

20 Years of the Estey Organ Museum

Compiled by Valerie Abrahamsen, ThD

- 2001** In November 2021, reed organ restorer, Ned Phoenix, convened a meeting of Estey enthusiasts, former employees, musicians, history buffs, and designers at the First Baptist Church in Brattleboro to discuss the feasibility of establishing a museum to collect, preserve, and interpret the physical and cultural heritage of the Estey Organ Company in Brattleboro and America.
- 2002** In January, the Estey Organ Museum, Inc. was incorporated as a Vermont domestic non-profit corporation. A Board of Directors was elected and work began to create an all-volunteer, membership supported organization.
- In March, the Estey Organ Museum, Inc. was recognized as exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
- In July, Dennis Waring published *Manufacturing the Muse: Estey Organs and Consumer Culture in Victorian America*, a comprehensive history of Estey Organ Company.
- In August, space in the former Estey factory on Birge Street was leased as the museum. The Engine Room in Building #19 became the primary exhibit space.
- In September, EOM Mission and Vision statements were adopted.
- 2003** The museum received a Cultural Facilities Grant from the Vermont Arts Council to convert the Engine House into exhibit space. This included and window repairs, asbestos removal, floor stabilization, and electrical repairs.
- The museum received a grant from the Windham Foundation for physical repairs to the building.
- In March, Building #4 was leased as the museum office.
- On June 13 and 15, the Estey Organ Museum grand opening was held.
- 2004** Nelson and Beverly Pease of the Reed Organ Society gave a recital and demonstrated features of various reed organs in the museum collection.
- An Estey Day Organ Tour featured instruments in Brattleboro and Bernardston, MA.
- 2005** The museum hired Steve Proctor of Bury Associates to create a Strategic Plan.
- 2006** In March, Estey Organ Museum, Inc. purchased Buildings #19 and #4.
- Museum Founder Ned Phoenix completed *A Guided Tour of the Reed Organ Exhibit*.

In May, the museum received a grant from the Vermont Arts Council.

2007

In September, museum consultant Douglas Evelyn of River Town Design completed the Estey Organ Museum Factory Heritage Tourism Master Plan, through a Preserve America grant of the Federal Department of the Interior.

The museum launched the walk-through organ project, enlisting the services of seven organ builders from around New England.

The museum mounted an exhibit of the photographs of the Estey complex taken by photographer Clements Kalischer. The photos were likely taken in 1959, as some of the photos appeared in the Autumn 1960 edition of *Vermont Life* magazine.

In May, the museum received a regional marketing grant.

In June, the museum received a grant from the Crosby Foundation.

2008

In June, the museum participated in the Tunbridge World's Fair.

In June, the museum received a grant from the Crosby Foundation.

2009

A Collection Plan was adopted by the Board of Trustees.

2010

In October, the museum hosted "The Works of Estey: A Concert for Pipe Organ, Reed Organ, Electronic Organ, and Piano," featuring George Matthew, Jr., Phyllis Isaacson and Bill McKim.

In October, the museum received a grant from the Windham Foundation for building construction, water supply line insulation, heat, and wiring.

2011

In January, the museum received a grant from the Vermont Humanities Council for a "sound program."

In January, the Masonic Center, Brattleboro, hosted "A Victorian Ladies Tea: An Elegant Afternoon in Support of the Estey Organ Museum."

In January, First Baptist Church, Brattleboro, hosted a fundraiser for the museum: "Wondrous Machine: A Concert by Clark Anderson Featuring the Estey Pipe Organ of First Baptist Church."

In May, First Baptist Church, Brattleboro, hosted a fundraiser for the museum: "Hans Hielscher in Concert."

In June, the EOM was "on parade" through its colorful float at Strolling of the Heifers and again at the July 4th parade in Brattleboro.

In July, the museum was part of Brattleboro's monthly Gallery Walk. Featured was Estey's Muse, with Ned Phoenix, Dennis Waring, and Marvin Bentley playing Estey instruments, violin, clarinet, guitar and saxophone.

In June, the museum sponsored the Second Annual Garden Party at the home of Cindy and John Wilcox home, featuring local historian Fran Lynggaard Hansen.

In August, the museum was part of Brattleboro's monthly Gallery Walk. Featured was Estey's Muse, with Ned Phoenix, Dennis Waring, and Marvin Bentley playing Estey instruments, violin, clarinet, guitar and saxophone.

In August, the museum sponsored "MAKE! TUNE! PLAY! The Levi Fuller A435 Extravaganza." Rolf Parker-Houghton shot video, and Ned Phoenix and Dennis Waring led a group of men, women and children in an afternoon of fun, creativity and experimentation about standardized pitch and the Brattleboro pioneer who helped bring the world in tune. With their newly-made instruments pitched to A, the crowd made their way to Levi Fuller's grave to pay homage.

In August, Estey's Muse (Ned Phoenix, Dennis Waring and fellow band members) presented a concert at Esteyville Common (Fuller Park) and performed at the Newfane History Fair.

In September, the museum was part of Brattleboro's monthly Gallery Walk and featured Estey's Muse.

In September, the Estey Day celebration featured "Around the World in 80 Minutes: An International Sampler on Period Instruments" with Nelson and Beverly Pease, assisted by Ned Phoenix and Ed Boadway.

In November, First Baptist Church, Brattleboro, hosted a fundraiser for the museum: "An Organ Concert by George Matthew, Jr."

In December, First Baptist Church, Brattleboro, hosted "Holiday Caroling!" on behalf of the museum, featuring Clark Anderson, Organ, Valerie Abrahamsen, Soprano, and the Rev. Suzanne Andrews, Emcee.

2012

In June, the museum received a grant from the Windham Foundation.

In June, the museum received a grant from Vermont Arts Council.

The museum launched the Estey Labs initiative, in which teachers led students through do-it-yourself projects and associated skill building workshops.

In the Fall, under the leadership of Dennis Waring and Ned Phoenix, the museum initiated the Estey School Project in five public schools in southern Vermont; using a portable Estey reed organ, Waring and Phoenix demonstrated and discussed the science and technology of sound, and related issues.

In October, First Baptist Church, Brattleboro, hosted a fundraiser for the museum: "An Afternoon at the Opera," with Clark Anderson and Jenna Rae.

In September, Estey Day took place at the museum

2013

In January, First Baptist Church, Brattleboro, hosted “Buzzards Brass in Concert,” a New Orleans brass band, on the Estey organ.

In February, First Baptist Church, Brattleboro, hosted “A Romantic Concert for Flute and Organ” on behalf of the museum, featuring Cheryl Duerr and Edwin Lawrence, Organ and Piano, and Cheryl Duerr, Flute.

In June, the EOM float was showcased at the Strolling of the Heifers parade, Brattleboro and in the Brattleboro July 4th parade.

In August, Estey’s Muse performed at the Windham History Fair.

In October, First Baptist Church, Brattleboro, hosted “Entertaining Organ Music from Classic to Operative” on behalf of the museum and in collaboration with the Brattleboro Historical Society, featuring Hans U. Hielscher, Organ

2014

In April, the Brattleboro Savings and Loan funded the publication of the newsletter.

In May, the Estey Pipe Organ Tour took place at a number of venues around Brattleboro, featuring organists Ed Boadway, Peter Walker and Alan Dann.

In July, the museum hosted a “Summer Concert and Tea,” featuring Philip Stimmel, Organ; and Peggy Spencer, Gudrun Weeks and Zon Eastes, Strings.

In July, museum members staffed a coffee break fundraiser at the Guilford Visitor Center

2015

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In September, the museum received a Technical Assistance grant from the Vermont Arts Council to redesign the website.

In October, the museum held a two day reed organ rehoming event.

In December, museum members staffed a bake sale at the Exit 1 Shops in Brattleboro.

2016

In February, museum members staffed a bake sale at the Exit 1 Shops in Brattleboro.

In April, the museum launched a new website, designed by Karen Rosen and Chris Grotke of Muse Arts, Brattleboro.

In October, First Baptist Church, Brattleboro, hosted “Organ Concerts can be Fun! A Recital of ‘Dancing Pipes’” on behalf of the museum, featuring Hans U. Hielscher, Organ.

2017

In July and August, the museum held reed organ rehoming events.

In September, following the annual meeting, the museum hosted “How the Muse was Manufactured: An Author’s Tale of Bringing the Estey Story to Life” by Dennis Waring.

2018

Barbara George was interviewed by VPR News' Howard Weiss-Tisman for a June 15 article, "We Had To Stop Just Taking Them': Brattleboro Organ Museum Has Too Many Instruments."

In June, the museum received a grant from the Vermont Community Foundation for work on the roof.

In the summer, the museum reissued *Vox Jubilante: Victorian Sounds on Estey Organs*, the CD that Dennis Waring's book, *Manufacturing the Muse*.

In July, First Baptist Church, Brattleboro, hosted Dr. Joyce Jones in two concerts, one for children and one for adults, on behalf of the museum.

In September, the museum held a reed organ rehoming event.

In October, the museum exhibited some of the pipe organ archives that had recently been examined, cleaned and organized, in honor of American Archives Month.

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2019

In September, museum archivist Mary Morganti and volunteers Barbara George and John Carnahan began the work of preserving the internal records of the Estey pipe organ department for future researchers.

2020

In January, Epsilon Spires (formerly First Baptist Church) hosted a recital by Gavin Klein on behalf of the Estey Organ Museum.

In August, Barbara George, Augusta Bartlett, and Barbara Woods completed the ambitious pipe organ archive cleaning project.

From May through July, the museum was closed due to the Covid pandemic. As vaccinations became available and Covid started to ease, the museum opened for two hours each week from August through October, thanks to Barbara George.

In September, the annual meeting was held via Zoom.

2021

In January, under the direction of Barbara George, many of the museum's collection of reed organ catalogs were scanned and placed online.

In April, EOM submitted an exhibit to "Lively and Local" at the Vermont History Museum in Montpelier.

In May, an orientation video about the Estey story, created by Dennis Waring and Sally Seymour, was launched at the museum.

In May, the museum created a YouTube channel for posting videos created by the museum and a playlist of Estey-related videos posted by others.

In June, the Brattleboro Historical Society placed a special exhibit about Brattleboro in the museum

In September, a recital by organist Gavin Klein of Bolton, MA followed the annual meeting.

2022

The Estey Organ Museum celebrated its 20th Anniversary.