

ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Rochester, New York
67 Ranks, 4 Manual & Pedal

Historic Restoration of E.M. Skinner's Opus 655, 1927

The restoration of the Ernest M. Skinner pipe organ at St. Paul's Episcopal Church offered our firm a unique opportunity to perform a "museum quality" restoration on one of Rochester's jewels. Skinner's organs of this period were considered their finest; according to noted consultant, Jonathan Ambrosino "In this organ, St. Paul's has the aesthetic equivalent of a Tiffany window...only much more rare".

The restoration work included detailed documentation and research to make certain that modern materials would be equivalent to those used by Mr. Skinner. Studying and duplicating the process of leathering was important with every component. Replacing thou-



THE PIPEWORK: A small portion of the 4,474 pipes, that were meticulously restored and revoiced back to E.M. Skinner specifications.



THE TOWER AT ST. PAULS:
A Rochester, NY landmark.

sands of feet of leather and cork gasketing, reconditioning of hundreds of feet of wind conductors, cleaning and shellacking the two-story structure that held the pipes and wind system and the stripping, washing and re-shellacking of 4,474 pipes was a year long process.

The St. Paul's organ was very large in scope and we knew it would be important for the success of the project to include other noted experts in the field. In addition to Mr. Ambrosino, the church chose Nicholas Thompson-Allen and Joseph Dzeda of the A. Thompson-Allen Company (CT) to assist with the restoration of the console and percussion. Chris Broome of Broome & Company (CT) was chosen to complete the voicing of the sixteen sets of unique and specialized reeds. This collaboration would be the key to the success of this project.

Our Tonal Director, Duane Prill spent

nearly one year going over the organ's pipework one pipe at a time, making repairs and attending to the many exacting aspects of the voicing process. As one of the foremost voicers in the country, Duane was excited to work with these pipes and work in this voicing style of the old Masters. Duane Prill and consultant Jonathan Ambrosino would ensure a successful end to the project by spending nearly a month listening and adjusting the pipes in their acoustical environment. The tonal finishing was assisted by St. Paul's Music Director and Organist Dr. Robert Poovey, who was in continual discussion with throughout the process.

With this level of expertise and attention to detail, the project is being celebrated as a fabulous success.

— Richard B. Parsons
President



THE PEDAL & GREAT DIVISION PIPEWORK: This open division holds the two 32' ranks in St. Paul's two-story chamber, along with all unexpressive pipework (above). The Rochester Democrat and Chronicle reporting on the two year process of restoring this organ (right).



Pipe organ being restored to its glory

End in sight for \$1.2 Million project at St. Paul's

Jeff Deveronica

Democrat & Chronicle Staff writer (excerpts from article)

Being in charge of a \$1.2 million project to restore the massive, 84-year-old organ at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Rochester has meant more to Matt Parsons than just hard work.

It has been a link to the past.

His great-great-grandfather, Gideon Parsons, helped build the organ, which was constructed in Boston by E.M. Skinner, America's foremost organ company in the early 1900's. His grandfather, Bryant Parsons Sr.; father, Richard; and uncle, Calvin also have

worked on maintaining the 4,474-pipe instrument over the years.

"My great-great-grandfather's signature is on some of the pipes," said Matt Parsons, 31, who is the project manager, "so that was pretty cool to see."

St. Paul's parishioners will have to wait until late this fall to hear how splendid the organ sounds once again. That's when the 18-month task of tearing out, restoring and then re-installing the organ is scheduled for completion. "Tonal finishing" and "voicing,"

TONAL FINISHING: Duane Prill final tuning of the Great division Mixture pipes.





INSTALLING THE REEDS: Consultant, Jonathan Ambrosino, works on tonal finishing of the English Horn.

to make sure the three-story organ sounds as it should, should be ready by this Christmas, and concerts will start in 2012, said Bob Frank, St. Paul's church warden.

"Obviously, music and tradition at St. Paul's is very important," Frank said Tuesday, the second day of the re-installation process. "(Parishioners) are thrilled. They've been very supportive."

More than half of the funds for the project have come from their donations.

Despite usual maintenance on an organ this size — pipes are made from metal and wood and range in length from 8 inches to 32 feet — sound quality was deteriorating for decades as dirt accumulated in pipes. Frank said before this restoration, the first complete job ever performed on this organ, more than 200 of its pipes couldn't be tuned or had been silenced because the valves no longer worked.

For years, though, the skill of organists, particularly David Craighead — St. Paul's organist from 1955 to 2003 — masked some of the flaws. Talk of a complete restoration started about four years ago, Frank said.

Canandaigua-based Parsons Pipe Organ Builders was a perfect fit for the job

because of its history with the instrument. "We're happy to go with a local company, too" Frank said.

Two Connecticut-based organ companies helped out as well.

Since the removal of the organ, a parishioner donated a 500-pipe organ he owned to be used at St. Paul's until the original is ready.

Parsons has, at times, used nearly all of its employees on the St. Paul's project. Most of its work is done in the Rochester, Syracuse and Buffalo areas and south of here into Pennsylvania, but it also has done jobs in Virginia, Texas and California.

He said there are only about 20 to 30

organ builders in the country that handle jobs the size of St. Paul's.

"Around the period this organ was built, they used such quality material to build it. Organs then were used to imitate an orchestra, said Justin Maxey, 23, assistant organist at St. Paul's.

"No one builds organs like this now, and if they did, they wouldn't use these types of materials, so you can't put a price tag on it."

In addition to cleaning every pipe, each leather valve was removed, cleaned, repaired or replaced (if needed) and reglued, Parsons said.

"We've got 12,000 to 13,000 man hours in on this," Parsons said. □



16' DIAPASON: Following shop restoration, each pipe (this one weighing approximately 300 pounds) was reinstalled into the organ chamber with the help of our hoist and 20 feet of scaffolding.



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GREAT:

Bourdon (Ped.)	16'
First Diapason	8'
Second Diapason	8'
Doppel Flute	8'
Erzähler	8'
Octave	4'
Flute	4'
Fifteenth	2'
Mixture	V
Ophicleide	16'
Tromba	8'
Clarion	4'
Chimes (Echo)	

SWELL:

Bourdon	16'
Diapason	8'
Rohrflöte	8'
Salicional	8'
Voix Celeste	8'
Flauto Dolce	8'
Flauto Celeste	8'
Octave	4'
Flute Triangulaire	4'
Flautino	2'
Mixture	V
Cornet	V
Waldhorn	16'
Cornopean	8'
Corno d'Amore	8'
Vox Humana	8'
Clarion	4'
Tremolo	

CHOIR:

Dulciana	16'
Processional Diapason	8'
Concert Flute	8'
Gemshorn	8'
Dulcet II	8'
Harmonic Flute	4'
Nazard	2 2/3'
Piccolo	2'
Clarinet	8'
Orchestral Oboe	8'
Tremolo	
Harp	
Celesta	

SOLO:

Stentorphone	8'
Flauto Mirabilis	8'
Violoncello	8'
Cello Celeste	8'
Tuba Mirabilis	8'
French Horn	8'
English Horn	8'
Musette	8'
Tremolo	
Chimes	

ECHO:

Viole Aetheria	8'
Viole Celeste	8'
Still Gedeckt	8'
Echo Flute	4'
Vox Humana	8'
Tremolo	

PEDAL:

Bourdon	32'
Diapason (wood)	16'
Bourdon	16'
Violone	16'
Echo Bourdon (Sw.)	16'
Dulciana (Ch.)	16'
Flute	8'
Cello	8'
Gedeckt	8'
Still Gedeckt (Sw.)	8'
Flute	4'
Bombarde	32'
Trombone	16'
Waldhorn (Sw.)	16'
Tromba	8'
Clarion	4'
Chimes (Echo)	

PEDAL DIVIDE PISTONS:

Choir to Pedal
Swell to Pedal
Solo to Pedal

BALANCED PEDALS:

Choir
Swell
Solo/Echo
Register Crescendo

COUPLERS:

Pedal:	Gt 8-4
	Sw 8-4
	Ch 8-4
	So 8-4
Unison:	Sw-Gt
	Ch-Gt
	So-Gt
	Sw-Ch
	So-Ch
	Sw-So
	Gt-So
Octave:	Sw-Sw 16-4
	Sw-Gt 16-4
	Sw-Ch 16-4
	Ch-Ch 16-4
	Solo 16-4
	So-Gt 16-4
	Gt-Gt 16-4

REVERSIBLES:

All Swells to Swell
Solo to Pedal *
Swell to Pedal *
Great to Pedal *
Choir to Pedal *
Solo to Pedal *
Sforzando *
Mezzo
(*also by toe spoon)

COMBINATION PISTONS:

So/Echo	8	2 Dupl. by toe
Swell	8	2 Dupl. by toe
Great	8	
Choir	6	
Pedal	8	Toe piston only
General	6	Dupl. by toe
(Ped. to man. comb. on or off for each manual)		

TOE LEVERS:

32' Bombarde
Man. 16' Stops silent
Man. 16' Cplrs. silent
Man. 4' Cplrs. silent

**ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

25 Westminster Road
Rochester, NY 14607

67 ranks; 4 manual & pedal
Electro-pneumatic Action
Collaboration:

Historic Restoration of E.M. Skinner Opus 655, 1927
Parsons Pipe Organ Builders / J. Ambrosino /
Broom & Co. LLC / A. Thompson-Allen LLC