

† HOLY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE HILL OVERLOOKING ROBESONIA †

MEMORIAL AMPHITHEATER – TO REMEMBER & HONOR

Construction of a Memorial Amphitheater began in March 1945. The purpose of the memorial was to perpetuate the memory of those who did not return from World War II and to exemplify gratitude to those who did return.

Of the many St. Daniel's members who were enlisted in the Armed Forces, three died while serving our country during World War II: Earl Moyer, Elwood Wartzluft, and John Wenrich.

The St. Daniel's church property included an ideal hillside for the seats of an open-air theater. Situated across the street on a western slope to the south of the church edifice, the amphitheater was built for a seating capacity of about 2,500 people. Construction was performed almost entirely by volunteers from St. Daniel's, with the help of several Mexicans employed by the Reading Railroad Co. The labor crews of about 70 members were headed by Rev. Elmer L. Leisey, Pastor of St. Daniel's, and Calvin E. Brown, founder of St. Daniel's Sunday School. The steep slope was shaped mostly by hand labor with pick and shovel by moving an astounding 1,100 tons of earth. Five hundred railroad ties donated by the Reading Railroad Co. were set into the hillside in a semicircle. Seats were made of wooden planks supported by the railroad ties. Women of the congregation put stain and sealer on the wooden seats. James Harnish constructed the stonework for the stage area. Tan bark from the coal regions covered the stage area. E. Lincoln Murdough, a local landscaper, provided shrubbery for the stage backdrop. A memorial stone was placed on the west end of the amphitheater to recognize veterans of foreign wars.

Dedication services were held on July 4, 1945, in conjunction with the Silver Anniversary of the Sunday School. Entertainment was provided by the Allentown Band and an address was given by The Honorable Guy K. Bard, a judge in the Lancaster Courts and brother of Clara Leisey, the wife of Rev. Elmer Leisey.

No time was lost in the presentation of a wide variety of programs at the amphitheater. Immediately following the dedication on July 4, the Lutheran Rural Rally of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania was held in the amphitheater on Sunday, July 8, 1945. The formal address was given by the Rev. Franklin Clark Fry, D.D., President of the United Lutheran Church of America. Music for the occasion was provided by the Ringgold Band. Subsequent events at the amphitheater ranged from simple picnics to notable extravaganzas. One notable pageant was the Centennial Celebration, 1855-1955, of the town of Robesonia.

The amphitheater was the scene of numerous picnics featuring the Allentown, Pottstown, and Ringgold bands; Memorial Day programs; anniversaries; community functions; choir and orchestra performances; Easter dawn services; community memorial services held by the VFW; and Pennsylvania German Fersommlings. The Brotherhood organization even sponsored minstrel shows as late as 1953. Proceeds from these shows were used in the church building fund and to reduce building debt. In 1955 and 1956, the Conrad Weiser School District Baccalaureate Services were held in the amphitheater, and in 1956 the school's commencement was held there.

Dramatic changes in post-World War II social life in the United States -- caused by factors such as radio, television, and the individual mobility provided by the automobile -- resulted in diminished use of the amphitheater. Eventually, it fell into disrepair and was dismantled in 1972. A stone semicircle, the edge of the stage, and the World War veterans memorial stone are all that remain of the amphitheater structures.

In 2021, the veterans memorial stone was moved from the old amphitheater to "the hill overlooking Robesonia," near the end of the main parking lot on the curve of the driveway heading toward the rear parking lot of St. Daniel's. The relocation provides better access to and recognition of the memorial honoring and remembering World War veterans, which would now include all wars. Look for it the next time you are at church! Also, as you drive through the parking lot around the back of the church, look down the hill on your left and you will see the remains of the amphitheater!

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 taken from the 'St. Daniel's Evangelical Lutheran Church "Eck Kirche" 1751-2001' church history book written by the St. Daniel's History Committee in celebration of the 250th anniversary. More details regarding this topic are found in Chapter 6 – Christian Fellowship – Amphitheater. Additional details from Parish Records from the applicable years. Photos from St. Daniel's archives or as noted.

**#StDaniels #StDanielsLutheranChurch #EckKirche #CornerChurch
#OnTheHillOverlookingRobesonia #RobesoniaPA #1751StDaniels2026 #275thAnniversary
#HolyHighlights #History #OurHistory #MemorialAmphitheater #Amphitheater
#VeteransMemorial #ParishRecord #ALotHappensIn275Years**



Earl Angstadt, third from left, a war veteran and member of the church council unveils a memorial to war veterans of St. Daniel's (Corner) Lutheran Church, near Robesonia, in connection with the congregation's 200th anniversary celebration. Left to right, are David Moyer and Harry Wartenluft, fathers of two men who lost their lives in World War II; Angstadt; the Rev. E. L. Leisey, pastor of the church, and the Rev. Dr. F. Eppling Reinhartz, secretary of the United Lutheran Church in America who was guest speaker at the anniversary rites. (Eagle Staff Photo.)

Reading Eagle newspaper articles about the amphitheater and dedication of the memorial stone.

Note Church Anniversary

Pageant in Outdoor Amphitheatre Marks Robesonia Celebration

Robesonia, July 2—Last evening a cast of 200 people portrayed the scenes that made St. Daniel's (Corner) Lutheran Church, the Rev. E. L. Leisey, pastor, a colorful landmark in western Berks County. Such outstanding figures of American history as Conrad Weiser, Baron von Stiegel and Abraham Lauck were portrayed as well as the churchmen who preached in the historical pulpit.

As a special feature, Benjamin Z. Anderson, aged 82, the oldest living choir singer of the church, led the audience in an oldtime church song demonstration. The pageant also featured the repeated attempts to organize Sunday schools, including the present school which is now celebrating its 25th anniversary, of which this pageant was the opening event.

Other events which follow are the Fourth of July celebration, when the new amphitheatre will be dedicated to honor the men and women who are serving in the armed forces. Guy K. Bard, Federal District Court judge in Philadelphia, will be the dedicatory speaker and the Allentown Band will furnish the music. Refreshments will be served afternoon and evening.

Secretary of United Lutheran Church on St. Daniel's Program

Robesonia, July 2—"Following Our Father's Footsteps," was the theme of a service conducted by St. Daniel's (Corner) Lutheran Church, near here, yesterday in celebration of the congregation's 200th anniversary. A monument in honor of the men and women of the church who served in the armed forces during both World Wars was dedicated in connection with the services.

More than 1,000 persons attended the rites in the memorial amphitheatre of the church. The Rev. Dr. F. Eppling Reinhartz, secretary of the United Lutheran Church in America, was the guest speaker. The Rev. E. L. Leisey, pastor, presided at the rites.

Hymns were sung by the Reuben Brossman family and there were vocal selections by William Eckert. Terry Brossman presented an organ number. Altar flowers were placed in memory of Mrs. John Putt by her husband and grandson, Ralph Putt and family.

Three Lost Lives

Three sons of the congregation lost their lives during the war and the fathers of two of them partici-

parted in the dedication of the memorial. War heroes were Earl Moyer, Elwood Wartenluft and John Wenrich Jr. The marker was unveiled by Earl Angstadt, a war veteran now serving on the church council.

Calvin E. Brossman, superintendent, was in charge of the Sunday school session yesterday morning, which featured the 20th in-gathering of funds. Selections were presented by the orchestra, under the direction of George Koch. Mrs. Warren F. Davis presided at the children's department service with a selection by Sally Ann Hassler.

Dates for a series of services later this year were announced by Rev. Mr. Leisey. A home-coming celebration is scheduled for Sunday, August 5, when the guest speaker will be Dr. Henry J. Pflum. Six barber shop quartets will participate in a night of harmony listed for Friday, August 10.

The church was founded about 1750 and acquired three adjoining tracts of land in May, 1751. The cornerstone of the first church building was laid the same year. The edifice—its walls are a part of the present building—was erected between 1814 and 1817.



NOW: The remains of the Memorial Amphitheater, as seen from the rear parking lot of St. Daniel's. Heidelberg Cemetery is across the street (N. Church Street).
Photo taken October 16, 2025 by Kim Henning.



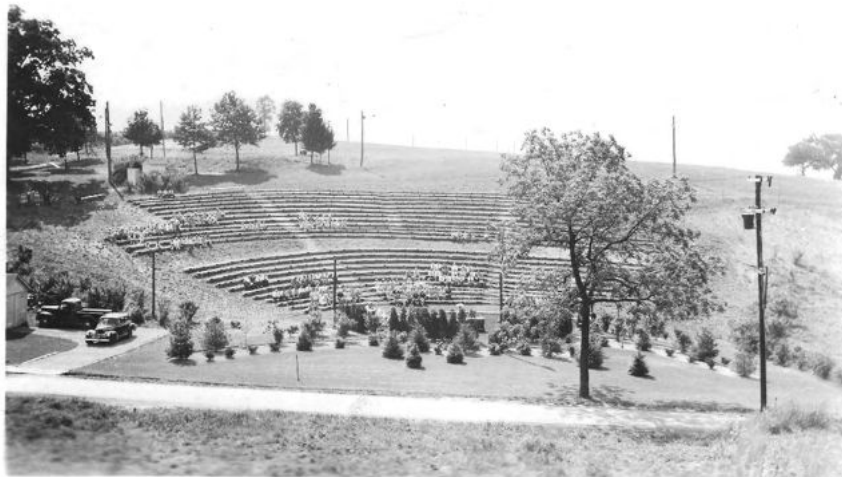
THEN: Robesonia Band playing at the Memorial Amphitheater.



NOW: The remains of the Memorial Amphitheater, specifically the stone semicircle and the edge of the stage. Photos taken October 16, 2025 by Kim Henning.



NOW: The remains of the Memorial Amphitheater, as seen from N. Church Street. The rear of the church and the shed are seen at the top of the hill. Photo taken October 16, 2025 by Kim Henning.



THEN: Memorial Amphitheater

View from Heidelberg Cemetery across N. Church Street toward the hill where the church is now located.



The stone originally located in the Memorial Amphitheater, now located on the side of the church building. It reads "St. Daniel's Memorial Amphitheater erected in honor of World War veterans." Photo taken November 1, 2025 by Kim Henning.



(Above & below photos) The stone originally located in the Memorial Amphitheater, now located on the side of the church building, “on the hill overlooking Robesonia.” (See red circle in photo below for location of the stone.) Photos taken November 1, 2025 by Kim Henning.

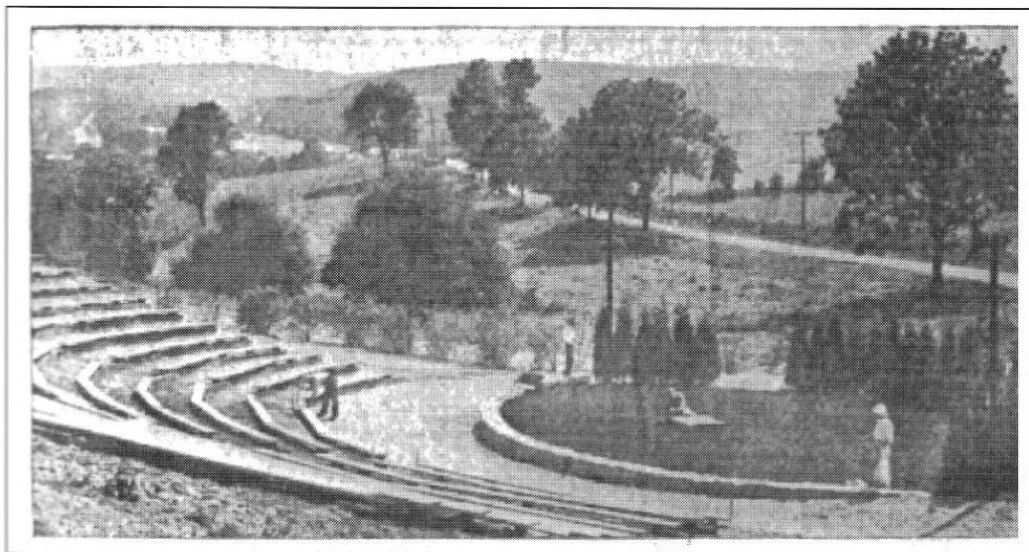




GETTING AMPHITHEATER OUT OF DIRT

Construction of the Amphitheater.

Photo from the 1946 Parish Record documenting activities of 1945.



Memorial Amphitheater nearing completion, 1945.

St. Daniel's Ev. Lutheran Sunday School

OUR AMPHITHEATRE

HONORS THE HEROIC LIVING AND THOSE WHO MADE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE

Earl Moyer—Killed in Action, April 21, 1945

John D. Wenrich—Auto crash

Elwood Wartzluft—Plane crash

STILL IN SERVICE

Lewis Marderness
Andrew Fichthorn
Ellwood Lutz
Earl Kauffman
Howard Marderness
John M. Smith
Jacob Ulrich, Jr.
Wayne A. Stump
Paul E. Gruber
Irwin S. Lutz
Harold I. Zerbe
Herman Seager
Lester Ulrich
Ralph N. Katzaman
Ellsworth Wenrich
Woodrow W. Moyer
George F. Koch
Harry F. Brown
Lester Zechman
Ellwood Ressler
Raymond Putt
Renzel Bricker
John Webber
Kenneth Strunk
Paul Miller
Herman Degler
Charles J. Putt
Daniel Flory
LeRoy Wenrich
Harold Moyer
George Putt
Harold Huber
Stewart Wenrich
James Clay
Norman Fleisher
William Moyer

Luther Brossman
Paul Houck
Robert Huber
Emory Wealand
George Balthaser
Pierce Patches
Luke Gromis
Gerald Clay
Mark Hartman
Henry Lutz
Ralph Putt
Vernon Bricker
Richard Gruber
David Wenrich
Warren Fisher
William A. Ravert
William Zerby
William B. Leisey
Howard Koch
Earl Ressler
Herman Klopp
Miles Risser
William Wolf
George Brigel
William Putt
Arthur Patches
John Moyer
Quindo Tranquillo
Warren Gromis
Alan Wenrich
Albert E. Wenrich
Merritt Freeman
Charles Neinhelser
Harold Strunk
Ralph Ressler
John Ravert

HONORABLY DISCHARGED

William Batzel
Benjamin Gromis
George Seager

Earl Angstadt
Beulah Moyer Collins
Matthew Boyer

From the booklet celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Sunday School. Note that online military records show that John Hughes Wenrich is the correct name of the member listed as having died in an auto crash, not John D. Wenrich.



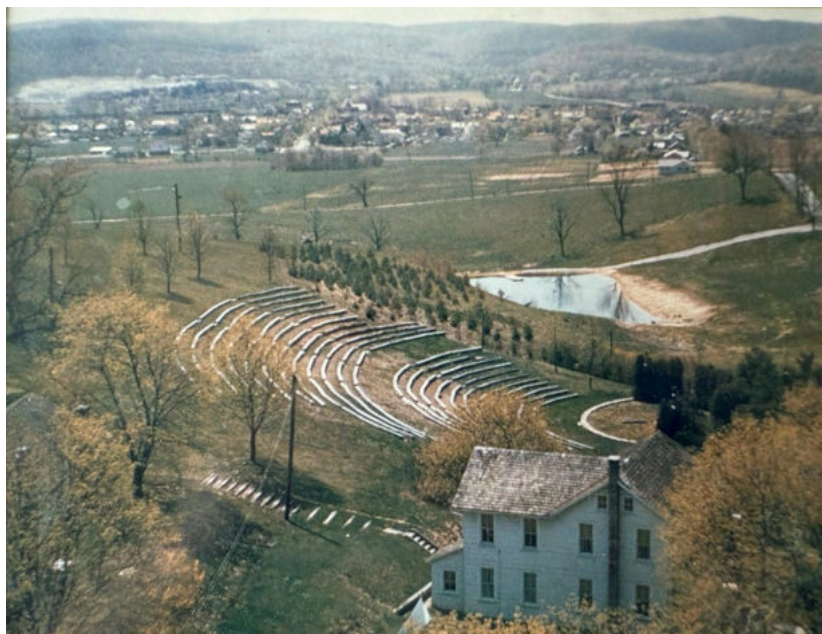
Memorial Amphitheater
The cars are parked across N. Church Street.



Memorial Amphitheater



Memorial Amphitheater stone



Memorial Amphitheater - View from the steeple of the second (previous) church building – 1951. The sexton's house is in the foreground of the photo.



Tenth Annual Fersommling

ST. DANIEL'S (Corner) CHURCH
MEMORIAL AMPHITHEATRE
ROBESONIA, PENNA.

FRIDAY, JUNE 17, 1949 5 to 12 P. M.

DUTCH PLAY "Tzu Forwitsich"
By Paul Wieand, Allentown, Pa.

The FRIENDLY FOUR From Pinegrove
SPEAKER Prof. J. W. FREY, Editor of
Penna. Dutch paper and College Professor.

Local Sunday School Orchestra

PLATTER DINNERS will be served beginning at 5 P. M.

Other light Refreshments will be on sale.

A "Fersommling" to be held at the Memorial Amphitheater, 1949

A NIGHT IN CLOSE HARMONY

Sponsored by the Recreational Association

Friday, August 10th, 1951

From 8 to 11 p.m.

SIX NATIONALLY KNOWN QUARTETTES

**ST. DANIELS MEMORIAL AMPHITHEATER
ROBESONIA, PA.**

Parking Free. **Tickets 60c Including Tax** Children Free.
Suppers Served from 5 to 8  **Program Rain or Shine**

A show at the Memorial Amphitheater, 1951