

## TALES FROM THE ARCHIVES

### THE ORGANS AT FIRST & PLYMOUTH CHURCHES

The organ at the first church on Curtis St. is thought to have been a harmonium (reed organ.) One description tells of pipes, perhaps dummy pipes. When the congregation moved into the new church on Glenarm St. in 1880, church leaders commissioned local organ builder Charles Anderson to construct a pipe organ for the new building.

When the church caught fire after the last service in 1907, the organ was damaged, but not destroyed. It was restored and enlarged for the new church on Clarkson St. where it served until 1923 when it was replaced by a larger pipe organ built by the W.W. Kimball Company of Chicago (builders of the large organ at St. John's Cathedral). After the First Church congregation merged with the Plymouth congregation in 1929, the Clarkson St. building was sold for use by other congregations. When the building was on the verge of being torn down in the 1980's, the organ was removed and later parted out.

The Plymouth congregation also started out with a harmonium instrument in their 1<sup>st</sup> building at 17<sup>th</sup> & Ogden St. The dedication program for the new building at 14<sup>th</sup> & Lafayette St. mentions a harmonium, but it is not known if it was the same instrument. In 1899 it was replaced by a pipe organ by the Hook & Hastings Company of Boston, opus 1818. That organ was damaged in the 1985 fire at the church, which had been sold to the First Unitarian Society in 1958. The organ was rebuilt and enlarged during the restoration of the building and is still in use by that congregation today.

When the First Plymouth congregation moved to our present location in 1958, a new 43 rank pipe organ by the Reuter Organ Company of Lawrence, KS was installed. The organ was donated by Miss Evelyn Knight in memory of her parents, Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Knight. This organ has served us well for 53 years. It was refurbished in 2004.

Chuck Willis was head of the music committee in 1957 and took a group of folks, including Miss Knight, to see the Reuter factory before the contract was signed. Photos of that visit are in the church archives.

The chapel on Lafayette contained a small pipe organ donated by the Culver family in honor of Rev. Frank Bayley. It was moved to the new chapel in our present church.

--Don Zeller, Church Archivist/Historian