

## A SHORT HISTORY OF THE ORGANS AT EMANUEL

by Richard Swanson

Emanuel First Evangelical Lutheran Church was founded in the fall of 1855. The first pipe organ was installed at Emanuel in October of 1872. Very little is known about this organ except that it was a small hand pumped tracker organ of fewer than ten ranks. This modest organ was installed in the white frame structure at the corner of Kilborn and Seymour which served as Emanuel's home from 1857 through 1916.

In 1905 Mr. Martin Haeusler, a teacher at Emanuel Lutheran School and also Emanuel's organist expressed the need for a new pipe organ. The old tracker organ had suffered the ravages of roof leakage that occurred in 1893. In March of 1906 at a special "organ meeting" it was decided that a new pipe organ should be purchased. Shortly after that meeting it was discovered that some individuals who wanted to hasten the demise of the old organ had bored seven holes in the organ's windchest and carefully removed the borings in order to avoid detection. A reward of \$50 was offered to apprehend the perpetrators of this "godless and evilminded act".

Emanuel contracted with the Estey Organ Company of Brattleboro, Vermont for the fabrication of the new pipe organ for the sum of \$2200. The Estey Company had been building reed organs since 1846 but didn't enter the pipe organ field until 1901. Emanuel's new Estey organ was opus #496 of the firm and was built in 1907. As near as can be determined the organ had a tubular-pneumatic action, an electric blower and the specification was as such:

### GREAT

8' Open Diapason  
8' Melodia  
8' Gamba  
8' Dulciana  
4' Principal  
4' Flute d'Amour

### SWELL

16' Bourdon  
8' Violin Diapason  
8' Stopped Diapason  
8' Salicional  
8' Aeoline  
4' Harmonic Flute  
8' Oboe

### PEDAL

16' Bourdon

Teacher Haeusler never had an opportunity to play the new organ because he died on December 6, 1906 after a brief illness.

The organ was dedicated at Emanuel's 50th anniversary celebration on September 29th, 1907. The guest preacher was the President of the Michigan Synod, Rev. Frederick M. Krauss of Riga, Michigan.

Later on, in 1909, Pastor Krauss accepted a call to be pastor at Emanuel where he served the remainder of his career. His son, Karl F. Krauss was ordained in 1921 and went on to serve as Emanuel's pastor for his entire career.

In 1915 the cornerstone of Emanuel's present edifice was laid and the building was built on

the site of an earlier parsonage. The dedication was on November 26, 1916. The Estey organ was moved to the new building and installed to the left of the chancel. Having been designed for the old building, the organ looked awkward in its new position. This situation was rectified in 1926 when the organ's windchests were converted to electro-pneumatic action and installed behind 4 new pipe facades on both sides of the chancel and nave. Also at that time a new "theater style" console was provided, and 5 new ranks were added. The new stops were: Cornopean 8'; Oboe 8' (to replace the Estey reedless Oboe); Vox Humana 8'; Voix Celeste 8'TC; and Tibia 8'.

During the early 1950's several other ranks were added as a special project of the choirs. During the late 1960's Mr. A.D. White of Lansing replaced the original Estey windchests with electro-mechanical chests of his own construction. The 2 manual console of 1926 was replaced by a new 3 manual console in the early 1970's. A new Great Mixture, Pedal Choral Bass 4' and Pedal Trombone 16' were added in 1980.

In May of 1989 Mr. Richard Swanson, an organbuilder and a member of Emanuel submitted a proposal to the Board for Worship of Emanuel. The proposal called for the rebuilding of the organ by emptying the chambers, reworking the nave tone openings and reinstalling an essentially new instrument which would include some reworked material salvaged from the previous installation. Mr. Swanson would be donating his labor as well as most of the materials. The proposal was accepted by the Board for Worship which passed its recommendation on to the Emanuel Church Council which also accepted it.

During the initial period of the project, Mr. Swanson was associated with Fowler Organ Company which donated shop space and use of equipment. Fowler Organ Company also provided at cost much of the materials for the project which were purchased by Mr. Swanson. In 1990 Mr. Swanson formed his own company, R.T. Swanson, Inc. which donated shop space and use of equipment.

After the organ rebuilding project was completed in 1997, one item had received very little improvement; the organ's console. In 2004 Mr. Swanson undertook the console rebuilding process which included replacing all the inner workings of the console with new solid state components while retaining the console cabinet, the bench and the pedal keyboard. The rebuilt console features a solid state combination action with 64 levels of memory and a new solid state switching system which features full MIDI capabilities including the ability to record performances in the manner of a player piano. The new rosewood and maple manual keyboards have "tracker touch" which gives a definite "pluck" when the keys are depressed.

Of the organ's 40 ranks of pipes, 5 are from the 1907 Estey, 4 are from the additions made between 1926 and 1980, 2 are donated by the Emanuel Senior Choir, 1 is donated by the Max Gietzel family and 28 are donated by Richard Swanson. Many members of Emanuel gave of their time and talents during the project. Others who deserve credit are organ pipemakers Claus Canell of Erie, Pennsylvania; Jacques Stinkens B.V. of Zeist, Holland; and Trivo Company, Inc. of Hagerstown, Maryland. Suppliers include Organ Supply Industries, Inc. of Erie, Pennsylvania, Syndyne Corporation of Vancouver, Washington and Klann Organ Supply of Waynesboro, Virginia. David Wigton of Dryden, Michigan assisted during the tonal finishing. One individual, Mr. Steve Black was Mr. Swanson's right hand man during the entire project.