

# Casavant Frères



Drawing of Opus 69 from the Casavant Frères Archives <sup>1</sup>

## ***Oswego, New York — St. Louis Catholic Church***

Two manuals and pedals, 21 stops, 23 ranks  
Attached drawknob keydesk, compass 58/30  
Mechanical key and stop action  
Opus 69, 1896  
Drawing: Casavant Frères Archives

Oswego, New York is located on the banks of Lake Ontario where it was once a booming shipping, shipbuilding and manufacturing center with factories producing everything from cornstarch to boilers. Today Oswego is a quiet college town, home to Oswego State University. The history of the Catholic Church in Oswego dates to the formation of St. Paul's Catholic Church in 1830. Eighteen years later, English speaking Catholics, mostly of Irish descent, formed St. Mary's Catholic Church on the west side of the Oswego River, which physically divides the city but also gave it the natural resource it had to achieve such prominence during a period when water travel was one of the primary means of transportation.

For many years the French and French-Canadians living in Oswego desired to have their own church where they could be ministered to in their native tongue. Initially they worshiped as a part of St. Mary's Church, however by 1870 they

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<sup>1</sup> The organ was designed and built to be located in the rear gallery of St. Louis Church. Due to the church's low ceiling, the organ façade has an unusually broad width in proportion to its height.

were able to organize their own parish, which was located near the center of the city just a few blocks from their former home at St. Mary's Parish.

By 1896 the parish had grown sufficiently to be able to purchase a two manual mechanical action organ from the Casavant brothers. On September 3, 1987 the ninety-one year old organ received a citation from the Organ Historical Society.

This organ served the parish for many decades until more recent times when the diocese was compelled to consolidate a number of parishes and decided to close St. Louis Church. The church and instrument were offered for sale and the organ remained in the building until it was purchased by St. Joseph Catholic Church in Camillus, New York where it was reinstalled in 2004.

The design of this instrument is fairly typical of two manual instruments that were installed in small parish churches at this time. The specification reflects the principal musical requirements of these parishes for an organ, which was to support the liturgy and accompany the choir and congregation. The presence of a large Swell division gives these organs flexibility and a wider dynamic range than what would have been possible had the same number of manual stops been more equally divided on the two manual divisions.

<b>Great Organ</b>		<b>Swell Organ</b>	
Open Diapason	8	Bourdon (Bass & Treble)	16
Melodia	8	Open Diapason	8
Gamba	8	Stopped Diapason	8
Dulciana (Common bass, 7 notes)	8	Harmonic Flute (Common bass)	8
Octave	4	Viola di Gamba	8
		Voix Celeste (TC)	8
		Fugara	4
		Harmonic Flute	4
		Piccolo	2
		Mixture	III
		Trumpet	8
		Oboe & Bassoon	8
		Cor Anglais	8
		Tremulant	
<b>Pedal Organ</b>			
Double Open Diapason	16		
Bourdon	16		
Violoncello	8		
<b>Couplers</b>			
Great to Pedal			
Swell to Pedal			
Swell Sub Octave to Great			
Swell to Great			

For a photograph of the organ in the church in Oswego please visit the Published Articles section of the website for a reprint of Antoine Bouchard's article "Canada's Oldest Organbuilding Firm" (p. 14) originally published in *The Tracker: Journal of the Organ Historical Society*.