

The Good Samaritan Reconsidered: The Revolutionary War Hospital at Ephrata Cloister

For one incredible day, May 1, 1902, the population of the small Borough of Ephrata, in northern Lancaster County, swelled to over four times its normal size. Cannon fire at 6:00 a.m. awoke those who had come to town the night before to join those just arriving by train, trolley, team, or foot. Following band concerts, receptions, and a special V. I. P. luncheon at the Hotel Cocalico, the much anticipated parade began on East Main Street, traveled around the block, back westward down Main Street, then south on Academy Drive and to its point of conclusion, the cemetery on the rise to the southwest of town known as Mount Zion.¹ It was on this small hillside that more than a century and a half before, the charismatic German mystic, Conrad Beissel, had formed a community of like-minded souls to join in a spiritual pursuit. Their settlement was not in itself the cause for celebration on this day. Instead, this was the day when a specific, heroic, and patriotic event would be memorialized.

The assembled crowd had come to witness the unveiling of a monument dedicated to the Revolutionary War soldiers who had been hospitalized at the Ephrata Cloister during the winter of 1777-1778. With speeches, invocations, and music the great granite shaft was unveiled and heralded with much acclaim. There at its broad base was the heart of the story so long recited by local residents, historians, and the popular press.

Sacred to the memory of the patriotic soldiers of the American Revolution, who fought in the Battle of Brandywine, September 11, 1777 A. D. About 500 of the sick and wounded were brought to Ephrata for treatment. Several hundred died and were buried in this consecrated ground. Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.²

During much of the century that has passed since the dedication of the monument on Mount Zion the noble sentiments inscribed on its face have stood as testaments to the events of

¹ *The Ephrata Review*, July 11, 1902, p.1.

²“Sweet and seemly is it to die for one’s fatherland.”

history. In recent years, however, new scholarship has challenged many of the long held traditions about the Ephrata Cloister. This fresh look at the past has opened doors for greater appreciation and better understanding of the community that once inhabited the National Historic Landmark. Among the subjects under reexamination, new interpretations of Ephrata's Revolutionary War hospital suggest that even the stories carved into stone may require change.

Ephrata owes its origins to the enigmatic Conrad Beissel who moved to the banks of the Cocalico Creek by the fall of 1732 in an effort to pursue the hermit's life of contemplation guided by his own conscience. The force of his personality soon brought others to his wilderness retreat. Within a few years his hermitage became the center of a unique Protestant monastic community based on a blend of pietism, mysticism, and asceticism. By mid-century the nearly eighty celibate members, supported by a married congregation of approximately two hundred, brought Ephrata to its zenith. This included the creation of outstanding *Frakturschriften* and illuminations, self-composed music, a significant printing office, impressive architecture, along with agriculture, milling, and domestic activities that equaled a nearly self-sufficient religiously based community on Pennsylvania's early frontier. With the death of Beissel in 1768, much of Ephrata's vitality faded. Beissel's successor, Peter Miller, wrote to Benjamin Franklin in 1771 stating, "we through the Grace of God, both Brethren and Sisters, hitherto maintained our ground and a visible congregation, but shall not propagate the monastic life upon the posterity; since we have no successors, and the genius of the Americans is bound another way."³

Five years passed from the time Miller wrote those words, and the population of devotees under his care continued to dwindle. In the world outside Ephrata, the "Genius of Americans" was, as Miller predicted, "bound another way" --toward revolution. Three months after the patriot fathers declared independence in Philadelphia, Miller wrote another letter. "We ought to abhor all war," he told James Read in October 1776. "To subject all men without distinction to the civil law,

³Peter Miller to Benjamin Franklin, June 12, 1771 in William B. Willcox, ed., *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*. Volume 18. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 132.

is injurious to the Christian cause, as some may be under a higher Magistrate....”⁴ Try as he might to remain, “a third party, who observe a strict neutrality,” Miller and the Ephrata community had the gravity of the struggle brought to their doorstep during the fateful winter of 1777-1778.⁵

In late August 1777, British General William Howe landed a force of approximately 15,000 men at Head of Elk (present day Elkton), Maryland, with plans to march overland and capture the rebel capitol of Philadelphia. Washington quickly moved his troops to defend the city. The two forces met near Chad’s Ford on the Brandywine Creek on September 11. A surprise flanking maneuver by the British set the Americans in retreat by late afternoon, with an excess of 1000 patriot casualties. In the month that followed, the British completed a surprise nighttime raid on American forces at Paoli, marched into Philadelphia, and defended an attempt to route their position at the Battle of Germantown on October 4. The result swelled the ranks of American wounded in temporary field hospitals.

On November 24, the Director General of the Military Hospitals reported that the number of sick, wounded, and convalescent was in excess of 4000 in hospitals located at Princeton, Burlington, and Trenton, in New Jersey, Buckingham Meetinghouse, North Wales, Skippack, Easton, Allentown, Reading, Bethlehem, Manheim, and Lancaster in Pennsylvania, and a hospital in Baltimore, Maryland.⁶ With the British settled comfortably in Philadelphia for the winter, Washington needed to gather his army scattered throughout the region and move them to a central secure location for the season. After advice from several of his generals, Valley Forge was chosen for winter quarters about December 10, and the Americans began to arrive at the site on December 19.

As Washington moved his able-bodied men to Valley Forge, preparations were also made

⁴ “Letter of Peter Miller, (Brother Jaebez of the Ephrata Community) to James Read, 1776,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 38 (1914), p. 227. The letter is dated October 10, 1776.

⁵Peter Miller to James Read, p. 227.

⁶George L. Heiges, “Letters Relating to the Colonial Military Hospitals in Lancaster County,” *Papers of the Lancaster County Historical Society*, vol. LII (1948), p. 74.

to remove the sick and wounded from some of the temporary hospitals to more secure locations for the winter. In December, the Director General of the Hospitals reported the hospitals formerly located at Burlington, Trenton, Buckingham Meeting, and Skippack were closed, and new ones were opened at Reamstown, Lititz, Warwick, Schaefferstown, and Ephrata.⁷

A long held tradition claims the Ephrata hospital was established as a result of the Battle of Brandywine that occurred on September 11, 1777. William Fahnestock, one of Ephrata's first historians, wrote in 1835:

*After the Battle of Brandywine the whole establishment was opened to receive the wounded Americans, great numbers of which were brought here in wagons, a distance of more than forty miles.*⁸

Likely Fahnestock and others since his time have found the Brandywine connection to Ephrata as logical, since it was the closest battle to Ephrata. Yet the Ephrata hospital was not mentioned in reports filed until December, 1777. A "Report of the General Hospitals" dated April 26, 1778, listing the numbers of men currently in, released from, or who had died at the various hospitals records entries for Ephrata beginning only on December 18, 1777.⁹

Other evidence that supports a mid-December opening of the Ephrata hospital includes the writings of Philadelphia apothecary Christopher Marshall. Marshall fled the city with the fear of a British advance on the capitol in the spring of 1777 and found refuge in Lancaster. In his diary entry for December 29 he notes, "visited in the evening by Dr.

⁷Heiges, p. 74.

⁸William M. Fahnestock, "An Historical Sketch of Ephrata," *Hazzard's Register*, vol. XV (Jan.-June, 1835), pp. 161-167. Quotations used for this paper are taken from Felix Reichmann and Eugene E. Doll, eds., *Ephrata As Seen by Contemporaries*. (Allentown, PA: The Pennsylvania German Folklore Society, vol. 17, 1953), p. 180.

⁹"A Report of the General Hospitals," signed by Brigadier General William McIntosh, April 26, 1778. Revolutionary War Muster Rolls in the National Archives, Washington, D. C., RG 93, M246, roll 135.

Yeardwell who told me they had made a hospital at Ephrata.”¹⁰ In 1780, Ephrata resident, and member of the Cloister’s married congregation, Jacob Kimmel was called to give a deposition as part of a court martial related to activities in the military hospitals. He testified that, “a great number of sick soldiers were brought to that town about Christmas, 1777.”¹¹ While no Ephrata records are as detailed, the Moravian congregation at Lititz, about eight miles to Ephrata’s west, received notice on December 14 that their single Brothers’ House was going to be converted by the army into a hospital, and those in need of care were on the way. The first sick and wounded, about eighty, arrived at Lititz on December 19 and were followed by fifteen more wagons full of men the next day.¹² This suggests the opening of the Lititz and Ephrata hospitals may have occurred almost simultaneously.

Ephrata’s hospital, it seems, may not have been a direct result of the Battle of Brandywine, but instead accommodated soldiers being moved from temporary to more secure locations well away from the enemy encampments for the winter, and to keep the sick away from the remaining healthy Americans camped at Valley Forge. Most likely the soldiers suffered from an assortment of wounds combined with dysentery, possibly typhus, and smallpox. In a letter from Ephrata dated March 7, 1778 Albert Chapman reports twenty “inoculants” present at Ephrata, perhaps a reference to the small pox inoculation ordered by Washington for troops.¹³

¹⁰William Duane, ed., *Extracts from the Diary of Christopher Marshall*. (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell, 1877), p. 153.

¹¹Heiges, p. 94.

¹²John W. Jordan, “The Military Hospitals at Bethlehem and Lititz During the Revolution,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. XX (1896), p. 154.

¹³Albert Chapman to Theodore Woodbridge, March 7, 1778. Original letter in the Woodbridge Papers, The Connecticut Historical Society.

Communities like Ephrata, and the Moravian towns of Bethlehem and Lititz, made ideal locations for army hospitals. They were located in well-stocked farm country. Their numerous large buildings, such as dormitories and churches, could provide sheltered spaces. They contained populations willing to take on some of the traditional jobs assigned to the “Peace Churches,” such as cooking, laundry, hauling, and other associated duties. Ephrata had long held the reputation as a place where the poor, aged, and infirm could turn for relief. When, for example, the Sisters’ House was constructed in 1743 the community’s history recorded that members were, “also very benevolent and harbored many poor widows whom they maintained out of their own means, so that the household resembled a hospital more than a convent.”¹⁴

The deposition given by Kimmel in 1780 went on to state that the sick arrived at Ephrata, “almost naked; many of them without shoes, stockings or blankets to cover them. Neither were they accompanied by nurses or other attendants, and left there by the wagoners, without orders what to do with them.”¹⁵ While the initial confusion of the arriving soldiers may have found some deposited at Kimmel’s home without immediate help from the military, official personnel were soon present at Ephrata to manage the hospital. Captain Albert Chapman was the military commander at Ephrata, with Doctors Moses Scott, Yeakel, and Harrison in charge of the hospital. They were assisted by Doctors Ebenezer Smith and Reading Beatty, while John Scott, brother of Dr. Scott served as commissary. During the 1780 court martial, Peter Miller wrote of the hospital

¹⁴ Lamech and Agrippa, *Chronicon Ephratense*. Translated by J. Max Hark. (Lancaster, PA: S. H. Zahm and Co., 1889), p. 158.

¹⁵ Heiges, p. 94.

management with satisfaction, noting, “a good government kept by the Senior doctors Messieurs Scott and E. Smith in which vices attending a soldier’s life were suppressed; and a harmonizing spirit prevailed among the doctors, officers and privates of said hospital on one, and our community the other side.”¹⁶

The stories of hardships attached to the Valley Forge encampment are well known, and Jacob Kimmel testified to the lack of clothing and blankets at Ephrata. Captain Chapman also seems to have had some initial concerns about supplies. In a letter dated February 1, 1778, Chapman says that upon arriving, the hospital was, “all in confusion for nobody could give any particular account of the dead men’s clothes,” which he said amounted to enough for eight or ten soldiers when nearly forty or fifty had already died at the place.¹⁷ Peter Miller, however, suggested that the winter at Ephrata was not unbearable.

“Indeed all circumstances did then join to make the situation of the sick comfortable. A constant supply of medicines and refreshments ...were sent from Manheim which your deputies the senior doctors have applied with a peculiar care and scrupulosity; a plentiful market, constantly kept by the neighbors, of veal, milk and other articles necessary to recruit the strength of poor soldiers. The winter season was spent comfortably and many hours with edification of spirit. Consider farther with what regularity things were conducted, the care taken of the sick, the equity observed in all dealings, I must say to the praise of the senior doctors...”¹⁸

In this regard, one Brandywine Valley connection to the Ephrata hospital did exist, that being a donation for the support of the soldiers. On March 25, 1778 the *Pennsylvania Packet* contains this notice:

¹⁶Heiges, p. 96.

¹⁷Albert Chapman to Theodore Woodbridge, February 1, 1778. Original letter in the Woodbridge Papers, The Connecticut Historical Society.

¹⁸Heiges, p. 96.

*On Monday night a handsome donation was received at Ephrata for the use of the sick and wounded of the hospital at that place, sent from the charitable and well disposed Presbyterian congregation of the Forks of the Brandywine; a laudable example worthy of imitation. The Medical Gentleman take this public method, in the name of the sick and wounded, to return their most hearty and unfeigned thanks to the good people who so generously contributed in so seasonable a manner.*¹⁹

Although Peter Miller may have found the winter hospital tolerable, the doctors were less impressed with the conditions at Ephrata. A note in the April 1778 “Report of the General Hospitals” considers Ephrata, “an inconvenient place for a hospital.”²⁰ The remark probably had more to do with the buildings used by the military than the actual location of the site. After visiting in the spring of 1778, Dr. James Tilton reported that at Ephrata, “the larger house turned into an hospital for the accommodation of the sick was ill chosen, being cut up into small monkish cells, that would admit of but little ventilation”²¹

It is not exactly clear which building or buildings may have served as a hospital at Ephrata. The Mount Zion hilltop held at least one large dormitory constructed between 1739 and 1743, and a large combination Meeting and Schoolhouse, built in 1740. This last building surely served to house the sick, as a note in the community’s history, the *Chronicon Ephratense*, edited and published by Peter Miller in 1786, contains the following note:

*The handsome Prayer-house, in which were manifested forth many wonders of God, did not stand more than 38 years, being converted into a hospital during the war of the Americans, after which is was never restored again.*²²

This final phrase, “never restored again,” is open for interpretation. Did the author mean the building was destroyed, or simply that it was not returned to its former use as a Meeting and

¹⁹Quoted in William F. Worner and H. Frank Eshleman, “Items of Local Interest From the *Pennsylvania Packet*, etc., 1777-78,” *Papers Read Before the Lancaster County Historical Society*, vol. XXX (1926), p. 129.

²⁰“A Report of the General Hospitals”

²¹Heiges, p. 93.

²²Lamech and Agrippa, *Chronicon Ephratense*. Translated by J. Max Hark. (Lancaster, PA: S. H. Zahm and Co., 1889), p. 119.

Schoolhouse? Fahnestock writes of the school in 1835 saying that, “after the Battle of Brandywine, the Sabbath School room, with others, was given up for a hospital, which was occupied as such sometime; and the school was never afterwards resumed.”²³ While Fahnestock’s language about the close of the school closely mirrors the language of the *Chronicon* regarding the Mount Zion Prayer and Schoolhouse, neither source directly says the building was destroyed because of its use as a hospital.

An 1815 land draft of the site illustrates three large structures upon Mount Zion. One of these buildings is drawn with a rather wavy roofline, possibly suggesting that the structure is in ruins.²⁴ By 1845, when the first attempt was made to create a monument to the hospital on Mount Zion, no structures remained on the hilltop.²⁵ When Julius F. Sachse spoke at memorial services on Mount Zion in 1895, he stated that the buildings, “on account of infection, had to be demolished after they had ceased to be hospitals.”²⁶ Sachse seems to be the first to suggest the repeated tradition that the hospital buildings were destroyed to prevent the spread of disease.

Archeological investigations on Mount Zion during the summers of 1999, 2000, and 2001 have located the site of a structure interpreted as the dormitory.²⁷ This building was first occupied by the Brotherhood from the time of its construction in 1739 until 1745, when it was turned over to the use of the poor. A quantity of medicine vials and items associated with military occupation such as gunflints and military buttons all attest to the likelihood that it was occupied by the military. No evidence, however, suggests that it was razed when abandoned by the hospital. On

²³Fahnestock, p. 180.

²⁴Manuscript land draft of Ephrata Cloister property by Jacob Hibshman, September 1, 1815. William Y. Zerfass Collection of the Ephrata Cloister, catalog number EC92.1.43.

²⁵The oration delivered by George W. McElroy at the 1845 ceremony on Mount Zion was reprinted in the souvenir program for the Patriot’s Day program of 1894 entitled *History of Ephrata, Penna.*, compiled by D. R. Hertz. (Philadelphia: H. Ferkler, 1894), p. 42.

²⁶Julius F. Sachse, *The Monument on Zion Hill*. (Lancaster, PA: New Era Book and Job Print, 1895), p. 9.

²⁷Stephen G. Warfel, *Historical Archaeology at Ephrata Cloister, A Report on 1999 and 2000 Investigations*. (Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 2000 and 2001). The 2001 report is forthcoming in early summer 2002.

the contrary, archeological evidence suggests this structure stood until the mid-1830s, perhaps the early 1840s. To date, investigations have not located the Mount Zion Meetinghouse.

While the exact location and cause for the demolition of the hospital buildings are still uncertain, the tradition concerning the number of men in the Ephrata hospital has been clarified. In 1835 Fahnestock wrote that 150 soldiers had died at Ephrata and were buried on Mount Zion, but failed to offer a source for his information.²⁸ Nine years later, *A History of Lancaster County* relied on both Fahnestock's written account and a personal conversation with him to record, "four or five hundred of the wounded solders were taken to Ephrata...one-hundred of the solders died here."²⁹ These numbers continued to appear as the numbers of men associated with Ephrata's hospital for nearly a century and a half, even being carved into the granite monument on Mount Zion. Unfortunately, much like the old, "Washington slept here" legends, the numbers are a bit exaggerated.

Christopher Marshall's late December visitor informed the apothecary that the newly opened Ephrata hospital contained, "near two-hundred and forty-seven sick and wounded."³⁰ The following March, Captain Albert Chapman wrote that about fifteen men had died since his arrival in late January, he discharged eighty, and there were 170 still present.³¹ Added to his previous letter which mentioned forty or fifty dead prior to his arrival, that would make Chapman's count at about 315 men total, with about 65 deaths, although his numbers are approximations. Finally, "A Report of the General Hospitals," filed on April 26, 1778 listed 34 "men now in hospital," 57 "died or deserted," and 167 "discharged and sent to camp."³² With the hospital closing about five weeks after this final report, it is likely that the total of men at Ephrata numbered about 260, with

²⁸Fahnestock, p. 179.

²⁹I. Daniel Rupp, *A History of Lancaster County*. (Lancaster, PA: Gilbert Hills, 1844), p. 218.

³⁰Duane, p. 153.

³¹Chapman, March 7, 1778.

³²"A Report of the General Hospitals."

approximately 55 to 60 deaths. While these numbers are not the inflated figures of legend, they are none the less remarkable, considering that this population of men, demanding attention and resources, was supported by a celibate community of approximately forty aging individuals and their neighbors.

While at Ephrata, at least one soldier deserted the army. It is unclear from the following notice which appeared in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* on March 11, 1778 if the man was a patient, or stationed at Ephrata as a guard.

Deserted from the hospital at Ephrata, a soldier belonging to Captain Jones's Company in Col. Christopher Febacher's Second Virginia regiment, named James Gordon, about 6 feet high; had on when he deserted a blue coat with a blue velvet collar, gray waistcoat, buckskin breeches, and round hat, he has black hair, fair skin and is much pitted with the small pox. Whoever takes up and secures said deserter so that he may be had again, shall have four dollars reward.

*Albert Chapman, Commander*³³

Of the burials performed at Ephrata that winter, several may have been of community members who contracted diseases carried to the settlement by the soldiers. Julius Sachse identified ten members of Ephrata whom he suggested died as a result of the hospital's occupation of the site.³⁴ Of his listing, however, two individuals can be ruled out as dying from camp diseases since their death occurred prior to the hospital's arrival in December, 1777. A third individual on Sachse's list had served as an army wagon driver, became ill, and returned to his family in Ephrata just prior to his death and probably had little or no contact with the hospital. Of three others on the list, one died circa 1777, another circa 1778 and the date of death for the third is unknown. Even those individuals with circa death dates cannot be unquestionably linked to the hospital's presence, since it is unknown when in those years they died. Of the remaining four people on Sachse's list, no cause of death is noted in any records. One of the army doctors, Harrison, also died at Ephrata.

³³Worner and Eshlman, p. 129.

³⁴Sachse, p. 10.

Harrison's death is noted by both Dr. James Tilton and Captain Albert Champman.³⁵ Tradition says that upon falling ill, he was taken to the home of community member James Angus, where the doctor died.³⁶ Angus died on March 4, 1778.

Two other events associated with Ephrata's Revolutionary War hospital must be mentioned. First is the seizing of paper, specifically unbound copies of the book the *Martyrs Mirror* published at Ephrata in 1748-1749. This book, telling of the persecution of early Christian and Anabaptist martyrs, was printed at the request of the Mennonites of the Franconia area. By the time of the Revolution, nearly 350 copies remained unsold and unbound at Ephrata. The army, in need of all supplies, including paper for making cartridges, acquired the unsold books and began to turn the "martyr book into a murder book," as some historians would later write. Eventually, officials were convinced to stop the destruction of *Martyrs Mirror* pages and nearly 175 copies were later sold back to interested individuals.³⁷ Peter Miller, writing in 1788, says of the affair:

*At length, someone came, Captain Henderson, with two wagons, to fetch away all our printed paper; he pretended to have an order from General Washington. As, at that time, the English army was in our vicinity, we remonstrated and told the captain, that, as this would hurt our character, we would not consent, unless he should take them by force, for which we should have a certificate; to which he consented. Accordingly, he orders six men, with fixed bayonets, from the hospital, which was at that time at Ephrata; and they loaded two wagons full. The captain afterwards settled with us, paying us honestly, and we parted in peace; though we never asked from him a certificate, but trusted to providence. Whether the said captain acted herein by an express or implied order of his Excellency, I can not say; I never saw any written one.*³⁸

The second, and more colorful tradition, links Peter Miller with the rescue of British

³⁵Heiges, p. 93 and Chapman, letter of March 7, 1778.

³⁶ Saches, p. 8.

³⁷A fuller account of this incident, and the exciting story as recorded by one of the purchasers of a redeemed *Martyrs Mirror* can be found in an article by David Luthy, "The Ephrata *Martyrs' Mirror*: Shot from Patriot's Muskets," *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage*, vol. IX, pp. 2-5.

³⁸ "Account of the Society of Dunkards in Pennsylvania," *American Magazine*, vol. VI (1789), reprinted in Felix Reichmann and Eugene E. Doll, eds., *Ephrata As Seen by Contemporaries*. (Allentown, PA: The Pennsylvania German Folklore Society, vol. 17, 1953), p. 134.

loyalist Michael Whitman. This tradition, said to be recorded by Fahnestock, appeared in a promotional pamphlet for the Ephrata Mountain Springs Hotel issued by its proprietor Joseph Konigmacher.³⁹ Konigmacher, in addition to being an entrepreneur and great self-promoter, served as a Trustee of the German Seventh-Day Baptist Church at the Cloister, and as the first president of the Ephrata Monument Association, spearheading the effort to create the monument on Mount Zion. The story claims that Miller walked to Valley Forge and pleaded with Washington to spare the life of Ephrata tavern keeper Michael Whitman, who had been arrested for treason. It seems Whitman never forgave Miller for leaving the German Reformed Church to follow Beissel, taking every opportunity to abuse Miller for the defection. Washington wondered why Miller would now wish to spare the life of his enemy. “My religion teaches me to pray for those who despitefully use me,” said Miller. Washington, then moved by this act of Christian charity, grants the pardon and Whitman is saved. So the story goes.

Michael Whitman was indeed arrested and his property seized by the Pennsylvania government for acts of treason. He was imprisoned in Lancaster and received a pardon in January of 1778.⁴⁰ It is doubtful, however, that Miller saved his life. Miller did defend several Mennonites who refused to pay a fine for not apprehending British deserters.⁴¹ There is also a series of correspondence recorded in the published Colonial Records in which Miller intercedes with Pennsylvania officials on behalf of John Rein of Earl Township. Rine was accused of stealing horses from neighbors and selling them to the British.⁴² Nowhere, however, is there evidence to

³⁹*Pencilings About Ephrata, by A Visitor*. (Philadelphia, J. B Chandler, 1860), p. 18-24. The pamphlet was issued in 1856 and 1860 with no changes to the Miller/Whitman story between the two issues. The 1860 issue has been reprinted as *The Journal of the Historical Society of the Cocalico Valley*, vol. XXIII (1998), with introductory notes by Clarence E. Spohn.

⁴⁰Whitman’s pardon can be found in Lancaster County Deed Book R, vol. 1, pp. 527-528. See also the explanatory notes by Spohn in *Pencilings* noted above.

⁴¹See the letter by Peter Miller to Timothy Matlack dated Ephrata, February 9, 1783 found in the published *Pennsylvania Archives, First Series*, vol. IX, p. 751-752.

⁴²For more information on the Rein family and their Revolutionary War activities see A. Hunter Rineer, “A House Divided, The Rine Family of Earl Township,” *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society*, vol. 87, (1983), pp.10-31.

suggest that Miller offered assistance to Whitman.

The military hospital at Ephrata closed sometime in May or early June, 1778. Reverend James Sproat preached at the Ephrata hospital on April 17, 1778, but noted that the hospital had left Ephrata by the time of his visit on June 21.⁴³ The closing of Ephrata as a hospital coincides with the army's removal from Valley Forge on June 19, 1778.

Writing to Dr. Edward Shippen in 1780, Peter Miller noted that, "the winter before last a large hospital was established at Ephrata, to which we have submitted without reluctance, being indebted to bear a proportionate share in the calamities of the present war."⁴⁴ While the hospital must certainly have been a trial for the small and somewhat isolated community, it was not the single agent that hastened the decline of Ephrata. The lure of Beissel's settlement began to diminish with the demise of its founder nine years earlier. In 1785 Miller added this note after his signature on a letter he sent to friends in York County:

*Here brotherly love is growing cold,
And the priesthood getting old;
Immortal youth is sinking down,
Hence we are subject to frown.*⁴⁵

All total, Ephrata served as a hospital for about six months, from mid-December 1777 until June 1778. Approximately 260 soldiers were brought to the buildings that once stood upon Mount Zion; about 60 remain at rest atop the hill. In 1845 efforts were begun to construct a monument to the soldiers. It would take fifty-six years before enough funds could be raised to see the effort completed. The gray obelisk that now stands in the Mount Zion Cemetery will celebrate its own centennial anniversary on May 1, 2002. It marks a brief episode in Ephrata's long history when

⁴³Heiges, p. 89-90.

⁴⁴Heiges, p. 96.

⁴⁵Nineteenth-century translation by Obed Snowberger of an original letter by Peter Miller dated May 10, 1785. Snowberger's translation was copied by Julius F. Sachse and is in the Sachse Collection in the Pennsylvania State Archives, MG-351, Harrisburg.

the pressing demands of the outside world overshadowed the spiritual goals of the devoted little community. Although the monument's stone surface is cold to the touch, the story it recalls is warm with compassion and charity, as one unidentified soldier is said to have written two and a quarter centuries ago:

I came among this people by accident, but I left them with regret. I have found out, however, that appearance may be delusive, and the where we expect to meet with a cold reservedness, we may sometime be surprised by exhibitions of the most charming affability and disinterested benevolence. They all acted the part of the Good Samaritan to me, for which I hope to be ever grateful; and while experiencing the benefits of their kindness and attention, witnessing the sympathies and emotions expressed in their countenances, and listening to the words of hope and pity with which they consoled the poor sufferers, is it strange that, under such circumstances, their uncouth garments appeared more beautiful in my eyes than ever did the riches robes of fashion, and their cowls more becoming than head-dresses adorned with diamonds, and flowers, and feathers? Until I entered the walls of Ephrata, I had no idea of pure and practical Christianity. Not that I was ignorant of the forms, or even the doctrines of religion. I knew it in theory before; I saw it in practice then.

Many a poor wounded soldier will carry to his grave the sweet remembrance of those gentle sisters, who watched so patiently by his side, supported his fainting head, administered the healing draught, and cheered him with both earthly and heavenly hopes. What matted it to him that their words were couched in an unknown dialect; he read their meaning in the deep, earnest, liquid eyes. Eternity likewise will bear a glorious testimony to the labor of the Prior, who could converse in the English language. Many a poor fellow, who entered there profane, immoral, and without hope or God in the world, left it rejoicing in the Savior.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ "Journal of an Officer," quoted in Mrs. Tamar Davis, *a General History of the Sabbatarian Churches*, (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakinston, 1851), pp. 226-227. Mrs. Davis says the entry was published in 1784 but the original source has not been identified.