

PipeNotes

American Guild of Organists – Milwaukee Chapter

P.O. Box 11731

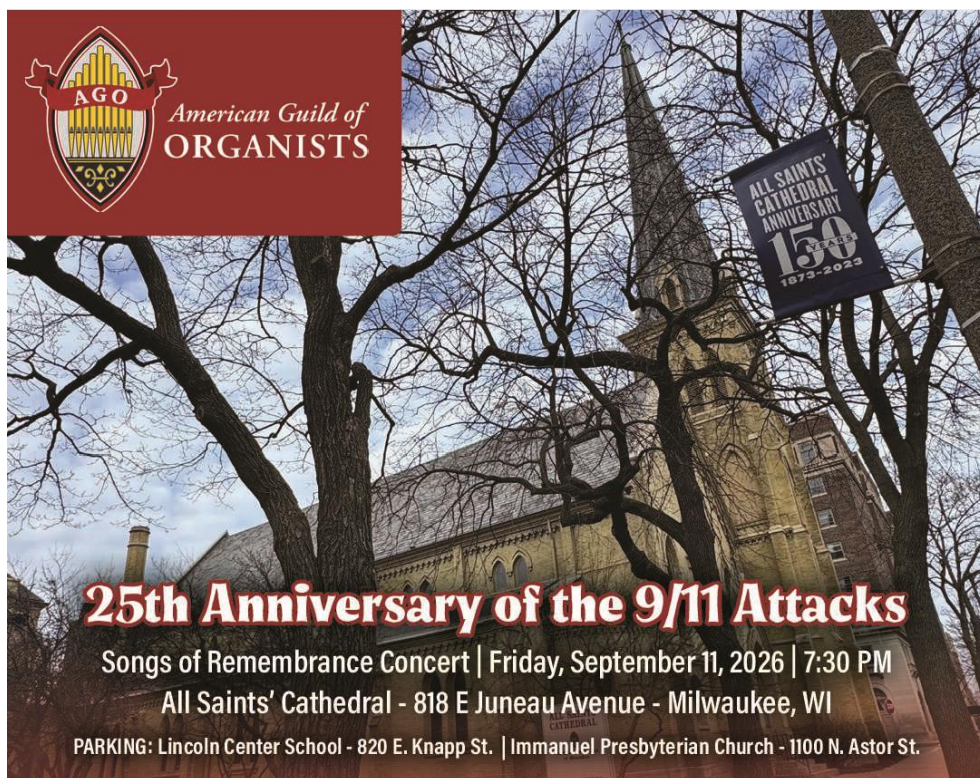
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53211

www.agomilwaukee.org • chapter@agomilwaukee.org

Volume 73 – September 2026



American Guild of
ORGANISTS



25th Anniversary of the 9/11 Attacks

Songs of Remembrance Concert | Friday, September 11, 2026 | 7:30 PM

All Saints' Cathedral - 818 E Juneau Avenue - Milwaukee, WI

PARKING: Lincoln Center School - 820 E. Knapp St. | Immanuel Presbyterian Church - 1100 N. Astor St.

The free public performance will be held at 7:30 pm Friday, Sept. 11, 2026, at All Saints' Cathedral, 818 E Juneau Ave. in East-Town Milwaukee.

Guest artists include AGO Milwaukee Chapter Musicians:

Michael Batcho, Lee Erickson, David Bahrke, Organists Carlot Dorve, Trumpet Aperi - Vocal Ensemble-in-Residence at All Saints' Cathedral

The event will include the ringing of the Cathedral's Bells of Remembrance and Hope, dedicated in 2007 to memorialize those who lost their lives on 9/11.

We Shall Remember Them....

Cosponsored by: All Saints' Cathedral | AGO Milwaukee Chapter
Freewill Offering to benefit Tunnels to Towers [T2T.org], supporting the victims and families affected by 9/11.



Registration Organ Bus Tour to Madison

Saturday, October 24, 2026

8:00 AM - 6:00 PM | \$60.00

Advance Paid Registration DUE by
September 20th

Scan QR Code to Register & Pay

Includes Bus Ride and a Box Lunch



Saint Stephen's Lutheran Church - Monona

Rosales/Parsons Organ

Covenant Presbyterian Church

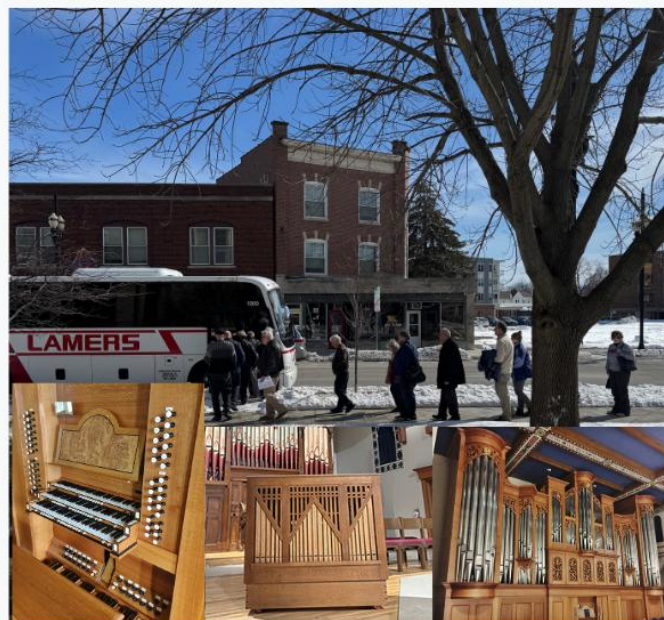
Schoenstein Organ

Luther Memorial Church

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Saint Paul's Catholic Student Center Chapel

Taylor and Boody Organ



Dear AGO Members,

Call to Action!

A spectacular Bus tour of 4 Madison Churches and Organs is planned for Saturday, October 24th.

We have reserved a Lamers Coach that will depart from the Watertown Plank Park & Ride located at [10600 W. Watertown Plank Road, Wauwatosa, WI](#).

Board the Bus at 8:00 AM and return by 6:00 PM. A Tasty Box Lunch is included in your **\$60.00 prepaid registration, which is needed by September 20th**. We need at least **25 participants to confirm** the bus reservation on September 21st.

You can register and pay by sending a check payable to: AGO Milwaukee Chapter, PO Box 11731, Milwaukee, WI 53211. Memo the check: Madison Organ Tour and the number of persons. **VERY IMPORTANT:** Include a note with the names of the registrants, a mobile text/phone number, and your email address. We need to contact you about box lunch choices and real-time updates on the tour.

You can also register and pay by scanning this QR Code or clicking this URL (<https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/madison-organ-and-church-bus-tour>) to pay online using a credit card.

The February 2025 tour was a huge success and a lot of fun and camaraderie. Come and enjoy time with some new and some old colleagues and friends!

We scheduled the tour for October to take advantage of the warm weather. We have selected four very interesting organs and churches for the tour.

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Sharon Adel
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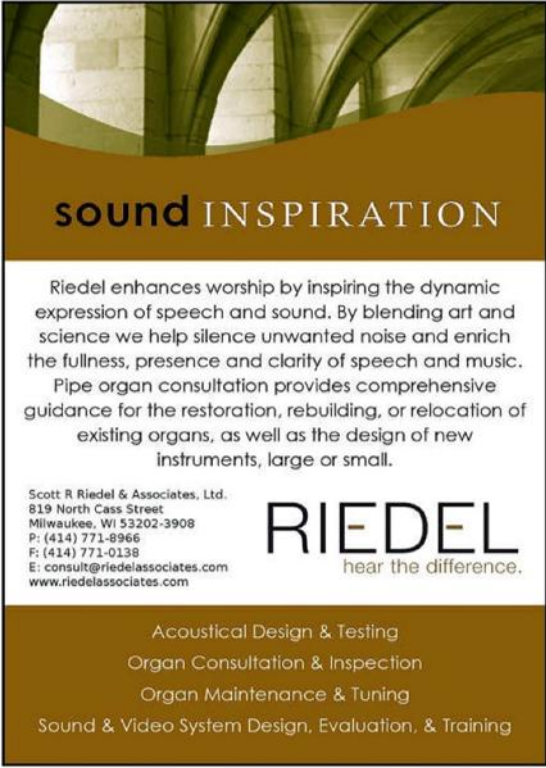
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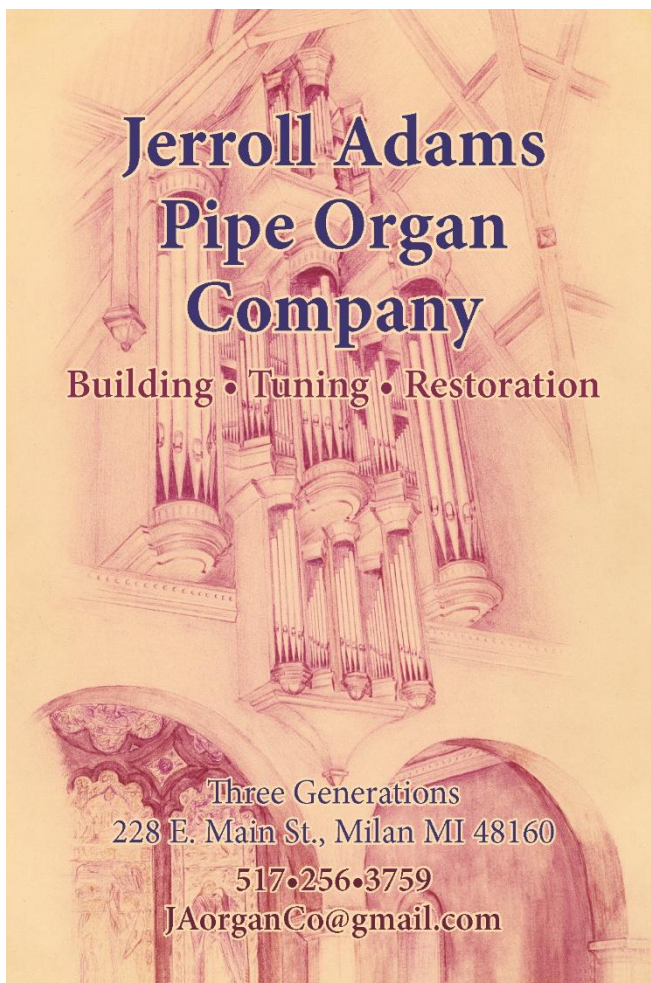
September 2026

11 (Fri) 7:30 Songs of Remembrance Concert
Remembering the 25th Anniversary of 9/11
Chapter Event with All Saints' Cathedral
Vocal Ensemble-in-Residence Aperi
Organists Lee Erickson, Michael Batcho, David Bahrke
Trumpet Carlot Dorve
All Saints' Cathedral
818 E Juneau Ave
Milwaukee, WI

20 (Sun) 1:30 Madison ACM Members' Recital
Trinity Lutheran Church
1904 Winnebago St
Madison, WI

23 (Wed) 12:15 Karen Beaumont, Organ
The Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist
812 N. Jackson St
Milwaukee, WI

26 (Sat) 2:30 Bruce Bengtson, Hymn Sing
Holy Cross Lutheran Church
734 Holy Cross Way
Madison, WI



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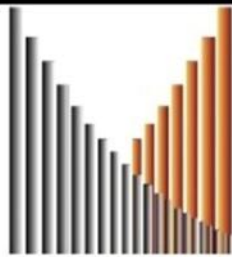
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FROM THE ARCHIVES

Liz Walloch/Archivist
archivist@agomilwaukee.org

The Archives has returned from hiatus and shares an interesting member profile this month. What makes this profile unique is I have never met this member face to face, nor did I connect with her over a beverage to listen to her story. One of her musical milestones was included in my February 2025 PipeNotes, The Early Years, Part 2 article. What continues to make this profile even more unique for us today is, she is one of the charter members of the Wisconsin chapter of 1919. Her contributions to our chapter's history laid a musical foundation that has contributed to our active chapter into our 107th year. For those members who browse the Archives, you probably have met this member. For those who haven't done much browsing, the Archives are waiting for you to explore the vast material, which tells the story of the Wisconsin and Milwaukee Chapter through the decades.

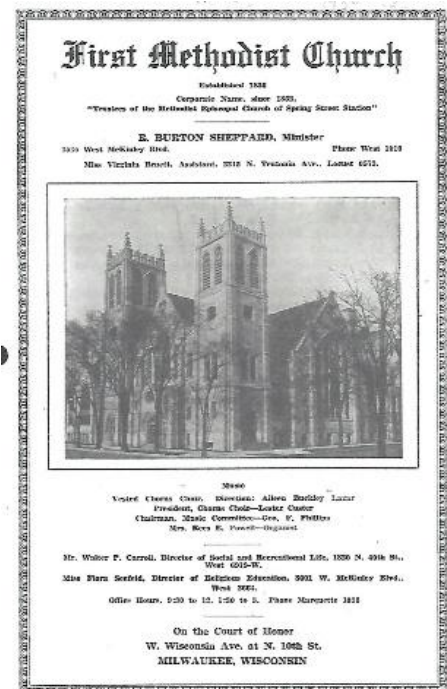
Spotlight Shines On Chapter Member "Mrs. Rees Powell," the Former Mabel Greenwood

Early Music Influences

This profile begins with introducing Mrs. Rees Powell to readers of PipeNotes. I found her musical journey very interesting, and it takes us back in time to the very early years of the chapter. I am always amazed to learn the musical influences in a person's life. For the former Mabel Greenwood, known to us as Mrs. Rees Powell, was quoted in a newspaper article dated Thursday, October 8, 1953. "*I grew up with music.*" Her beginning influence was her mother Mary Royall, a soprano soloist and her father John who also sang. Mabel's first instrument as a child wasn't a piano, but a stringed instrument, the violin. "*But from her childhood she loved the organ.*" She came to the organ bench at the age of 17, taking organ lessons from "*Louis Eaton, and William Williamson, widely known organists in the city.*" The one and only church where she was organist was First Methodist Church on North 10th Street and W. Wisconsin Avenue. The Methodist Church was also truly her church being a lifelong member from birth. I found this amazing that she served one and only one church in her 63 years of church ministry! Source: Container 1, Newspaper Clippings, Events Print, Binder 1, 1920-1953 (C1NCEPB1, 1920-1953), Page 578.



Source: C1NCEP, Pages 90 and 579.



Her contributions to the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Guild of Organists

With her nuptials to Mr. Rees Powell at age 19 in 1894, she only used her married name of Mrs. Rees Powell. All correspondence in the Archives has her name as Mrs. Rees Powell. The only place I found printed with reference to her first name of Mabel was in a short bio on her passing away in 1958. Here is a timeline of her contributions to the early days of our chapter and her ministry.

1919 Charter member of the newly formed Wisconsin Chapter
1924-1926 Elected the First Female Dean of the Wisconsin Chapter
1927 Chaired Social Committee
1933 Guest organist for a chapter event of Musical Vesper Service
1935 Member of the Executive Committee
1936 Hosted Chapter Meetings at her residence
1937 Organized the 1st Choir Festival at First Methodist Church
1938 Organized the 2nd Choir Festival at First Methodist Church
1939 Organized the 3rd Choir Festival at First Methodist Church
1940 Organized the 4th Choir Festival at First Methodist Church
1941 Organized the 5th Choir Festival at First Methodist Church
1943 Honored for her 50 years as organist at First Methodist Church
1953 Honored for her 60 years as organist at First Methodist Church
1953 Honored with Life Membership by the Wisconsin Chapter
1953 Of the 37 original charter members, Mrs. Rees Powell was one of the remaining five still active
1955 Hosted the Executive Committee meetings at her residence
1956 Officially retires from First Methodist after 63 years
1957 Became a substitute organist for areas churches
1958 Passed away January 13, 1958, after a long illness, age 83

Source: (C2CRETCB1Misc.), Page 244.

Service to our Chapter

She was a charter member of the Wisconsin chapter that began in May of 1919 and became known as the member who could organize and coordinate events beyond the Social Committee. Her hospitality became her trademark with opening her home for committee and board meetings. She also extended their summer cottage for the annual picnic for members to enjoy a Sunday out of the city. Her stepping forward to assist in planning events and coordinating strengthened her skills for leadership roles of being elected the first female dean and being granted Life Membership in the Wisconsin chapter.

Her Personal Views from the Bench

In an article titled “*Organist Has to Lead*” from the Milwaukee Journal of 1953, Mrs. Rees shared her thoughts. “*The organist always has to lead. It is a big responsibility.*” Although she didn’t pick the hymns, sometimes she wished she could have. She didn’t like hymns that dragged, so she nudged up the temps somewhat to the distress of several members of the congregation who like the slower tempos. “*The church service has grown over the years, Mrs. Rees Powell said. There are many more responses and there is more ritual than there used to be. Mrs. Powell’s taste in organ music has not changed. She still likes Bach, Brahms, Handel, and Tchaikovsky. She loves to play hymns and old English songs— ‘good music; there is so much trash nowadays.’*” In her 60+ years of Sunday mornings she has had a “*variety of experiences.*” “*One of the most exasperating is when the keys stick...and at that moment there is nothing you can do about it. The service just has to go on without music.*” Here is another sharing by Mrs. Rees Powell on a particular Sunday morning. “*Sometimes it’s hard to follow the morning program. On this morning, the ‘Communion Meditation’ was her cue to meditate on the organ. Rev. Merrill Abbey, the then pastor, thought it was his cue to meditate on prayer.*” Beside her musical talents, she was known to have a sweet tooth and known for her doughnut making, “*doughnuts are my specialty at least that’s what my friends tell me.*” Source: (C1NCEPB1, 1920-1953), Pags 578 & 579, 624.

The Later Years

Her association involvements throughout her active years reached a variety of established organizations of being an honorary member of the McDowell Club, a board member of the YWCA for 50 years, a charter member and honorary director of the Milwaukee Travelers Aid Society, a charter member of the Tuesday Musical Club, life member of First Methodist Church and charter member of the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Guild of Organists. Her career in church ministry is a short list of only serving as organist for 63 years at her church of First Methodist. One would think with all of her musical, civic associations and practice time for Sundays that she would have limited time for new interests to explore. Well, at the age of 77 she and her husband John kept active by joining a *"a group of young people in square dancing."* Source : Container 2, Correspondance, Reports, Etc., Binder 1 Misc (C2CRETCB1Misc.), Page 136 and C1NCEPB1,1920-1953), Page 578, 608.

Her 60th Anniversary

As her 60th anniversary of serving as organist at First Methodist Church approached, the church dedicated Oct. 11, 1953, as a tribute to Mrs. Rees Powell Sunday, who marked her 60th anniversary on that day.

"The morning service Oct. 11 at the First Methodist Church in Milwaukee took the form of a tribute to Mrs. Rees Powell, who on that day marked her sixtieth anniversary as organist there. The choir sang one of her favorite anthems, an arrangement of 'Jesus Call Us O'er the Tumult,' and the topic of the sermon was 'Sixty Years.' The congregation presented a watch to Mrs. Powell, replacing one given on her fiftieth anniversary, which she had lost. Flowers from the choir, family and the Wisconsin Chapter of the A.G.O. adorned the interior of the church.

At the age of 77, Mrs. Powell is active not only as an organist but in many other ways long since given up by younger people. Not long ago she and her husband joined a group of young people in square dancing. She is still a board member of the Y.W.C.A. and a charter member of the Travelers' Aid Society, having served the former organization for fifty years. Mrs. Powell says that she is not ready to retire.

The Rev. Ensworth Reisner, pastor shared this about Mrs. Rees Powell on the occasion of her 60th anniversary. *"Mrs. Powell is an astounding person all the way through."* He also commented that she and her husband could be unpredictable at times and referenced the two taking up square dancing at the young age of 77!

With 60 years of playing, you would think it's time for more leisure. Mrs. Powell spoke of not being ready to retire at her 50th anniversary. She hoped to be able to be an organist for another 10 years. Well, she achieved her wish at her 60 anniversary and continued to play for another three years until she officially retired in 1956. However, she continued to play for churches as a substitute organist for an additional two more years. Now that is true dedication!

Source: C1NCEPB1,1920-1953) Pages 578 & 608.

To wrap up this incredible church ministry profile of Mrs. Rees Powell are words shared on Sunday, October 11, 1953.

"Sixty Years:

Time is meaningless except as it indicates a rich contribution to life.

Mrs. Rees Powell has spent many years playing the organ for the First Methodist Church of Milwaukee-- just 60 years today. What we honor is not just the 60 years, but the rich contribution of Mabel Powell" known through the years as Mrs. Rees Powell. *"Organ pipes are the vehicle of two artists, the composer of the music and even more the spirit of the one who plays. Our church has been richly blessed by the spirit of our organist, rain or shine, in sickness and in health, she has loved and cherished the people who have come here, the pastors, the choirs, the members and the visitors.*

To Mrs. Rees E. Powell, we offer our congratulations and to almighty God, we give thanksgivings."

Source: C1NCEPB1,1920-1953), Page 646.

I have to agree with Rev. Ensworth Reisner, Mrs. Rees Powell was astounding. Our Chapter has been very fortunate for those early leaders like her. They set a firm foundation that has sustained our chapter to our 107th year! I hope you enjoyed this month's profile story from the Archives on Mrs. Powell. Her spirit of church ministry dedication lives on in each chapter member today.