

## **A Brief History of the Pipe Organ at St. Lawrence Catholic Church**

The restored Kilgen & Son organ was the third organ at St. Lawrence Catholic Church. The first was a “Melodian,” a type of reed organ that sucks air through metal reeds to make musical notes, which is not as powerful as a pipe organ. The second was a pipe organ from the firm of Pfeffer & Son, St. Louis, played for the first time on the Feast of the Holy Rosary, October 7, 1888.

Fundraising for the Kilgen organ began in 1909 with benefit performances by the town’s Dramatic Club. Fr. Bruch, the pastor, and John Schwietermann, the organist and choir director, went to St. Louis in October 1914 to order the Kilgen organ. It was manufactured at the Kilgen factory in St. Louis.

The Kilgen organ was delivered to the church and dedicated on the Feast of St. Sebastian, January 20, 1915. The following report about the dedication was published in the German-language newspaper *Missouri Volksfreund* :

On the feast of the holy patron of the sick, Saint Sebastian, Father Bruch blessed the new organ before the Solemn High Mass at 9:30. After that, Professor Carl Adams of St. Louis played a wonderful introduction during which the various sound colorations of the organ could be appreciated.

The Solemn High Mass was celebrated by the esteemed Johannes Schramm from Rich Fountain. The deacon was J. D. Schmidt of St. Thomas, subdeacon F.C. Gulath of St. Anthony, and the esteemed Father Bruch was the master of ceremonies. The German sermon was delivered by Fr. F.C. Gulath about the life of the Holy Sebastian and about the Christian art that has always been practiced and cherished in the Catholic Church. After the Solemn High Mass there was the English sermon from the esteemed Fr. Gerhard Fick from Freeburg. He talked about the origin, development and progress and meaning of song and music in church services.

After the Mass, the Benediction was given by Father Kalvelage from Mary’s Home. The sublime, unforgettable ceremony ended with a strong “*Holy God We Praise Thy Name*” which Mr. Adams accompanied at the end. The choir, which consists of 20 well-schooled singers under the leadership of the organist, Mr. John Schwietermann, sang the “*Missa in honorem S. Caroli*” by Filks very well. Miss Rose Schwietermann sang Willard’s *Ava Maria*. The ceremony was well attended, especially by the Men and Young Men.<sup>1</sup>

The organ was built by the well-known firm, Kilgen & Son, from St. Louis. The gorgeous housing in Gothic style is made of oak wood. The 31 front pipes are tastefully decorated. The instrument has two keyboards, 625 pipes and 16 registers. The price was \$1,500.00.<sup>2</sup>

VF, 28 Jan. 2015 (English translation by Erica Doerhoff, Ph.D.)

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<sup>1</sup> “Men and Young Men” refer to the married and unmarried men’s sodalities.

<sup>2</sup> \$1,500.00 in 2015 is approximately \$45,000.00 in 2023 inflation-adjusted dollars.

*Thank You Dale Doerhoff! We are grateful and fortunate for your deep appreciation for the rich history of St. Lawrence Church, Parish, and Community!*