

M. L. BIGELOW & COMPANY INC. ORGAN BUILDERS

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BRIEF HISTORY: 1859 PIPE ORGAN BY T. ROBJOHN, N.Y. TWO MANUALS, 10 STOPS



1859: Acclaimed New York builder, Thomas Robjohn, completed this organ, one of his last instruments, probably for a residence (location unknown).

1872: Organ was moved to Presbyterian Church, Bedford, New York, presumably by Dietrich Valentine, who signed and dated the Swell bung board *Dietrich Valentine, May 17, 1872*. The organ was installed in the rear balcony under a rose window.

1901: Organ was moved to front of church.

1942: Organ was repaired by J.H.&C.S. Odell & Co. of Yonkers, New York, including re-leathering of bellows and addition of tuning slides on pipes. Previously the hook-down swell was replaced by a balanced swell, an electric (Kinetic) blower was installed, and the octave coupler was removed.

1963: Organ was donated to Banksville Baptist Church, Banksville, New York, and moved there under the direction of historical organ aficionado Peter Cameron. All pipes were carefully measured and documented.

1969 – 1991: Banksville Baptist Church was closed, and organ pipes were subsequently vandalized. Organ was eventually removed to the shop of James Bertin, Organ Builder of Des Moines, Iowa. Keys were re-covered.

1991 – 2005: Organ was purchased by Dana Hull, Organ Builder, of Ann Arbor, Michigan. Wind chests were re-tabled, bellows re-leathered, and new façade pipes were custom built to match originals. It was loaned for a period of time to a Lutheran church in Detroit where Dana was organist.

2005 – Present: Attracted to its beauty and historical significance, M. L. Bigelow & Co. acquired the organ and moved it to their shop in American Fork, Utah, where the following repairs were completed: 1) New Laukhuff blower; 2) Façade pipes painted gold to match originals; 3) Inside pipes re-configured using vintage pipes to more closely conform to originals; 4) Latch-down swell mechanism restored; 5) Missing Tremulant mechanism restored; 6) Missing stop knob labels replaced to match originals. All systems are now in good working order.

Sources:

1. "Third Home for Thomas Robjohn Organ" by Peter T. Cameron, p.3, *The Tracker*, Winter 1966, Volume X, Number 2.
2. Phone conversation between Michael Bigelow and Peter Cameron, 29 May 2008
3. Receipt of repair of wind chests by SDG Organ Service, Miller, PA, 15 June 1995,
4. Receipt of purchase of new façade pipes from Eastern Organ Pipes, Inc. Hagerstown, MD, 12 August 1998.
5. Contract document between Dana Hull and M. L. Bigelow & Co., 14 April 2005.