

✝ HOLY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE HILL OVERLOOKING ROBESONIA ✝

Having recently been moved up from the church basement, the Daniel S. Bechtel Memorial Pump Organ is currently located in our Narthex.

The original owner of this antique pump organ was William Bechtel of Robesonia, who passed the organ to his grandson, Daniel S. Bechtel, a member of St. Daniel's Lutheran Church. Daniel donated the organ to St. Daniel's to use in the Sunday School building. It was used in the Sunday School during the time Rev. Elmer L. Leisey was Pastor (1940-1957). At Rev. Leisey's request, it was placed in his home in Ephrata, PA, upon his retirement. After Rev. Leisey's death, the organ was returned to Daniel Bechtel, who gave the organ to his daughter, Shirley B. Lowry, with whom it remained until she donated it back to St. Daniel's in 2007.

The 1897 pump organ was made by Franklin S. Fieman. Born on March 15, 1858, Fieman lived at the corner of Mill Road and Route 501 in Mt. Aetna, PA, where he made pump organs in a two-story white frame building located on the property. Upon removing the back cover of the organ, attached is a label (see photo):

F. S. Fieman's
EXCELSIOR ORGAN ACTION
Style B.B.
No. 1202
Case. Favorite Piano

And also a warranty (see photo):

WARRANTY.

This is to certify that this ORGAN, Style B.B., No. 1202 bearing my name, and the name "EXCELSIOR" Organ, is warranted for the term of SIX YEARS, from the date hereof for any failure in performance arising from defective workmanship or material during the above specified time. I hold myself responsible at my factory.

Mt. Aetna, Pa., Nov. 27, 1897. (Signed) F. S. Fieman

The organ is in amazing condition with very minimal wear, especially considering its age and (based on the above history) the number of times it has been moved! The exception was that the left foot pedal was no longer attached. And, unfortunately, the 1897 pump organ is out of warranty!!! During a recent visit for our regular church organ, the organ tuners took a look at the pump organ and provided instructions on how it could be fixed. Next up, our multi-talented Jim Griesemer!

With help from Ron O'Brien and Randy Yarnall in laying the organ on its back and from Kim Henning in holding a flashlight and various pieces and parts, Jim disconnected the broken strap for the left pedal and used jute webbing to attach as a new strap. It turns out that the strap on the right pedal had been fixed at some point in the past (apparently by MacGyver!), so Jim replaced that strap as well. In the meantime, Randy replaced the wooden wheels as one was missing. After standing it back up, Jim tested his work by pumping the pedals to play a few notes. Success -- until the strap came loose again!

The above steps were repeated, this time with the addition of a small piece of wood placed and glued in the strap to hold it in place. (This is how the original strap was configured.) Not taking any chances, there was no further testing of the pump organ!

That is, until our organist and Director of Music, Marlin Kerchner, played it during a luncheon after our worship service on April 12, 2026! St. Daniel's had just held a special 275th Anniversary service called "Sing to the Lord – Honoring Our Music Heritage." So, it was a very fitting end to the festivities of the day!

Many thanks to all involved for restoring this wonderful artifact, and to the Bechtel family for the organ itself! Enjoy the photos and videos! If you captured a video of Marlin playing the pump organ, please feel free to share in the comments, or reach out to Kim Henning to text or email it. Thanks!

What an amazing and enduring history we share!

Follow this space throughout the year for snippets of St. Daniel's history from 1751 to 2026. Historical details from St. Daniel's archives and with input from the Bechtel family. Photos by Kim Henning except as noted.

**#StDaniels #StDanielsLutheranChurch #EckKirche #CornerChurch
#OnTheHillOverlookingRobesonia #RobesoniaPA #1751StDaniels2026
#275thAnniversary #HolyHighlights #History #OurHistory #PumpOrgan #Antique
#DanielBechtelMemorial #FiemanExcelsiorOrgan #FranklinSFieman
#SundaySchoolOrgan #ReverendElmerLeisey #MarlinKerchner
#HonoringOurMusicHeritage #ALotHappensIn275Years**



Daniel Bechtel and his wife, Myrtle, in 2001.

Photo by Carol Dieffenbach Kantner, from her St. Daniel's 250th Anniversary scrapbook.



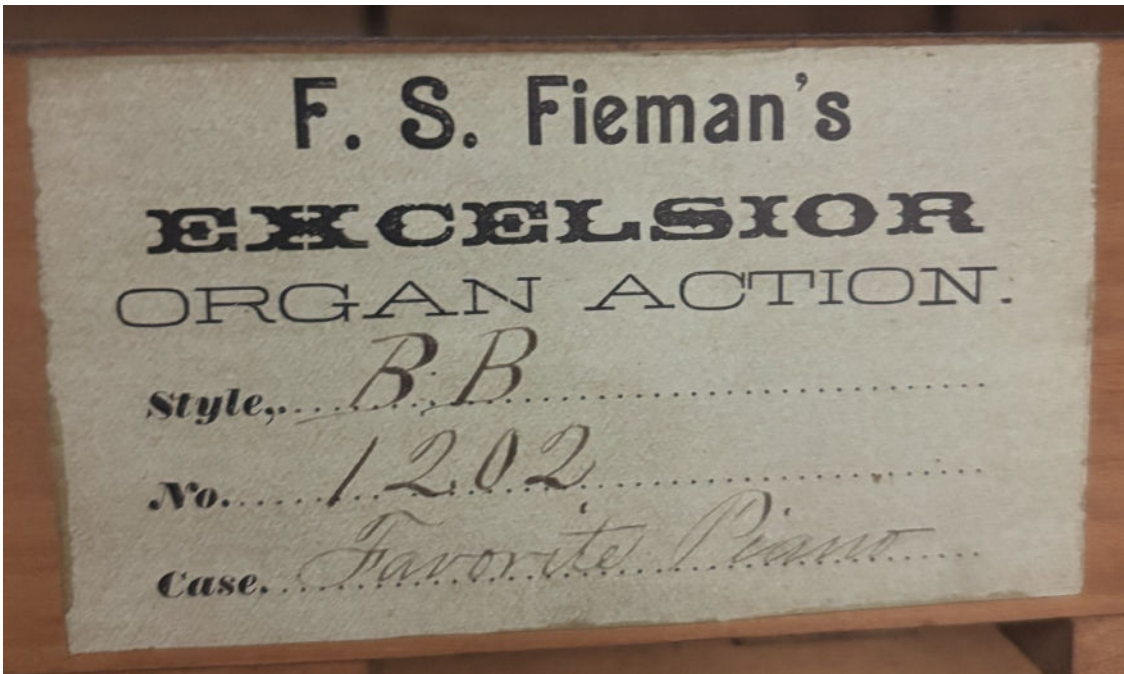
The Daniel S. Bechtel Memorial Pump Organ, built in 1897. In this photo, the left pedal is not functional.



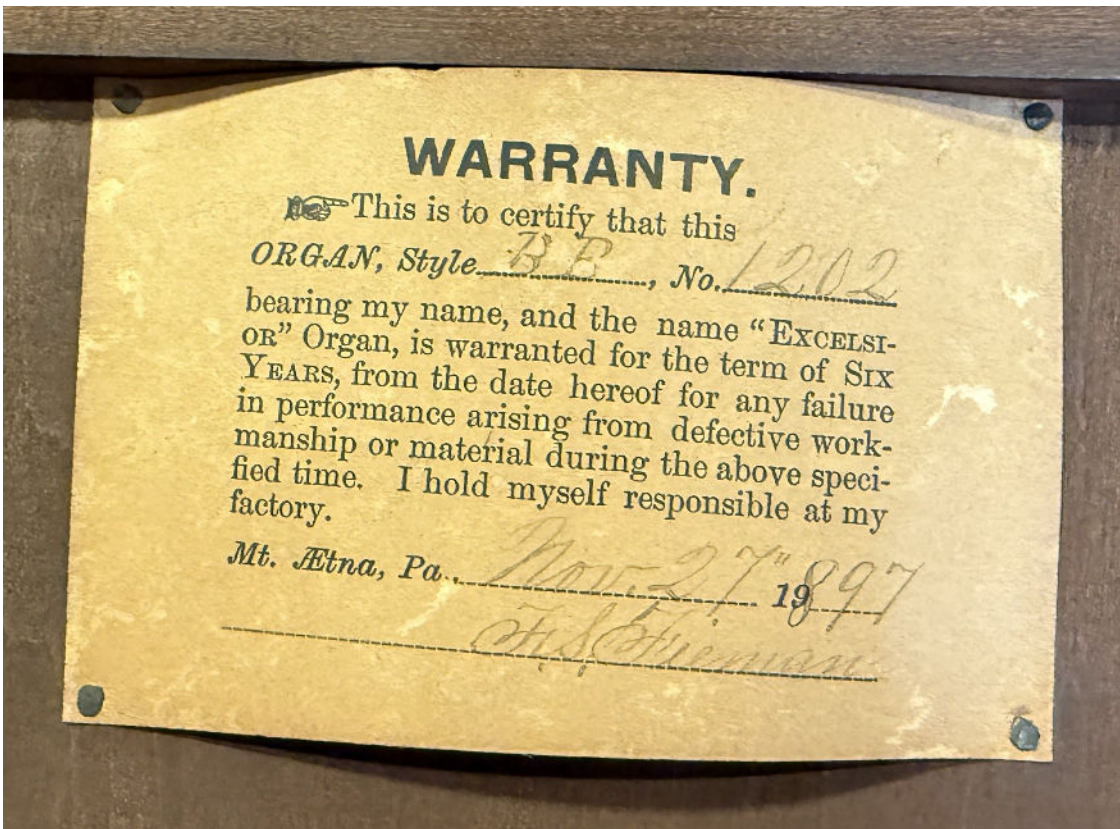
The back cover has been removed from the organ.



View of the inside from the back.



Maker's label found inside the organ.



Warranty from 1897! Found inside the organ.



Jim Griesemer had a tough reach to remove the broken strap and replace it with a new one.



Left strap (light brown) replaced but not yet attached to the pedal. Take a look at the concoction someone previously put together to repair the right strap (brown and gray)!



After cutting out the old strap, this is what it looked like. Clearly this strap had broken in the past and someone fixed it. That's quite a mechanism they put together! The original brown strap tore, and a combination of rope, wallpaper, electrical tape, pipe clamps, and what looks like a piece of car seatbelt was used to repair it!



Randy Yarnall replaces the small wooden wheels.



The organ is laying on its back. This is the view of the bellows from underneath.



Both straps have been replaced and attached to the pedals. The angled pointed metal pieces are the hinges for the bellows when the pedal is pushed.



The organ has been fixed and is ready to be played, just in time for the 275th Anniversary service honoring our music heritage!



Fancy – and now functional – foot pedals.



Marlin Kerchner, St. Daniel's organist and Director of Music, plays the pump organ after the worship service on April 12, 2026. St. Daniel's had just held a special 275th anniversary service called "Sing to the Lord – Honoring Our Music Heritage."

