

## Historic organs play for crowd in Syracuse

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By **Michelle Breidenbach / The Post-Standard**



Dennis Nett/The Post-Standard

Will Headlee, the organist of Park Central Presbyterian Church, plays music for guests taking a tour of historic organs at four downtown Syracuse churches on Sunday April 29, 2012. The tour was organized by the Onondaga Historical Association.

Syracuse, N.Y. -- More than 100 people joined in an organ "crawl" in downtown Syracuse Sunday afternoon to take in the sounds of the historic organs in four churches in the Cathedral Square Neighborhood.

They were treated to organ recitals from four area musical directors, including Will Headlee, Jim Potts, Timothy Davenport and Joe Downing.

The tour started at the Park Central Presbyterian Church, on Fayette Street and continued on to St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, at Fayette and Montgomery streets; The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, at Columbus Circle; and finally Plymouth Congregational Church, on East Onondaga Street.

Gregg Tripoli, executive director of **the Onondaga Historical Association**, shared some history about each church and its instrument. Three of the organs were built by the M.P. Moller Co. The fourth, at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, is a Roosevelt organ.

Participants filled the pews, listened to pieces by composers Elgar, Thomas Matthews and John Cook and watched as the wall panels opened and closed from above. The musicians invited participants to sit close and roam the churches. People took pictures of the sculptures and architecture of the Roman Catholic Cathedral, designed by Archimedes Russell, and the Episcopal Cathedral's Tiffany stained glass window.

Some organs, such as the one at the Episcopal Cathedral, were loud and front and center. That organ, a Moller that was redesigned and rebuilt in 2002, has 4,327 pipes in 74 ranks – or sets.

Downing, at Plymouth Congregational Church, demonstrated what he called the "soft and sweet" sound of that church's 1930 Moller organ. It has 2,600 pipes in 40 ranks. It is expected to be rebuilt this fall with a state-of-the-art fiber optic electrical system.

The event was a fundraiser for the **Cathedral Square Neighborhood Association**. The group was started in 2010 to promote the downtown Syracuse neighborhood that includes Montgomery Street, Columbus Circle and Fayette Park. One of its initiatives is to hang flower baskets from the light posts. They went up for the first time last year.

Some participants said they felt like tourists in their own city.

"We live here in the city and we don't know that much about all of these wonderful instruments," said Cara Steiner, of Syracuse.

Glenn Hinchey, also of Syracuse, admired the cornice at the front portal to the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception before entering to hear the music.

"It's a rare chance to hear these wonderful historic organs play and to get to see some of Syracuse's finest 19th century architecture," he said.

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