

MILLERITES IN PENNSYLVANIA

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ABSTRACT: Pennsylvania's Second Advent history offers a new perspective on the nineteenth-century religious phenomenon of the Millerites since members were drawn from the state's diverse ethnicities and nonconformist religious sects. Accounts of Pennsylvania Adventists, especially in the central portion of the state, provide further evidence that the movement allowed an active role for women, engaged in outreach to African Americans, targeted rural communities, and maintained connections with other nineteenth-century reform movements, including abolition, temperance, and eclectic medicine. Rather than disappearing after 1844, Millerites in Pennsylvania remained active into the twentieth century, providing an unbroken link to the new evangelical denominations that eventually replaced them.

KEYWORDS: Millerites, Adventists, abolition, religion in Pennsylvania, medicine

In October 1844 the *Clay Bugle* newspaper in Harrisburg reported 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 . . . to await the coming of the Messiah.”¹ In Philadelphia newspapers reported that Millerites gathered outside the city to await the end. When the day passed without event, Adventists admitted their “Great Disappointment,” but many still believed that the Second Advent was imminent even though the date was wrong. Adventists in Pennsylvania, led by the Reverend Josiah Litch, nonetheless continued their work to promote Adventism in Philadelphia and further expanded their evangelical mission into the rural counties of central and northern Pennsylvania.

This study began as an effort to document a rural Centre County church building, locally known as the Advent Church. The discovery of other nineteenth-century Advent churches in Centre County suggested a larger

untold story. It became clear that the history of the Millerites and the Second Advent movement in Pennsylvania had been overlooked by most scholars who focused on the New England roots of William Miller's efforts to develop and disseminate his theory that the second coming of Christ would occur sometime between 1843 and 1844. After 1844 most sectarian accounts move on to the development of the two most successful denominations that grew out of Millerism: The Advent Christian Church and the Seventh-day Adventists. These narratives tend to depict the movement as a New England and New York State phenomenon and pay little attention to the Millerites in Pennsylvania who continued to follow Miller's original teachings most closely. First known simply as Second Adventists, and later as both Messiah's Church and Evangelical Adventists, they remained committed to the eternal suffering of the wicked, while other Advent groups adopted a belief in the ultimate destruction of the damned.

Pennsylvania's Second Advent history offers a different perspective on this nineteenth-century religious phenomenon since members were drawn from Pennsylvania's diverse ethnicities and nonconformist religious sects. Accounts of Pennsylvania Adventists provide further evidence that the movement allowed an active role for women, engaged in outreach to African Americans, targeted rural communities, and maintained connections with other nineteenth-century reform movements, including abolition, temperance, and eclectic medicine. Rather than disappearing after 1844, Millerites in Pennsylvania remained active into the twentieth century, providing an unbroken link to the new evangelical denominations that eventually replaced them.

MILLERISM, 1831–1844

A New England farmer seemed an unlikely candidate to lead a widespread religious movement that attracted thousands of followers and national attention. Born in Massachusetts, William Miller (1782–1849) grew up in Low Hampton, New York, just south of Lake Champlain near the Vermont border. After serving in the War of 1812, he abandoned deism to become a Baptist in response to the religious revivalism of the Second Great Awakening. He began to study the Bible in an attempt to rationalize and harmonize its seeming contradictions. He eventually began sharing the conviction that the Second Advent of Christ would occur around 1843–44, based on his own mathematical calculations of biblical chronology. He gave his first public

presentation in 1831 and published his lectures in 1836, but it was not until Joshua V. Himes (1805–95) joined the movement in 1839 that Miller began to share his message more widely to large audiences in major cities from Boston to Washington, DC. Joshua Himes, a Christian Connection minister in Boston, actively participated in the antislavery movement in association with William Lloyd Garrison and other Boston reformers. It is not surprising that he adopted similar communication strategies of lectures, publications, and public meetings when he redirected his efforts to promote the Advent cause.



FIGURE 1. William Miller. Lithograph, 1851, John H. Bufford Company. Courtesy: National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.

While Himes published *Signs of the Times*, organized the first Second Advent Conference at his Chardon Street Church in Boston, and arranged speaking tours for Miller, Josiah Litch (1809–86) ventured south to bring the Advent message to Pennsylvania and the mid-Atlantic states. Born in Lunenburg, Massachusetts, Litch studied at Wesleyan Academy in Wilbraham, Massachusetts. Ordained in the Methodist Episcopal Church as deacon in 1835, he became an elder in 1837. In the growing debates among Methodists over the issue of slavery, Litch aligned with reform movements, supporting both antislavery and temperance. In 1838, after reading a copy of Miller's published lectures, he became one of the first ministers to adopt Miller's predictions and began preaching and writing on the Second Advent. By 1841 he had separated from the Methodist Episcopal church to become a fulltime Advent preacher.

In a letter to Joshua V. Himes, dated December 10, 1841, Litch wrote from Philadelphia: "I do not know when I shall be home, so you must see to my family. There is a great work before me here and I cannot leave it for the present."² His first visit to Philadelphia may have been at the invitation of another New England Methodist, James W. Dyer, who had moved to Philadelphia in 1837. In an obituary for Dyer's wife, Mahitable, Litch documents her role during his first visits to Philadelphia, underscoring the importance of women in adopting the Advent message.³ Apollos Hale (1807–98), another Methodist Episcopal preacher from Massachusetts, accompanied Litch on his second visit to Philadelphia in 1842. A later account by Jonathan P. Weethee (1812–99) explains that during the winter of 1842–43, these two Advent lecturers had particular success in Pennsylvania:

During the same winter Brn. Litch and Hale visited Philadelphia, and other parts of Pennsylvania. A tract was prepared and published in German, and circulated among the German population. In February, 1843, Brn. Miller and Himes visited Philadelphia, where their labors were signally blessed. At the same time two ministers started on a Southern mission, and went as far as Richmond, Va. This effort was unsuccessful. Brn. Litch, I. Drake, and J. J. Porter visited Washington city.⁴

Hale and Litch briefly visited Pittsburgh, writing back on March 14, 1843, that since they found no Second Advent people there, they "had neither men nor means to do anything toward supplying the demand for light."⁵ They



FIGURE 2. Josiah Litch. Courtesy: Center for Adventist Research.

returned to Philadelphia where they saw greater opportunities and access to southern states. Litch's Pennsylvania activities first focused mainly on Philadelphia, where he established a Second Advent book room and briefly published a newspaper, the *Philadelphia Alarm*. In February 1843 he arranged for William Miller to visit Philadelphia. A description of the scene at the

Chinese Museum, located at Ninth and Sansom streets, conveys the level of excitement that resulted from Miller's visit:

At an early hour the house was filled and overflowed. When the lecture commenced, the crowd and confusion were so great as to render it almost impossible to hear the speaker, and it was thought best, after notifying the people what was to be done, and giving an opportunity to all who wished so to do, to go out, to close the doors and thus secure silence. This was done, and the speaker proceeded to his subject. . . . This would have undoubtedly continued, had it not been for the circumstance of a lady's fainting, and it became necessary to open the doors for her to go out. When the door was opened, there was a rush of persons who stood outside for admittance. As soon as this was done, and a few had come into the room, an unruly boy raised the cry of fire, which threw the whole assembly into confusion, some crying one thing, and some another. There did not appear to be any disposition on the part of the multitude to disturb the meeting, but all came from the rush and cry.⁶

Under Litch's guidance, Philadelphia Adventists formed an association and held regular meetings at the Chinese Museum and at the Juliana Street Chapel.⁷ They carefully avoided any appearance of sectarianism or suggestion that they were establishing a separate denomination. Charles Greene, corresponding secretary of the Philadelphia Second Advent Association reported:

As to the association, I would say, that in March last, some of the brethren deeming it better to unite their efforts in behalf of the second advent cause, associated themselves by enrolling their names as members of the "Philadelphia Second Advent Association for relative Missionary Purposes." Their object being the diffusion of relative light through the medium of the various measures that might be found effective. Having no constitution, by-laws, or anything bearing the stamp of organization, it could not be said we were forming a new sect; and confining our operations to advent missionary labors, no ground was given for animadversion. Brethren and sisters thus associated, though attached to all the different churches, have retained their influence and standing there, but have been able to act efficiently as a body, in favor of the great principles which we advocate. . . . Public

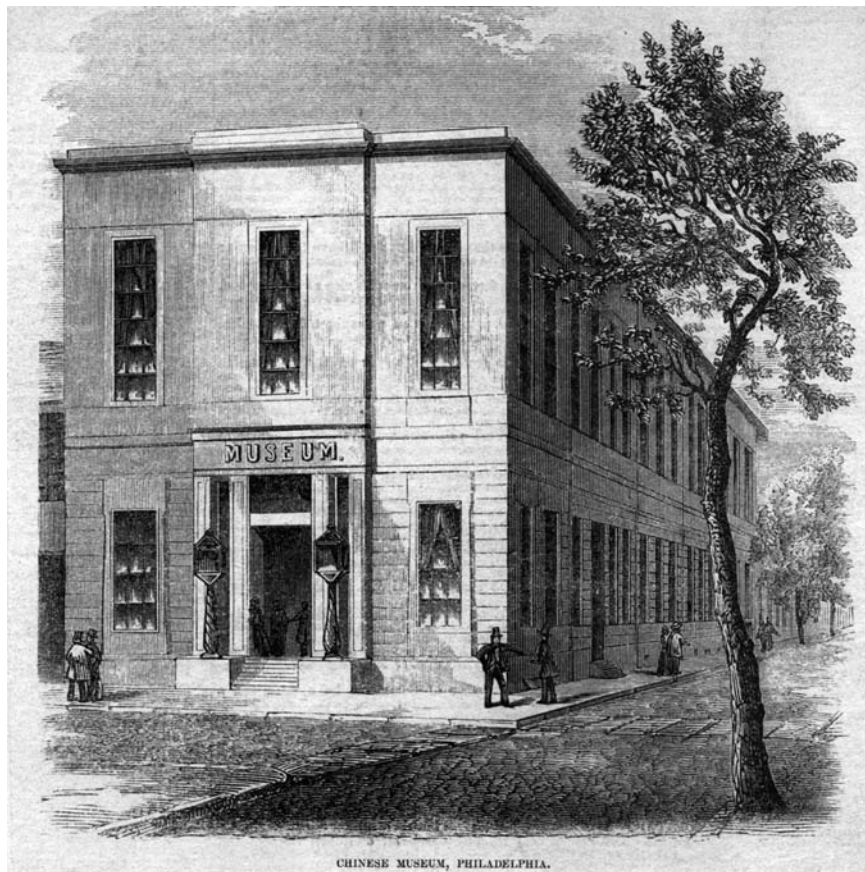


FIGURE 3. Chinese Museum, Philadelphia (1838–1841). *Courtesy:* Free Library of Philadelphia, Print and Picture Collection.

meetings have been constantly held in the city (the hitherto neglected colored population being particularly attended to), while laborers have been sent to the adjoining states.⁸

From Philadelphia, Litch and a growing number of lecturers and preachers initiated outreach missions targeting southern cities and Black congregations. In February 1843 Litch, Hale, and others from Philadelphia launched a “southern expedition” to Washington, DC, and Virginia with mixed results. For Litch and other Second Adventists who supported the cause of antislavery and abolition, the coming Advent offered an immediate end to

the practice and a final solution to the sin of slavery. While Black audiences enthusiastically received them, they were less welcome in the churches of southern slaveholders. The *Signs of the Times* reported:

The glad tidings of the coming of the Lord, is received with the greatest joy by the poor colored people, as being the only hope they have of deliverance. Whenever the subject of the Lord's coming is named to them their eyes sparkle with joy; it is, you may be assured a far more welcome sound to them, than to their rich lords. O what an hour of interest to them, when the trumpet of Jubilee shall sound and the servant be free from the master. All efforts at emancipation before that hour are perfectly vain and futile. As long as human nature is what it is, and the love of power which is now inherent in the human heart exists, slavery will exist. But "the year of Jubilee is come," Thanks be to God. "Be patient brethren, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" is the only comfort I can give the slave.⁹

Visiting Philadelphia in February 1844, Joshua Himes reported that "the colored people have opened the Wesley Chapel in Sixth St. to us and seem to be much interested in the doctrine."¹⁰ Arriving in Baltimore he noted that

Many of the colored people have received the doctrine. One of their most efficient ministers has embraced the doctrine in full, and will devote himself wholly to the proclamation of it. The people of color will therefore have a congregation, where the Advent doctrine will be fully proclaimed.¹¹

The minister Himes refers to is William J. Watkins (1803–58), a well-known Black educator, minister, and abolitionist in Baltimore. He contributed articles to *The Liberator*, published by William Lloyd Garrison, but also corresponded with the *Advent Herald*. Watkins adopted the Advent message and remained connected to the movement until his death in 1858 in Canada.¹²

Litch and Hale also traveled farther into the interior of Pennsylvania, enlisting the help of local ministers and converts to spread Miller's Advent message. In addition to Methodist and Baptist churches, the Adventists found audiences among the various local German sects of southcentral Pennsylvania. In January 1843 Litch gave a course of lectures at the Church of the Brethren in York, Pennsylvania. Apollos Hale spent several weeks in

Harrisburg and vicinity, lecturing in Middletown at the Lutheran Church, and in Harrisburg at the “Bethel,” as the churches of the Winebrennians were called. In Lancaster and in Cumberland County, he reported considerable interest among the Winebrennians, followers of John Winebrenner, also known as Church of God.¹³

In July 1843 Litch reported from Philadelphia that “the way is opening in the vicinity of this city for lectures more than ever before, and the people in the country are exceedingly anxious to hear.”¹⁴ In addition to continued efforts in southcentral Pennsylvania, Isaac R. Gates (1813–91), a native of Bradford County, traveled as an Advent lecturer through the northern counties of Pennsylvania, including Centre, Clinton, Lycoming, Bradford, and Susquehanna. In July 1843 he wrote from Salona, Clinton County,

I have just closed a course of lectures in this village, which was well attended, notwithstanding it was right in the midst of harvest. There are now many believers. I am the first advent lecturer that has been through this county. . . . This evening I commence a course in Lock Haven in the Court House, the county seat of Clinton Co.¹⁵

Gates was not as successful at Level Corner, Lycoming County, where a furious mob attacked him; “They mocked and swore horribly, threw rotten eggs, and broke several of the windows.”¹⁶ A similar reception in Towanda, Bradford County, may have been politically as well as religiously motivated. Northeast Pennsylvania was a hotbed of both abolitionists and proslavery Democrats. The antislavery position of Adventists made them targets of political as well as religious violence. In Montrose, Susquehanna County, the Reverend Albert L. Post (1809–87), a Baptist minister, former lawyer, and outspoken abolitionist, welcomed Gates. Post remained a Baptist but acknowledged the political aspects of Adventism when he later admitted that he attended an Advent conference as he would “an Antislavery or Temperance or Peace Convention.”¹⁷

THE GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT

William Miller’s calculations predicted that the Second Advent would take place between March 1843 and March 1844. In May 1844 Miller issued a statement that, although his original time frame for the Second Advent had ended,

no one who has obtained this hope seems willing to give it up; —they expect to be tried, and so understand it. They are therefor looking with deeper interest than ever for the final accomplishment of the prophecies; and, I think, are purifying themselves and sanctifying themselves more and more, from unbelief, and the influence of sectarianism, and bigotry of the sects.¹⁸

Joshua Himes expressed similar belief that the work should continue:

The Advent meetings, lectures, and papers should be sustained. The publications should be scattered; and not only keep what ground we have gained, but we should make advances into the ranks of those that are sleeping upon their arms. There should be no giving up—no going back—nor temporizing—no truce with a Laodicean church.¹⁹

An Advent Conference held in Boston in June 1844 further suggested that they supply “deserted places,” in more thinly settled neighborhoods where there were only few Adventists.²⁰ Their work continued throughout the summer of 1844 and William Miller and Joshua Himes again visited Pennsylvania in early September. John Winebrenner’s Bethel in Harrisburg was apparently no longer open to the Adventists because Miller wrote that “the organ of ‘the Church of God,’ so called, in this place, has spit his venom out, and I hope his poison will not taint his own body.” Many churches that initially welcomed Advent lecturers, and the large crowds they drew, now closed their doors to them. Joshua Himes nevertheless described successful meetings at the “old Methodist church” in Harrisburg, two days in Middletown, and a meeting at “Landersville” (Landisville) in Lancaster.²¹

Adventists Samuel S. Snow (1806–70) and George Storrs (1796–1879) proposed a new date of October 22, 1844. Although Miller, Litch, and Himes at first hesitated to adopt a definite time, the excitement generated by a specific date became impossible to ignore, and they eventually endorsed the idea. As the day approached, newspaper accounts in major cities derided Millerites for gathering in white robes to ascend to heaven, stopping work, giving away all their earthly possessions, and even going mad from over-excitement. While the Millerites denied wearing white robes or exhibiting unseemly behavior, many did gather together in anticipation of the Second Advent and the fulfillment of Millennial prophecy. Philadelphia’s Juliana Street Chapel was so crowded in the weeks before October 22 that the police

ordered evening services suspended. A newspaper reported that the services at the Second Advent chapel on Juliana Street “were closed last evening by order of the sheriff, in consequence of a large gathering of persons on the outside of the chapel. There will be no further evening services. Providence permitting, the chapel will be open daily at 9 AM and 2 PM.”²²

As October 22 approached, newspapers reported the thousands of people who attended lectures, but also derided Miller and his followers as fanatics and fools for giving away their money and possessions.²³ Claims that Millerism caused insanity concurred with nineteenth-century physicians who commonly used the term “religious insanity” to explain symptoms of the mentally ill. In 1812, decades before the Millerite movement, Benjamin Rush reported that 10 percent of the manic patients at the Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia suffered from “erroneous opinions in religion.”²⁴ While Advent newspapers refuted claims that Millerites were driven mad by their religious



FIGURE 4. “End of the world, October 22, 1844!! Behold! the Bridegroom cometh!! Go ye out to meet him!!!” Broadside, 1844. *Courtesy:* American Antiquarian Society.

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FIGURE 5. “Grand ascension of the Miller tabernacle!: Miller in his glory, saints and sinners in one great conglomeration!” Broadside, 1844. *Courtesy: American Antiquarian Society.*

beliefs, asylums in the Northeast increasingly reported an influx of patients deranged by “the Miller excitement.” The 1843 annual report of the newly opened New York State Lunatic Asylum at Utica listed “religious anxiety” as the number 1 cause of insanity. Many nineteenth-century patients with manic and psychotic symptoms were diagnosed with religious insanity attributed to Millerism as well as Mesmerism, Mormonism, Spiritualism, and even to the teachings of later evangelists like Dwight Moody.²⁵ It remains unclear whether Millerism caused symptoms of insanity or simply attracted unstable individuals who were susceptible to excessive religious fervor.

Events in Philadelphia received particular attention in newspaper accounts due to the supposed vision of Dr. Charles R. Gorgas (1806–92) who encouraged Millerites to leave the cities and gather in the countryside.²⁶ Litch wrote to Miller from Philadelphia on October 24 that “Dr. Gorgas, with the help of C. S. Minor, in spite of all I could do, led off about one hundred and fifty

to flee from the city [Philadelphia] on Monday morning.”²⁷ George Grigg of Philadelphia wrote a letter describing his firsthand experiences with fellow Adventists in Philadelphia that day:

I would say that on Monday, Oct. 21, some of the brethren and sisters left Philadelphia early in the morning, in obedience, as we then thought, to the teachings of Christ in his reference to Lot. See Luke xvii. 28–30. Sister Minor and myself took the lead in the matter. I should think the whole number that went out, including children, to be about one hundred and fifty. We encamped in the field of one of our brethren, on the Darby Road, about four miles from Market St. Bridge. We had two large tents, and being quite near the house of our brother, and also within a short distance of several country stores, we obtained all the necessaries we wanted. The next morning, (Tuesday) my faith in the pretended vision of Dr. C. Gorgas entirely failed, and at ten minutes after three, I laid myself on the floor in the house, and slept till 5. As soon as I could collect some of the most prominent Brethren (together with sister Minor) I presented my views to them in regard to our situation.²⁸

After the group prayed together, Grigg distributed the money he had previously collected from various members in his capacity as treasurer of the Philadelphia Second Advent Association. Another group that remained in Philadelphia gathered at the Juliana Street Chapel.²⁹ Grigg left the Philadelphia encampment to travel to Landisville and Middletown to assist fellow Adventists there. The Harrisburg newspapers reported that some Adventists gathered on Hill Island in the Susquehanna, opposite Middletown, at the farm of Jacob and Elizabeth Shelley.³⁰

Following the disappointment of 1844, Litch, Himes, and other like-minded Advent leaders became concerned about the lack of coordination among Adventists. A special conference, convened at Albany, New York, in 1845, sought to bring together the remaining Adventists and to plan how to address the future. Absent from that meeting were those who had adopted the so-called shut-door theory and advocated worship on the seventh day; many of those individuals eventually formed a new denomination of Seventh-day Adventists.³¹ The “Report of the Mutual Conference of Adventists at Albany” confirmed the main body’s belief in an imminent Second Advent and specifically rejected the idea that the establishment of the Jews in Palestine had to

occur first. The Albany report named practices that they found unseemly: Jewish fables, feet-washing, salutation kiss, and sitting on the floor to humble yourself. Litch was particularly critical of visions, dreams, miracles, or discerning of spirits.³² The Albany Conference report laid out a plan of action that moved away from the large mass meetings in big cities that had been so successful in 1843 and instead advocated a focus on smaller communities:

What we now do must be done more by dint of persevering and determined effort, than by moving the masses of community. We would therefore advise that our mode of operation, in this respect, be varied so as to meet the exigencies of the times, and are of the opinion that our camp meetings, except in particular cases, where the brethren deem it will advance the cause, should be dispensed with for the present, and our energies expended by visiting the towns and villages, and in some convenient place giving courses of lectures and holding series of conferences.³³

SECOND ADVENTISTS 1845–1854

Following the “Great Disappointment” of October 22, 1844, Litch remained in Philadelphia and continued as an agent of the Second Advent movement, working with a core group in Philadelphia and serving surrounding communities in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and New Jersey. Litch and his followers remained unwavering in their adherence to Miller’s original teachings, even while other Adventists scattered in various directions, some returning to their former denominations, others adopting new ideas promoted by various leaders. Clorinda S. Minor (1807–55), one of the Adventists who responded to the Gorgas prophecy, played an active role among Philadelphia Adventists as a frequent contributor of articles and poetry to publications, and as editor of an Advent publication for women, *Daughters of Zion*, which she co-edited with Emily C. Clemens (1818–1900) of Connecticut. After October 22 Minor shifted her interest to the role of the Jews in the Second Advent and adopted the seventh-day Sabbath. She died of typhoid while working as a missionary to Jewish agricultural settlements in Palestine.³⁴

Peter Edward Armstrong, former Millerite and paper dealer in Philadelphia, decided to create an earthly sanctuary to mirror the Kingdom of Heaven in anticipation of the Second Advent. In 1850, with the goal of

creating a new Zion, Armstrong purchased 181 acres in the mountains of Sullivan County, Pennsylvania, which he called Celestia.³⁵ Second Advent leaders like Miller, Himes, and Litch denounced these and other innovations and dismissed them as departures from biblical truths. Litch remained particularly critical of prophecies, visions, and other “fanaticisms.” Isaac Gates in the *Advent Herald* in June 1845 described his more conservative stance:

A portion had been induced, contrary to all his remonstrances, to obey the vision of Dr. Gorgas, and fled from the city on the 10th of the 7th month. And some of them had not yet been able to get the hallucination from their minds. The result was most disastrous. It had served to disgust the mind of the community there, so that they were laboring under the greatest embarrassments. All the notions prevailing in different places have been responded to by some in that city. He has denounced those things before the community, and shown that he has no sympathy with those things; and in doing thus, he had felt the necessity of union and concert. There is still a goodly company there who are occupying the old ground.³⁶

The company of Adventists who remained with Litch in Philadelphia included a variety of ages and backgrounds. One modern study of Millerites in New York State concluded: “Millerites are not fascinating because they were so different from everyone else but because they were so like their neighbors.”³⁷ The same was true in Philadelphia where many Adventists participated in the city’s businesses and trades: James W. Dyer (1799–1863), iron molder and merchant; Lewis Beebe (1791–1855), printer and publisher; Charles Greene (1804–80), burr stone manufacturer; Frederick Mear (1822–76), Queensware manufacturer; George S. Grigg (1809–72), salesman; Frederic Schmeding (1780–1850), brass turner and mathematical instrument maker; Walter Swope (1770–1860), turner; and Thomas Elwell (1809–57), bridle bit maker.

A significant number of Philadelphia Adventists were occupied in medical fields and connected through both professional and family ties. Dr. Thomas Wardle (1818–87) practiced as a dentist before earning an MD from the Philadelphia College of Medicine in 1853. His first wife, Charlotte (1818–50), the daughter of another Advent family,

embraced religion at an early age, and united with the M. E. church, where she continued to hold Christian fellowship till the Advent doctrine was promulgated in the city, in 1842, when she, together with her husband and father's family, embraced the Advent faith, and identified themselves with the cause of our coming King. Bro. Wardle's house was the home of Father Miller in all his visits to this city.³⁸

Charlotte Wardle's parents, Henry (1780–1865) and Elizabeth (1793–1867) Lye, were early converts who remained active in the Philadelphia Advent community. Joshua V. Himes described them as early believers in an 1857 account that describes Elizabeth Lye's medical practice:

Mrs. Lye is and has been a very skillful physician. She has a large number of patients constantly on her hands, both in the city and from the country. She uses "herbs" for medicine and is very successful in treating cancers and all kinds of sores as well as other diseases. But in these I have named she is eminent. And should Bro. Lye, her useful partner and helper, advertise as others have done, they would be overrun with business. But they have as much as they can do without it and they seem to choose to let their cures do their advertising.³⁹

The Lyes emigrated from England to Philadelphia sometime before 1826, but there is no record of where Elizabeth Lye received formal or informal medical training. The 1861 Philadelphia City Directory lists Henry's occupation as measurer and Elizabeth's as herb medicine. Other Philadelphia Adventists engaged in medicine included Litch's brother-in-law Joseph Barstow (1824–89) and Sparkman R. Screven (1842–1921) who were both dentists; Frederick A. Gunner (1823–97) and William Stiles (1815–85), who graduated from the Philadelphia College of Medicine in 1850 and 1855 respectively; and John Edwin Barnes (1829–84), who attended the University of Pennsylvania medical department in 1854.

Josiah Litch himself pursued a medical career in addition to his religious activities. Philadelphia, a center of medical education at the time, offered a choice of medical schools. Litch first attended lectures at Jefferson Medical College in 1846 and then attended the Philadelphia College of Medicine for two courses in 1847 and 1848. Although he did not receive an MD degree, forgoing the final examination and thesis, his three years of study

enabled him to launch a second career as a physician. His choice of James McClintock's Philadelphia College of Medicine reflected his interest in eclectic medical practices that placed a greater reliance on alternative botanical medicines, hydropathy, and so on, rather than orthodox medicine, which still adhered to bloodletting and mercury-based treatments. By June 1855 Litch regularly advertised his own preparations—Dr. Litch's Family Restorative and Dr. Litch's Pain Curer—in Advent publications, with testimonials from Philadelphia residents and a list of Advent ministers who endorsed his products.

Litch's medical and religious careers sometimes intersected. A July 22, 1846, letter from William Miller, published in the *Advent Herald*, described how Litch sent him a magnetic machine made by J. & C. W. Neff of Philadelphia to help steady a tremor in his hand.⁴⁰ In 1858 Litch wrote to Himes about his treatment of Emma Noyes who suffered from fits at a camp meeting in Centre County.⁴¹ In 1862 the Reverend Campbell of Canada wrote how Litch not only attended to his wife medically, "during her last affliction, of about 14 days, and gave great attention to her disease, and by the divine blessing on his efforts checked the disease in several forms," but then also preached her funeral sermon.⁴²

In addition to his medical career and herbal preparations, Litch remained active in the Advent cause. While he tended to the Philadelphia Adventists, traveled as an evangelist, and took part in Advent conferences and conventions, he also assembled a corps of dedicated missionaries—some with New England roots, others from Pennsylvania—to help continue the work in the mid-Atlantic states. Some were ministers of other denominations, like John J. Porter (1816–59), the pastor of a Christian church in Southwark, Philadelphia, who invited Litch and Hale to speak in 1842 and opened his church to them. As an Advent preacher, Porter later traveled widely to Virginia, Buffalo, and New York, and then settled in New York City until his death.⁴³ Isaac Rufus Gates (1813–91), born in Bradford County, Pennsylvania, left a Christian Connection church in Burnt Hills, New York, to return to Pennsylvania as an evangelist in 1843. He later served as pastor to Adventists in Baltimore, Maryland, before establishing an Advent preaching circuit in Lycoming County, finally moving to Philadelphia.⁴⁴ Litch mentored a number of younger men from Pennsylvania who became prominent Adventists. Lemuel Osler (1821–1900) of Philadelphia, for example, began working closely with Litch and Gates in 1843, preaching in Philadelphia and on missionary trips. Following his ordination in 1845 and officiated by Gates, Osler served

mid-state communities of Lancaster, Middletown, and Shiremanstown; Adventists in Baltimore; and later churches in Salem, Massachusetts, and Providence, Rhode Island. Gates described Osler in 1845 as “a young man of good talents and personal piety, who was born in Philadelphia and nurtured by the fostering care of brother Litch.”⁴⁵

The missionary activities of Litch, Hale, and others from Philadelphia in the years preceding 1844 had already established Advent congregations in Bucks, Lancaster, Dauphin, and Cumberland counties. The Advent groups that continued after 1844 were sustained by the efforts and support of dedicated ministers, local individuals, and prominent families in those communities.

In Bucks County, one of the earliest converts was Phoebe S. Milner McCracken (1804–60), a former Quaker disowned by the Falls Quarterly Meeting in 1836 because of her marriage to merchant Samuel McCracken. Other members of the Advent congregations that developed in Morrisville, Yardleyville, and across the river in Trenton, New Jersey, included carpenters, machinists, and farmers. Two brothers, John T. (1827–1901) and Micajah Bunting Laning (1839–1913), came from a Methodist Episcopal family of physicians; they both became Advent preachers, studied medicine, and served as clergy at Advent churches throughout Pennsylvania and other locations. By 1850 both Yardleyville and Morrisville had built churches for worship.

An account written by David Bachman Landis for the *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society* in 1904 describes how many followers of John Winebrenner in Lancaster were attracted to the Advent cause.⁴⁶ These included John Tucker (1802–88), who remained an elder in the Church of God.⁴⁷ One group of Adventists in Maytown, Lancaster County, continued until about 1860 under the leadership of Martin Peck (1808–c.1870s). Originally associated with the River Brethren, Peck built a Union Bethel on his property for use of Adventists and others in 1856. When he left Pennsylvania and moved to Ohio around 1860, he sold the church building to members of a new sect known as Brinzerites, who were followers of Matthew Brinzer, an offshoot of River Brethren.⁴⁸

Harrisburg and Middletown in Dauphin County both supported Millerite activity in the 1840s. The Harrisburg family of Mary M. Boyer (1794–1858) and her sons, William L. (1815–79), Henry K. (1818–81), Jacob D. (1819–99), and Theodore F. (1824–81), actively participated in the Advent cause and may have had connections with John Winebrenner’s Church of God in Harrisburg. Although Winebrenner at first rejected the Adventists,

he and his son-in-law, the Reverend James Colder (1826–93), eventually opened their churches to Advent preachers, often sharing buildings for worship. In Middletown Elizabeth (1818–49) and Jacob Shelley (1810–77) of Hill Island remained active until Elizabeth's death. Her obituary identifies her as a Lutheran who embraced the Advent in 1843 under Apollos Hale's preaching.⁴⁹ Other members at Middletown were Mrs. Ana Redfield (1798–1855), a teacher and widow of Dr. Chandler Redfield, and Mrs. Mary Thomson (1807–57), wife of shoemaker Davis Thomson.

In Shiremanstown, Cumberland County, merchants Henry Rupp (1807–72) and his son Daniel (1832–87) supported the Advent cause, helping to establish an Advent congregation as early as 1846. In 1859 the group began plans to build their own church, located on an 1872 map at the corner of Market and Main streets.⁵⁰ Shiremanstown continued as an active congregation, employing Advent ministers at least through the 1870s. New Kingstown, Cumberland County, also had a small congregation by the mid-1850s, with John A. Heagy (1835–1914) one of the principal supporters and an occasional preacher. A letter from Josiah Litch described the church building that they dedicated in December 1856 in conjunction with the Church of God:

The house is a neat brick 35 by 40 feet with a neat belfry, in which the young men of the place propose to place a bell in the spring. In front on the gable end is a neat tablet with the inscription, ERECTED FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD IN 1856. To be used for both Advent Church and Church of God. The entire cost was about \$900.⁵¹

Adopting the charge of the 1845 Albany Conference, Litch and the Pennsylvania Adventists began to reach out to establish churches in the more rural communities of northcentral Pennsylvania. While the Philadelphia Adventists struggled to get past the embarrassments of October 1844, Advent preachers found the northern counties less prejudiced and more receptive to the biblical literalism of their message. Few missionaries were as active or successful as Jacob D. Boyer from Harrisburg, who began his work as an evangelist in 1843 in Lancaster and Shiremanstown, and as far west as Cincinnati, Ohio, before focusing his efforts on Centre and surrounding counties. In the winter of 1845 Jacob Boyer made a tour through the counties of Lancaster, Dauphin, Cumberland, Perry, and Centre.⁵² Litch reported 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.”⁵³ In August 1846 Lemuel

Osler, then based in Shiremanstown, organized a grove meeting in Centre County, probably at the invitation of Thomas Esworthy (1818–52) and Jacob Sharer (1805–78), among the first to adopt Advent beliefs in Centre County.⁵⁴ In the fall of 1846 Boyer and John E. Barnes departed from Philadelphia “to visit the destitute places of this state.”⁵⁵ In Bellefonte, Barnes described

being invited by the pastor of the colored church in Bellefont 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 God.⁵⁶

Barnes spent the winter with Boyer in Centre County, but returned to Philadelphia, while Boyer remained in Centre County for four years, writing in the spring of 1847 that

my health at present is not so good, on account of my laboring almost constantly, and having but little time to rest; the usage, also, is harder than what I have been accustomed to, sleeping in the humble log-cabins of the settlers in the woods, travelling on foot, or in the common lumber wagons of the country; and gratefully accepting a bed of straw, and such other fare as they might be able to afford. But I am willing to endure all this; yea, and more, knowing that we shall very soon reap if we faint not. I expect to leave in a few days for Martha Furnace, where I have preached twice. I have been requested to have a week's meeting with them. The people have been very much neglected about the furnaces and forges of this State.⁵⁷

By summer 1847 interest was strong enough to organize a camp meeting “on the land of Col. Greig, five miles above Milesburg.”⁵⁸ Andrew Gregg Jr. (1799–1869) was a prominent ironmaster, businessman, and politician in Centre County and an owner of the Harmony Forge in Milesburg, in partnership with James Irvin (1800–1862). It is not clear whether Gregg himself was interested in the Advent message or whether he supported the effort on behalf of his employees and the community. During the 1847 camp meeting, Lemuel Osler preached at the Methodist Church in Milesburg and “while there, we were kindly entertained by Col Greigh, a gentleman of influence and wealth.”⁵⁹ Census records confirm that some of the Centre

County Adventists worked as forgemen and colliers, while others were local farmers. Thomas Watson (1780–1857), a former collier who later retired to farming, was active in local politics and was one of the early converts along with his numerous sons and daughters and their spouses. His son George Watson worked as an iron forgerman as did sons-in-law Robert McMullen and William Stanley; Perry Aikens was a wagonmaker and Joseph Eckley a farmer.⁶⁰

With the support of these and other local families, Boyer found particular success at Marsh Creek where he reported, “I never saw such an interest since I have been in Centre county, as there is now in Bogs township.—Over one hundred firm believers in the second coming of Christ live there, who have formed themselves into a body, and are willing to support the cause.”⁶¹ A second camp meeting, held August 1848, ended with plans to build a chapel:

On the last day of our camp-meeting an effort was made towards the building of a place of worship at Ma[r]sh 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.⁶²

With land donated by Gregg and Irvin, they began building a log church. A year later at the camp meeting in 1849, two Advent ministers, J. W. Bonham and Josiah Litch, described the proceedings which ended with the dedication of the Advent Chapel at Marsh Creek, making it one of the earliest churches built specifically for Second Advent worship.

On Lord’s-day, Sept. 2d, the new Advent chapel at Ma[r]sh Creek was dedicated. When completed, it will be a neat building, 32 feet by 42. ft 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.⁶³

Litch’s account sums up the progress that had been made as a result of two years of work by Jacob Boyer:

Sunday, Sept. 2d, was a day much to be remembered by the Advent church in Centre County, as the day of the opening of the new chapel at Ma[r]sh Creek. About two years ago, the first camp-meeting

was held in that county, and the first souls converted as the fruit of Advent labors. Now there are, on the district travelled regularly, by Bro. Boyer, nearly three hundred members in church fellowship. One chapel so far advanced as to be opened for worship, although not yet completed. Another is to be put up immediately in Elk County, the first Protestant place of worship in the county. Also, in the course of a few months, a third will be erected in Milesburg.⁶⁴

By 1853 Boyer had moved farther north and west to focus his efforts in Elk County, leaving John Perkins Farrar (1824–1901) of Lynn, Massachusetts, and later others in charge of the Centre County churches. Boyer joined his three brothers who engaged in the lumber business in Elk County. He married Camilla E. Boger (1831–96) around 1852 and established himself with a home and farm while he continued preaching. In Elk County he organized a circuit that supplied regular preaching to far-flung lumber and mining communities and established churches at Caledonia and Driftwood. Joshua Himes visited the Boyers in 1853 on a tour of Pennsylvania and was impressed that Sister Boyer, anxious to

join her husband in useful labor, in this wild and destitute region, has arranged to establish a High School for young ladies, to which she will devote her time and talents. The school will be of a high order, and prove a great blessing to the community. The success of our brother and sister in their respective departments of labor, is not an experiment; but they have the community with them, in their good will and support. Brother Boyer has shown himself to be the “Oberlin” of this portion of the Alleghenies.⁶⁵

Boyer moved to the Yardleyville church in Bucks County in 1860, identified as a Church of God minister in 1862, and by 1866 lived in Philadelphia where two of his brothers now manufactured farm implements.

CHURCH ORDER AND THE AMERICAN EVANGELICAL ADVENTISTS 1854–1886

When Israel Daniel Rupp and John Winebrenner published a *History of All the Religious Denominations in the United States* in 1849, they enlisted Josiah

Litch to author a history of the Adventists. At that time, Litch estimated that between 15,000 and 20,000 in all the states in the Union and Canada had “united in Church fellowship with no other creed or form of discipline than the written word of God.”⁶⁶ Although Adventists had set out to prepare for the Second Coming and opposed sectarianism, they gradually began to shift their efforts to provide more structure and organization, in addition to the principles set forth at the Albany Conference. As more permanent churches formed, they needed regular and larger meeting places rather than school-houses and borrowed churches.

Pennsylvania Adventists, in particular, recognized the need for greater organization at the regional and local levels in order to recruit and support not only itinerant evangelists but also ministers who could provide ongoing pastoral care to Advent congregations. Lemuel Osler’s report to an Advent Ministerial Conference in New England offered Pennsylvania as a model of church order that might be followed. In the report,

he adverted to the course pursued by our brethren in Pennsylvania, and wished brethren here to pursue a similar course. Brn. Litch, Farrar, Boyer, and Daniels, had resolved not to scatter their labors to the winds, nor labor in places where there was no prospect of their labors being followed up, or of the work being continued. He referred to the success attending the efforts put forth in Bucks county, Pa., and said that ministers should endeavor to take care of the smaller churches, and see that they are well supplied with judicious laborers. It is frequently the case, that some preachers know not, even as late as Saturday, where they can labor on the Sabbath. This should not be so.⁶⁷

With larger numbers of churches, Advent ministers organized and coordinated their efforts into regular circuits. By 1854 these circuits formally organized as Quarterly Conferences, described by J. T. Laning in a report to the Second Advent Conference that year:

We have adopted the plan, in Central Pennsylvania, of organizing the churches of each pastoral district into what is termed a Quarterly Conference, the officers of which are to exercise a general superintendence over the interests of the cause in the vicinity.⁶⁸

The Centre County Quarterly Conference, over which he presided consisted of four churches: Milesburg; Marsh Creek; Central Church and Cooper's Settlement. The Elk district Quarterly Conference under the pastoral care of Elder J. D. Boyer consisted of eight flourishing churches, located in Elk, Clinton, and McKean counties. Other circuits in Pennsylvania included Bucks, Cumberland, and Lycoming counties. By 1856 Second Advent churches in Pennsylvania also organized at the state level as the Conference of Second Advent Churches in Pennsylvania.

Thirteen years after the Albany Conference of 1845, the agreement to disagree on various issues of interpretation began to unravel. While Litch in Pennsylvania, and a portion of the Adventists in New England, continued to hold Miller's original position on the eternal suffering of the damned, others like Miles Grant (1819–1911) adopted belief in the so-called sleep of the dead.⁶⁹ Questions also arose about the organization and finances of the offices and publication in Boston under Joshua Himes. Beginning in 1840 Himes owned and published the *Signs of the Times*, then the *Advent Herald* with support from subscriptions and advertisements. His entrepreneurial methods attracted controversy and occasionally legal challenges. In 1843 he raised money to build a tabernacle in Boston, seating 4,000, which was sold in 1845. In 1854, when the Chardon Street Church was no longer available, the Boston Advent Association sold shares to raise capital for a new chapel on Kneeland Street to house meetings, the publication office, and several stores that could be rented out for income. Himes eventually indicated his willingness to turn over the publishing operations to an organization. In response the nineteenth Annual Conference of Adventists, held in Boston in May 1858, established a committee to prepare a plan for a new organizational structure and adjourned until November. Meanwhile, the Second Adventists of Pennsylvania met in Lancaster in July and established themselves as Messiah's Church of Pennsylvania. The reason for the name change:

Whereas the word Advent does not express any peculiarity of our denomination . . . and as there are various branches of those denominated Advent who hold doctrines that are unscriptural, and dangerous, and contrary to those we hold, propose to our several churches represented in this conference that the words Second Advent or Advent be replaced with Messiah's.⁷⁰

When the Advent Conference reconvened in November in Worcester, Massachusetts, it adopted a new national organization called the American Evangelical Advent Conference, with a constitution that defined the role of delegates. The conference did not adopt Miles Grant's position on the state of the dead as a part of their Advent doctrine—hardening the growing rift with those who formed the Advent Christian Church in 1860. The new organization of Evangelical Adventists adopted resolutions about slavery, abstinence, and use of tobacco. Litch, attending as a delegate of the Messianian Conference of Pennsylvania, explained the principles maintained by the “churches of Messiah” in Pennsylvania and Canada West. He asked that they be recognized as evangelical and were eventually accepted. A second organization established November 12, 1858, the American Millennial Association, entered into negotiations with Joshua Himes to take over ownership and publication of the *Herald*. Transfer of the *Herald* office took place January 1, 1859, with the purchase of type, stereotype plates, furniture, library of 408 volumes, merchandise, books, and tracts from Himes for the sum of \$2,190.58. The American Millennial Association now managed the financial and business responsibilities of publishing the *Herald* with Sylvester Bliss as editor and Josiah Litch as president. Himes continued on the editorial board, but eventually joined with the Advent Christians in 1862.⁷¹

Evangelical Adventists closely followed the progress of the Civil War in the pages of the *Herald* with articles on the morality of serving in the military, news of battles and letters from the front, and obituaries of soldiers. John T. Laning, originally from Yardleyville, graduated from the Eclectic Medical College of Philadelphia in 1863 and served as a contract surgeon in the Union Army at Gettysburg following the battle. He later served in a hospital for US Colored Troops in New Orleans, Louisiana. His letters to the *Herald* from Louisiana describe the ruined sugar plantations and his disdain for the defeated southerners compared to the newly freed slaves.⁷² Following the abolition of slavery, Evangelical Adventists continued their outreach to former slaves by organizing and supporting a mission to freedmen in Edgefield, Tennessee, in 1864 that included both a school and church.⁷³

The 1860s represented a time of disruption and transition for the Evangelical Adventists. Although Himes still occasionally wrote articles for the *Herald*, he eventually severed his ties with the Evangelical Adventists to join with the Advent Christians. In 1863 Sylvester Bliss, editor of the *Advent Herald*, died suddenly and Josiah Litch stepped in to serve as editor, leaving Philadelphia and moving to Boston. By 1865 when the Evangelical Adventists

met for their annual conference much had changed in the twenty-five years since the first Advent Conference of 1840.

It is impossible to write a report of this Anniversary which would convey any adequate idea of the interesting occasion. But very few who attended the first Conference were present at this. Death has taken many away; others have made shipwreck of their faith, some have forgotten the truths which they cherished twenty-five years ago, or are giving them a secondary position, while advocating notions and theories having no foundation in the Word of God, and of no vital importance.⁷⁴

Litch was one of the few attending in 1865 who had attended the first meeting in 1840. A motion to relieve Litch of editorial duties so that he could devote more time “to travel as Missionary Agent in furtherance of our religious interest” made way for a new generation of Adventists in leadership roles.⁷⁵ Lemuel Osler now served as president of the American Millennial Association. John Muir Orrock (1830–1909) took over as editor in 1867.

When Messiah’s Church of Pennsylvania met in Harrisburg in 1873, a new mission chapel in the city had been built, described as “a large plain, wooden building—a noble result of many prayers, numerous donations and persevering effort,” under the guidance of pastor William Henry Swartz. The following Sunday another new church was dedicated in Trenton, New Jersey, described as “a fine stone building that will comfortably seat about 400 people.” The reports of other churches also indicate active congregations meeting at Yardleyville, Morrisville, Shiremanstown, and New Kingstown. In Centre County, John Zeigler (1840–1916) now served a circuit of seven churches. He would report the completion of Messiah’s Church of Zion and renovation of the 1849 Marsh Creek Church. A Moshannon Circuit now served the churches at Snowshoe and Kylertown. Elk County also reported an active circuit of churches. Josiah Litch was reelected president of the Pennsylvania Conference, but younger ministers also filled leadership positions: James A. Aldred (1837–1917); Daniel Elwell (1842–75); and Henry P. Cutter (1844–1931). At the Harrisburg meeting, the Pennsylvania Conference of Messiah’s Church voted that they “desire the American Millennial Association to carry out the previous action regarding the publication of an edition of the advent herald under the name of messiah’s herald.”⁷⁶ At the next meeting of the American Millennial Association held later that year,

the Pennsylvania delegation successfully changed the name of the publication with sixteen votes for “Messiah’s Herald” to ten votes for “Millennial Herald.”⁷⁷ Josiah Litch remained a leader of the Evangelical Adventists and the Messiah’s Conferences in Pennsylvania and Canada until his death in 1886 in Providence, Rhode Island. The address delivered at his funeral by Lemuel Osler was printed in full in *Messiah’s Herald* of February 17, 1886. Osler described him as patient and unselfish, meek but unafraid of conflict in antislavery and temperance causes. “His piety was deep-rooted, fervent, perennial. . . . He was not an impulsive man, not given to great emotions which had their relapses. . . . His life-work is done and well done.”⁷⁸

THE LAST DECADES

Without the leadership of Josiah Litch, Evangelical Adventists began to decline as a denomination. Earlier census reports record a steady rise in the number of churches identifying as Second Advent, from 25 churches in 1850 to 140 in 1870.⁷⁹ But by the 1890 census, the *Report of Statistics of Churches in the United States* documents the decline of Evangelical Adventists while other Advent denominations continued to grow. Detailed snapshots for each of the Advent sects show that Advent Christians reported 294 church edifices and 25,816 communicants, Seventh-day Adventists reported 418 church edifices and 28,991 communicants, while the Evangelical Adventists were reduced to only thirty-four ministers, twenty-three church edifices and 1,347 communicants. The Evangelical Adventists were described as follows:

Those who could not accept the views of the Advent Christians as to the mortality of the soul began in 1855 to hold separate meetings and to be known as Evangelical Adventists. They believe that the soul is immortal; that all the dead will be raised, the saints first and the wicked last . . . the wicked into everlasting punishment. . . . They have two annual conferences, besides 5 congregations unattached and are found in Vermont, Mass., Rhode Island and Pennsylvania.⁸⁰

Pennsylvania accounted for the largest number of Evangelical Adventist members, and sixteen of the twenty-three church edifices. Broken down by counties, the 1890 census reported three churches in Bucks, one in Cameron,

six in Centre, two in Clearfield, one in Cumberland, and two in Elk. Centre County alone represented one-quarter of the entire denomination.

The 1906 *United States Census of Religious Bodies* contains the last listing for the Evangelical Adventists, reporting a total of only sixteen church edifices, twelve of which were located in Pennsylvania, while the Advent Christians and Seventh-day Adventists continued to report increased numbers. Although the 1916 census no longer lists the Evangelical Adventists as a denomination, individual Advent churches in the northern counties of Pennsylvania continued as active congregations into the twentieth century.⁸¹ The persistence of Evangelical Adventists in Centre and surrounding counties, despite their decline nationally and elsewhere in Pennsylvania, may be attributed to the efforts of two of the longest serving and last remaining Evangelical Advent ministers.

Born in Abington, Massachusetts, Martin Luther Jackson (1828–1903) came to Pennsylvania in 1856, serving churches in Centre, Cumberland, and Bucks counties before returning to the Snowshoe and Clearfield circuit. He was still a teenager in 1844 at the time of the “Great Disappointment” but devoted his life to the Advent cause in Pennsylvania, an Evangelical Adventist to the end. The inscription on his grave in the Advent Cemetery at Kylertown aptly expresses his legacy: “A minister of the Gospel for fifty years. Pastor of Moshanon circuit for thirty-six years. Awaiting Christ coming and the resurrection morn.”

John Zeigler served for almost forty-five years in Centre County and lies buried in the Advent Cemetery at Marsh Creek. A schoolteacher and native of Cumberland County, Zeigler converted to the Methodist Church as a young man and trained as an Adventist by M. L. Jackson during his tenure with the Advent church at Shiremanstown from 1867 to 1877. Under Zeigler’s leadership the Advent churches of Centre County experienced a period of active building and expansion from 1871 to 1900. Zeigler’s journal at the Centre County Library includes references to payments from the American Millennial Association as late as 1914.⁸²

Following Zeigler’s death in 1916, the original 1849 church building at Marsh Creek continued to serve local families under various local non-denominational ministers. Reports of worship services and social events at the “Advent Church,” reported in weekly articles written by Emma Confer Watson (1876–1945) for the *Centre Democrat* from 1924 to 1945, suggest that religious beliefs and practices still reflected their evangelical Advent roots.

Her first column of July 19, 1924, mentions, “Glad to see so many out to church on Sunday.” Another reports that Mrs. Laura Zeigler, wife of the Reverend John Zeigler, “was laid to rest at the Advent cemetery.” Emma Watson’s accounts include announcements of church services, Sunday school classes and picnics, “rally days,” prayer meetings, “say-so” meetings, revivals, and protracted meetings. The church continued to be a focal point for the community. In 1929 she wrote, “Don’t forget the festival to be held near the Advent church on Saturday evening August 31st for the purpose of getting a new stove or furnace for the church. All persons interested in the church or cemetery are kindly requested to come and help and bring a cake or something that will help a good cause.”⁸³ In 1949 the original charter of Messiah’s Church of Marsh Creek was officially dissolved so that members could transfer ownership of the church building and affiliate with God’s Missionary Church, a new Pennsylvania-based evangelical denomination chartered in 1935. In 1958 God’s Missionary Church constructed a church in Milesburg, leaving the Marsh Creek church unoccupied until the Advent Historical Society acquired and preserved the building as a historic structure in 1989.



FIGURE 6. Marsh Creek Advent Church, 1849. Photograph, 2020 by the author. Courtesy: Advent Historical Society.

THE LEGACY OF PENNSYLVANIA MILLERITES

Little tangible evidence of the Millerites survives in Pennsylvania. A single state historical marker identifies the site of Peter Armstrong's religious community in Sullivan County, with no reference to his Millerite connection. Nineteenth-century maps provide locations for "Advent" and "Messiah" churches that no longer stand. In Philadelphia the Juliana Street Church where Adventists met in 1844 was sold to the Rodeph Shalom Congregation in 1847 and renovated for use as a synagogue. When the congregation built a new synagogue in 1871, the building became a box factory and was finally demolished by the 1930s to make way for the development of Independence Mall. In 1854 fire destroyed the Chinese Museum.

Of the eight original Advent churches in Centre County, only two, the Marsh Creek Church, built in 1849, and the Fairview Union Church, built in 1898, survive—the first and last to be built. The Milesburg church, built on Hazel Street in the 1850s, no longer appeared on a map in 1874. In the twentieth century, fires destroyed the Central and Pine Glen churches, built in 1868 and 1874, respectively. Dick's Run Church, built in 1873, and renovated as a dwelling house in the late 1980s, has since been demolished. The Messiah's Church at Snow Shoe, built in 1874, was torn down in 1927 to build a Presbyterian church on the site. The Spring Township Church, built in 1874, no longer exists. The Advent church built in Kylertown, Clearfield County, is now preserved as a meeting hall by the current congregation adjacent to their 1959 church building.

The few remaining Advent buildings, and a larger number of associated Advent cemeteries, are the last remnants of a movement in Pennsylvania that once made national headlines and attracted thousands eager to hear William Miller's message of the Second Advent. Many of Pennsylvania's Evangelical Adventist congregations later joined with other denominations and completely lost their historical connection to the Second Advent movement. In Elk County, for example, the Mt. Zion Historical Society still maintains the cemetery as a historical park, although the Mount Zion church burned down in 1976. While the list of ministers who preached there includes Adventists Thomas Hollen (1813–92), M. L. Jackson, and Samuel F. Ebersole (1839–1913), local history now identifies it only as a former Methodist church.⁸⁴ Other churches, like Marsh Creek and Central, continued as independent churches until the 1940s when they reaffiliated with new evangelical denominations like God's Missionary Church and Pilgrim's Holiness, an 1897

offshoot of Methodists that later merged with Wesleyans in 1968. Only the Kylertown congregation remained an independent church, now known as Messiah Baptist Church.

Advent publications, on the other hand, have left a detailed account of the Second Advent movement in Pennsylvania. Descriptions of their efforts in far-flung counties of the state refute claims of Adventist scholars like David L. Rowe, who suggested that Millerites, combining “Yankeeess” with pietism and commitment to action, were limited to regions settled by New Englanders.⁸⁵ Reports of Advent preachers, sent back from Pennsylvania’s agricultural districts and remote lumber and iron regions, suggest a wider appeal. Itinerant Advent evangelists in Pennsylvania regularly describe the rugged landscape, the difficulties of travel over mountainous roads, the camp meetings, and religious practices of the German and Scots Irish residents. Interactions with River Brethren, United Brethren, Lutherans, and the Church of God, in addition to Methodists and Baptists, document that Miller’s message had a strong appeal among evangelical sects outside of New England.

The involvement of Adventists in nineteenth-century reform movements points to new avenues for research. A number of Adventists active in the anti-slavery movement joined the Millerites, in part, because denominations like the Methodists had divided on that issue. William Watkins, Joshua Himes, and Emily C. Clemens, all published in William Lloyd Garrison’s abolitionist newspaper as well as Advent publications. Clemens wrote several antislavery novels in the 1850s under her married name of Emily C. Pearson.

The Advent movement stands out among Protestant denominations of the 1840s because of its willingness to include women in public roles. Philadelphia women like Elizabeth Lye, Clorinda S. Minor, and others received recognition for their work in the movement. Jacob Boyer’s young wife Camilla wrote from Caledonia in 1853, asking, “Oh! Why should not females devote their talents and influence to the cause of Him who so justly demands. Why sport it away upon the fleeting pleasures of a transitory world heedless of the one to come.”⁸⁶ When Camilla’s niece Emma Hall was baptized, Joshua Himes wrote in his journal that “Emma bids fair to be not only an ornament to the cause, but an active, useful laborer.”⁸⁷ In 1860, when Daniel T. Taylor published the first known census of Adventist preachers, he reported a total of 584 ministers, including five females, four “colored,” and two Indians.⁸⁸ Historian Catherine A. Brekus suggests an even larger number of women and estimates that at least twenty-two women became

Advent preachers before 1845.⁸⁹ A heated exchange between Anne E. Boyd Smith (1825–1906) and Daniel Ingalls Robinson (1809–69), published in the *Advent Herald*, reveals both acceptance and ambivalence toward female preachers. In 1865 Smith announced a Women’s Convention to be held in Poultney, Vermont. An Adventist since 1842, Smith studied medicine at the Female Medical College of Pennsylvania in 1856, established several missions to African Americans in New York City after 1863, and was ordained in 1866. Robinson, a Methodist minister, was active as an antislavery lecturer and writer in the 1830s before he became an Advent evangelist in 1844. He attended the Women’s Convention and reported that

sisters Murray, Boyd and Smith, with a colored sister from New York, were the chief speakers. It was the first day. I like to hear women take part in meetings, but Christ did not call any to preach, that we read of, and I think Paul has reference to it in his epistles. I see no other sound exposition of the texts, and the results, I think, generally justify his directions. I have seen and heard many. They mostly run out, and run down, and the people get tired of them, because they are apt to aim to do just what Paul forbids them.⁹⁰

Smith vigorously refuted his comments, adding, “I cannot believe that Bro. R. intended to do us an injury; if so I have been much mistaken in his character; for I have always esteemed him for his true missionary spirit.”⁹¹ To which the Reverend Robinson quickly apologized: “As I liked the meeting, and the sisters that spoke, I do not want to be held up as disparaging them, and so wish, in justice to both, this correction.”⁹²

Adventists remained dedicated to the temperance movement, spanning a century from the 1840s to the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union in the 1940s. In addition to abstinence, articles on medicine in Advent publications reflect the broader health concerns of many nineteenth-century Americans. The *Advent Herald* recounts the illnesses of ministers, deaths from chronic diseases, and the loss of children to cholera and diphtheria. In addition to the prospect of reuniting with loved ones in the soon hereafter, Advent publications offered their readers testimonials and advice for various aspects of eclectic medicine, including herbal tonics, the advantages of water cures, and homeopathic treatments. An article on “consumption,” reprinted from *Arthur’s Home Gazette*, a Philadelphia publication, captured the helplessness of those afflicted with a disease responsible for the deaths of many both young and old.

Specified remedies; one after another, have been recommended and tried, sometimes with partial, but rarely with complete success. It is to be hoped, from the rapid advancement of scientific knowledge, that some course of treatment may be discovered more certain in its beneficial results than any which have as yet been adopted.⁹³

Consumption was a personal concern for Charles B. Turner (1816–54), an Advent preacher who served various congregations, including Philadelphia and Brooklyn, New York. He studied medicine at Western Reserve College, Ohio, in 1848 and at the Philadelphia College of Medicine in 1850. In 1852 he wrote a long, clinical description of the pros and cons of seeking relief from consumption in various climates, based on his own medical and personal experience with the disease.⁹⁴ Turner died of consumption two years later and, like many other sufferers, doubtless found solace in his belief in an imminent Second Advent.

Evangelical Adventists represent people and communities whose religious beliefs and personal stories intersect with major issues in American social history of the period. Millerites in Pennsylvania occupy a position between the earlier nineteenth-century revivals of the Second Great Awakening and the later nineteenth-century evangelism of Dwight Moody and others that followed. Their persistence provides a direct link to new evangelical denominations that developed in the mid-twentieth century. The reasons why Evangelical Adventists failed, while other Advent denominations prospered, may explain why Pennsylvania remained their last stronghold. Steeped in early nineteenth-century ideas of egalitarianism, nonsectarianism, and biblical literacy, the unchanging message of the Evangelical Adventists continued to appeal to areas of Pennsylvania that were less susceptible to religious innovations. While new generations of evangelists eventually took their place, the legacy of Josiah Litch and the Evangelical Adventists adds another important chapter to Pennsylvania's complex religious history.

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NOTES

1. *The Clay Bugle* (Harrisburg, PA), October 24, 1844.
2. Josiah Litch to Joshua Himes December 10, 1841, J. V. Himes Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.
3. *Advent Herald* (Boston, MA; hereafter *AH*), May 16, 1857, account of Joshua V. Himes, *AH*, April 9, 1853, Obituary of Mahitable Dyer: "When the writer of this notice first visited Philadelphia in Dec. 1841, she became deeply interested in the subject of the glorious restitution, and reign of Christ on the redeemed earth. It was mainly through her influence the way was opened for a second visit in 1842, when an effectual door was opened for the preaching of the great truths of the second advent of our Saviour."
4. *AH*, October 6, 1849.
5. *Ibid.*, March 29, 1843. Advent preachers visited Pittsburgh in 1843, but there are no references or reports of established congregations in western Pennsylvania associated with the Evangelical Adventists or later Messiah's Churches as there were in central and eastern PA.
6. *Signs of the Times* (Boston; hereafter *SOT*), March 1, 1843.
7. *AH*, February 21, 1844, and July 29, 1846
8. *SOT*, June 14, 1843.
9. *Ibid.*, March 15, 1843.
10. *AH*, February 21, 1844. Probably the Wesley AME Zion Church located at Fifth and Lombard streets in 1830. E. L. Carey and A. Hart, *Philadelphia in 1830–1*, and *A Brief Account of the Various Institutions and Public Objects in the Metropolis Forming A Complete Guide For Strangers and A Useful Compendium for the Inhabitants* (Philadelphia: James Kay, Jun and Co., 1830), 49.
11. *AH*, March 6, 1844.
12. *Ibid.*, July 24, 1858; "William Watkins," Archives of Maryland, Biographical Series. <https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5400/sc5496/002500/002535/html/002535bio.html>.
13. *SOT*, February 15 and 22, 1843.
14. *Ibid.*, July 19, 1843

15. *Midnight Cry* (New York City), August 3, 1843.
16. *Ibid.*, October 5, 1843.
17. *AH*, July 15, 1846; William Kashatus, "Finding Sanctuary in Montrose," *Pennsylvania Heritage* (Winter 2007), <http://paheritage.wpengine.com/article/finding-sanctuary-montrose/>.
18. *AH*, May 1, 1844.
19. *Ibid.*, May 29, 1844. The Laodicean Church is criticized in Revelations 3:14–22 as lukewarm.
20. *AH*, June 5, 1844.
21. *Ibid.*, September 25, 1844.
22. *Midnight Cry*, October 19, 1844, quoting *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, October 14, 1844.
23. A. Spencer Braham, "The Philadelphia Press and the Millerites," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 78, no. 2 (April 1954): 189–202.
24. Benjamin Rush, *Medical Inquiries and Observations upon the Diseases of the Mind* (Philadelphia, 1812), 36–37, 44–47.
25. Ronald L. Numbers and Jane S. Numbers, "Millerism and Madness: A Study of 'Religious Insanity' in Nineteenth-Century America," in *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993), 96, 97, 110.
26. Dr. Charles R. Gorgas (1806–92) was a physician in Lebanon County in 1830 and graduated from the Homeopathic Medical College in Philadelphia in 1853. He later moved to Wooster, Ohio.
27. Josiah Litch, letter to William Miller, October 24, 1844, qtd. in Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry: A Defense of the Character and Conduct of William Miller and the Millerites* (Takoma Park, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1945), 226–27.
28. *AH*, November 6, 1844
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Clay Bugle*, October 24, 1844.
31. Some Adventists, including many who later formed the Seventh-day Adventists, at first believed that on October 24, 1844, every man's destiny was forever sealed based on Revelations 22:11–12 and Matthew 25:10.
32. *AH*, May 14 and 21, 1845.
33. *Ibid.*, May 14, 1845.
34. Shalom Goldman and Barbara Krieger, *Divine Expectations: An American Woman in 19th-Century Palestine* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999); *AH*, May 8, 1844.
35. Sullivan County Historical Society, https://www.scpahistory.com/museum/history_of_celestia; Explore PA History, <https://explorepahistory.com/hmarker.php?markerId=I-A-46>.

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36. Report of Josiah Litch on the "State of Things in Philadelphia," in *AH*, June 4, 1845.
37. David L. Rowe, "The Millerites," in *The Disappointed*, ed. Numbers and Butler, 15.
38. *AH*, March 2, 1850.
39. *Ibid.*, May 16, 1857.
40. *Ibid.*, September 2, 1846.
41. *Ibid.*, April 24, 1858; Advertisement of Litch's medicines in *AH*, November 5, 1858, includes a cure for fits.
42. *AH*, April 12, 1862.
43. Isaac C. Wellcome, *History of the Second Advent Message and Mission, Doctrine and People* (Yarmouth, ME: I. C. Wellcome, 1874). 273; *AH*, October 6, 1849.
44. *SOT*, May 18, 1842, and February 1, 1843; *AH*, May 14, 1845, and June 7, 1856.
45. Wellcome, *History of the Second Advent Message*, 347; *AH*, June 4, 1845.
46. David Bachman Landis, "The Second Adventists or Millerites," *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 9, no. 3 (1905): 47–58, https://www.lancasterhistory.org/images/stories/JournalArticles/vol9no3pp47_58_321157.pdf (accessed January 10, 2021).
47. *AH*, September 1845.
48. *Ibid.*, February 3, 1863.
49. *Ibid.*, September 22, 1849.
50. *Pennsylvania, Cumberland County 1872 Hampden Township* (F. W. Beers and Co., 1872), <https://ancestortracks.com/Cumberland-1872/HampdenTwp,Shiremanstown.jpg>. Church located at corner of Main and Market, Shiremanstown.
51. Letter from J. Litch on "Report of Tour of Pennsylvania," *AH*, January 17, 1857.
52. *AH*, February 4, 1846.
53. *Ibid.*; *AH*, December 17, 1845.
54. *Ibid.*, July 8, 1846
55. *Ibid.*, December 2, 1846.
56. *Ibid.*, March 24, 1847.
57. Letter from J. D. Boyer, dated Harrisonville (PA), March 15, 1847, in *AH*, April 6, 1847.
58. *AH*, August 14, 1847.
59. *Ibid.*, October 2, 1847.
60. Federal Census, 1850 and 1860.
61. Letter from J. D. Boyer, Pleasant Gap, in *AH*, April 15, 1848.
62. *AH*, October 14, 1848.
63. *Ibid.*, September 22, 1849.
64. *Ibid.*
65. *Ibid.*, September 29, 1853.

66. I. Daniel Rupp and John Winebrenner. *History of All the Religious Denominations in the United States: Containing Authentic Accounts of the Rise And Progress, Faith And Practice, Localities And Statistics, of the Different Persuasions: Written Expressly for the Work, by Fifty-three Eminent Authors, Belonging to the Respective Denominations.* (Harrisburg: J. Winebrenner, 1849), 41.
67. *AH*, November 15, 1851.
68. *Ibid.*, June 17, 1854.
69. Advent Christians and Seventh-day Adventists both believed that death was a temporary unconscious state while awaiting the resurrection to life for the just and condemnation of the unjust to a second death in the lake of fire.
70. *AH*, September 11, 1858.
71. *Ibid.*, November 20, 1858, and October 15, 1859.
72. Harold J. Abrahams, *Extinct Medical Schools of Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1966); *AH*, December 12, 1865.
73. *AH*, December 4, 1864. Letters from Advent missionaries George H. Child (1827–1905) and Irville Irwin Leslie (1819–99) describe in detail their work in Edgefield ministering to the educational, religious and medical needs of the freedmen.
74. *AH*, November 4, 1865.
75. *Ibid.*
76. *Ibid.*, June 11, 1873.
77. *Ibid.*, August 27, 1873.
78. *Messiah's Herald* (Boston), February 17, 1886.
79. Francis A. Walker Superintendent of Census, *The Statistics of the Population of the United States, Vol. I, Ninth Census* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1872), table XVII, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1870/population/1870a-48.pdf?#>.
80. Henry K. Carroll and US Census Office, *Report on Statistics of Churches in the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1894), 117, 121, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008603107/Home>.
81. W. Chamberlin Hunt and US Bureau of the Census, *Religious Bodies: 1906 . . .* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1910), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001408064>; E. Munsell Bliss, W. Chamberlin Hunt, and US Bureau of the Census, *Religious Bodies: 1916 . . .* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1919), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001408065>.
82. *Democratic Watchman*, April 28, 1916; John Blair Linn, *History of Centre and Clinton Counties* (Philadelphia, PA: Louis H. Everts, 1883); Zeigler manuscript journal, Centre County Library.
83. Emma Confer Watson, "Holts Hollow," weekly column published in *Centre Democrat* (Bellefonte PA) 1924–45.

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84. "Pioneer Spirit: The Pearsall Family and Mt Zion Church," <http://mtzionhistoricalsociety.org/mt-zion-church/pioneer-spirit-the-pearsall-family-and-mt-zion-church/>.
85. Rowe, "The Millerites," 14.
86. *AH*, January 1, 1853.
87. *Ibid.*, September 24, 1853.
88. *World's Crisis* (Boston), January 18, 1860.
89. Catherine A. Berkus, *Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America 1740–1845* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1998), 306.
90. *AH*, July 11, 1865.
91. *Ibid.*, August 1, 1865.
92. *Ibid.*, August 22, 1865.
93. *Ibid.*, September 25, 1852. *Arthur's Home Gazette* was published 1850–55 by Timothy Shay Arthur in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
94. *AH*, October 9, 1852.