

From *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 16,  
1899

### PLYMOUTH'S OLD ORGAN.

General King and S. V. White Give  
Some Reminiscences of Musical Peo-  
ple Connected With the Church.

A paragraph published in a Chicago newspaper states that the old Memorial Baptist Church, on the Oakwood boulevard, that city, is being torn down. It says: "With the passing of the old building will go out of existence forever an organ which was originally built for Plymouth Church, Brooklyn. For years during Henry Ward Beecher's prime, the organ did its part in the famous services at Plymouth Church. At his death the congregation decided that the old instrument would no longer meet its wants. Accordingly, it was sold to the Memorial Church, where it has since been in use.

S. V. White, who is one of the oldest members of Plymouth Church in point of seniority of membership, was seen at his home, 210 Columbia heights, on Wednesday night, and asked to tell what he knew about the old organ.

Mr. White said that there was an error in the statement that at Mr. Beecher's death Plymouth congregation decided to sell the organ. He said Mr. Beecher died in 1887, and that the organ was disposed of about twenty years prior to that time. Continuing, he said: "In point of fact the present organ was built in the year 1867 or 1868. I was not treasurer of the church at that time and do not know what became of the old organ. If it was sold to Chicago I do not know it, but having no knowledge on the subject I could neither affirm nor deny it."

Mr. White was asked as to the disposition of the bequest left by Emma Abbott to Plymouth Church. In reply he said: "When Emma Abbott died, having herself been a member of Plymouth Church from about the year 1868 to the time of her death, it was found that her will contained a bequest to Plymouth Church of \$5,000. As the organ which had

been in use about a quarter of a century needed overhauling, the trustees of the church had the organ put in repair, at a cost of \$3,750. Although the gift by Emma Abbott was absolute and contained no directions whatever as to the manner in which it should be applied, the trustees thought that it would be a graceful recognition of Emma Abbott's musical career which she began while a member at Plymouth Church, and through which she amassed a large fortune, to pay for the renovation of the organ out of her \$5,000 gift. They did so and placed a small tablet on the organ, stating that the organ was repaired out of money received through a bequest of Miss Abbott."

Mr. White in speaking of the late John Zundel, who was prominently identified with the music of Plymouth Church, both as organist and composer for many years and who was a familiar figure on Sundays at the old organ, said: "John Zundel, I think, died in Stuttgart, Germany. An emeritus salary was given Mr. Zundel several years after he ceased to be an organist of the church and went back to Germany. Mr. Zundel was a composer and an organist of a deeply spiritual order of sacred music. Mr. Beecher has said in my presence dozens of times that Mr. Zundel's playing and Mr. Zundel's compositions were an inspiration to him — lifting him into deeper moods of religious inspiration than did the playing and the compositions of any other man."

General Horatio C. King, who first became identified with Plymouth Church about 1865, or thirty-five years ago, and who was chairman of the music committee for many years, was seen at his office, 375 Fulton street. When asked about the old organ he said: "The old organ which was in Plymouth Church when I came to the church in 1865 was a two banked organ of about twenty-four stops, and when the new organ was put in, about 1866 or 1867, the old organ was sold to a church in Jersey City, if I remember rightly. I never heard of what became of it afterward, but it is very likely that it was sold subsequently to the Memorial Church in Chicago."

General King was asked if any of John Zundel's children had inherited any of his

musical talent. He replied: "None of John Zundel's children inherited any special musical talent, that is, none of them became musicians. One of his sons — a very popular man, too, resides in Haverstraw, on the Hudson, where he was Mayor for a number of years, and which position he may now hold for aught I know. One of his daughters is married and lives in New York. Another daughter is married to a Mr. Brandt, a prosperous merchant in Toledo. Mr. Zundel was organist of Plymouth Church off and on for a period of twenty-five years when his eyesight failed him and he was retained as organist emeritus at a sufficient salary to keep him in comfort in Germany until he died. He passed away at a little place named Elsen, near Stuttgart, Germany, about 1881.

"During Mr. Zundel's later years or for a period of about ten years, I was his assistant organist and relieved him of a great part of the work. He was probably the greatest musical genius who presided at the organ. His improvisations seemed almost to be inspired.

"Mr. Beecher used to say that he was indebted more than he could express to Mr. Zundel for his aid in the church worship. Mr. Beecher was very susceptible to music and it was his idea that if the organist went wrong, other matters were apt to be affected by the same influence. Mr. Zundel used to say to me in his broken English: 'Mr. King, I cannot pray with my lips, but I pray with my fingers.'

"Like all geniuses he was more or less crotchety and for that reason he was retired from the organ for two or three years and went to Toledo, but Mr. Beecher missed him so greatly that he begged to have him back, and Zundel was reappointed with the distinct understanding that if he had any complaints to make or differences with the director of music or any of the choir, that he would first tell them to me and leave me to adjust matters. In other words, I was to be his safety valve and whenever he blew off his steam to me his mind was greatly relieved and that was the end of it. He was a simple hearted, dear old man."

General King had charge of the series of organ concerts given at the instance of Mr. Beecher, a number of years ago, on what is known as the new or present organ of Plymouth Church. This series of concerts extended over a period of about five years. It will be observed that neither Mr. White nor General King states positively that the organ belonging to the Memorial Baptist Church, Chicago, is the old organ of Plymouth Church and the question arises: If it is not the old organ what has become of the instrument, and to whom was it sold after passing into the possession of the Jersey City congregation alluded to by General King?