

✝ HOLY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE HILL OVERLOOKING ROBESONIA ✝

FROM THE HILL TO THE VALLEY: THE PARSONAGE THAT WENT FOR A RIDE!

When St. Daniel's congregation decided in February 1977 to build its new church on the site of the parsonage, that decision solved one important question following the December 1976 fire: where to rebuild. But it created another rather unusual one: what to do with the large stone house already standing there.

Rather than demolish the building, the parsonage found a new owner and a new home. Getting it there, however, would be no ordinary move. The next chapter in St. Daniel's story would see a 300-ton stone house leave its place on the hill and make a remarkable journey to the valley below.

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The last St. Daniel's parsonage was built for Rev. James Miller in 1958. When Rev. Edward Cloughen was called in 1976, he did not wish to live in the parsonage. Also, during the 1970s, the trend among churches was leading away from the practice of owning parsonages. In September 1976, a committee of five councilmen was appointed to study the issue and recommend what should be done with the building. The committee members were Vernon Bright, Richard Hassler, Carl Labe, Rodney Small, and Mark Wolfskill.

At a special congregational meeting in September 1976, a decision was made to sell the parsonage and approximately 1.2 to 5.5 acres of land surrounding it. Weeber Realtors was selected to market the building for the price of \$93,000. Proceeds from the sale would be used to provide a housing allowance for the Pastor. The church's destruction by fire in December 1976 prompted the congregation to reconsider the parsonage's future. The land on which the parsonage stood was now a possible site for the new church building. On January 23, 1977, council approved the Building Committee's nomination of Dana Gangewere as architect for the new church building. He was asked to submit three sets of drawings representing three possible locations: the site of the burned church, the grove area where the Pavilion once stood, and the parsonage site. At the February 2, 1977, Church Council meeting, the architect indicated that the old site was unacceptable because of size limitations and that moving the cemetery to create additional space would involve various legal procedures and indefinite delay.

After extensive discussion, on February 13, 1977, the congregation accepted Council's recommendation and voted to build the new church on the parsonage property. To that

end, the price of the parsonage was reduced to \$50,000, with the condition that the buyer remove the building from the site at the buyer's expense.

Mark Wolfskill knew that his family needed to either renovate their aging farmhouse or build a new home. The Wolfskills believed that purchasing and moving the parsonage would benefit their family while also meeting a need of the church. And so, on February 27, 1977, the congregation voted to sell the parsonage to Mark Wolfskill for \$50,000.

Flory and Wolfe of Bernville, PA, had experience moving houses and other buildings in the area as a result of the Blue Marsh Lake project, and the Wolfskills hired the company to move the parsonage. Preparing for the move took weeks, at both locations: the site where the parsonage stood and the farm in the valley where it was going. The Wolfskills first had to demolish and clear their old farmhouse and prepare a slab for the new foundation of the house. To provide the most direct route to the valley, workers created a temporary path down the hill through the neighboring Mogel farm. Interestingly, the parsonage had been built with the front door facing toward Robesonia and the back of the house facing Big Spring Road. This unique orientation proved to be a significant advantage, as the building did not need to be turned for its journey down the hill.

As seen in some of the included photos, structural moving begins with a combination of supporting and lifting the structure before it goes anywhere. On the hill, the area around the parsonage had to be excavated so steel beams could be placed through the foundation and wheels positioned beneath the house. The length and weight of the parsonage created additional logistical challenges. Once work was underway, it was discovered that a special piece had to be fabricated for the dolly system. A few of the tires blew out while the house was already jacked up on the steel beams and wheels prior to moving day – what sounded like mini explosions came as quite a shock to the family and friends who were there! Shrubbery was dug out and later replanted at the farm. The front porch was removed for transport and then rebuilt on site by the Brendle stone masons after the move.

Moving day was May 16, 1977. All of Robesonia was captivated by the event, with some people taking off from work or school to witness the unusual spectacle. It took almost the entire day to move the 300-ton, 12-room stone house to its new location in the valley, about one-half mile east of the present church.

Nancy Wolfskill recalled that the movers carried no insurance, making it all the more remarkable – and fortunate – that the building traveled along the top and down the side of the ridge without sustaining a single crack! Notably, the movers used an unusual technique

to check some of their plumb measurements: one worker dropped a rock while the others observed how it fell!

After the building was moved, connecting the utilities took time, and restoring telephone service proved especially troublesome. After staying with Mark's mother since April 30th, the Wolfskill family moved into their new home on June 21, 1977. The Wolfskills converted the garage into a workroom, changing the garage door to a single entry door. The Brendle stone masons blended the new stonework so seamlessly with the old that one would never know it wasn't original. The stone fireplace remains a striking feature of the living room, and the home retains much of its original character. Nearly 68 years after its construction, the home stands as a testament to the quality of the builder's fine workmanship.

The former St. Daniel's parsonage can be seen today by following Big Spring Road from the church toward Penn Avenue and looking to the left down into the valley. Nestled near the red-roofed barn and pond of the Wolfskill farm, the former parsonage remains a tangible reminder of an extraordinary chapter in St. Daniel's history.

From the ashes of the fire, through the challenges of recovery, and even the parsonage's literal move down the side of a hill, the congregation continued moving forward – making way for the St. Daniel's church building we know today.

What an amazing and enduring history we share!

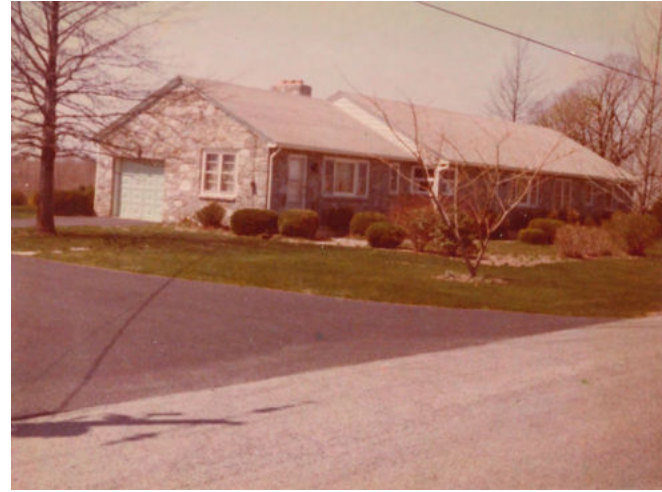
Follow this space throughout the year for snippets of St. Daniel's history from 1751 to 2026.

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 2 – The Church Grows – The Parsonage. Additional details from The Corner Church News from applicable years. Special thanks to Nancy Wolfskill and Douglas Wolfskill for sharing their family's story and experiences. Photos from albums owned by Nancy Wolfskill and Joyce Hassler. Additional photos as noted. Newspaper clippings from albums owned by Joyce Hassler, Margie Baernkopf, and Geraldine Yoh.

**#StDaniels #StDanielsLutheranChurch #EckKirche #CornerChurch
#OnTheHillOverlookingRobesonia #RobesoniaPA #1751StDaniels2026
#275thAnniversary #HolyHighlights #History #OurHistory #Parsonage
#ParsonageMove #WolfskillFarm #ALotHappensIn275Years**



The parsonage before the move. The front of the house faced Robesonia. Above photo: Joyce Hassler



The parsonage before the move. The rear of the house faced Big Spring Road. Above photo: Nancy Wolfskill



Prepping the Wolfskill farm. The old farmhouse was removed; dirt was cleared for a foundation; a path was carved down the hill. Above photos: Nancy Wolfskill





Shrubs are removed for replanting.
Above photo: Nancy Wolfskill



The foundation is dug out and prepared.
Above photo: Joyce Hassler



The foundation is dug out and prepared. Above photos: Joyce Hassler





Steel beams are placed under the house. Above photos: Joyce Hassler



Steel beams are placed under the house.
Above photo: Joyce Hassler



Workers stand under the raised house.
Above photo: Nancy Wolfskill



Mark and 2 of the Wolfskill boys check out the raised house.
Above photo: Joyce Hassler



Flory (right, with hat) and Wolfe (left) talk with a Bell Telephone employee. Above photo: Nancy Wolfskill



On the move! Photo: Nancy Wolfskill



View from the other direction! Photo: Nancy Wolfskill



On the move across Big Spring Road! Above photos: Joyce Hassler



Above photo courtesy of: Nancy Wolfskill



Above photo: Joyce Hassler

Moving along the ridge and down into the valley through Mogel's farm



Above photo: Joyce Hassler



Above photo: Nancy Wolfskill



Above photo: Nancy Wolfskill



Above photo: Joyce Hassler



Almost there! Above photo: Joyce Hassler



Moving onto the slab. Above photo: Nancy Wolfskill



Above photo: Joyce Hassler



New foundation in progress. Above photo: Nancy Wolfskill



Steel beams are removed after the move.
Above photo: Nancy Wolfskill



Stone work around old garage and rebuilding the porch (see left in photo). Above photo: Nancy Wolfskill



1977 – Above photo: Marge Baerncof



June 2024 – Above photo: Kim Henning



Reading Times article – May 18, 1977
Deanie Yoh clipping



Standing at the corner of the house, looking up the general path it took on the move. The beige house at the top of the ridge is the house across the street from the current church building. August 14, 2026 – Photos: Kim Henning





Reading Times article – May 18, 1977

Above: Joyce Hassler clipping

Right: Marge Baerncopf clipping



Off to a New Site

It's a downhill ride for this 300-ton, 12-room stone house, formerly the parsonage of St. Daniel's Lutheran Church, Robeson R.D. 1. After the church hired a pastor who did not want to live in the home, Mark A. Wolfskill, Robeson R.D. 1, president of the church council and building committee chairman, decided to purchase it and have it moved 1,500 yards across fields to his property. Most of the distance was covered in less than four hours Wednesday through the efforts of Wolf and Flory, Bernville movers. Today the structure was in place over footings on a site at which Mr. Wolfskill's former 14-room farmhouse was demolished. Fifty tons of steel, 48 wheels, and hard-baked fields supported the stone home during its ride. — Eagle Photos by Owen C. Stout.