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7Roads

THE LITTLE THINGS I LEARNED
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THE NEW PIPE ORGAN

EDITED AND COMPILED BY DR. V



The pipe organ featured on the cover of this edition of 7Roads was one of three instruments built in 1902 by the Vogelpohl and Spaeth Organ Company of New Ulm, Minnesota, U.S.A. One of these organs was a much smaller one-manual instrument. The other two organs built that year were nearly identical twins. One of the 'twins' was destroyed in a church fire in the 1930s, however, so the 'new' organ at KIS is possibly the only one of its kind.

A Brief History of the Vogelpohl and Spaeth Organ Company

Hermann Vogelpohl Sr. immigrated with his family to America from Westphalia, in what was then Prussia, to New Ulm in 1869. The oldest of the several children in this family was a seventeen year old son, also named Hermann. The boy had an intense interest in music, as well as the ability to work well with his hands.

Following his marriage in 1877, Hermann Jr. decided to remain in New Ulm, working as a carpenter, and playing the organ and directing the choir at St. Paul's Lutheran

Church. Hermann became the first organist-choirmaster at St. Paul's, and served in this capacity for over forty years. In addition to playing organ and directing the choir, he served many years as a member of the church council, took an active part in church and community affairs, and taught private piano lessons in his home.

Jacob Spaeth, Hermann's business partner for more than twenty years, was born of German-American parents in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1856, and moved to Minnesota as



KIS Alumni who attended the Consecration Service in Minnesota : Seated l to r: Katie Hennig '98 Teece; Emily Hennig '04; Joel Otten '77; Lisa Lindell '81 Hoh; Miriam Naumann '51 McCreary; Dorothy DeLong '78; Gene Hennig '65, Parent; Helen Naumann '48 Spitzack. Standing l to r: Kristie Hennig 'FS, Parent; Carsten Bjornstad 'FS, Parent; Mary Lindell 'FS, Parent; Eunice Naumann '51 Nissen; John Naumann '58; Marty Grubbs '69 & Joe '66, 'FS Rittmann, Parents; Don '53, 'FS & Betchen 'FS Oberdorfer; Eunice Kretzmann '51 Koepke; Paul 'FS & Margaret 'FS Christensen.

an infant. As an adult, Jacob was also gifted with his hands, making his living as a mechanic and carpenter. He was especially good at making small wooden articles and decorative items. Unlike Vogelpohl, Spaeth did not maintain active ties with a church. An innovative man, he was interested in new trends, and would eventually become the owner of one of the first automobiles to appear in New Ulm.

In 1890, Hermann Vogelpohl joined with Jacob Spaeth to form the Vogelpohl and Spaeth Organ Company, a firm that would remain in business until Hermann's death in 1919. The business became one of New Ulm's most highly regarded enterprises, yet was never

incorporated; it was most likely handled as a 'gentlemen's agreement' between two partners who trusted one another for their mutual advantage. A shop was built behind Vogelpohl's house, and it was in this shop that the 'new' KIS organ was constructed. The partners likely did most of the work themselves, and their trade was largely a family affair. Vogelpohl's two sons joined the firm around the turn of the century, and became partners in 1902, the year the KIS organ was built.

The Vogelpohl and Spaeth Organ Company eventually built more than one hundred organs for churches and schools as far west as Idaho, as far south as Kansas, as far east as Ohio, and

as far north as Saskatchewan, Canada. Most of their organs were of tracker action, meaning that there is a direct mechanical link between the keys and the pipes. (see picture on page 61)

The casework of the instruments was made of carefully cured oak. The façade pipes on all Vogelpohl instruments were ornately decorated, often in soft shades of browns or greens, and highlighted with silver or gold leaf. After his death in 1919, Hermann's sons continued in organ work, not as builders but as representatives of large organ firms, rebuilding existing instruments and repairing and tuning organs. The last Vogelpohl organ was built in 1921.

How the Vogelpohl-Spaeth Organ Came to K.I.S.

In October 2012, Roland Rutz, organ builder and restorer from Morristown, Minnesota, visited KIS in an attempt to help restore the single-manual 1888 Hill & Son organ that has been in the Chapel since the late 1960's. It was discovered that the instrument had suffered irreparable damage at the hands of well-meaning but insufficiently trained people over the years. Only six of the eight stops were useable, the wind-chest was cracked and audibly leaking air, and the organ could not stay in tune due to missing or damaged pipes.

The Rutz Organ Company, Inc., was founded in 1971 originally as a pipe organ service and tuning entity, with the work being accomplished on weekends and vacations while Roland continued his duties as a public school music teacher. As the company and opportunities grew, he resigned teaching to devote full time to the organ company. The Rutz Organ Company has restored, rebuilt or newly created over one hundred instruments to date. Most of these organs are in the USA, but the company's notable overseas instruments are installations in Riga, Latvia, Bethlehem, Palestine, and Istanbul, Turkey. Now he has added India to this list.

For over a decade, Mr. Rutz's organ company had been



servicing a Vogelpohl-Spaeth organ that had been built for a nearby rural Catholic Church in 1902. The church was closed by the Archdiocese of St. Paul several years ago, making the organ available for relocation. Realizing the 'terminal' condition of the KIS Chapel organ, and of the availability of the Vogelpohl-Spaeth organ, Mr. Rutz suggested that the school should "think big." Thus began a process that has involved many people, culminating in the organ project being underwritten by Kodai Friends International. In June, 2013, I flew from my home in Washington State to give the then unrestored organ a "test drive" in its original home. Shortly thereafter, the instrument was dismantled, moved from the abandoned church, and completely restored by the Rutz Organ Company. A short consecration recital was

played on it to a full house of organ/KIS enthusiasts on March 30, 2014. Shortly thereafter, it was again dismantled, boxed, and sent from Minnesota to the US eastern seaboard, where it was loaded aboard a cargo ship that traveled around the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa to Sri Lanka, and eventually to Chennai.

Roland Rutz and his son Paul supervised the dismantlement of the old organ (which has since found a new home in the CSI Church of St. Bartholomew, Mysore), and the reconstruction of the new instrument. Assisting in the process were music faculty members Paul Chandron, Prasanth John, and myself. The Dedication Service for the KIS Vogelpohl-Spaeth organ took place in Margaret Eddy Memorial Chapel on Sunday, September 28, 2014, Rev. Raja Krishnamoorthy presiding.