

The Casavant Organ

Incorporating the Raleigh W. Greene Memorial Organ

Grand Orgue (Manual II)

16	Violonbasse	12	S
8	Montre	61	C
8	Violon	61	S
4	Prestant	61	C
2	Doublette	61	C
1 1/3	Fourniture IV-V	269	C
16	Bombarde	12	S
8	Trompette	61	C
	Chimes		
	Cymbelstern		
8	Trompette Royale (Bombarde)		

Bombarde (Manual IV)

8	Flûte à cheminée	61	C
8	Flûte harmonique	61	C
4	Flûte ouverte	61	C
2 2/3	Nazard	61	C
2	Quarte de nazard	61	C
1 3/5	Tierce	61	C
	Tremulant		
16	Bombarde		
8	Trompette royale	61	C

Positif (Manual I)

16	Bourdon	12	S
8	Principal	61	S
8	Voce humana	49	S
8	Bourdon	61	S
4	Prestant	61	S
4	Flûte à fuseau	61	SC
2 2/3	Nazard	61	SC
2	Quarte de nazard	61	SC
1 3/5	Tierce	61	SC
2/3	Cymbale IV	244	S
8	Clarinettes	61	S
8	Trompette	61	T
	Tremulant		
8	Trompette royale (Bombarde)		

Récit (Manual III)

16	Contra Dolce	12	S
8	Flûte majeure	61	SC
8	Viole de gambe	61	SC
8	Voix céleste	61	SC
8	Flûte douce	61	S
8	Flûte céleste	49	S
4	Octave	61	C
4	Flûte octaviante	61	SC
2	Octavin	61	SC
2	Plein jeu III	183	S
16	Basson	61	C
8	Trompette	61	C
8	Hautbois	61	C
8	Voix humaine	61	H
4	Clairon	61	C
	Tremulant		
8	Trompette royale (Bombarde)		

Pédale

32	Bourdon	32	H
16	Contrebasse	32	S
16	Violonbasse (GO)		
16	Bourdon	12	H
16	Bourdon doux (P)		
8	Octave	12	S
8	Principal	32	S
8	Bourdon	12	S
4	Octave	32	S
4	Flûte ouverte (Bombarde)		
10 2/3	Théorbe III (derived)		
2 2/3	Mixture IV	128	S
32	Contre bombarde	12	C
16	Bombarde	32	C
16	Seconde bombarde (GO)		
16	Basson (R)		
8	Trompette royale (Bombarde)		
8	Trompette (GO)		
4	Clairon (GO)		
4	Soprano (R)		

Pipe Sources

C	Pipes installed by Casavant Frères in 2000
S	Pipes installed by Schantz Organ Company in 1960
H	Pipes installed by Hook & Hastings in 1891
T	Replacement pipes built by Trivo in 1978 and installed by John Horton

Couplers

Grand Orgue to Pédale 8	Bombarde to Positif 8
Bombarde to Pédale 8	Récit to Positif 16, 8, 4
Positif to Pédale 8, 4	Positif 16, 4, and Unison Off
Récit to Pédale 8, 4	Bombarde to Récit 8
Bombarde to Grand Orgue 8	Positif to Récit 8
Récit to Grand Orgue 16, 8, 4	Récit 16, 4, and Unison Off
Positif to Grand Orgue 16, 8, 4	Grand Orgue to Bombarde 8
Grand Orgue Unison Off	Récit to Bombarde 8
Grand Orgue to Positif 8	Positif to Bombarde 8
	Grand Orgue/Positif transfer

Accessories

Adjustable Combination Action	Récit Expression Pedal
80 Thumb Combination Pistons	Positif Expression Pedal
18 Toe Combination Pistons	Digital Readout for Crescendo Level
16 Reversible Pistons	Chimes Volume Control
Crescendo Pedal (Adjustable)	Combination Action Adjuster Lock

Echo

In 1931 an echo division of six stops and five ranks of pipes was installed by the M. P. Möller company of Hagerstown, Maryland. While repairs were being made in 1999 to a truss that supports the roof of the building, it became necessary to disconnect the wind supply to that division. The Möller pipes and chest remain in place, and a floating division has been prepared on the console (including full combination action, couplers, and an expression pedal) so that the division can be reconnected in the future.

Statistics

The organ contains 3191 pipes, distributed across the five divisions in fifty-five ranks. Of the total number of pipes, 1380 are new and 1811 were retained from previous instruments; 2134 of the pipes speak on new windchests and 1057 on windchests installed by the Schantz Organ Company in 1960. The largest pipe in the organ is low C of the 32' Pedal Bourdon, a wooden pipe installed in the building in 1891. The smallest pipe is less than ½ inch speaking length, and is found in the Positif division. The new four-manual console is by Casavant and features composition naturals and rosewood sharps on the manual keyboards, maple naturals and rosewood sharps on the pedal.

Personnel

The stoplist of the new organ was developed by Casavant Assistant Tonal Director Jacquelin Rochette, working in collaboration with First Church musicians Mark Hayes and Jim Cook. The Schantz organ was removed by Mark Hayes, Ronald Dates, Barry Norris, Charles Wilson, and Ron Dates and the First Church custodial staff. The Casavant organ was installed by Germain Cormier and Mario Vanasse. Tonal finishing of the Casavant organ was done by Ives Champagne and Alain Gagnon.

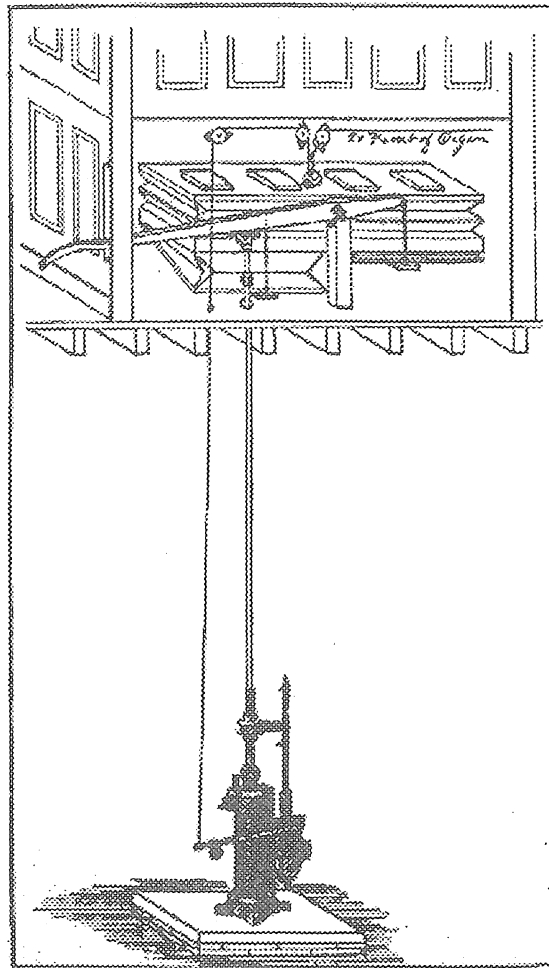
Rebuilt, Relocated, Replaced, Recycled — The History of our Organs

As we look at the history of First United Methodist Church, we can see reflections of its past in the way the organ has changed within the walls of our current building. In 1891, when this structure was built, the congregation bought an organ that was installed and used in the first service. The congregation of that day planned not only an outstanding structure, filled with light and designed for the future, but also a musical future that would be unmatched by other Birmingham churches for a generation.

The first organ in the building was built by one of America's premier builders of the day, the venerable Hook & Hastings firm of Boston. From published reports in local newspapers, we know that the organ had three manuals and forty-eight stops, and that the church paid \$10,000.00 for the instrument. Miss Belle McCoy, our first organist, must have been a very capable musician, and she was no doubt excited when she played in worship for the first time November 22, 1891. However, church records give us very little information about the instrument she played.

We might be expected to learn something about the organ from the company that built it, but they ceased to exist during the 1930's and most of their records were lost. Even so, we do know a few other details of the organ. We know, for example, that wind could be raised for the pipes either by hand pumping or by means of a "water engine." In days before electricity was commonly used to provide air pressure for pipe organs, as it is today, water pressure was sometimes used to provide the power for air pumps. The church records of the day even give details about the amount of the water bill for the organ each month. Sometimes this bill amounted to as much as \$3.50 a month, more than the bill for water used by the church for all other purposes combined.

The church was diligent in seeking out talented musicians to serve during this time as well. Not only did the church hire one of the founders of the Birmingham Conservatory, Dahm Peterson, as its Choir Director, it also had a regular practice of paying the organist more than any other staff member. Perhaps organists were more difficult to find than choir directors or secretaries. Records of payments by the church for tuning and regulating the organ attest to the fact that the organ was well cared for by the church, and that it received the best care they could provide. A contract with the Seals Piano and Organ Co. shows that in 1908 the church paid \$80.00 to cover the cost of tuning all pianos and organs for a year — about the cost of a single piano tuning today.



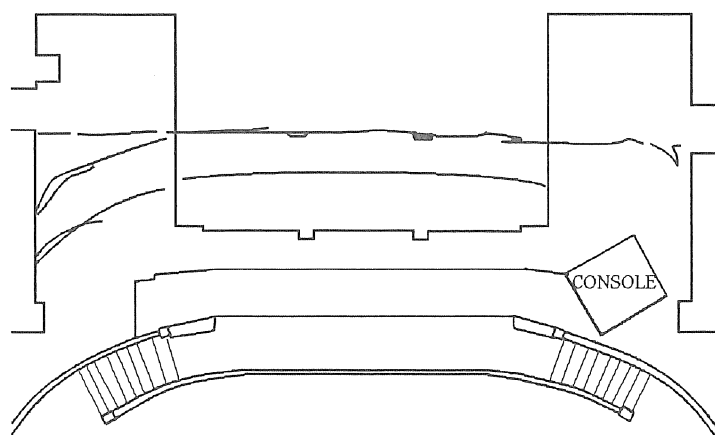
During the early years of the organ's presence in our building, it remained a unique instrument in the city. As such, it was highly prized, and at times jealously guarded — a treasure of the congregation. For example, the minutes of the Board of Stewards for July, 1908, include reports of a request that a certain Miss Hanley be allowed to practice and take lessons on the organ. After much discussion, the Board decided that only Miss Duncan — the daughter of the Senior Pastor — would be granted that privilege. Records show that the Board continued to control access to the organ until the 1930's.



Even though we have only sketchy information about the instrument itself, we do have some photographs that show how it looked. The picture above, which was made around the turn of the century, is in the Birmingham Public Library Archives and is printed here with their permission. The organ was located in its present position behind the choir, but its console — the keyboards — were built into its case. To our eyes, the pipes in the façade would have been surprising, because they were painted a dusty blue and rose with with gold ornamentation. The colors of the pipes complemented the bright colors of the windows, contributing to the lightness of the room overall.

After WWI, when the organ had been in place for over thirty years, the church decided to modernize its workings. After all, a lot of progress had been made, and newer organs in the city – including those in the nearby First Baptist Church and Church of the Advent – had electric motors to provide wind for the pipes. They even had electric action to connect the keys to the pipes, allowing the console to be placed at any distance from the rest of the organ. This freedom of placement gave those churches a flexibility that must have appealed to the First Methodist of the 1920s, for in 1923, Orla D. Allen and Morton B. Welch completed a mechanical rebuild of the Hook & Hastings organ, providing electric action for the windchests and a new console, one built by a relatively new firm, the Austin Organ Company, with whom the two local organ men were associated. The work involved these mechanical changes only, and the only change to the appearance of the church was moving the console to the side of the choir loft.

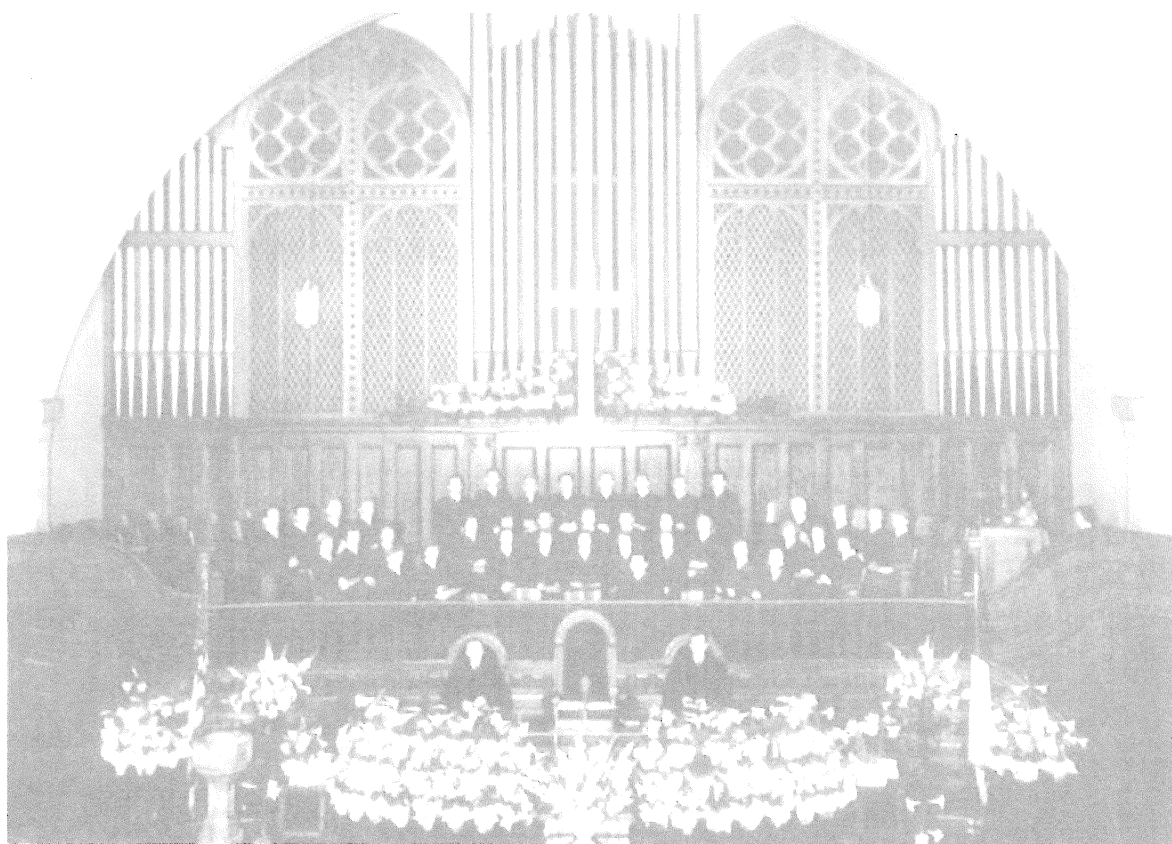
In 1931, however, a great deal about the appearance of First Methodist was changed. To begin with, the musical fabric of American churches was different. Large volunteer choirs, similar to the ones we are accustomed to today, had not existed when the building was new. By the middle of the 1920's, however, when larger choirs were becoming common, there was not enough space in the First Methodist choir loft. The Board decided in 1931 to undertake a series of major repairs to the church, including making significant changes to the organ, both in its tonal properties and in its location — to allow more space for the choir.



The Board solicited bids from virtually all the major organ-building firms in the country. Records in the church archives show that fifteen companies were asked to make a bid on relocating the organ chests and pipes so that they could be spread out in the space behind the choir, moving the façade back to allow two more rows of seats in the choir. The drawing to the left is taken from a blueprint in the church archives. The straight lines show the original square shape of the organ case, while the irregular lines are handdrawn on the original

blueprint. They indicate the new position of the relocated organ façade. At the same time, these companies were asked to add some new sounds to the organ. Specifically, they were requested to add a French Horn stop (one of the orchestral voices that had become common in American organs around the turn of the century), an echo division (one whose pipes are still in place in our attic), and a set of chimes (which we still use).

After bids had been received, the M. P. Möller company of Hagerstown, Maryland was selected to do the work on the organ. Because there were not enough façade pipes to fill the wider space, two screens were designed to be placed between the flats of pipes. After some negotiations between the church and the organ company, a design done by a local firm was chosen, and Möller built the screens we still have in our choir loft today. The pipes themselves were painted a solid metallic color, covering the original stencilled design, and local workers assisted in making the modifications to the choir loft itself, providing new curved risers for the choir. Given the delays that have become commonplace when work of this nature has been done in recent years, it's a little surprising that the entire process, from soliciting bids through completion of the organ relocation, was completed in just a few months.



The completion of the 1931 project gave the front of the church a new look, one that it was to retain through the 1950s, when this photograph was taken. We will never know to what extent the changes made to the original organ shortened its life span, but by the end of the second World War, the First Methodist organ was in poor mechanical condition. Even though its sound was considered more beautiful than the sound of some newer instruments in Birmingham, it was no longer reliable, and the church began to consider improving its organ once again. Money was raised in memory of Raleigh W. Greene, who had been a much-loved member of the clergy, and in 1957 the church hired Robert Baker, of New York's Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, to evaluate the organ. After examining the instrument, he recommended that it be replaced, and in due course the church signed a contract for a new organ to be built by the Schantz Organ Company of Orville, Ohio.

Representatives of the Schantz company received a proposed stoplist from Dr. Baker and modified it to conform with the available space and their concept of the American Classic organ – a concept of organ specification that was meant to allow a single instrument to play many different styles of music. Their revised stoplist was reported on the front page of *The Diapason*, the leading pipe organ publication of the era, and details of this new instrument were soon known throughout the nation. One of its features that marked it as unique in Birmingham for several years was the presence of an exposed neo-Baroque *Positiv* division in addition to a more traditional enclosed *Choir* division. While other post-WWII instruments were to have one or the other, only First Church and Canterbury Methodist – closely copied from our organ a few years later – had both.

This instrument, dedicated as the Raleigh W. Greene Memorial Organ on August 28, 1960, utilized the same chamber space and screens that had been built by Möller in 1931, but it added two cantilevered chests that held the pipes of the Great division and the Positiv suspended over the choir members. The console, which had been on the side of the choir loft since 1931, was returned to the center, this time in a special sunken pit, below the floor level of the choir loft. Once again, the appearance of the church was changed, and another generation grew up in First Methodist with a new organ providing accompaniments for its hymns and anthems. As the music program of the church grew and flourished under the direction of Hugh Thomas, Joseph Schreiber and Sam Batt Owens, many Birmingham-Southern College students were welcomed to the church as they took organ lessons and played recitals in the sanctuary of First Church.

The photograph below was used in the dedication program in August of 1960, when the organ was completed. The brass rail and curtain, which had served as a modesty screen for the choir since 1891, were removed for this official "portrait" of the organ, making it easier to see the unbalanced seating in the choir loft that had been required by the side position of the 1931 console placement.



In 1972 another major modification to the appearance of the building resulted in new lighting and a revised color scheme for the church. At the same time, the rail and curtain were removed for a final time, and a skillful extension of the rail was added as a permanent screen for the choir. In recognition of the important role the organ played in the musical life of both First Church and Birmingham-Southern College, the center panel of the extended rail was made removable, so that the organist could be seen clearly during recitals. This rail remains in place today, and the center panel is still removed when the organ plays a particularly important role in a service or concert.

The Schantz organ served the church for forty years, but as is the case with all machines, it too began to show signs of wear. The mechanical "memory" that had been placed in the basement had become unreliable by the early 1980's, and even some pipes had been replaced because of damage from excess humidity. By the late 1990's, the church embarked on a major rebuild and revision of the Raleigh W. Greene Memorial Organ. The Canadian firm Casavant Frères was selected to do the work, and the Schantz was used for the last time in worship in January of 2000.

Parts of the organ were shipped to Canada to be reworked in the factory, and parts remained in place. Once again, the musical traditions of First Church had grown, and several modifications were made to the choir loft to give us the flexibility to accommodate the variety of music that we have in our services today. The curved risers of 1931 were removed, and a basic set of straight risers were put in place, nearly duplicating the original layout of the choir loft. The new risers, however, are designed to permit not only the Chancel Choir, but also our Bell Choirs to use the choir loft during services. The new console was made movable, so that it can be placed in the center of the choir loft for recitals and services, or be moved to the side when a broader floor space is needed in the center. As Wayne Hester studied the proposals for removing the curved risers, he drew a series of curved steps leading from the choir loft to the balcony. When the risers were removed, the original steps were revealed – with the same curved shape of Wayne's proposed new ones. After seventy years, we're using them once again.

When the organ returned to the church in the middle of October, we moved our services to the Dining Room – and started watching progress of the reinstallation from the narthex and the balcony. We couldn't see everything that happened, but new wind chests were installed, new framework was added, some of our old pipes were placed where they had been before, others were removed, and still others replaced. After five weeks we returned to the sanctuary, but it would be five more weeks – on December 24 — before the tedious process of voicing each pipe was completed and the organ was once again heard in our worship services.

The screens that Möller installed in 1931 are still there, but the pipes both in front of them and directly behind them are new. The pipes that once stood in front of them are now standing on new chests in the Choir division or on old chests in the Swell division. In keeping with principles of good stewardship, we've recycled parts of the organ and reinstalled others exactly as they were. Where changes in our musical practices have demanded it, or where damage had occurred, we've replaced some pipes. Two ranks of pipes from 1891 are still being used, the echo division of 1931 is still in place, and most of the 1960 Schantz organ is still with us.

It's difficult to compare one instrument to another, because just as we have had different needs over the last 110 years, so do other churches have needs that differ from ours. This year we celebrate a new organ in our church – the best organ for our church in this, the twenty-first century.

Dr. James H. Cook

The Renovation of our Building

Standing on the corner of 6th Avenue and 19th Street North, the Sanctuary of First United Methodist Church has been a majestic fixture of downtown Birmingham for one hundred and ten years. The building has seen baptisms, weddings, and fond farewells by the hundreds at its altar. In the words of Senior Minister David Wallace, it is “a place where God is loved and that love is made known”. However, a threat to the beloved Sanctuary building existed almost from the beginning. Soon after the edifice was completed, the coal dust and soot that permeated the young city’s air began to accumulate on the stone blocks of the building. Within a very short time, the original color of the stones lost the beautiful nuances their of color and became a grimy black. The dark coloration became accepted as normal, and it was not very many years before there was no one left who could remember the original beauty of the building.

Last year the Long Range Planning Committee discovered the alarming fact that the soot and coal dust were trapping water inside the porous stone. The deterioration would inevitably destroy the structural integrity of the building itself if left untreated. It was essential that the exterior of the building be treated with a sealant that would keep water out while allowing the existing buildup to dissipate.

To do the work properly, the existing grime would have to be removed in such a way as to do no further damage to the stones. Any abrasive technique was out of the question. The church considered two companies before selecting Masonry Arts of Bessemer to perform the work. The stones would be treated with a chemical that would effectively dissolve the grime while protecting the limestone itself. A Church Conference was held on August 20, 2000 where a unanimous vote approved the cleaning and sealing of the building.

Masonry Arts soon began treating the building and the results were startling. The cleaning revealed stones with many beautiful shades of color as well as remarkable textures that had been hidden behind the soot and coal dust. Removing the threat to the Sanctuary had allowed the building’s original beauty to be revealed in all its glory. In the words of Masonry Arts President, Roy Swindall, the Family of Faith was gaining a “brand-new, one hundred year old church”.

At the same time, another need concerning the Sanctuary was addressed. The carpeting in the Narthex had become worn out and the pad below it was so deteriorated that walking across the uneven surface had become a safety hazard. While waiting for some construction issues to be resolved, a beautiful new carpet was selected by the church’s House Committee. Installation of the maroon and gold carpeting was performed during January of 2001.

The new carpet was only the latest in a series of renovations to the area that is now the Narthex. As the building was originally designed, the main entrance into the Sanctuary was from the steps coming up from 19th Street and the area behind the Sanctuary was the Education Wing for Sunday School classes. The twenty classrooms were on two levels at the rear of a semi-circular auditorium. Later, the auditorium was converted to Wesley Chapel, which replaced straight-back chairs with theater seats. In 1972, this area was dramatically altered into a welcoming foyer and became the primary entrance into the Sanctuary. The stained glass window that had provided light for the auditorium was covered with a drop-in ceiling and fluorescent lights. Only time will tell what other changes await in the future.

Awash in its re-discovered grandeur, the Sanctuary of First United Methodist stands as a beacon to all of God’s children. As a safe harbor for the weary and a watchtower in the Lord’s vineyard; this building, this congregation, and this church shall stand ready in the years to come “to seek, ...to strengthen, ...to share, ... and to send.”

*Dr. Paul E. McCracken
Director of Christian Education*