

AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS CENTENNIAL

AGO CONVENTIONS, 1914–1939

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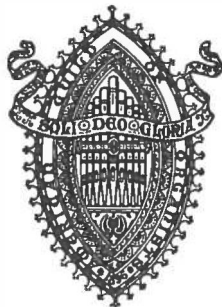
For most AGO members in the latter part of the 20th century, active membership in the organization is based on participation at the chapter level, receiving both national and chapter publications, and attendance at national conventions. Members today are used to the concept of having a national convention every other year, but it was not always that way. The first conventions (1914–25) seem to have been scheduled on an ad hoc basis, after which they occurred every year for a period. The schedule of biennial conventions was not established until 1939, then interrupted by World War II, and resumed in 1948.

When the AGO was founded in 1896, it was chartered by the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York as an educational organization. Education was indeed the chief concern of the New York-based founders, although there was an early push to establish chapters in various parts of the country. There also was interest in presenting organ recitals in each area, but the idea of a convention did not surface until 1914, when, at the Guild's annual meeting, held May 7 at the Hotel Gerard in New York City, "Mr. Hatfield, of California, made remarks concerning a possible Convention or Congress of Organists in San Francisco next year. Others spoke on the same subject. . . ." (*AGO Registrar's Record 1910–1915*). A motion was made and carried, showing it to be the sense of this meeting that a convention be held at some time in the near future, and 18 members went on record as favoring a time between December 1914 and January 1915. Subsequent discussions considered other times, including the summer, but December 29–30, 1914, was the time eventually chosen, with New York City as the natural site.

The Earliest Conventions

According to a report in *The New Music Review* of February 1915, "The first National Convention of the American Guild of Organists has become a memory of the past. What it has accomplished remains to be seen. The good comradeship throughout was in evidence on all sides and all those present seemed to appreciate the opportunity of meeting together." Compared to later conventions, this one was fairly limited, but it was a beginning. Events took place at Columbia University, where four recitalists performed in the chapel: Charles Heinroth, Pittsburgh municipal organist; Samuel A. Baldwin, of the City College of New York; William C. Hammond, of Mount Holyoke College; and James T. Quarles, organist of Cornell University. Interwoven with the recitals were a number of addresses on subjects ranging from "Music Appreciation as a National Asset" to "In what way can the Organists' Guild unite with the Ministry in enhancing the dignity and beauty of the non-liturgical service?" Given the interest in education, it is not surprising that there was a discussion session on the Guild examinations. The first day closed with a service at St. Thomas Church, with music led by organist-choirmaster T. Tertius Noble, while

Second Convention American Guild of Organists of the United States and Canada



The College of the City of New York
St. Nicholas Terrace at One Hundred and Thirty-Ninth Street

December 26-27-28, 1917

the second day ended with a banquet at the Hotel McAlpin, attended by approximately one hundred.

Only a few months after this initial convention, discussions began about the next convention. On August 14, 1916, an official national Convention Committee was appointed, with S. Lewis Elmer as its chairman. The next convention was then scheduled for December 26–28, 1917, again in New York City, at the College of the City of New York, St. Nicholas Terrace at 139th Street. Six organists gave recitals, two of them—Charles Heinroth and Samuel A. Baldwin—having appeared at the first convention. They were joined by Charles M. Courboin, organist of the First Baptist Church in Syracuse, N.Y., but later to be at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City; Richard Tattersall, organist of Old St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Toronto; W. Lynnwood Farnam, organist of Emmanuel Church, Boston, also later to be in New York City at the Church of the Holy Communion; and Gaston M. Dethier, professor of organ at the Institute of Musical Art (later the Juilliard School of Music), New York, N.Y.

The program content ranged from Heinroth's all-Bach (a lecture recital on "The Emotional Element in Bach's Organ Music") to Tattersall's "Ride of the Valkyries" to Farnam's playing of the complete Sixth Symphony by Widor. Addresses throughout the three days were devoted to such subjects of interest as "The Modern Cantata," "Children's Choirs in Non-Liturgical Churches," and "The Organist and the Church." The noted composer Horatio Parker spoke on "Modern Church Anthems" and was quoted in *The Evening Post* as labeling such music "weedy and showing a lack of economy." He saw the revival of earlier music to be encouraging, noting "We may get back to Gibbons yet." A

round-table session dealt with "Choir Work: Its Difficulties and Inspirations" and informal receptions took the place of a closing banquet. Five organbuilders—Skinner, Steere, Austin, Odell, and Moller—participated in a display of organ consoles.

The 1920s: Locations Away from New York

As early as 1915, the AGO Registrar's Record notes that there was interest in holding a convention somewhere other than New York: San Diego, San Francisco, and Oberlin were all mentioned. The nod eventually went to the Ohio conservatory town, presumably because of its organistry and ability to house a fair number of people at one institution. Not only was the location new but the timing was different: the third national convention took place June 22–24, 1920, in Oberlin, Ohio.

The four-manual Skinner organ in Finney Chapel was the location for recitals by Charles Courboin, Eric DeLamar, Lynnwood Farnam, Edwin Arthur Kraft, Rollo Maitland, and William E. Zeuch, and Frederick W. Schleider gave an improvisation demonstration. The unsigned review in *The Diapason* of July 1920 (probably by editor S.E. Gruenstein) hailed the events as "three days filled to overflowing with the best work of some of the greatest recitalists of the United States," going on to note that the "rich diet would better have been spread over 30 days than over three." This review praised all the performers but noted particularly the elegance of Farnam's playing and the vitality of Courboin's Franck (*Grande Pièce symphonique* and *Pièce héroïque*). Charles Heinroth canceled his recital on two days' notice because of an attack of neuritis, this despite the fact that he had already made a special trip from Pittsburgh to practice at Oberlin.

The organbuilder Ernest M. Skinner was a featured speaker and his presentation on recent American organbuilding was well received. In spite of early publicity that suggested that Midwesterners could easily reach Oberlin by train, the total number registering for the convention was just 130. *The Diapason* commented on the pleasant weather, which, in addition to pleasing the visitors, brought a circus parade to town. Serendipitous timing caused the calliope, which brought up the rear of the parade, to pass Finney Chapel shortly after the conclusion of Lynnwood Farnam's recital!

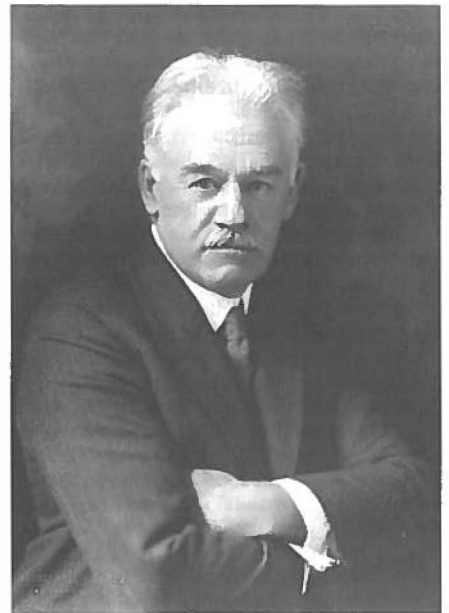
An interesting point that came up at the Oberlin convention was a vote by those assembled to join the National Association of Organists (NAO) in a cooperative convention the following year, which would mark the 25th anniversary of the Guild, but for various reasons this idea did not come to fruition. The NAO held its 1921 convention in Philadelphia without help from the AGO, followed by ones in Chicago (1922), Rochester, New York (1923), Atlantic City (1924), and Cleveland (1925). Of course, many organists belonged to both organizations. For its part, the AGO celebrated its quarter-century mark with a festival service at New York City's Trinity Church on April



Charles Heinroth



Lynnwood Farnam



Ernest M. Skinner

13, 1921. The Northern and Southern California AGO chapters hosted a successful regional convention in Los Angeles, June 25–28, 1923, but another national convention did not take place until June 16–18, 1925, in Chicago, Illinois.

The Chicago convention, attended by 200 registrants from 27 chapters, was headquartered at the Congress Hotel, where a reception opened the events. Kimball Hall, with its new four-manual Kimball organ, was the site of many activities: recitals by John Knowles Weaver (who, as dean of the Eastern Oklahoma Chapter, represented the “West”), John Hermann Loud (dean of the New England Chapter, representing the “East”), and Arthur B. Jennings (of “Springs in the Desert” fame), as well as papers and panel discussions. Sightseeing on the first afternoon was followed by Charlotte Klein’s recital on the four-manual Casavant at Grace Episcopal Church in Oak Park; in addition to works by Rheinberger, Dethier, Bonnet, and Vierne, her program included the *Symphonie Romane* of Widor. This noted Washington, D.C., organist had the distinction of being the first woman to perform at an AGO national convention (so foregone was the conclusion that organists were male that most journal and newspaper accounts referred to them as “the men” of the profession). The second day took place in Evanston, where William C. Carl of New York’s Guilman Organ School spoke on recital programming. John Cushing played the four-manual Skinner at St. Luke’s Episcopal Church (an instrument then rated as the largest in the area and now being painstakingly restored some 70 years later), and William H. Barnes opened his home with its three-manual instrument to visitors. Dinner at the North Shore Hotel was followed by a service at St. Luke’s that attracted more than a thousand people. It featured the singing of the Guild prizewinning anthem, “In Him We Live,” by Yale University composer Hope Leroy Baumgartner, as well as the playing of Eric DeLamarter and Stanley Martin; Clarence Eddy, probably the most famous organist of the day, was scheduled to play but was in fact confined to bed by a foot injury, so his place was taken by

Herbert Hyde, organist-choirmaster of St. Luke’s.

Back in Chicago proper the next day, Albert Riemenschneider performed works of James H. Rogers, Bach, and Widor on the four-manual Austin at St. James Episcopal Church, where Leo Sowerby would become organist-choirmaster two years later. The closing event of the convention was a recital of music by Thiele, Debussy, Demercaux, Ravel, Bonnet, Stoughton, Rachmaninoff, Pachelbel, Palmgren, and Middelschulte, played by Hugo Goodwin, municipal organist of St. Paul, on the four-manual Skinner at the Fourth Presbyterian Church.

Annual Conventions

The 1925 convention was the first in a 13-year series that would see a national convention take place every year. Along with the annual occurrence came an interest in having conventions in cities not previously visited by organ groups. Accordingly, the 1926 location—the fifth general convention—was announced the previous December for Buffalo, New York, June 1–3.

The proximity of Niagara Falls was advertised as a special scenic attraction, and a visit to the large factory of Rudolph Wurlitzer in nearby North Tonawanda was promised. Recitalists were Warren D. Allen of Stanford University and Harold Gleason of the Eastman School of Music, playing a new Moller organ at the Larkin plant (advertised as the “Mammoth Larkin Organ—the largest instrument in Western New York”); Harold Fix of Buffalo and Lester Groom of Chicago, playing a new four-manual Skinner at Central Park Methodist Church; and Lynnwood Farnam playing the large new Estey at the Buffalo Consistory, one of the city’s showplaces. Noteworthy is the inclusion of two women organists, following in the precedent set in Chicago by Charlotte Klein: Kate Elizabeth Fox (Watertown, New York) and Virginia Carrington-Thomas (Florida State College for Women), also playing at the Consistory. Howard Hanson, director of the Eastman School, was the featured speaker for the closing banquet. Services included ones at St. Paul’s Cathedral and at Temple Beth-Zion.

Washington, D.C., was the location of the 1927 sixth general convention, which took place June 28–30. Although the official hotel was the Hamilton, the Church of the Epiphany on G Street served as headquarters as well as the site of a Guild service, with music directed by organist-choirmaster Adolf Torovsky. Featured organs were the large new Moller at the Washington Auditorium, played by Rollo Maitland, and the Skinner in the Coolidge Auditorium of the Library of Congress, played by Charlotte Klein. Charles A.H. Pearson played at All Souls’ Unitarian Church, and other recitalists were J. Norris Herring of Baltimore, Eda Bartholomew of Atlanta, and Lilian Carpenter of New York, all playing at the Church of the Epiphany. The Library of Congress mounted an exhibition of original organ scores, with an informal talk by Carl Engel, chief of the Music Division. A tour, which included the Washington Cathedral, also took visitors to George Washington’s home at Mount Vernon.

The next year saw the gathering site move to Detroit, Michigan, where the convention took place June 12–14, 1928, and registrants from 27 states numbered 200. The first recital of the convention was played by William H. Barnes of Chicago at the Consistory Cathedral of the Masonic Temple, on its large four-manual Skinner. At the new Detroit Institute of Arts, Clyde Burroughs spoke on “Music in Art Museums,” and the large four-manual Casavant in the auditorium was played by Marian Van Liew of Detroit and Sheldon Foote of Milwaukee, both performing memorized recitals. Francis A. Mackay directed the music for a festival service at St. Paul’s Cathedral, and Robert Cato played its large four-manual Austin organ in a pre-service recital. Arthur Gutow, of Detroit movie-playing fame, began the next day’s events, demonstrating the large Wurlitzer in the Michigan Theater, described as “one of the palatial picture-houses of the United States.” An excursion to Belle Isle, the park in the St. Clair River, was followed by Alle D. Zuidema’s recital on the chimes of Jefferson Avenue Presbyterian Church, where he was organist of the new four-manual Skinner. This

68-rank instrument, restored by Kenneth and Dorothy Holden in 1976, remains one of the important surviving examples of its type; it was played for the 1928 occasion by Edwin Arthur Kraft of Cleveland, whose rendition of music by Neuhoff, C.P.E. Bach, Bonnet, Bach, Sealy, Bingham, Tchaikovsky, Rogers, Hollins, Dethier, Johnson, and Matthews was highly praised by critics. Other recitals were played by Charles M. Courboin of New York on the Institute of Art's Casavant and by Palmer Christian of Ann Arbor on the large new Skinner in Hill Auditorium of the University of Michigan, which instrument had been opened the previous month by Mr. Christian, whose playing attracted 5,000 people. A closing banquet at the Hotel Statler in Detroit concluded this successful convention.

Memphis was the location of the 1929 convention, held in the Tennessee city, June 3–6. Special note was made of the fact that this was the first national AGO convention in a Southern city, where its famed hospitality would be paramount—this included a reception at the Memphis Country Club graced by the singing of Jean Johnson, whose credentials listed study with Marcella Sembrich, the famous Polish-American soprano. As *The Diapason* remarked, "Dixieland conducted its first convention of organists. . . . The city situated on 'Old Man River' not only exhibited the best brand of Southern hospitality, but emphasized this with the help of the weather man." Senator Emerson L. Richards, architect of the huge Atlantic City Convention Hall organ, led the way among speakers, dealing with "The Tonal Design of Two- and Three-Manual Organs," and Charlotte Klein, making her third national convention appearance, was the leading recitalist, performing works of Franck, Bach, Jongen, Maleingreau, Karg-Elert, Sealy, and Barnes on the three-manual-and-echo Casavant of St. Peter's Catholic Church. Other performers were Franklin Glynn playing a three-manual Moller in the Norfleet residence, a suburban estate; James Phillip Johnson playing the three-manual-and-echo Austin at St. John's Methodist Church; Arnold Dann playing the four-manual and echo Skinner at Idlewild Presbyterian Church; Parvin Titus playing the three-manual and echo Pilcher at Bellevue Baptist Church in a program that included the *Arabesque and Fughetta* by Van Denman Thompson, which had won first prize in the 1919 competition of the National Federation of Music Clubs; and David McK. Williams, also at Idlewild Presbyterian Church, where his playing of Bach chorale preludes, along with works of Dupré, McKinley, Bingham, McAmis, Vierne, and Mulet, was described as "ideal organ playing."

Charles Courboin was featured at the Memphis Auditorium, seating a total of 12,500 and housing a new five-manual dual-installation Kimball organ, where he played a program of Bach, Gigout, and Franck, and transcriptions of works by Bach (C-sharp Major Prelude and Fugue from the *WTC*, played on the grand piano activated as an organ "stop"), Debussy, Nardini, and Wagner. This was also the site of recitals by Charles Galloway of St. Louis, Arthur Dunham of Chicago, Frank Asper of the Salt Lake City Tabernacle, and Edward Eigenschenk of Chicago. A Guild service, which included a performance of the Brahms *Requiem* with orchestra, was led at Calvary Episcopal Church by



Edwin Arthur Kraft

organist-choirmaster Adolph Steuteran, Tennessee Chapter dean and convention chairman, assisted by his brother, Harry J. Steuteran, who also played a pre-service recital. Chicago theater organist Ambrose Larson shared a demonstration of the three-manual Wurlitzer at the Orpheum Theater with resident organist Arthur Hays. The final convention event was a banquet at the Hotel Peabody, attended by 146.

The 1930s

The 1930 convention was set for Philadelphia, June 23–27, and seems to have attracted the largest attendance to date, with about 400 registrants. The opening recital by Charles Courboin at the Wanamaker store (cited as the world's largest organ) featured his playing of the Prelude and Liebestod from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, said to be particularly moving. Edwin Arthur Kraft followed with a program at the First (Calvary) Presbyterian Church that included the Reubke Sonata; then Catharine Morgan played the 124-stop Austin at the First Presbyterian Church of Germantown. The day concluded with a Guild service at St. Luke's Church, Germantown, with organist George Alexander West and his choir of men and boys, preceded by Bernard R. Mausert's carillon recital at the Methodist Church. The following day the Aeolian Company bused everyone to the Stotesbury home in Chestnut Hill, where Mrs. Edward P. Linch played the firm's three-manual residence instrument. Then it was on to Longwood Gardens for Firmin Swinnen's recital on the 10,010-pipe Aeolian organ at the Pierre S. du Pont estate; his transcription of Tchaikovsky's *Capriccio Italien* was praised for its display of the reeds on the new installation. The du Ponts were hosts for dinner, and the day closed with a water and light display of the fountains in the gardens.

A session on Guild exams, and papers by William H. Barnes ("Modern Organ Actions") and Harold Vincent Milligan ("Our Musical American Background") occupied the next morning, after which Carl Weinrich played the new four-manual Welte organ of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church and Arthur B.



Firmin Swinnen

Jennings performed on the Austin of over 200 ranks at Irvine Auditorium, built for the Sesquicentennial Exposition of 1926 and later given to the University of Pennsylvania by Cyrus H. K. Curtis. M.P. Moller hosted a dinner and demonstration of its reproducing organs; then a program at the Second Presbyterian Church by the Musical Art Society of Camden and organist Alexander McCurdy closed the day.

The final convention day was held at the Convention Hall in Atlantic City. Upon arrival, the convention book invited registrants to "inspect the Convention Hall, promenade on the Boardwalk, or engage in ocean bathing," the latter as guests of Richards's Baths, before being luncheon guests of Senator Richards. In mid-afternoon Frank Stewart Adams performed a pops program on the new 57-rank Kimball in the ballroom of the auditorium. After a banquet, Rollo Maitland played the incomplete Midmer-Losh organ of over 300 stops in the main auditorium itself, playing a temporary console supplied by Seibert Losh especially for the occasion and concluding with an improvisation on tunes chosen by audience vote: "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" and "Deep River."

Indianapolis was selected as the location for the next convention, held June 8–12, 1931, and attended by 275 registrants. An evening reception at the Lincoln Hotel greeted visitors, with entertainment by the Indianapolis Matinee Musicale. Opening speeches were given the following morning at Broadway Methodist Church, followed by Harold Heeremans's recital on the four-manual Estey of 1927. Arthur Dunham demonstrated a two-manual, seven-stop Skinner at the Goodman residence; his own *Quiet of the Forest* showed the colors of this small organ. A Guild service at Christ Episcopal Church, under the direction of Cheston L. Heath at the large Casavant, concluded the day. Of special note were three new anthems by Van Denman Thompson, Frank L. Sealy, and Alexander Gretchaninoff. Recitals were given the next day by Julian R. Williams at Tabernacle Presbyterian Church (four-manual Casavant), Edwin Arthur Kraft at the Scottish Rite Cathedral (four-manual Skinner,



Ernest White



Albert Riemenschneider

the city's largest), and Louise Carol Titcomb at Broadway Methodist Church. The latter recital occurred in conjunction with a program by the Mendelssohn Choir of Indianapolis under the direction of Elmer A. Steffen.

The next day's events began as Father William J. Finn, director of the New York Paulist Choristers, spoke on "The Essential and Differentiating Characteristics of Boy Choirs," followed by Charlotte Klein's recital on the new four-manual Kimball at North Methodist Church. A bus trip provided by the Aeolian Company took conventiongoers to visit the estate of Josiah K. Lilly, where the two-manual Aeolian residence organ was demonstrated in a short recital by Frank Sealy, Harold Heeremans, and Van Denman Thompson. A piano-vocal program ensued at the Woodstock Country Club before the evening recital by Arthur R. Croley of Toledo at the Scottish Rite Cathedral, where he took the place of the scheduled performer, Palmer Christian, who was unable to attend. "Problems of the Guild" was the subject of a discussion the final morning, followed by the recitals of Marshall Bidwell at the Tabernacle Presbyterian Church and Arthur Poister at North Methodist Church. The closing banquet featured Indiana author Meredith Nicholson as speaker. The Indianapolis convention book was the first to bear the subtitle "United States and Canada" after the AGO name.

Boston's first national convention, the eleventh for the AGO, took place June 20-25, 1932, and was attended by more than 225 people from 20 states. It was housed at the Hotel Statler, where the rates for a room for one ranged from \$4 to \$10 per night (rooms for four were \$12.50-\$16, shower and tub included). Events somewhat out of the ordinary included a visit to the famous Boston Music Hall organ, saved and owned at that time by Ernest M. Skinner, and housed in Serlo Hall, Methuen (rebuilt in 1947 as Opus 1103 of Aeolian-Skinner, in the Methuen Memorial Music Hall); and a post-convention trip to Austin and Aeolian-Skinner installations in Hartford.

The opening concert for organ and orches-

tra took place at the New England Conservatory of Music's Jordan Hall, with Wallace Goodrich conducting Hope Leroy Baumgartner's *Concert Piece* (H. Frank Bozyan, organist), the Franck *Choral in B Minor* (arranged for organ and orchestra by Dr. Goodrich, Albert Snow, organist), and Eric DeLamar's *Concerto in E Major* (Palmer Christian, organist); Carl McKinley conducted his own *Masquerade* for orchestra, and George W. Chadwick's *Sinfonietta in D Major* was also on the program. In conjunction with this program, the convention book mentioned an exhibit mounted by the Boston Public Library of treasures from the music collection, on view throughout the convention. The two trips for "browsing" among Boston organs were forebearers of today's organ "crawls," and included visits to the First Church of Christ, Scientist (four-manual Hook & Hastings), Temple Mishkan Tefila (four-manual Frazee), and Holy Cross Cathedral (four-manual Hook & Hastings, the firm's magnum opus which would later become unplayable and is today gradually being restored). A second trip to the suburbs took in the Melrose Municipal Auditorium (four-manual Austin) and Phillips Academy (four-manual Casavant later removed and stored, which today is slated for reinstallation in Florida). The now-traditional Guild service was held in the Church of the Advent, with Frederick Johnson directing Solemn Evensong, assisted by organists Albert Snow (Emmanuel Church) and Francis Snow (Trinity Church).

Recitals were played by Marion Janet Clayton at the Church of the Covenant (four-manual Welte), memorized; Alexander McCurdy at Methuen (four-manual Walcker-Skinner); Carl Weinrich at the First Church in Boston (large four-manual Skinner), where his program included the "new" Sixth Symphony of Vierne, dedicated to Weinrich's late teacher Lynnwood Farnam; Robert Cato at Emmanuel Church (large four-manual divided Casavant designed by Farnam); Hugh Porter at Trinity Church (four-manual divided Skinner); Marion Hutchinson at King's Chapel (four-manual Skinner), where choral works were sung under the direction of Raymond Robinson; and Ralph Kinder at the

Second Church in Newton (four-manual Casavant), where recent American choral music was sung under the direction of William Lester Bates. Among several papers delivered, Archibald T. Davison of Harvard University spoke on service music and William H. Barnes dealt with "Console Standardization." The Women Organists' Club of Boston issued a special invitation to "ladies attending the Convention from outside Boston" to attend a recital by the Misses Alice Shepard, Myrtle Richardson, and Daisy A. Swadkins at Bethany Congregational Church, Quincy (the home of the President Adams). Charles Courboin played an extra recital on a new three-manual Kilgen at Temple Ohabei Shalom, and Edith Lang performed a lighter program at the City Club (four-manual Skinner). The concluding banquet at the Statler featured T. Tertius Noble as speaker on examinations.

A post-convention trip to Hartford, Connecticut, provided by the Austin Organ Company of Hartford and the Aeolian-Skinner Organ Company of Boston, afforded 100 conventiongoers visits to the four-manual Austin in Bushnell Hall and the four-manual Skinner at Trinity College, as well as the opportunity to tour the Austin factory. There were also visits to the celebrated rose gardens and other objects of interest in Hartford.

Cleveland became the site of the 1933 convention, held June 26-29 in the Ohio city. Following registration by 325 attendees at the Wade Park Manor, William H. Barnes presented the report of the Committee on Standardization of Consoles, which led to the specifications generally called the "A.G.O. Standards." This was followed by Hugh McAmis's recital on the Skinner at Epworth-Euclid Church, a program that included the Satie *Messe des Pauvres* with voices. At the Museum of Art the next day, Arthur Jennings played the Skinner, and Edward Eigenschenk performed on the four-manual Kimball at The Temple. The annual Guild service took place at Trinity Cathedral, with a festival choir of 250 voices from six churches under the direction of Edwin Arthur Kraft, organist-choirmaster of the cathedral. "Bach the Organist" was the title of a paper by Senator Emerson Richards, which was complemented by Arthur Poister's all-Bach program at Epworth-Euclid Church. Additional recitals were played by William E. Zeuch on the four-manual Skinner at the Church of the Covenant, by Laurel Everette Anderson on the 150-rank Skinner at the Public Auditorium, by Mrs. Doyne Christine Neal on the 68-stop Moller at Euclid Avenue Baptist Church, by Herman F. Siewert on the Hook and Hastings at the First Church of Christ, Scientist, and by Parvin Titus on the Austin at the Church of Our Saviour.

Worthy of special mention was the program played by Ernest White on the new 24-rank Votteler-Holtkamp-Sparling at St. Vitus Catholic Church, since it was comprised exclusively of music composed before 1800 and grouped by national schools—Teutonic (Buxtehude, Kellner, Walter, Scheidt), English (Greene, Arne, Roseingrave, Byrd, Handel), French (Clérambault's *Suite on the First Tone*), and Italian (Vivaldi-Bach)—an early example of a historical organ recital. Also of note was the organ, since its regional builder would become a national organbuilding influence in the years to come. Members of the Cleveland Orchestra played a program of

contemporary American music: *Pioneer Overture*, Rossetter G. Cole; *Memories of France*, Seth Bingham; *Station W.G.Z.B.X.* (NBC prize work), Philip James; *Symphonic Poem "Prairie,"* Leo Sowerby; *Masquerade*, Carl McKinley; and *Pageant of P.T. Barnum*, Douglas Moore. In several instances, composers conducted their own compositions.

The 1934 convention took place June 25–29 in Rochester, New York, where the Eastman School of Music served as the focal point of activities. Director Howard Hanson welcomed registrants and Robert Hufstader played the opening recital on the four-manual Skinner in Kilbourn Hall. Barbara Duncan, librarian of the Sibley Library, spoke on rare books and manuscripts in her care of interest to organists; a tour of the school's physical facilities (including the many practice organs) was given; Arthur S. Thompson addressed the subject of "Modern Acoustical Problems"; and Benjamin F. Miessner demonstrated his new electronic piano, on which Anton Rovinsky played a recital. Other organ recitals were given by Leon Verrees on the large Austin in the Eastman Theatre, by Grace Leeds Darnell on the Skinner at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, by Edwin Stanley Seder at St. Paul's, by Francis W. Snow at Kilbourn Hall, by Nita Akin on the Moller of Cathedral Hall of the Masonic Temple, by Melville Smith on the Skinner in the Masonic Auditorium, by Margaret Whitney Dow at Kilbourn Hall (from memory), and by Catharine Morgan at St. Paul's Episcopal Church. Howard Hanson conducted members of the Rochester Philharmonic in works for organ and orchestra by Baumgartner, Baldwin, Sowerby, Hanson, Dickinson, Gleason, and Bach (the latter using the electronic piano); the organists were Thomas H. Webber Jr., Leo Sowerby, Palmer Christian, Mary Louise Schroder, and Harold Gleason. Father William J. Finn lectured on choral technique, using a mixed chorus for demonstrations; he later conducted a concert of choral music ranging from Gregorian chant to Rachmaninoff's "Cherubic Hymn," using a historical approach not unlike that which Ernest White had utilized the previous year for organ music. A mock wedding was staged as entertainment at the closing banquet, with the NAO as bride and the AGO as groom.

Twenty-one years after the first AGO convention, New York City was once again the host, and the 14th general convention took place June 24–28, 1935, with headquarters at the Hotel Astor, Times Square. Nearly 900 people registered, by far the largest of any convention to date, this in spite of the inroads of the Great Depression. Special features included a new emphasis on choral music and a national radio broadcast. Aside from meeting in the city of the founders, this convention was also significant for the fact that it was the first after the AGO and NAO merged on January 1, 1935. A historical sketch in the program book boasted of 77 AGO chapters and over 5,000 members.

The opening concert was given in the grand ballroom of the hotel by the Roth Quartet and organist Louis Robert playing the large Austin, separately and together in a new concerted *Fantasia* by Kálmán Antos. On the first full day, after a session on Guild

examinations, Harold Heeremans and Alfred Wilson shared a recital at the Church of St. Mary the Virgin (four-manual Aeolian-Skinner), as did Carl Wiesemann and Alexander McCurdy at the ballroom of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel (four-manual Moller). After group photographs at Grant's Tomb, the Riverside Church was the site for "Pageant: A Series of Interpretations," with the Ruth St. Denis Rhythmic Choir, the Choir of St. Luke's Chapel, and William Pollock at the Hook and Hastings organ, followed by Kamiel Lefevere's carillon recital. An evening service for boy choirs at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine was under the direction of organist-choirmaster Norman Coke-Jephcott, with T. Tertius Noble, William E. Zeuch, Channing Lefebvre, and Thomas Matthews at the Skinner organ. The next morning's offerings included N. Lindsay Norden speaking on just intonation in a cappella music, and a choral demonstration by Hugh Ross and Thompson Stone. Charlotte Klein and Paul Callaway shared a recital on the Skinner organ of St. Thomas Church before a symposium on Hebrew, Byzantine, Gregorian, and Russian music took place in the auditorium of the Juilliard School; a postlude was played on the Casavant organ by a young Englishman, E. Power Biggs. A junior choir festival involving 900 children followed at the Riverside Church, with conductors Walter Henry Hall, Ralph A. Harris, and Herbert Stavely Sammond, and accompanists Harold Vincent Milligan and James Philip Johnston. A national radio broadcast from Radio City featured the NBC Symphony Orchestra in works by T. Tertius Noble, Seth Bingham, Philip James, and Leo Sowerby, with the composers conducting.

A round-table discussion of "Practical Problems of the Organist" occupied the next morning, prior to a recital by Clarence Mader and Charles Heinroth at the College of the City of New York (Skinner). Afternoon tours of Rockefeller Center and tea on the 47th floor of the RCA Building preceded a service for mixed choirs at St. Bartholomew's Church under the direction of David McK. Williams, with Hugh Porter playing the organ (Skinner). The final day of the convention began with a business meeting, followed by a panel discussion of "New Features of Organ Design," moderated by Emerson Richards, with J.B. Jamison and Ernest M. Skinner as speakers (the 50th anniversary of Skinner's organbuilding work was noted). A joint recital at Temple Emanu-El (Casavant) was played by Charles Courboin and Virgil Fox, a young organist then residing in Hanover, Pa. A concert of music for organ and instruments followed at St. George's Church, with George W. Volkel at the large Austin. The closing banquet at the Astor included songs by the Downtowners Quartet and addresses by AGO Warden Charles Henry Doersam and Mayor Fiorello La Guardia.

In addition to photographs of the main venues, the program book included such unusual lists as "Great Events in the History of Music" (starting with choral director Chenaniah in 1055 B.C.), "Ages of Musicians Living in 1935" (Charles-Marie Widor led the way at age 90), and "Longevity of Famous Musicians" (Manuel Garcia the Younger headed this category at age 101).

A delegation from Pittsburgh was successful in New York at winning the bid for the following year, and the 1936 convention took place in the Pennsylvania city, June 22–26, with something over 500 attending. The opening string ensemble concert at Carnegie Music Hall featured works of Mozart, Roussel, Chavarri, and Bach, conducted by Oscar Del Blanco. Organ recitalists were Marshall Bidwell, Francis W. Snow, and Winslow Cheney at Carnegie Music Hall; Greenhouse Allt at the Third Presbyterian Church; Dora Poteet and E. Carroll McKinstry at East Liberty Presbyterian Church; Ethel Sleeper Brett at the Church of the Ascension; Parvin Titus, also at Carnegie Music Hall, playing the Reubke Sonata in conjunction with Caspar Koch's lecture on it; and Claude L. Murphree at Calvary Church. Except for the Moller at Calvary, all these locations housed Aeolian-Skinner organs. As in New York, there was considerable emphasis on choral music. In addition to a symposium on choir training, choral presentations included Bloch's *Sacred Service* at Rodef Shalom Temple, sung by the Y.M. & W.H.A. Choral Society; Bach's *Mass in B Minor* at Carnegie Music Hall, sung by the Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh; a public school address and concert at Carnegie Music Hall; a madrigal program and Reger's *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunder* by the Madrigal Choir of Carnegie Institute of Technology; and a program by the A Cappella Choir of Allegheny College. In addition to the annual Guild service at East Liberty Presbyterian Church, Sacred Heart Church was the location for Solemn Vespers and Benediction. Albert Riemenschneider gave a lecture-recital on Bach interpretation, and Caspar Koch chaired a discussion on "Present Trends in Organ Building."

Cincinnati, Ohio, was the site of the 1937 convention, held June 14–17. Issues of the day were confronted in the first event, a demonstration by John Hammond of the Hammond electronic instrument and by George Y. Wilson of the Holtkamp organ at St. John's Catholic Church, across the Ohio River (which had flooded a few months earlier) in Covington, Kentucky. A chamber music concert at the headquarters Hotel Netherland Plaza followed, performed by the Cincinnati String Quartet and the Cincinnati Madrigal Singers. The same quartet joined Arthur Croley playing a three-stop Holtkamp portativ the next morning for concertos by Handel and Schiassi. Healey Willan delivered a paper on the history and development of the use of the organ. Clarence Watters was the recitalist on the Casavant at Christ Church; his program came only two weeks after the death of Vierne and included excerpts from that master's Second Symphony. Christ Church was also the location of the evening convention service that featured the singing of Dupré's *De Profundis*, Op. 18, directed by Parvin Titus.

The second day saw Mark Andrews give a paper on "The Why and How of Guild Examinations," followed by Alexander Schreiner's recital on the four-manual Austin at Covenant-First Presbyterian Church, Helen (Mrs. Clarence) Dickinson's presentation on "Service Planning and Play-

ing," and John Challis playing a harpsichord and clavichord he had built. At the Music Hall, Julian R. Williams, Robert Noehren, Catharine Crozier, and Kenneth R. Osborne played a program of music for two organs (Gigout, Bach, Karg-Elert, Widor), and Miss Crozier was soloist in the Hindemith Concerto, Op. 46, No. 2, for which she was accorded much praise, despite the fact that the music was "very modern." The organs were the hall's four-manual Hook and Hastings-Austin and a Moller diapason chorus installed for the occasion under the direction of Richard O. Whitelegg. The next morning's Solemn High Mass at St. Lawrence Church, with music directed by organist-choirmaster Alfred Schehl, was followed by a recital by Paul Callaway on the Hook and Hastings, where the chief work was Widor's *Symphonie Gothique*. Afternoon forums were devoted to "Tone Production in Boy Choirs" (Harold E. Tower), "Organ Recitals, Planned and Unplanned" (Rowland W. Dunham), and "Volunteer Choir Problems" (Franklin Glynn). Alexander McCurdy's recital at the Music Hall was succeeded by the closing banquet.

The 18th AGO convention, which took place in Philadelphia, June 19–23, 1939, was entitled the "First National Biennial Convention", signaling the new schedule still followed at the close of the century. More than 400 members attended the second convention in the City of Brotherly Love.

E. Power Biggs, playing music of Bach, Handel, Daquin, and Dupré, and Ernest White, performing works of Langlais, Alain, Hindemith, and Messiaen, gave the opening recital at St. Mark's Church (Aeolian-Skinner), and Lillian Carpenter played a program broadcast on radio station WFIL (Kilgen). The first full day included discussions of Guild policies, a welcome lunch (for women only!), Edwin Arthur Kraft's recital of contemporary organ music (Candlyn, Read, Whitlock, Sowerby, Bedell, Edmundson, Weitz, Commette, and Duruflé) at First (Calvary) Presbyterian Church (Casavant), a recital by Mary Ann Mathewson at Convention Hall (including duets—Beethoven "Ruins of Athens" march and Wagner "Ride of the Valkyries"—arranged by Clarence Dickinson and played with Russell Wichmann on the large four-manual Moller), and a second WFIL radio broadcast by John Klein. The next day featured Edward Twitmyer's address on "Can Our Attitudes Toward the Appreciation of Music Be Improved?," lunch at the Presser Home for Retired Musicians, Claire Coci's recital on the four-manual Kimball at the Second Baptist Church, and Virgil Fox's program at the Wanamaker Store, including Middelschulte's *Perpetuum Mobile* (Mr. Fox was already referred to as a "youthful wizard"). The day concluded with a program at Irvine Auditorium presented by the Federal Music Project of the WPA: orchestral music (Brahms, Wagner), a festival chorus (Nagle, Brahms, Holst, Andrews, Banks), and Harold Heeremans playing the large Austin in George Frederick McKay's *Sonata for Organ*, which was awarded the Diapason Prize of \$200; William S. Nagle's anthem, "Who Are These Like Stars Appearing," won the \$100 H.W. Gray Prize. Mario Salvador



Virgil Fox

played the next radio broadcast. Round-table discussions occupied the next morning, after which Ralph P. Lewars directed a demonstration recital by his students at the Pennsylvania Institute for the Instruction of the Blind (Moller), and Albin McDermott played the Moller at the Chapel of the College of Chestnut Hill, where choral works were also performed under the direction of Sister Regina Dolores. Following dinner, Mario Salvador played the new Wicks "Amplitone" of four amplified ranks, and Russell Wichmann played the final WFIL broadcast.

The concluding day was devoted to a business meeting, a discussion of contemporary organbuilding (led by William H. Barnes, with contributions by Ernest M. Skinner, Arthur Howes, and others), and three recitals by Charlotte Klein: on the two-manual Aeolian-Skinner at St. Mary's Church (Bach, Bairstow, Whitlock, Harris), on the Estey at Cynwyd Methodist Church (Franck, Bingham, Edmundson, Messiaen, Karg-Elert), and on the Moller at St. John's Church, Cynwyd (Gulbins, Rowley, Mulet), with bus transportation furnished by the three builders. The closing concert on the 100-stop ceiling-mounted Skinner at Girard College filled the chapel's 2,400 seats and included a recital by Francis W. Snow and choral works under the direction of Harold Wells Gilbert.

When the decade of the 1930s ended, the American Guild of Organists had held a total of 17 national conventions in 14 different cities, ranging from Boston to Chicago and from Buffalo to Memphis. It had merged with the National Association of Organists, thus ending competition for membership and meeting times—the Rochester convention's mock wedding was a portent of the future. Yet to come were any conventions west of the Mississippi or in the deep South, ones lasting more than the inside of a week, or ones attracting more than a thousand registrants. After beginning sporadically with midwinter dates, an annual pattern had been established for early summer times. Biennial meetings began just before the outbreak of World War II and would be re-established following the war.

(Photos courtesy of Arthur Lawrence.)

AGO NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

- 1914 New York, N.Y.
- 1917 New York, N.Y.
- 1920 Oberlin, Ohio
- 1925 Chicago, Ill.
- 1926 Buffalo, N.Y.
- 1927 Washington, D.C.
- 1928 Detroit, Mich.
- 1929 Memphis, Tenn.
- 1930 Philadelphia, Pa.
- 1931 Indianapolis, Ind.
- 1932 Boston, Mass.
- 1933 Cleveland, Ohio
- 1934 Rochester, N.Y.
- 1935 New York, N.Y.
- 1936 Pittsburgh, Pa.
- 1937 Cincinnati, Ohio
- 1939 Philadelphia, Pa.
- 1941 Washington, D.C.
- 1948 St. Louis, Mo.
- 1950 Boston, Mass.
- 1952 San Francisco, Calif.
- 1954 Twin Cities, Minn.
- 1956 New York, N.Y.
- 1958 Houston, Tex.
- 1960 Detroit, Mich.
- 1962 Los Angeles, Calif.
- 1964 Philadelphia, Pa.
- 1966 Atlanta, Ga.
- 1968 Denver, Colo.
- 1970 Buffalo, N.Y.
- 1972 Dallas, Tex.
- 1974 Cleveland, Ohio
- 1976 Boston, Mass.
- 1978 Seattle, Wash.
- 1980 Twin Cities, Minn.
- 1982 Washington, D.C.
- 1984 San Francisco, Calif.
- 1986 Detroit, Mich.
- 1988 Houston, Tex.
- 1990 Boston, Mass.
- 1992 Atlanta, Ga.
- 1994 Dallas, Tex.
- 1996 New York, N.Y.

The July 1996 Centennial Convention in New York City will be the 43rd national convention of the American Guild of Organists. In sponsoring it, the New York City Chapter will have hosted the largest number of gatherings in any city, with five conventions (1914, 1917, 1935, 1956, and 1996). Other chapters who have held more than one national convention are Atlanta (2), Boston (4), Buffalo (2), Cleveland (2), Dallas (2), Detroit (3), Houston (2), Philadelphia (3), San Francisco (2), Twin Cities (2), and Washington (3).