

Auxiliary Organs

In addition to the main organ in the West Gallery, Saint Cecilia Cathedral has been served by three small pipe organs located either in one of its two chapels or the cathedral sanctuary. The main ancillary chapel in Saint Cecilia Cathedral is the Lady Chapel, known since the early 1940s as “Our Lady of Nebraska Chapel.”¹⁸⁰

Austin Opus 1812

The earliest known organ in the Lady Chapel was a compact cabinet organ built by the Austin Organ Company in 1932 for the G. A. Volland Funeral Home in Hastings, Nebraska (Table 10).¹⁸¹

Table 10. Specification of Austin Opus 1812 (1932)¹⁸²

Great		Swell		Pedal	
16'	Open Diapason (<i>c⁰</i>)	16'	Claribella	16'	Contra Bass
16'	Contra Viole (<i>c⁰</i>)	16'	Contra Viole (<i>c⁰</i>)	16'	Dolce Bass
8'	Open Diapason	8'	Open Diapason	8'	Open Diapason
8'	Claribel Flute	8'	Claribel Flute	8'	Flute
8'	Salicional	8'	Salicional	8'	Viole
4'	Octave	4'	Octave	4'	Super Octave
4'	Flute	4'	Flute	4'	Flute
4'	Salicet	4'	Salicet	4'	Viola
2 2/3'	Nazard	2 2/3'	Dulcet	2'	Octave Flute
2'	Super Octave	2'	Dulcet		
		1 3/5'	Dulcet		
			Tremolo		

¹⁸⁰ Kuhlman, 120. The chapel was so named for the statue entitled “Our Lady of Nebraska” or “Our Lady of the Corn” by sculptor Albin Polasek.

¹⁸¹ Holyoke. Data compiled in 1993.

¹⁸² Ibid.

It is known that this organ was removed from Saint Cecilia Cathedral in 1998,¹⁸³ but the date it was acquired by the cathedral is uncertain. Winifred Flanagan solicited a proposal on 27 February 1952, from the Andover Organ Company of Methuen, Massachusetts, for a new organ to serve Our Lady of Nebraska Chapel.¹⁸⁴ This was to be an “improved model” of an Andover studio organ that she encountered at an “Organ Institute” in 1950 (Table 11).¹⁸⁵

Table 11. Proposal by Andover for a New Lady Chapel Organ¹⁸⁶

Great		Positiv		Pedal	
8'	Rohrflöte	8'	Gambe	16'	Quintade
8'	Gambe	4'	Rohrflöte	8'	Rohrflöte
4'	Spitzprinzipal	2 2/3'	Nasard (Rohrflöte)	8'	Gambe
4'	Rohrflöte	2'	Superoctave (Spitzpr.)	5 1/3'	Quinte (Rohrflöte)
2'	Superoctave (Spitzpr.)			4'	Spitzprinzipal
	Mixture IV			4'	Rohrflöte
				2'	Superoctave (Spitzpr.)

¹⁸³ Austin Opus 1812 was removed from Our Lady of Nebraska Chapel in the spring of 19998 to make room for another instrument. As a result of a misunderstanding, the party engaged to move and store the organ presumed ownership in exchange for the removal, and the instrument was sold before it could be reclaimed. (Br. William Woeger, F.S.C., to Kevin Vogt, telephone conversation, 1 April 2007.)

¹⁸⁴ Thomas W. Byers, Andover Organ Company, to Mrs. M. J. (Winifred) Flanagan, 6 March 1952, Cathedral Archives, Saint Cecilia Cathedral, Omaha.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. This proposal suggests that the organ would have had electro-pneumatic action and some unification, but would be have the “clear qualities of low pressure voicing.” Such an instrument was to have reflected the “classical” tonal scheme in vogue at the time, and would have been consistent with the changes made to Casavant Opus 51 in 1957.

It is unknown if this organ was intended to replace Austin Opus 1812 or if the Austin organ was procured instead of the Andover. It is clear, however, that the Andover proposal was to be part of the interior decoration project anticipating the completion and consecration of the cathedral.¹⁸⁷ The organ was to cost around \$7,000,¹⁸⁸ but it was never realized.

Bedient Opus 38

In 1993, Brother William Woeger, F.S.C., commissioned a positive organ from the Bedient Organ Company of Lincoln, Nebraska, in honor of Archbishop Daniel E. Sheehan on the occasion of his retirement. The organ is Bedient’s Opus 38, and is comprised of three stops on one manual with a pull-down pedal. It is one of the firm’s stock designs known as “The Boston” (Table 12).

Table 12. Specification of Bedient Opus 38 (1993)

Manual		Pedal
8’	Gedeckt	Manual permanently coupled to Pedal
4’	Rohrfloete	
2’	Prestant	

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. The letter from Andover indicates a desire to coordinate the design of the organ with the decorative work in progress at the time: “The most practical solution to the problem of architectural disposition of the organ would be for us to collaborate with the Rambusch firm on the design of the casework, we being familiar with the acoustic requirements as well as the architectural usage of pipes as decorative materials; they being familiar with the treatment of ecclesiastical woodwork, particularly in your own chapel. This part of the project could then well be executed by Rambusch as a part of their general decorating work there.”

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

This organ sits on a movable platform and has been employed at several locations in the cathedral nave and sanctuary, and in the adjacent Nash Chapel (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Bedient Opus 38
(Courtesy of Bedient Organ Company)

Bedient Opus 60

A seven-stop Bedient organ, Opus 60, was installed in Our Lady of Nebraska Chapel in May 1998, replacing Austin Opus 1812 (Figure 9). This organ was purchased with funds bequeathed to the cathedral from the estate of Robert G. Miller, Jr., long-time cantor and assistant organist at the cathedral. The organ was planned in

consultation with cathedral organist Patrick Burkhart before his departure in August 1997, and was installed during the subsequent interim year under the watch of Brother William Woeger, F.S.C.¹⁸⁹



Figure 9. Bedient Opus 60
(Courtesy of Bedient Organ Company)

Bedient Opus 60 is also one of the firm's stock models, this one named "The Houston." Its specification is distinctive in its inclusion of a Spanish-style regal

¹⁸⁹ Bedient Opus 60 was actually installed the very day I interviewed for the position of Director of Music and Cathedral Organist.

called a “Dulzaina,” mounted horizontally (*en chamade*) on the impost of the organ (Table 13).

Table 13. Specification of Bedient Opus 60 (1998)

Great		Positive		Pedal	
8'	Rohrflute	8'	Gedeckt	16'	Subbass
4'	Principal	8'	Dulzaina		
2'	Octave		(regal, <i>en chamade</i>)		
1 1/3'	Quint				
2 2/3'	Sesquialtera II (c ¹)				

From pioneer beginnings, through fits and starts, bursts of inspiration and determination, plateaus of stability and faithfulness, cataclysmic upheavals and patient periods of renewal, the organs of Omaha’s Roman Catholic cathedrals have attended the festivity of parochial and diocesan churches and symbolized their traditions of faith. Reciprocally, the rich cultural texture of human life and creativity has “breathed life” into these artifacts. This is the context into which a new cathedral organ has been borne to attend the festal moments of human life, to symbolize the procession of cultic and credal traditions, and to receive its own breath of life from generations to come.