

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, The Mayfair United Methodist Church, located at the northwest corner of West Wilson and North Kilpatrick Avenues, Chicago, has been sold at auction. The congregation has found it necessary to move to smaller and more inexpensive quarters. The congregation was founded in 1890 as the Montrose Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1898, the first church of shingle-style frame construction was built, at which time the congregation took the name of Mayfair. The second church of brick neo-Gothic design was commenced in 1922. Charles F. Wheeler, who was a member of the congregation, served as architect.

The Organ Handbook of the 1984 convention of the Organ Historical Society documents the following about the instrument, the oldest known organ to remain in the city of Chicago:

The earlier location(s) of the organ are unknown. "Blaney Lodge" appears on several manual stops, but the Johnson for that hall was Op. 331, 1870, a "1-16", and the hall was destroyed in the Great Fire of 9 October 1871; it seems hardly possible that the organ survived. The Mayfair organ is perhaps a post-fire replacement for Op. 331, ordered for Blaney Lodge but diverted elsewhere; Blaney Lodge does not appear a second time on the Johnson list. Op. 386, a "2-23" of 1872, is listed for the Oriental Lodge, F. & A. M.; it is possible that Oriental Lodge took delivery of an organ originally intended for Blaney Lodge. Blaney Lodge is reported to have obtained an organ from Hillgreen Lane & Co. in 1910, though there is no such entry on the Hillgreen, Lane & Co. list. The Lodge was still in existence as late as 1923, but had disappeared from city directories by 1928.

Wherever the instrument was before being installed in a chamber clearly designed for an electro-pneumatic organ, it is obviously a Johnson of the early 1870's. Mr. Coburn placed his metal nameplate over the empty space formerly occupied by a standard diamond-shaped Johnson plate. The Open Diapason basses, once decorated and in a case front, are now offset. Some on-the-job mitring, unnecessary in the present location, suggests that the organ was placed in a chamber before it came to Mayfair. Mr. Coburn moved the coupler knobs from above the Swell manual, improved the action of the unlabelled combination pedals, changed the Swell pedal, and replaced the reservoir. The Johnson pipework is completely intact, and the manual divisions were cleaned in 1984 by church members and members of the Chicago-Midwest Chapter of the O. H. S. Additional renovation was recently undertaken by J. C. Taylor, Organ builder of Appleton, Wisconsin.

The organ is of mechanical key and stop action. The keydesk is engineered such that it is placed outside the chamber against the chancel wall. The organ speaks through two plaster grilles facing the chancel and the nave of the room. The manual compass is 58 notes (C-A); pedal compass is 27 notes (C-D), with a flat pedal board. According to The Stopt Diapason, whole issue 27, June 1984, volume 5, number 3, page 29: "The keydesk is solid walnut, with maple Great and Pedal drawknobs and ebony Swell drawknobs. The action is fan tracker for both Great and Swell divisions, and the chests are N chests, with 9 basses rolled (using iron rollers) to the treble end. Scale markings appear on most of the pipework, which is unusual for Johnson."

The Chapter has worked diligently with the congregation to ensure that the organ finds a home where it will be appreciated as well as it has been for the past seventy-five years. On Sunday, May 30, 1999, the Chapter sponsored a recital at the church by Stephen Schnurr, Michael Friesen, and Susan Friesen, which is reviewed elsewhere in this issue. The congregation has sold the organ to the Bradford Organ Company of Evanston, Illinois, which will have the organ removed from the building by mid-June. The instrument will be placed in storage until a buyer can be found. Interested persons should contact the Bradford Organ Company or the Chapter President.

Specification of Johnson organ:

GREAT (Manual I)

- 8 Open Diap. (metal—58 pipes)
- 8 Melodia (from tenor C, wood—46 pipes)
- 8 Dulciana (from tenor C, metal—46 pipes)

Great (continued)

8 Unison Bass (bottom octave, wood—12 pipes)
4 Octave (metal—58 pipes)
4 Flute d'Amour (from tenor C, wood and metal—46 pipes)
2-2/3 Twelfth (metal—58 pipes)
2 Fifteenth (metal—58 pipes)
8 Clarionet (from tenor C, metal—46 pipes)*

SWELL (Manual II—Enclosed)

8 Open Diapason (from tenor C, metal—46 pipes)
8 Stop'd Dia. Treble (from tenor C, wood and metal—46 pipes)
8 Dolce (from tenor C, metal—46 pipes)
8 Stop'd Dia. Bass (bottom octave, wood—12 pipes)
4 Fugara (metal—58 pipes)
8 Oboe & Bassoon (metal—58 pipes)
Tremulant*

PEDAL

16 Bourdon (wood—27 pipes)

COUPLERS

Sw. to Gr.

Gr. to Ped.

Sw. to Ped.

PEDAL MOVEMENTS

Piano Great (retires all but 8' Melodia, 8' Unison Bass, single-acting)

Forte Great (draws all stops but 8' Dulciana, 2-2'3 Twelfth, single-acting)

ACCESSORIES

Pedal Check*

Blowers Signal

**original stop label missing*

Information for this article was gathered from The Organ Handbook: 1984, published by the Organ Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia, 1984, pages 62-63, and The Stopt Diapason, whole issue 27, volume 5, number 3, pages 24-29, and through onsite visit.