

**Kimball Organ Preservation
Steering Committee Collection
M/A 2013.07.01**

Finding aid prepared by Bailey Diers

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October 2013
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Table of Contents

<u>Summary Information</u>	3
<u>History</u>	4
<u>Description of Collection</u>	4
<u>Controlled Access Headings</u>	5
<u>Collection Inventory</u>	6

Summary Information

Repository	James K. Hosmer Special Collections Library
Creator	Hirschhoff, Edwin C., 1905-2002
Creator	Kimball Organ Preservation Steering Committee.
Title	Kimball Organ Preservation Steering Committee Collection
Date [bulk]	Bulk, 1986-1993
Date [inclusive]	1927-1994
Extent	0.21 Linear feet
Language	English

History

The 10,000 pipe Kimball organ has been part of the heritage of the City of Minneapolis since it was first installed in the Municipal Auditorium in 1928. Hailed as one of the finest pipe organs of its kind, it still remains as a tribute to the fine craftsmanship of the W. W. Kimball Company of Chicago, who built the organ at an approximate cost of \$125,000.

The "Mighty Kimball" or "Voice of Minneapolis" as it was christened in 1928, is one of only three of its particular size ever manufactured by the Kimball Company. It is one of the largest pipe organs in the midwest, weighing over 30 tons, with handcrafted pipes that vary in size from 1/2 inch to over 30 feet. One of the unique features of the Kimball is the two consoles, a concert console and a theatre console, which in its early days rose dramatically out of the basement on elevators (a feature which was removed in the 1960s during the Auditorium remodel).

While the idea for the Kimball was strong, it lacked sufficient funding and support from the start, which caused problems throughout the organ's lifetime. A Twin Cities Musicians Union rule requiring the employment of 15 musicians whenever the organ was played, combined with the economic depression and new innovations in organ technology, meant that the organ was rarely played after its grand opening in 1928. Yet the Kimball was never forgotten and from the 1950s to the 1980s, it was used an estimated 10 or 12 times per year.

In 1986, plans were developed for a new convention center on the site of the Minneapolis Auditorium. With the backing of Mayor Donald Fraser and support from other city promoters including *StarTribune* Columnist Barbara Flanagan, the Minneapolis Organ Trust Fund was established to kickstart preservation efforts and save the Kimball from destruction. A committee of volunteers was also formed to raise an estimated \$1 million to refurbish and reinstall the organ in the new convention center. Donors "purchased" pipes, benefit concerts were held, and dozens of corporations and groups contributed to the funds, eventually raising more than \$700,000. An organ builder was selected to do the job and in July 1990, the organ parts were transferred from warehouse storage to the new Minneapolis Convention Center. Unfortunately, after seven years of struggle to save the organ, issues arose with the organ contractor and the job was left unfinished. Today, the Kimball sits disassembled in storage at the Minneapolis Convention Center, awaiting a new home or the chance to be rebuilt so it can sing again.

Description of Collection

The Kimball Organ Collection consists of one box which includes newspaper clippings, newsletters, programs, promotional material, and correspondence from the Kimball Organ Preservation Steering

Committee. Files contain some historical documents from the 1920s, the time in which the organ was built, but most records pertain to the preservation efforts of the late 1980s, early 1990s.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

James K. Hosmer Special Collections Library October 2013

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Kimball Organ Preservation Steering Committee.
- Minneapolis Auditorium and Convention Hall. History.
- W.W. Kimball and Company.

Subject(s)

- Minneapolis Auditorium and Convention Center -- History
- Organ (Musical instrument)

Collection Inventory

	Box	Folder
History 1988, 2013	1	1
Scope and Contents note		
<p>Articles and papers which include a comprehensive history of the "Mighty Kimball". Includes the Spring 2013 issue of <i>Hennepin History</i>, featuring an article titled "The Voice of Minneapolis" written by Paula Hirschhoff, daughter of Edwin C. Hirschhoff (member of the Kimball Organ Preservation Steering Committee).</p>		
Newspaper Clippings 1927-1994	1	2
Newsletters 1987, 1991-1993	1	3
Programs 1928, 1986-1993	1	4
Scope and Contents note		
<p>Includes event programs from Minneapolis Auditorium performances of the Kimball Organ in 1928 and from Benefit concerts held at the Basilica of Saint Mary in the late 1980s, early 1990s.</p>		
Publicity and Promotional Material 1986-1993	1	5
Scope and Contents note		

Promotional material includes invitations, letters of solicitation for donations, press releases, and informational brochures.

Miscellaneous: Stock Certificates 1927

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6

Scope and Contents note

Four stock certificates. In 1927 Mayor George Leach formed a citizens' committee to raise funds to build a new, larger organ at the new Minneapolis Auditorium. The committee began selling stock certificates for one dollar to citizens who supported the cause.

Preservation Steering Committee Files 1988-1993

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7

Scope and Contents note

The papers of Edwin C. Hirschhoff, member of the Kimball Organ Preservation Steering Committee. Includes correspondence to and from the steering committee, news releases, and lists of supporters and committee members.