

# THE ORGAN PROJECT

## GRACE CHURCH IN PROVIDENCE

*A brief history, and a plan for renovation and expansion.*

In the late 1950s – more than sixty years ago – Senior Warden Charles M. Smith wrote to Grace Church parishioners about the failing state of the pipe organs and the dire need to address those conditions. His letter stated three considerations for the Vestry:

- The seriousness of the condition and the action required to correct it
- The possibility of spreading the work and large expense involved over several years
- The best means of providing the required funds to successfully undertake such a project



*The Gallery Case & Façade, designed by Hutchings Organ Co., Boston, 1886*

These questions are essentially the same ones asked by our current Vestry, as we determine the best approach for the restoration of the organs at Grace. We have the answers to the first two questions – a sound and creative plan for restoration, renovation, and expansion; and a clear understanding that a multi-phased approach over many years is not practical, neither financially nor from a usage standpoint. We now seek funding from generous individuals, foundations, or corporations (or from a combination of these) in order to return this venerable instrument to its former glory and honor the vision and legacy of generations of Rhode Islanders that have come before us.

We are proposing a two-phased approach for this project. **Phase I:** enlarges, restores, and renovates the Chancel organ, addresses the most pressing and important issues with the Gallery organ, and provides for a new console. **Phase II:** would complete the restoration and renovation of the Gallery organ.

*Please continue reading for more detailed information on this very exciting and monumental musical project.*



*The twin Chancel cases and façade, designed by Ralph Adams Cram, 1912.*

## THE ORGAN'S CURRENT CONDITION . . .

The current instrument – comprised of the front (Chancel) organ and back (Gallery) organ – are in desperate need of renovation and restoration. The only reason the organ still sounds impressive during worship and concert is the large number of digital, or electronic, stops employed to cover all the issues of the pipe organ. There are hundreds of dead notes, and ciphers – pipes that play on their own and won't stop – are frequent. Again – we essentially are using an electronic organ on a day-to-day basis to avoid these problems. The organ needs to be completely re-leathered; all the pipes need cleaning, and most need repair; the organ chambers need thorough cleaning; and much rewiring and additional chamber lighting is needed. While we are dealing with those types of issues, it is the ideal time to address any other shortcomings the organ may have tonally. This project will do just that. Finally, a new console is needed to control the entire organ. The console from the 2010 project is sadly falling apart, with many broken/ askew stop-knobs, and stops that won't disengage.

*Please see the pictures below and on the back of this brochure for an inside peak into the organ's current condition. And do watch our three videos found at [www.gracechurchprovidence.org/organproject](http://www.gracechurchprovidence.org/organproject)*



# THE ORGAN PROJECT SUMMARY

## A BRIEF HISTORY

- 1845 – Henry Erben organ installed in the Gallery
- 1886 – Hutchings & Co. (Boston) organ installed in the Gallery including present case and façade
- 1904 – Organ action electrified and console moved downstairs to the chancel
- 1912 – New chancel built – Hutchings & Co. provided a small 2-manual organ for the new chancel
- 1923 – Casavant Frères, Ltée. builds large new 2-manual organ for the chancel
- 1959 – Casavant rebuilds the entire organ, including a new console – 103 ranks; 6122 pipes
- 2010 – A new console is installed by R.A. Colby, Inc. and 100 digital (electronic) voices added by Walker Technical Company
  - *NB: This last project was conceived and carried out by then-Music Director Mark Johnson as an alternative to restoring the pipe organ.*
- **2021** – We find ourselves with a mostly digital (electronic) organ. The problems from previous decades have only multiplied, and the actual pipe organ is virtually unusable. Additionally, 11 years on, the digital stops and Colby console are also beginning to malfunction and fall apart. In the meantime, Grace Church has: restored the exterior of the building to prevent water leakage; built The Pavilion, a state-of-the-art parish hall adjacent to the church, to be used for parish and community events; and renovated all other interior spaces that had suffered from water damage and decay over the years. And finally, our Music Program has grown to include the 40-member Grace Church Choir; 20 children involved in the Chorister program; a *Schola* to provide music for monthly Compline; and *Collegium Ancora*, a professional chamber choir in residence at Grace Church.

## THE PROPOSED PROJECT

It is time that our once-glorious pipe organ be restored, renovated and expanded to be in effect the largest and most versatile organ in the state of Rhode Island, as well as a landmark instrument for the East Coast. We dream of an organ that is worthy of the magnificent historical building it will inhabit. We are currently seeking funding for this monumental project. The restored and expanded organ, when complete, would contain **120 ranks of pipes and just over 7,000 individual pipes**, divided between Gallery and Chancel. **The historic Hutchings case of 1886 (gallery) and Ralph Adams Cram twin cases (chancel) would remain intact.** This would be a two-phase approach: First the Chancel organ, and second, the Gallery organ.

- **Highlights of the renovated and expanded organ (Phase I) will include:**
  - A new 4-manual state-of-the-art console to control the entire organ (both Gallery and Chancel)
  - A greatly expanded 4-manual Chancel organ, including new Great and Solo divisions
  - A copper horizontal trumpet (*Trompette-en-chamade*) atop the Gallery case
  - A re-use of almost all existing pipework
  - Dispensing with nearly all digital (electronic) stops and corresponding speakers in the current cases
  - Restoration/repair of all existing components and pipes in the Chancel organ, and restoration/ repair of selected stops in the Gallery organ, with the remainder awaiting “Phase II” of restoration.
- **Costs:** Phase I - \$1,600,000; Construction of new pipe chamber in Chancel - \$250,000; Endowment for future maintenance - \$150,000. Total Cost of Phase I - \$2,000,000. ***This could be a memorial project, naming the organ for a family member, or loved one.***

*For more information on the Grace Church Organ Project, please contact Vincent Edwards, Director of Music [vedwards@gracepvd.org](mailto:vedwards@gracepvd.org); 203-984-8943 (Mobile); 401-331-3225, x 4 (Office)*

**MORE PHOTOS OF THE ORGAN'S CURRENT CONDITION . . .**



**Bent Pipes**  
*(Chancel)*



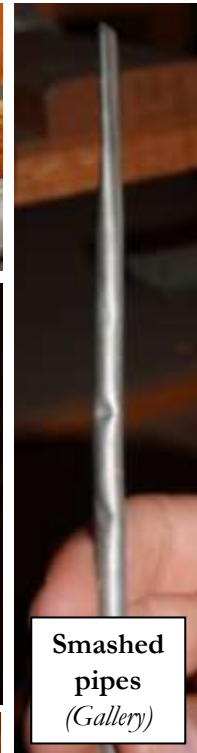
**Swell-shutter foam lining disintegrating to dust** *(Gallery)*



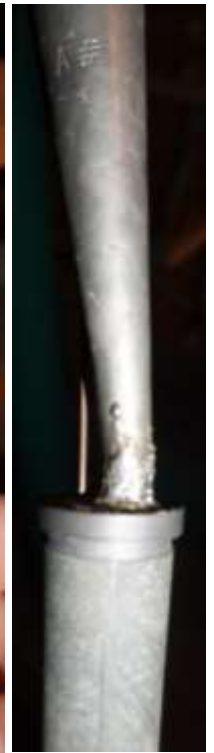
**Pipe tuning-rolls held in place by sack-cloth** *(Chancel)*



**Dented pipes** *(Gallery)*



**Smashed pipes** *(Gallery)*



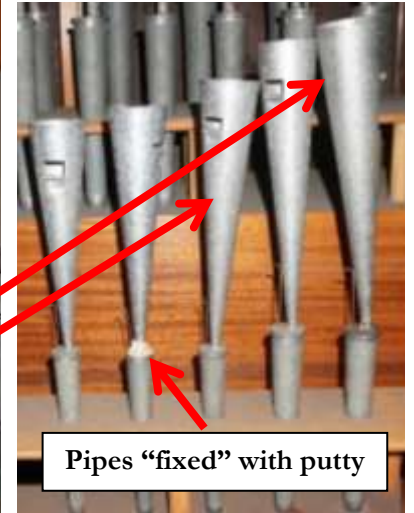
**Pipes collapsing in on themselves** *(Chancel)*



**Bent Pipes & Decades of Dust** *(Chancel)*



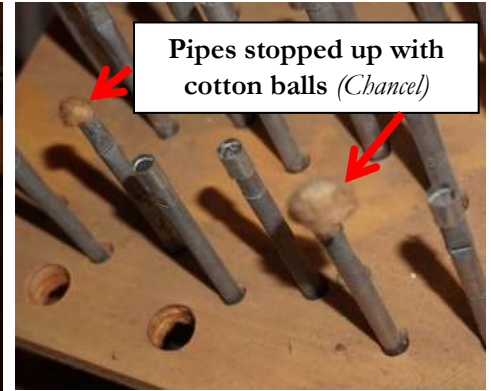
**Bent pipes** *(Gallery)*



**Pipes "fixed" with putty**



**Cardboard used to stop reservoirs from leaking** *(Gallery)*



**Pipes stopped up with cotton balls** *(Chancel)*



**Chaotic wiring** *(Chancel)*

*For informative and descriptive videos on the Grace Church organs and their current condition, please visit: [www.gracechurchprovidence.org/organproject](http://www.gracechurchprovidence.org/organproject). A proposed stop-list is available there as well.*