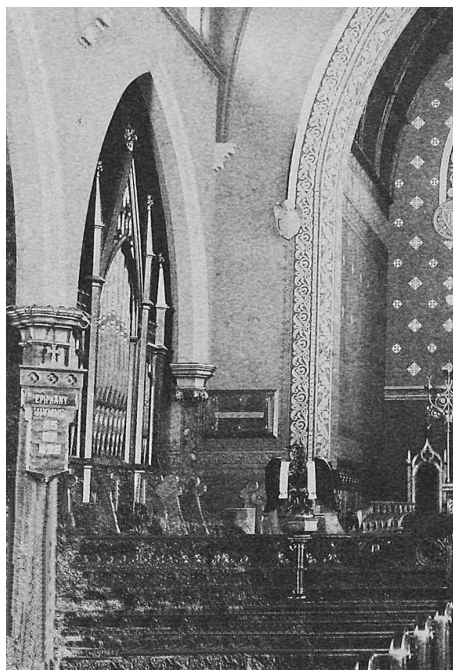


Organs at St. Andrew's: A History

Four organs have served St. Andrew's through the 160 years of its history.

1855-1905

The first recorded organ purchase was in 1855; although it is possible that there was an organ here before that, it is also quite possible that there was not. English churches did not revive the organ until the first third of the 19th century, and American Episcopal churches followed suit after some time lag, so it could well have been 1855 by the time St. Andrew's bought its first organ. The organ was built by the F.G. Merritt firm of Detroit. When our new sanctuary was opened in 1868, the organ was placed in the gallery at the back of the church, which was the custom then (and in many churches now, for such placement provides good support for congregational singing and allows the voice of the organ to resound down the length of the room). In 1890, the chancel was added to the east end of the nave, and the organ was moved to the front, on the opposite side from where the organ console is placed now. The first organ at St. Andrew's was at the front, on the north side of the sanctuary, very near where the new organ will be.



The first organ at St. Andrew's.

1905-1937

That early organ was replaced in 1905 with a larger organ built by the Austin Organ Company of Connecticut, with two manuals (keyboards) and tubular-pneumatic action to send the wind to the pipes. In 1937 the Austin Organ Company replaced their first organ with a second, their Opus 2005 (organ makers number their instruments as composers number their compositions). That organ, like our present one, had pipes behind the grilles in the side walls of the chancel; because electricity sent the air to the pipes, they could be placed farther from the console where the organist sits to play. That organ was slightly smaller than our current organ: it had 29 ranks and 1584 pipes.

1937-1969

In 1955, a small organ was built for the gallery at the back of the nave. Built by Dewey Layton of Ypsilanti, that organ has 6 ranks. It is called an "Antiphonal" organ, for it was meant to provide an answering and supplemental voice to the main organ. However, because its tonal quality is quite different from that of our current organ, it is hard to blend the instruments and we use the antiphonal organ very rarely.

1971-Present

For the centennial of the church building we commissioned a new organ from the Reuter Organ Company of Lawrence, Kansas. It is said that the first gift towards this new organ was made by a choirboy. The organ was finished in the summer of 1970 and dedicated on Sunday, 28 February 1971 with a guest recital by Professor Marilyn Mason of the UM School of Music. She had also provided guidance for the design of the instrument. The Reuter organ has 3 manuals, 39 ranks and 1897 pipes; George Hunsche (1946-1977), then our organist and choirmaster, drew up the specifications for the pipes. The Reuter

organ retains two stops of great beauty from the old Austin organ: the Vox Humana and the Oboe.

A little arithmetic will demonstrate one of the many reasons we need to replace the Reuter organ. The first organ lasted 50 years before being replaced (1855-1905). The Austin organ was completely rebuilt after 32 years (1905-1937), making that an almost-new instrument. The Reuter organ was commissioned after another 32 years (1937-1969) and in place in another two, giving the Austin a life span of 34 years. The Reuter organ has served us well since 1971, but that was 45 years ago, and we need an alternative. So an organ committee was formed in 2004 to study the organ and our parish's musical needs, and to seek to meet those needs in the context of our other long-range plans. The proposal for an organ is the fruit of the work of many people throughout the parish and will serve St. Andrew's for many more generations to come.



The Austin Organ