

Hook & Hastings Pipe Organ



Ludwig van Beethoven once said, "The pipe organ is the king of all musical instruments," and Aurora Methodists are blessed to enjoy the service of a fine example of 19th century American Romantic organ building. The pipe organ which graces the sanctuary of First United Methodist Church of Aurora is Opus 2,012 by the renowned Hook & Hastings firm from Boston. Founded by brothers Elias and George Hook in 1829, the firm added partner Frank Hastings in 1872. Earlier organs bear the label "E. & G.G. Hook," and instruments built after 1872 bear the "Hook & Hastings" label. The company built their last organ in 1936, a victim of the Great Depression.

In 1903 a former member of the congregation, Margaret E. Wymond, donated the instrument for the church at a cost of \$2,500. Mrs. Wymond had relocated to Louisville, Kentucky, and perhaps had experienced the quality of an earlier Hook organ in her church in that city. The Aurora organ was dedicated on July 4, 1903 in memory of her husband W.L. Wymond.

The fine instrument is a tracker which originally was pumped by hand or provided wind through a water turbine. Today a powerful blower provides wind for the organ which is otherwise completely mechanical. A look inside while the instrument is in use shows an astonishing mechanical design wherein moving parts efficiently share a tight space.



The Aurora organ includes nineteen stops or registers. These drawknobs allow the organist to open or close ranks (sets) of pipes and to operate special functions such as the vibrato and the couplers. One such stop is denoted "Bellows Signal" and formerly notified the person pumping to begin or to stop pumping. Some of the pipes are quite large and require substantial wind, so the job of the pumper was strenuous.

The pipe organ presents an inspiring visual appeal in addition to its warm, silvery tone. The pipes visible across the front of the instrument are part of the Diapason rank of pipes and were originally beautifully stenciled; inside the cabinet, the organ includes almost eight hundred pipes. The instrument is serviced regularly for tuning and technical adjustments and was overhauled by M.P. Rathke in 2008, in large part due to the generosity of Dearborn Community Foundation, City of Lawrenceburg Community Grant Program. The congregation of Aurora First UMC is pleased to have welcomed the community into the sanctuary numerous times for organ concerts and recitals given to raise funds for various community organizations such as Hillforest, the City of Aurora, and St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry. God willing, this fine organ will continue to help us worship Him and serve the community for many years to come!