

Ode To An Organ
Smithville Presbyterian Church
Organ Commemorative Service

November 5, 2006

1:30 pm

115 years old

Boy, pump the organ! Let the anthem flow!
With promise for the chosen saints below!
(Calvinistic Evensong)

Tucked away in the countryside sat a small village named **Smithville**, of 700 residents. People with hopes of a tomorrow, dreams brought to reality and fortitude for accomplishments. Such sets the setting for one prominent citizen of Smithville, D. Ward Eastman, grandson of Rev. Mr. D. W. Eastman, "*the father of the Presbyterian Church of Niagara Region*", to see fit for the birth of a Presbyterian Church in Smithville. Longing to hear glorious melodious sounds of an organ accompanying parishioners praising God, here lies the creation of procuring an organ for worship. A signed contract on April 20, 1890 by Rev. Mr. H. H. Cruikshank authorized Edward Lye and Sons, organ builders, to construct an Opus 107 tracker action one manual pipe organ, manually pumped with its case to be made of chestnut, smooth finish in oil. The Front to display 15 speaking pipes illuminated in gold and colors, operated with pneumatic tubular action. The leather bellow, 3' X 7', to be of modern construction and with a feeding capacity to supply legitimate demand. The keys to be the best of ivory and ebony which shall have celluloid fronts and 10 stops.

Imagine the glee of excitement upon its scheduled arrival at the STR Station. The church people were prepared to team, at their own expense, the organ from the freight-shed to the church with the expected performance on Sunday, May 30, 1891.

"We hereby contract to build an organ according to the foregoing specifications and details for the sum of \$550.⁰⁰. \$300.⁰⁰ down, balance by note for one year with interest at 6%. Note: if cash is paid within 30 thirty days this price is subject to discount of 3% upon the whole sum viz \$550.⁰⁰." Payment written on the contract states: "\$400.⁰⁰ four hundred dollars cash to be paid within thirty days, balance of \$125.⁰⁰ on or before January 1st, 1892. Thus, we now know the frugality of the people to get the discount! We owe this new insight to Florence Hayes from the Music Section, Library and Archives Canada also Subject Editor, Encyclopedia of Music in Canada, The Historica Foundation of Canada. Mrs. Hayes contacted Mrs. Conliffe who has sole proprietorship of all 225 organ contracts dating from 1881 - 1933 and she graciously located our contract. Using state-of-the-art technology of today, she scanned the contracts and e-mailed the contract to us for our archival records.

Edward Lye was born September 8, 1829 in Crewkerne Somerset England, son of Edward Lye and the former Letitia Ireland. His occupation was a cabinet maker, thus his testimony to his understanding of and skill of wood. He married Rachel Mary Steen LeMaitre on October 10, 1854 and arrived in Canada in 1857. He began his organ building business in 1864 on 18 and 20 St. Alban's Street, Toronto, Ontario. His tonal design shows a sound knowledge of the principle of reinforcing foundation tone by the addition of appropriate upperwork. Three sons joined him as teenagers, Edward J., Herbert H., and Walter L., to carry on the tradition. The Depression forced restructuring of the company and his three grandsons, William, Norman and Murray continued the tradition of the old company but also introduced new technology of electric keyboards in place of the old mechanically activated keys. The pipes are wind driven, arriving from England, which never seem to wear out. It took two months to build an organ. "A good organ needs rebuilding only every fifty (50) years", quotes Walter, son of Edward Lye. William built the last organ in 1954 but continued organ repair work till 1982. Sixty (60) churches in Toronto enjoy a Lye organ and others remain to this day in Nanaimo, British Columbia, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and as far north as the Yukon. Upper Canada has enjoyed this reliable organ builder and the 300 - 400 well crafted instruments. Edward Lye, also known for his art of carillon, ringing the chimes at St. James Cathedral, Toronto, died at 90 years of age and is buried at St. James Cemetery, Toronto.

Restoration and maintenance of the organ has been dutifully crafted under the eyes of the Denton family for decades. Our records indicate the first visit in 1926 for the sum of \$5.⁰⁰. Appreciation for its authenticity and historical value is utmost in their business and we thank Janine and Nelson Denton for carrying on the tradition from their father and grandfather. They maintain the tuning pitch of the organ at A440 at 68⁰F.