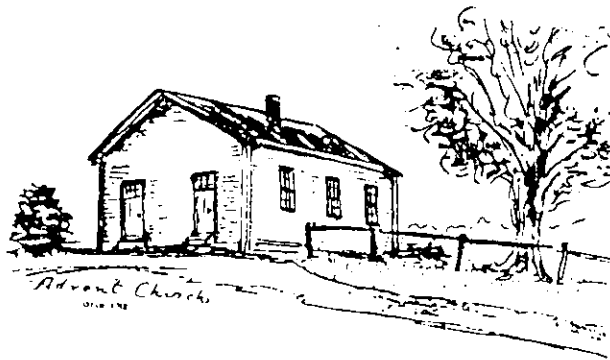


CENTRE COUNTY HERITAGE

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by Barbara Franco. Seven country churches clustered in the "ridges" of the Bald Eagle Valley testify to Centre County's prominent place in the early annals of the Adventist movement. Marsh Creek Church, the oldest, has been restored and may be visited.

MEMOIR OF HARRIET J. MEEK - CENTRE COUNTY'S "NATIVE BIRD OF SONG"

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by James W. Hill. Despite her early death at the age of 23 in 1851, Harriet Meek, a cousin of Peter Gray Meek, left a body of nationally published poetry.



ADVENTISTS IN CENTRE COUNTY

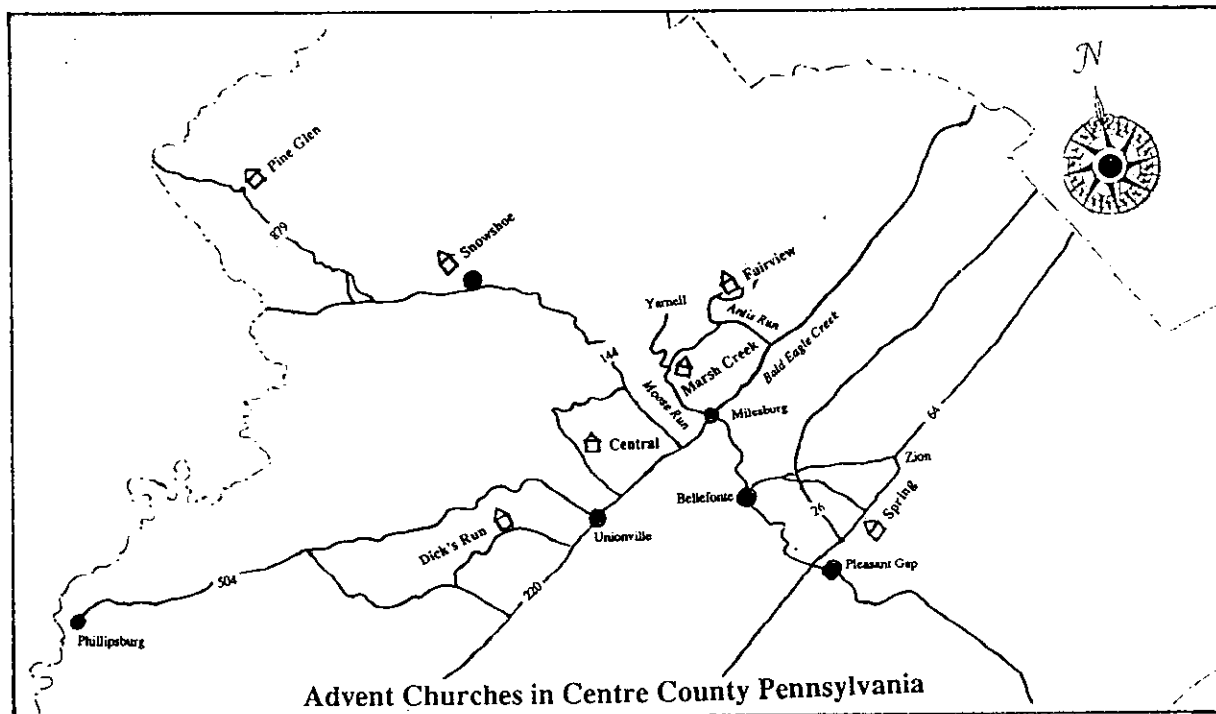
Barbara Franco

Barbara Franco, Assistant Director at the Museum of Our National Heritage in Lexington, Massachusetts, has published numerous exhibition catalogues and articles on 19th Century American history. She began research on Centre County Adventism when her mother, Sarah E. Franco, undertook restoration of the Marsh Creek Advent Church.

Historic preservation and local history sometimes combine to produce new and surprising insights into a community's past. Such a surprise lay in wait when the Advent Historical Society was formed in 1985, to save a rural Centre County church from demolition. Atop a hill nestled among the "ridges" north of Bald Eagle Valley, the Advent Church on Moose Run Road seemed like many other pretty country churches, distinguishable only to the local residents whose families had worshipped there and whose ancestors were buried in the adjoining cemetery. Simply as a surviving symbol of the community of farmers and iron workers who settled the area in the 19th Century, the old

Advent Church building seems to merit preservation; local history landmarks should be preserved. Research that accompanied the building's restoration, however, revealed a more complex story. The white neoclassic structure and its idyllic setting beside a quiet country road conceal a past distinctive not only in the religious history of Centre County, but in the national ferment accompanying the Second Advent movement of the 1840s, known as Millerism.

Linn's History of Centre and Clinton Counties describes the building as the Marsh Creek Messiah's Church, built in 1849 [p.265-66]. Linn also lists six other Advent churches in the county between 1868 and 1874 [Central, or Bush Run, in Union Township (1868), p.448; Fairview in Boggs Township (1871), p.266; Messiah in Spring Township (1873), p.435; Dick's Run in Union Township (1873), p.448; Messiah's in Snow Shoe (1874), p.428; and Messiah's in Pine Glen (1874), p.271]. Who were these Adventists of Centre County?



OVERVIEW

Present-day Adventism traces its origins to William Miller, a Vermont farmer, who predicted that the second coming of Christ would occur in 1843. Two splinter groups of Miller's followers, the Seventh Day Adventists and the Advent Christians, have survived into the 20th Century as active denominations. The direct heirs of William Miller, those followers who most strictly adhered to his original theories, organized as "Evangelical Adventists" and continued active through the 19th Century, but went out of existence in the early 20th Century. The Marsh Creek church and its five Centre County sisters were built by Millerites who affiliated themselves with the Evangelical Adventists.

Little research has been spent on this defunct branch of Adventism, compared with the relatively complete histories of Seventh Day Adventism and the Advent Christian Church. Nevertheless, a connected account of the specific activities of the Evangelical Adventists in Centre County can be pieced together through their frequent letters to the Advent Herald, published in Boston, and from local newspapers and other sources. The story how William Miller's followers brought Adventism from New England to Pennsylvania, attracted converts in the Harrisburg area, and then carried their millennial message into the mountain settlements of Centre County, offers an intimate study of Millerite evangelism and provides colorful details about life in Centre County in the 1840s and 1850s. This local history of Centre County Adventism supports three generalizations about the Advent movement as a whole, and the Evangelical Adventists in particular:

1. The Second Advent movement is often described as having particular appeal among rural populations. This is borne out in the geographical distribution of the churches they built in Centre County.
2. The reluctance of Adventists to organize into a centralized denomination is amply documented in the local story.
3. Finally, the reaffiliation of various Advent congregations with new fundamentalist denominations illustrates how the Evangelical Adventists were absorbed into religious groups with current appeal.

THE MILLERITES

In 1818 William Miller came to the conclusion, through study of the Bible, that the second coming of Christ and his ensuing 1,000 year reign on earth--the **millenium** of Biblical prophecy--would occur in the year 1843. At first Miller was reluctant to publicize these opinions, but in 1831 he began his public ministry by lecturing to local congregations in New York and New England. With the publication of his lectures in 1836 in Troy, New York, Miller's reputation as evangelist spread and he began to attract the attention of New England clergymen.

In 1839 Joshua V. Himes, a Boston minister of the Christian Church, was one of a group of ministers who met with Miller to discuss his theories. Himes was convinced of their accuracy; he became the moving force behind an organized campaign to bring the "Second Advent" message to as many people as possible before the anticipated end of the world. The names of the newspapers he and other Adventists published--The Signs of the Times, The Midnight Cry, The Morning Watch, The Trumpet of Alarm, and The Advent Herald--convey the sense of urgency that Miller's followers felt. In the 1840s, thanks to Himes' campaign of newspapers, religious tracts, and books explaining the beliefs of the Second Adventists, the number of followers of Miller's teachings swelled to an estimated 100,000 or more. Large camp meetings and a network of traveling lecturers spread the Advent message as far south as Baltimore and as far west as Michigan.

DANIEL'S VISIONS.

NOTED IN THE SCRIPTURES OF TRUTH, "FOR OUR LEARNING."

BABYLONIAN EMPIRE, B. C. 677. Dan. chap. ii.

MEDIA AND PERSIA, B. C. 538. Dan. 7: 6.

GRECIA, B. C. 331. Dan. 7: 5.

ROMAN EMPIRE, B. C. 148. Dan. 7: 7.

PAPAL AND PAGAN KINGDOMS, A. D. 476.

THE TEN HORNS.

PAPACY.

1. B. C. 677
538
400
200
150
100
100
200
300
400
476
500
537
600
800
1000
1200
1450
1650
1700
1750
1800
1843

And after these shall arise another kingdom inferior to these

And another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.

And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron.

And the fifth kingdom shall be as the fourth, only broken.

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

THE TEN HORNS.

1. B. C. 677
 2. 538
 3. 331
 4. 148
 5. 476
 6. 476
 7. 476
 8. 476
 9. 476
 10. 476

PAPACY.

The horn of the papacy is the only one that has not been destroyed, and it is the only one that has not been broken in pieces.

VISION OF THE RAM AND HE-GOAT. Dan. viii.

Daniel saw the vision of the ram, he-goat, and exceeding great horn, two years after he saw the representations of the four beasts. According to Lightfoot, Townsend, and other eminent chronologers, it was after the fall of Babylon: hence he was "an Shushan," the capital of Persia. Babylon being then a subject of history, had no place in this prophecy.

"Behold, a ram which had two horns, and the two horns were high, but the higher came up last." The ram which came from the east, with its two horns, was Media and Persia; and the rough goat which darted upon him from the west, was Grecia:—so said the angel. The Grecian empire was at first united, as is represented by the single horns of the goat. It was afterwards divided into four parts, represented by the four horns, of which the angel said—"Four KINGDOMS shall stand up out of the nation." Here we are taught, in the plainest manner, that a horn in this vision means a kingdom.

GRECIA: MEDO-PERSIA.

After the death of Alexander, Grecia was divided into four parts, toward the four Winds of heaven, v. 8. And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great (v. 9), even to the host of heaven (v. 10). In chapter ii. Rome is represented by the feet and legs of the image. In chap. vii. it is represented by the fourth beast having ten horns. But in the eighth chapter it is symbolized by an exceeding great horn.

ENLARGED VIEW OF THE FOUR HORNS.

This exceeding great horn represents Rome, is evident from the following and many other reasons.

1. It rises "In the latter part of their kingdom,"—that is, of the four kingdoms. So did Rome, as far as its place in the prophecy is concerned. Its connection with the Jews commenced 158 years before Christ.
2. It was "of fierce countenance." So was Rome. See Deut. xxviii. 43, 50.
3. It was "little" at first. So was Rome.
4. It waxed "exceeding great," towards the east and towards the south." So did Rome.
5. It cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground. So did Rome—persecuting Christians, Apostles, and ministers of Jesus, as no other power ever did.
6. "He magnified himself even to the Prince of the host." So did Rome, when the Pope became the "head of all the churches." But the margin reads more properly, "He magnified himself AGAINST THE PRINCE of the host," and in the interpretation the angel says, "He shall stand up against the PRINCE of princes." Thus did Rome, when both Herod and Pontius Pilate conspired against the holy Jesus.
7. "He shall destroy wonderfully, and shall destroy the mighty and holy people." Thus did Rome.
8. "He shall be broken without hand." So will Rome. (See ch. ii.) "Broken by the stone cut out without hands."
9. Rome was the only power which could be referred to, for it was the only "EXCEEDING GREAT" power which succeeded the four kingdoms, and fulfilled all parts of the description.

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Dan. ii. 44.

Josiah Litch was a Methodist Episcopal minister from New England who, like Himes, embraced the Advent cause after reading William Miller's lectures. In 1841 he brought the Advent message to Pennsylvania and set up headquarters in Philadelphia to lecture and distribute publications. Litch was one of a number of ministers who, with Himes, provided leadership for the Second Advent movement from its beginnings in the 1840s and later continued as leaders of the several factions into which it split. Litch himself remained with the Evangelical Adventists. Soon after his arrival in Philadelphia, Litch wrote back to Himes in Boston that he needed more books. "I do not know when I shall be home, so you must see to my family. There is great work before me here and I cannot leave it for the present."¹ By 1844 Litch reported in a letter published in the Advent Herald that "there is a field from Lancaster to Chambersburgh, Pennsylvania, on the line of the western railroad, which promises a precious harvest if occupied."² Activities of "lecturers" reported in the Advent Herald, and in articles in local newspapers through the period 1843-44, attest to the lively interest in Adventism in the Harrisburg area--not surprising, given the tradition of millennialism among many of the German sects of the area.³

THE GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT

As 1843 came and went, two dates in 1844 became targeted as likeliest times for the expected event. The Whig paper Clay Bugle published in 1844 in Harrisburg an article on the failure of the second date of October 22 to produce the expected events under the headline, "Millerism in Dauphin."

The end-of-the-world mania, which has been raging to so great an extent in the east, has, we regret to state, extended to this neighborhood. During a recent visit to this place of Father Miller and several of his coadjutors, a number of our worthy, though simple minded individuals, were induced to give credence to the delusive doctrines which were held forth, and have been for sometime impressed with a notion that--the end of the world is coming--coming and nothing can induce them to believe otherwise. Tuesday and Wednesday last week were to be the final days--and in order to be prepared, we are informed by a reliable source, that quite a number of the faithful at Middletown, settled up their worldly affairs and on Monday afternoon proceeded to what is called "Hill Island" in the Susquehanna river which rises several hundred feet above the level of the stream, there to engage in prayer &c., and to await the coming of the Messiah. Whether they are still waiting in anticipation of the interesting event, or have concluded that it is to be "further postponed on account of weather," we have not heard.⁴

(OPPOSITE) DANIEL'S VISIONS, WOOD ENGRAVING FROM MILLERITE NEWSPAPER, C. 1844. COURTESY AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY, WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS.

When both dates passed without event, the press quickly joined the established churches in dismissing the Adventists as misguided fanatics. The newspapers dropped their occasional mention of the so-called Millerites because they were no longer newsworthy. Even those ministers and congregations who had previously been sympathetic to hearing Advent "lecturers" in their churches, and had supported the revivals associated with the cause, increasingly disassociated themselves from Miller's followers and closed their churches to Second Advent preachers.

Letters from Joshua Himes to William Miller provide insights into how the Adventists themselves reacted to what has been called "the great disappointment." Writing to William Miller in 1845, Joshua Himes expressed his loyalty to Miller's theories and his opposition to a number of competing theories and explanations that were splintering the Second Advent cause.

It is not right for us to set down and brood over our disappointment, and give way to a morbid feeling, that will arise out of such a state of things. No--No. God has set Watchmen upon his walls that shall never hold their peace until Jerusalem is made a praise in the Earth. Is. 42,6,17. This has not yet been done, and we have No right therefore to hold our peace yet. The no work system--The door of mercy shut etc. against sinners is producing the most disastrous effects both to believers and to the uncommitted. It also makes havoc with our publications... Your old view is the true view. I like the "old wine" best.⁵

Confusion about how to react to the disappointment--and the diversity of opinions put forward--prompted Himes, Miller, and other Advent leaders to call a meeting to establish unity among their respective followings.

At the Mutual Conference of Adventists held in Albany, New York on April 29, 1845 Miller's followers admitted that a mistake had been made in the time, but reaffirmed their belief in an imminent Second Advent. They remained reluctant to establish a formal church organization, but grudgingly adopted a congregational structure that recognized any group of worthy believers who used the Bible as their rule. The Conference organizers also sought to separate themselves from more radical theories and practices, resolving that

the act of promiscuous feet washing and the salutation kiss, as practised by some professing Adventists as religious ceremonies, sitting on the floor as an act of voluntary humility, shaving the head to humble one's self, and acting like children in understanding, are not only unscriptural, but subversive, if persevered in, of purity and morality.⁶

Following reports from various "lecturers", including a "cheering account of the cause in the interior of Pennsylvania," by Brother Gates, the Conference addressed the question, "What now is our work?"

END OF THE WORLD, OCTOBER 22, 1844!!

Behold ! the Bridegroom Cometh!! Go ye out to meet him !!!



BRO. WM. MILLER'S
LETTER

And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief men, and every freeman, had their wives in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. Rev. vi. 15, 16.

END OF THE WORLD. HEADLINE AND WOOD ENGRAVING FROM MILLERITE NEWSPAPER C. 1844. COURTESY AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY, WORCESTER, MASS.

Rather than the large camp meetings which had characterized their evangelism during the excitement leading up to 1844, they realized that "what we do now must be done more by dint of perseverance and determined effort, than by moving the masses of community." The methods they outlined in their resolutions included "visiting the towns and villages, and in some convenient place giving courses of lectures, and holding series of conferences. By this we think our means could be better husbanded, and fewer laborers could carry on the meetings, and thus a wider field be occupied."⁷ Their methodology also called for wider circulation of their books and periodicals, and for the establishment of Sabbath Schools for children.

ADVENTISM IN CENTRE COUNTY

Jacob D. Boyer of Shiremanstown, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, was one of the lecturers who answered the call to carry on the work of preaching the Second Advent message. Although the details of his life remain obscure, we can glean from his letters to the Advent Herald that he had been active in Adventist activities in the 1843-44 period. One of his first letters to the newspaper, written from Landisville, Pa., on August 27, 1845, describes prejudice against the Advent message that he encountered and gives the example of Brother Tucker, who "formerly belonged to the Winebrennarians, but was expelled last spring, because he had identified himself with the Adventists."⁸ As early as 1844 or 1845, Boyer accompanied I.R. Gates⁹ on a tour of Centre County. A letter from Josiah Litch in December, 1845 reports that "Bro. Boyer has gone out among the mountains of Pennsylvania to seek out the wandering sheep, and feed them with the bread of life." The next year Boyer reports 10 or 12 conversions during a tour through the counties of Lancaster, Dauphin, Cumberland, Perry and Centre.¹⁰

Despite these early efforts, only 5 or 6 converts to Adventism remained in the region when Jacob Boyer returned to Centre County with John E. Barnes in the fall of 1846. The two men stayed at the home of Thomas Esworthy, a sympathetic Adventist, through the following spring but met with little success because prejudice against their views was high in the community. Barnes left the area, but Boyer continued his preaching and eventually succeeded in attracting converts. A summary of their activities, written in a letter from Thomas Esworthy to the Advent Herald in 1848, is supported by letters from Boyer and others describing the work in Centre County.

In a letter from Shiremanstown, Pa., dated August 26, 1846, Reverend Lemuel Osler, another prominent Adventist and former Methodist Episcopal minister from New England, wrote that

Brother Adams and myself have just returned from our visit to Centre County, and we can assure you that it afforded us great satisfaction to meet with the few scattered ones who are holding fast their profession of faith without wavering. There are about 6 who remain as the fruits of Bro. Gates' and Bro. Boyer's labors.

They are men of piety and influence, and that influence is excited for God's cause... The public mind in that region had been shamefully abused on the Advent question, by the pulpit and the press, but when they heard the subject fairly presented, they were both astonished and delighted... one brother walked 55 miles to enjoy the privilege of meeting with us.11

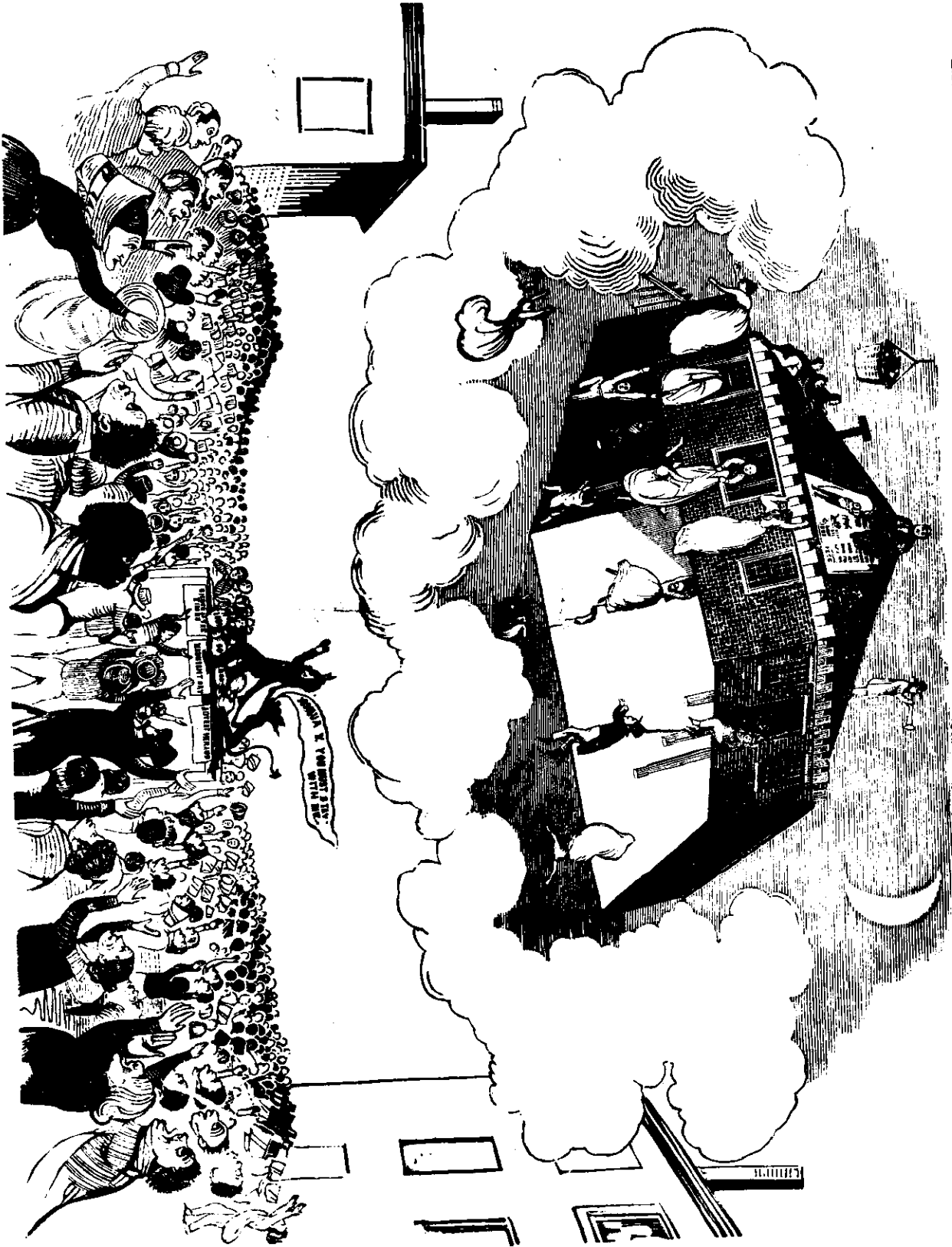
The next letter from Boyer, written from Philipsburg and dated December 21, 1846, describes his trip to Clearfield County after "attending the protracted meeting in Centre County." His detailed description of activities there provides an interesting picture of how he and other Advent "lecturers" operated. Leaving Centre County on December 8th, he arrived in Clearfield on the 15th.

It being too late to circulate the notice that evening for a meeting, and being a stranger in the place, I went to a temperance hotel, and soon entered into conversation with the gentleman of the house and others. I was then introduced to a brother who had heard Bro. Hale in 1843, but since that time he had heard little or nothing on the subject and was anxious to hear more. He called on me the next morning, and invited me to his house where I was kindly entertained. He also assisted me in procuring the Court house, a large and commodious building, in which I spoke twice to large and attentive congregations. Five of the clergy were present... One man said he would wish no better fun than to shoot me... I distributed a number of tracts and books amongst the people, who appeared as anxious to read on the subject as I ever saw them in 1843 or '44. 12

Boyer continues by describing similar efforts at Clearfield Bridge and "Mr. Goss's settlement," where he combined public preaching with house-to-house visits to pray and sing and distribute tracts. Fortitude was required of both preachers and listeners. Boyer describes preaching at Mr. Goss's settlement despite the stormy December weather when "the roads filled in many places with snow, so that they had to pass through the fields with their sleighs, yet the house was well filled and they listened to a discourse of 2 hours in length." He goes on to say after reporting on this trip, "It may well be said of these upper counties, the harvest is great, and the laborers are few."13 He returned to Centre County to hold a "watch meeting there New Year's eve."

We met on the last night of the old year, had preaching at six and nine o'clock, after which we partook of the Lord's Supper. Thus we commenced the new year, by showing forth His Death until he comes.14

In the new year Boyer reported preaching at Blooming Grove, Lycoming County; Spring Creek, Centre County; the Methodist Episcopal Church at Centre Furnace; and at a school house in Pine Grove.



MILLER in his glory, Saints and sinners in one great CONGLOMERATION!
GRAND ASCENSION OF THE MILLER TABERNACLE!

GRAND ASCENSION OF THE MILLER TABERNACLE. SPOOF OF MILLER'S THEORIES APPEARING IN THE POPULAR PRESS, C. 1844. COURTESY AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY, WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

A letter from John E. Barnes, Boyer's companion in Centre County, sheds some further light on the activities of these early Advent preachers. He describes his experiences with both the "colored church" and the Roman Catholics of Bellefonte.

Some few weeks since, being invited by the pastor of the colored church in Bellefonte to preach during a protracted meeting, I did so one night, the only time in which I had leisure. Sinners, like Saul of old, fell to the ground. Out of nine or ten who were concerned, two or three received pardon, and rejoiced in the Lord. There is yet mercy. On the 10th of this month, the Roman Catholics locked the school-house where I had an appointment to preach. The inhabitants were very much enraged. It was opened the next evening, when I spoke freely on the rise and progress of the Papacy. The interest was very great. Though we were at first called false prophets, now the feeling is different.¹⁵

There are other reports of Adventists preaching in black churches, not surprising considering the anti-slavery and abolitionist sympathies of many Adventists. They were less kindly disposed toward Catholicism. Indeed, they viewed Papal Rome as the last empire to be destroyed, in the vision of Daniel as they interpreted it (opposite), before the establishment of the kingdom of God.

By the summer of 1847 Boyer's efforts had succeeded in attracting enough of a following to hold a camp meeting in Centre County. The announcement of the meeting appeared in The Advent Herald on August 21 of that year.

There will be a Camp-meeting in Centre County, Pennsylvania on the land of Col. Gregg, five miles above Milesburg one mile to the right of the Phillipsburg Pike, to commence August 27th and continue over the Sabbath. Brn. Osler, Adams, Peck, and Boyer will be in attendance. Bro. Litch is also expected to be present. We invite all the scattered ones in the adjoining counties to come up to the feasts;--let there be a general gathering of the faithful. J.D. Boyer 16

Lemuel Osler, one of the preachers who came to that meeting, reported on it in a letter that appeared in the Herald.

We commenced our meeting on the 27th. Bro. Boyer and myself were the only ministers present then. We had a respectable attendance during the day. On Saturday, the congregations were much larger. Bro. Adams, from Shiremanstown, arrived this day; and on the Sabbath we were favored with a very large audience of intelligent and interested hearers. Bro. Edmonson, a minister of the United Brethren Society, was present. By hearing and reading on the subject, he has become fully persuaded

of the truth of our position... He will doubtless be of service to the cause in the region... On Tuesday, Bro. Boyer and myself went to Milesburg, which is about 2 miles from Bellefonte, the county-seat of Centre, and seven miles from our camp, where I preached in the large Methodist meeting-house, to a good congregation. While there, we were kindly entertained by Col. Greigh [Gregg], a gentleman of influence and wealth.¹⁷

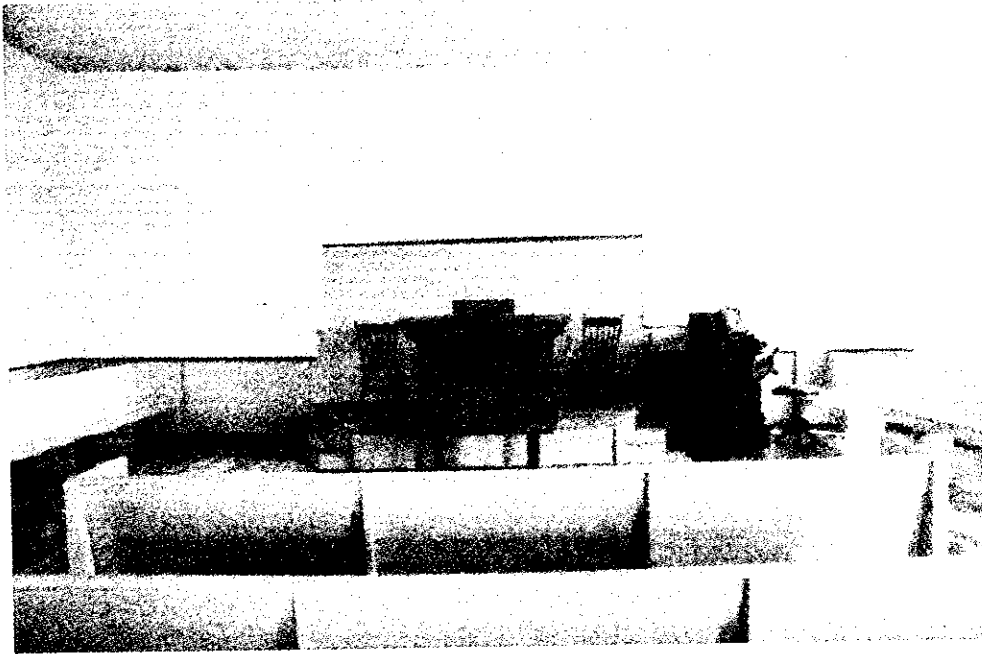
Andrew Gregg was at this time an owner of the Milesburg Iron Works and a prominent member of the community. The fact that he provided the land for the first camp meeting and met with Advent preachers suggests that he supported their efforts, but it is not clear how involved he became.

The camp meeting was apparently a turning point for the Advent cause in Centre County. Writing from Pleasant Gap on October 29, 1847, Boyer comments that "this neighborhood appears to be all on fire... the interest to hear was as great as it was at any time in 1843."¹⁸ He goes on to describe preaching at the Methodist Episcopal Church in Stormstown to a congregation of 400-500, and at the Wallace Run meeting house belonging to the United Brethren. He also describes a visit to Snow Shoe.

The next place I visited was Snow-shoe settlement, which is some 16 miles from Bellefonte. There is no denomination here but the Baptist, of which there is a small congregation. They received the word gladly, and having no preacher to visit them regularly, they requested me to visit them as often as convenient.¹⁹



PREACHER'S STAND AND PULPIT, MARSH CREEK ADVENT CHURCH, AFTER RESTORATION TO THEIR ORIGINAL (1849) APPEARANCE.



INTERIOR OF MARSH CREEK ADVENT CHURCH, VIEW FROM PEWS
REPRODUCED AT VO-TECH, BASED ON BUSH HOLLOW ORIGINALS.

Thomas Esworthy, writing in early 1848, also attributes the increased interest in Adventism in the county to this meeting, and reported that "since the camp-meeting upwards of fifty have gotten religion." He also explains how they have organized themselves.

We have now formed a church at the Union [Meeting house] according to gospel order. It numbers at present upwards of thirty members, and there are every week some joining themselves to us. We do not believe in leaving everything at loose ends and having our labor lost among the different sects. Not that we glory in building up a church of our own. For we trust in God that our motives are pure and we do it all for his glory. But we have been forced into these measures by the different sects, and more especially the Methodists. First, they objected to us on account of our being without rules or organization; next for being Unitarian; and again for making no effort to save souls. In this dilemma, what were we to do? We saw no other way, than to form ourselves into a church. At the head of our church-book we have pasted the declaration of principles of the Mutual Conference of Adventists at Albany, to which we all subscribe. We have also an article on the God-head written out and attached to it, so that all may see what we do believe.²⁰

Events in Centre County and the pressures that produced a need to organize locally into churches, reported in Esworthy's letter, parallel the development of Adventism in other areas. While Boyer

and others sought converts in the rural fields of Pennsylvania, New York, and New England, Himes continued to keep the Herald office afloat and to coordinate the work of the traveling preachers through the vehicle of the newspaper. Worldwide upheavals in 1848 contributed to the success of his efforts. Cholera epidemics, a volcanic eruption in Java, the revolutions of 1848, and the "strife and convulsions among the nations of the old world," were duly reported in the pages of The Advent Herald and served to reassure Adventists that their hope was not in vain.²¹ Himes reported to Miller in September of 1848, "...our meetings of late have been good. The tent meetings were never better than this year."²²

Advent activities in Centre County continued to flourish. Boyer reported holding meetings at the "Union meeting-house which is in Bald-eagle village, about seven miles west of Bellefont, Wallace Run meeting-house, Half-moon village," Milesburg, and Johnson's Run. "I next went to the mouth of Mash [sic] Creek, three miles north of Howard village, and preached in the schoolhouse... We also formed a society here, numbering thirteen."²⁹

The following summer, another camp meeting was held in Centre County. An announcement appeared in the Democratic Whig of August 2nd and 16th, 1848 under the heading, "Advent Camp-meeting."

There will be an Advent Camp-meeting in Centre County to commence on Thursday, the 17th of August and continue over the Sabbath. It will be held on land owned by Mr. Alexander, five miles from the Phillipsburg turnpike. It is hoped that all the brethren of the region will come and bring tents. Elder J. Lieth [Litch] of Philadelphia, and others, will be present to assist in the meeting. Board can be had near the ground at Mr. Alexander's. By order of the committee.

J.D. Boyer	T.A. Esworthy	Joseph Eckley
Geo. Watson	William Resides	John Rayton 24

Letters from both Litch and Boyer were published in The Advent Herald. Boyer's account, written from Milesburg, describes his efforts with the help of Brothers Litch and Laning.

Our camp-meeting was instrumental in awakening an interest in a large part of the community, and in the conversion of from twenty-five to thirty souls. After its close, we held a grove meeting in company with Bro. Litch, at Mechanicsburg [Mount Eagle], a village about 5 miles distant from this place... Our next meeting was held at a place called Snowshoe [sic]. This also was a new field of labor, but a deep interest was soon manifested. After our return, we held a grove meeting in Milesburg, which continued three days... We next commenced a series of meetings at Adams' Furnace [Julian], a distance of nine miles from this place...²⁵

His letter ends with a detailed description of the events that led to the building of the church at Marsh Creek. The problem of finding



MARSH CREEK ADVENT CHURCH IN 1989, FOLLOWING RESTORATION. VIEW FROM CEMETERY SHOWING SOUTH SIDE AND REAR. MOOSE RUN ROAD ABOVE MILESBURG

suitable churches and halls to preach in is reported at this time by most Advent historians, and is the main reason why Adventists began forming congregations and building churches during this period.

On the last day of our camp-meeting, an effort was made towards the building of a place of worship at Mash Creek, the brethren not having a suitable place to worship in. About three hundred dollars were subscribed on the ground, and the building will shortly be commenced.

Previous to this, I received a note from a gentleman in Milesburg, who, with several others, wished me to request Bro. Litch to preach in that place in the evening next week and that a house of worship would be provided. The brethren of the Baptist church were consulted, and as the majority consented, it was understood we should occupy their building. On the evening of the meeting we found that due to the influence of a few members, the doors were closed against us. A large congregation had assembled in front of the meeting-house, who repaired to a suitable spot at some distance, where Bro. Litch addressed them, standing in the open air. The community were displeased with this act and asked me to make an

effort by way of subscription for the erection of a place of worship. I did and now have between two and three hundred dollars for that purpose.²⁶

Boyer's next letter, written in the spring, describes how they now have a church numbering 35 or 40 in Milesburg even though there had been no believers there 15 months before. "We are progressing slowly towards the erection of a church at Mash Creek," he reports, "and expect to have it ready to worship in by the middle of the summer."²⁷ That summer another camp meeting was held, with announcements appearing in both the Centre Democrat and the Democratic Whig.

CAMP MEETING. An Advent Camp Meeting will be held commencing August 23rd on the old ground owned by Messrs. Alexanders five miles from Milesburg, one mile north of Philipsburg Pike. The community are invited to attend that they may hear and investigate for themselves. Rev. J. Litch of Philadelphia and O. Osler of Salem, Massachusetts, will be in attendance. J.D. Boyer. In behalf of the committee.²⁸

A description of this camp meeting in a letter to The Advent Herald from J.W. Bonham, another Adventist evangelist, provides a clear picture of Advent camp meetings of this period.

"The encampment covered an area of about 120 feet by 100, which was very comfortably fitted up with preachers' stand and tent, and seats for the accommodation of one thousand persons, with twenty commodious tents. At the time of my arrival, the brethren were holding a 'love feast;' they appeared to be filled with the love of the Saviour, and as happy as they could possibly be in this mortal state... on the arrival of the hour for the afternoon service, the horn was blown to call the friends together, whom I addressed for about an hour. Bro. Litch preached in the evening, after which penitents were invited to come forward to the anxious seats. At the prayer meeting the brethren and sisters assembled within the altar, which was capable of holding about two hundred, and in the centre of which were two benches, one for male, and the other for female penitents... At night, the camp-ground presented a very interesting and imposing appearance. On two sides of the encampment were lofty mountains, covered with trees of majestic height; on the ground were four platforms, elevated several feet, covered with earth, upon which were burnt pitch-pine, the flames of which illuminated the ground, and with the moon, which shone between the trees, removed the gloom of night, and made all around look cheerful... On Tuesday morning Bro. J. Adams of Shiremanstown arrived. After the prayer-meeting, a goodly number went to the Bald Eagle Brook, where Bro. Boyer immersed six happy believers... Bro. Peck, a German Baptist preacher, attended the meeting, and took part in its services.²⁹

In the same letter, Bonham gives an equally detailed account of the dedication of the Marsh Creek chapel.

On Lord's-day, Sept. 2d, the new Advent chapel at Mash Creek was dedicated. When completed, it will be a neat building, 32 feet by 42. It stands on an eminence, and is surrounded by nature's enchanting scenery. It is built on a portion of an acre of ground, presented to the society by Gen. Irvin and Col. Gregg. The first and third sermons were preached by Bro. Litch, and the second by the writer. The attendance was good, several having come from a distance. During the day, Bro. Joseph Adams was publicly set apart for the work of the gospel ministry by the imposition of hands and prayer. --The society at Mash Creek number eighty-two members, and give signs of prosperity.30

FRONT VIEWS OF MARSH CREEK (BELOW) AND CENTRAL (RIGHT) ADVENT CHURCHES. THIS VIEW SHOWS GREEK REVIVAL FACADE WITH TWO DOORS CHOSEN WHEN BOTH BUILDINGS WERE BUILT. CENTRAL WAS SECOND CHURCH TO BE ERECTED (1868). ITS LOCATION, IN BUSH HOLLOW, WAS ON SITE WHERE ADVENT CAMP MEETINGS WERE STAGED.



By 1849 Boyer was serving nearly 300 members of Advent congregations throughout the district in which he traveled. The chapel at Marsh Creek appears to be the first built in central Pennsylvania, although Litch reported plans for building a second chapel in Elk County and another in Milesburg. Joseph Adams, also of Shiremanstown, was assisting Boyer, who could report that "the cause is onward in Centre, Clearfield, and Elk counties."³¹

Camp meetings held in the summers of 1850 and 1851 reported good attendance. In May 1851, a conference of Adventists was held in Centre County at the Marsh Creek Chapel. At this meeting Joseph Adams, who had moved with his family from Shiremanstown to Centre County to assist Boyer, was called before the officers of the Advent Churches in Centre County to answer to five grave charges brought against him. He did not appear, and was found guilty by a council of thirteen officers, and was expelled from their communion.³²

This incident shows the degree and type of organization that was evolving. Reluctant to create a centralized denomination, Adventists were becoming increasingly organized as local and state "conferences" that could act in just such matters as the dispute between Boyer and Adams. A notice in The Advent Herald, supporting Boyer, utilized the rostrum of the national paper, but spoke in the voice of the local churches served by one preacher: "...resolved, that we, as the representatives of the Advent churches in Centre, assure our brethren and friends abroad, that we have unabated confidence in Bro. Boyer's Christian character, and esteem him very highly in love for his works' sake." The notice was signed, "In behalf of the churches, John Ross, R. McMullen, Wm. H. Swan, J.T. Swiers, Jos. Eckley, Green Watson, Wm. Resides, Perry Akins, T.A. Esworthy, Sec'y, Pleasant Gap, June 20th 1851."³³

Lemuel Osler ended his description of the 1851 conference at Marsh Creek by reporting that "this church occupies a neat chapel of their own, situated among the ridges of the Alleghenies. They are at peace among themselves, and are loving each other with pure hearts fervently."³⁴

Jacob Boyer remained active in Centre County until at least 1861. The year before, he was listed among the ministers present at an 1860 Messianian Conference in Pennsylvania. After 1861 Boyer's name no longer appears in The Advent Herald and the work in Centre County is taken up by a number of other ministers.

LATER YEARS OF EVANGELICAL ADVENTISM IN CENTRE COUNTY

During the decade that followed the building of the church at Marsh Creek, the Advent movement became increasingly organized--first establishing individual churches, then local and state conferences, and finally a number of general associations, each ascribing to various Advent positions and with publications of their own.³⁵ Himes, Litch,

and other original leaders of the Second Advent movement formed the first of the general Adventist associations--the American Second Advent Mission Society--in 1854. A convention of these same Adventists, held in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1858, reorganized as the American Evangelical Advent Conference. They established the American Millennial Association for the purpose of carrying out the publishing ministry of the conference. From 1860 they began using "Messianic Conference" and "Messiah's Church" when referring to themselves, eventually renaming their publication Messiah's Herald in 1875.

The Evangelical Adventists throughout the country were active supporters of the reform movements of abolition and temperance, and reportedly worked among southern Freedmen both during and after the Civil War.³⁶ Following the Civil War, a new era of revivalism in the 1870s brought renewed interest in their message. Evangelical Adventists cooperated with the new generation of evangelical denominations, finding their views about the Second Advent and the infallibility of the Bible widely shared.

Adventism in Centre County followed a similar course. Linn's History of Centre and Clinton Counties includes detailed information about the formation of the Centre County Advent churches and the ministers who served them. Many of those mentioned by Linn were traveling Adventist preachers whose names appear in The Advent Herald in connection with meetings throughout the northeast. Following Boyer, a number of preachers served the Advent congregations of Centre County. **M.L. Jackson**, born in Abington, Massachusetts in 1828, first came to Centre County as an evangelist in 1856, and probably replaced Boyer as the main circuit preacher in the early 1860s. According to Linn, he left Centre County in 1867 and moved near Harrisburg. He later returned to Centre County in 1877 to become the pastor at Snow Shoe. He died May 13, 1903 at Snow Shoe and is buried at Kylertown. From 1868 to 1871, **Thomas Holland** and **Henry P. Cutter** are mentioned as the pastors of the various Advent churches in Centre County.

According to Linn, Jackson trained **John Zeigler**, a native of Cumberland County, while he was in the Harrisburg area. John Zeigler became the last Adventist preacher in Centre County. Born in North Middleton Township in Cumberland County on February 11, 1848, Zeigler was the oldest son of Jonathan and Elizabeth Zeigler, listed as farmers in the 1850 census. In 1862 John Zeigler married Susan Kutz, also from North Middleton. After studying under M.L. Jackson in Cumberland County, Zeigler entered the ministry and took over as pastor of the Messiah Churches of Bald Eagle. The detail of Linn's account of Advent churches in Centre County suggests that he probably asked Zeigler, who was the active pastor at the time the history was published, to write the descriptions of the various churches. Zeigler's leadership occurred during a period of active building and expansion for Adventism in the county. In 1872 the Marsh Creek church was remodeled and rededicated. Between 1873 and 1874, churches were built at Dick's Run, Snow Shoe, Spring Township and Pine Glen. From 1876 on, Linn reports that Zeigler was closely and publicly identified with the temperance cause. After the death of

his first wife, Zeigler married Laura Way of Centre County in 1901. Zeigler's journals from 1903 to 1915, in the collection of the Centre County Historical Society, help fill in the later period of Evangelical Adventism that postdates Linn's publication.

Zeigler records his preaching activities at Marsh Creek, the United Brethren Church at Runville, and a Free Methodist Grove Meeting. His journal also lists his attendance at State Conferences of Messiah Church held in Snow Shoe and Zion, as well as at a Prohibition Convention at Philipsburg. As late as 1914, he records receiving checks from the American Millennial Association "for the performance of faithful duty." He died in 1916, and was buried in the Marsh Creek cemetery. With his death, the Advent awakening in Centre County, begun by Jacob Boyer in 1846, came to a close. Many of the congregations continued in existence, using the services of visiting ministers of various denominations for a time. When they reaffiliated, they chose newer fundamentalist denominations. In 1940 the Central Messiah Church reorganized as a Pilgrim Holiness Church, and about the same time the Marsh Creek Church affiliated with God's Missionary Church.



MARSH CREEK CHURCH BEFORE RESTORATION. VESTIBULE AND BELL TOWER WERE ADDED IN ITS GOD'S MISSIONARY DAYS AFTER 1940.

CONCLUSION

As a case study, the Evangelical Adventists of Centre County shed new light on this least known of the Advent groups which emerged from the Millerite excitement of the 1840s. The experiences of Centre County Adventists support the general characteristics of Adventism described in more general histories of the movement. The rural appeal of the Advent message, often noted as a characteristic of the Millerite movement, is borne out in the location of six of the seven Advent churches in the county (the exception being the Spring Township church) within the ridge

areas north of Bald Eagle Creek and on the Allegheny Mountain beyond. The organizational structure of the Centre County churches followed the non-denominational preference of the early Adventists and documents their choice of loosely affiliated conferences over a centralized denomination. The later history of Centre County Evangelical Adventists likewise traces a pattern common to Adventists elsewhere: a period of growth in the 1870s followed by decline and eventual assimilation into the newer fundamentalist denominations of the 20th Century.

David T. Arthur, curator of the Jenks Memorial Collection at Aurora College in Illinois, suggests that the downfall of the Evangelical Adventists came about because of their steadfast adherence to the Advent message of the 1840s, and their inability to develop a theology for the present. "Progressive America," he says, "seemed but little interested in a denomination whose sole emphasis was on the evil of the present world and the glory of the next."³⁷ A small white church on quiet Moose Run Road, the Marsh Creek chapel remains an unlikely but eloquent testimonial to a segment of American religious history, and a fascinating chapter in the rich religious heritage of Centre County.

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ADVENT CHURCHES IN CENTRE COUNTY

MARSH CREEK ADVENT CHURCH

Location: Moose Run Road, Boggs Township
Organized: 1848 by Jacob D. Boyer
Church built: 1849
Later History: Remodeled in 1872. Reaffiliated with God's Missionary Church in the 1940s. Saved from demolition in 1985 and acquired by the Advent Historical Society, which was founded to act as its custodian. Restoration completed in 1989.

CENTRAL ADVENT CHURCH

Location: Bush Hollow, Union Township
Organized: 1861 by Lemuel Oeler and Jacob Boyer in school house.
Church built: 1868
Later History: Reorganized in 1940 as Pilgrim Holiness Church. Burned by vandals in 1983.

DICK'S RUN MESSIAH'S CHURCH

Location: Dick's Run, Union Township
Organized: 1867 by Rev. Thomas Holland in Dick's Run Schoolhouse
Church built: 1873, on a lot adjoining the school
Later History: Privately owned

RESTORATION OF THE MARSH CREEK ADVENT CHURCH

THE RESTORATION OF THE MARSH CREEK ADVENT CHURCH TO ITS ORIGINAL 1849 APPEARANCE, BASED ON ARCHITECTURAL AND PHOTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE, HAS BEEN COMPLETED BY THE ADVENT HISTORICAL SOCIETY. A SET OF MEASURED DRAWINGS, PREPARED BY STRUCTURAL ENGINEER ROBERT DEPUY DAVIS OF BELLEFONTE HELPED GUIDE THE RESTORATION PROJECT. THE UNADORNED VERNACULAR GREEK REVIVAL BUILDING IS CONSTRUCTED OF CHESTNUT LOGS AND SHEATHED WITH CLAPBOARDS. THE ROOF WAS RESHINGLED WITH CEDAR, AS IT WAS IN THE 19TH CENTURY, AND RETAINS INTERESTING HALF-ROUND DETAILING UNDER THE EAVES. THE ORIGINAL PANELED DOORS--ONE SINGLE AND ONE DOUBLE--WERE RESCUED FROM THE CRAWL SPACE, RESTORED AND HUNG. THE DOORS WERE USED AS PATTERNS FOR THE WOOD SHUTTERS FOR THE WINDOWS, WHICH WERE REPRODUCED BY STUDENTS AT CENTRE COUNTY VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL. THE 8 9-OVER-9 WINDOWS (3 ON EACH SIDE AND 2 IN THE REAR) WERE RESTORED AND REGLAZED WITH OLD PANES WHENEVER POSSIBLE. A BELL-TOWER, PORCH AND PULPIT ALCOVE, ADDED IN THE LATE 1940S, WERE REMOVED DURING THE RESTORATION AND THE ORIGINAL SOUNDING BOARD THAT MATCHES THE WAINSCOTING WAS REBUILT FOLLOWING 1930S PHOTOS.

INSIDE, THE RESTORATION INVOLVED REMOVING LAYERS OF WALLPAPER AND PAINT, LINOLEUM, AND A PRESSBOARD CEILING, TO REVEAL THE ORIGINAL SURFACES. WITH TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FROM DENISON GROENENDAAL, WHO DID THE PAINT ANALYSIS AND COLOR SPECIFICATION, THE RESTORATION TEAM OF VOLUNTEERS WAS ABLE TO MATCH THE WHITE-WASHED PLASTER WALLS, WHITE-PAINTED PLANK CEILING, AND BRIGHT-BLUE WAINSCOTING THAT WERE ORIGINAL TO THE CHURCH. AS LATER PAINT LAYERS WERE STRIPPED FROM THE WAINSCOTING, THE OUTLINE SHADOW AND PLACEMENT OF THE ORIGINAL PEWS COULD BE SEEN IN THE BLUE PAINT LAYER. FROM THIS EVIDENCE AND A SURVIVING PEW FROM THE CENTRAL CHURCH AT BUSH HOLLOW, REPRODUCTION PEWS WERE MADE BY THE CENTRE COUNTY VO-TECH STUDENTS. THE ORIGINAL PLANK FLOOR WAS CLEANED AND SEALED TO MAINTAIN ITS ORIGINAL APPEARANCE.

DURING RESTORATION, INTERESTING IRON OBJECTS WERE FOUND IN AN ADJOINING ASHPIT: A PLATE FROM ONE OF THE ORIGINAL STOVES THAT HEATED THE CHURCH, AS WELL AS A FRAGMENT FROM A LATER POTBELLY STOVE; PARTS OF A CHANDELIER OF IRON; AND IRON BRACKETS POSSIBLY USED ON PEWS TO HOLD PEG LAMPS.

PLANS FOR THE RESTORED CHURCH BUILDING INCLUDE ITS USE AS A CHAPEL FOR THE CEMETERY, AND AS A SITE FOR WEDDINGS AND OTHER APPROPRIATE EVENTS, IN ADDITION TO ITS BEING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC ON A LIMITED BASIS AS AN HISTORICAL BUILDING. ANYONE INTERESTED IN THE BUILDING SHOULD CONTACT THE ADVENT HISTORICAL SOCIETY, P.O. BOX 983, MILESBURG, PA 16853 (814-355-7388)

MESSIAH'S CHURCH OF SNOW SHOE

Location: Sycamore Street, Snow Shoe
Organized: 1869 by Rev. Henry P. Cutter in Presbyterian Church
Church built: 1873-1874
Later History: Rented by Methodist Church when their building was destroyed by fire in 1922. In 1927 remaining members transferred Snow Shoe Advent Church property to Presbyterians to use as site for a new church after their building burned in 1927.

MESSIAH'S CHURCH, SPRING TOWNSHIP

Location: Spring Township
Organized: 1871 by Henry Cutter. Organizing families: Bilger, Brooks, Shorer
Church built: 1874
Later History: Unknown. No church at that location.

PINE GLEN MESSIAH'S CHURCH

Location: Pine Glen, Burnside Township
Organized: 1873
Church built: 1874
Later History: Unknown

FAIRVIEW MESSIAH'S CHURCH

Location: Antis Run, Boggs Township
Organized: 1871 in Pleasant Valley Schoolhouse
Church built: After Linn's History was published in 1883
Later History: Currently used for Sunday School classes.

NOTES

1. Letter from Josiah Litch to Joshua V. Himes, Dec. 10, 1841, Joshua V. Himes Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.
2. Advent Herald, September 11, 1844.
3. Members of the United Brethren churches seem to have been most sympathetic to the Advent cause.
4. Clay Bugle, Harrisburg, October 24, 1844.
5. Letter from Joshua Himes to William Miller, Feb. 18, 1845, Joshua V. Himes Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.
6. Advent Herald, May 14, 1845.
7. Ibid.
8. Advent Herald, September 3, 1845.
9. Gates was a minister who left his congregation in Burnt Hills, New York, in 1842 to preach the Advent message. Advent Herald, Feb. 1, 1843.
10. Advent Herald, December 17, 1845 and February 4, 1846.
11. Advent Herald, September 16, 1846.
12. Advent Herald, January 6, 1847.
13. Ibid.
14. Advent Herald, February 17, 1847.

15. Advent Herald, March 24, 1847.
16. Advent Herald, August 21, 1847.
17. Advent Herald, October 2, 1847.
18. Advent Herald, November 13, 1847.
19. Ibid.
20. Advent Herald, January 22, 1848.
21. Advent Herald, June 15, 1848.
22. Letter from Himes to Miller, September 6, 1848, Joshua V. Himes Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.
23. Advent Herald, February 5, 1848. Boyer and others consistently spell Marsh Creek "Mash" Creek in the 1840s.
24. Democratic Whig, August 2, 1848. Joseph Alexander, Jr. is described by Linn as someone who always had a place to put up visiting clergy.
25. Advent Herald, October 14, 1848.
26. Ibid.
27. Advent Herald, April 7, 1849.
28. The Centre Democrat, August 1, 11, 15, 1849. Democratic Whig, August 11, 15, 1849.
29. Advent Hereald, September 22, 1849.
30. Ibid.
31. Advent Herald, November 3, 1849.
32. Letter from Lemuel Osler, Advent Herald, July 5, 1851.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. In 1848, a meeting of sabbath-keeping Adventists established a publishing ministry to produce the Present Truth. Under the leadership of Ellen White, the group continued and in 1860 adopted the name of Seventh-Day Adventist, the name of the present-day denomination. The Advent Christian Association was organized in 1860 by those who agreed with the positions taken in a publication called the World's Crisis, and eventually became the Advent Christian Church.
36. Arthur, David T., "The Evangelical Adventists, 1855-1914." Unpublished paper, University of Rochester, 1963.
37. Ibid.