

Raising the Raisin Organ by Susan Ferré – February 2006

The Legend

The Raisin organ was purchased from a Mrs. Fred Sandhop for \$25 in 1958 by Rubin S. Frels, who found the old organ at the top of the stairs of what had been a stagecoach inn in the small burg of Raisin, population 50, near Victoria, Texas. Its pipes lay smashed, crushed in the bottom of the fauxbois case. Light from a nearby window had faded portions of the fake wood finish, and the damp South Texas attic environment had ravished its metal pipes, the bellows and wood.

It had arrived in Texas in the 1850's with a Lutheran pastor from Switzerland, and had served the Trinity Lutheran Church of Victoria from the 1850's until 1884 when it was replaced by William Schuelke's Opus 33 and put in storage. It appears to have been, and may still be, the oldest extant organ to have served the early German pioneers of Texas. Housed in this stone way-station near Raisin, located between historic Goliad and thriving Victoria eight miles to the north, mud-daubers, rats and mice quietly ate away at the organ for almost 75 years before it was rescued and restored by Rubin Frels. The work was carried out by Susan Tattershall in 1980, due in large part to the urging and with the help of our dearly departed Ted W. Blankenship, Jr., then an employee in the Frels shop.

The organ was purchased in 1991 by Charles Lang and the author, again with the urging of Ted Blankenship, who helped move it from Rubin Frels' living room to a home in Garland, near Dallas. It is now on display at the Mesquite Arts Center, a suburb east of Dallas, placed there in the fall of 1999 on permanent loan and where it is played from time to time to the delight of invited guests, as well as for the occasional concertgoer.

The ³oldest extant² Texas organ?

If one does not count possible organs or organ-like instruments (regals, small portatives, panpipes) which were likely a part of music-making in the Spanish missions near San Antonio, East Texas and El Paso, perhaps a large exception, the Raisin organ is the oldest organ to have served the early settlers and which is still in its original, well, ³original² to its Texas prairie, condition. Evidence suggests that it was already an old organ when it arrived by boat from Switzerland in the 1850's.

We do have reports of some slightly earlier organs, such as the 1848 organ in Galveston's Cathedral, but these organs have not survived intact. Since the 1980's other historic organs have arrived in Texas, four of them now located at Festival Hill in Round Top, including a 9-stop Henry Erben from 1835, a gift from Ted Blankenship, an 1830's English chamber organ, a gift from Charles Lang and this author, Johann Traugott Wandke's first organ (3 stops, 1863), formerly owned by Otto Hofmann, and the large

19th century Mohr/House organ with its intriguing Germanic history, originally from St. Mary's Buffalo, NY, now in storage there, owned by Rubin Frels.

The next oldest extant organs were built by the German organ builder, Johann Traugott Wandke, also an early pioneer whose stone house and shop still grace the small town of Round Top, population 89, located in the lush South Texas German farm belt. He built seven organs, three of which are extant: the one listed above, another now housed in the Sophienburg Museum in New Braunfels, and third one, the most famous, being a gift for his own church in Round Top, Bethlehem Lutheran Church, finished in 1867. These and his work are well documented in a fascinating book highlighting this pioneer German immigrant, entitled,² *A German Organbuilder on the Texas Frontier: The Life and Work of Johann Traugott Wandke*,² published by the Boston Organ Club, authored by Gerald D. Frank. 1

Dallas also welcomed the addition of a 1762 chamber organ built by Pascoal Caetano (Oldovini), originally from Evora Cathedral, now singing forth in the galleries of the Meadows Museum at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, joining the largest collection of Spanish art outside of Spain. Since we don't know the exact origins of the Raisin organ, we can't know for certain which is older, but we do know that the Raisin organ served Texas settlements in the 19th century and survives intact to entice us with its story.

The Germanic influence and origins

German is still spoken in S. Texas in these regions where the organs figure prominently, so the links and the influences are quite formidable. One article on just one of these organs won't do the subject justice, but will serve to point to a larger pattern of influence.

This little organ is now referred to as the ³Raisin² organ because it was found thanks in part to an article which appeared in the local newspaper, the ³Victoria Advocate,² alerting Rubin Frels ³to the existence in Raisin of an old stagecoach way station, a stone building in which for many years an organ had been standing at the top of the stairs.² 2 Raisin, Texas, is a town located on U.S. Highway 59 eight miles southwest of Victoria. Established in 1889 as a stop on the Gulf, Western Texas and Pacific Railway line from Victoria to Goliad and Beeville, the railway company called the station ³Lucy,² but the postal department insisted on a more distinctive name. When the local post office opened in 1892, the name ³Raisin² was chosen in honor of rancher J. K. Reeves' efforts at growing grapes. The new town grew quickly, surpassing the nearby German settlement of Coletoville. In Raisin, C. G. T. Friedrichs, the first postmaster, built a gin, and Otto Kohl, the Wells Fargo agent, built a large general store and residence.

Kohl, who emigrated from Germany in 1880 and lived in Yorktown and Germantown (later named Schroeder), also organized the local Sons of Hermann lodge and remained its

secretary for forty-three years. He was postmaster from 1901 until 1914, when the office was closed upon the beginning of rural free delivery.... 3

A caption under a photo of Otto Kohl's General Store, Raisin, TX 1900, reads, ³In 1904 Kohl was appointed to deal with folk singing, festivals, and gymnastics. He did much to instill in his own children, as well as many others, love for the traditional German celebrations, particularly the beautiful Christmas dramas.^{2 3}...for decades shortly before and after the Civil War, young German immigrants poured into this area, which in appearance was so much like their homeland across the Atlantic.^{2 4}

Meanwhile, Coletoville, near Coletto Creek Reservoir, ten miles west of Victoria, was known in its early days as Steiner's Settlement, after Carl Steiner, who arrived from Germany in 1850..... The Coletto Creek valley communities were part of the large area of German settlements in Victoria, DeWitt, and Goliad counties, which also included Schroeder (Germantown), Arneckeville, Meyersville, and Yorktown. Steiner's Settlement produced 2,000 gallons of wine from the local wild Mustang grapes in 1860 alone. The Old Goliad Road, which carried Victoria-Goliad traffic through Coletoville, contributed to the town's early growth. The community had a store, a school, and the Coletto Schuetzen Verein (shooting club), as well as a Gesangverein (singing club) established in 1854, a Lutheran church founded in 1872, and a post office established in 1875. Trustees paid four dollars for the two-acre church site, upon which they also established a community cemetery without burial restrictions regarding creed and where most early Coletoville settlers are buried.

Coletoville was one of the few German settlements that failed to prosper, however. The post office was closed in 1877, and the store was closed by 1884. The Gulf, Western Texas and Pacific Railway, as we mentioned, established a stop five miles away at Raisin in 1889, and the Goliad-Victoria road missed the community. So Raisin emerged as the new business center. The combined population of the two settlements (Raisin-Coletoville) remained about fifty from the early 1900's to 1986, when most residents were descendants of the original pioneers. The rural school served the area into the 1940's, and the church was still active in 1986. 5

In a larger context, music of virtually every Western genre flourished in Texas, from before the advent of Europeans through the times of colonization, settlement, and revolution, until the present. In addition to the music of indigenous cultures, music brought to the missions through the Catholic church, and early influences of European music from French settlers in nearby Louisiana territory, by the 1830's Anglo-Americans introduced music from the eastern states, especially songs and instruments, including pianos.... Sacred music societies were organized in several towns. Bishop Jean Marie Odin had an organ built for his cathedral in Galveston in 1848.

³Music instruction was introduced into the public schools of Galveston in 1845, and most private schools offered music instruction to girls, but no marked progress was made in teaching music, except among the Germans....² 6

Beginning about 1845, the greatest contributors to musical development were the Germans, whose first singing society was organized at New Braunfels (west of Victoria, toward San Antonio) in 1850. Beginning in 1853 the Germans of Texas held biennial singing festivals, and after 1877 they imported an orchestra and soloists who were later replaced by their own local musicians.

Colonies of French and Swiss also included musicians. Among those who settled near Dallas, and among Hispanics, singing and dancing to stringed orchestras was common in the homes and on the plazas. The German music centers were the beer gardens. At the Casino Club in San Antonio and the Turnverein Hall in Austin, and later at the Scholz Garten under the direction of William Besserer, there were operettas and choral productions. Local bands, sometimes military, played in the larger communities before 1850, and by 1900 most of the towns had bands. ⁷ Texas is still known for its outstanding bands.

The 1860 census revealed that Victoria County was notably cosmopolitan in the makeup of its population. The foreign-born were predominately German, as there were 551 inhabitants of German origin, and their influence on the life and culture of the little town had been extremely beneficial. They supplied many of the artisans of the building trades, and also contributed a great deal to the educational facilities, the social graces, appreciation of music and the like. Next in ethnic background were Africans, with about 500; then came the French (mainly from Alsace-Lorraine) with 93 inhabitants; followed by 78 from Mexico; 30 of Polish origin; 26 Irish; 18 English; 15 Swiss, and so on down the line for the 11 ³others.²⁸

A photo of Hauschild's Music Store, est. in 1891, located on the lower floor of the theatre building and opera house in Victoria, shows at least one, and perhaps two more, pipe organs (or orchestreons) for sale at the back of the floor, behind a dozen or so pianos. ⁹

So it is not surprising that this area, where one still hears ³low² German spoken in the local grocery stores, and which is famous for its beer and wine, would also produce the first organs, first organ builders, and first organ culture in Texas. In fact, it may have been a bit of competition which drove or inspired the Swiss cabinetmaker, Adam Sager, the missionary-pastor who brought the organ with him, to enlarge or at least try to improve the Raisin organ. But we are getting ahead of the story.

The Raisin Organ and its provenance

Manual compass C 1 - f 54

Gedackt 8¹ wood

Suavial 8¹ open wood Middle C up (a right-hand half-stop) Praestant 4¹ wood and tin

Quint 2 2/3¹ open wood Octave 2¹ tin

Pedal compass: C 1 - B 12

Bass 8¹ open wood, narrow scale, 12 pipes (a later addition, 1860-1870?)

Hand pumped

The organ of pine, oak and walnut stands eight and a half feet tall and is four feet wide. According to a news article featuring the find in 1980,

By the time Frels purchased the organ, it was in a very bad state of repair. Pipes were bent, tops were missing from stops, and hinges to the two front doors had to be replaced~in addition to the fact that much of the instrument was worn out and decayed.....Tattershall has worked for almost eight months...repairing the pipes and other interior parts, cleaning and replacing gold leaf on the ornate pipeshades.¹⁰

Susan Tattershall, who had studied and worked in Switzerland and Italy, also added new hinges, identical to the old ones, fashioned by the Hummel Blacksmith shop in Victoria, and Ann Sciba of the Open Door Creativity Center was charged with making porcelain tops for the stops.

It was known ³from personal accounts² that the organ had served as the first instrument in the Evangelisch-lutherischen Friedens Kirche, now Trinity Lutheran Church, in Victoria, Texas. According to the records of the synod, the organ had been sent as a gift from the Pilgermission zur St. Chrischona, Switzerland. This organization, an offshoot of the Deutsche Christentumsgesellschaft, had served as the seminary and training school for many of the early pastors, sent to immigrant churches not only in Texas, but around the world. By the end of the nineteenth century seventy-seven pastors had been sent from the Pilgrim's Mission of St. Chrischona to Lutheran churches in Texas, including, by the way, Bethlehem Lutheran in Round Top.

One of the first graduates of St. Chrischona to be sent to Texas, the one connected with the Raisin organ, was Christoph Adam Sager, born in Wuertemberg, Germany, in 1826. In the fall of 1850, at the age of 24, Sager landed at Galveston on his journey to Victoria, Texas. Sager remained only a short time in Victoria before being asked to serve as Pastor of the newly formed St. Johannis Kirche at Meyersville, one of the German communities in the Coletto Creek valley, sixteen miles northwest of Victoria. Five years later, in 1855, Sager returned to the Victoria area, and, according to the records of the synod, remained there four more years until 1859. Trinity Lutheran Church records speak of him as having been their ³provisional² pastor for several periods during this time.¹¹

It is likewise in the 1850's that the organ is most likely to have come to Trinity Church, Victoria, although no church record indicates this precisely. According to the bill of lading the organ landed first in Galveston and then in the old, now defunct, southern port of Indianola where it was transported by land to Victoria. One important archival source from the records of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church in nearby Meyersville mentions the organ and its connection to Pastor Sager. The Kirchen Chronick compiled in 1860 contains the minutes of the ninth meeting of the synodical convention held from May 12-15, 1859, at Meyersville, in which the statement is noted that ³Pastor Sager had brought along his organ from Victoria for the expressed delight of congregational singing.²
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After 1860 the records show Adam Sager to be at various settlements along the Coletto Creek valley, in the Meyersville area. In 1868 he again filled a temporary preaching vacancy at St. John's Church, Meyersville. According to his family, he had built a home near Meyersville in order to turn to a more lucrative trade as carpenter and cabinet maker. Nevertheless, he continued as circuit preacher, traveling when and where he was needed in the area during the 1860's. In St. John's old stone church building, erected in 1867, there is a storage chest made by Adam Sager in which, according to his descendants, he carried his books and materials whenever he traveled from place to place to preach.¹³

The fact that he was by trade a carpenter and cabinet maker serves at least as circumstantial evidence connecting Sager with possible improvements and repairs made to the Raisin organ, for it appears that it may have been he who enlarged the organ. A comparison between the woodworking techniques and materials used on the storage chest and on the Raisin organ could shed more light on this question. Adam Sager died in 1869 at the young age of 42 or 43.

Some members at Trinity Church insist that the Raisin organ was ³the second instrument of the Church.²¹⁴ A more plausible scenario suggests that after Sager moved the organ to Meyersville for the synod convention in 1859, he kept the organ in his home nearby in order to carry out ³major repairs.² The physical evidence indicates that the 8¹ open wood pedal stop of twelve notes was probably added at this time, since the pine wood used does not match the case wood, according to David Westerholm, nor does the quality match the original case. In any case, many have conjectured that this ³crude addition² is most likely the work of Adam Sager.

In order to add the twelve pedal notes (the independent open wood of 8¹), a pedal board had to be added to the front of the case, a second bellows added inside, and other major adjustments crafted to make it all fit together. It is logical to conclude that Sager (or someone) painted the entire case at this time, giving it its brand new fauxbois appearance, fashionable for a ³prairie² church(?). By the time the organ was returned to Trinity Church some time later, it would not have been recognized as the same instrument, having gained in stature, with the addition of the pedalboard, new casework and large wooden pipes,

complete with added 4¹ x 4¹ platform, and repainted case, now appearing to be of wood. The bellows foot lever, would have had to be moved from front to side, as was indeed the fact, now necessitating a pumper and a new handle. Also a substantially higher stool would then have been necessary in order to play it. How could they have recognized it as the same organ?

The independent pedal notes as played today are barely audible, supporting perhaps only the 8¹ Gedackt on the manuals. It is inadequate to supply the bass for any of the other combinations of sound. As there are no pedal pull-downs, no coupler, the ³new² crudely-made pedal is simply a curious addition, and a hog for wind. It is a minor point that there is also no literature or model for improvisation that would have justified this kind of enlargement. The only possible explanation for a use of this pedal might have been that Sager (or someone) was hoping that the pedal notes could be made to sound strong enough to sustain a bass note while elaborations during the obligatory fermatas were taking place between the phrases. We know from Wandke's own chorale book that the practice was to ³fill in² these long spaces between phrases with improvisations or elaborations. In the case of Wandke's chorale book, many of these are written out, giving us a clear example of the actual practice. Tempos in these Lutheran churches are still to this day exceedingly slow when it comes to singing of the old German chorales. These congregations certainly don't need their organs to lead the singing! But we digress.....

What could possibly have inspired Sager (or someone else) to make this unhappy, unlikely, and unsuccessful addition to an organ which had been noted to have successfully led (to their ³expressed delight²) the congregational singing?² Had there existed pressures from Trinity Lutheran to enlarge the organ? After all, they did replace the organ within fifteen years, albeit with an organ not that much larger, and with at least one less high-pitched stop. The new instrument, built by William Schuelke of Milwaukee in 1884 (Opus 33), which according to the records cost \$800, was also a one-manual instrument with pedal with the following specification: Pedal: 16¹ Subbass; Manual: 8¹ Principal, 8¹ Lieblich Gedackt, 8¹ Gamba, 4¹ Harmonic Flute (an open flute, not harmonic), 4¹ Violine, and 2¹ Octave. ¹⁵ The new organ did possess a pedal coupler, a bellows signal, marked ³Calcant,² two mechanical combinations, and a keyboard compass of fifty-eight notes, all useful changes. Taken together with the addition of a principal 8¹ and a real pedal Subbass, this new organ must have seemed quite an improvement.

Or, had Sager (or someone) perhaps even known of, or at least heard of the work of Johann Traugott Wandke, a knowledgeable organbuilder, who had arrived in Texas with copied portions of Adlung and who was making pipes, all the pipes of the Bethlehem Lutheran, Round Top church organ, entirely of cedar?¹⁶ This seems unlikely, though, unless by chance Wandke had attended the convention in Meyersville in 1859, the one at which Sager had brought his organ for the ³delight of congregational singing.² Wandke had arrived in the area of La Grange by 1855, but would not have built his home in Round Top until around 1863. ¹⁷ Round Top is due north of Victoria,

through Schulenburg, Swiss Alp, and La Grange, about 75 miles. It is sheer conjecture to imagine that their paths might have crossed at the convention in 1859. Still, others may have spread the news and the influence was felt more indirectly.

Perhaps the little organ was already subjected to the effects of the hot, humid environs and its keys began to stick. The keyboard sticks even now.

During the restoration Susan Tattershall found ³some interesting old papers² which had been used in the back of the case to cover cracks in the bellows. One of the papers was an order list from Praeger and Co. general store in Victoria, for example, and there were circulars, grocery bills, sketches, first drafts of letters in both German and English, bits of newspaper clippings in German, English, and French, drawings, and one bill of lading. There was a bill for carpentry work on a cross for an unspecified church. Another note, addressed to the sister of a convent, asks whether there might be an available cabinet maker in the Catholic Church. Yet another note demands payment for some CE mean devilment you did in the room above the theater.¹ Some of the papers are dated, none earlier than 1859, and one carries the late date of January 22, 1870, providing some evidence that work or repair may have been carried out after Sager's death.

It is conceivable that the entire addition was accomplished AFTER Sager's death by ³someone² wanting to update or expand the little organ, but without any expertise at all. The lone paper with the later date of 1870 could lead one to imagine that the instrument fell into the hands of ³someone² not quite as respectful or as knowledgeable about organs as Sager had been. After all, Sager did presumably bring the organ all the way from Switzerland, guided it safely, moving it on at least one occasion, which was successful enough to have been mentioned favorably, and would have had little motivation in repainting or enlarging it—especially to its detriment. Even though members of the church described two different organs (we guess, two descriptions of the same organ before and after its transformation), they did not mention a time frame for these. Again, a look at the woodworking techniques used on the organ's addition and on Sager's storage chest might answer this question.

A draft of a letter in German script, which according to David Westerholm appears to be in the handwriting of Adam Sager, is of particular interest, as the content of the letter urges a brother to immigrate to Texas along with his aging mother and a sister. This is precisely what occurred in Sager's family during the early 1860's. A letter which Sager had written to his parents a few days prior to his own departure from Switzerland offers a good opportunity for comparison and according to Westerholm ³can be found on display in the old stone church in Meyersville.²¹⁷

What can the organ tell us of its provenance? If artifacts bear witness to a particular point in time, perhaps they can also describe an earlier history, if we pay close attention. The

following description of the Raisin organ was made by David Westerholm in consultation with Susan Tattershall and Ted Blankenship when the restoration project was first begun:

The dimensions of the original case were 6¹ 3² in height, 1¹ 11² in depth-the keyboard extending another 5²-and 3¹ 11 3/4² in width. The case was made of pine and had been originally painted a blueish-green and a rusty barn red, easily seen at the keyboard cheeks and at other places where the fauxbois paint barely covers. The pipe shades were constructed of gilded cardboard.

The majority of the wooden pipes are of oak. The metal used is of an inconsistent high tin content, with a rustic, antique quality. The first eleven pipes of the 4¹ Praestant are of open wood; the next twenty-five are divided into the five flats of the facade. Sitting on top of the toeboard, the facade pipes are arranged on an upright facade board fitted with grooved-and-paper tubings. The last eighteen pipes of the 4¹ Praestant are located on the chest and appear more crudely made. The Octave 2¹, also labeled Doublette, is made entirely of metal, and sits tightly crowded on the chest. Most of the metal pipes had been squashed flat.

Of the Gedackt 8¹ some pipes required reconstruction. The lowest twenty-four pipes are of pine, while the rest are of oak. There is evidence on the toeboard that the Quint 2 2/3¹ was possibly a 4¹ Flute at one time.

The most significant change was in the Suavial. The original stop on the organ was a full compass stop as evidenced by the holes on the chest which had been simply covered over with leather, and the slider cut off. Evidently this stop had originally been at a pitch higher than 2¹. This leads one to suspect that the chest was from an even older organ.*** The Suavial could have been Swiss or South German in origin, the pre-Texas organ having been built around an old chest. The present order of the stops on the chest from back to front is: 8¹ Gedackt, 2 2/3¹ Quint, 8¹ Suavial, 2¹ Octave, and 4¹ Praestant.

The finish on the keyboard proved to be distinctive, as the red colored wood, although unidentifiable, had been stained with a deeply penetrating stain, one which Susan Tattershall related as being normal in Austria and Switzerland. The keyboard itself is curious in that an iron pin passes through the back end of the key, thus acting as a hinge. There are little paper rings on the rods which require treatment with graphite in order to keep from sticking. The keyboard sits on top of the front part of the chest. The stickers are located directly in line with the end of the sharps, so that the keys depress the pallets, which are located just underneath the keyboard, making adjustments difficult. It is therefore a key-scaled chest, except for four notes.

The previous reservoir (before the 19th century enlargement) consisted of a single cuneiform feeder bellows, which fit well in the confines of the original case....

The windchest is a grid-type slider chest in which, instead of a table, small pieces of wood (³sponsels²) are inlaid between the chest bars (see note). In German this construction is known as ³gespundete Laden,² (sic) 18 a grooved chest.... The chest frame is made of oak, as are the grid bars.... The bottom side of the chest is covered in leather, while the top side of the chest is covered in sheepskin. 19

The Swiss Connection

Susan Tattershall found certain similarities to instruments of South German and Northern Swiss origin which were built at the close of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. Especially in the Toggenburg area of northeast Switzerland (four districts of the Upper Thur River Valley in St. Gall canton) where many small house organs intermingled influences of French, German and Italian origin. These instruments, as exemplified by the work of Heinrich Amman and Joseph Looser (1749-1826) 20 display a remarkable degree of uniformity. All are one-manual instruments which generally have a keyboard compass of four octaves, and which have a rather standardized specification of: Koppel 8¹, Flote 4¹, Quinte 2 2/3¹, Principal 2¹, and Superoctave 1¹. Some instruments have two 4¹ flutes, namely, a Blockflout and a Copula minor, and some have three 4¹ stops; ie., a 4¹ Principal in addition to two 4¹ flutes. 21

For winding, a cuneiform feeder-type bellows fit underneath the chest and was operated by a lever which came out of the middle of the front panel beneath the keydesk in order to be controlled by the right foot of the player, as had been the *modus operandi* of the Raisin organ. Although the facade and pipe doors were painted ornately, the layout of the pipes in the facade remained relatively simple in that all the pipe mouths were on the same level, unlike the facade of the Raisin. Many of these instruments are traceable throughout the world, according to information given by Guy Bovet. 22

One such organ has come to the National Music Museum in Vermillion, South Dakota, the playing of which and comparison to the Raisin organ inspired this present article.

The house organ by Josef Looßer, Lüppfertswil, Gemeind Cappel, St. Gall, Switzerland, 1786 (NMM 4897, purchase funds gift of Margaret Ann and Hubert H. Everist, Sioux City, Iowa, 1990) represents a fascinating local tradition. In the middle of the eighteenth century in the Toggenburg Valley of northeastern Switzerland, Wendelin Looßer (1720-1790) began to make organs. Although documents concerning Looßer had previously referred to him as a cabinetmaker, the quality of his work indicates that he had received professional training as an organ builder, and he passed this art on to his son Josef (1749-1822).

Josef Looßer, who held several local offices, including that of bailiff, made at least one 18-rank church organ, but, like his father, he was mainly a prolific builder of house organs. With cases painted in the charming traditional Toggenburg style - which serves to distinguish these instruments from the similar organs made not far away in the Appenzell

Valley - these could have as few as two stops, but they usually conformed to a standard five-stop disposition. The Museum's example, one of the very few Toggenburg organs outside of Switzerland, where they are deemed national treasures, is an exceptionally large model, having a 4¹ Principal in addition to the standard five stops. The disposition is:

| | | |
|--------------|--------------------|---|
| Copel | 8 ¹ | (stopped wood) |
| Principal | 4 ¹ | (metal, A# to e2 in the façade; wooden pipes in the bass) |
| Flöten | 4 ¹ | (open wood; C to b stopped) |
| Occlav | 2 ¹ | (metal, with wooden pipes in the bass) |
| Quint | 1 2/3 ¹ | (metal, with wooden pipes in the bass) |
| Subterocclav | 1 ¹ | (metal, with wooden pipes in the bass) |

The compass is C to c3 (49 notes).

An old photograph shows a similar six-stop instrument in a bedroom in the large house where Josef Looßer had lived. Mid-nineteenth-century manuscript music books from the region suggest what was played on these house organs: psalms, chorales, and sacred songs, as one might expect but also dances and arrangements of operatic airs. 23

By way of quick comparison to the Raisin organ, all the pipes of the Looser organ, replies John Koster, ³are of softwood (ie., presumably spruce), likewise the case and windchest, etc. The only hardwood pieces I could see, the stickers between the keys and pallets and the stop levers, are beech. No oak. Both sides of the grid are filled with CEsponsels¹ (the term I think Dirk Flentrop introduced into English with his articles on the Zwolle restoration), not a plain table on top, so at least that corresponds.²

A visit to a Swiss web site, entitled, ³Restoration of the 1786 Toggenburger House Organ By Josef Looser now at the Shrine to Music Museum in Vermillion South Dakota USA,² reveals this further information:

The organ was restored by Edward Bennett in 1988. The evidence for its date and maker is characteristically on a piece of paper at the back of the pallet box: Durch Joseph Looßer Orglen Macher Von Luppertsweil in der Gemeind Cappel in Toggenburg 1786

The pitch is slightly less than a semitone below A=440. The tuning is a slight variant of Kirnberger III, according to internal evidence and the experience of Friedrich Jakob of Orgelbau Th. Kuhn. In the circle of fifths, c-g-d-a-e are 1¼ comma narrow, and the rest are pure.

The winding is by foot pedal, which operates a single-fold feeder, filling a two-fold wedge reservoir, The wind pressure is 45 mm, at the lower end of the range that are to be found in Toggenburger organs.

The casework is pine, painted in the characteristic vernacular style of the region, still in use today, a free rococo with stylized flowers. There are fine gilded pierced carvings around the pipe tops and the cornices, which are marbled, rather crudely but effectively. The only significant decoration to the pipes is a highly elaborate pattern, with initials and date, scratched on the central pipe. 24

The similarities between the Raisin organ and the organs of the Toggenburg are intriguing, but certainly not decisive or conclusive, as differences abound, not only in the materials, but in the lack of signatures on the case or pipework, in the specification itself (with the presence of the Suavial, but acknowledging that the Quint might have originally been a 4¹ flute, as the toeboard suggests), and without mention of a decorative painted case in anyone's memory. Surely an organ painted in the manner of the Looser would have been remembered, unless it had been repainted in ³normal² colors and without so many flowers.

Even though the organ is known to have been a gift from the St. Chrischona mission in Switzerland, there were certainly other regions nearby where such an organ could have been produced. Guy Bovet points out ³that similar traditions exist in the Zurich area (Zürcher Oberland) and especially in the Emmental region (canton of Berne).² 25

It is entirely possible that the chest, much changed, came from a much older organ, but this we do not know for certain. Guy Bovet writes,

First, it is certain that house organs comparable to the one described have been built by various more or less professional builders long before the middle of the 18th century, since there are instruments, for example at the Toggenburg folk museum at Ebnat-Kappel, dating back to the 17th c. The tradition could take its roots in another tradition of building small instruments for private persons which documents portable organs (portatives) much older than this. The museum in Chur has a famous portative organ from the very beginning of the 17th. Some churches, like the abbey church in Muri, Canton of Aargau, have regals and other small instruments, or documented traces of, built in the 16th. 26

It is also possible that the organ is of South German or Italian origin, having crossed many borders before reaching the Texas shores at Indianola. Perhaps the most convincing argument for its origin lies with the half-stop whose slider had carried the penciled markings of ³Sua,² indicating a Suavial, a typical South German/Swiss stop tuned to beat sharp, in the manner of an Italian Voce Umana. In any case, it will be the generations of organ lovers who follow us, with enhanced capabilities for identifying wood, paint and metal fragments, who will raise these questions again and listen to the stories told by the Raisin organ.

THE END

NOTES

- 1 Frank, Gerald D., ³The Life and Work of Johann Traugott Wandke,² Harrisville: The Boston Organ Club of the Organ Historical Society, 1990.
 - 2 Harsdorff, Linda, ³The Victoria Advocate.² Sunday, August 10, 1980.
 - 3 Craig H. Roell, Victoria Advocate, Progress Edition, March 10, 1963.
The Victoria Sesquicentennial "Scrapbook" (Victoria, Texas: Victoria Advocate, 1974).
 - 4 The Victoria Sesquicentennial "Scrapbook" (Victoria, Texas: Victoria Advocate, 1974), page 39.
 - 5 Fox, Anne A., and Livingston, Katherine, ³Historical Architectural and Archaeological Investigations at the Steiner-Schob Complex,² Victoria County, Texas. Archeological Survey Report 52 (Center for Archeological Research, University of Texas at San Antonio, 1979).
- and
- Jordan, Terry G., ³German Seed in Texas Soil: Immigrant Farmers in Nineteenth-Century Texas,² Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966.
 - 6 Spell, Lota M., ³Music in Texas,² Austin, 1936; rpt., New York: AMS, 1973.
 - 7 Tiling, Moritz , ³History of the German Element in Texas,² Houston: Rein and Sons, 1913.
 - 8 Op. cit., Roell, page 43.
 - 9 Ibid. page 75.
 - 10 Op. cit., Harsdorff.
 - 11 Flachmeier, W. A., ³The Handbook of Texas Online,² The Texas State Historical Association, 1999, cited in Mgebhoff, Johannes, ³Die Geschichte der ersten deutschen evangelisch-lutherischen Synode in Texas,² Chicago: Wartburg Press, 1902.
 - 12 Jacobs, Mille and Ruth Egg, editors. ³Kirchen Chronick zur evangelisch-lutherische St. Johannis gemeinde, 1860.² Trans. ³ The Church on the Coleto.² Cuero: Cuero Publishing Company, 1978.

13 Westerholm, David H., ³In the Shade of a Lone Star Libertarian: The Oldest Extant Organ in Texas,² unpublished paper with organ archives and documents, 1980.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid. According to Westerholm, ³the organ's exquisite case is intact and in storage, while the chest plays as the positive division of the Frels organ in the Christian Science Church in Victoria. The rest of the organ exists, albeit in diaspora.²

16 Op. cit., Frank. NB: This technique of making all pipes of wood such as cedar was known in Germany from examples such as the famous ³historic² Renaissance organ of Schmalkalden, among others.

17 Ibid.

18 NB: John Brombaugh suggests in recent correspondence that ³Verspundete Laden² is a better term for this. ³...¹Spunde¹ means $\text{C}\text{E}\text{B}\text{u}\text{n}\text{g}$ ¹ so maybe the 19th century German immigrants were melding their old German with new English to create what is confusing to us today! I also found $\text{C}\text{E}\text{v}\text{e}\text{r}\text{s}\text{p}\text{u}\text{n}\text{d}\text{e}\text{n}$ ¹ is really the best, as it describes exactly what we need to do in the organbuilding. ... We modern Americans have invented new words (Charlie Fisk was especially important on this since he was so brilliant at using English well) for our organbuilding terms during the recovery of tracker action building. Because it looks a bit like a football field, we call the main structure in the windchest that pertains to the individual $\text{C}\text{E}\text{c}\text{h}\text{a}\text{n}\text{n}\text{e}\text{l}\text{s}$ ¹, the $\text{C}\text{E}\text{g}\text{r}\text{i}\text{d}$ ¹. The other thing Charlie advocated is the word $\text{C}\text{E}\text{r}\text{i}\text{b}$ ¹ for the dividers in the chest grid which separate one channel from another - instead of the word $\text{C}\text{E}\text{b}\text{a}\text{r}$ ¹ which is common to the English.²

19 Op. cit., Westerholm.

20 Looser's death dates are variously reported, according to Guy Bovet, as 1826 and 1822. Bovet, Guy, to Susan Ferré, Private correspondence, December 27, 2005.

21 Bovet, Guy, to Susan Tattershall, Private correspondence, June 16, 1980.

22 Bovet, Guy. LP recording: ³Les orgues de chambre du Toggenburg² Orgues historiques de Suisse No. 7. Gallo 30-170, liner notes.

23 Koster, John, Notes for Omaha Conference ³A Sentimental Journey,² Westfield Center, May 8, 2005.

24 Website: <<http://www.goetzegwynn.co.uk/restored/toggenburger.shtml>>

25 Bovet, Guy, to Susan Ferré, Private correspondence, December 27, 2005.

26 Ibid.

Illustrations

- 1) Photo of Raisin organ at the stagecoach inn
- 2) Photo of Hauschild's Music Store with organs in the rear
- 3) Photo of the Raisin organ with detailed photos taken by Martin Pasi
- 4) Photo of Susan Tattershall and Rubin Frels at time of restoration
- 5) Page from Wandke's Chorale Book
- 6) Photo of the Looser organ at the National Music Museum, Vermillion, SD

Further Reading

Biesele, Rudolph Leopold. ³The History of German Settlements in Texas, 1831-1861.² Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones Press, 1930.

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