The opening of

Parsons Pipe Organ Builders
Opus 56, 2025

ST. PAUL'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

St. Paul's Episcopal Church
605 Clay Street
Lynchburg, Virginia

St. Paul's first organs

The Hall & Erben Co. of New York built the first organ for St. Paul's in 1826. The instrument had six stops in the Great Organ and four stops, including a Hautboy (Oboe) in the "Small" Organ. It is quite possible the organ had no pedal board as we know it today as there are no pedal stops listed. The organ, though small by today's standards, was remarkable for the day, and even more so that it was delivered from New York. The entire town seems to have come together to raise the funds for the instrument:

> We have been highly gratified at the liberality displayed by almost all classes among us, in raising the amount required; but we know of none who have higher claims upon the public thanks than the Lynchburg Thespian Society, who of their own accord, without solicitation from any quarter, generously devoted their receipts to this object, to the amount of $500. (*Virginian*, November 5, 1826).

This instrument did not come without controversy. A century later *The Diapason* (a national magazine dedicated to the organ) described the same event:

> A great innovation was made Nov. 13 [1826] when a pipe organ was introduced into the [St. Paul's] church. Some thought it a very questionable proceeding. Nothing before had been seen like it in Lynchburg. The Rev. F. G. Smith preached a sermon upholding the use of an organ in the church, but this did not heal the breach. Sentiment was greatly divided, some holding that the use of an organ in religious services was sacrilegious, and that they would absent themselves from any church that was guilty of this sin; others held that God could be praised by the use of an instrument as well as by the human voice, and they rejoiced in the new music. The agitation brought many to church to hear the new "machine." Among the organizations that took a great deal of interest in it were Marshall Lodge and the Thespian Society. Each contributed to it, the latter as much as $500, which was raised by entertainments.

It may seem strange to us that there should have been any, question as to the use of an organ in church but to many people at this time, and even later, it was a problem hard to solve.

There were few organs in the early part of the 19th-cent. in America. As noted above, David Tannenberg and his successors built small instruments used primarily in Moravian (German) congregations. There was a negative influence remaining from the Puritan settlers regarding any instruments in a church setting. In fact, in the history of Court Street UMC, Lynchburg there is a note from 1850 regarding 56 members who withdrew from Third Street Church to build a new church with an organ. The note reads,

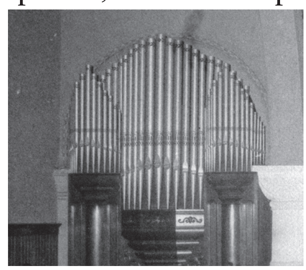
> Fifty-six members have withdrawn from this church to build one up on the hill to serve the devil in." Their first organ, a melodeon (reed organ) was given by a Miss Carrie Warwick. It is hard to imagine what the Third Street congregation thought of the Episcopalians with their 1826 building and organ.

The 1826 building soon became inadequate for the growing congregation and a new building opened on April 20, 1851. The new building housed an organ by Wm. B.D Simmons of Boston. It is highly like that Simmons took the Hall & Erben in trade for partial payment for the new organ.

Hall & Erben parted ways in 1827 and both continued successfully through the 19th century. (Henry) Erben would soon become the leading organ builder in New York, eventually opening a second shop in Baltimore. His shop closed about 1875 and reopened 1879-1884 as Henry Erben & Son. Wm. B.D. Simmons built organs from 1838 through 1876 and, like Erben, was a leading builder in Boston, MA.

Organs in the current building.

In 1895 the M.P. Möller Company of Hagerstown, MD installed the first instrument in the current St. Paul's building. The instrument was their Op. 140, with 42 stops across 3 manuals (keyboards) and pedal. The instrument was located in the left bay at the front of the church. It was built with tracker (mechanical) action, meaning its keys were connected to the chests, where the pipes are located, with thin strips of wood called trackers, which, given the organ's size, meant it was probably difficult to play.


Nave façade of the Möller

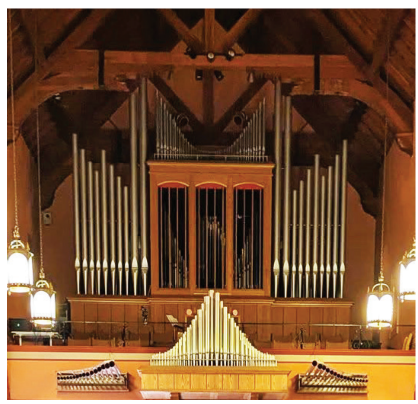
A contract was signed with Möller on December 12, 1906 to renovate the 1895 instrument, becoming their Op. 734 which contained 40 ranks of pipes. Several ranks from the 1895 instrument were replaced and the action was converted from tracker to tubular pneumatic, the hot innovation of the day. Tubular pneumatic replaced the trackers with small lead tubing. Depressing a key caused the tube to pressurize, activating a mechanism which allowed the pipe to play. This action, while innovative at the time, became problematic very quickly. The seeming miles of lead tubing were prone to leaks causing the organ to be 1) very noisy, and 2) very sluggish in key response, often to the point of not functioning. These instruments were somewhat derisively called "tubercular rheumatic" organs.

By the late 1920s, the 1906 organ was most likely in poor repair. Additionally, musical tastes had shifted quite drastically in the late 1910s and 1920s rendering some of the 1895/1906 organ "out of style." The Geo. Kilgen and Son Organ Company of St. Louis, MO installed their Op. 4556 in 1930. This instrument was a great departure from the preceding Möller organ(s). It had an electric action, a vast improvement over the previous instrument's tubular pneumatic action, and its style of sound was more in line with the times, an instrument that was very orchestral in nature with many more stops imitating orchestral instruments. This also produced an instrument which departed from the concept of a "clean sound." Additionally, with the introduction of an electric action many stops could be "shared," i.e. the same set of pipes on different stop tabs on different manuals. The instrument had many more stop tabs than the previous Möller, 60, but far fewer ranks, 32, than the previous organ (in later years this came to haunt this style of building).

The Kilgen fell into poor repair, through age and some rather questionable building practices of the time, and had become unreliable by the mid 1960's. Again, as happened in the late 1910s and 1920s, musical styles and tastes had shifted drastically, and the concept of an orchestral instrument was no longer desirable. Organists and organ builders wanted instruments that more closely followed the instruments built during the Baroque era (1600-1750), and specifically those from The Netherlands and Germany. The ideal was an organ that played Bach and his contemporaries but without much consideration for composers from later periods. This movement actually started in the mid-1930s but took to full steam after WWII. By the 1960s builders had moved far down that road and instruments became, tonally, what those builders interpreted as a pure Baroque style. St. Paul's current organ comes from that style of building.

In 1970 three organ companies, M.P. Möller, Schantz, and Holtkamp were contacted to make proposals to replace the Kilgen organ. The organist at the time, Roger Cole, had recently installed a Holtkamp at Randolph-Macon Women's College (now Randolph College) and Holtkamp seemed to be the company he preferred, however the Holtkamp proposal came in significantly more expensive that the others and there was a longer wait for delivery. This does not speak badly about Möller or Schantz, Mr. Cole evidently preferred a Holtkamp based on the Randolph organ.

Ultimately Schantz was chosen and their Op. 1097 was installed in 1972. The Schantz Company opened shop in 1878 and has enjoyed a fine reputation throughout its life. Their instruments are well built and solid. From a tonal aspect, the instrument reflected the thought of the day, which was heavily influenced by German organs from the 18th century. Visually the organ is laid out in a stacked design; the Positif division is on the rail, the Pedal and Swell divisions at the choir level, and the Great division on top. While this is very consistent with the style of the instrument, maintaining the organ, especially its tuning, is difficult. Tuning depends upon consistent temperature and each division lives in its own climate region of the church, making consistency virtually impossible. The instrument plays Bach and his contemporaries well, but struggles with literature from 19th century composers and many composers from the 20th century; also, choral music in the 18th century was not a part of the church service in the same way it is today. While we "make it work," it is often less than satisfying from a musician's standpoint.



By the late 2010s the Schantz was beginning to show its age. Mechanical parts in the organ were beginning to fail, though a major failure had not occurred. A committee was formed in 2019, chaired by parishioner Lamar Cecil, to examine the instrument and make recommendations about its future. The two options were either to rebuild and judiciously enlarge it, or to replace it. After a number of meetings and communication with Schantz, it was decided that a replacement instrument would better serve St. Paul's. While the Schantz had served the church well, its North German influence was difficult to bring into an Episcopal liturgical setting. There were also several logistical issues in its construction that a rebuild would not resolve.

Four organ building firms, including Schantz, were contacted in early 2020 (during the COVID pandemic) for proposals for a replacement instrument. In the end Parsons Organ Builders of Canandaigua won the contract. Parsons' proposal was most interesting. They had been working with a church in Scottsdale, AZ to rehome their unused instrument, built by Casavant Frères (Saint-Hyacinthe, Québec, Canada) in 2002. The church had decided in the mid-2010s to move their music program to a praise-band based program. Rather than "pushing the organ to the street" they chose to rehome it in a church with a more traditional music program. The organ was quite well built and very complete in its tonal resources. Parsons had been working with them for several years to find a new home and proposed modifying it and re-working the instrument for St. Paul's. Casavant Frères has been in business for more that 150 years, having built almost 4000 organs; their workmanship is of the highest quality. As a testament to their work, they won the contract to rebuild the main organ at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City, the magnum opus of the Kilgen company; the same company that built the 1930 organ for St. Paul's.

Parsons removed the organ from its original home in 2023 and placed in storage at their shop. Work to remake it for St. Paul's began in late 2024; installation took place in late 2025. One major modification was made to St. Paul's to make room for the new organ. A large storage room on the Courtyard side of the church was converted into an insulated room to house the three largest stops in the pedal division of the organ. The main portion of the organ was installed in the balcony, the same position as the Schantz. Tonally (the sound) the organ was changed to a much more "Anglican" sound, and also to reflect late 19th century organ building. The instrument is warm and solid without being shrill. The organ includes a number of "color" stops not included in Schantz's installation. Of particular note is the Clarinet (Choir division) and Harmonic Flute (Great division). The instrument also includes two stops which play at 32' pitch.

Parsons has provided for St. Paul's an instrument which will serve this congregation for many years to come. It is an instrument which can and should be considered one of the finest, if not the finest, in the region.

The Casavant in its original home.
Chaparral Christian Church
Scottsdale, AZ

Parsons Pipe Organ Builders

Opus 56, 2025

Rebuild and modifications to Casavant Frères Op. 3818, 2002

Great - Manual II - *unenclosed*

16'	Sub Principal
16'	Bourdon
8'	Open Diapason
8'	Principal (Sub Prin. ext.)
8'	Harmonic Flute
8'	Bourdon
4'	Octave
4'	Open Flute
2'	Super Octave
	Mixture IV
16'	Dulzian
8'	Trumpet
16'	Tuba (CH)
8'	Tuba (CH)
4'	Tuba (CH)
	Chimes

Choir - Manual I - *enclosed*

8'	Viola
8'	Gedeckt
8'	Flauto Dolce
8'	Flute Celeste (t.c.)
4'	Spitz Principal
4'	Koppel Flute
2'	Principal
	Sesquialtera II
	Mixture III
8'	Clarinet
8'	Bassoon (SW)
16'	Tuba (t.c.)
8'	Tuba
4'	Tuba
	Tremolo
	Cymbelstern
	Harp
	Celesta

Swell - Manual III - *enclosed*

16'	Bourdon (Chimney Flute ext.)
8'	Geigen
8'	Chimney Flute
8'	Viole de Gambe
8'	Voix Celeste (GG)
4'	Principal
4'	Harmonic Flute
2 ⅔'	Nasard
2'	Piccolo
1 ⅗'	Tierce
	Mixture IV
16'	Bassoon
8'	Trompette
8'	Oboe
4'	Clarion (Bassoon ext.)
	Tremolo

Pedal - *unenclosed*

32'	Resultant
16'	Contra Bass (open wood)
16'	Principal (GT)
16'	Subbass
16'	Bourdon (SW)
8'	Octave (16’ Principal ext.)
8'	Bass Flute
8'	Chimney Flute (SW)
4'	Choral Bass
4'	Flute
4'	Chimney Flute (SW)
32'	Contra Trombone (L/2 Trombone ext)
16'	Trombone
16'	Bassoon (SW)
8'	Trumpet (Trombone ext.)
8'	Bassoon (SW)
4'	Clarion (Trombone ext.)
4'	Bassoon (SW)
8'	Tuba (CH)
	Chimes

Memorials to the organ

The stenciling on the façade is given to the glory of God
and in loving memory of Lamar John Ryan Cecil
by his daughters, Emma Reed Cecil and Mary Robinson Cecil

The Harmonic Flute in the Great Division
is given to the glory of God
and in loving memory of Annette Terrell Jordan Jones & James Gray Jones
and Sadie Galloway Jones
by Claudia (Jones) and Tulane Patterson

The Cymbelstern was given to the glory of God
by Barbara & Gordon Betenbaugh in 2023
and moved to the current organ.