

Dean's Message for April, 2017



Have you explored the pipe organ database on the Organ Historical Society's website (organsociety.org)?

This database began life before the electronic/digital age way back in 1959. The current database website debuted in May 2005 and on the day the website was made public there were 11,225 entries. Today the number of entries exceeds 57,000. In addition to the installation entries you can find information on 8000 builders, photographs and stoplists.

This database led me to a unique experience. Back in 2007, in preparation for our 2008 175th anniversary, I was researching the history of the congregation where I was the organist and church historian. As a part of that research I discovered that the first pipe organ my congregation owned was built by the W H Clarke & Company of Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1879.

I was not familiar with the Clarke Company so I went to the OHS Pipe Organ Database and discovered that a church about 85 miles from me had a restored 1879 Clarke. A telephone call to the organ company that did the restoration provided me with the name of the church organist and a telephone number. An appointment to visit was made and I was off! What a great experience to play and hear an instrument that was nearly identical to the one my congregation had heard 128 years earlier.

A quick look in the database reveals very few postings of pipe organs within Sarasota and Manatee Counties and even fewer photographs. Surely there are additional pipe organs that ought to be in the database.

I would like to suggest that you visit the website and look at the postings for churches in our area. Is your church pipe organ listed? Are there photographs? Is a stoplist provided? Are you aware of instruments that have been relocated, broken up for parts, or destroyed? It's really very easy to contribute information and I encourage you to do so. We are probably the only ones who have an interest in preserving the history of the pipe organ in Sarasota and Manatee Counties!

And while you're at it, please contribute the same information about existing organs to the LOCAL ORGANS section of our Chapter's website (agosm.org).

Dwane