

# *From 1925 to Today*

## FBC Pipe Organ Has a Story to Tell

By Joyce Thomas

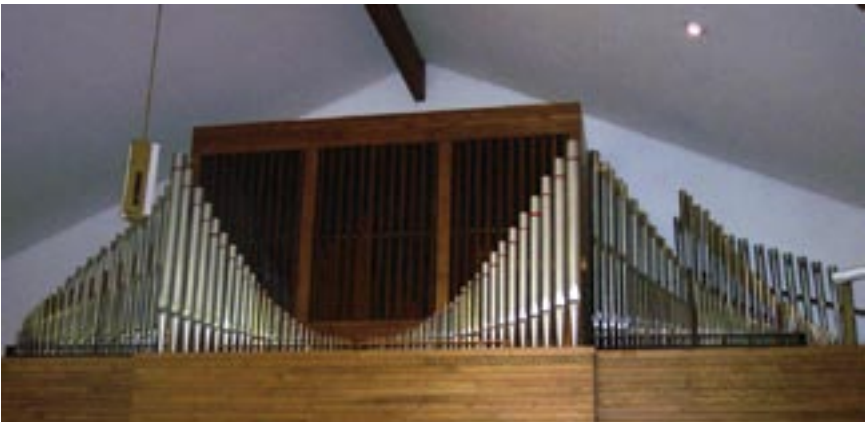
A recent visitor to our church commented on the sound of our wonderful organ. She wondered if we realized what a unique thing it is for a newer church building to have such an amazing instrument. I

was proud to tell her that our congregation recognized its value, and worked very hard to preserve it and move it with us from the old downtown church. Then I got curious. How fortunate exactly were we? How does our organ compare to others in the area? And what is it actually worth?

To answer these questions, I turned to two sources. The first

was our own Carolyn Hyde, who serves as church historian. The second was John Buzard, the organ builder that helped the church move, upgrade, and re-install the organ when we moved to our present location.

Carolyn's archives revealed that the church accepted the gift of the organ from C.A. Lloyd in 1925, as a memorial to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. D.H. Lloyd. The organ was built by a Pekin firm, the Hinners Organ Co. for a price of \$10,000, a very substantial sum in that day. It was ultimately dedicated in a church service held Feb. 12, 1926.





When the downtown church was sold and slated for demolition, our music committee, under the leadership of Lee Peek, investigated what it would cost to replace the organ with a “new” organ. It was determined that it would be impossible to purchase a new pipe organ, and would be a step backward to get rid of what we had and use an electric organ (the kind most churches in our area have). Our best stewardship, and the one that would bring the best musical value, would be to store the pipe organ and re-install it in the new building. The church contracted with a young man named John Buzard, who, at the time was employed by the university as an instrument technician, and was the person who main-

tained the several organs on the campus. Tod Dawson offered the use of his large storage facility, and the organ was dismantled and removed to Tod’s shed.

John speaks with great fondness of that time period, when, in the poorly heated shed (also occupied by Tod’s

Model A Ford!) he began working on the rebuilding and improving of the organ. He said he charged the church \$28,000 dollars for his work, and it was such a labor of love that he jokes that he probably only made about 5 cents an hour! He rebuilt the original windchests, console, and pipes, adding modern electronic switching to the console. He remembers finally installing it in the new sanctuary, with Pastor Ralph Nast handing the pipes carefully up to him, calling out their names as he did so. He also remembers working, with his wife, to build and stain the wood we see from the sanctuary, and, late at night, with the console sitting in the middle of the room so that he could hear what the congrega-

tion would hear, completing the tonal finishing and tuning of the instrument. When he was done, we had essentially a new organ, perfectly designed for the architecture of the room, and designed to accept expansion if we so chose.

During this process, John remembers he made a life-long friendship with Lee Peek, whom he calls “one of the sweetest men” he ever met. He also thought that Ralph Nast’s vision and wisdom as he shepherded the church through its transition was remarkable.

In 1992 the U of I decided to remove the pipe organ that was in the Auditorium. Mr. Buzard helped the church acquire some of the pipes from that organ, allowing us to expand our instrument to 35 ranks, which the volume of our sanctuary required. Because of the work done in the rebuilding process, this could be done easily. Excellent stewardship was exhibited by the church all the way along. That upgrade cost the church \$100,000 or so, and modernized the organ even further. The old 1925 organ, with its dark, almost muffled sound, could now be

played with many brighter, more contemporary sounds available to the organist, adding to the tonal color and vibrancy of the music in our worship. A new blower box was also added at this time, to eliminate the loud whoosh the congregation could hear when the organ was turned on at the end of the sermon!

**We now have a pipe organ whose replacement value is approximately \$675,000!**

But, in a way it is priceless to our congregation because of the history that goes with it. Though churches are not museums, and pipe organs are really only tools for worship, this instrument is certainly worth maintaining and using. It sets us apart from many other churches in the area, in that we are one of the few growing Evangelical churches that have anything like it. We can be grateful to those folks who saw the value in saving it. We can be grateful that God has given us the finances to rebuild and maintain it. And we can be grateful to those musicians that have played it with so much skill over the years.

