

John Jacob Dieffenbach

Founded/Born

1744 - 1803

Closed/Death

Still active?

no

Description

John Jacob Dieffenbach was a prominent organ builder in the early 19th century, known for his craftsmanship in the tradition of the Pennsylvania German community. He was born in Berks County, Pennsylvania, where he crafted numerous organs characterized by their robust construction and rich tonal quality. His organs were notable for their beautiful casework and the use of locally sourced materials. Dieffenbach's work is significant for its contribution to the religious and musical life of the communities he served, with several of his instruments still existing and in use today, marking a legacy that highlights the artistry of early American organ building.

Sources

<https://www.seekingmyroots.com/members/files/G001834.pdf>

Reading, PA, Berks History Center

Berks History Center, 940, Centre Avenue, 19601 Reading, PA, United States of America



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|---------------------|--------------------|
| Builder | J. J. Dieffenbach |
| Year | ca. 1800 |
| Period/Style | Romantic |
| Stops | 6 |
| Keyboards | 1 |
| Keyaction | tracker/mechanical |

Description

The organ housed at the Historical Society of Berks County in Reading, Pennsylvania, crafted around 1800 by John Dieffenbach, offers a glimpse into early American organ building. The organ has been carefully documented with inscriptions and updates that indicate modifications and restorations over its two centuries of existence. The manual has 49 notes with various stops including an 8' Grob Gadackt with walnut pipes, a 4' Principal with some pipes borrowed from a 4' Klein Gadackt, a unique 4' Qund:Dehn with metal-capped pipes, and other wood and metal stops. Notably, the 4' Principal was installed in 1879 by Thomas Dieffenbach, replacing an original Mixture stop, hinting at changes in musical tastes or performance requirements over time.

The organ's authenticity is corroborated by signatures and dates found within the organ's structure, including one from John Jacob Dieffenbach dated 1803, and a piece of newspaper from 1799 used in the organ's construction, suggesting a meticulous documentation practice by its builders. This historical artifact not only represents the craftsmanship of the Dieffenbach family but also encapsulates the evolution of organ music and technology in early America. Its preservation allows current and future generations to appreciate and study the intersection of music, craftsmanship, and history.

Stoplist/Disposition

Manual

Grob Gedackt 8'

Principal 4'

Qund:Dehn 4'

Klein Gadackt 4'

Salicet 4'

Octav 2'

Additional:

Sources

<https://beta.pipeorgandatabase.org/instruments/514>