CHAPTER I
EARLY ORGANS

During the time of Spanish colonization, the Jesuit Missions brought music and musical instruments to many parts of the South American continent, including what is now Argentina, Bolivia, Uruguay, and Paraguay. The missionary fathers used music as a primary tool for the evangelization of the inhabitants, teaching them not only to sing and play, but also to build their own instruments. Foremost among these trades was organ building.

It is unfortunate that very few organs from this period survive. The reason seems clear: during Argentina's prosperity in the latter part of the nineteenth century, many of these instruments were replaced by new ones. Such was not the case in other South American countries like Perú and Bolivia, where the continuously poor economic condition have actually facilitated the preservation of many instruments built during the time of the Spanish colonization. It is possible, however, that there are instruments (whole or in part) in Argentina that have yet to be rediscovered by historians and musicologists.

Jesuit documents of the time point to the importance placed on organs and organ music:

> Father Angulo, a Jesuit priest, states that in 1585, in Santiago del Estero, during an official reception, "When we entered the Church, they played the organ and bells."[3]

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[3] Quoted by Antonio Astrain, *Historia de la compañía de Jesús en la Asistencia de España* (Nurnberg: 1995). 4:608.

Father Angulo's document is the earliest source reporting the existence of an organ in Argentina (1585).

The next excerpt documents the fact that in the year 1628 accomplished organists were already present in Buenos Aires.

> In 1628 Don Francisco de Céspedes, a governor of the Spanish colonies in the Río de La Plata provinces, wrote: "The Indians from Uruguay have come here [Buenos Aires], more than 20, great musicians of organ, violin and other instruments, to participate in Masses and Dances."[4]

In the year 1691 Father Sepp, a missionary who had an extensive musical background, and was well regarded as an organist, provided the first information regarding organ building activities:

> Already, our ancestors have taught these people (inhabitants)—very simple people but very interesting to talk with—not only religion, but also how to make bread, food, clothing, to paint, cast bells, and build organs as well as other musical instruments.[5]

In the letters that Father Sepp wrote describing his trip to the Southern Hemisphere, he included the following paragraph that gives us remarkable information about the sound and origin of some of the organs in the Buenos Aires area:

> The principal defect of this music is that the organ did not possess enough bass tone. To appreciate how important music was in these territories, you should know that the *Padre procurador* [priest in charge of the Mission], the one that brought us here, has purchased an organ in Flandes for Buenos Aires that has the cost of one thousand *duros* [monetary unit]. [6]

Based on these documents, which represent a very small fraction of those in existence, we can indeed glimpse the extent to which music and the organ played an

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[4] Quoted by Enrique Peña, Francisco de Céspedes (Buenos Aires: Imprenta Coni Hermanos, 1916).

[5] *Ibid.* 3.

[6] *Ibid.* 3.

important role in this society. Among the missionary musicians who arrived to the New World to be part of this music environment was a renowned Italian composer and organist, Domenico Zipoli.

DOMENICO ZIPOLI IN ARGENTINA

Zipoli was born in Italy in the year 1688. He studied with several great musicians of the time, including Alessandro Scarlatti and Bernardo Pasquini, and collaborated with Casini, Gasparini, and Caldara in the composition of an oratorio in Florence. In the year 1717 he undertook the long journey to Argentina. Musicologist Robert Stevenson gives the following account of Zipoli's move to South America:

> Zipoli joined the Society of Jesus on 1 July 1716, and soon after went to Seville to await passage to the Paraguay province. With 53 other prospective Jesuit missionaries he sailed from Cadiz on 5 April 1717. After a violent storm he and the others disembarked in July at Buenos Aires, and after 15 days set out for Córdoba. By 1724 he had completed with distinction the required three years each of philosophy and theology at the Jesuit Colegio Máximo and university in Córdoba. He was ready to receive priest's orders in 1725, but died (of tuberculosis) without them for lack of a bishop in Córdoba to ordain him that year.[7]

Zipoli is considered the father of all Argentinean composers, as he was the first trained composer to arrive and pass his knowledge on to both the inhabitants of the land and *criollos* (sons and daughters of the first Spaniards who arrived to the New World). His organ compositions, *Sonate d'Intavolatura,* were published in Rome in 1716 and include: Toccata, Five sets of four Versos (each ending with a Canzona), Two Elevations, Post Communion, Offertory and Pastorale. His music is exquisite, ranging from brilliant,

[7] Robert Stevenson. http://xoomer.virgilio.it/zipoli/bioeng.html. February 6, 2006.

to charming, to reflective. A unique characteristic of his style is the ease with which he moves between keys.

Zipoli brings us to the first organ to be studied in our journey. Several writers have suggested that the composer played the organ now housed at a museum in the city of Córdoba, *Museo Histórico Marqués de Sobremonte*.

THE ORGAN AT THE MUSEUM MARQUÉS DE SOBREMONTE

The historical province of Córdoba is situated in the center of the country. During the time of the Spanish Colony (before the year 1816), Córdoba was one of the most important religious and cultural centers. The building of the Museum (Marqués de Sobremonte) dates from the eighteenth century and it is a remarkable historic monument.

The organ was probably built for a monastery in the city of Córdoba. The date of its transfer to the museum is unknown. This small instrument is one of the only three organs that survived from the Spanish colonies and post colonial period. Due to the fact that there is no written documentation concerning its builder and date of construction, this organ has been a subject of controversy and discussion among the specialists.

In the *Censo y Estudio de Órganos de la República Argentina*, we find the following description of the organ:

> Builder anonymous. Probably it was built for a monastery, *Monasterio de las Monjas Teresas,* where it belonged before it was moved to the Museum. There is no precise date of construction, but it could date from the middle of the eighteenth century.[8]

[8] Miguel Juárez, *Censo y Estudio de los Órganos de la República Argentina*, (Buenos Aires: Conferencia Episcopal Argentina, 1996).

Specifications

Manual	**Pedal**
Principal 4'	Bourdon 8'
Flaute 4'	Bourdon 4'
Octava 2'	
Mixture	

Mechanical key and stop action

Compass:
Manual: C to f'''
Pedal: C to B (permanently coupled to the Manual)

The wind is produced manually.

Mixture composition:

First rank:	C------B	c------b	c'------b'	c''----------f'''	
	1 ⅓'	2'	2 ⅔'	8'	
Second rank:	C------B	c------b	c'------b'	c''------b''	c'''----------f'''
	1'	1 ⅓'	2'	8'	5 ⅓'

The case of the organ, in which all the pipes belonging to the four stops of the manual are enclosed (see figure 3), is built of cedar. The pipes for the two stops of the pedal are placed behind the instrument, and in front of the bellows. Because the back of the case is open, one could speculate that the organ was placed against a wall. This theory is also supported by the fact that there is a clear mark on the right side panel showing where the bellows' feeding pipe was. Therefore, the organ was probably a one manual instrument with four stops. The keyboard is not original.

Figure 3: **Organ at the Museum Marqués de Sobremonte, Córdoba.**
Front view.
Photo: Edgardo Menéndez. July 30, 1997

In the picture above we can observe a very rudimentary façade. No pipes are exposed and the grill above the keyboard looks like a church confessional. The four knobs for the stops are situated two in each side of the music rack.

Figure 4: **Organ at the Museum Marqués de Sobremonte, Córdoba.**
Front view. Pedal board.
Photo: Edgardo Menéndez. July 30, 1997

Figure 4 shows the pedal board. It seems to have been used to play simple pedal parts (sustain notes and cadences). There are no knobs for the two pedal ranks. Although the author of this study has named them Bourdon 8' and Bourdon 4', there is no source or inscription with these names or other names to be found. These two ranks of wooden pipes, clearly bourdon pipes, are very similar in construction and sound. The first octave of the manual is permanently coupled to pedal, but this could be a very recent addition.

Figure 5: **Organ at the Museum Marqués de Sobremonte, Córdoba.**
Side view.
Photo: Edgardo Menéndez. July 30, 1997

In figure 5, the handle for the wind mechanism can be observed. Since it is physically possible to play simple music (accompany simple chant and responses) and pump air at the same time, one could assume that at some point in the history of the instrument, the handle was installed in the current position to facilitate this. Behind the main case, the pipes belonging to the Bourdon 8' and Bourdon 4' stops can be observed.

Although Domenico Zipoli has long been associated with this organ, this author has concluded that the Italian composer probably never played this instrument and that his legendary involvement with it has no firm historic foundation. First, in the year 1729, a priest named Father Martin Schmid arrived in Buenos Aires, as was then common, before traveling North by land to his final destination at the missions of what today is Bolivia (known then as *reducciones de Chiquitos).* One of his stops was in Córdoba, where he rested for two months. During this time, he probably copied the Zipoli pieces that were recently discovered in Bolivia. Among these works there are some organ compositions. Some of these pieces are duplications of those in the *Sonate d'Intavolatura*, but with a much simpler texture. It seems that Zipoli had probably adapted the pieces for the inhabitants of the New World who were not familiar with European music. It is important to note that there are registration indications which call for stops not found in the organ at the Museum in Córdoba. For example, in the middle section of the well-known Pastoral in C, there is a registration indication that seems to read "Corneta", a stop considered foreign to the organ in Córdoba.

Second, it seems that if Zipoli ever played this organ, he must have felt very limited by its resources. Before moving to Argentina, Zipoli was the organist at the Jesuit Church in Rome, and even though the specifications of that organ are not known, there is an organ by the same builder, Wilhem Hermans, in Pistoia. Maestro Luigi Ferdinando Tagliavini gives us the following description of Zipoli's organ in Pistoia:

> It is known that it was built by Flemish organ builder Wilhem Hermans who did much work in Italy, and among others, built the famous cathedral organ at Como and that in S. Maria di Carignano in Genoa. Only one instrument by Hermans

appears to have been preserved today, that is in the Church of Santo Spiritu in Pistoia.[9]

Specifications of the Pistoia (Italy) organ:

Manual (C-c''', with short octave)

Principal	8'
Octave	4'
Fifteenth	2'
Nineteenth	1 $^{1}/_{3}$'
Two-and twentieth	1'
Six-and twentieth	$^{2}/_{3}$'
Stopped Diapason	8'
Twelfth Flute	$^{2}/_{3}$'
Cornet	3 ranks (Treble)
Flute	2' (Bass)
Trumpet	8' (Treble)
Trumpet	8' (Bass)
Mosetto (Reed)	8' (Treble)
Violoncello (Reed)	4' (Bass)

Pedal (C-f, with short octave and permanently coupled to the Manual)

Accessories
2 Nightingales, Drum, Ventil and Tremulant

Thus, these two instruments are clearly quite dissimilar, not only in size and tonal colors available, but also in the concepts of design and construction. Among the unique features of this instrument are the two Nightingales. It is possible that the organ in Córdoba was actually built later, at the end of the eighteenth century or beginning of the nineteenth century, which again casts doubt on Zipoli's involvement.

While visiting the organ at the Museum, the author of this study came across a very important document that could be the answer to the myth regarding the instrument at

[9] Luigi Ferdinando Tagliavini, Domenico Zipoli: Preface to *Sonata d'Intavolatura per Organo e Cimbalo*. (Germany: Durchgesehene Auflage, 1988).

the Museum. Written in 1820, the document was found by Dr. Josefina Piana, *Sub Gerente de Patrimonios y Museos, Córdoba* and is included in its entirety in Appendix II. This document shows accounting information regarding a new organ for the *Monasterio de las Monjas Teresas* (the previous home of the organ now at the Museum). Therefore it is possible that the Córdoba organ was built in the year 1820. This document deserves a detailed and separate study which the author of *Historical Pipe Organs in Argentina* will address in the near future.

Based on his experience and research, professor Miguel Juárez, believes that the Córdoba instrument may have been partially the work of Louis Joben, a French organ builder who moved to Argentina around 1789. [10]

A French Organ Builder in Argentina

It is well documented that Joben built an organ for the *Convento Grande de San Ramón,* of the Order of the *Mercedarios* in Buenos Aires, today the Church of *La Merced.*[11] According to church records this organ had seven ranks and was sold to the Basilica of San Ponciano, in the city of La Plata, at the end of the nineteenth century. It was replaced with a new instrument in 1904, and its current whereabouts are unknown.

Many details of Joben's life are shrouded in mystery and probably will remain so. There are no records of his entry into the country. The spelling of his name is found in several sources with different variations: Joben, Joven, Oben, J'Oben. A number of

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[10] Miguel Juárez, *El Órgano Positivo de San Pedro de Susques*. http://amusindias.online.fr/html/modules. March 17, 2006.

[11] Enrique Godoy, *Louis Joben, un Organero Francés en Buenos Aires durante la Colonia.* http://www.galeon.com/enriquegodoy/cvitae204010.html. March 17, 2006.

attempts have been made to find information regarding his organ building activities in France, before he moved to Argentina, but no connection can be established.

One can only surmise that Joben left France during the very difficult years preceding the French Revolution looking for a better life in South America, where he established himself as an organ builder. Perhaps, he was just an apprentice in an organ shop in his country of origin and once in Buenos Aires, made his first organ building attempts on his own. There is no doubt that he created a successful business in the New World. According to church documents he built organs not only for the *Convento Grande de San Ramón*, but also for several Churches in Buenos Aires: *Convento de San Francisco*, Santo Domingo, as well as in other provinces, including Córdoba.

In 1794 Joben offered to build an organ for the Cathedral of Buenos Aires. In order to promote his idea he printed a simple brochure (*volante*) explaining his great dream. A copy of the brochure is now found in the *Biblioteca Nacional de Buenos Aires*. Portions of the document are translated below and in the next page:

> Don Luis Joven, organ builder of the town of Santísima Trinidad de Buenos Aires, wants the people to know, that considering the magnificent Cathedral, I have designed an organ accordingly to the beauty of the church. The organ which will be admired for its exceptional design will also be of great use during the Cathedral's services, saving great amount of funds due to the fact that it will create a sound similar to that of full orchestra, therefore in the future making it unnecessary to hire an instrumental group.[12]

The document then continues promoting the instrument by explaining how it is going to be installed in the back of the Cathedral, how well he had taken into consideration the proportions of the church, where the choir was going to stand, how easy

[12] Courtesy of Professor Miguel Juárez.

its maintenance would be, how he had already thought about a possible way to move the whole instrument if necessary, etc. A very interesting part is his claim maintaining that eight organists could play at the same time:

> A particularity of the organ will be that when necessary, for special occasions, it will be possible to have eight organists playing at the same time, each playing his part and together replacing an orchestra of one hundred musicians. On other occasions it may be played by only one organist.

There is no evidence that the organ was ever built.

We have no indication of this builder's talent since there are no instruments in Europe or Argentina that can be firmly attributed to him with certainty. It is very possible, however, that he had some connection with the organ in the museum in Córdoba as well as the next organ in this study: the Colonial Organ at the Metropolitan Cathedral of Buenos Aires.

COLONIAL ORGAN AT THE METROPOLITAN CATHEDRAL OF BUENOS AIRES

The Cathedral of Buenos Aires is located in the heart of the city. Following the European tradition, the mother Church is built alongside the most important government buildings, including the office of the President, *Casa Rosada,* the National Bank and the historic *Cabildo.* This collection of superb architecture is to be found around the main square: *Plaza de Mayo*.

The history of the building of the *Catedral Metropolitana* began in the sixteenth century. The first two centuries are a complicated story of demolitions and new construction, until the erection of the present edifice was finally started. This gorgeous Italian Renaissance-style building was finished at last in 1852. It houses two historical

instruments: the Choir Organ (unknown builder) and the Main Organ (E. F. Walcker, 1871).

The Choir Organ (or Colonial Organ, as the local organists call it) has been a subject of discussion and study for many years. It seems that the instrument itself has gone through many revisions, suffering at the hands of builders and organists who, following trends and personal predilections, were not aware of its historical value. Today the hope is that the organ will be historically restored, including reconstruction according to the original specification, pitch and wind system. Previously installed in a hospital chapel, *Hospital de Santa Catalina,* it was moved to the Cathedral in 1822. Unfortunately, there are no extant documents relating to the origin of the organ, since the hospital has been demolished.

The following excerpts are from a study by Dr. Claudio Di Veroli on the origin and specification of the organ:

> The opinion of two authorities is relevant here: Prof. Enrique G. Rimoldi – organist of the Buenos Aires Cathedral – who carried on restoration and maintenance work on the instrument, and Miguel P. Juárez – organist at the Basilica of S. Antonio de Padua in Buenos Aires…. They both believe that the instrument belongs to the late Baroque aesthetic, with some elements of French style mainly visible in the decoration of the case. Prof. Juárez once told me that the organ could well be the work of Louis Joben, a builder from Southern France – Province – who is known to have worked in Argentina in the late Colonial times, around 1800. Several recent discoveries support the French origin. Some details also lead Prof. Rimoldi to believe that it is very likely that the instrument, whoever its maker was, was built locally in Buenos Aires.[13]

As previously stated, continuing research by several scholars may uncover, in the near future, some European connection to the work of Louis Joben. This information will

[13] Claudio Di Veroli, *On the Origin and Original Specification of the Baroque Organ in the Buenos Aires Cathedral.* (Bray: 2002).

be essential in our quest to understand the roots of these organs. The complications regarding the study of this specific instrument are so immense that it is not possible at this time to get involved with the details. Once all the mysteries have finally been solved, the Cathedral Choir Organ will merit a book devoted entirely to itself.

Present Specifications

There are two rows of stop knobs, one on each side of the manual keyboard as follows:

Doble sic (Bass)	Flautado (Soprano)
Flauta	Cimbala
Clarin[14]	Quinta
Octaba (Bass)	Donle (Soprano)
Bordin (Bass)	Octaba (Soprano)
Ruiseñor	Bordon (Soprano)

The pedal stop, Bajo 4', has no knob (it is permanently on)
The manual is divided in Bass (C-b) and Soprano (c' to f'''). Some stops are completed.

Action: mechanical
Compass: Manual: C to f'''
Pedal: C to e (pull-downs)

[14] There are no pipes for this stop. However, upon examination of the instrument, one can see that the Clarin (reed) was mounted on the façade horizontally “en chamade”, these pipes were mounted from bottom to top in two rows, with probably the biggest pipes on the top. The mechanism, tubing from the main chest, is still there but only one pipe has survived.

Chart 1: Dr. Di Veroli's examination of the stop list:[15]

Keyboard	Stop	Pitch	Name	Details
MANUAL	Open Diapason	8'	Flautado	*Soprano only*
	Stopped Diap.	8'	Bordon	*Divided into Bass and Soprano*
	Octave	4'	Octaba	*Divided into Bass and Soprano*
	Flute	4'	Flauta	*Complete.*
	Nasard	2 ⅔'	Quinta	*Complete, lowest 4 pipes stopped*
	Superoctave	2'	Doble	*Divided into Bass and Soprano*
	Fifth	1 ⅓'	Cimbala	*Complete, starting at F*
PEDAL	Octave	4'		*No stop knob, today disconnected*
ACCESSORIES	Tremolo	-	-	*Modern, now disabled*
	Nightingale	-	Ruiseñor	*Bird's warble from a tube filled with water*

The attractive instrument contains two façade. One could imagine that the original design was due to a corner installation. See figure 6. The instrument is now installed near the Sanctuary, at floor level and on the right hand side. It is in good playing condition and used mostly for recitals.

[15] *Ibid. 11.*

Figure 6: **Colonial Organ at the Cathedral of Buenos Aires, Argentina.**
Corner view.
Photo: David Merello. September 25, 1999

As shown in figure 6, the organ has a gorgeous case. It is evident here that its builder knew the great European tradition of organ case decoration.

Figure 7: **Colonial Organ at the Cathedral of Buenos Aires, Argentina.**
Front view.
Photo: David Merello. September 25, 1999

Figure 7 shows the great detail of the construction of the case. From the alignment of the pipe mouths to the golden top, every detail was taken into consideration by the unknown builder.

Figure 8: **Colonial Organ at the Cathedral of Buenos Aires, Argentina.**
Front view (lower section).
Photo: David Merello. September 25, 1999

As shown in figure 8, the Pedals are short. This is an indication that the pedal was probably used for sustained notes, cadences, and/or *cantus firmus*. The beautiful paintings in the panels are clearly visible.

AN ORGAN FOR PROCESSIONS

The third and final organ dealt within this chapter, the *Positivo de San Pedro de Susques*, is, the most historically important instrument pertaining to this group. Reports of recent research on the remaining parts of the instrument have suggested that it is probably one of the oldest examples of *Ibero-American* organs, dating approximately from the beginning of the 17th century.[16]

Susques is located in the southwestern part of the province of Jujuy. This out-of-the-way town, which serves as the border crossing to Chile, has only 671 inhabitants. Throughout its history, the village has been a point of conflict between three countries, belonging first to Chile, then Bolivia and finally becoming part of Argentina.

The Church, *San Pedro*, dates from 1598 and still preserves its primitive construction with its thatched roof and tower (see figure 10). Inside there are wonderful paintings of the art of the famous Cuzco School. The organ is located in a choir loft that can be reached only by climbing a very narrow ladder. There is no information concerning how long the instrument has been located there.

This organ is a very different and specific instrument: *Órgano para procesiones* or *Pampa Piano,* were the names given to these kinds of instruments by the inhabitants of Perú and the Alto Perú (Bolivia today). According to Miguel Juárez there was, in this part of the world, a great tradition of processions venerating not only the different Roman Catholic Saints, but also in adoration of the four cardinal points, the sun and the moon, as

[16] *Ibid. 10.*

well as other items following the traditions of the indigenous peoples (Inca). [17] It also appears that from the early days, the Catholic Church blended their celebrations with the local customs to create a new form of open religion, where the great respect emanating from peoples on both sides created a unique experience. The small organ carried on a *carro* (wagon) was probably used for these celebrations.

The only parts of the organ that have not survived are the pipes. The rest of the organ (keyboard, bellows, chest) is in decent condition and in time a complete restoration, according to the original plan, will be possible.

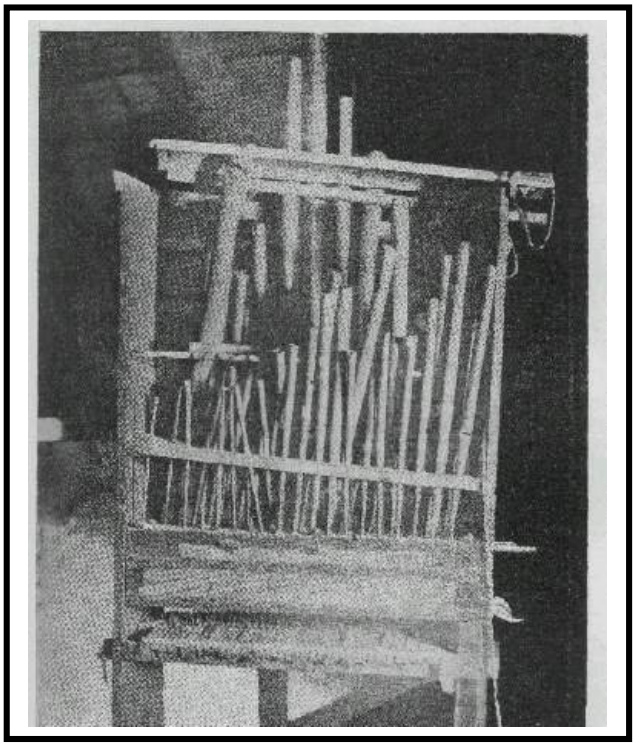

Figure 9: **Órgano para procesiones. Susques, Argentina**
Front view
Photo: Guillermo Furlong, 1957

Figure 9 shows the organ as it was in the year 1957.

[17] *Ibid.*

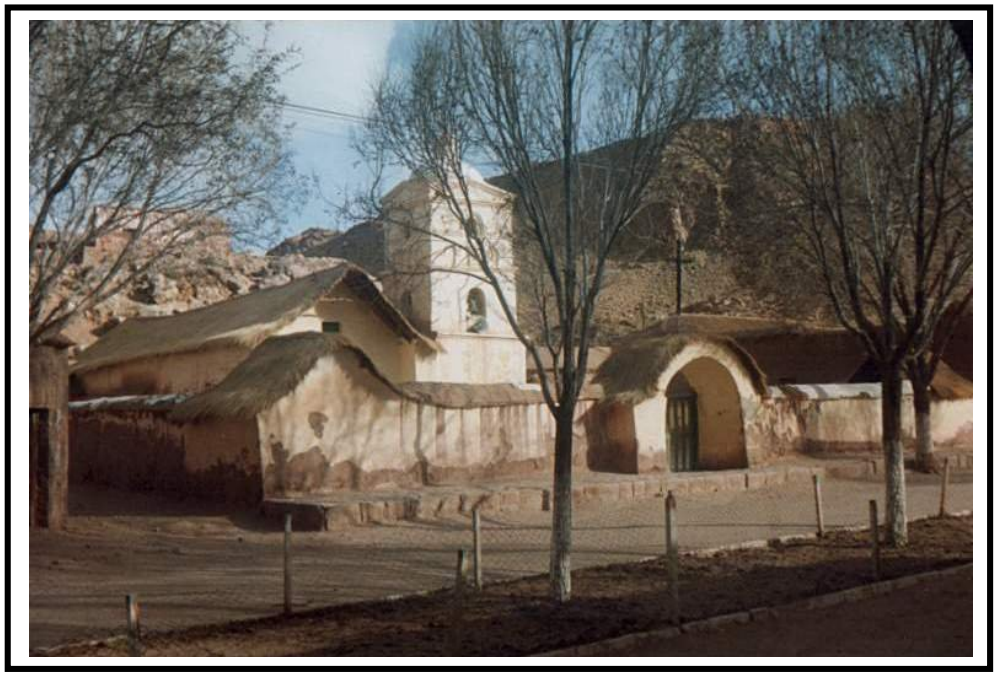

Figure 10: **Church of San Pedro de Susques in Salta, Argentina**
Photo: Miguel Juarez, 1985

The organ is housed in the Andean Church of San Pedro de Susques shown in the picture above. This remote area has escaped modern times, leaving its inhabitants enjoy a very peaceful life.

By examining the chest, one can observe that there were three stops. One of the stops is a complete rank, while the other two are divided, following the Spanish tradition, between c and c#'. The instrument looks like a mini-organ; everything is small. By studying the openings for the pipes on the chest one can see that the lowest rank was probably only 2', making this a very high-pitched instrument. The compass of forty notes is atypical. In the lower octave we can observe the Spanish representative *Octava Corta*

(short octave). It is likely that this instrument was brought to Susques from Perú or Alto Perú *a lomo de burro* (mounted on a mule).

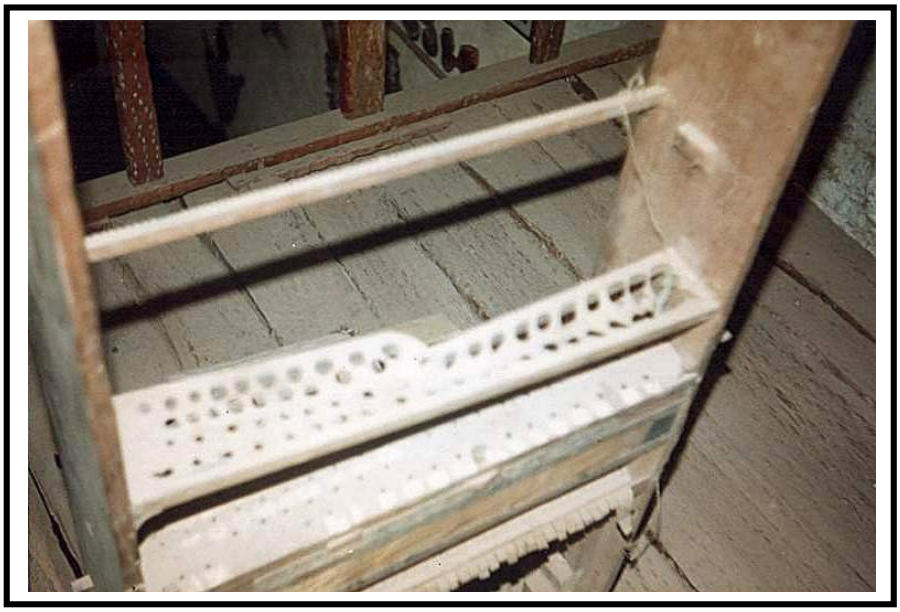

Figure 11: **Some remaining parts of the organ of Susques, Argentina**
Back view
Photo: Miguel Juárez, 1985

The music performed on this organ was probably limited to simple autochthon hymns that the congregation sang during the festivities. There is no record of any academic music having been developed in this part of the world.

As this author has stated in the introduction, it is disappointing to realize that many pipe organs existed during the time of the colonization and that they have all but disappeared. Our hope is that in the near future, scholars will find more of these early instruments that will have survived the destruction of modern times. The following chapters of this study will take the reader to nineteenth and twentieth century Argentina and to the organs that probably replaced many of the early instruments. These newer

organs were imported from several countries, including Italy, France, Germany, and Great Britain during the period from 1850 to 1920. Since organ design differed significantly among builders from each of these countries, a separate chapter will be devoted to the contributions of each country to *Historic Pipe Organs in Argentina*. The next chapter, will address the Italian organs as these were among the earliest organs imported to Argentina during the nineteenth century.