Chapter Seven – The Sounds of Music

An Organ and a Telescope

When Shelby College provided a top-down inventory of its Shelbyville campus in 1870, the year before the Episcopal Diocese of Kentucky abandoned the school and turned it over to the trustees of the City of Shelbyville as a public school, it listed the following items:

Main Building
Observatory
Telescope
Chapel and Organ
Laboratory Apparatus
President’s Residence
Student Desks and Chairs
Library and Reading Tables

The main building was the large classical structure designed by Gideon Shyrock, providing both classrooms and faculty space. For Shelbyville of 1840-1870 this was the largest building in the city and rivaled the courthouse for its architectural size and impact.

The observatory dome was a world class facility housing the equatorial telescope, the third largest in the world, designed and manufactured in Munich, Germany. The facility was so renowned that in 1869 it drew the most famous astronomical scientists from Harvard, Glasgow, Germany, and the U.S. Coast and Geological Survey to observe a complete solar eclipse. The laboratory apparatus was clearly first class and had attracted leading professors in the sciences and engineering. The library of more than 4,000 volumes with student and research reading tables was simply enormous for any state let alone Kentucky. The President’s residence was separate from the main building and was clearly not shabby. And one assumes that the student desks and chairs were at least classy enough to mention.

So now one comes to the mention of the chapel and the organ. We know from the reports to the Diocese of Kentucky that the chapel was one of the last buildings to be completed. Reverend Frederick Ewell in 1851 complained that the chapel was not yet finished but that he was holding services and baptisms.
anyway. But by 1852 it appears that regular services were being held at the Shelby College chapel, and apparently the school had installed an organ at that facility. What type and size organ is not mentioned in either the school or the diocesan records, but it must have been in keeping with the classical structure demeanor of the campus. And students interested in music probably could take private lessons on such an instrument. According to the school catalogue there was no specific professor of music; however, music instruction was offered in the Preparatory Department in the 1848 period.

The most likely music used in the Shelby College setting would have been the 1819 edition of the Psalter “A Set of Chants Adapted to the Hymns in the Morning and Evening Prayer and to the Communion Service of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States,” that had been printed in combination with the 1830 Book of Common Prayer. This book would have contained very basic chants and canticles supporting the Morning Prayer, Evensong, and Holy Communion services without specific hymns as we know them today. Only the organist or cantor would have had musical notation. The congregational prayer book combined psalter was printed as text only. In the mid-19th century, the services were generally spoken with sung psalms and perhaps a canticle sung to a psalm tune. Congregational hymn singing, so popular in the Methodist and Baptist traditions, was nearly unheard of in the Episcopal Church in those days.

Because Shelby College was a literary and theological seminary, it is likely that classical organ music and perhaps some instruments would have been encouraged. The musicians would have come from faculty and students. In the 1840s and 1850s, Mendelssohn and other Romantic composers would have been quite popular for concerts. And even a small two-manual organ would have provided the lush sounds and overtones favored by the Romantic composers. However, the Bach chorales and organ music so prevalent in today’s churches, really did not come into popularity until the mid-20th century when Baroque music was rediscovered.

An Early Music Deficit

When St. James Church was constructed in 1865-66, there was no organ and probably no piano either. In fact there were no windows, seats or furnishings. It was not until 1870 that those items were reported completed. So the early services would not have had accompanied music. Recall, however, that one of the original charter members, Charles Kinkle, a Bavarian immigrant, was a music teacher in Shelbyville. As a musician, Kinkle probably led the congregation in singing the psalm tunes, because they would have known the tunes well.
The period from 1840 to 1870 was interesting in that many private homes owned by people of even modest means had parlor pianos, and family singing was a favorite form of leisure activity. Sheet music became quite prevalent even during the Civil War. For Kentuckians, Stephen Foster was the most popular of all composers. And there were many accomplished pianists, since that form of music was part of the education of young ladies, and was taught at such schools as Science Hill in Shelbyville. There are lithographs from this period showing the family gathered around the piano with a crackling fire in the hearth.  

Unfortunately, St. James Church had no heat in the church and only candle light for some time. Because clergy were encouraged to preach fairly long, detailed sermons, it is not likely that the congregation wanted to make the service any longer than necessary. Remember that until 1968 when Bessie Todd Hall was constructed there was no bathroom or running water at St. James Church.

**Victorian Church Singing**

The first mention that St. James Parish had purchased an organ for $45.00 came in the Diocesan Convention records of 1895. Since there is no indication that pipes for an organ were ever installed on the walls at St. James Church, it is quite likely that the instrument described in the diocesan records was a small foot-pump organ that wheezed a relatively soft sound. These organs were self-contained and scaled for large homes or small churches and relied upon a sound box rising above the organ. A few had two manuals. Some had pipes attached to the organ for greater sound amplification.
Why install an organ in 1895? For two major reasons, every other church in Shelbyville had probably already installed pipe organs, and secondly, the Episcopal Church had issued a revised Psalter and Hymnal in 1882 that encouraged congregational singing of psalms, canticles, and hymns of appropriately accurate text, generally from the King James version of the Bible. In fact the national church had issued a reminder that Canon 6 strongly recommended that clergy encourage their congregations to sing praises to God.

Also the congregation by 1895 was far more comfortable sitting in the church services. The pews used today had been purchased, a pot-bellied stove was now located in the back of the church and one or more chandeliers had been installed probably as gas lighting came to Shelbyville. An Episcopal hymnal was published in 1882 and adapted by the national Convention in 1892. Several writers in the late Victorian period commented that hymn singing was so widespread in the Protestant churches that often one could hear people walking along the streets of a town coming home from different denominations – Methodist, Baptist, Christian, Presbyterian -- but singing or humming the same hymns. Most Protestant denominations had published sizeable hymnals for use in congregational singing. And publishers had printed special hymnals for use in campground revival settings, for the YMCA, for Sunday Schools, and for the Salvation Army.

But one suspects that the enhanced interest at St. James in church music during this period came directly from the fact that Reverend Mortimer Murray Benton, the Diocesan Archdeacon, was assigned to St. James from 1893 to 1907. Benton, who bridged the change from Bishop T. U. Dudley to Bishop Charles C. Woodcock, had been intimately involved in the creation of the Diocese of Lexington in 1895 and its subsequent separation from the Diocese of Kentucky. Archdeacon Benton was the rector that built the Church of the Advent on Baxter Avenue near the entrance gate to Cave Hill Cemetery in Louisville. And Advent was always known for being “high church.” The 1898 report to the Diocese indicated that Reverend Granville C. Walker was assisting Archdeacon Benton at Shelbyville. Benton also in 1902 inducted four Louisvillian lay readers – Robert Steele, John Howe Payton, Theodore C. Snively, and Judge Brent – to read Morning Prayer in place of clergy. This pattern, local lay readers assigned by the bishop, alternating with ordained clergy coming out from Louisville to provide Holy Communion and such baptisms, burials and preparation for confirmation that were needed, lasted throughout the first half of the 20th century.
The First Choirs at St. James

In 1911 Reverend Clinton S. Quin reported to the Diocese of Kentucky that St. James Shelbyville had a flourishing Sunday School and a vested choir. Since Quin later became bishop co-adjudicator of the Diocese of Texas, one can assume that he probably encouraged the congregation to invest in these two interests – Christian education and Episcopal choirs. The national church had produced in 1907 the results of a commission on music that had revised the 1882 prayer book and psalter by adding a substantial number of hymns, and, in keeping with the interest in Anglo-Catholic changes to the services, several responses and communion settings. A separate hymnal with service music was published in volume in 1916.12

Families active at St. James in the 1910-1930 period included among others: Judge Charles Marshall family, the Thomas Todd family, the William G. Johnston family, the second generation of Albert Hollenbachs, the Charles Hall family, Mrs. Jesse Owens and family, the David Todd Sampson family, the Philip Weissinger family, Mrs. C. G. Barrickman and family, Mrs. Richard Armstrong and family, the Burnett Wallace family, the second generation George Bright family.13 Although there is no specific reference to an organist or choir member from this period, they likely would have been drawn from among these families.

By the 1940s Mrs. Robert Giltner, Helen Fairleigh Giltner, was the organist at St. James, but there is no indication whether there was a choir or not. Mrs. Giltner was the mother of Bill Giltner, a long-time Lay Reader and vestryman. At some time in the 1950s a Hammond Organ was purchased and was used at St. James until the Rogers Organ was purchased in 1992. The Hammond Organ had drawbars and a Leslie speaker. This kind of organ was popular with jazz and early rock and roll groups of the 1950s and 1960s. The first of these Hammond Organs was manufactured in 1930 but it entered popular use for churches that could not afford the space or cost of a large pipe organ. Mrs. Roy Miller was listed as organist probably in the late 1950s and 1960s. Her sister in law, Mrs. Clarence Miller was St. James delegate to the Diocesan convention in 1967.
Illustrated History

Miss Mary Thomas Cooper was the next regular organist. She also played the organ at Shannon’s Funeral Parlor. There was a period during the late 1960s and 1970s when there was no regular organist. It was while Reverend Shep Musson was resident priest at St. James. Deborah L. Henry, as a young person, used to play the organ if no one else was there who could play it. Louise Henry recalled that when Deborah played the organ it was located in the front of the church not the back.

Several people remember when Tim Baker played the organ at St. James. He was very accomplished and gave concerts as well. He is currently the organist at the Harvey Browne Memorial Presbyterian Church in Louisville and accompanies Louisville choral groups as well. Recently Tim Baker gave a concert in Shelbyville at the new Christian Church.

During the 1980s and early 1990s, the regular organist at St. James was Jean Wentz. For Christmas and Easter Mary Only-Linder would play the organ and Walton Johnson pulled together an occasional choir to sing special music. Sadly, Mary Only-Linder died in the Fall of 2010 in North Carolina. During this period Father John Trager also played the organ occasionally. People remember the strains of Trager’s organ practice as they met for various church committee meetings.

In 1992 a major step forward was taken at St. James. The church purchased a $10,400 Rodgers Model 505 Electronic Organ with Solid Walnut Case from Conrad’s of Corydon Organ & Piano. The organ committee was Sam Nicolich and Walton Johnson. Donations for the purchase came from the Kenny Bellman memorial fund ($560) and from Mrs. Anna Nicolich ($5,000).
The Rogers organ dedication was held at St. James Church November 1, 1992 with Evensong Service and recital – Mary Only-Linder, Jo Bobbitt, Walton Johnson, Father John Trager; with organist Jean Wenz.

When Walton Johnson died, Jon Jacoby took over as choir director, and at some point the choir vested at first in black cassocks with white cottas. But most of the time the choir stood behind or in front of the organ in street clothes to sing an anthem at Christmas and at Easter.

In 1999 St. James welcomed Paul Salmon as their new organist. Paul had been organist at Ascension, Frankfort, and was active in Voce Novae, a choral arts group in Louisville. At this time, Jon Jacoby was soloist and choir director and his daughter sang as well. Paul established a choir room with an electronic keyboard to practice and provide additional sounds for special music. He also had the Rogers organ refurbished and upgraded. It is a C505 with two manuals (Swell & Great), full pedal board (American Guild of Organists specifications), and two memory banks. In 2000 when the Jacobys moved to Anchorage, Paul took over as choir director as well as organist. That same year Paul instituted weekly choir practice and regular Sunday anthems as part of church services. A
A gift of blue cassock choir robes was given to St. James as the choir began singing regularly in the period when Reverend Ken Thompson was interim rector.

Because the choir sits in the back of the church, the choir does not join in the procession at the beginning and end of the service. The acoustics at St. James Church are so good that even with two or three choir members are singing, the sound resonates through the building. That is also true for instruments and, of course, the organ itself.

In the late 1990s an anonymous donor gave a $10,000 Music Endowment gift to St. James which is used to purchase music and instruments. A few percussion instruments were added to accompany some of the contemporary anthems. And in 2010, Austin Waggoner donated a silver Schilke cornet that is frequently played by Michael Wade and Toodlie Edward back row, Christian and Halleigh Ols- son, Janie and Katie Butler, Molly Cowan, Jane Bellman.

(left) The Holy Huddle c. 2000: Bishop Ted Gulick, right, Paul Salmon turned to face the camera, Jon Jacoby the tune master, and left to right: B. J. Campbell, Phyllis Thompson, Ellen Bailey, Rita Cobb, Jane Bellman, Kirsten Jacoby, Weller Head, Ken Thompson, Molly Cowan, Mike Cowan during dedication of Barnett Hall. Photo from the Shelbyville Sentinel-Times.
Cowan. In 2009 through 2011, flute, trombone and saxophone were used as instrumentals or accompanied the choir.

Under the direction of Paul Salmon, the St. James choir has performed a variety of choral music, some contemporary, some classical, and often with new music Paul brought back from the annual meeting of Episcopal church choir directors at Sewanee University in Tennessee.

To conclude the year-long 150th anniversary celebration at St. James Church, the choir from Christ Church Cathedral, Louisville, gave an Evensong performance at St. James in Spring 2009. The previous Fall, the St. James choir had performed special music for Evensong.

The choir had some light moments as well, in December 2009 the St. James choir members sang a major part of the narrative of “Eeek, a Christmas Musical,” that was presented in the Fellowship Hall after Communion Service on Christmas I.

Mo Wakefield, Molly Cowan, Karen Crawford, Jane Bellman, Audrey Sheldon, and Mike Cowan, the choir, sang the major part of the narration of the Christmas musical. They were fellow travelers to Bethlehem with the Holy Family.
In 2009-2010 three new memorial gifts added to the music program: 1) enough supplemental hymnals, *Wonder, Love, and Praise*, for the congregation, 2) dark red (maroon) choir robes were purchased and also 3) choir chairs that contained space for holding hymnals and anthem music. And an upright, spinet piano borrowed from Paul Salmon’s personal collection. Austin Waggoner also donated funds for a music cubby-hole bookcase that fit in the hallway leading to the choir room thus cleaning up the perpetual mess.

(left) Following the 150th Anniversary celebration. Bishop Ted Gulick and Rector Amy Coulta greet choir members Nick Heil and Karen Crawford. The red robes were only worn a few times because they were very hot.

The choir was very active in providing choral Evensongs in Spring 2010 and Advent 2010 and half-hour special music before Christmas Eve service in 2009 and 2010. Use of the Oxford Book of Anthems, Oxford Book of Carols, anthems from St. James Press, allowed both traditional and contemporary music, and the choir also sang several spirituals and Appalachian music as separate anthems and as hymns from Wonder, Love, and Praise. During 2009-2011, Mike Cowan added his saxophone, trombone and cornet and Diane Coon added her flute as instruments to support the choir. The addition of Marian and Stephen Taylor during 2010 enhanced the music program through keyboard and through soloist and duet voice.

Invited by long-time choir member Jane Bellman, the St. James Choir in Advent 2009 and 2010, traveled to Beuchel, Kentucky, to provide a special program at the Rose Anna Hughes Presbyterian Home. Residents from the Assisted Living and the Health Center attended as well.

The musical genius behind the choirs and instrumental music at St. James is Dr. Paul Salmon who joined St. James in 1999 as organist and took over the additional responsibilities as choir director as well. He also serves on the Liturgical Committee working closely with the resident priest. Paul’s busy schedule includes teaching at University of Louisville as well as singing with Voce Novae, a choral arts society in Louisville.
Notes on Chapter Seven – The Sounds of Music

1. Report by the Trustees of Shelby College, 1867, to the Diocese of Kentucky.
2. Ibid.
4. Music in the Protestant Episcopal Church, several on-line sources.
5. Organ Music of mid 19th century, several on-line sources, suggesting Liszt and Mendelssohn.
7. “Historic American Sheet Music.” American Memory, digital access from Duke University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library. "The period after the Civil War saw a great increase in music publishing activity. The stereotype process allowed publishers to issue huge numbers of music for mass consumption. In his article, "Publishing and printing of music" in the New Grove Dictionary of American Music, D.W. Krummel suggests that this period could be called the "age of parlor music." Significant numbers of sheet music continued to be issued in the twentieth century, centering around the area of Manhattan known as "Tin pan alley." The sheer number of "hits" emanating from publishers such as Leo Feist, T.B. Harms, Irving Berlin, Shapiro & Bernstein, Von Tilzer and M. Witmark is remarkable. Sheet music became so popular that it was even issued as supplements to newspapers. With the rise of parlor music in the 1860's came a realization on the part of music publishers of the commercial value of printing advertising on the otherwise blank pages of music.
9. Canon Six, Protestant Episcopal Church, 1882, from History of Episcopal Church, online.
11. 1911 Convention Journal of the Diocese of Kentucky; Preface to the 1940 Hymnal.
12. Preface to the 1940 Hymnal.