A Pipe Dream Comes True: The Keweenaw Heritage Center’s Barckhoff Organ

Anita Campbell

It’s interesting to think back about the Barckhoff Church Organ Company located in Latrobe, Pennsylvania in 1869, and picture the many German immigrants employed there, bringing with them from the old country their expertise in organ building. Flash forward 107 years to the little community of Calumet, Michigan, in a remote area of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, where a group of organ enthusiasts are busily cleaning 957 pipes in preparation for the restoration of a historic Barckhoff tracker pipe organ built in Latrobe, Pennsylvania in 1899. (For a history of pipe organs in this area, see Janet Anuta Dalquist, “Pipe Organs of the Keweenaw: Houghton County, Michigan,” in The Diapason, February 2007.)

Barckhoff history

It is written that Carl Barckhoff and his employees built over 3,000 organs. Most of the organs were, of course, built for churches, but he also built residence organs and organs for recital halls, Masonic temples, and at least one college.

Carl Barckhoff was born in Wiedenbrück, Westphalia, Germany in 1849. His father, organ builder Felix Barckhoff, brought the family to the United States in 1865, and in that same year the first Barckhoff organ was built in this country. The firm was established in Philadelphia, and was for a time during the 1870s known as Felix Barckhoff & Sons, the sons being Carl and Lorenz.

Carl continued managing the company after his father’s death and relocated to several different towns due to various misfortunes, such as the financial panic of 1863, a fire in 1897, and a disastrous flood in 1913. The business grew, and by 1889 the Barckhoff Church Organ Company had 54 employees. In 1904 the company was shipping “an average of three organs per week, and nothing smaller than two-manual instruments.” Barckhoff organs are unfortunately not identified by opus numbers. Due to various disasters, all company records have been lost. Nameplates have merely his name and location.

The Barckhoff organ in Calumet

The Barckhoff Church Organ Company remained in Latrobe, Pennsylvania for only three years. It was during this short period that the two-manual, 16-rank tracker pipe organ was built and installed in the Carmel Lutheran Church of Calumet in 1889. This organ served the Calumet Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church, Carmel Lutheran, from 1899–1965, when the congregation merged with the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church in the neighboring community of Laurium.

When Carmel Lutheran closed, the congregation donated the pipe organ to their retired pastor and organ enthusiast, Rev. John Simonson, and his wife, Hortense, also an organist. The Simonsons had a building constructed to house the organ on their wooded property near their home in Dollar Bay, Michigan. Besides the steeply pitched roof, the organ houses featured haymow doors like those on a barn, which were there “to let the music out.” The Simonsons and friends and family enjoyed several years of pipe organ music before the death of Hortense in 1990 and John in 1991. The Simonson children looked for an organist to keep the organ going and chose the Keweenaw Heritage Center, Calumet, Michigan.

The Keweenaw Heritage Center

The Keweenaw Heritage Center, formerly St. Anne’s Catholic Church, was built in 1900 for the large French-Canadian community that had immigrated to Calumet to work in the booming copper mines. The structure was built of red sandstone with French Gothic ornamentation generously applied. After decades of service, St. Anne’s was deconsecrated in 1966 and sadly fell into years of decay and desecration. Eventually, the abandoned building was home only to pigeons. Lack of heating and the rugged Keweenaw winters took their toll.

In 1984 the Keweenaw Heritage Center began as a broad-based community effort to purchase and restore St. Anne’s. Their intent was to ultimately use this historically and architecturally significant building as a home for a community center, highlighting the social history of Michigan’s Copper Country. Local contributions and several grants from foundations, the National Park Service, and the hard work of numerous volunteers...
have brought St. Anne’s back to life. The Keweenaw Heritage Center is now one of eighteen Heritage Sites of the Keweenaw National Historical Park.

The pipe organ was moved to the Keweenaw Heritage Center in May 2000. The organization then hired Mike Duden as executive director. The organ had been moved to its new location by the Keweenaw Heritage Center. It was then shipped to Keweenaw Heritage Center to be restored. The organ was shipped to the Keweenaw Heritage Center in May 2000, where it was restored by the Keweenaw Heritage Center. The organ was then restored by the Keweenaw Heritage Center.

The organ was moved to the Keweenaw Heritage Center in May 2000. The organ was then restored by the Keweenaw Heritage Center. The organ was then restored by the Keweenaw Heritage Center. The organ was then restored by the Keweenaw Heritage Center.

In the summer and fall of 2007, the Keweenaw Heritage Center began raising money to move and restore the pipe organ. The organ was then restored by the Keweenaw Heritage Center.

The Keweenaw Heritage Center is proud of this recognition and looks forward to sharing this “king of instruments” with the community.

Below are the specifications for the Barckhoff organ.

### GREAT

- **16′ Bourdon** wood & metal 49
- **8′ Open Diapason** metal 61
- **8′ Veila Di Gambe** metal 61
- **8′ Dopped Flute** wood 61
- **8′ Dokana** metal 61
- **4′ Principal** metal 61
- **2′ Octoth** metal 61
- **2′ Fifteenth** metal 61

### SWELL

- **8′ Violin Diapason** metal 61
- **8′ Salicional** metal 61
- **4′ Chorus Diapason** metal 61
- **4′ Fugara** metal 61
- **4′ flute Harmonic metal & wood 61
- **2′ Flauto** metal 61
- **2′ Piccolo** metal 61

### PEDAL

- **16′ Sub Bass** wood 27
- **8′ Flute Major** wood 27

### Mechanical Registers

- **Great Organ Forte**
- **Great Organ Piano**
- **Balanced Swell Pedal**

### Combination Pedals

- **Great Organ Forte**
- **Great Organ Piano**
- **Balanced Swell Pedal**

### Construction

1. All the metal flue pipes are to be of a composition of tin and lead, sized according to the requirements of the tone, but in no case to have less than 40% pure tin.
2. The reeds pipes to be of tin and lead as above stated, except the basses, which have in the most slender parts, where stiffness is required. No zinc is used otherwise, except for front pipes & basses.
3. Pedals of black walnut, with naturals zinc in the most slender parts, where stiffness is required.
4. The best of bone and ivory shall be used for the manual keyboards, which shall project and be beveled.

For more information on this pipe organ restoration project, please contact the chair of the organ committee, Anita Campbell (<pdcampb@pasty.net>.

Anita Campbell is retired from the Cabaret Public Schools, and has been on the Board of Directors of the Keweenaw Heritage Center at St. Anne’s for several years. She enjoys promoting the history of her community—the Copper Country, located in the northernmost tip of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. She has always had a love for music, so she took on the challenge of restoring the Barckhoff pipe organ restoration project with great passion and is excited to share this historic instrument with the community.