

Who built the seven gates of Thebes?
 The books are filled with names of kings.
 Was it the kings who hauled the craggy blocks of stone?

“A Worker Reads History”
 Bertolt Brecht

These words of an influential 20th Century German playwright remind us that grand architectural achievements are accomplished through the detail-oriented efforts of individual builders and craftspeople. To illustrate the point, let's look at three aspects of the building of our church and the individual builders and craftspeople responsible for them: the Organ, the Stained Glass Windows, and the General Contracting of the Work.

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The Organ

The organ in the Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo, a gift of the Howard family, has many elements of the best of American organ building in its ancestry. It was built by the Hutchings-Votey organ company in 1906 and cost \$7,367.40 -- an amount of money that might pay for one stop in a pipe organ in 2005!

George S. Hutchings (1835-1914) apprenticed as a cabinetmaker and his work was noticed by a member of the Hook family of Boston. Elias and George Hook were the founder-owners of the most prestigious organ building firm in 19th Century New England, and they hired young Hutchings as an apprentice in their woodworking department. He showed both interest and aptitude, and soon worked his way through all the organ building departments in the Hook firm.

Eventually Hutchings went into business on his own. He was more interested in artistic goals and technical innovation than moneymaking. As a result, his firm passed through a number of reorganizations with different partners. The partnership with Votey came in 1901 -- Hutchings' later years.

Edwin S. Votey (1856-1931) was a partner in the Detroit firm of Farrand and Votey. They built standard church organs, and didn't really achieve prominence until they bought the rights to the electric key action and other patented features of the Roosevelt Organ Works, owned by Theodore Roosevelt's cousin. Votey used the Roosevelt designs, along with his invention of the player piano, to concentrate on building self-playing residence organs for the mansions of the wealthy under the name of the Aeolian Organ Company.

Votey's work is still very recognizable in the Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo organ. Many old pipes are preserved, but it is the windchests that the pipes stand on that reflect Votey. They are built somewhat like Aeolian chests -- idiosyncratic, complicated, but very reliable in their design and construction.

The organ was rebuilt in 1960 by the Delaware Organ Company. This company, which was based in Tonawanda, New York, had been formed in 1956 by Robert Colby and Eugene Burmaster. These two gentlemen were former employees of the Schlicker Organ Company, a firm which had a fine international reputation at that time. The Unitarian Universalist Church did its homework admirably before signing with a builder for work on its organ. Documents in the church archives include a Dun & Bradstreet report about the Delaware firm, consultations with Hans Vigeland, who was one of Buffalo's most important musicians and organist of Westminster Presbyterian Church, and Jerome Murphy, who was organist at St. Joseph's New Cathedral (Roman Catholic), which used to stand at the corner of Delaware Avenue & West Utica Street. Unitarian Universalist Church organist

Richard Marshall was also involved in all the plans. The cost of the work agreed upon was \$10,600 -- a rock bottom price even for that time.

The rebuild, as carried out, preserved quite a few of the Hutchings-Votey stops, but the general sound of the present organ reflects the ideas of Delaware. The number of keyboards was reduced from three to two in order to make each set of pipes independent. (The original three keyboard scheme made many of the stops do double duty -- a poor practice in organ building.) The stoplist was also redesigned and some voices were added to make the organ more able to accommodate the great classical literature composed for it. Mr. Vigeland, along with Mr. Marshall, examined and approved this job in late 1960. It is a credit to everyone who was involved that this organ is as musically successful as it is and has functioned reliably for so many years. (*Contributed by David Snyder*)

The Stained Glass Windows

Harry E. Goodhue (1873-1918), who designed the stained glass windows in our sanctuary, is known as one of three stained glass craftsmen to revive the art and craft of medieval glass-making during the last decade of the 19th Century and the first decade of the 20th. His work, along with that of Otto Heinigke and William Willet, was the foundation of the Modern Gothic stained glass masterpieces created in the United States after 1910.

Harry Eldredge Goodhue was born in 1873 in Pomfret, CT, the second of four sons; his older brother was Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, a partner in the famous architectural firm of Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson. After attending the Holderness School in Plymouth, NH, he went to Cambridge, MA in 1892, joining the Boston Art Students' Association at age 19. He began to design glass for his brother's firm, travelled to Europe to view medieval stained glass, and in 1902 created a landmark window for the firm's Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Newport, RI: The Brown Memorial window. It was the first American window made of antique glass in accordance with techniques refined in the 13th Century.

Goodhue opened his own shop at 23 Church Street, in Cambridge, MA in 1903. He preferred hand-blown antique glass to the popular opalescent or "American" glass of the time, writing in 1903, "Why should we be afraid of pure color? The men of the 12th, 13th, and 14th Centuries were not. (With) the old glass: the light comes through, but not the sun, to fill the church with gorgeous rays – to almost echo the window upon the floor." His ideas were further advanced in an *International Studio* article in 1904, in which he was introduced as "the designer of some of the best church windows in the United States."

Between 1903 and 1918 Goodhue provided antique glass windows for over 70 buildings in 21 states and Canada. He did at least three commissions in Buffalo: the Beal's Memorial at North Presbyterian Church; the Christ Chapel at Trinity Episcopal Church; and our windows. A newspaper article from September 4, 1906, printed a week before the first service in our new church building, describes them:

A large factor in the beauty of the First Unitarian Church is the array of stained-glass windows, of which there are two transept, one pulpit and six nave windows. These were all given to the church by Mrs. E.C. Sprague and her sons, Henry Ware and Carleton Sprague, as a memorial of Noah P. and E. Carleton Sprague. They were designed and made by the Goodhue firm of Boston.

The east transept window is of especial interest because of the story

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connected with its design. The central figure is that of the Good Shepperd (*sic*), but it is wholly unlike the conventional representation of Christ. It shows a beardless youth, of rather martial aspect, clad in a red tunic, the right hand grasping a staff, and the left shoulder bearing a lamb. This is a reproduction of the earliest known representation of Christ, which was found in the catacombs of Rome.... The west transept window has as its central figure the prophet Isaiah. The window back of the pulpit and rising above the exquisite tracery line of the reredos has no marked design. It is a mass of soft, dark reds, shading into lighter tones, contracted with a bit of clear green and a little touch of purple. It is very restful to the eye, and not obtrusive enough to claim special attention. The nave windows all show a grapevine pattern, with tracery of vine, leaf and bunches of grapes in charming design and color. Each window bears one of the Beatitudes. The colors in all the windows are most harmonious and beautifully blended.

On December 11, 1918, Goodhue died at his home in Cambridge, MA at age 45. He was buried among family members in the Old North Cemetery in Pomfret, CT.

The General Contracting of the Work

Many contractors were hired for the building of the church. In fact, a list in our church archives identifies 61 separate ones. Coordinating their work was the job of Architects Edward Austin Kent, William Winthrop Kent, and General Contractor J.J. Churchyard (1852-1914). Of all the contractors used, Churchyard was paid the most for his services: \$21,352.78. Some of his written correspondence to the church survives in our archives.

Born in Buffalo in 1852, Joseph J. Churchyard graduated from Central High School and entered Cornell University. While in college, he was called home by his father to assist in the enterprise of developing what was then known as "Churchyard's Farms", a neighborhood off Clinton Street near Bailey Avenue. He remained in the contracting business with his father until the latter's death in 1887, and then continued the business alone for 27 years. It was said at the time of his death that he built more public schools in Buffalo than any other contractor. He also constructed many of Buffalo's finest municipal buildings and did a large amount of work for the government.

Beyond his profession, he had charitable interests in this city, including the Homeopathic Hospital, which he served as President for many years, and the establishment of technical schools, being among the first to advocate them. He was also a former police commissioner. He lived on Irving Place and died on September 3, 1914, at his home.

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George S. Hutchings, Edwin S. Votey, Harry E. Goodhue, Joseph J. Churchyard -- These are just some of the many builders and craftspeople who "hailed the craggy blocks of stone" to build our elegant church home. We owe to them and their skilled hands much gratitude. When we walk into the church and seat ourselves in pews surrounded by architectural splendor, we will memorialize them well by remembering that it was their individual contributions, joined together in common purpose, that made possible the glorious edifice that is our church building.

Compiled by Bill Parke, Church Historian
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Sources:

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Unpublished essay by David Snyder, September 9, 2004.

I am grateful to Mr. Snyder for writing “The Organ” section specifically for this exhibit, and to Mr. Tannler for use of significant portions of his article “Harry Eldredge Goodhue: Pioneer of American Stained Glass” in “The Stained Glass Windows” section of this exhibit. – Bill Parke