

## Century old organ still in use

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Apparently reacting to the unsettling conditions caused by the Civil War in which 35 Westford men died out of the two hundred who served, a large percentage from the parish the church turned to new endeavors with drastic changes

Most momentous was the swinging of the building with its 120-foot steeple a quarter turn so that its tower faced the common, not the west. The central hall ground floor used from the day its doors were first opened in 1794 for town assemblies and business, was dismantled. The vestry and sanctuary were 'modernized' and the ladies' parlor fixed up. Of great importance, of course, was the addition of the organ, a major expense in those days

Over the years the organ needed minor repairs and tuning. The Andover Organ Company of Methuen completely rebuilt the wind chests 15 years ago, installed new parts and at the same time replaced the tracker linkage to the pipes. The cost was \$7,000, nearly three times the original purchase price.

'Tracker organs are difficult to play quietly,' says Mrs. Pamela Precious Perry, an organist while a student at the Academy and at times later. 'They necessitate an entirely new technique in playing,' Mrs. Harriet Leggat, now organist and choir director for the past thirty years, agrees.

Viewed from the sanctuary the organ appears to be only a symmetrical row of gilded pipes set

in the facade. Some are 'speakers' and others are dummies for appearance. But in the organ loft in the rear there are 17 ranks of pipes, controlled from the console by two manuals with 14 stops plus a pedal bank.

In the swell division, there is a two-rank mixture of pipes including oboe and bassoon, also flute and reed. There is one mixture in the 'great' division including a trumpet stop.

The ancient Willcox cannot possibly compete with the Mighty Wurlitzer of bygone movie palace organs, but for the parishioners of the First Parish it is a very dear instrument.