

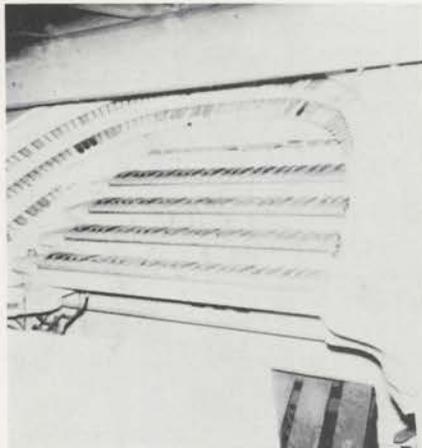
HISTORICAL PHOTOS OF THE CHICAGO THEATRE CONSOLE, Courtesy L. R. Clark.



Milton Charles when he played the Chicago theatre. Now a resident of Hollywood, California.



Author Gutow—one of the better organists—taken in the early 20's at th Chicago theatre console.



The same console as it is today. At the bottom of the pit covered by the extended stage.



The Slave or second console. Designed for and used by Helen Crawford. The console is still connected but now out of sight hidden back stage. When Mr. Siegel used this console on stage he was only permitted to play two songs—*Silent Night* for the Christmas show and—*The Rosary* on Easter Sunday.

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JOHN MITCHELL, theatre organist

by PAUL E. ENGLE

Three of the largest theaters in the Pittsburgh area supporting organs were the Loew's Penn, the Stanley and the Enright, located in the East Liberty section of Pittsburgh. The latter of these had the largest seating capacity. The Loew's Penn boasted of a Robert Morton, the Stanley

goes back to the time when he played the two manual Moller in the Manor Theatre in Squirrel Hill, a section of Pittsburgh, and then to the Stahl Theatre, now the Leona, in Homestead, Pennsylvania. Later Johnny moved to the Sheridan Square Wurlitzer and then on to the Enright in



Johnny Mitchell, at the Leona Theatre Kimball console; taken in July 1964.

of a Wurlitzer, and the Enright of a 3-13 Kimball. When all three organs were in full sway they were played by Dick Leibert, Bernie Armstrong and Johnny Mitchell, respectively. Both the Loew's Morton and the Stanley Wurlitzer were lost in the historic 1936 flood. The consoles of both organs, as well as the switches, relays and blowers were completely under water. Neither of these organs were reactivated. The Kimball was unaffected, however, for the Enright was situated well out of the flood area. This organ remained in use until 1952 under the capable artistry of Johnny Mitchell.

ATOE member, Johnny Mitchell, has a history that dates back to the early days of the theatre organ. Johnny's history

East Liberty. His stay there only lasted a short time due to a local musician's strike. However, because of a contract with Warner Brothers, he was moved to Erie where he played the Warner Wurlitzer for two years. In 1932 he returned to the Enright where he originated with the very popular Walter Framer of Strike It Rich fame, a very popular organ program for Warner Brothers called *Footlights and Stardust*. This program went on the air daily until the house went cold in 1952.

Many fond memories exist for Johnny at the Enright for it was here that Johnny met and worked with the late Dick Powell. Dick was just starting then, and

(Continued on Page 7)

Release Form and
Man-Hour Summary

I will not hold Piedmont Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Enthusiasts or any of its members in any way responsible for injuries which I may sustain incidental to removing the organ from the old Center Theatre, Durham, N. C.

(Names)	(Hours Worked)
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Contract for the Restoration
of the
Robert Morton Organ in the
Center Theatre, Durham, N. C.

Both of the parties whose names appear below, representing their respective organizations, agree to the following terms:

1. The Piedmont Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Enthusiasts (to be referred to hereafter as Piedmont Chapter) will furnish the labor necessary to restore the Robert Morton organ in the Center Theatre, Durham, N. C. to good playing condition. There shall be no charge for this service which is one of the national goals of the American Theatre Organ Enthusiasts.
2. The Center Theatre will furnish such new parts as the organ may require provided that the present parts cannot be rebuilt or substitutes cannot be found; new parts shall not cost more than \$50.00, total.
3. The restoration work will be conducted at a mutually convenient time such as during the morning hours and after the last show at night.
4. As long as the organ remains in the present theatre building, Piedmont Chapter may have use of the organ and building at no charge for free concerts and meetings at mutually convenient hours. If admission is charged to the concerts, expenses and profits will be divided equally between Piedmont Chapter and the Center Theatre.
5. If the organ is ever to be disposed of, Piedmont Chapter and its members have first option on the acquisition of it. If the organ is not wanted by the Piedmont Chapter or its members, it may then be disposed of in any way seen fit by the Center Theatre.
6. Piedmont Chapter will not hold the Center Theatre responsible for personal injuries to its members on official business in the theatre, and the Center Theatre will not hold Piedmont Chapter responsible for any accidental damage to any part of the theatre building or its equipment.
7. The organ may be used only with the knowledge and consent of the Piedmont Chapter.

(Name) for _____
(Organization)

(Name) for _____
(Organization)

(Witness) _____
(Date)

JOHN MITCHELL, continued

(Continued from Page 4)

it wasn't long until he was moved to the Stanley as MC of their stage shows and then on to Hollywood and Stardom. Johnny also had a very successful kiddie show every Saturday. This show became the springboard for many youngsters who went on to success and stardom. Johnny likes to talk about these kiddies and the good times he had with Dick Powell in this house of stars.

The Enright Theatre was torn down when it became evident that the area had changed and would no longer support a house of this size. The Kimball was sold. It is understood this organ is now in storage in Cleveland, Ohio.

Johnny, unlike many artists of the silent movie days, has not deserted his first love. The organ has been and is his life. Today, Johnny is engaged in a whirlwind of activities. Currently, he has been playing an organ in the new huge Civic Arena in McMurray, Pennsylvania, holding down a church organ position and keeping pace with a grueling teaching schedule. For seven years he held sway in a popular night spot where the young and old timers loved to go and hear his special style. His instrument was always rigged with all types of gadgets designed by Mitchell—strings, guitars, surf, percussion and many more sounds nightly echoed forth to the glee of the patrons. Johnny is also on the selling staff of Pittsburgh's largest Hammond dealer. With all of this, one would really wonder how you could get an affirmative "Yes" when you ask Johnny if he would like to go and play "The Pipes". This is how he affectionately refers to the theatre organ, "The Pipes". He will tell you there isn't anything like "The Pipes". "Most important of all," quips John, "I just want to keep my hand in so I never lose the touch."

Time permitting, Johnny will go anywhere, any time, to play a theatre organ. Last year he revisited the Erie Warner where Johnny warmed up the Wurlitzer. He played there and reacquainted himself with the theatre manager who has a wide eyed and thrilled young usher back when Johnny would rise up with the Wurlitzer under the spotlight.

Recently, in Richmond, Virginia, John thrilled to the touch of the three Wurlitzers—the Byrd, Mosque, and Loew's, and revealed to the famous hospitality of the organ enthusiasts there. He went also to see Jimmy Boyce and experienced that spine tingling sound from Jimmy's big 4-43 Wurlitzer at the Rink in Alexandria, Virginia. All in all, Johnny is one of the truly great organ enthusiasts who never could forsake the love, thrill and feel of the king of instruments. "No Siree," quotes Johnny, "There just isn't anything like 'The Pipes'."