

THE DIAPASON

Spring Hill United Methodist Church Renewing a 1915 Hinners

BY: Derek Milnar

The small railroad town of Spring Hill, Tennessee, is situated just south of Nashville. The outskirts of town have grown considerably due to a recently constructed General Motors plant. Fortunately, the heart of town remains as it was at the turn of the twentieth century.

Spring Hill United Methodist Church just celebrated its one-hundredth anniversary. The sanctuary, with its original furnishings, chancel area, and fixtures, was given a touch-up prior to its birthday. The 1915 eight-rank Hinners tracker organ was installed shortly after the church was built.

Founded in 1879, the Hinners Organ Company of Pekin, Illinois, developed a number of stock models of mechanical-action instruments that were advertised throughout the United States. Operating without salesmen, the company was one of the first to conduct all of its affairs by mail. Buyers first met a company representative when he arrived by train to set up the crated instrument that had been shipped ahead of him. Tracker organs with hand-pumped bellows were suited to an area that, for the most part, lacked electricity. In all, the company constructed nearly 3,000 pipe organs during its 60 years of operation.

Opus 1970 particulars

The pump arm on the bellows was disabled and a blower, situated in the basement, was installed when the town was electrified. When restoring these early instruments, we releather the feeder bellows, and if it has been disabled, we reinstall the hand pump. The one-hundred-year-old leather on the pallets was like new, so along with the manual trackers, it was retained.

The Pedal Bourdon was played by tubular-pneumatic action. The lead tubes were in poor condition and were replaced with black rubber hoses. The low octave of the Swell 8' Violin Diapason was mounted in the façade and also has a tubular pneumatic action.

The most unusual thing about this organ is its lack of a Swell rollerboard. The tracker squares are mounted on an angle and the tracker runs are of various lengths running diagonally between the square rails. The action is smooth and has less friction than the normal rollerboard set up. In Spring Hill, the Methodists purchased an electronic organ when the Hinners went into disrepair, but they kept their tracker, knowing that someday it would be rebuilt.

In the South, the lack of trained organ technicians has caused a lot of these early trackers to be discarded when a bellows corner blew out. Ironically, the lack of regular tunings for this organ left the pipes with tuning scrolls in wonderful condition. After cleaning and reconditioning the pipes, all the tuning scrolls were retained as well as the organ's original pitch.

New pull-down wires were installed with new felt connection points. Like the builder, we installed new leather adjustment nuts instead of modern plastic ones. Besides the early addition of an electric blower, the century-old organ was restored to its original level of high craftsmanship.

