

PARK STREET TO HAVE NEW ORGAN

DOUGLAS L. RAFTER

In the fall of 1959, climaxing over two years of planning and construction, a new pipe-organ will be installed in Park Street Church, coinciding significantly with the church's 150th anniversary observance.

With the realization that the precarious mechanical condition of our present organ was an indication that its replacement was an immediate necessity, Dr. Ockenga appointed an organ committee composed of Mrs. Lauriston Ward, Jr., chairman; George Pickering, Philip Murdy and Edgar W. Poore, II. After several of America's outstanding organ builders (following careful examination of the organ) stated that due to the condition of the instrument rebuilding was out of the question and that the only solution to the problem was a completely new organ, the Board of Trustees accepted the recommendation of the organ committee. This was that a contract be signed with the Aeolian-Skinner Organ Company of Boston for a new organ to be built and installed by them.

Accordingly, on June 5th, 1957, this contract was signed for a new three-manual instrument. The Aeolian-Skinner firm ranks high among American organ builders, having planned and built many outstanding organs, among them the instruments at Harvard and Columbia Universities, the Salt Lake City Tabernacle, the Tanglewood Music Shed, Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine and Riverside Church in New York and Boston's Symphony Hall.

The organ committee had, in our case, a much more difficult task than merely recommending that the church buy a new organ. With the constantly expanding and widening ministry of Park Street

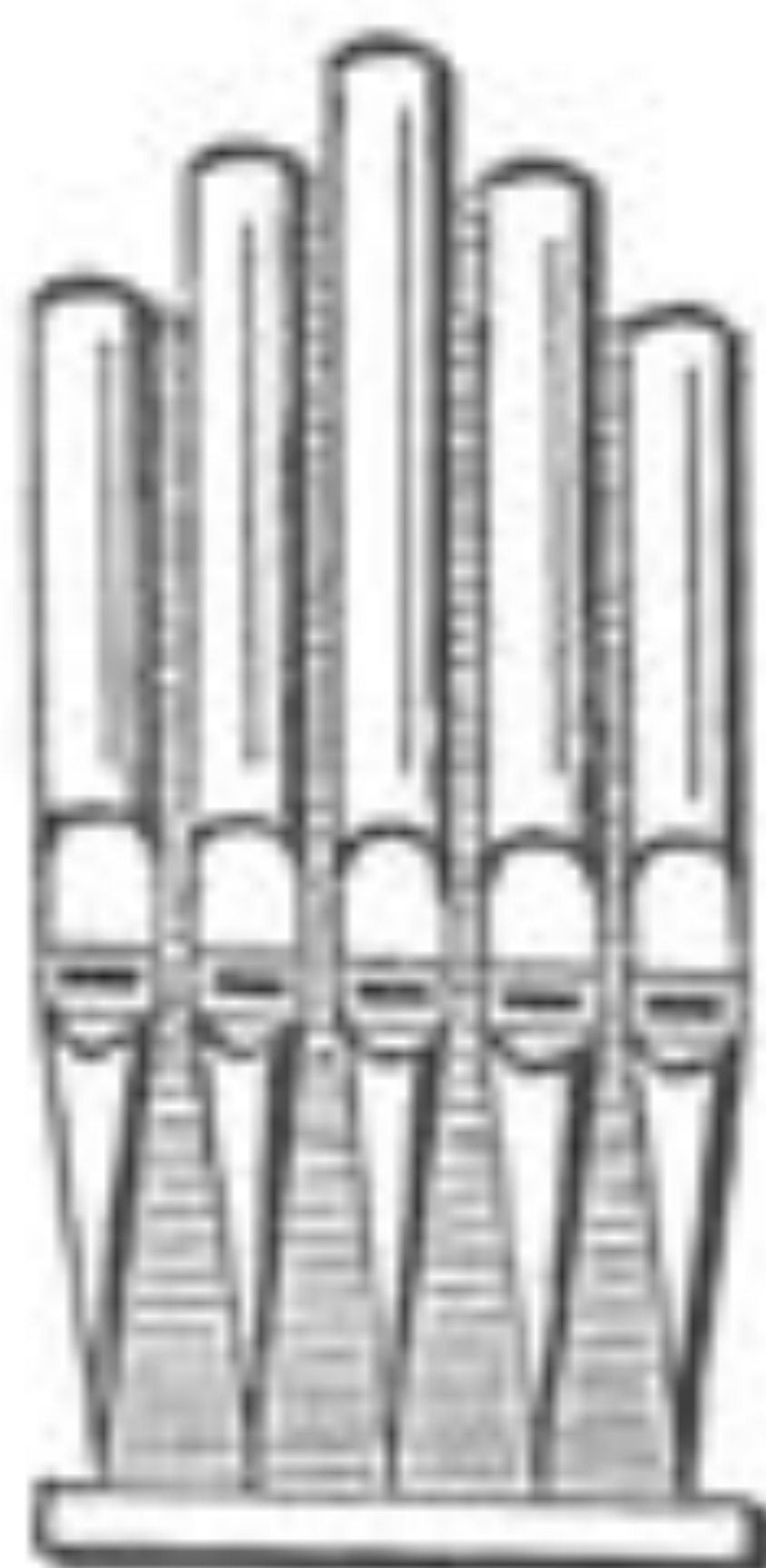
Church in mind, it was necessary to plan an instrument which would not only fulfill its every requirement in a distinctly superior manner but also to anticipate the demands which would be placed upon it in the years to come with regard to the areas and media of the church's program and ministry into which the music of the organ would enter. These areas were classified into four fields, and the organ has been designed so that its musical and tonal resources and mechanical equipment would be unsurpassed in the fields of (1) church service music, (2) concert music and recital work, and the modern demands of (3) radio broadcasting and (4) recording. Each area demands certain characteristics of tonal resources and flexibility of control which is peculiar to itself. The organ has been carefully planned so that its musical results will leave nothing to be desired in each of these four fields.

A pipe-organ is so fantastically complex that detailed descriptions are always inadequate. However, here is a summary of its most outstanding features. The organ will have five divisions: Great, Swell, Choir, Antiphonal and Pedal. From a three-manual conventional draw-knob-type console, these divisions will control a total of 3,127 pipes and 60 speaking stops. There are 25 couplers and 48 combination pistons and combination pedals. The Antiphonal Division will be located above the rear gallery, where the present Echo organ is located. The Antiphonal Organ will have 691 pipes as against 244 in the present Echo Division, which will enable it to be used for accompanimental purposes and to strengthen congregational singing. The increased resources of the new organ are further apparent from this comparison with the present instrument's 41 speak-

ing stops and 2,532 pipes; with 21 couplers and 18 combination pistons.

The tonal structure of the organ includes 16 ranks of mixtures and mutations, 11 reeds, and 8 ranks of strings, Vox Humana, 3 percussions (chimes, harp and celesta), 15 manual flutes, and the main Diapason and Reed Choruses on the Great and Swell. It will be an organ that will do full justice to any and all types of music. Mechanically, it will be the last word, with the console containing every modern aid for efficient, flexible control in playing.

The cost of this organ will be \$68,000. Now, many times it is hard for people to see, particularly on paper, why a pipe-organ should cost so much. The reason is that, unlike other musical instruments, a pipe-organ is completely custom-built. Every part (and there are actually thousands of parts—mechanical and electrical—which must either be made or assembled by highly trained craftsmen) is made for one particular organ. An organ contains a vast number of parts in addition to the visible portions—the console and casework (or front pipes). Pipe-organs can never be "mass-produced." Each one must be designed and voiced for the size of the church sanctuary, the size, location and materials of the organ chambers and the acoustical properties of the sanctuary. Organ pipes, for example, are made only by craftsmen and artisans who have had long experience in this art. An organ, too, is designed and built to be a part of the building in which it is to be installed. This often necessitates structural modifications and adjustments. Finally, the physical layout of the organ is



spread out over a large area of the church building. The electrical equipment (the generator and blower) in the basement sends the wind pressure through conductor pipes to the chambers and chests which are two and three floors above. From the console to the pipes and in the chambers and chests are literally miles of electrical wiring. The stops must be carefully chosen, designed and their pipes voiced, each one individually, to sound to the best advantage in their new "home."

As we anticipate the installation of this beautiful and magnificent instrument, which for decades to come will sound the praises of God, and bring the message of His Gospel in beautiful music, we may be assured that Park Street Church will have a noble instrument, the work of a master builder, designed and created in beauty and grandeur to—

"Sing praise to God who reigns above,
The God of all creation,
The God of power, the God of love,
The God of our salvation."

Mr. Rafter is an Associate of the American Guild of Organists and member of the executive board of its Boston chapter, instructor of organ at Gordon College and organist of Park Street Church. He is also something of an artist as is indicated by the accompanying sketch.

SUMMER ORGAN CONCERT

DOUGLAS RAFTER will present a concert on the Kotzschmar Memorial Organ, City Hall, Portland, Maine, on Wednesday, August 6th, at 8:15 p.m. This will be Mr. Rafter's 27th concert on this famous instrument which ranks as the largest municipal organ in America. The public is invited to attend.