

Cover feature

Salmen Organ Company, 2007, Wessington Springs, South Dakota The Yankton College Memorial Organ at United Church of Christ-Congregational, Yankton, South Dakota

One cannot speak of the Yankton, South Dakota organ without mentioning a parallel project in Boulder, Colorado. We have been privileged to have recently worked with Organ Supply Industries as we built these two new 3-manual instruments for the United Church of Christ-Congregational, Yankton, South Dakota, and First Congregational Church, Boulder, Colorado. These congregations and the experiences with them are so nearly parallel that they deserve to be told almost as a single story. Both are thriving downtown congregations with historic buildings that had suffered the neglect of time. Both had existing instruments; while unique and somewhat interesting, neither served its congregation in a reliable and musical manner. Each church has a music program without rival in its own community. And each—while offering an array of meaningful and much needed social ministries—has also been an influential medium in which music and fine arts have been fostered and shared with a larger community.

When the opportunity arose to design new instruments for the Yankton and Boulder congregations, we took our typically conservative approach. This approach seeks to use viable existing materials in an environmentally and musically sound manner, while always keeping the stewardship of the congregation as a focusing factor in our design recommendations. Each of the congregations' existing instruments had some beautifully crafted pipework from previous incarnations, mostly in which the true color and clarity of the stops had not yet been realized. Working with the architects and contractors for Yankton and Boulder, we were able to influence the outcome visually and acoustically of each of the historic conservation efforts.

Historic conservation, I believe, is an ideal approach to working with older buildings. It recognizes the historic integrity, inherent beauty, and original design intent of a structure; and while maintaining this character, it brings the building into full usefulness and compliance for today's needs and service. It would seem that most historic American churches have suffered from decades-old attempts at modernizations. Too often, one will find ceilings covered in acoustically absorbent tiles as a perceived cure for a problem caused by the installation of a poor amplification system. In addition, one will usually find a sea of aging, thick carpet installed, often over a beautiful wooden floor. Paneling covers cracking plaster over lath.

Visually the rooms appear straight out of the 1950s post-WW II era. Gone are the encased instruments and decorative façades that complemented and graced the original building's design. Quite often an inadequate or neglected pipe organ speaks through a tattered grille-covered opening. Fortunately for the Yankton and Boulder congregations, they were served with leadership from within and design teams from outside the congregation to recreate exciting new worship spaces—relevant to today while being faithful to their past. For me, worshipping with these congregations while working on their instruments has reinforced the UCC mantra, "God Is Still Speaking." Yes, there is great historical importance to the biblical message and the message of sanctuaries of a more ancient time, but both are also being rediscovered today in a way that is fresh, relevant and new!

As an organbuilder, I have relied upon our friends at Organ Supply Industries as valued partners in our musical endeavors. Their business model of being our partner in production while never our competitor in the marketplace has

served us and our clients well. For the past ten years, following the termination of a relationship with a national organ building firm, I have been able to work more closely with and appreciate the knowledge and craftsmanship of our friends at OSI in Erie. Their attitude is refreshing in that they are always looking for ways to serve us; they are creative in assisting us in finding solutions when some seem impossible; they openly embrace new concepts and layouts with the premise that "anything is possible"; most importantly from a strictly business perspective, we get what we want, when we need it, delivered as promised for a fair and open price. I believe that the partnership we enjoy with OSI has allowed us to deliver higher quality instruments for a lower price than was previously possible in our business.

—David Salmen

Historical sketch of organ music at First Congregational Church

The Civil War had ended, and Yankton was a frontier town of approximately 400 inhabitants. Immigrants came to take advantage of the Homestead Act, signed into law by President Lincoln in 1862. Imagine that—160 acres of free land for those brave enough to leave the Old Country and come to Dakota Territory. The people who came were religious and wanted a church.

The Congregational Church was organized here on April 6, 1868, at the home of A. G. Fuller by the Rev. E. W. Cook from Wisconsin. On November 6, 1868, Rev. Joseph Ward and his bride Sarah arrived in Dakota Territory as missionaries. Services were held two days later (November 8, 1868) in the lower level of the Dakota Territorial Capitol Building. Thirty-three people attended.

A charter member of this congregation was J. B. S. Todd, a cousin of Mary Lincoln, wife of the president. At the Christmas Eve service, he pinned a note on the Christmas tree, which read: "lots for the church." On Christmas Day, Rev. Ward, one of the trustees, and J. B. S. Todd went to see the lots. They chose the lots this church still occupies today. Some members questioned, "Who would attend a church so far from town? . . . way out on the prairie!"

The earliest church was built of wood and dedicated July 17, 1870. It is reported to have had a "hand-organ." The present brick church was built in 1904 and dedicated May 14, 1905.

In 1880 Rev. Ward founded Yankton College. It was the first institution of higher learning in the Dakota Territory. It had a School of Theology, which graduated German-speaking Congregational ministers, who served many communities in the Dakota Territory and beyond.

Yankton College had a highly respected Conservatory of Music, which originally used the (brick) church sanctuary as its concert hall. Staff included musicians such as Dr. Lee N. Bailey, Ida Clawson Hunt, J. Laiten Weed, Dr. Evelyn Hohf, Floyd McClain, Lewis Hamvas, Gene Brinkmeyer, Stan Rishoi, and others. Dr. Hohf and Mr. Brinkmeyer were organists of this church for many years.

The first pipe organ in Yankton was installed in First Congregational Church. Records reveal that the congregation voted to form a "Committee on Music" on January 5, 1882. In 1888 a Johnson tracker organ was installed. A recital was given on September 6 of that same year, with an offering of \$52.90 received.

In 1905 this organ was enlarged and placed in the present brick church building. In 1957 the organ was modernized, and the console moved to the choir loft. The tracker action was changed to an electrically controlled system. This project cost \$14,000. In 1980 the organ was enlarged and renovated to three manuals for a cost of \$40,000 by Eugene Doult of Watertown, South Dakota.

During the historic renovation of the sanctuary in 2004, it was necessary to remove all organ pipes and parts because



Yankton College Memorial Organ, United Church of Christ-Congregational, Yankton, South Dakota



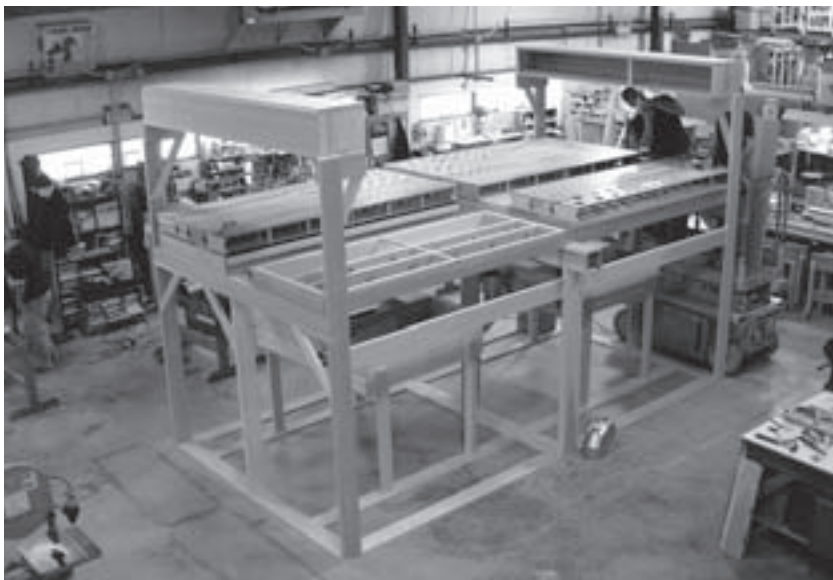
Final enlargement and renovation of previous organ in 1980



1888 William Johnson organ, enlarged and moved to 1905 brick church



Salmen organ, First Congregational Church, Boulder, Colorado



Swell and Choir divisions under construction at OSI



Detail of corner case tower turning

of construction dust. The organ was removed in October 2003 by David Salmen of Salmen Organs & Farms, Wessington Springs, South Dakota. Among the pipes saved and put in storage, until a new organ could be built and safely installed, were some that were part of the original 1888 organ.

Plans for a new organ were on hold until the Yankton College Board of Trustees announced a \$100,000 named grant in appreciation for the support given by this congregation to the college over many years. The grant challenged the congregation to pledge an equal amount. Plans that were on hold were now put into ac-

tion. The organ chamber had to be prepared with new walls, proper insulation, new wiring, and a new floor. This added to the daunting tasks addressed so conscientiously by the renovation committee.

On January 9, 2005, a semi-trailer loaded with over 2,000 pipes arrived at the church; it was unloaded by a host of excited members. David Salmen began the installation of the new Yankton College Organ. The three-manual organ with 33 ranks of pipes and a beautiful new console was installed. The visible (black) expression shutters and a few pipes dating to the original 1888 organ were reminders that the organ had yet to be completed. For nearly three years the members of the congregation worked together to pay down the remaining building renovation debt and raise the funds to complete the new organ.

February 2008 again found the congregation assembled to unload another semi-trailer of pipes, windchests, reservoirs, and the casework necessary to complete the organ. The organ now contains 46 ranks of pipes.

It has truly been a labor of love and sacrifice for the members of this congregation, who love to sing with the majestic accompaniment of a pipe organ. Music has always been central in worship to this church. The 45-member Adult Choir enjoys this fine instrument as they prepare not only to lead Sunday worship, but also for special masterworks concerts and cantatas.

We remain ever grateful to Yankton College, the J. Laiten Weed Endowment, and to the generous members and friends

of this congregation for their support. Yankton College Conservatory graduates Ted and Jennifer Powell are the present organist and choir director. Chelsea Chen played the dedicatory recital.

We look forward to the next 100 years as we continue the tradition of wonder-

ful music to the glory of God, which began at the First Congregational Church, way out on the prairie in Dakota Territory 120 years ago.

—Brooks and Vi Ranney

Photo credit: David Salmen

**The Yankton College Memorial Organ at United Church of Christ-Congregational, Yankton, South Dakota
Salmen Organ Company, 2007
Wessington Springs, South Dakota
3 manuals, 36 stops, 46 ranks**

GREAT		
16'	Bourdon (Choir)	
8'	Principal	61 pipes
8'	Harmonic Flute	61 pipes
8'	Bourdon (Choir)	
8'	Chimney Flute (Swell)	
4'	Octave	61 pipes
2'	Flachflute	61 pipes
IV	Fourniture	244 pipes
8'	Tromba (Choir)	
8'	Basson (Choir)	
8'	Posaune (Pedal)	
	Cymbelstern	
	Tremulant	
	Great-Great 16-UO-4	
	Swell-Great 16-8-4	
	Choir-Great 16-8-4	
	Pedal on Great Continuo	
	MIDI I	

SWELL		
8'	Montre	61 pipes
8'	Chimney Flute	61 pipes
8'	Viola	61 pipes
8'	Voix Celeste (TC)	49 pipes
4'	Principal	61 pipes
4'	Hohlflute	61 pipes
2 3/4'	Nasard	61 pipes
2'	Blockflute	61 pipes
1 3/4'	Tierce	61 pipes
IV	Plein Jeu	244 pipes
16'	Bombarde	85 pipes
8'	Trompette	61 pipes
8'	Bombarde (ext)	
8'	Hautbois	61 pipes
4'	Bombarde Clarion (ext)	
8'	Festival Trompette	preparation
	Tremulant	
	Swell-Swell 16-UO-4	
	Choir-Swell 8	
	MIDI II	

CHOIR		
16'	Bourdon	73 pipes
8'	Diapason	61 pipes
8'	Bourdon (ext)	
8'	Spitzflute	61 pipes
8'	Flute Celeste (TC)	49 pipes
4'	Geigen Octave	61 pipes
4'	Koppelflute	61 pipes
2 3/4'	Twelfth	61 pipes
2	Fifteenth	61 pipes
1 3/4'	Seventeenth	61 pipes
IV	Scharf	244 pipes
16'	Basson	73 pipes
8'	Tromba	61 pipes
8'	Clarinet	61 pipes
16'	Posaune (Pedal)	
8'	Posaune (Pedal)	
	Tremulant	
	Choir-Choir 16-UO-4	
	Swell-Choir 16-8-4	
	Pedal on Choir 8	
	Great/Choir Transfer	
	MIDI III	

PEDAL		
32'	Resultant	
16'	Principal	32 pipes
16'	Subbass	32 pipes
16'	Bourdon (Choir)	
8'	Oktav	44 pipes
8'	Diapason (Choir)	
8'	Chimney Flute (Swell)	
8'	Bourdon (Choir)	
4'	Oktav (ext)	
4'	Chimney Flute (Swell)	
II	Mixture	68 pipes
16'	Posaune	73 pipes
16'	Bombarde (Swell)	
16'	Basson (Choir)	
8'	Posaune (ext)	
8'	Bombarde (Swell)	
4'	Posaune (ext)	
4'	Basson (Choir)	
4'	Clarinet (Choir)	
	Great-Pedal 8-4	
	Swell-Pedal 8-4	
	Choir-Pedal 8-4	
	MIDI IV	

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**First Congregational Church, Boulder, Colorado
Salmen Organ Company, 2007
Wessington Springs, South Dakota
3 manuals, 41 stops, 51 ranks**

GREAT		
16'	Rohrflute (Swell)	
8'	Principal	61 pipes
8'	Harmonic Flute	49 pipes
	(1-12 from Bourdon)	
8'	Bourdon	61 pipes
8'	Rohrflute (Swell)	
8'	Gemshorn (Choir)	
8'	Flauto Dolce*	61 pipes
8'	Flute Celeste*	49 pipes
4'	Octave	61 pipes
4'	Spillflute	61 pipes
2'	Flachflute	61 pipes
IV	Fourniture	244 pipes
16'	Basson (Choir)	
8'	Tromba	61 pipes
8'	Basson (Choir)	
8'	Festival Trumpet	preparation
	Tremulant	
	Sawyer Cymbelstern	
	Great-Great 16-UO-4	
	Swell-Great 16-8-4	
	Choir-Great 16-8-4	
	Pedal Continuo on Great	
	MIDI on Great	
	* located in Swell	

SWELL		
16'	Rohrflute	73 pipes
8'	Montre	61 pipes
8'	Rohrflute (ext)	
8'	Salicional	61 pipes
8'	Voix Celeste	49 pipes
4'	Prestant	61 pipes
4'	Hohlflute	61 pipes
2 3/4'	Nasard	61 pipes
2'	Blockflute	61 pipes
1 3/4'	Tierce	61 pipes
IV	Plein Jeu	244 pipes
16'	Bombarde	85 pipes
8'	Trompette	61 pipes
8'	Hautbois	61 pipes
4'	Bombarde Clarion (ext)	
16'	Festival Trumpet	preparation
8'	Festival Trumpet	preparation
	Tremulant	
	Swell-Swell 16-UO-4	
	Choir-Swell 8	
	MIDI on Swell	

CHOIR		
16'	Gemshorn	73 pipes
8'	Geigen Principal	61 pipes
8'	Doppel Flute	49 pipes
	(1-12 from Stopt Diapason)	
8'	Stopt Diapason	61 pipes
8'	Gemshorn (ext)	
8'	Gemshorn Celeste	49 pipes
4'	Octave	61 pipes
4'	Koppelflute	61 pipes
2 3/4'	Twelfth	61 pipes
2'	Fifteenth	61 pipes
1 3/4'	Seventeenth	61 pipes
IV	Scharf	244 pipes
16'	Basson	73 pipes
8'	Posaune (Pedal)	
8'	Basson (ext)	
8'	Clarinet	61 pipes
8'	Festival Trumpet	preparation
	Tremulant	
	Choir-Choir 16-UO-4	
	Swell-Choir 16-8-4	
	Pedal on Choir	
	Great/Choir Transfer	
	MIDI on Choir	

PEDAL		
32'	Resultant	
16'	Contra Bass	32 pipes
16'	Subbass	44 pipes
16'	Gemshorn (Choir)	
16'	Rohrflute (Swell)	
8'	Oktav	44 pipes
8'	Subbass (ext)	
8'	Gemshorn (Choir)	
8'	Rohrflute (Swell)	
4'	Oktav (ext)	
4'	Rohrflute (Swell)	
4'	Gemshorn (Choir)	
II	Mixture	64 pipes
16'	Posaune**	73 pipes
16'	Bombarde (Swell)	
16'	Basson (Choir)	
8'	Posaune (ext)**	
8'	Bombarde (Swell)	
4'	Posaune (ext)**	
4'	Basson (Choir)	
8'	Festival Trumpet	preparation
	Great-Pedal 8-4	
	Swell-Pedal 8-4	
	Choir-Pedal 8-4	
	MIDI on Pedal	
	** located in Choir	