

Organs of the "Town Clock" Church, New Albany, Indiana (formerly Second Presbyterian Church, now Second Baptist Church)

The Second Presbyterian Church Organ.

We visited the Second Presbyterian Church yesterday to see the new organ, being reconstructed by Mr. Conkey, of Louisville. He has taken it to pieces in every part, remodeled and improved it so much that we doubt if the members of the church will recognize it at all. The outside is constructed in the gothic style and looks much handsomer than ever. The works of the organ have been greatly enlarged, there being sixty-six notes in the the [sic] keyboard, which is an increase of twelve notes, making it a G to C organ. The Pedal Key-board is a new invention of the builder and is a great improvement over the old order of things. By simply placing the foot on the different pedals the wind from the air-chamber is diverted to the pipes the player wishes to operate upon. The bass and pedal pipes are made of wood handsomely varnished. The suckers of the pedal pipes are supplied with a patent spring which regulates the tone, making it either loud, soft or medium.

The stop [sic] pipes are made of fine composition metal, supplied with caps and lined with leather and are easily tuned. The number of pipes in the organ of all kinds is 792.

A SPLENDID ORGAN.—Some fifteen years ago Mr. J. Conkey of Louisville built and set up an organ in the Second Presbyterian church. This organ has ever been regarded one among the best in the State, both in the excellence of its workmanship and the rich, deep, full and sweet sound of its music. It differs in many particulars from other reed organs. It has sixty-six keys instead of fifty-four; no roller-board, a new patent action, combining with the organ the richest tones of the piano. It has another great advantage in working without the friction of the ordinary organ.

We have never heard an organ that gave forth more mellow and inspiring music, and in this particular the skill of Mr. Conkey as an accomplished and thorough master of his art is most manifested, and shows that his long practical experience in the best organ manufactories of England was improved by him as only a master would improve it. He justly ranks to-day as one among the very best organ builders in the United States, and as such is well known in all our principal American cities.

Mr. Conkey needs no better recommendation of his skill than is given by the organ at the Second Presbyterian church, and churches in our State that design having organs built, should by all means send their committee to this city and hear this organ. If they do so, they will give Mr. Conkey their contracts, as an addition to the superiority of his instruments he is very liberal in his charges.

Mr. Conkey resides at Louisville, where he carries on his business of organ building. He is also

The repeating bellows is also a new invention of Mr. Conkey's. At the base or lower part the fold is inside and the upper part of the fold is reversed to the outside, in order to keep an equal pressure of wind in the air chamber. The air chamber is air-tight, the valves being made substantial, yet in such a way that any portion can be removed or replaced at the shortest notice.

The action is patent by squares and does away with the levers and roller boards. This part of the organ is certainly most wonderful, and the invention stamps Mr. Conkey king of inventors in the organ line. The workmanship throughout is very fine, every part of the machinery being constructed of the best material and polished in the highest style of perfection. In fact, the works of a fine watch could not be more elegant nor operate with more ease. The lightest touch upon the key-board is sufficient to sound any note desired. For power of tone few organs will excel this, nor can softer tones be conceived of than it can produce in the hands of a skillful player. Judging from the interest Mr. Conkey has taken in the matter, we feel safe in saying he may well feel proud of his achievement.

—an undated clipping, c. 1852?, probably from the *New Albany Ledger*

engaged in piano tuning, being a superior workman upon this instrument. All orders for his services in piano tuning in this city may be left at the store of John E. Crane & Bro., on Main street.

The following certificates of Mr. Conkey's qualifications are herewith submitted.

ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH, LOUISVILLE,
June 8th, 1865.

Rev. and Dear Sir: The bearer, John Conkey, asks a few lines to recommend him to you. I had to employ his services for my organ. He gave full satisfaction. I have no doubt but he will do the same for you.

Yours, respectfully,

THOS. JOYCE.

Rev. Father Faller,

LOUISVILLE, KY., Sept. 8, 1866.

Know all men to whom this may come, that we the undersigned have known Mr. John Conkey for many years, since he first came to Louisville, and take pleasure in stating that he has a good reputation for honesty and fair dealing. That he is a pianist, organist and musician, and is reported capable of teaching music. He has been often at our houses amongst our children and musical instruments, and seems master of his business. Respectfully,

JOHN JOYES,

PHIL. TOMPERT, JR.

Approved: J. P. HARBESON, W. C. REASON

—*New Albany Daily Ledger* 10 September 1866.

THE MAGNIFICENT ORGAN

Of the Second Presbyterian Church of this City.

The new organ of the Second Presbyterian church of this city is at last finished, and will be opened to the public on Thursday night. It is the work of Hook & Hastings, of Boston, the builders of the great organ of the College of Music, Cincinnati, and was put up by Mr. Holland, who assisted in putting up the Cincinnati instrument. It is in a case of solid walnut, oiled. This wood forms the entire front of the first story. The frame of the second story is also of solid walnut.

A feature of the instrument is that it has no sham pipes, "painted hypocrites." But every pipe except four, which are not seen, is like Byron's mountain peaks, in that it hath a tongue, and "Jura answers back to the joyous Alps who call to her aloud."

The style of the front is Gothic. The entire front pipes are 8 feet diapason, flanked on either side by 16 feet open pedals. The width of the organ is 25 feet, the height 25 feet. It is not sunk into the wall,

but stands out into the church with an imposing effect. It has 25 stops — containing 1,098 pipes.

The distinguishing feature of the diapasons is their full volume and round open tone. The flutes are imitative, the string toned stops are rich in their liquid flow. The reed stops, the oboe and trumpet make music that delights every one. These stops, played singly or collectively, show the instrument now in its might and then in its tenderness. The piano and forte combinations are produced by foot pedals, thus enabling the performer at all times to devote his hands to the keys.

The organ is operated by a Piston motor placed in the cellar, and there is thereby secured not only a strong and even and noiseless motion, but the rushing sound of the water made by rotary motors is avoided.

Mr. Holland worked most faithfully and conscientiously in putting up the instrument, and the church is quite pleased with his painstaking determination to leave them when done an instrument in perfect order.

— *New Albany Daily Ledger*, 28 March 1883

DESCRIPTION OF THE ORGAN.

BUILT BY HOOK & HASTINGS, BOSTON, MASS.

It has 2 Manuals, of 58 notes each, and a Pedale of 27 notes, 29 Speaking, and 5 Mechanical Registers.

GREAT ORGAN.

1.	16'	SUB BASS	Wood,	12	Pipes.
2.	16'	BOURDON	"	46	"
3.	8'	OPEN DIAPASON	Metal,	58	"
4.	8'	DULCIANA	"	58	"
5.	8'	MELODIA (Stop'd Bass)	Wood,	58	"
6.	4'	OCTAVE	Metal,	58	"
7.	2 2/3'	TWELFTH	"	58	"
8.	2'	FIFTEENTH	"	58	"
9.	3'	Rks. MIXTURE	"	174	"
10.	8'	TRUMPET	"	58	"

SWELL ORGAN.

11.	8'	OPEN DIAPASON	Wood and Metal,	58	Pipes.
12.	8'	VIOLA	Metal	58	"
13.	8'	STOPPED DIAPASON	wood	58	"
14.	4'	FLAUTO TRAVERSO	"	58	"
15.	4'	VIOLINA	Metal	58	"
16.	2'	FLAUTINO	"	58	"
17.	8'	OBOE	"	46	"
18.	8'	BASSOON	"	12	"

PEDALE.

19.	16'	OPEN DIAPASON	Wood	27	"
20.	16'	BOURDON	"	27	"

Mechanical Registers.

21. SWELL TO GREAT COUPLER.
22. GREAT TO PEDALE COUPLER.
23. SWELL TO PEDALE COUPLER.
24. TREMOLO.
25. BELLOWS SIGNAL.

Pedal Movements.

1. FORTE COMBINATION GREAT.
2. PIANO COMBINATION GREAT.
3. REVERSIBLE PEDAL TO OPERATE NO. 22.
4. BALANCED SWELL PEDAL.

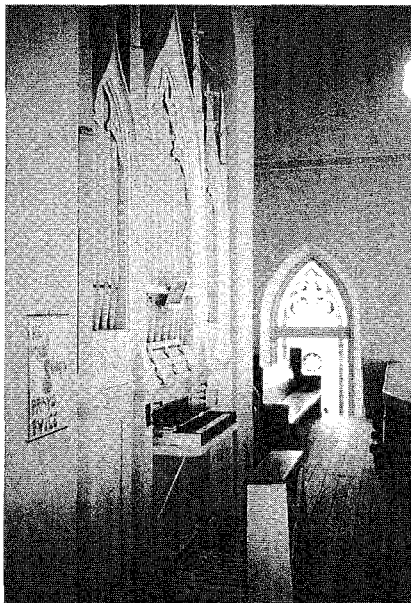
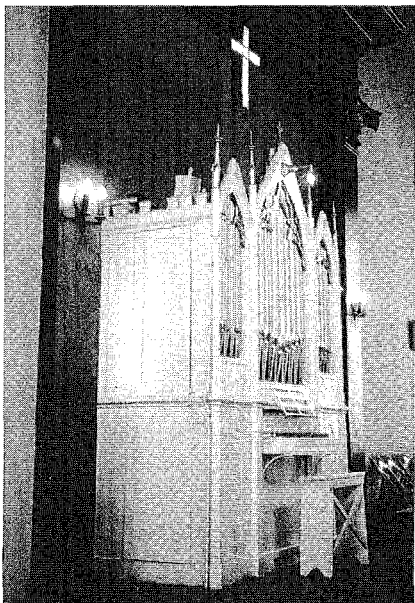
—flyer describing Hook & Hastings Op. 1126, 1883

In 1837, 103 members from the First Presbyterian Church of New Albany organized the Second Presbyterian Church. The church building at East 3rd and Main streets was dedicated free of all debt in 1852; it was a station on the Underground Railway. The congregation met there until 1889, when the building was sold to the East 4th Street Baptist Church. Owned now by the Second Baptist Church, the building is today affectionately known as the "Town Clock Church."

From the evidence, it appears that John Conkey (Johann Koenke) rebuilt an existing one-manual organ at the Second Presbyterian Church in New Albany around 1852. Who built it initially, or when, or what became of it when Hook & Hastings installed their Op. 1126, 1883 research has thus far

not revealed. The Hook & Hastings stayed in the building only six years; in 1889 it was moved to the new building of Second, later to become Hutchinson Presbyterian Church. Its case and some pipes still exist in the Aeolian-Skinner organ, Op. 1039, 1942, located at St. John's United Presbyterian Church, a merger of Second, Third, and most recently First Presbyterian Churches, meeting in the 1889 building of Second Presbyterian.

In the meantime, the parishioners of East 4th Street Baptist Church bought a second-hand instrument, the pipeless chassis of which still exists in the church. Who built it or where it came from we do not know. A very similar organ, whose builder is also unidentified, exists at St. Anne's Roman Catholic Church in North Vernon, Indiana.



The photograph above left is of the one manual organ now in Second Baptist Church (the "Town Clock Church") in New Albany. The photograph above right is of the similar organ at St. Anne's Roman Catholic Church in North Vernon, Indiana. We do not know who built either instrument. The photograph at the right is of Hook & Hastings Op. 1126, 1883 as it looked c. 1900 in Second Presbyterian Church in New Albany. It was in the "Town Clock Church" from 1883 to 1889.

