

Discovering pieces of lost history best part of man's job

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MANNFORD — Dale Money has a time machine in his own backyard.

There's never a dull moment in his workshop, where he restores old-time pump organs.

"It shocks you back into time. When I take these apart, I look for old newspaper clippings, hair clips, pennies," said Money.

The latest gem he extracted from the interior of an organ? A pecan.

"It's surprising what you pull out of these," he said.

Money was bitten by the organ bug for the first time in the early '50s. He bought an old pump organ for \$45 and decided to try his hand at restoring the instrument.

"I loaded the whole thing in my pickup and got home and said, 'what a mess I've got.' I didn't know beans about it," Money said.

With pieces scattered around him, Money went to work, gluing parts together and reassembling his project. He was in for a big surprise once it was complete.

"Not knowing what I was doing, to my amazement, it played," Money said.

Since then, he has restored several organs, some dating back 100 years. He uses an old stethoscope to detect leaks in the bellows, the "lungs" of each organ.

Foot-operated pedals drive air into the bellows, which are covered by rubberized cloth. This creates a vacuum sucked out of a chamber and sent into a wind chest.

Air is then passed through brass reeds. Each reed is set to a different

note, and stamped accordingly. Sixty-one reeds give the pump organ 61 keys.

Most often, Money must replace the bellows, which dry out and crack. Money carefully removes the mater-

ial to measure it for proper replacement.

"I have to laugh at some of these I get," said Money, who recently replaced makeshift bellows — a shower curtain — on an organ he restored.

The top of an organ is attached to the foundation board with a leather gasket. Money removes dirt from the ivory stop knobs with an ammonia-based cleanser. He uses Pierce Piano Atlas to direct him to parts he may need.

"(Pierce Piano Atlas) is more or less my bible," Money said. An organ's serial number helps him track down obscure pieces. "I can get fairly close to it through that."

Money orders items from supply houses back east, but if they can't meet his needs, he'll construct a part on his own.

"Anything they don't make anymore, I make it myself," Money said. Springs on volume doors, which keep them shut, are some of his creations.

Money restored a pump organ for members of Diamond Valley Community Church in Stillwater, Okla. He cleaned it and made the reeds work again.

"The mice had been in it," said Jocille Hoffman, church treasurer. "He came and picked up our organ. He kept it for quite awhile, then called and brought it back. It's beautiful," she said.

Barbara Cavett, church superintendent, located Money through a Tulsa music store, then called him up.

"He did an excellent job. He repaired the internal part, like the reeds and refinished it for us. It really looks nice," Cavett said.

The organ, which sits in the

church auditorium, gets a lot of attention. People come in to visit, then see the organ and feel compelled to tickle the ivories, said Cavett. It dates back to at least the early 1900's, she said.

Discovering pieces of lost history is one of the best parts of the job, Money said. Underneath the wind chest of an organ he restored not long ago, someone wrote "cleaned and tuned Dec. 26, 1922," then signed it. The organ was located in Schoolhouse, Ark.

When he saw the notation, Money said his imagination ran wild. The man who serviced the organ might have traveled far and wide.

"He might have gone all that way in a buggy. It gets you thinking, 'what were times like back then?'"

At the turn of the century, a Hinners & Albertsen pump organ sold for \$26.50, according to an old newspaper advertisement. Families would stand around the organ for hours, and sing.

"It was entertainment. Maybe people were working for 25 cents a week," Money said.

Though Money said word of mouth is his best advertisement, people as far away as Maine have enlisted his help. His name is included in the Reed Organ Society Directory and that has generated some calls, he said.

With 3 organs in line for improvement, Money stays pretty busy. He doesn't use many tools; just the basics will do.

"You take a pair of pliers and a screwdriver, and you're in business." The organs keep coming, and continue to transport him back in time.

"Every time I work on these, I wonder," Money said.



Community World staff photo by Susan Jakobsen
This melodeon, a forerunner to pump organs, belongs to a Broken Arrow resident. Since the photo, Money completed the process and will deliver it to its owner.