

Four Organs

The first Lutheran Church erected in Middletown was built about 1783, on the current site of the present church, right at the close of the American Revolution. Immediately following the war there was no money and the fact that in 1783 when our ancestors gathered for that first worship and were able to worship with the accompaniment of organ music, is truly a testament to the dedication and sacrifice that these first Lutheran settlers were willing to make. Yes, that first Lutheran church on Main Street had an organ in it. As far as records show, this organ was used for the next 100 years, it served the members joyful through the first, second and into the early days of the third and present church.

In March of 1871, the congregation purchased a reed organ for \$425 and it was installed in the sanctuary. "The Valley Register, a weekly local paper printed in Middletown, reported "The instrument is one of excellent finish and exquisite tone; has five sets of reeds, with pedal base and it is claimed that it is capable of greater orchestral effects than any instrument of its size yet manufactures." The reed organ was a fairly young instrument but became very desirable in churches because it had a much stronger sound. It was also less expensive which the congregation was still recovering from the economic conditions brought on by the Civil War.

The last of April in 1892, a move was inaugurated to purchase a pipe organ for the church, and a committee was appointed to see if funds could be raised for the project, "as no debt would be permitted." But it wasn't until May of 1899, when 32 members had signed a petition in regards to obtaining a new organ. Before long a motion was on the floor that such an organ be bought at a cost not to exceed \$4000. To say that council was concerned for the safety of this new and expensive instrument, would be an understatement. The keys for the for the "new pipe organ shall be placed in the sole hands of the Chorister, Martin Remsberg and the Organist, John L. Routzahn, and the keys shall not be loaned by them to any one, and no lessons given or practicing allowed outside of the Chorister and organist."



The new pipe organ was installed about November 1, 1899 and it was powered by a water motor. On November 24th, a special organ recital was given in the sanctuary of the church with R. Leroy Haslup, a concert organist from Baltimore. An admission fee of 25 cents was charged, the proceeds to be used to defray the expenses of the water motor which operated the organ. The affair was much publicized and a special car was run from Frederick for the benefit of music lovers in that city who wished to hear the new organ. Late 1923, a three horsepower electric motor was purchased for the organ at \$340. In 1925 there was a severe water shortage and the town asked the churches in to have the New Year Week of Prayers Services at Zion because our organ was electric and not water like the other churches in town.

In 1953, this wonderful instrument that served our congregation over fifty years, was reported by our repair service that it was beyond repair and needed to be replaced in the very near future. Parts for the organ had been discontinued and the repairman would no longer guarantee his work. Our property committee did repairs to keep the pipes from falling. The new organ was purchased from the Shantz Company in Ohio and when they installed it they used some of the pipes from the organ of 1899. Many additional sounds like the trumpet, have been added to the organ, in order to enhance the beautiful sounds. Today the value of this organ is over \$350,000.

From the earliest days of our congregation music has been one of the key elements in our corporate worship. Music opens the hearts to hear the Word of God. We sing prophetic declaration over our church and over our lives and we sing what we desire to see God do for our future. And it is the instrument of the organ that leads us from the early days of our church till today into songs of praise. We have been blessed with many fine organists, Mary Hoffman, for one, served Zion over 50 years.

We One very interesting fact about playing a pipe organ, after only a couple of minutes working the foot pedals you will not soon forget the energy needed to operate the foot pedals...it's not easy.

