

# THE MACCON NEWS

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Photo by Rufus Jones

Robert Hill Checks Out Auditorium Organ

# Pipe Organ Worth Saving, Expert Says

By GRACE CRAWFORD

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Henry Seibert, New York concert organist, was the first musician to play the huge pipe organ at Macon City Auditorium.

His recital was part of the festivities there Nov. 23, 1925, when the \$795,000 auditorium was dedicated.

Now, nearly 50 years later, the grandson of the man whose company built the organ has visited Macon to see if the long-unplayed instrument is worth restoring.

Peter Moller Daniels, whose grandfather founded the M.P. Moller Organ Co. in Hagerstown, Md., made a trip to Georgia a few days

ago. "And for a two-fold purpose," according to Peter E. Dennis, consulting engineer for Dennis and Dennis, architectural engineers. The Macon firm has been retained by the city and the Middle Georgia Coliseum Authority to plan restoration work on the auditorium. It will be done over a two- to three-year period.

When the Moller Company vice president came to Georgia, he came not only to check out the auditorium's pipe organ, but in an attempt to save the old organ in Atlanta's Fox Theater, scheduled for demolition.

The visit here was strictly for the purpose of evaluation.

Dennis said, "to determine the condition of the organ, to see if it could be restored, and if so, how much it would cost."

After climbing around in the dusty auditorium for an hour or so, Daniels said the instrument, "a very fine example of a concert organ," definitely is worth saving. The pipes, he reported, are in good condition.

"He went over it extensively," Dennis said, "and recommended a factory reconditioning. He said the organ would have to go back to Maryland and down the assembly line, but when the work was done, it would be worth a half a million dollars."

Purchased by the city in

1925 for \$35,000, the pipe organ has 4,333 tone pipes, according to Dennis, "ranging in length from 3/4 inch to 32 feet. And no tube has the same tone."

He said no plans have been made for reconditioning the organ, which, if approved by the Coliseum Authority and Council, would be the last part of the restoration program. He said the organ company representative was in Macon simply to make recommendations.

Part of those recommendations was that the organ be removed from the auditorium and stored so it would not be further damaged.

Dennis said the interest of Macon pharmacist Robert

Hill "is one of the reasons we still have an organ to rebuild." Hill a member of a national organization for the preservation of old organs, has worked on the huge musical instrument periodically, and without charge, for the past 10 years or so, once rebuilding the console.

Dennis said the restoration program is in the process of being transferred from City Council to the Middle Georgia Coliseum Authority.

He said plans for the exterior restoration of the 50-year-old building facility have been completed, "and as soon as the transfer is made, we'll be putting the work out bids."

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# Old Organ Worth Saving — Expert

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The work will include cleaning of the exterior and restoration of the stone work, installation of new doors and windows, "and revamping the terraces and colonnade."

The old cooling tower on

the back portion of the auditorium also will be removed, "and we'll be doing some roof work."

As for the inner restoration, plans are in the works, he said.

Dennis said when the auditorium is restored, it will be used for concerts, entertainment and meetings but not as an athletic complex.