FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GREENSBURG

A brief history of the organ at First Presbyterian Church, Greensburg, PA

The first organ of the church structure was completed in 1915 and installed in 1919, and was the design of the Ernest M. Skinner Company of Boston, MA. This prestigious company was an appropriate choice to complement the building that the celebrated architect Ralph Adams Cram designed in the modified English gothic style.

Composer Gordon Balch Nevin was the organist at the time and boasted about the large Tuba stop, saying that it was the best stop of its kind that he had ever heard.

The instrument served the congregation well, but time and use left their marks. In 1965, the M.P. Moller Organ Company of Hagerstown, MD, built a new console, releathered the great division and replaced most of the pipe work in the great division.

By the early 1970s, it was decided the organ needed to be totally replaced so it could play organ literature and accompany the worship services. Charles H. Snyder was appointed chairman of the organ committee. After much deliberation, it was decided to invest in a new organ, retaining the 1965 console and new pipework.

A financial campaign followed, and the congregation and friends of the congregation pledged toward the financing of the new instrument.

The Austin Organ Company of Hartford, CT, received the contract, and William B. Stickel, area representative of Austin, Edgar B. Highberger, Minister of Music, and Richard Piper, tonal director of Austin, designed the specifications.

In the fall of 1974, Austin installed the organ under the supervision of Virgil Johnson with Zoltan Zsitway doing the tonal finishing.

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The dedication recitals included performances by Edgar Highberger, Calvin Hampton (nephew of Charles Snyder), Russell G. Wichmann and William C. Witherup.

In the 1970s and 1980s, several additions were made, including the addition of the Dr. Jane Clotworthy Galley Organ, installed at the rear of the church. Funds were transacted from Dr. Clotworthy's estate by Attorney Thomas P. Cole II. The M. P. Moller Company received the contract and Daniel Angerstein and Peter Luley did the tonal finishing.

Through the years, new stops were added, to reach a total of 61 ranks and 3,521 pipes.

More recently, Walker digital stops were added, and now there are 32 digital ranks in the organ, bringing the instrument to a total of 93 ranks.

In 2015, the organ was entirely releathered and cleaned. The console was totally rebuilt using Walker products.

William Hain and Son-Organcraft, Alan Sterner, and Ray Colby, organ technicians, have taken care of the organ.

Prepared by Edgar B. Highberger, 2024
Minister of Music Emeritus