



175th Anniversary Moment

“He who promised is faithful” (Heb 10.23)

ORGANS AT FIRST SAINT PAUL’S

While we don’t have any information about musical instruments in the early church buildings, we do know that the building at LaSalle and Goethe that First Saint Paul’s occupied from 1910 to 1969 was built in 1894 as a synagogue, and it had an organ installed right after it was built. The builder was the Lancashire-Marshall Organ Company of Moline, Illinois. This picture from 1942 shows Albert Beck seated at the organ.



In 1951, a few years after the remodeling of the sanctuary, a new organ was installed. This organ was much larger than the previous instrument, having three manuals (keyboards) and pedal, and 35 ranks (independent sets of pipes). The prestigious firm Casavant Frères from Quebec, Canada was chosen to build the organ at a cost of \$41,000 (about \$427,000 in today’s dollars). Unfortunately, we don’t have any further record of this organ, other than a description by Charles Ore (organist from 1962 to 1966), that it had warm color stops, but not the clear tone that was desired in the organ reform movement of the 1960s. The organ was dedicated on May 6, 1951.

When the congregation decided to build a new church building, it was determined that the current organ, now only 18 years old, would not work well in the new church sanctuary. Just in the nick of time, this organ was sold to St. Alphonsus Roman Catholic Church, Chicago, on April 7, 1969, for \$6,250. The organ was removed in three days. Demolition of the old church began only a few days later, on Monday, April 21!



The new church was without an organ for two years until the new organ was installed in fall 1972. This new instrument, designed by Dr. Paul Bunjes of Concordia, River Forest, is a much smaller instrument than the previous organ, having only 9 ranks (sets) of pipes. The organ is judiciously unified, meaning that a set of pipes can play on either manual or pedal, and at different pitches. While the organ is very good for leading congregational singing, it does lack the variety of color found in larger instruments for choir accompaniment and playing various styles of organ music. Over the years, there have been some inquiries to see what could be done to expand and enrich the organ. Meanwhile we give thanks and praise to God for blessings that we have received through this instrument. In the late 1990’s, a Zimbelstern (literally, “cymbal-star”) was

added to the instrument, given in memory of James Rogner. It was dedicated on May 10, 1998. The Zimbelstern provides the sound of bells most often heard at high points of praise, such as final Trinitarian hymn stanzas, and the “Holy, Holy, Holy” of the communion liturgy.