



The Baltimore Chapter of the American Guild of Organists

135 Hollow Brook Road
Timonium, MD 21093

February 26, 2025

Dear Kirby Spencer,

First gathering in 1879 at the vacant Paradise Hotel in Catonsville, a new Presbyterian congregation acquired the land at 600 Frederick Road in 1880 and constructed during that decade the current building, named at the time Paradise Presbyterian Church. Renamed Catonsville Presbyterian Church in 1896, the congregation relocated in 1921 to a new building a mile west at 1400 Frederick Road, where it flourishes today. When the congregation moved, they left behind the 1870 Hall, Labagh & Co. pipe organ acquired second-hand from Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church, Baltimore in 1889, thus it remains in the 1880s building. The building was used by a Christadelphian congregation ca. 1944-2021.

Before the 1870 Hall, Labagh & Co. organ was sold by Brown Memorial to the Catonsville Presbyterians in 1889, it had been moved within Brown Memorial from the back to the front in 1880 and "rebuilt," according to the verb used in a report published by *The [Baltimore] Sun* of April 10, 1880. The identity of the organbuilders who moved and rebuilt it is unknown, nor is the identity of the parties who moved it to Catonsville, though all of the work is of professional caliber.

The organ continues as a playable instrument today some 155 years after it was constructed. It is rare indeed to find almost anything of this age that still works. The instrument is quite worthy of restorative repairs. Before disbanding, the Christadelphians committed considerable resources toward some complicated and difficult repairs to keep the organ in usable condition. It would be wonderful if that tradition could continue. The organ has been used by Brown Memorial's choir for a concert where their former Director of Music, the late Michael T. Britt, played and conducted them. It is our hope that the instrument may continue to be used by American Guild of Organists members in the Baltimore area for weddings, concerts, teaching and other musical celebrations.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bert Landman", followed by a long horizontal line.

Bert Landman, Dean
Baltimore Chapter of the American Guild of Organists