

The British Invasion Lives On!

Pipe Organs of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada

By Lester Goulding and William (Bill) Vineer

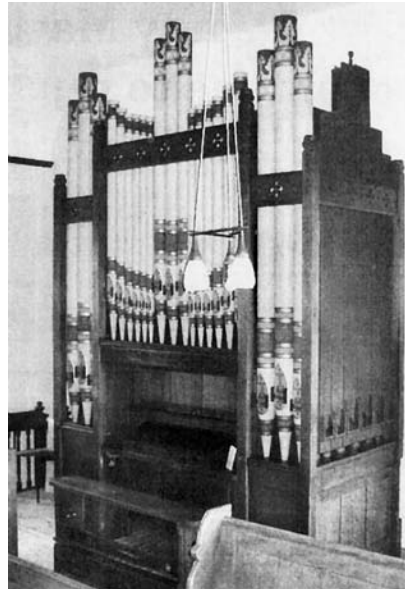
For those of us in Canada who have a passionate love for the pipe organ and its history, there is no need to look further than our own backyard: a gold mine of glorious history is sitting right here in the youngest province of the Confederation, Newfoundland and Labrador, which became Canada's tenth province in 1949. Prior to joining Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador was a Crown colony and in fact the oldest colony of the British Empire in North America. Thus, as we uncover the history of pipe organs past and present, it is not surprising to find in this eastern province a loyalty to the old country, Britain. A profound respect and affection for British standards of quality can be readily observed and it was quite common for the principal churches in the colony to turn to Britain rather than to America for their organs.

Pre-Confederation (1853–1949)

The earliest pipe organ found in our research that could be factually dated was constructed in 1853 by the British builder Thomas J. Robson for St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Cathedral, in St. John's. Taking this date as a starting point, we have a period of 96 years, ending when Newfoundland and Labrador joined the Canadian Confederation in 1949. During this period, a total of 52 pipe organs were installed in the British colony: 36 were of British make, eleven were from Canada, and two from the United States of America. We did not find any information regarding the origin and manufacturer of the other three instruments. The date of installation could not be determined for eight of the 52 organs.

1949–present

After Newfoundland and Labrador joined the Canadian Confederation in

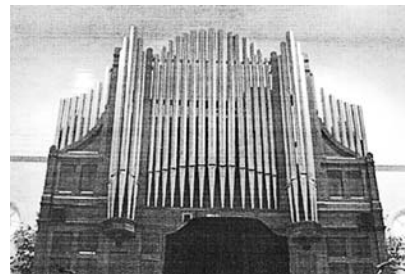


North East Church Museum, Twillingate, NL, Bevington & Sons 1906 (photo courtesy Lester Goulding)

1949 and up to the present day, a total of eighteen organs were installed in the province, all manufactured in Canada and all still currently in use. The instrument built by Létourneau Organs as well as sixteen of the instruments built by Casavant Frères remain in the province, their conditions ranging from good to excellent. Another of the organs built by Casavant Frères and originally installed in Newfoundland is now located in Ontario and is in excellent condition.

Pipe organs of Labrador

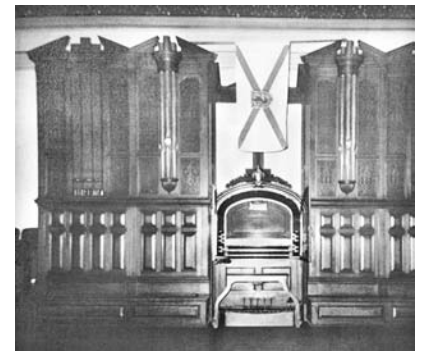
We believe that there were at least five pipe organs installed in Labrador, the mainland part of the province. Four of these were smaller instruments and were installed in communities along the coastal



Memorial United Church, Bonavista, NL, Woodstock 1922 (photo courtesy Lester Goulding)



Botwood United Church, Botwood, NL, Forster & Andrews 1928 (photo courtesy Lester Goulding)



Masonic Temple, St. John's, NL, August Gern 1883 (photo courtesy Lester Goulding)



Private residence, St. John's, NL, Positive Organ Company (photo courtesy Lester Goulding)

shore, the first having arrived in 1824. The only organ among these four still in existence today is located in the Moravian Church, Hopedale: a one-manual with four stops, built in Saxony, Germany. We continue to search for information on the other three pipe organs we believe were located along the coastal shore of Labrador. It is highly likely that these too came from Saxony, Germany.

The fifth pipe organ located in Labrador is a Casavant, a unit organ of one manual, nine stops, three ranks. It was relocated in 1981 to Our Lady of Perpetual Help Roman Catholic Basilica, Labrador City. The organ is in good condition, is played on a regular basis, and is actively maintained.

Inventory of Newfoundland and Labrador pipe organs

The table below, a chronological listing of the instruments of the past and present installed in Newfoundland and Labrador, is current as of January 2013. Each instrument is identified by opus number, year of installation, city or town, location, builder, number of manuals, stops, and ranks, type of action, and present condition. Abbreviations were used to describe the action of the instruments: "M" Mechanical (Tracker), "P" Pneumatic, "MP" Mechanical-Pneumatic, "EP" Electro-Pneumatic, "DE" Direct Electric (all unit organs), and "ES" Electric Slider. In the Opus and Year columns, "N/A" indicates data was not available at the time of publication.

We would greatly appreciate being made aware of any errors or omissions and would welcome readers' corrections and comments. Any information that can be added to these files or data to help fill in the table would certainly be welcomed. All information on the organs of Newfoundland and Labrador has been submitted from the files of Lester Goulding.

Some historical facts of interest

The 1853 Thomas J. Robson organ, installed in St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Basilica, St. John's, had three manuals and 46 stops: 16 on the Great, 11 on the Choir, 13 on the Swell, and six for the pedals, plus four couplers;¹ "[...] it was handsomely equipped with mixtures on all three manuals, and fell short of the full present-day gospel by failing to have a 4ft. choral bass on the pedals."² We have found no trace of this pipe organ.

Today, St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Basilica houses two Casavant organs, both installed in 1955. Opus 2269 is a four-manual, 51-stop instrument located in the gallery, and opus 2270 a two-manual, 15-stop instrument located in the chancel.

A very rare and historic instrument is to be found in the Masonic Temple, St. John's. Built in 1883 (opus number unknown) by August Gern, who previously worked as a foreman in the late 19th century for the renowned French organbuilder Cavallé-Coll, the instrument is fitted with two manuals, 10 stops, and mechanical/pneumatic action. It has glass-paneled doors, all part of the console, which are set into the beautiful case. This pipe organ was originally built for the home of John B. Ayre (1850–1915), a merchant, political figure, organist, and director of the music section of the now defunct Ayre and Sons department store.

The importance of this instrument is that it is the only Gern pipe organ in Canada and in fact the only one in North America. Our understanding is that only a very few August Gern pipe organs remain intact in England where the builder lived. Unfortunately this pipe organ is in poor condition and in need of a total restoration. We firmly believe that this pipe organ should be restored to the full working condition of its glory days and sit in its rightful place as part

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St. James Anglican Church, Carbonear, NL, Positive Organ Company 1900, Number 262 (photos by Rev. Morley Boutcher)



Corpus Christi Roman Catholic Church, St. John's, NL, Forster & Andrews 1928 (photo by Robert Young)



Corpus Christi Roman Catholic Church, St. John's, NL, Forster & Andrews 1928 (photo by Heather Roberts)



Gower Street United Church, St. John's, NL, Casavant 1930 / 2008 Opus 1386 (photo courtesy Lester Goulding)

Pipe Organs of Newfoundland and Labrador

Opus	Year	City/Town	Location	Builder	Manuals	Stops	Ranks	Action	Condition
N/A	N/A	St. John's	Masonic Temple	Gern, August	2	10		MP	Poor
850	N/A	Burgeo	St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church	Positive Organ Company	1	11		M	Silent
N/A	N/A	Grand Bank	Grand Bank United Church	Peter Conacher & Company	1	8		M	Destroyed
N/A	N/A	Grate's Cove	St. Luke's Anglican Church	Positive Organ Company	1				Destroyed
N/A	N/A	St. John's	private residence	Positive Organ Company	1	3		M	Poor
N/A	N/A	St. John's	Congregational Church	Peter Conacher & Company	2				Destroyed
N/A	N/A	St. John's	George Street United Church	Bevington & Sons	3				Destroyed
N/A	N/A	St. John's	St. Mary the Virgin Anglican Church, South Side Road	Unknown					Destroyed
N/A	1853	St. John's	St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Cathedral	Robson, Thomas J.	3	46			Destroyed
N/A	1862	Hopedale	Moravian Church	Unknown	1	4		M	Poor
1139	1874	Brigus	Brigus United Church	Bevington & Sons	1	10		M	Good
N/A	1877	Harbour Grace	St. Paul's Anglican Church	Chappell Company	1	5		M	Good
N/A	1880	Trinity	St. Paul's Anglican Church	Bevington & Sons	1	6		M	Good
N/A	1882	St. John's	Cochrane Street United Church	Peter Conacher & Company	3			M	Destroyed
N/A	1883	St. John's	Ayre, John B. Residence (relocated)	Gern, August	2	10		MP	
N/A	1884	St. John's	Alexander Street Methodist Church (relocated)	Bevington & Sons	1	9		M	
N/A	1890	Harbour Grace	Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic Cathedral	Unknown	1			M	Good
N/A	1895	St. John's	Methodist College Hall	Peter Conacher & Company	3				Destroyed
N/A	1896	St. John's	Gower Street United Church	Peter Conacher & Company				M	Destroyed
N/A	1896	St. John's	St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church	Peter Conacher & Company	2	22			Destroyed
N/A	1897	Twillingate	St. Peter's Anglican Church	Norman Bros. & Beard	1	4		M	Good

► Table continued on page 24

of the glorious history of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Bevington & Sons organ of 1884, a one-manual, nine-stop instrument with mechanical action, was built for Alexander Street Methodist Church. It was moved in 1911 to Trinity United Church, Winterton. This instrument is in good condition today.

The British organ builders, Forster & Andrews (1843–1956), of Hull, England, built a total of eight instruments that were exported to Newfoundland. Seven of these were smaller instruments of similar design (one manual, six stops), the other one being a larger organ of three manuals, 38 stops. The last of the smaller instruments was built in 1928 for Botwood United Church, Botwood. In 1990, the organ was relocated to the Corpus Christi Roman Catholic Church, St. John's. The organ is in poor condition and is in need of a total restoration. It should be pointed out that Forster & Andrews were exporting their instruments to Newfoundland while it was still a British colony and did not export any of their instruments to Canada.³

Casavant opus 2586, built in 1960 for All Saints' Anglican Church, Foxtrap, is a two-manual, 20-stop, three-rank direct electric action instrument. It was moved in 1999 to St. Leonard's Roman Catholic Church in Manotick, Ontario. This pipe organ is in excellent condition.⁴

The only two pipe organs that we know to have been imported from the United States are Estey opus 1701 (1919), located in Central United Church, Bay Roberts (two manuals, seven stops) and Möller opus 7751 (1948), located in St. Anthony United Church, St. Anthony (two manuals, 17 stops, three ranks). Both are still in good playing condition.

Of the eleven pipe organs built in Canada and exported before 1949, nine were by Casavant, one by Woodstock,



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Pipe Organs in Canada

Pipe Organs of Newfoundland and Labrador (continued)

Opus	Year	City/Town	Location	Builder	Manuals	Stops	Ranks	Action	Condition
262	1900	Carbonear	St. James Anglican Church	Positive Organ Company	1	8		M	Good
N/A	1900	Clarke's Beach	Clarke's Beach United Church	Forster & Andrews	1	6		M	Silent
N/A	1900	Cupids, Conception Bay	Cupids United Church	Forster & Andrews	1	6		M	Good
N/A	1900	Fogo Island	St. Andrew's Anglican Church	Forster & Andrews	1	6		M	Good
N/A	1901	Bonavista	Christ Church (Anglican)	Forster & Andrews	1	6		M	Destroyed
N/A	1903	St. John's	St. John the Baptist Anglican Cathedral	Hope-Jones Organ Builder / Ingram, C.	4	39			Destroyed
N/A	1903	Twillingate	North East Church Museum	Bevington & Sons	1	6		M	Good
N/A	1906	Collins Cove	Zion United Church	Bevington & Sons	1	6		M	Good
N/A	1909	St. John's	Cochrane Street United Church	Forster & Andrews	3	38			Destroyed
N/A	1910	St. John's	St. Thomas Anglican Church	Peter Conacher & Company	3				Destroyed
N/A	1911	Winterton	Trinity United Church	Bevington & Sons	1	9		M	Good
N/A	1911	Brigus	St. George's Anglican Church	Peter Conacher & Company	2			M	Destroyed
N/A	1912	Bay Roberts	St. Matthew's Anglican Church	Forster & Andrews	1	6		M	Good
N/A	1912	Spaniard's Bay	Holy Redeemer Anglican Church	Forster & Andrews	1	6		M	Good
N/A	1915	St. John's	St. John the Baptist Anglican Cathedral	Norman & Beard	3	32			Destroyed
N/A	1916	St. John's	Cochrane Street United Church	Harrison & Harrison	3	50	65	P	Destroyed
N/A	1916	St. John's	St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church	Norman & Beard	3	42			Destroyed
1701	1919	Bay Roberts	Central United Church	Estey Organ Company	2	7		P	Good
804	1919	St. John's	St. Michael's & All Angels Anglican Church	Casavant Frères	1	5		P	Destroyed
N/A	1922	Bonavista	Memorial United Church	Woodstock Organ Builders	2	7		DE	Console Destroyed Case Remains
931	1922	Grand Falls	Holy Trinity Anglican Church	Casavant Frères	1	5		P	Good

► Table continued on page 25

Scattered leaves ... from our Notebook

As a rule of thumb,
the 32' stop in an
organ should be heard
no more often than is
the bass drum in a
symphony orchestra.

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Gower Street United Church, St. John's, NL, Casavant 1930 / 2008 Opus 1386 (photo above by Heather Roberts) (photo on right by Robert Young)



Memorial University, St. John's, NL, Casavant 1986 Opus 3601 (photo by Robert Young)



St. James United Church, St. John's, NL, Casavant 1975 Opus 3292 (photo by Heather Roberts)



Cochrane Street United Church, St. John's, NL, Casavant 1957 Opus 2386, façade Harrison & Harrison 1916 (photo by Heather Roberts)



Peter Conacher organ, Memorial United Church, Grand Falls, Newfoundland (photo courtesy Lester Goulding)

and one by Lye. Of these instruments, eight are still playable and rate from good to excellent, two were destroyed, and one lost its console (destroyed), although the case remains in the church.

Of the three instruments installed by unknown builders, one has been destroyed and two are still in use, one rated poor and one good.

Casavant opus 1386, located in Gower Street United Church, St. John's, was installed in 1930: three manuals, 29 stops. This instrument was rebuilt and enlarged in 2007 to 36 stops.

It is amazing that, even after 160 years (1853–2013), fourteen of the 36 instruments manufactured in England remain in playable condition, their status ranging from poor to good, and that the two that

are silent remain intact in their original location. We would very much like to see all of these remaining instruments that came from Britain and are still in playable condition be classified as heritage instruments, and rebuilt to their original condition before this very important part of Canadian history is lost forever.

Gower Street United Church, St. John's, Newfoundland

In the photograph, we see the Peter Conacher organ built in 1896 for Gower Street United Church, St. John's, Newfoundland. In 1930, the organ was moved to the Memorial United Church, Grand Falls, Newfoundland. This photo was taken in 1953, prior to the organ

Pipe Organs of Newfoundland and Labrador (continued)

Opus	Year	City/Town	Location	Builder	Manu-als	Stops	Ranks	Action	Condition
1178	1927	St. John's	St. John the Baptist Anglican Cathedral	Casavant Frères	4	52		EP	Excellent
N/A	1928	Botwood	Botwood United Church (relocated)	Forster & Andrews	1	6		M	
N/A	1928	St. John's	Corpus Christi Roman Catholic Church	Forster & Andrews	1	6		M	Poor
N/A	1930	Fortune	Fortune United Church	Lye, Edward & Sons	1	6		M	Destroyed
1385	1930	St. John's	Wesley United Church	Casavant Frères	3	28		EP	Very Good
N/A	1930	Grand Falls	Memorial United Church	Peter Conacher & Company					Destroyed
1386	1930	St. John's	Gower Street United Church	Casavant Frères	3	29		EP	Excellent
1441	1931	Bay Bulls	Ss. Peter & Paul Roman Catholic Church	Casavant Frères	2	12		P	Good



St. Mary the Virgin Anglican Church, St. John's, NL, Casavant 1986 Opus 3613
(photo by Heather Roberts)



St. Pius X Roman Catholic Church, St. John's, NL, Casavant 1987, Opus 3638
(photo by Heather Roberts)

being dismantled. The casework shown here now houses Casavant opus 2182. The towers and rosettes are hand-carved. Beautiful!

Historical note

The United Church of Canada came into existence in 1925, bringing together the Congregational, Methodist, and some of the Presbyterian churches of Canada.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to express their most sincere thanks and appreciation to the following: Carl Gouling, who spent countless hours correcting the chronological listing for this article; Kathy Roberts, who spent hours making changes and corrections in order for this article to be published; Paul Cheatley, who designed the database used in this article and provided helpful input to this article.

Notes

1. E. J. Hopkins and E. F. Rimbault, *The Organ: Its History and Construction* (London: Robert Cocks & Co., 1877), pp. 453-454.
2. C. I. G. Stobie, "The Organ in St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, St. John's, Newfoundland," *The Organ*, 52, 1972, p. 58.
3. Laurence Elvin, *Forster and Andrews: Organ Builders, 1843-1956* (Lincoln: Laurence Elvin, 1968), p. 77.
4. "Pipe Organ Database," *Organ Historical Society*, 15 February 2013, database.organsociety.org.

Lester Gouling was born in Grand Falls, Newfoundland. He has been an independent businessman, a music specialist (wind band) in the provincial school system, and a sessional instrumental instructor at the Department of Music at Memorial University of Newfoundland. A Licentiate and Fellow of Trinity College of Music, London, England, Gouling apprenticed and worked at Casavant Frères, St. Hyacinthe, Quebec in 1954 and 1955. In 1956 he was appointed by the builder to be their sales and service representative in Newfoundland and Labrador. With few exceptions, he has serviced all of the organs in this province. He lives in St. John's, Newfoundland with his wife Elsie. He has four children and nine grandchildren.

William (Bill) Vineer is an Ottawa Valley boy from Renfrew who got "hooked on the pipe organ" at age five when he attended Renfrew

Presbyterian Church with his family. While he has had a lifelong love for the pipe organ, his focus since 1967 has been on the Vineer Organ Library & Archives, now celebrating its 46th anniversary; the library and archives are located in Vineer's west-end Ottawa home. Its website: www.vineerorganlibrary.com. Moving to Ottawa in 1965, Vineer began a 30-year career with the Department of Retro Virology in the Department of Agriculture's Animal Disease Research Institute, during which time he contributed to over 150 published scientific papers, and two patents. In addition to his research work, he taught for 26 years in the Department of Hospitality at Algonquin College.

Contact the authors at the Vineer Organ Library & Archives by telephone at 613/224-1553 or by e-mail at bill@vineerorganlibrary.com.

Opus	Year	City/Town	Location	Builder	Manu-als	Stops	Ranks	Action	Condition
N/A	1931	Heart's Content	St. Mary's Anglican Church	Sweetland Organ Company	2				Destroyed
1427	1931	St. John's	St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church	Casavant Frères	2	21		EP	Very Good
1635	1940	Channel Port aux Basques	St. James Anglican Church	Casavant Frères	1	5		P	Very Good
1672	1941	Corner Brook	St. John the Baptist Anglican Cathedral	Casavant Frères	1	9		P	Very Good
7751	1948	St. Anthony	St. Anthony United Church	Moller, M.P.	2	17	3	DE	Good
1970	1949	Coley's Point	St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church	Casavant Frères	1	9	3	DE	Good
2182	1953	Grand Falls	Memorial United Church	Casavant Frères	2	17		EP	Good
2270	1955	St. John's	St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Basilica	Casavant Frères	2	15		EP	Very Good
2301	1955	Labrador City	Our Lady of Perpetual Help Roman Catholic Basilica	Casavant Frères	1	9	3	DE	Good
2269	1955	St. John's	St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Basilica	Casavant Frères	4	51		EP	Very Good
2386	1957	St. John's	Cochrane Street United Church	Casavant Frères	4	55		EP	Very Good
2511	1959	Gander	St. Martin's Anglican Cathedral	Casavant Frères	2	25	5	DE	Good
2546	1959	St. John's	St. David's Presbyterian Church	Casavant Frères	2	25	5	DE	Very Good
2586	1960	Foxtrap	All Saints' Anglican Church (relocated)	Casavant Frères	2	20	3	DE	
3292	1975	St. John's	St. James United Church	Casavant Frères	2	17	23	EP	Very Good
3351	1977	St. John's	Memorial University of Newfoundland	Casavant Frères	2	7		M	Excellent
3601	1986	St. John's	Memorial University of Newfoundland	Casavant Frères	3	32	45	EP	Excellent
3613	1986	St. John's	St. Mary the Virgin Anglican Church	Casavant Frères	3	28	40	EP	Excellent
16	1987	St. John's	St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church	Létourneau Pipe Organs	3	37		ES	Excellent
3638	1987	St. John's	St. Pius X Roman Catholic Church	Casavant Frères	2	24	29	EP	Excellent
3737	1994	St. John's	St. Thomas Anglican Church	Casavant Frères	2	24	32	EP	Excellent
3747	1996	Corner Brook	First United Church	Casavant Frères	3	32	45	EP	Excellent

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