

Description and History of the Organ

by

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The organ is free-standing and encased with an attached, projecting keydesk. The case is of quarter-sawn oak with the diatonically divided Pedal 16' Bourdon forming the sides of the case. The facade is divided into three sections arranged: 5 - 17 – 5. Of these 27 gold pipes, 10 are from the Great 8' Open Diapason. The outer towers of five pipes each contain notes FF 6 through D 15 - diatonically divided. The first five pipes of the 8' Open Diapason are of stopped wood. The center flat of 17 pipes is comprised of non-functioning pipes, though all 17 of the pipes have languids and do speak - albeit roughly. The Great 8' Dulciana has 12 stopped wood basses, and the 4' Violina is entirely of spotted metal.

The Swell 8' Stopped Diapason is mostly made of wood, but does have some open metal trebles. The 8' Salicional is grooved to the Stopped Diapason for the first 12 notes. The 4' Harmonic Flute is entirely of metal. Several basses are of zinc before it changes to spotted metal. The pipes become harmonic length at middle c.

The Pedal 16' Bourdon is entirely of stopped wood.

This organ has a long and interesting history, the first part of which had been somewhat uncertain. An article written for the Roseburg Woodsman by Marj Watkins states, *"Made in Brattleboro, Vermont, circa 1908, the organ first graced the Portland, Oregon mansion of the Asa Lovejoy family."* Another article, written by Ruby Dunbar of Vashon Prebyterian Church for the Vashon Island Beachcomber on October 4, 1984 states, *"Built by the Estey Organ Company in Brattleboro, Vermont, the organ was brought around the Horn in 1876 and placed in the Lovejoy mansion in Portland, Oregon."* Both statements are partially correct and partially in error. The organ was indeed built by the Estey Organ Co. of Brattleboro, VT. The opus number was painted on the back of the facade pipes, revealing the organ to be opus 23. (This was a common practice with early Esteys). When checked against the published Estey opus list it was found to have been built in 1902 for W.H. Hart who owned some kind of store [presumably music-oriented] located at 3703 Spring Garden in Philadelphia, PA. It is not yet known when Asa Lovejoy acquired the organ from Philadelphia. He may have seen it during a visit or learned of its availability through a journal. If it was acquired before 1914, then the organ may well have been shipped around the Horn.

During the Depression, the Estey was acquired by the Miller and Tracy Funeral Home of Portland, OR. It resided there until around 1978 when they merged with Hennessey, Goetsch, and McGee and the organ was made available for purchase.

It was next acquired by Mr. Bill L. Watson, then owner of the Colonial-Dewitt Funeral Home of Walla Walla, WA. With the help of a friend, they dismantled, moved, and reassembled the myriad of parts in the chapel of the funeral home.

The next phase of the organs' history grew through coincidence.

Vashon Presbyterian Church on Vashon Island - located in Puget Sound just off of south Seattle/Burien - was considering the acquisition of any potential, used, appropriate pipe organ for their sanctuary. Parishioners Walt and Ruby Dunbar happened to be in Walla Walla, and stopped to admire an antique, horse-drawn hearse in a glass case in front of the Colonial-Dewitt Funeral Home. Ruby was unable to get a good picture of the hearse because of the glare. They went in to ask if there were any pictures of the hearse. Owner Alan Ray did have some, and during the course of their conversation, he asked the Dunbars if they knew of anyone interested in buying an antique pipe organ. The organ was purchased for \$3,500.00 on the spot by the Dunbars who were then reimbursed by the church. The organ was crated and moved by parishioners headed by their organist/choir director Jim Brumbaugh. The chest pneumatics were '*releathered*' by Charles M. Rich of Orting, WA. who had been a representative for the M.P. Möller Organ Co. of Hagerstown, MD. The organ was installed with volunteer help beginning in August, 1984, and was completed early in 1985.

In June 1999, the organ was removed from the church by Clint & DeAnne Meadway and Jim Stettner doing business as Pipe Organs, Inc. of Monroe, WA. The aim was to fully restore the organ which was failing in a number of ways. All of the pipes were cleaned, and de-dented. The metal-fatigued tuning scrolls were all removed and aluminum slide tuners were fitted to the metal pipes. The stoppers were all releathered. The chests were cleaned and the dry wood was reconditioned with hand-rubbed oil. Broken parts were repaired or replaced with replicas. The primary pneumatics were recovered in thin rubbercloth and the valves replaced. The extant lead and some replacement rubber tubing was replaced with new Neoprene tubing. The Aeolian player stack pneumatics were painstakingly recovered in ultra-thin Zephyr skin. New leather and cork gaskets were installed throughout the organ to make pressurized portions of the organ airtight. A new swellbox and mechanical linkage system from expression shoe to the shutters was built to replace the missing original.

At some point in the past, c 49 of the Swell 8' Stopped Diapason was lost. It was the last wooden pipe in that rank, and it was replaced with a spotted metal treble having an arched cut-up which matched the rest of the open metal trebles for that rank. Bass DD (note 3) had also been lost in the past, and a homemade pipe of reasonable construction had been built as a replacement. This was replaced by Pipe Organs, Inc. with another used, stopped wooden pipe from their stock. On the Pedal 16' Bourdon, top E (note 29) had been lost and another homemade pipe built as a replacement. This pipe was able to be revoiced, and the inside and outside of the pipe were sealed with sanding sealer to help the tone match the existing Estey pipes. A used Estey pipe foot with a lead toe was glued-in in place of the homemade wooden foot. On the Great, top C (note 61) had been lost in the past. A used c# (note 50) was substituted, and the original pipes 50 - 61 were trimmed shorter and moved-up one half step on the chest. This change was not reversed during the restoration.

After the organ was restored and reassembled per the contract, ciphers continued to plague the organ. So it was again dismantled and the chests pneumatics previously '*releathered*' in 1984 were scrutinized. They were found to be flawed in many, *many* areas. The pneumatics themselves had been originally glued-in to the chest. When they were removed for alleged re-leathering, the underside of the chests were gouged as the glue seams broke free. When reinstalled, the pneumatics were screwed back into place. But many of the screw holes breached the pneumatic channel wind feed/bleed. And the screw holes had been plugged with dowels to seal the breach. And, with the chunks of wood gouged from the chest and still stuck to the individual pneumatics - they didn't seat well and were leaking. Further problems were found in that the original cloth hinges on the moving portion of the pneumatics had NOT been replaced and were ripping and leaking air. Also, varying thicknesses of leather had been used rendering some of the pneumatics less responsive than others. And lastly, the

internal springs inside each pneumatic had not been reconditioned and replaced as necessary. In some cases, they weren't even riding inside the guide groove. So, all of the manual and pedal chests pneumatics were completely stripped of leather. New hinges were provided first. Then new, uniform-thickness tan pneumatic leather was glued-on. The springs were repaired or replaced as necessary. New valves replaced the moth-eaten originals. While the pneumatics were being re-leathered, the gouges on the underside of the table were repaired and the entire surface planed smooth. Lastly, pneumatic screw holes that had breeched the pneumatic channel wind feed/bleed were doweled and re-drilled. The pneumatics were gasketed before being reinstalled. After reassembly yet again, the organ worked perfectly the first time.

The organ was returned to the church and reinstalled in February, 2000.

The actual roll-playing mechanism remains extant but unrestored as the church has no interest in using it.