



[Otto Hofmann: Texas organbuilder \(1950-1967\)](#)

Author: **David J Polley**

Publication: [ETD collection for University of Nebraska - Lincoln](#)

Abstract

Otto Hofmann, a Texas native, built organs in the Organ Reform style from the late 1940s through the 1980s. One of the first American post-World War II builders actively to design and build instruments following the precepts in Albert Schweitzer's 1906 treatise Deutsche und Franzosische Orgelbaukunst, Hofmann is credited with building the first modern tracker action organ installed in a permanent, modern case in America in Albany, Texas in 1956.

During his career, Hofmann was a leader in bringing the Organ Reform to Texas. Sensing a need for change in organ design, Hofmann studied instruments in Europe and worked to incorporate European ideals in the instruments he built for American churches and universities. He built organs throughout central Texas in addition to instruments in Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Illinois. Hofmann advocated low wind pressures, mechanical actions, encased instruments, and classically inspired stoplists. In addition, many of his apprentices are now successful organ builders.

Hofmann's views concerning the organ as an accompanying instrument differed from many of the other progressive builders active in the 1950s and 60s. His experiences growing up near Kyle, Texas in a German settlement rich in the German choral singing tradition profoundly influenced his concepts of organ design and function. The organ needed to sing, in his opinion, and it should entice others to sing as well. This approach to organ sound differed from many other builders who were more interested in building replicas of historic instruments at the expense of practicality. During this time Hofmann was the undisputed leader in organ building in Texas. The number of instruments he built, plus his desire to work with any church which wished to have a pipe organ, helped establish the lighter, clearer sounds inspired by the Organ Reform. He was sought out because of the quality of his workmanship, his forward looking, practical designs, and the clarity of his voicing techniques.