

During this last winter and spring I have been engaged in a research project cataloguing references to William H. Barnes and Ernest M. Skinner which have appeared in back issues of The Diapason. Both men were prolific writers of "Letters to the Editor" and the encounters between the two of them have been especially intriguing.

Neither William Barnes nor Ernest Skinner was one to back down on an argument, as is evident in a brisk exchange wherein Skinner takes umbrage at statements in Barnes' famous book that cast doubt on Skinner's claim to have been the original designer of certain stops. Skinner inquires: "Will Mr. Barnes please state in these columns who else produced an *authentic* English horn as an organ stop, and where it was placed previous to the date given in his book, *re my English horn*." Barnes replies; after musing why Mr. Skinner was finally getting around to complain about something written 15 years previous: "Mr. Anton Gottfried has produced a French horn, English horn, and clarinet for the organ in my home as far back as 1922 which compare favorably with anything that Mr. Skinner or his voicers have ever done ... Whether or not Mr. Skinner's claims are true" These minor skirmishes continued on through the years, and it is difficult to say who finally got the last word. Although Barnes outlived Skinner, the latter was perfectly capable of taking care of himself, even in his later, "declining" years, and could destroy the opposition with withering scorn. One hapless soul deplored what he called an all-time low in organ building in the decade from 1920 to 1930, the very period of some of Skinner's greatest activity. Skinner acidly commented in the next issue: "Permit me to thank Mr. _____ for giving me credit for 'building some notable instruments.' If I happen to have a chance I'll do him a like favor. But being now over ninety years old, I fear I may be denied the opportunity and that is one of the penalties of being an antique."

An impressive discovery of this research was the prominence of William H. Barnes for a period of almost 60 years. The Diapason carried his professional ad for practically every issue from the time he appeared on the scene until his death. He was quite active in the A.G.O., and played countless recitals, especially dedicatory programs on organs for which he had been the consultant. In fact, it seemed just about everybody did consult him, and he exercised a powerful influence over the type of organs installed in the Chicago area during his long career. He toured this country and Europe, sharing his insights with The Diapason's readers. His articles reveal his strong opinions on almost every subject, including favorable reviews and comments on "electronic substitutes." He was always referred to with great respect, and few ventured to take him on in argument. Considering the readiness with which many would debate with Skinner, I cannot help but wonder if people felt that Skinner was an easier target, since he was not in a position to harm one's career, as was the redoubtable Dr. Barnes!

This research has been fascinating and rewarding for me, and I look forward to sharing more of my findings with you.

Julie E. Stephens

MARSHALL AND ODENBRETT BROCHURE REPRINT

Reprints of a brochure of one-manual organs built by the 19th-century organbuilders Marshall and Odenbrett of Ripon, Wisconsin are available. Send a legal-sized, self-addressed, stamped envelope and 25¢ in stamps or coin to Susan Friesen, whose address is on the masthead of this newsletter.

Also available are copies of the Illinois Extant Organs List expanded by the Chicago-Midwest Chapter. The cost is 50¢ plus a 20¢ stamp (or the sum total in stamps or coin), also to be ordered from Susan Friesen. Addendums for changes to the list will be published when enough changes have become known to the chapter to warrant such publication.

1984 CONVENTION

The Chicago-Midwest Chapter has been approached concerning the possibility of hosting the 1984 National Convention of the Organ Historical Society instead of the 1985 convention previously anticipated. When this becomes official chapter members' help will be needed sooner. Decide now in what capacity you will be able to help!

MINUTES

Copies of the minutes of all business meetings of the chapter and the treasurer's reports are available to the chapter members upon request from the Secretary/Treasurer, Thomas Burrows, whose address is listed in the masthead. The minutes and reports have not been published in this journal due to space considerations.