

On two Appleton Organs

In 1982, I became organist & choir director of the First Congregational Church on Park Street in Adams, Massachusetts. Although the 1883 Johnson organ is rather undistinguished for a Johnson organ, it still was good to be back at a church with a real organ instead of an electronic substitute.

In preparing for a centennial presentation on the organ the next year, I thought it would be good to find the source for the handsome case of the organ, said to be by Appleton, and one of few times that Johnson re-used an old case.

At about the same time, we were beginning to hear about the Appleton Organ discovered in a church in Plains, PA.

Sometimes people jump to conclusions, and the Plains situation is indicative of this fact. Inscribed inside the organ was found "made in 1830". Appleton's ledger book for 1830 shows only two sources of income for 1830 – repairs to the Brattle organ, and an organ for South Congregational Church in Hartford, Ct. So, the organ must be the Hartford organ.

However, I was troubled by the fact that in Adams, we had a rather large Appleton case, source unknown, but it was known that the church purchased a pipe organ in the fall of 1854. I thought it ironic that the Adams church possibly got an Appleton organ just a few months after Johnson replaced the Hartford organ with one of his own manufacture.

I mentioned this to Alan Laufman, and reminded him that it takes time to build an organ. It is possible that an organ partially built in 1830, may not have been completed until the next year. Upon receiving what information I had, he asked Marty Walsh to look into the matter.

Marty found in a Boston Newspaper in mid 1830, Appleton did offer an organ for sale, the description of which, resembles the organ in the MET. It also appears that the organ was sold to the Salem Street Congregational Church in the North End of Boston, and paid for in February, 1831, according to Appleton's ledger book.

And I finally located an 1854 article in a county newspaper, *The Culturist and Gazette*, Pittsfield, MA, Nov. 1, 1854 the following:

The Congregational Society in South Adams has recently procured a new organ of Appleton's manufacture, having two banks of keys, two octaves of pedals, and 26 stops, and costing \$725.

When I shared this information with Barbara Owen, she said that the relatively small amount paid for such a large organ indicated that the organ was second hand. An organ of 26 stops should have cost about \$2500, which is indeed what South Church in Hartford paid for their Appleton organ in 1830. And the organ was in use just months after

Johnson replaced the Hartford Appleton, as well as the fact that the case resembles other Appleton cases from 1828-1830.

We compared measurements of the cases. The case in Adams is significantly larger than the organ now in the museum in NYC.

Meanwhile, what about the Salem Street organ? Well, it was moved from there to the Congregational Church in Manchester, Massachusetts, where it stayed until 1889, where it was replaced by a used Hook organ.

Because the articles in *The Tracker* mentioned the Plains organ as arriving in 1883, I asked both Marty and Alan what documentation there was for that. It turns out there was none. Alan's original estimate had suggested the organ was moved to Plains c.1883, which was only a guess.

Marty wrote to me in 1996 that there was little doubt that the organ now in the Metropolitan Museum in NYC was the organ that was installed in the Boston Church in 1831, but it would still be nice to have one more piece of documentation to confirm it. Perhaps sometime it will be possible to search church history, or newspapers in the Plains area to find out if indeed the organ was moved to Plains shortly after its removal from Manchester, MA in 1889.

It has been thought that the Plains installation was done by Emmons Howard. Unfortunately, the article in the *Gloucester Daily Times*, which covered Manchester, as well, for May 10, 1889 only says that the removal of the organ, and replacing it with a larger one is being done under the supervision of D. B. Kimball, esq. (He was organist of the Church) It would be nice to know if Howard did that work, which would tie in another connection.

I have also included a copy of part of Alan Laufman's Miscelanea Organica, from *The Northeast Organist*, November/December, 1996, which deals with the subject.

p.s. When I submitted the information via the internet on the Adams Johnson organ, I think I stated that the organ was in a case. This is tricky wording. The original Appleton case is in an alcove in the right front of the church. Although most of the organ is within the boundaries of the Appleton Case, (except for pedal stops behind) most of the panels have been removed from the case. So the organ is sort of in a case, but not in a case at the same time. The standard Johnson projecting keyboards were attached where the original doors that covered Appleton's recessed keyboards were fastened together, and rather crudely cut to allow the keyboards to project. The action is rather HEAVY, as Susan Armstrong, who has played three recitals on the instrument in the 1990's can testify. The organ is maintained by Messrs. Czelusniak et Dugal, who completed renovation in 1990. This work included re-tabling the wind chests, and re-leathering the reservoir.