

Dalton Memorial Organ, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Flint, Michigan

Information from the church's website is as follows:

## The Dalton Memorial Organ

The pipe organ at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Flint, Michigan, has seen changes in tonal design and specifications throughout the years. The earliest known instrument was a small affair built by the Reverend John Birchmore, rector of St. Paul's Church (1865-1870). The instrument was installed in the older edifice, located on Saginaw Street where the addition to the Michigan National Bank now stands.

The congregation became large enough for a new church to be built on the present site of St. Paul's Church in 1873. A new two manual, fifteen stop tracker organ by the William A. Johnson and Sons Company, Westfield, Massachusetts, was installed into the new sanctuary and dedicated on August 24, 1873. This instrument was one of two organs built by Johnson in the Flint area.

The Johnson organ served the congregation well until mechanical repairs and antiquated tonal design made it necessary to select an organ committee for a new instrument. The tonal design of American organs from 1900 until 1935 was basically that of symphony orchestra imitation. The committee selected the Ernest M. Skinner Organ Company, Boston, Massachusetts for the new instrument. Ernest M. Skinner (1866-1960) instruments were known for the excellence of their building materials and tonal quality. The company was known as a leader for American church, cathedral and concert instruments. Contracts were signed in 1915 for a moderate three manual, forty rank organ. Opus 266 was installed in 1916. The organ was enlarged in 1917 with a Tuba stop and a new six stop Gallery division.

The Skinner instrument served the church well until 1937. Mechanical repairs and cleaning were necessary and the Reverend Layton, priest and musician,

discussed the idea of a new instrument. By 1935, organ design in American had changed from organs-as-orchestra sounds of imitation violin sections, woodwind choirs and heavy brass bands to a balanced crisp American-Classic sound. This tonal concept made all periods of organ literature possible from Baroque to the modern French and English traditions.

An organ committee was selected and the Aeolian-Skinner Company, Boston, Massachusetts, received the contract to build a new instrument utilizing several stops from the older Skinner organ. G. Donald Harrison (1889-1956), President of the Aeolian-Skinner Company, designed the new organ. Opus 989 was installed in St. Paul's Church with four manuals and fifty seven ranks. This was the only instrument built by Aeolian-Skinner in the Flint area. The contracts were signed in 1938. The organ was actually installed in 1940, a gift of the late Florence W. Dalton. After her death in the same year, the vestry named this instrument the Florence W. Dalton Memorial Organ. The organ was dedicated by Father Layton.

The Aeolian-Skinner organ remained tonally the same until 1955. The organ was in need of repairs and cleaning. The late Richard Harvey, Organist-Choirmaster at St. Paul's, contacted the Detroit area representative of Casavant-Freres Organ Company, St. Hyacinthe, Canada, to make needed repairs as well as alter the tonal design of the instrument. The reed chorus in the swell division was changed; a new metal bourdon replaced the older wood rank; a bright three rank cymbal mixture replaced the older quint flute on the choir division.

The instrument remained basically the same tonally and specifications were not greatly changed. However, by 1976, it became apparent that a comprehensive rebuild was needed at St. Paul's Church. The older organ, with many of its original mechanical parts, was in need of great repair and tonal rethinking. An organ committee was selected and various bids were solicited.

In 1979, after deep and serious consideration a complete brochure was prepared outlining the needs and their solutions following which the vestry elected to engage Mr. Jerroll Adams of Milan, Michigan to rebuild the instrument incorporating the best of the existing voices in the organ and

enhancing them with sounds more consistent with the clarified tonal philosophy that comes from a comprehensive historical perspective. The new instrument of four manuals and eighty nine ranks is now the largest instrument in the Flint area with the greatest range of colors. Its design could be described as a cohesive bouquet of tone capable of meeting the many needs of church service work and recitals as well.