

# SPEAKING OF PIPE ORGANS

## New Zealander Played World's Biggest

ATLANTIC CITY'S giant organ, claimed to be the biggest in the world, was until recently played by a New Zealander, Arthur Scott Brook, who was born at Lincoln, near Christchurch, 73 years ago. Recent correspondence in *The Listener* has sought to establish the whereabouts of the world's biggest organ, and now Mrs. J. D. Colville, of Cashmere Hills, Christchurch, has given *The Listener* some details of her brother's career, together with photographs of the organ console in the Senior High School Auditorium, Atlantic City, New Jersey.

It has 32,706 pipes altogether, and weighs 120 tons. The largest wooden pipe measures 59 feet 10 inches, and the largest metal pipe is 34 feet 8 inches long. Some 225,000 feet of timber were put into it, and the total length of the wire used would girdle the earth twice. Mrs. Colville says that the next largest

organ is the one mentioned by a correspondent to *The Listener*, that in the Wanamaker store, Philadelphia, only 60 miles from Atlantic City, but this is not quite half the size of her brother's former charge, she says.

Mr. Brook's earliest musical training was received in the choir of St. John's Church, Latimer Square, Christchurch, when he was seven. He began to study the organ, and ten years later he was appointed organist at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Phillipstown, Christchurch.

Two years later he received his first salary at the church where he had begun as a chorister, and since then he has travelled widely and held many important posts. He was organist and director of music at Leland Stanford University, California, organist in charge of the Festival Hall at the St. Louis World Fair, and organist at Deems Memorial Church, New York, for nine years.

In 1923 he became Municipal organist in Atlantic City, and in 1924 he directed the Atlantic City Chorus. He remained there until three years ago, when he retired, aged 70.

## The Organ At Salt Lake City, Utah

THE big pipe organ in the Salt Lake City Tabernacle in Utah, U.S.A., which is heard every Sunday morning in recitals from the ZB stations, and which has been the subject of some controversy in *The Listener*, was built nearly 80 years ago by Joseph Ridges, who had learned his craft in Sydney, Australia.

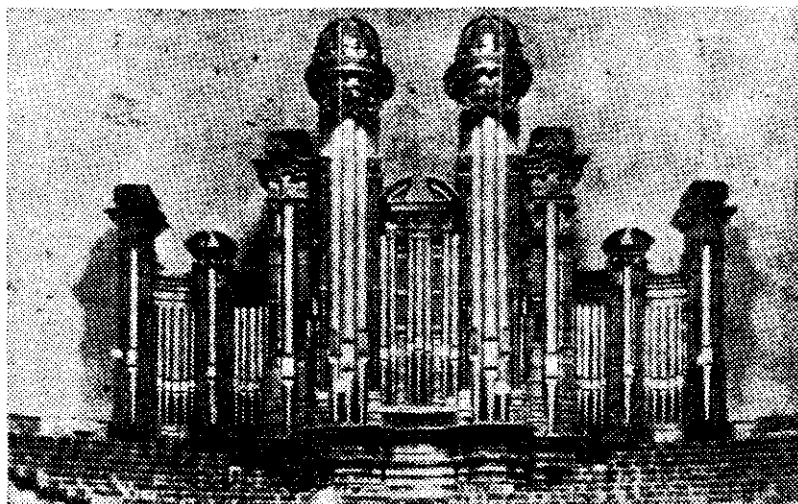
A native of England, and a carpenter by trade, Ridges emigrated to Sydney in 1856, and worked for some years in an organ factory, where, by careful observation, he learned the details of organ building. He was also a student of musical history, and especially of the history of organ building, which goes back to the time of Ctesibius of Alexandria, who lived in the third century before Christ, and who first invented a mechanically blown trumpet.

Ridges constructed a small organ while in Sydney, and when he joined the Mormon Church he was invited to give the organ as a gift to the church in Utah. He agreed, and the organ was soldered up in tin cases and shipped to San Pedro in California. Under President Brigham Young's orders, a special party was made up to escort the organ on its long and arduous desert trip to Salt Lake City, the company consisting of twelve waggons hauled by 14 mule teams. On arrival it was housed in the large adobe structure in which the Mormons then worshipped.

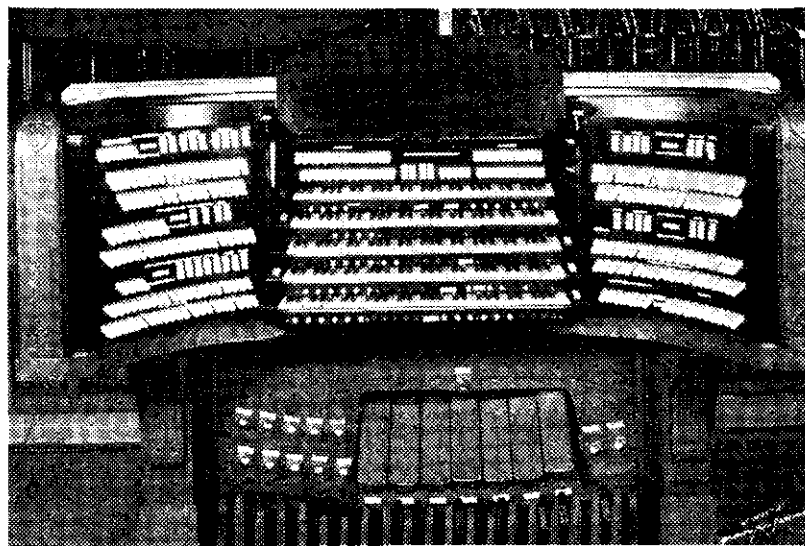
### Preliminary Work

A few years later, Brigham Young commissioned Ridges to make a second organ for the Mormon Tabernacle.

Under Ridges' direction, four skilled craftsmen set about the preliminary work. While one was collecting various specimens of wood from the canyons of Utah, another was making tools, with which to work the wood, while a third would be experimenting with glue. Specimens of wood were sent from all over the state of Utah, a fine-grained white pine, free from knots and without much gum or pitch, being decided on. It was especially well adapted for the largest pipes, some of which measure 32 feet and which altogether required thousands of feet of timber. The glue was made from cattle and buffalo hides.



THE SALT LAKE CITY TABERNACLE ORGAN, heard in recitals from the ZB stations every Sunday morning



NOT THE COCKPIT OF A "FLYING FORTRESS," but the huge console of the Atlantic City, U.S.A., organ, which until a few years ago was regularly played by a New Zealand musician, Arthur Scott Brook, formerly of Christchurch

The organ was begun in January of 1866, and about 100 men were employed constantly in its construction. It was dedicated in October, 1867, though it was many months before all the pipes were installed and the instrument completed.

"My time was taken up in making scales and various sizes of pipes, voicing them and designing details for the workmen," wrote Ridges afterwards. "Those were busy, happy days. After many months the great instrument on which we had worked so long began to assert itself. The bellows were put in place. The strong frames carrying their huge wind chests, with their multitude of heavy pipes, the ontablaturo, the column and pillars, all began to rise into their positions. All was happiness and pleasure, for we felt that we had not worked in vain. Our reward was in seeing the completed instrument."

### "Most Approved Principle"

A newspaper account of the time says: "We paid a visit to the organ shop the other day where the large organ for the

Tabernacle is being built, and we were gratified to note the progress already made. Brother Ridges, the builder, kindly informed us that the organ is being built on a large scale on the most approved principle. It has two manuals, or keyboards, and 27 pedals with the pedal compass from four C's to D. Its compass embraces 35 steps, five of which are mechanical. It will contain something like 2,000 pipes, the large CCCC, being 32 feet in length. The two manuals are the swell organ and the great organ, the steps of which, when played singly produce the richest tones that modern art in organ building has produced, and when they are combined, the volume of musical sound is grandly majestic."

The organ, which was the largest in America at that time, attracted great public interest, and the standard of music in Salt Lake City began to move definitely forward from that time.

### The Organists

Two organists, Alexander Schreiner and R. Frank W. Asper, are heard in the recitals broadcast by the ZB stations. Schreiner, who studied with Louis Verse at Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris, and with Charles Marie Widor of Paris, was for nine years organist and lecturer in music at the University of California in Los Angeles, and his book of organ voluntaries is used by church organists throughout the United States.

Dr. Asper studied in Europe, has been heard in concerts all over America, and has appeared with such artists as Heifetz and Stokowski. He has sat at the console of the Salt Lake City Tabernacle organ through upwards of 3,500 recitals and broadcasts. One of the most interesting instruments he has played, however, says Dr. Asper, is the one at St. John's Church in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. It was originally imported from England and was unpacked on the porch of the church, where it lay for seven months while the members of the church argued whether or not it was a device of Satan. Both Benjamin Franklin and George Washington listened to it in their time.