

Historical Account
of the
Ephrata Cloister
and the
Seventh Day Baptist Society

By A. MONROE AURAND, Jr.

Illustrated with wood cuts by
HOWARD PYLE

Revised Edition



Saron (left) and Saal, at Ephrata, (Pa.) in 1845

P r e s s C o m m e n t s :

"Readable and informative."—Paul Walker, well-known columnist.

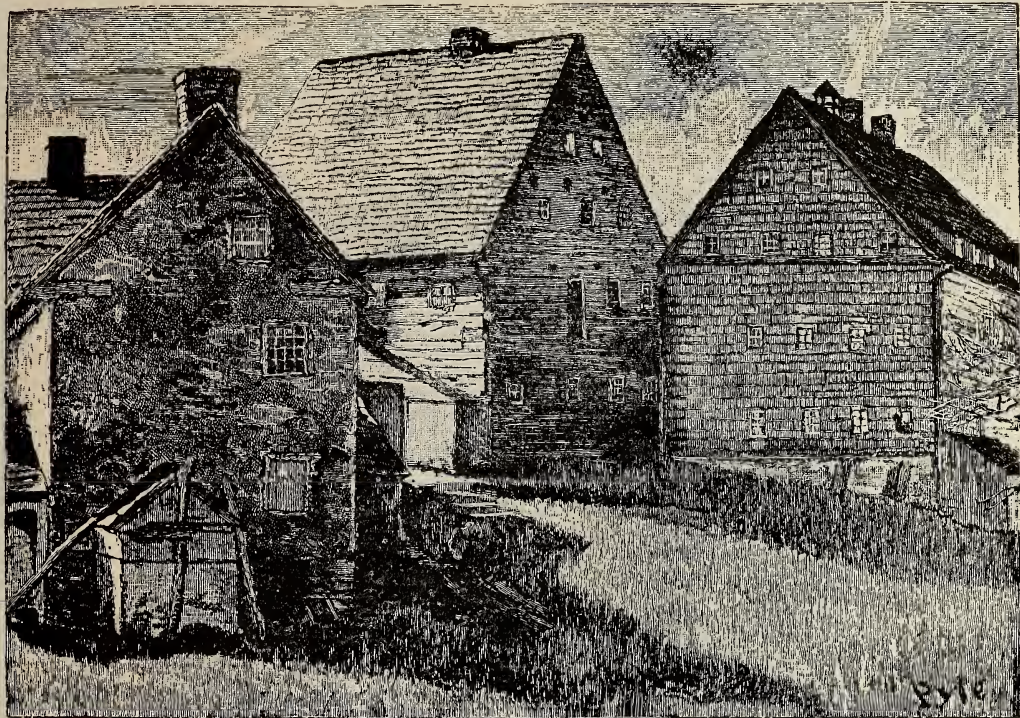
"Another fine job—all the tangled skeins re-woven into a readable little book."—"Girard," in the Philadelphia "Inquirer."

"To read this chronicle is to resolve to go to Ephrata!"—"F.U.F."

"An intelligent word-picture of the Cloisters."—The Harrisburg "Patriot."

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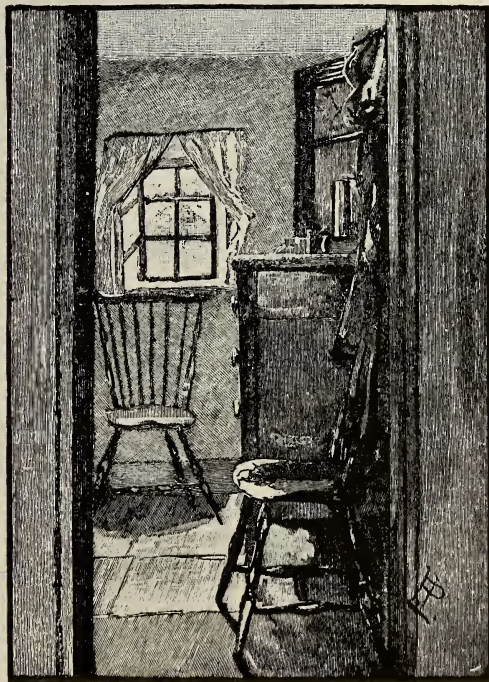


(Below, left).—The artist depicts a Sister, the low and narrow doorway, grandfather's clock and copies of the German almanac, with multiplication table. (Right).—Artist H. Pyle reconstructs room of an early day.



The Ephrata Cloister

A view of the Cloister. (The wood-cut illustrations in this pamphlet are the work of the late celebrated artist, Howard Pyle.)





The room in the "Saal," in which religious services were held, appears much the same today as it did to the artist in the 1880's. The desk or pulpit is still in place — large German hand-lettering on the walls; the seats, or benches, with tables and shelves for the accommodation of hymnals, and an indication as

to the appearance of the Sisters in their special garb. On the ceiling may be seen foot prints about which some very interesting comments are to be heard. —Wood cuts in this edition, by Howard Pyle, were used to illustrate an article written by him, "A Peculiar People," in "Harper's Magazine," for October, 1889.

EPHRATA—HOME OF THE MYSTICS AND SECTARIANS

“EPHRATA! Of all the words and names in the vocabulary of Pennsylvania none embraces so much of what is mystical and legendary as the word Ephrata, when it is used to denote the old monastic community which once flourished in the valley of the Cocalico in Lancaster county, and whose members lived according to the esoteric teachings, practised the mystic rites, and sought for both physical and spiritual regeneration according to the secret ritual as taught by the ascetic philosophers of old . . .” says Julius Friedrich Sachse in his scholarly work, “The German Sectarrians of Pennsylvania; 1708-1800.”

Early Interior Settlement. — Ephrata (pronounced “Ef-ra-taaw”) was one of the earliest settlements in the interior of the state, and the first Protestant monastery in America.

The borough of that name, and the remaining buildings of what was once a tolerably important communistic settlement in colonial days, will be found on most maps at a point nearly midway between Lancaster and Reading on one road, and nearly in the same position between Harrisburg to the northwest and Philadelphia on the southeast by the “direct road” of other years.

The history of this town and its famed Cloister is interesting on account of the longevity of the latter institution and the associations connected with it.

Originally it consisted of a monastery and several other buildings for the accommodation of the mystics and devout believers known as the Seventh Day Baptist Society. In addition there were about one hundred and forty acres of land, a grist and saw mill.

Before the town had the name Ephrata it was known as “Kloster” (Cloister), or Dunkerstown — a nickname, from the word Dunker or Tunker, corruptions of “Tauffer” — Baptist.

The Society at Ephrata was a distinct sect from the denomination that now bears the name of “Dunk-

ers," with whom they have for generations been confounded.

About the year 1694, a controversy arose in the Protestant churches of Germany and Holland, in which vigorous attempts were made to reform some of the errors of the church, and with the design of promoting a more practical, vital religion.

At the head of the reform were men of a pious nature, to whom were applied the epithet "Pietists." Many of these devotees of the "new philosophy" of the "old order," among them men of considerable learning, left their labors and professions in the then half-sick Europe and emigrated to America.

Baptist Movement Started.—In the year 1708, Alexander Mack, of Schriesham, and seven others, in and around Schwardzenau, Germany, met together, regularly, to examine the doctrines of the New Testament, and to ascertain the obligations it imposes on professing Christians; determining to lay aside all preconceived opinions and traditional observances.

Their inquiries resulted in the formation of the Society now called the Dunkers, or First-Day German Baptists.

They met with much persecution, as did all who differed with the popular church. Some were driven to Holland, some to Crefels in the Duchy of Cleves, and the mother church voluntarily moved to Serustervin, in Friesland; and then emigrated to America in 1719.

Here they dispersed to Germantown, Skippack, Oley, Conestoga and elsewhere. They formed a church at Germantown in 1723, under the charge of Peter Becker. The church grew rapidly in this country, receiving members from the banks of the Wisahickon and from Lancaster county. Soon after a church was established at Muehlbach, (Mill Creek), in Lancaster county—now Bird-in-Hand, four miles east of Lancaster city.

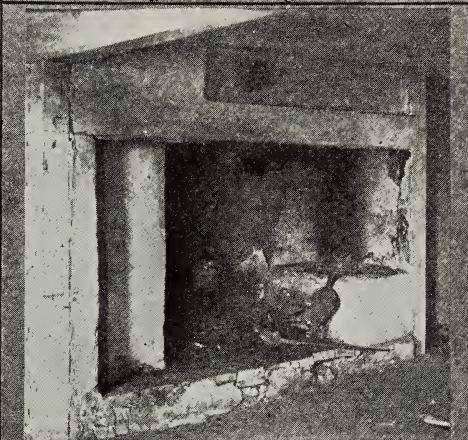
Conrad Beissel, Mystic.—Of this community was one Conrad Beissel, a native of Eberbach (or Oberbach), in the Palatinate, Germany, who contributed a great philosophy and leadership in the early days



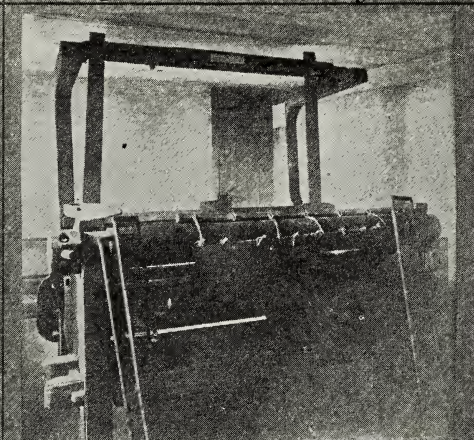
Saal Chapel, 1737
Present meeting room where regular services are held.



Gods Acre Cemetery - Very Historic.
Almourey - Saal - Saron in the background.



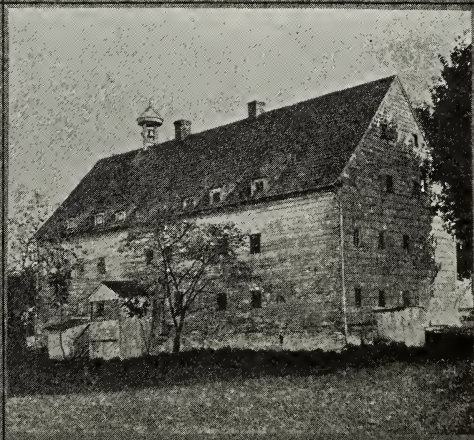
Saron, Second Floor, Fire place for Probationers.



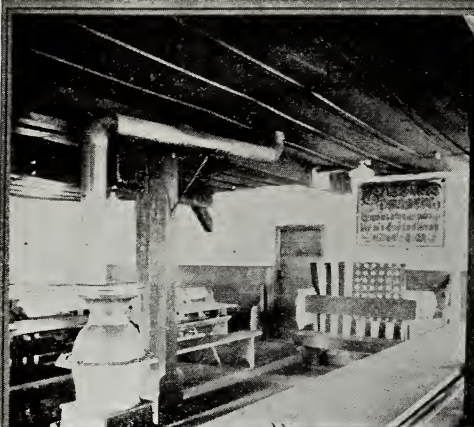
Loom over 100 years old in Saron for making carpets and linen.



View of Almourey, Saal, and Saron from Parsonage



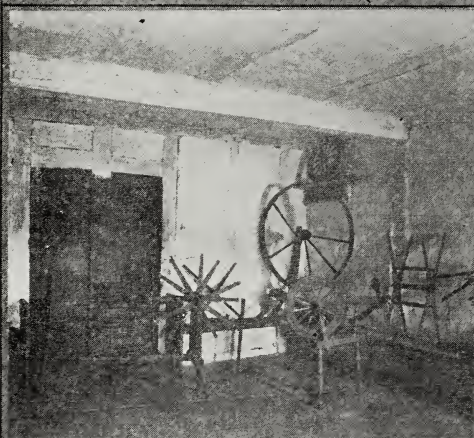
North View of Saron.



Saal Chapel 1738. Present meeting room where regular services are held



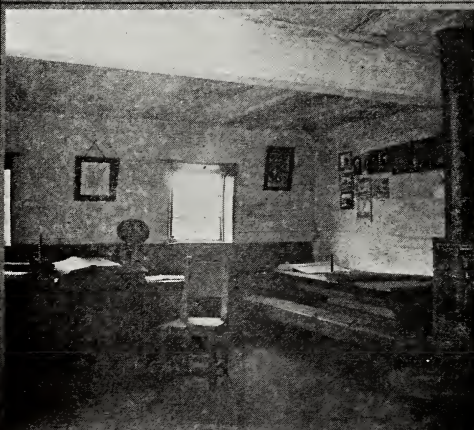
Sister House, or Saron. First floor Kitchen.



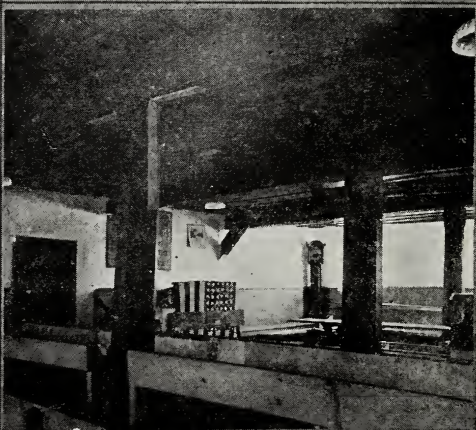
Mafin Room Saron. Third Floor



Saal 1738 Cookery



Sister House, or Saron
Registration room for visitors



Interior Saal showing Clock Pulpit.

of a rich and glorious experiment among men and women in the field of religion and labor.

Beissel had been a "Presbyterian," (i. e., probably a member of the German Reformed Church), who fled from the persecutions of his day in Europe. It was he who conceived that there was an "error" among the Dunkers in their observance of the day for the Sabbath—that the **Seventh Day** was the command of the Lord God; and it was this conviction which set Beissel on the road to leadership.

About the year 1725, or later, he published a tract entering into a discussion of this point, which created some excitement and the disturbance in the Society at Mill Creek. Noting this, he retired for solitude to a cell on the banks of the Cocalico, which had previously been occupied by one Elimelich, an hermit.

A "Communitic" Society is Born.—After some reflection, members of the Society at Mill Creek, learning of the hiding place of Beissel, followed him, settling around him in small cottages. They adopted the original Sabbath—the Seventh Day—for public worship in the year 1728; which has been observed by their descendants, even unto the present day.

Among those who followed Beissel from the Mill Creek congregation, were two women — Anna and Mary Eicher. They expressed a wish to share with him a seclusion in the wilderness with others of his followers.

Unable to persuade the women to return to their former homes, the brethren finally built for their use a cabin on the opposite side of the Cocalico, in 1735, and in their establishment of a residence here they became the original members of the Ephrata Sisterhood.

This nucleus of the church was joined in 1733 by Israel and Gabriel Eckerline, and in the following year by a large number from Oley and Coventry, in Chester county, as well as a large number of Germans who came from Schoharie county, N. Y.

The Ephrata Society was actually lead by and under considerable influence of Father Friedsam (Beissel), until his death July 6, 1768, "in the 52nd year

of his spiritual life, but the 72nd year and fourth month of his natural life." His remains lie in God's Acre adjoining the Cloister.

From the sparsely settled country round about more than six hundred persons gathered to follow his body to the grave. At the time of his death the Society numbered about three hundred members, and the property and real estate, from a very humble beginning, had grown to a considerable value.

Rev. Peter Miller (Brother Jaebez).—The religious labors of these pious men and women did not end at Ephrata, for we find Peter Miller (Brother Jaebez), and others on frequent preaching and missionary tours. These led them, sometimes forty or fifty in a company, on foot, into Long Island and New England. The pious Michael Wohlfahr preached in his monastic dress on the streets of Philadelphia, where he enlisted the interest of distinguished men such as Dr. Benjamin Franklin and others.

Peter Miller succeeded Beissel as head of the community. Born in the Palatinate, he came to America in 1730, was baptized in the congregation at Ephrata in 1735, and called Brother "Jaebez." His death occurred on September 25, 1796, aged 86 years.

Miller was a graduate of Heidelberg University, and a former pastor of Reformed congregations located at Muddy Creek, Bethany and Heller's, near Ephrata, about 1730-1735.

Conrad Weiser, one of the most beloved of the pioneers of colonial days on the frontier, one of Rev. Peter Miller's church officers, and an Indian interpreter for the government, likewise entered the cloister life as Brother "Enoch," which means "consecrated."

THE MONASTIC BUILDINGS AND BEHAVIOR OF THE CELIBATES

Erection of Monastic Buildings.—The "Berghaus," one of the first buildings, became almost at once too small for the growing congregation, and "Kedar" was erected in 1735 on a hill named by Friedsam "Mount Zion." This, too, was soon found insufficient for the

use of the brethren or monks, and in 1746 another and much larger building was erected for them, and named "Bethany," or "Bethania." In each of the cells in this building there was an hour-glass. These and subsequent buildings had shingles on the side walls, as well as on the roof. (See wood-cut illustration on cover).

The building called Kedar, contained one principal room for religious worship, love-feasts, and the ceremony of feet-washing. Besides this there were other rooms, very small, for the use of the brethren and sisters, those of the latter being in the upper story.

Bible Calculations Used.—The erection of the new brother house "Bethany," and the sister house "Saron," and the chapel "Saal," in the 1740's were said to mark the beginning of "large buildings" in America.

The dimensions of the houses were said to have been based on Biblical calculations, narratives, and prophecies. The walls were more than a foot thick, not very generous, considering the length of time they have stood, the weight supported, and ravages to which they were exposed in two hundred years.

The "Saron" building was erected as a dwelling-house for married men and women who had voluntarily renounced matrimonial vows, the sexes to be kept separate in different parts of the house. The plan proved a failure; many of the self-divorced couples reunited and returned to live together as before.

Saron was then occupied by the women, Anna and Maria Eicher, with the other celibate sisters who loved the spiritual guidance of Father Friedsam.

The Sisterhood known as the Roses of Sharon or "Spiritual Virgins," were under a matron, a sort of "Mother Superior," and disobedience was reckoned a grievous sin.

Communion, or Love Feast.—The love-feast of the Baptists embraced but a frugal meal of bread, butter, apple-butter, pickles and coffee. This is still a practice among them where the ritual is observed.

Contrast this with sweet cakes, or buns, and hot coffee served by the Moravians; the full meal of the Amish and Mennonites; the crumb of bread and a thimble of wine of the Lutheran, Reformed and other

congregations; and the communion of the Catholic church.

The Baptists enjoy an "open" communion, which means that any in good standing of any denomination may "sup" with them.

They also pass the holy kiss between the brethren and also between the sisters.

World's First Sabbath-School. — One of the first Sabbath School cards designed, printed and given to pupils of a Bible School were used in the Ephrata Sabbath School, the organization of which antedates the Sunday School of Robert Raikes, of London, England, 1780, by a generation, as the Ephrata Bible School dates back to 1738.

Daily Routine Rather Trying. — The routine at Ephrata kept the celibates pretty much on the go. From seven to nine p. m. was spent in writing, reading and study, as well as devotions, then sleep until midnight, when they arose and had an hour of matin (song service),—not mass, as there were no priests. They returned to sleep until 5 a. m., when another matin was observed to 6 a. m. Then work until 9 a. m., when the first meal ensued, then more bodily employment until 5 p. m., followed by the evening and final meal of the day.

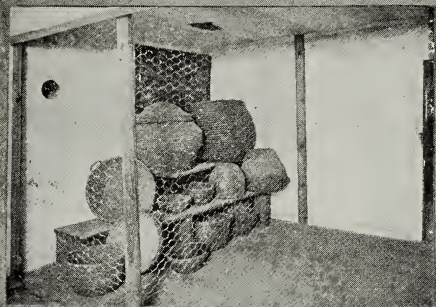
Gossiping was frowned upon and loud laughter, even in the more modern days, was forbidden and thought to be the work of a fool. Whistling was likely forbidden also.

Sexes Kept Separate.—One of the rules of the Society was that the sexes be separated in their buildings, and in the services as well. This is a rule followed by other plain sects in Pennsylvania, today.

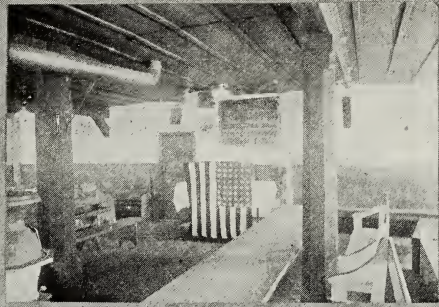
There are several reasons advanced for this custom, which is as old as Jewish religious history.

Mysticism Kept Interests Alive. — It should be pointed out that mysticism (the art of being particularly well-informed in matters of religion), was one of the deep-rooted notions among the founders of the Cloister.

We doubt whether there would have been much to the experiment at Ephrata without mysticism, and



Baskets made before the Revolution, by the sisterhood



West view of Pulpit in Saal



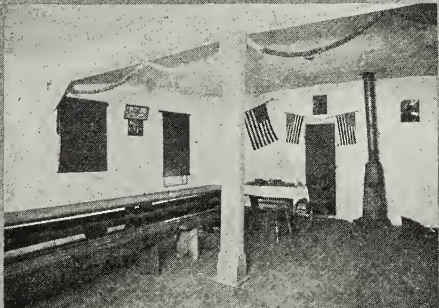
Saron stairway and antique utensils



East view of 1739 clock and Pulpit



Saron Fireplace 1740



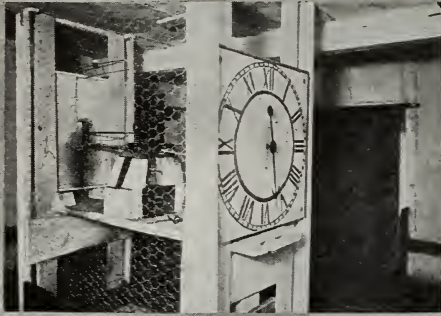
Sabbath school room



Right side doorway 16' wide, second floor of Saron



Saal kitchen, sink and drain pipe



Tower Clock made in 1735, still striking time from 3rd floor Saron



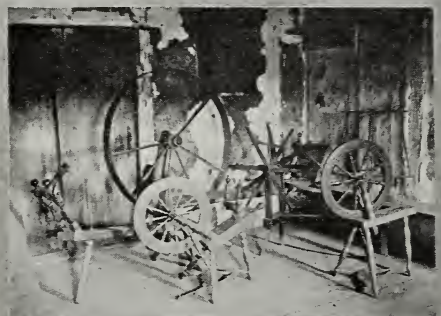
Loom in Saron over 150 years old



Fracture Schriften in 2nd floor of Saron



Wooden block and bench in Saron on which occupants slept



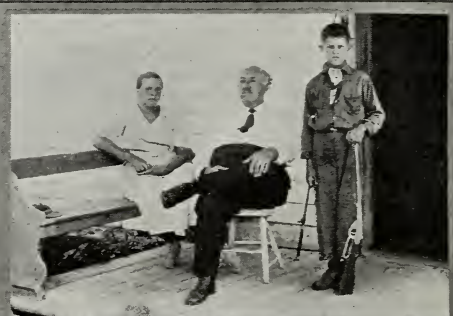
Spinning wheel reels etc.



Water-baskets, bee-hive, dough-tray etc.



The parsonage



Rev. S. G. Zerless and family

the cooperation of its faithful companions—labor and industry (and the love for doing it)—the more to enjoy their beliefs in the mystic things of life—the world before, and the world to come!

Being almost 100 per cent. Germanic in origin, these believers differed only slightly from some others of German and Swiss origin, whose faiths and ideas prevail even to the present day.

FRUGALITY, INDUSTRY AND STABILITY OF THE SOCIETY

Difficulties at Outset. — By the close of the year 1733 Ephrata was a place of some importance, and some dignity was lent to all affairs by the distinctive garb worn by the celibates. In fact, these early pioneers looked and acted so much like Jesuits, who supposedly were sent there to seduce the populace, that an attempt was made to destroy their buildings by fire; but a wind storm arose, which, it is claimed, providentially changed its course, and burned the barn and buildings of the chief instigator.

The location of the Cloister by the side of a never failing spring of water, was a happy one; it was also more or less avoided by the Indians in the early days for the reason that the place abounded in snakes.

All Work; Little Play. — At the beginning of the experiment at Ephrata they had few beasts of burden, so that it was necessary to draw the plow with man power, which was accomplished by the brethren, who were ranged in a long line on each side of a rope, doing this obviously arduous and straining task, assisted sometimes in their efforts by the sisters. But oxen and horses soon relieved them of this hard labor.

Father Friedsam did not encourage idlers and he found plenty of work for men and women, either inside or out, soon making the community prosperous.

The several mills erected at the community settlement served a growing neighborhood which gladly patronized them, and at the same time helped enrich the Society, thereby encouraging them in more ways than one.

Industrially, in addition to the printing plant and several types of mills, the Society operated a pottery, and engaged in basket making. Quarries were opened and roads and bridges were built.

Needle work, "fractur," and other articles were produced by the sisters, who, in those early days, found labor of their sort a privilege and an expression of love, a contentment in life, and a disposition toward charity.

Notes on Building Construction. — Originally the lighting and ventilation of the buildings was poor. In late years holes made in the ceilings brought in a better supply of fresh air, or permitted the foul air to escape.

Heat was obtained from open fire places, closed off in warm weather, and in the Saal from what was known as an "Ephrata cannon stove."

The chimneys in these old buildings consisting of wood (!) and clay, were erected with considerable care, and they seem to have served their purpose admirably with all the attendant dangers, since they were built in the centers of the buildings, which architects claim was not nearly as safe as if built at the ends.

There was scant use of iron in the construction of the buildings at Ephrata. There were two reasons for this circumstance—one, the teachings of the old dispensation relative to the building of the Temple; two, and most likely the real reason, was the prohibitive cost of nails and other iron, which of course was hand wrought and hammered out laboriously on the anvil. The hinges to doors were of wood!

It will be seen that the thumb latches on the many doors are wood, all sound, in working condition, and "good as new." They are demonstrated many times.

The Footprints on the Ceiling.—On the ceiling of the "Saal" may be seen marks resembling foot-prints. The tradition is that in one of their midnight meetings a zealous brother demonstrated the power of his faith by walking on the ceiling, and at every spot where his feet supposedly touched the boards an imprint remained as though made by fire. These are still

visible, but one will likely be told that the foot-prints, if such they be, were placed there at the time the timber was being prepared for use in the erection of the building, when a laborer, with grease on his bare feet to keep them from chapping, accidentally walked on the parts which now show.

Clock With One Hand.—One of the interesting objects of the collection there would be the clock made with but an hour hand to tell the time.

In Peter Miller's day the hour-glass was the time-piece, and it was turned twice during his sermons, so that we may know he preached for a long time (according to our modern reckoning), and yet he must have been interesting to hear.

Meager Furnishings.—The interior of the buildings are coated with a plaster of loam and straw that is as hard as marble. Frequent white-washings kept the place fresh-looking and, with constant hand-scrubbing of the floors and other wood-work made an otherwise drab abode a place of comfort, at least to a limited degree.

Accommodations were of the most meager sort.

In the larger of the rooms once stood objects used in the various endeavors undertaken, including the spinning wheels and looms, carding reels, candle moulds, ancient chests, great wicker baskets, and a hundred and one other articles that were necessities in the old days.

Today one may see a very few of the many essential objects which once were a part of this great monastic institution and workshop.

A PRACTICAL AND SUCCESSFUL PRINTING PLANT IN COLONIAL DAYS

First Printing in 1745.—"A Bibliography for Lancaster County, Pa., 1745-1912," by Lottie M. Bausman, clearly shows that in the first year of the establishment of a printing press at the Cloister, they lost no time in publishing both books and tracts.

There were no less than ten items listed for 1745.

On the following year none are listed, and but one for 1747. These are for known items, but it is possible that printing of some sort was done at this time.

Martyr's Mirror Published.—In 1748 there appeared one of the most remarkable undertakings of the kind in America—probably exceeding the labor expended on a printing of the Bible as compared for some years after, as to costs of production, and probable sales value: — “Der Blutige Schau-Platz oder Martyrer-Spiegel . . .” translated “The Martyr's Mirror” — an immense book of about 1500 quarto pages, and an elaborate frontispiece.

This volume probably engaged the attention and labors of the brothers and sisters as soon as they had obtained a plant and equipment with which to work, for it is said that that volume alone required the services of no less than thirteen men who toiled more than three years to translate, revise, type-set, manufacture paper, print, fold and bind this treasured volume. The work was done as a sort of accommodation to the Mennonites and other sects. It could be purchased on publication, bound, or unbound; with or without the plate which depicted a scene of immersion, which was an offense to some people.

It stands out today as one of the real contributions to the printing art in Colonial America. Ink and type were made at the Cloister. Truly these monks were artists and craftsmen.

Another more or less obscure item appeared in 1748, one in 1750, and by the year 1752 printers in Lancaster began to turn out books and pamphlets.

The press at the “Bruederschaft” at Ephrata continued to issue books and tracts for some time, and other printers soon set up in this growing community.

No less than forty-three books were written and compiled by the members of the Society, and published by them.

While the Continental Congress was seeking refuge during the Revolutionary War, and holding sessions at Lancaster and York, Continental (Colonial) money is claimed to have been printed at this trusted plant in the wilderness.

Franklin and Saur Imprints.—A number of books had been printed for Beissel and the Ephrata Society as early as 1728, by Benjamin Franklin, of Philadelphia, and Christopher Saur, of Germantown.

The first one printed by Franklin for Beissel, was "Divine Melodies of Love and Praise."

The first one issued from the press of Saur was entitled "Zionitischer Weyrauth's-Hugel," (1739), or "Zion's Hill of Incense, or Mountain of Myrrh," the volume being dedicated to "All the Solitary Turtle-Doves that Coo in the Wilderness."

In 1786 Brothers Lamech and Agrippa compiled an important book in German, entitled: "Chronichon Ephratense," containing the biography of the venerable Father in Christ, Friedsam Gottrecht. This is an important history of the Community of the Seventh Day Baptists, and was translated into English by J. Max Hark, D. D. (Lancaster, 1889).

Original Presses May Be Seen. — The old printing presses passed out of the possession of the Society about the year 1795. One of the original presses may be seen in the rooms of the Carl Schurz Foundation, in the Old Customs House, on Chestnut street, Philadelphia; another, with the date 1742, is in possession of F. R. King, a printer in New Enterprise, Pa., in the heart of the famous Morrison's Cove section, today a community populated with members of the Society.

MUSIC SHARED ONE OF THE IMPORTANT PLACES IN EARLY DAYS

Famed for Hymns and Singing. — Singing-schools were begun at Ephrata in 1742, under the direction of Father Friedsam, who was himself a good singer, as well as an excellent performer on the violin and other musical instruments.

The music used in these schools was of Beissel's own composing, and was written on sheets by the sisters of "Saron," in a room of that house devoted to that purpose. More than four hundred hymns, all

of Beissel's own composition were thus copied in their great hymn-book, "Zionitischer Weyrauth's-Hugel."

The music transcribed by the sisters of the Cloister was done before the establishment of their famed printing press.

The "Weyrauth's-Hugel," printed by Christopher Saur, at Germantown (1739), was the first book printed in German type in America, and contains over 800 hymns composed by the members of the Society between 1730 and 1740, and was practically the beginning of the writing and printing of verse in Pennsylvania.

A Gift from the Royal Family.—Commissioners of the English government who had been sent to Ephrata following the close of the French and Indian war to learn what manner of people resided there, were more than charmed with the music rendered by the brethren and sisters.

Some of the written music of "Saron" was sent by the commissioners as a present to the royal family, who, being greatly pleased with it, sent in return a present enclosed in a box, and delivered to the Cloister. The contents, however, must have been an unfavorable surprise to Friedsam and Peter Miller, for, on opening it, the box and its contents were immediately buried in a secret place, and it has never been discovered to any one.

Whether the gift might have been a crucifix, or whatever, has not been divulged, but there were some suspicions among the members that this was so. Being an offense to their order, it was "put away."

Beissel Issues Rules for Singers.—Among the unique and interesting facts relative to their desire to be good singers, we note their especial attention to the matter of "spiritual" virginity. Beissel writes:

Care must be taken of the body, and its requirements reduced to a minimum, so that the voice may become angelic, heavenly, pure and clear, and not rough and harsh through the use of coarse food, but on the contrary, in place of genuine song, only an unseemly grunting and gasping.

At the same time it is especially necessary to know what kinds of food will make the spirit teachable, and the voice

flexible and clear; as also what kinds make it coarse, dull, lazy and heavy. For it is certain that all meat dishes, by whatever name known, quite discommode us, and bring no small injury to the pilgrim on his way to the silent beyond.

Then there are those other articles of food which we improperly derive from animals, e. g., **milk**, which causes heaviness and uneasiness; **cheese**, which produces heat and begets desire for other and forbidden things; **butter**, which makes indolent and dull, and satiates to such an extent that one no longer feels the need of singing or praying; **eggs**, which arouse numerous capricious cravings; **honey**, which brings bright eyes and a cheerful spirit, but not a clear voice.

As regards the other common vegetables, none are more useful than the ordinary **potato**, the **beet**, and other **tubers**. **Beans** are too heavy, satiate too much, and are liable to arouse impure desires. Above all must it be remembered that the spirit of this exalted art, because it is a pure, chaste and virtuous spirit, suffers no unclean, polluted and sinful love for woman, which so inflames and agitates the blood of the young as completely to undo them in mind, heart, voice and soul . . .

As concerns drink, it has long been settled that nothing is better than pure, clear water, just as it comes from the well, or as made into soup to which a little bread is added . . .

JUDAISM AND ROSICRUCIANISM PRACTICED — HOSPITALITY WELL KNOWN

Definite Trends Toward Judaism.—Not unnoticed among scholars and students of history, was the evidence of more than one sort that these mystics were more than a "little bit" interested in following some of the tenets of the ancient Jews.

Their interpretation of the Sabbath to mean the Seventh-Day, and the end of that day coming at sun-down are but two very evident indications of their attitude and leaning. We note that they eschewed certain kinds of foods for the same reasons advanced by the Jews. The strictness in most of their observances is Jewish.

They practiced a rite of Rosicrucianism, as well as a type of Egyptian Freemasonry. Interesting to note is the report that several of the old-time members of the Ephrata Society were members of the Masonic fraternity.

The Ephrata Chronicles quote several cases where settlers of German extraction circumcised each other,

and blasphemed against Paul because he did away with that rite.

The seal of David (six-pointed cross), is well-known among students who search in Pennsylvania-German lore.

The Davidic cross was used extensively by congregations of the "plain sects" of Pennsylvania, as may be seen in colored, frosted and plain glass window designs, and over main doors, in houses of worship scattered throughout the state.

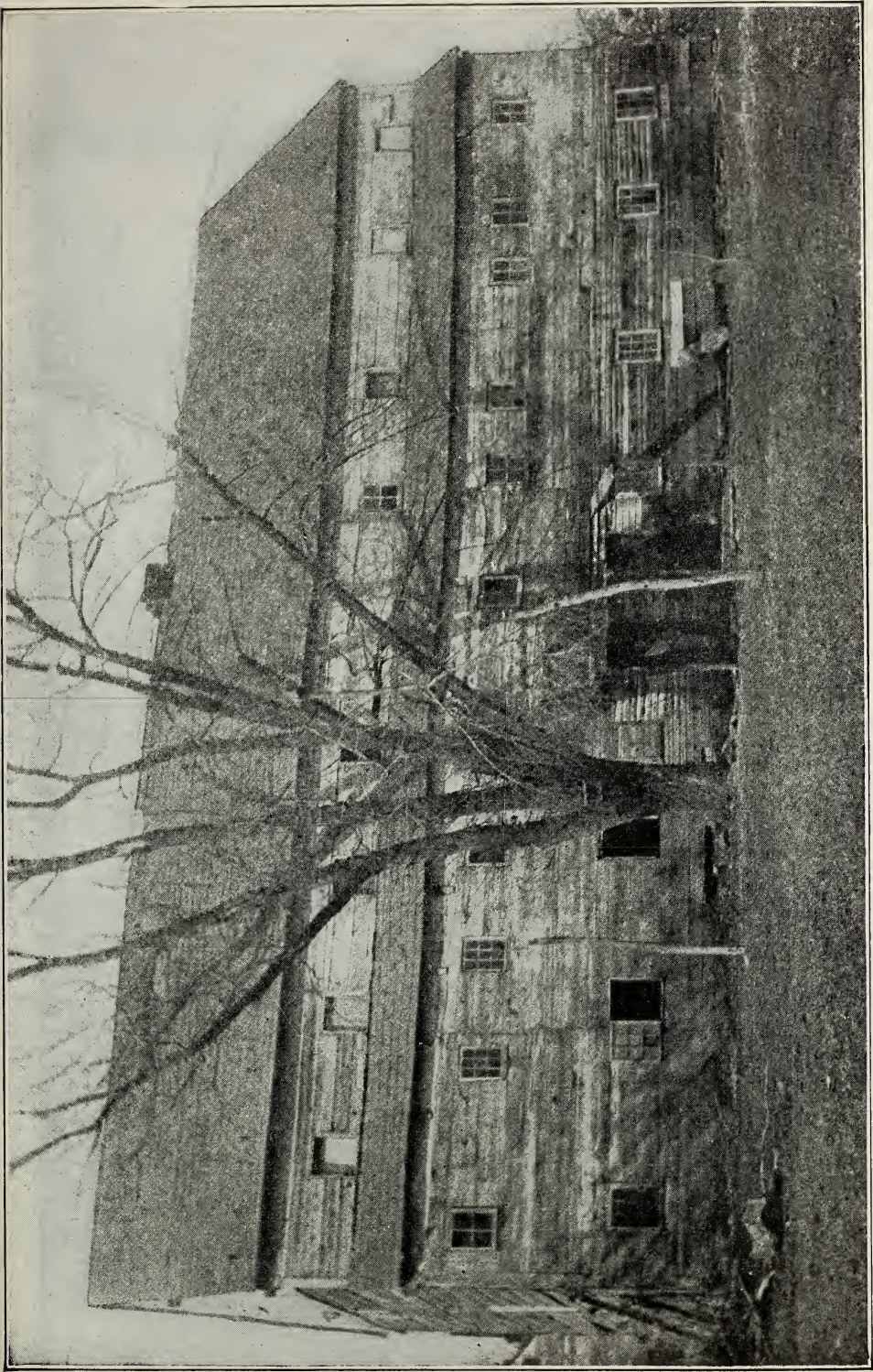
Hospitality in the "Backwoods." — Ephrata had quite a reputation in her early days, as well as today, for the hospitable attitude she showed toward all who had occasion to come to her doors. This was especially marked during the French and Indian Wars, in 1755-6, and later during the Revolutionary War, when Washington, with his troops at Valley Forge, found the going well nigh despairing.

In the battle of the Brandywine, Washington lost about 1200 soldiers in killed and wounded; besides these, he had many sick. He started about 500 of those who could travel, on the road to Ephrata. Their journey was a hard one, and some died on the way, others as they arrived, and numbers of them soon after, but the care given them at the Cloister proved good, and many of them soon were able to rejoin the armed forces.

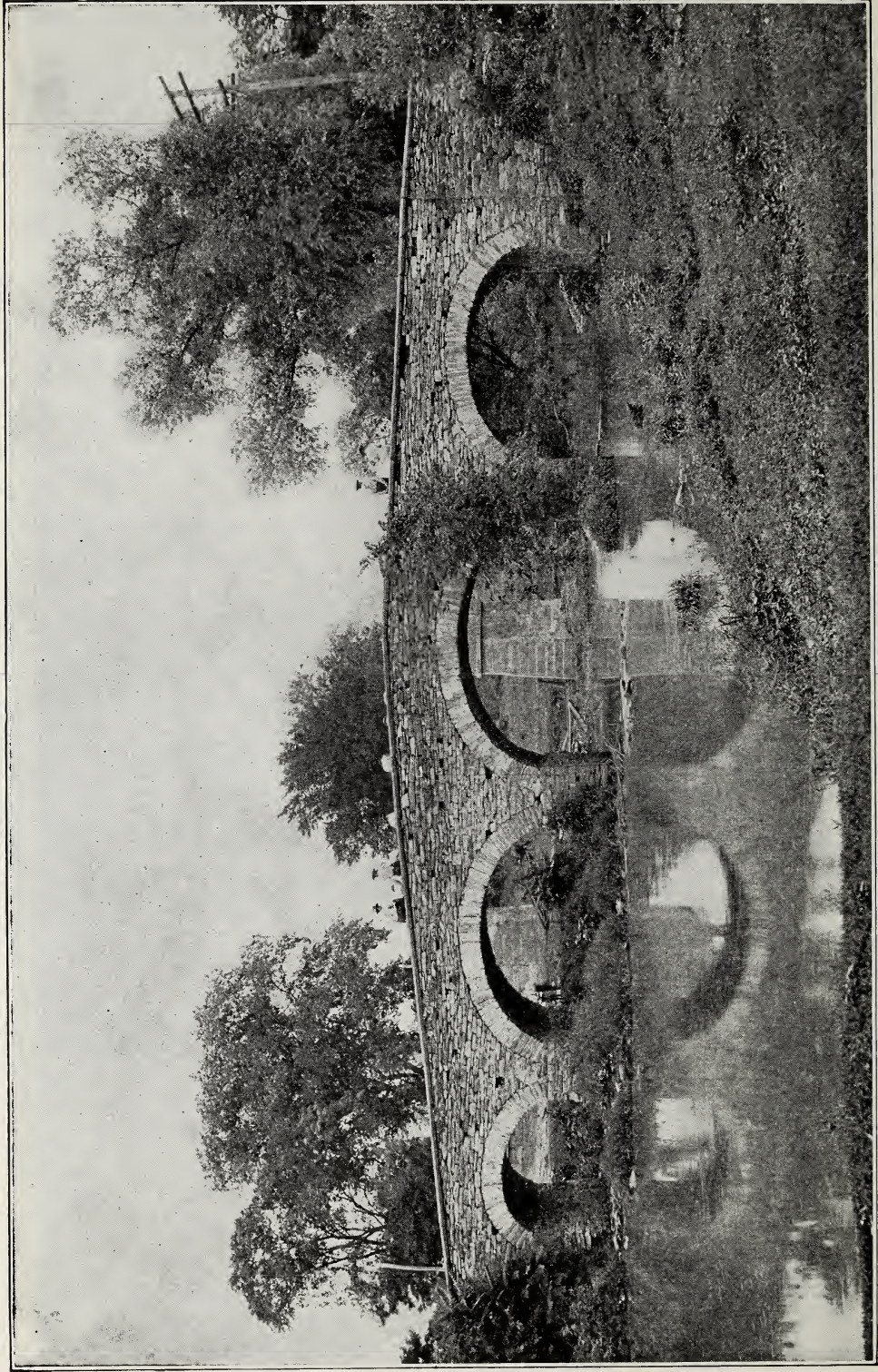
Dr. Fahnestock says:

After the battle of Brandywine the whole establishment was opened to receive the wounded Americans, great numbers of whom were brought here in wagons, a distance of more than forty miles; and one hundred and fifty of whom died, and are buried on Mount Zion. Their doors were ever open to the weary traveller, and all visitors were cordially received and entertained, while they tarried, as is done in the Hospices of Europe . . .

General Washington is said to have visited Ephrata on one occasion when he sought out Peter Miller to work on the translations of the Declaration of Independence into the various languages then spoken in America, and on a later occasion to visit his wounded and sick soldiers.



Bethania, or Brother House, Used by the Solitary; also for Hospital Purposes



Old Stone Bridge Crossing the Cocalico; Built by Seventh-Dayers

PARTIAL REPRINT FROM WELL KNOWN
ARTICLE BY DR. FAHNESTOCK

We are glad to reprint for the benefit of the reader, important facts relative to the Baptist Monastic group, based on the well known article entitled "An Historical Sketch of Ephrata," by William H. Fahnestock, M. D., appearing in full in Hazard's "Register of Pennsylvania," volume 15, number 11, March 1835, (pp. 161-167). (See also Atkinson's "Casket," for July 1835, and Prof. I. Daniel Rupp's "History of Religious Denominations in the U. S.,"; also Day's "Historical Collections of the State of Pennsylvania," published at Philadelphia, 1843).*

Dr. Fahnestock's account in part, is as follows:

In the years 1732, the solitary life was changed into a conventicle one, and a Monastic Society was established as soon as the first buildings erected for that purpose were finished—May 1733.

The habit of the Capuchins, or White Friars, was adopted by both brethren and sisters, consisting of a shirt, trousers and vest, with a long white gown and cowl, or woollen web in winter, and linen in summer. That of the sisters differed only in the substitution of petticoats for trousers, and some little peculiarity in the shape of the cowl.

Monastic names were given to all who entered the cloister. Onesimus (Israel Eckerlin) was constituted prior, who was succeeded by Jaebez (Peter Miller); and the title of Father—spiritual father—was bestowed by the Society, upon Beissel, whose monastic name was Friedsam; to which the brethren afterwards added, Gottrecht—implying together, Peaceable Godright.

In the year 1740, there were thirty-six single brethren in the cloister, and thirty-five sisters; and at one time, the society, including the members living in the neighborhood, numbered nearly three hundred.

The first buildings of the Society, of any consequence, were

* (Note: The writer of this pamphlet has chosen to write on the history of the Cloister in the early days, rather than in the later, and his selection of parts of Dr. Fahnestock's account is on the assumption that his observations of the Cloister a hundred years ago are worth a great deal more to the reader, than if too many modern "notions" were to be used in writing what is intended to be a concise account.—A.)

Kedar and Zion—a meeting house and convent; erected on the hill called Mount Zion. They afterwards built larger accommodations, in the meadow below, comprising a Sister's House called Saron, to which is attached a large Chapel, and Saal, for the purpose of holding the Agapas, or Love Feasts;—a Brother's House, called Bethania, with which is connected the large meeting room with galleries, in which the whole Society assembled, for public worship, in the days of their prosperity, and which are still standing, (1835, but torn down since 1900), surrounded by smaller buildings, which were occupied as printing office, bake house, school house, almonry, and others for different purposes; on one of which, a one-story house, the town clock is erected.

The buildings are singular, and of very ancient architecture—all the outside walls being covered with shingles. The two houses for the brethren and sisters, are very large, being three and four stories high: each has a chapel for their night meetings, and the main buildings are divided into small apartments, (each containing between fifty and sixty), so that six dormitories, which are barely large enough to contain a cot, (in early days a bench and billet of wood for the head), a closet and an hour-glass surround a common room, in which each sub-division pursued their respective avocations.

On entering these silent cells and traversing the long narrow passages, visitors can scarcely divest themselves of the feeling of walking the tortuous windings of some old castle, and breathing in the hidden recesses of romance.

The ceilings have an elevation of but seven feet; the passages leading to the cells, or "Kammers," as they are styled, and through the different parts of both convents, are barely wide enough to admit one person, for when meeting a second, one has always to retreat; the doors of the Kammers are but five feet high, and twenty inches wide, and the window, for each room has but one, is only eighteen by twenty-four inches; the largest windows affording light to the meeting rooms, are but thirty by thirty-four inches.

The walls of all the rooms, including the meeting room, the chapels, the saals, and even the kammers, or dormitories, are hung and nearly covered, with large sheets of elegant penmanship, or ink-paintings, — many of which are texts from the scriptures, done in very handsome manner, in ornamented gothic letters, called in German "Fraktur-schrift."

They are done on large sheets of paper and manufactured for the purpose at their own mill, some of which are put into frames, and which admonish the resident, as well as the casual visitor, which ever way they may turn the head. There are some very curious ones: two of which still remain in the chapel attached to Saron. One represents the narrow and crooked way, done on a sheet of about three feet square, which it would be difficult to describe—it is very curious and ingenious: the whole of the road is filled up with texts of

Scripture, advertising the disciples of their duties, and the obligations their profession imposes upon them. Another represents the three heavens . . .

In the rooms which any sister has occupied, and is departed, a piece, which is framed in imitation of a tablet, is put up, expressive of the character and virtues of the deceased, or some feeling memorial of love is inscribed . . .

A room was set apart for such purposes, called the writing room, and several sisters devoted their whole attention to this labor, as well as to transcribing the writings of the Founder of the Society; thus multiplying copies for the wants of the community, before they had a printing press. Two sisters named Annastasia, and Iphigenia, were the principal ornamental writers. They left a large folio of sample alphabets, of various sizes and styles; which are both elegant and curious, exhibiting the most patient application. The letters of the first alphabet are twelve inches long, surrounded by deep border, in imitation of copper plate engraving; each one of which is different in the filling up: It was finished in the year 1750 and is still preserved in the hands of the trustees.

There was another transcribing room appropriated exclusively to music: — hundreds of volumes, each containing five or six hundred pieces, were transferred from book to book with as much accuracy, and almost as much neatness as if done with a graver.

. . . The Society was wedded to Apostolic simplicity, — they desired no tower — no bells. They refused to have a bell to call them to meeting, even the midnight meeting, which was regularly held at twelve o'clock: Friedsam contending that the spirit of devotion ought to make them punctual to the hour, which generally proved to be adequate.

The community was a republic, in which all stood in perfect equality and freedom. No monastic vows were taken, neither had they any covenant, as is common in the Baptist churches. The New Testament was their confession of faith, their code of laws, and their church discipline. The property which belonged to the Society, by donation, and the labor of the single brethren and sisters, was common stock, but none were obliged to throw in their own property or give up any of their possessions. The Society was supported by the income of the farm, grist mill, paper mill, oil mill, fulling mill, and the labour of the brethren and sisters in the Cloisters.

The principles of the Seventh Day Baptist Society of Ephrata . . . may be summed up in a few words, viz:

1. They receive the Bible as the only rule of Faith, covenant and code of laws for church government.—They do not admit the least license with the letter and spirit of the scriptures, and especially the New Testament,—do not allow one jot or tittle to be added or rejected in the administration of the ordinances, but practice them precisely as they are instituted and made an example by Jesus Christ in his Word.

2. They believe in the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the trinity of the Godhead; having unfurled this distinctive banner on the first page of a hymn book which they had printed for the Society as early as 1739, viz: "These are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth; the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one."

3. They believe that salvation is of Grace, and not of works; and they rely solely on the merits and atonement of Christ. They believe, also, that that atonement is sufficient for every creature—that Christ died for all who will call upon His name, and offer fruits meet for repentance; and that all who come unto Christ are drawn of the Father.

4. They contend for the observance of the original Sabbath, believing that it requires an authority equal to the Great Instructor, to change any of His decrees. They maintain that as He blessed and sanctified that day forever, which has never been abrogated in His Word, nor any scripture to be found to warrant that construction, that it is still as binding as it was when it was announced amid the thunders of Mount Sinai. To alter so positive and "hallowed" a "commandment" of the Almighty, they consider would require an explicit edict from the Great Jehovah . . .

5. They hold to the Apostolic Baptism—believer's baptism—and administer trine immersion, with the laying on of hands and prayer, while the recipient yet remains kneeling in the water.

6. They celebrate the Lord's Supper at night, in imitation of our Saviour; washing at the same time each other's feet, agreeably to His command and example, as is expressly stated in the 13th chapter of the Evangelist John, 14th and 15th verses . . .

Celibacy they consider a virtue, but never require it, nor do they take any vows in reference to it. They never prohibit marriage and lawful intercourse, between the sexes, as is stated by some writers, but when two concluded to be joined in wedlock, they were aided by the Society. It (celibacy) was urged as being more conducive to a holy life . . . it may be considered the ground of the Institution at Ephrata, . . . it was a prolific subject for many of their hymns, which seemed to hallow and sanctify virginity . . .

They do not approve of paying their ministers a salary. They think that the Gospel was sent without money and without price, and that every one called to preach the Word, should do it from the love of the cause . . . however, they never have any scruples in affording their ministers such supplies of life as they possess themselves . . .

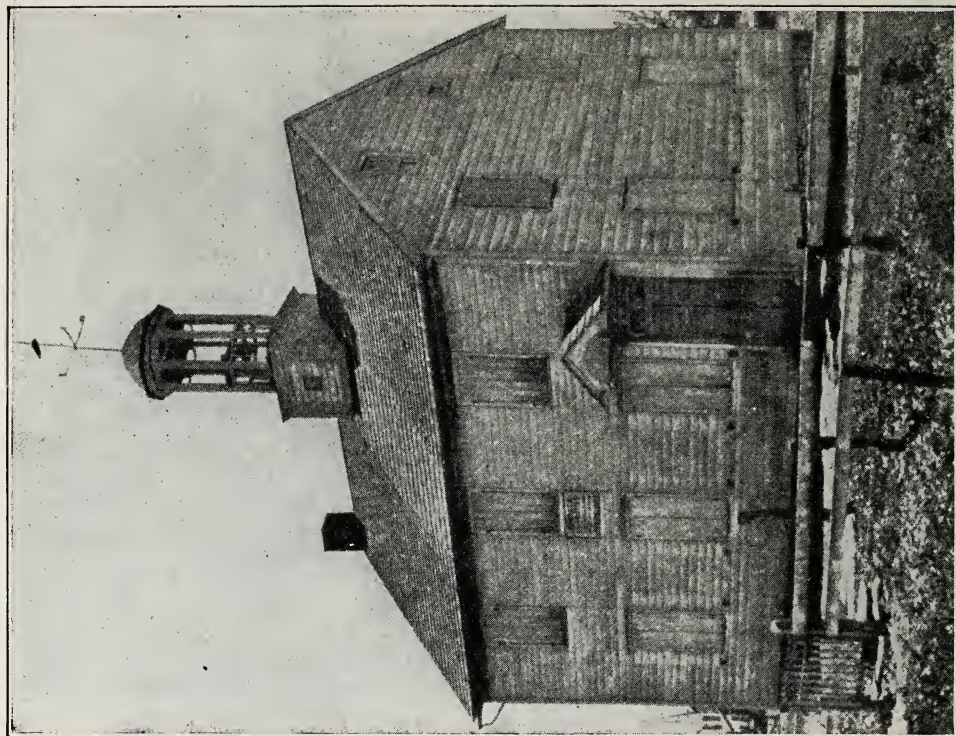
It is not one of their customs to wear long beards, as is frequently said of them: this is more the case with the Dunkers and Mennonists. They are often represented as living on vegetables, the rules of the society forbidding meats,



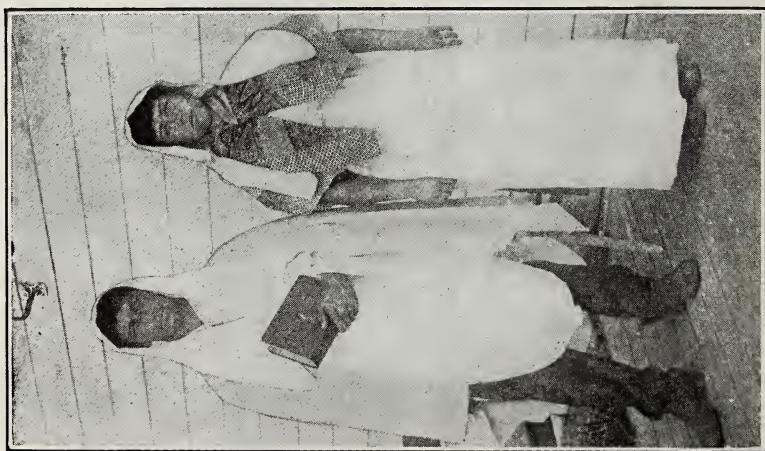
Peter Miller House



Chair on Which Washington Sat. Hour Glass, Turned Twice When Peter Miller Preached



Old Academy Building



In Monk and Nun Costumes

(NOTE: The half-tone illustrations used in this pamphlet were from photographs taken before the year 1920; captions were inserted at that time).

for the purpose of mortifying the natural appetite, and also as lying on wooden benches, with billets of wood for pillows, as an act of penance. The true reason and explanation of this matter is, that both were done from considerations of economy. Their circumstances were very restricted, and their undertaking great.

They studied the strictest simplicity and economy in all their arrangements: wooden flagons, wooden goblets, turned wooden trays, were used in administering the communion; and the same goblets are still in use (1835), though they have been presented with more costly ones. Even the plates off which they ate, were octangular pieces of thin poplar boards, their forks and candlesticks were of wood, and also every other article that could be made of that material, was used by the whole community.

. . . it may be well to remark, that there was not any ardent spirits used in the building of the whole village; the timber of which was hewn, and all the boards sawed by hand during the winter months.

The Society was a social community, and not a cold, repulsive compact; being sometimes represented as reserved and distant, and not even giving an answer when addressed on the road. Morgan Edwards, in his "Materials Towards a History of the American Baptists," (published in 1770,) bears a different testimony;—he says: "From the uncouth dress, the recluse and ascetic life of these people sour aspects and rough manners might be expected; but on the contrary, a smiling innocence and meekness grace their countenances, and a softness of tone and accent adorn their conversation, and make their deportment gentle and obliging. Their singing is charming; partly owing to the pleasantness of their voices, the variety of parts they carry on together, and the devout manner of performance."

They never had to renounce matrimony on entering the Convent, and but four or five of the whole numbers that have been in the cloister, in the period of one hundred and three years, left and were married . . .

Though they considered contention with arms and at law unchristian and unbecoming professors, yet, they were decided Whigs in the Revolution, and have, unfortunately, had to defend themselves too frequently in courts of justice . . . In the French (and Indian) war, 1755-56, the doors of the Cloister, including the chapels, meeting room, and every other building were opened as a refuge for the inhabitants of Tulpehocken and Paxton settlements, then the frontiers, from the incursions of the hostile Indians all of whom were received and kept by the society during the period of alarm and danger. Upon hearing of which a company of infantry was dispatched by the Royal government from Philadelphia to protect Ephrata; and on representation of the character of the Society, by the commissioners who were sent to visit the places; the Government made them a present of a pair

of very large glass communion goblets, which was the only recompense they would receive. At an earlier period they attracted the attention of the Penn family, and one of the young ladies, in England, commenced a correspondence with the Society.

Governor Penn visited them frequently and desirous of giving them a solid evidence of his regard, had a tract of five thousand acres of land surrounding Ephrata surveyed and conveyed to them, as the Seventh Day Baptist Manor; but they refused to accept it . . .

Many of the brethren being men of education, they established, at a very early period, a school, which soon gained for itself an honourable reputation, many young men from Philadelphia and Baltimore being sent here to be educated.

By this time (1777) the Society began to decline . . . The institution was one of the seventeenth century, and in accordance with European feelings: most of the members being natives of Germany. The state of public opinion at Beissel's death was widely different from what it was during the first fifty years after it was established, in relation to politics and government, and with this march of intellect different sentiments were entertained in regard to religious institutions. It was commenced as a social community in the midst of a wilderness—the hand of improvement made the desert bloom as the rose, and at that time (1768) was surrounded by a dense population. These circumstances connected with incessant persecution—the turmoil and contention into which they were thrown and constantly kept by some of their envious neighbours, were the principal causes of its decline; which continued on the wane . . .

At an early period they established a printing office, one of the first German presses in the state, (the second I believe); which enabled them to distribute tracts and hymns, and afterwards to print several large works, in which the views of the founder are fully explained. Many of these books have been lost and destroyed. In the Revolutionary war, just before the battle of Germantown, three wagon loads of books, in sheets, were seized and taken away for cartridges.—They came to the paper mill to get paper, and not finding any there, they pressed the books in sheets . . .

Music was much cultivated: Beissel was a first rate musician and composer. In composing sacred music he took his style from the music of nature, and the whole comprising several large volumes are founded on the tones of the Aeolian harp—the singing is the Aeolian harp harmonized. It is very peculiar in its style and contents, and in its execution. The tones issuing from the choir imitate very soft instrumental music; conveying a softness and devotion almost superhuman to the auditor. Their music is set in four, six, and eight parts. All the parts save the bass are lead and sung exclusively by females, the men being confined to the bass, which is set in two parts, the high and low bass—the latter

resembling the deep tones of the organ, and the first, in combination with one of the female parts, is an excellent imitation of the concert horn.

The whole is sung on the falsetto voice, the singers scarcely opening their mouths, or moving their lips, which throws the voice up to the ceiling, which is not high, and the tones, which seem to be more than human, at least so far from common church singing appear to be entering above, and hovering over the heads of the assembly . . . They have nearly a thousand pieces of music, a piece being composed for every hymn. — This music is lost entirely, now, at Ephrata—not the music books, but the style of singing: they never attempt it any more. It is, however, still preserved and finely executed,* though in a faint degree, at Snowhill, near the Antietam creek, in Franklin county, of this state, where there is a branch of the Society, and which is now the principal settlement of the Seventh Day Baptists. They greatly outnumber the people at Ephrata, and are in a very flourishing condition* . . .

. . . In former days the whole property and income belonged exclusively to the single brethren and sisters, but now, by a charter obtained from the State Legislature, at the instance of the single members then remaining, the property is invested in all the members, single and married . . .

I have spoken of Ephrata as it was, not as it is. True, old Ephrata still stands—its weather-beaten walls, some of which are upwards of an hundred years old, and crumbling to pieces, rendering it more interesting from its antiquity. Many traces of the olden time remain, but its life has departed.

This institution has suffered the fate of similar institutions in the old countries, from the mutations of time and the natural consequences of the advancement of general improvement; and especially from incessant internal opposition and persecution with which it had to contend.

As early as 1758, there was a branch of this Society established at the Bermudian creek, in York county, about 15 miles from the town of York . . . Another was established in 1763, in Bedford county, which still flourishes and many members of the present Society are scattered through the counties of the interior of the State . . .

* Snowhill has gone more or less the way of Ephrata.—Ed.

(Note: At long last, title and possession of the Ephrata Cloister and related property, was taken over by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in May, 1941. The State Historical Commission has restored, and strengthened the ancient buildings and is in charge of this valuable bit of early Americana.)



(Above).—Artist Pyle was famous for his accurate portrayal of the American scene. Here is an interesting study of one of the Sisters attending to the wants of the soldiers sent to the Cloister, from Valley Forge, to recuperate.

(Below, left).—The “kiss of peace,” or brotherly love, as passed between the men; women passed it, too. (Right).—Towns people, members of the Baptist Society, going to their Sabbath-meeting.



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