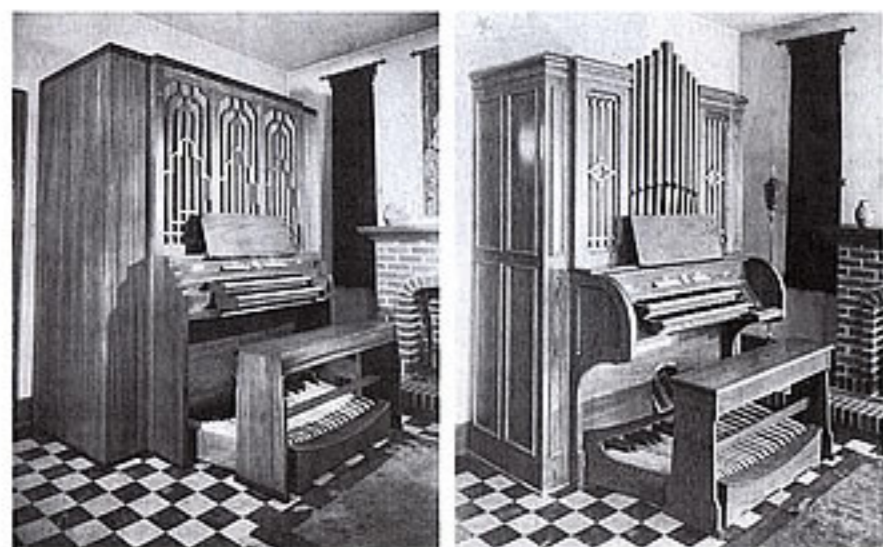


THE REUTER ORGAN COMPANY "R" SERIES ORGANS

BY STEPHEN SCHNURR

EARLIER install-ments in this series have examined small organs of both mechanical and electric action of the second half of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries. In this part, the work of a builder west of the Mississippi River is examined—the Reuter Organ Company of Lawrence, Kansas.



The Reuter "R" organs were available in a selection of case styles; above left is the "Modern" case; at right is the standard case with optional display pipes. Below is an example of the optional detached console in the "Modern" style. • Opposite page: Reuter engineering drawings showing dimensions of selected models

Founded in 1917 as the Reuter-Schwarz Organ Company in Trenton, Illinois, the firm relocated to Lawrence in 1919, at the invitation of local business leaders. Soon thereafter, the name Reuter Organ Company was adopted.

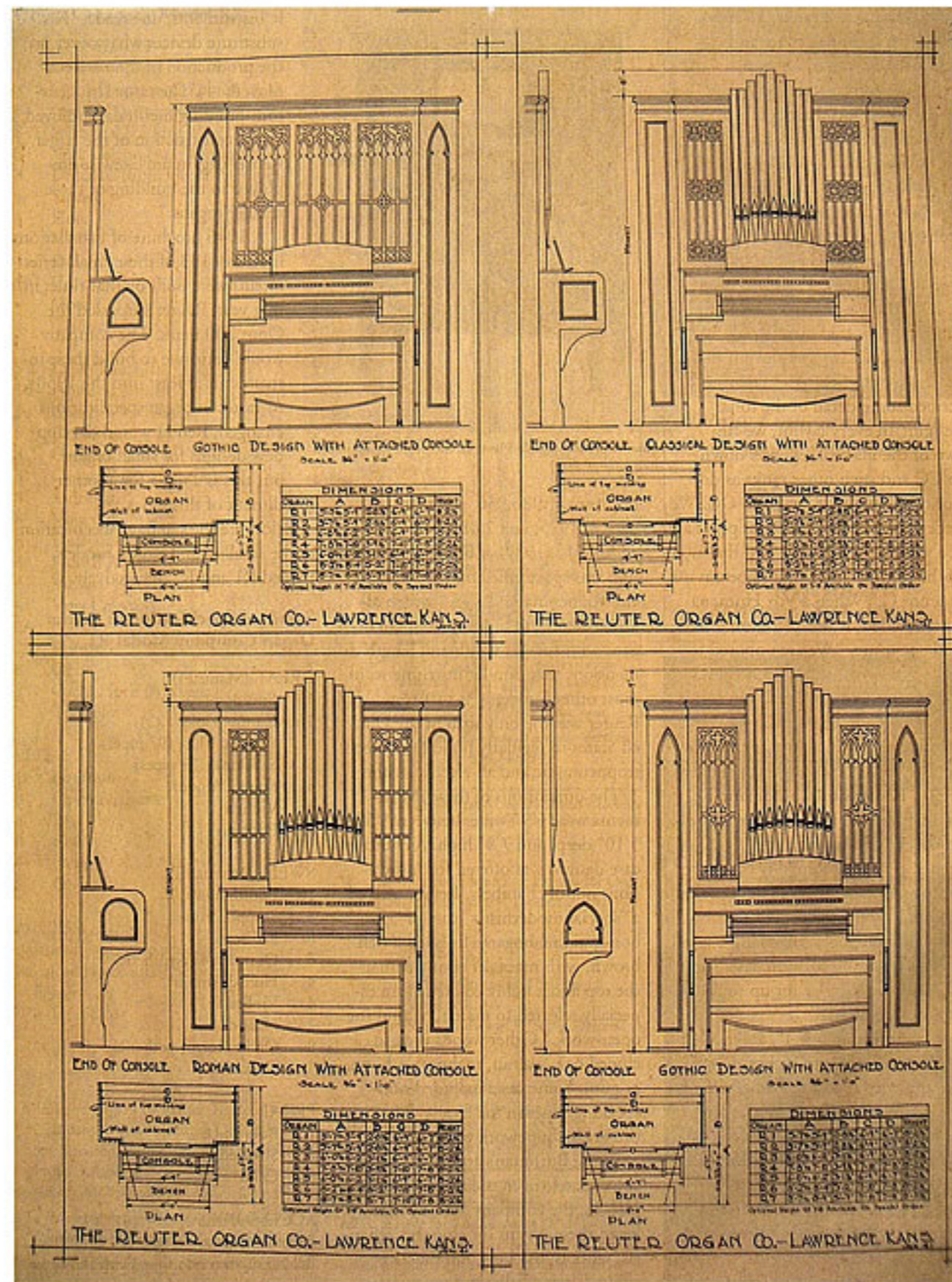
Through the end of the Second World War, Reuters were primarily modest-sized two- and three-manual organs. The largest were four-manual organs for the Moody Memorial Church of Chicago (Opus 308, 53 ranks, 1928) and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Opus 367, 59 ranks, 1929). The company had considerable experience with construction of quality small instruments, providing an advantage sometimes not available to others who primarily built much larger organs.

In the mid-1930s, with the newly developed electronic organ growing in sales and pipe organ manufacturers de-

veloping small organ models for quick, inexpensive sales, Reuter did not stand in the background but rather developed a number of successful small organ models. The May 1937 issue of *The American Organist* featured an article by T. Scott Burhman, the journal's editor, titled "Miniature Organs by Reuter." The builder offered stock

models of organs ranging from two to four ranks, priced between \$1,100 and \$1,600, exclusive of shipping. Prices could be reduced if the lowest octave of the 16' Bourdon pipes were substituted with a set of reeds, "of the harmonium or melodeon variety." (The Wicks Organ Company used the same method with their smallest organs.) If the customer wanted a detached console, an additional charge of \$100 was made. Mr. Burhman's article noted that "... the miniature organ costs about the same as an automobile, and while the automobile lasts five or ten years and costs considerable to maintain, an organ will last a lifetime and costs virtually nothing to maintain." Focusing on the "professional organist" as the chief customer of these instruments, he continued, "[He] can claim as a deduction on his income-tax all money spent in maintaining the instrument, and also deduct, say, 5% of its purchase price each year as depreciation." These organs, called the "R" series by the company, were designed and priced to compete with those of other builders such as Wicks, Geo. Kilgen & Son, and M.P. Möller.

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The four organ sizes reviewed were as follows: 2 ranks, 16 stops, 170 pipes (Stopped Flute and Salicional); 3 ranks, 18 stops, 224 pipes (Stopped Flute, Salicional, Vox Humana); 3 ranks, 19 stops, 224 pipes (Stopped Flute, Salicional, Dulciana); 3 ranks, 19 stops, 236 pipes (Diapason, Stopped Flute, Salicional); 4 ranks, 22 stops, 290 pipes (Diapason, Gedeckt, Salicional, Dulciana). The Diapason of 30% tin was typically scale 46, Dulciana (spotted metal) scale 56, and Salicional (spotted metal) scale 60. John Selig of Reuter described some detail of the tonal design: "In every layout, we run two of the manual registers down to CC and such other ranks as do not run down that far, go to GG. We believe these additional bass pipes are too valuable to sacrifice and that none of the normal stops should be cut off at tenor C." When a Vox Humana was included, it was placed in a second enclosure. "We are opposed to placing the Vox on an open chest. It costs more to do it our way, but it gets results and that's what we want." Chimes were available at an additional cost. Rather amazingly for the late 1930s, Reuter's fully automatic Reproducing Solo Player was still available for installation on these instruments. A special company brochure for mortuary installations stated that the roll player was located in its own cabinet, included a roll changer and a catalog of rolls for purchase, some of which would play for up to 30 minutes.

Wind pressure was 4", and a Spencer Orgbobo of 1/4 to 1/2 horsepower was provided. For attached keydesks, the enclosure linkage was mechanical; with detached consoles, "electropneumatic individual shutter action" was used when the installation was in a case, a "swell motor" used when in a chamber without a case. A register crescendo was also provided. The key action was all-electric, of Reuter's own patents for its "Micro-Balanced Mag-



A Reuter Reproducing Solo Player cabinet, with its door open to show a roll in place

net" (nos. 1,986,956, patented January 8, 1935, and 2,083,644, patented June 15, 1937). This all-electric action was space efficient over most electropneumatic designs, which allowed Reuter to build these small organs with smaller width and length dimensions than similar instruments of most other builders. At that time, Reuter was the only firm in the United States to regularly build both electropneumatic and all-electric actions.

The dimensions of these instruments were 6'9" wide, between 5'5" to 5'10" deep, and 7'8" high. A choice of case designs was offered for installations not in chambers. Reuter offered a "special modernistic" case of "ribbon-grain mahogany, finished a rich brown, with macassar ebony trim at the top and a richly colored cloth especially selected to match, behind the open-work." Other woods used included oak, walnut, mahogany, birch, or gum. Some cases included non-speaking pipes in the facade. The entire organ's pipework was enclosed.

While Burhman's article was aimed at a clientele of musicians for their residences, the company actively marketed these organs for churches, chapels, schools, teaching and practice studios, lodge halls, and mortuaries. In a brochure from the 1940s, aimed

at the growing market of electronic instruments, one reads, "No substitute devices whatsoever in the production of tone are employed. . . . The same strict custom-building methods employed in the construction of the larger Reuter organs are likewise employed in the building of these smaller organs."

A 1946 brochure of installations indicates 133 of these small series organs were built by that time; in that year, Reuter surpassed the Opus 700 mark. The company would continue to build these instruments at least into the 1950s. As tastes in organ specifications changed, Reuter would develop new designs for small organs, but this is a topic for another installment of this series.

Below are the standard specifications of the smallest and largest models, named R1 and R7, respectively.

Standard Specification of Reuter Organ Company Model R1

- GREAT (Manual I)
16 Bourdon (T.C.)
16 Contra Viole (T.C.)
8 Stopped Flute (97 pipes)
8 Salicional (73 pipes)
4 Flute d'Amour
4 Violina
2 Flautino

- SWELL (Manual II)
16 Bourdon (T.C.)
8 Stopped Flute
8 Salicional
8 Quintadena (synthetic)
4 Flute d'Amour
4 Violina
2 1/2 Nasard
8 Orch. Horn (synthetic)
Tremolo

- PEDAL
16 Bourdon
8 Stopped Flute
8 Cello

- ACCESSORIES
Balanced expression shoe
Balanced crescendo shoe (with indicator light)
Wind indicator

Standard Specification of Reuter Organ Company Model R7

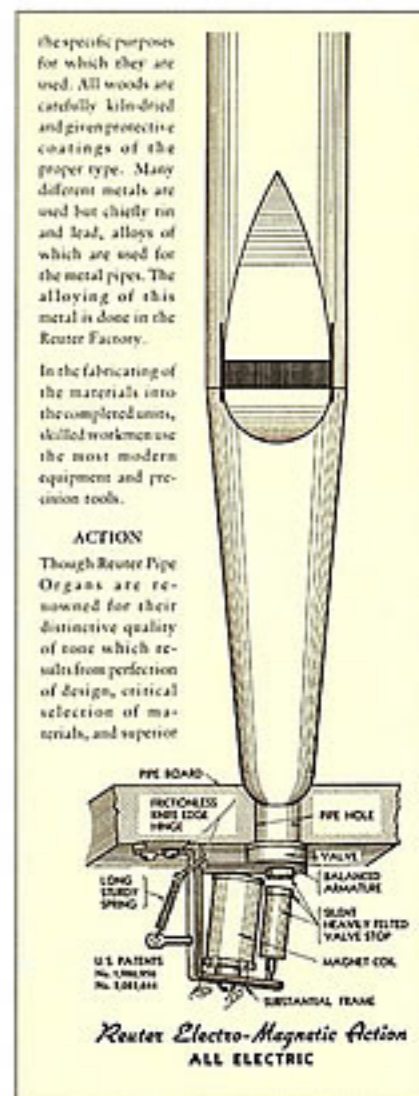
- GREAT (Manual I)
16 Diapason (T.C.)
8 Open Diapason (73 pipes)
8 Gedeckt (97 pipes)
8 Salicional (73 pipes)
8 Voix Celeste (T.C., 61 pipes)
4 Dulciana (from low G, 54 pipes)
4 Octave
4 Flute
4 Violina
4 Dulcet
16 Contra Oboe (T.C.)
8 Oboe (73 pipes)
4 Clarion

- SWELL (Manual II)
16 Bourdon (T.C.)
16 Contra Viole (T.C.)
8 Diapason
8 Gedeckt
8 Quintadena (synthetic)
8 Salicional
8 Voix Celeste (T.C.)
8 Dulciana (from low G)
4 Flute d'Amour
4 Violina
4 Voix Celeste
2 1/2 Nasard
2 Flautino
8 Oboe
8 Orch. Horn (synthetic)
Tremolo

- PEDAL
16 Bourdon
8 Open Diapason
8 Bass Flute
8 Cello
4 Octave
8 Oboe

- ACCESSORIES
Balanced expression shoe
Balanced crescendo shoe (with indicator light)
Wind indicator

SOURCES
"Miniature Organs by Reuter: Reuter Organ Company Offers Miniature Organs in Five Specifications with Detached Consoles for Professionals," T. Scott Burhman, *The American Organist* (May 1937): 154-57.
The following brochures were published by Reuter Organ Company, Lawrence, Kans. "Fine Small Pipe Organs" (undated, after 1940). "Presenting an Entirely New Series of Fine Small Pipe Organs by Reuter" (undated).



Vintage illustration from a Reuter brochure demonstrating the firm's all-electric action

"Reuter: Builders of Fine Pipe Organs for Over a Quarter of a Century" (undated; after 1942).
"Reuter Fine Pipe Organs: Ask Those Who Have Them" (1946).
"The Reuter Pipe Organ for The Funeral Home" (undated).
"Specification Manual for 'R' Series Organs" (c. 1940).

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