

The Story of the Christ Episcopal Church Kilgen Organ

Our tracker organ was built by the company George Kilgen [later, & Son] of St. Louis, Missouri, in 1875. The Kilgen family's history of organ building dates back to the 17th century. Born in Germany in 1821, Kilgen emigrated to the United States at the age of 19. He founded his own organ building firm in 1851; relocating from New York City to St. Louis, the company became one of the principal suppliers of church organs in the Midwestern states.

Spending most of its life in Lincoln, Nebraska, our organ has served an Evangelical German Lutheran congregation, a Latvian congregation and a Greek Orthodox parish. It is a simple instrument, built to accompany hymns, with one manual and seven stops.

Offered for sale in 2001 on eBay, the organ was purchased by Gregory Noyes, music director at that time, and Timothy Smith, an organist and organ builder with ties to our city. They presented a proposal to the Christ Church Vestry to purchase the instrument to replace the electric organ then in use. Shortly after the Vestry voted to purchase the organ, a donor stepped forward with needed funds to make the organ playable.

The organ was taken apart and moved from Nebraska to Eastport to a donated storefront. Parish members helped with cleaning the pipes and other tasks. Many community members loaned their talents. David Addison reworked the pedal board; Elizabeth Hopkins refurbished the case; Tanya Barker restored the nameplate using a reverse painting technique.

Timothy Smith rebuilt the organ in the church over the course of several months, with Gregory Noyes overseeing the project.

The organ was dedicated on October 20, 2002, to the honor of Laura J. Turner and Eleanor T. Norton.

We continue to be thankful for the beautiful music that our present music director, John Newell, makes possible to enhance our worship at Christ Church.