

MIDI Modification of the OSI Organ

Jim Partrick

In September, 2006, my wife and I attended a COAA Rally in Franklin, PA. As part of this rally, Dave and Darlene Wasson, rally coordinators, had a gathering at their home for a meal, and for Dave to put on a lesson on how he arranged and punched music rolls for his organ, *Trudy*. Afterwards we were invited to the Organ Supply Company in Erie, PA where Dave and Darlene work. We were treated to a private tour of the facility. At the end of the tour there was a display of 20-note street organs that were made a few years prior and offered for sale at a very good price.



Figure 1. The OSI organ with the original MIDI removed - note the black Velcro ready to hold the new unit.

Donna and I were quite impressed with the organ to the point that we purchased one on the spot and took it with us. It made its public debut the next day at the Franklin Rally (September 15, 2006). It was a lot of fun to operate and received some interest. Over the years we have had a chance to play it at rallies, for friends, birthday parties, anniversaries and other occasions. We became disappointed, however, about the limited amount of music that was available for it. We have enjoyed it

for many years but wished that there was some form of upgrade available.

In 2010 we played at a rally in Weston, MO and invited Bill Klinger to play his organs next to us (and share our shade). I lamented to Bill about the organ's MIDI system and he looked at it and decided that since he had quite a bit of experience with MIDI, he would like to see what he could do. He had developed and installed systems in about four band organs and had been interested in doing something in a street organ.

Late in 2010, he contacted three of us (COAA members—Dan Danko, Wally Venable and me) and asked if we would like to help him develop a system. We gave him a wish list of things we would like to have on MIDI and he started work on it. We were quite excited when he sent us the first prototype to install in our organ. We couldn't wait to try it out.



Figure 2. The new MIDI unit installed.

The only problem I had was fear I might damage the unit by pressing too hard trying to insert the plug, which was snug. Bill patiently worked with me and when all was said and done, the MIDI worked perfectly. We made a video of me installing the unit in my organ and amazingly it only took a Phillips

screw driver, a 14" piece of chain and some sticky Velcro dots to install it (Figure 1). I used the chain to change how the lid opened since I wanted to use the underside of the lid for song lists. The Velcro pieces were used to hold the MIDI player on the plastic shelf inside the organ (Figure 2).

Interestingly it only took about 20 minutes to remove the old system and install the new one. Dan Danko was also quite impressed with the unit. Wally Venable took things to a whole new level musically. He took time and did a wonderful job of redoing some of the music on the old cards to bring them up to a higher standard. Each one of the old cards held approximately 97 songs—one new two gb SD card holds four of the old cards with room for a lot more songs. Now I can make new files, put groups of songs in their own file easily and add new songs with my computer



Figure 3. The author with his OSI and new MIDI system.

Jim and Donna Partrick have been members of the COAA for about 10 years. They enjoy going to rallies and meeting new members that share their interests. In a previous life they sold insurance and had their own agency.