A New Look at the Ephrata Cloister

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When the day's last curious tourist has retreated from the worn paths where Conrad Beissel once trod, and the softly glowing moonlight illuminates the old graveyard at Ephrata's Cloister, once more the Saal seems filled with the strains of choral music. Shades of the past still walk the quiet paths along the banks of the Conestoga, meditating and praying to their God with hearts uplifted from the dreary toil and self-abnegation of days and even years. But when dawn breaks over the horizon, past glories vanish and soon more tourists pour through the buildings and trudge past the nameless graves, praising and pitying the eccentric customs and inhabitants of long ago.

Today, the restored buildings of the Ephrata Cloister stand as a silent monument to an ideal abandoned years ago, profaned only by that ubiquitous soul, the American tourist. A mass of literature has eulogized this communal ideal and those who tried valiantly to live the life of self-sacrifice demanded of them. But for the most part emphasis is placed on the lives of the inhabitants, especially their religious practices and motivation. Although extravagant claims have been advanced by some writers that the Cloister and its people played a significant role in American history, no real ex-

amination of the cultural significance of the Cloister has been attempted. Whether of a negative or positive nature, the contributions of the Cloister to the dominant cultural pattern of America[1] and the minor Pennsylvania-German[2] cultural pattern is of enough importance to warrant an addition to the already swollen ranks of Cloister literature.

Each ethnic group reaching the New World had an equal opportunity to influence the mainstream of American culture by first accepting the dominant mores and then by interjecting those parts of their own cultural heritage capable of assimilation into the dominant cultural patterns, disclaiming the remainder. The Scotch-Irish, the Welsh, the French Huguenots all followed this procedure when they landed on American shores during the colonial period. Those groups which remained aloof, deliberately rejecting their opportunity, chose instead to accept a cultural pattern with mores outside of the mainstream of American culture—a decision that transformed such a group into an island untouched by the swirling waters of American life. Before analyzing the Ephrata Germans' reasons for rejecting the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture, a brief summary of the history of the community is necessary.

The names Ephrata and Beissel are almost synonomous, for the community that Johann Conrad Beissel founded was the inevitable culmination of his mystical and idealistic nature. Born in 1690, Beissel, a native of Eberbach in the Rhineland, was orphaned early in life and became an itinerant baker swayed by the extreme religious beliefs circulating widely through the Germany of his youth. Rosicrucianism, Inspirationism, Pietism, Judaism, all left an indelible mark upon the uneducated, impressionable young man who underwent periodic spiritual rejuvenations, the final and most important one occurring in 1715.[3] Soon Beissel, a separatist by nature, was repulsed by the dogmatism and formalism of the major religious sects in Germany, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Roman Catholics. With no religious home, he was forced to search inwardly for answers to his spiritual yearnings. "Since all parties lead equally evil and godless lives, I should like to ask by what one is to know the pure teaching people claim to have. For certainly, if a doctrine produces no piety, it is false and evil, whatever it may seem to be.' "[4]

In 1720, Beissel arrived at Germantown where a large band of German Baptists had settled the previous year. By 1723, after much soul searching Beissel was baptized by Peter Becker, leader of the Germantown group, humbling himself before one whom he felt was spiritually inferior to himself. Commissioned by the Germantown leaders to lead the embryonic Conestoga congregation in Lancaster county, Beissel began to express openly the religious views which he had drawn from eclectic strains of theology to which he had been exposed. All the while he attracted like-minded individuals until by 1728 a long-smouldering break with the parent congregation flared up and the two Dunkard factions severed all ties.[5] Beissel showed no interest in a reconciliation with the Ger-

mantown Dunkards, but scuttled conciliatory attempts initiated by the rival congregation.[6]

Later, Beissel implemented his pet theories on marriage and communal living by promoting the celibate ideal. By 1740 both men and women had formed orders which encouraged contemplative living. In the mid-1740's a series of internecine conflicts threatened Beissel's position, but he managed to regain his hold upon the settlers after being ousted from control for a brief period by Israel Eckerlin. After winning back his lost authority, Beissel made sure no further challenges could be mounted against him by investing his office with supernatural significance. He thus constantly solidified his position as *Vorsteher* up to the day he died, July 6, 1768.[7]

Walter C. Klein in an excellent biography affords historians a fine insight into the complex organism that was Beissel. Klein remarks that Beissel had no conception of the obligations that life entails. Living as he did, in an abstract, isolated atmosphere untouched by the routines of the world, he was undependable and unreliable when measured by ordinary human standards. Many of those initially attracted to him were later repulsed when they fully understood the spiritual demands expected of them. His two most famous converts, Conrad Weiser and Christopher Sauer, after several years of grovelling at the feet of the *Vorsteher* rebelled and became bitter foes of Beissel. Yet in the spiritual realm where he should have reigned supreme, Beissel was no more impressive; for he was an eclectic in doctrine, and in ritual he cut a grotesque, pitiful figure for all save his most devoted coreligionists. "He was an insignificant man who made a life long effort to feel impressive."[8] Unfortunately, the people at Ephrata were the chosen instruments for this self-glorification.

In spite of his obvious failings, Beissel had a spiritual presence that attracted many people. "His preeminence as a ghostly father was the foundation of the solid continuity that made his curious anachronism a civilizing agency."[9] But this same preeminence made the ultimate failure of the Cloister, Beissel's as well. Even before the Vorsteher's death the community had begun its slow decline. In 1740, 35 brothers and 34 sisters had taken the vows of celibacy, a number which had gradually increased until the middle years of the 1750's when this trend reversed itself. By 1770, the celibate membership, the nucleus of the community, numbered only 14 men and 28 women. Fifteen years later, seven brothers and nine sisters still pursued the celibate ideal and the end of the community was imminent.[10]

Beissel's heir, John Peter Miller, surpassed him in intelligence and in formal learning, yet he was apparently content to play a role subordinate to Beissel's. His learning was so highly regarded in Philadelphia (in spite of his culturally isolated location) that he was elected to the American Philosophical Society.[11] But for all of his superior talents, Miller, lacking the needed charismatic qualities, could not rejuvenate a decaying enterprise. He was everything that Beissel was not as a person, "open, affable, familiar, easy of access,

and agreeable in conversation," but he could not exalt the soul as his master had been capable of doing and by then spiritual exaltation was the only justification for the community's existence.[12] The membership continued to dwindle until only four of the religious remained in 1814 when the survivors of the householders[13] at the Cloister received a charter for the incorporation of Ephrata.[14] Ephrata had become just another village in the Pennsylvania Dutch country surrounding Lancaster.

Historians in the past have been content merely to record their observations on the culture of the Ephrata Cloister and to present a more or less factual historical narrative similar to the one just concluded. The generally accepted historical interpretation has fostered the impression that the Cloister has played a substantial role in the development of American culture. So disproportionate to its real importance in American history has the cult of Ephrata become that several years ago it was possible to publish a volume of annotated bibliography on literature pertaining to the Cloister.

The *Ephrata Chronicon,* an approved biography of Beissel, has been the primary source for Ephratologists and with the quasi-primary sources of Redmond Conyngham and William M. Fahnestock has led the unsuspecting scholar into making uncritical appraisals of Beissel and his life's work. The modern apologists for Beissel, Eugene Doll and Felix Reichmann, continue in this fashion, superfivially examining the surface attributes of life in the Cloister, claiming a disproportionate place for Ephrata in American history,[15] and placing an aura of saintliness about the unlikely head of Conrad Beissel.

Even the most objective historians, Walter Klein and Oswald Seidensticker, however, never analyzed the settlement in order to uncover the reasons why the Ephrata Germans remained outside the ascendant cultural patterns of Anglo-Saxon America, although Klein does represent Beissel's rejection in psychological terms. Nor did they explore the broad range of the relationships of the Ephrata Germans with the surrounding ethnic groups. Also overlooked has been the effect that the Cloister may have had upon the minor culture that blossomed in Pennsylvania-German circles. John L. Gillin, the only sociologist ever to probe the subject, investigated the relationship of the main body of Dunkards with the Ephrata branch, producing a study of the impact of two groups of common origin upon one another. Gillin, too, left to others the demonstration of the cultural significance of the Ephrata Dunkards.

At least six questions, all dealing with a cultural analysis of the Ephrata Cloister, must still be answered. Why did Ephrata remain aloof from the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture? Why did the community prove to be an enclave even within the transplanted German culture of Pennsylvania, exerting little or no influence upon it? Why did the community reject its opportunity to aid in the assimilation of the Pennsylvania Germans into the main stream of culture? Why did Beissel promote this tendency towards physical and intellectual isolation? Why did so little original thought emanate from the inhabitants of the community? And finally, how did the

View of the restored Cloister buildings. The Saron, or Hebron, at the left, was the sisters' house. The Biessel cabin can be seen in the background. Photo courtesy of the Penna. Historical & Museum Commission.

eccentric religious beliefs held by the Beisselian Dunkards accentuate the cultural differences? Within the answers to these questions rests the significance of Ephrata in the development of American culture.

The key to these answers lies in the 1740's when the Eckerlin brothers for a brief period transformed Ephrata into the most important industrial center west of Philadelphia. Before this time, no reason existed for anyone to suspect that Ephrata should ever be anything but a fanatical religious community directing all the accumulated energies of its members away from this world and toward the next. Yet the community possessed an advantage in the frontier environment that the individual pioneer with his limited time and resources could not match. The communistic organization of the community with its ability to regiment the laboring force and to concentrate all of its resources made corporate enterprises requiring large amounts of capital, labor, land, and distributive contacts possible. Development of a complex economy at Ephrata, which would have enabled the Cloister to become the industrial leader of central Pennsylvania, afforded a real chance to contribute to both the physical and cultural development of the colony. But only spiritual endeavors occupied the zealots of Ephrata at this early stage.

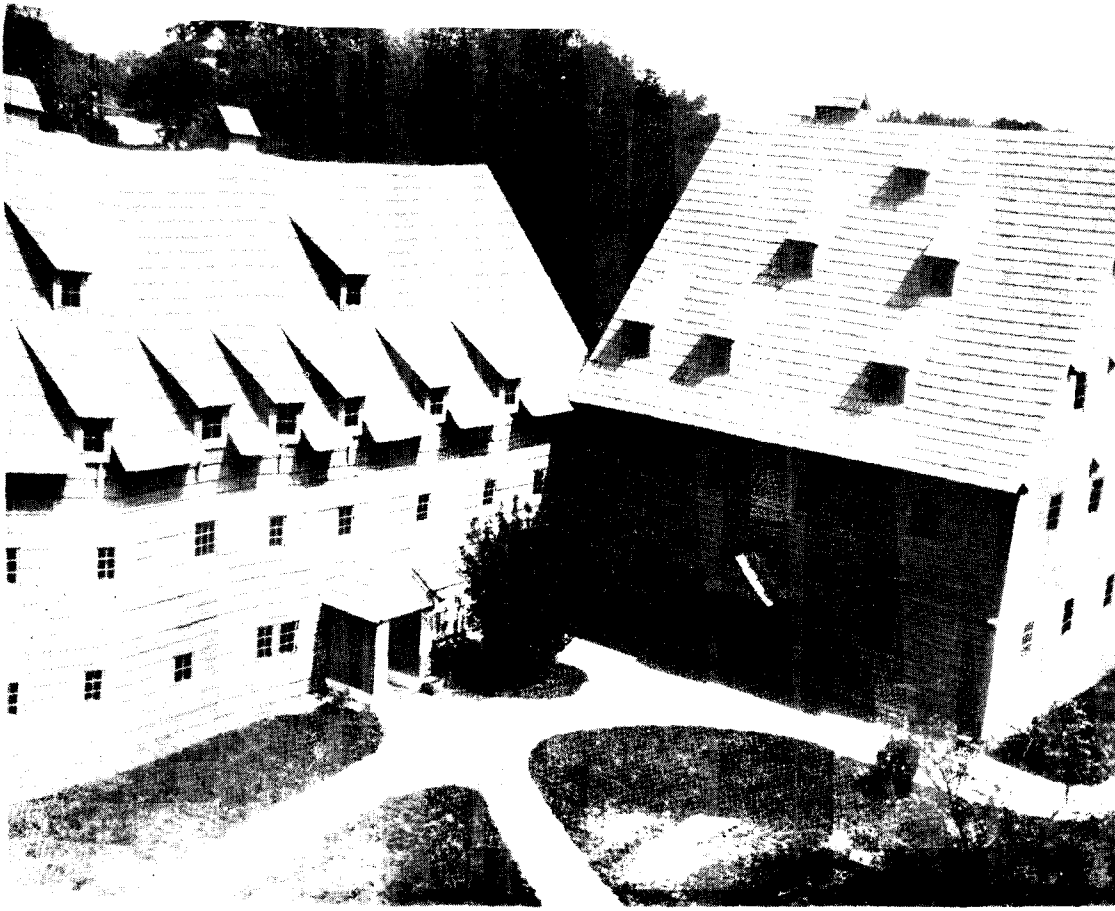
In 1740, Israel Eckerlin, who had early demonstrated leadership ability, was appointed Prior of the monastery by Beissel. From this responsible position Prior Onesimus proceeded to extend his influence over the entire community. He subdued all resistance to his operations by instituting a stern disciplinary code that demanded the entire subordination of every individual. Onesimus also enlisted the aid of the Mother Superior against Beissel, and through her earned the support of the sisterhood. With this backing he moved against the strongly entrenched position of Beissel and actually forced the *Vorsteher* to relinquish completely the reins of authority for a time.[16]

Under Prior Onesimus, who exhibited the passion for organization and administration lacking in Beissel, the community began to capitalize upon the economic advantages presented to it by virtue of its communistic economic system. Onesimus initiated a program that by 1745 enabled Ephrata to become the most important community in Pennsylvania outside of Philadelphia. The fourth paper mill in Pennsylvania, a saw mill, fulling mill, flaxseed oil press, tannery, and flour mill, all were established at this time, an industrial complex unequalled in Pennsylvania.[17] Even more important, the sudden prosperity of the settlement, especially of the brotherhood, began to redirect the thought-habits of these simple-minded folk from other-worldly to worldly concerns.

This sudden blossoming of an agrarian settlement composed of ascetics into an industrial center occurred almost entirely through the efforts of Onesimus and his three brothers. The members of the Cloister had long been accustomed to having their thought and work patterns imposed upon them by a strong individual, who gave them the sense of security and belonging so desperately needed by these German immigrants who found themselves in hostile surroundings in a strange land. In turn, the first of these dominating individuals, Conrad Beissel, took refuge in the false feeling of power that his sense of dominance gave him.

Beissel realized instinctively that only in isolation from the world could his power remain intact. Contacts with the "worldly" civilization of the outside world meant the dissipation of his authority. However, Prior Onesimus, a much more ambitious and confident man, did not require the crutch of a community completely dependent upon his whims, but willingly challenged the world on its own terms. Each used the religious cover of the community for his own benefit—Beissel to remain apart from a world in which he had never succeeded and in which he knew inwardly that he was forever doomed to failure, Israel Eckerlin to further his own ambitions and self-importance. The religious of Ephrata were little better than sheep being led by whichever man exercised the stronger hold over them at any given moment.

While certainly some saint-like souls must have resided at Ephrata, the majority pursued the rigid asceticism promoted by Beissel not through any natural inclination towards such a life, but because of their need for a "father" figure — the symbol of authority.[18] One "father" can supplant another as Onesimus was seeking



An aerial view of the Saron (Hebron) and Saal (Peniel) complex. The Saron was built 1743, and the chapel, or Peniel, was built in 1741. The Peniel has not been restored in its interior. Photo courtesy of the Penna. Historical and Museum Commission.

to do, but until the process of transplanting the regalia of authority is complete, the usurper is extremely vulnerable. In this case, Onesimus' task was complicated by his need for removing not only the originator of those thought-patterns followed by the people but the thought-patterns as well. Success would require both diplomacy and cunning, but nfortunately Onesimus lacked these vital qualities.

Good sense dictated that Beissel be driven into exile so that his person would not serve as a rallying point for the discontent sure to develop out of the rapid switch in ideas, even among sheep-like individuals. Instead, the vindictive Onesimus paraded Beissel before his former congregation to emphasize his degradation. This display of arrogance by Onesimus proved fatal to all his dreams, for as willing as the religious were to follow the Prior's lead in indus-

Beissel parlayed this pity for his downtrodden condition and the overweening arrogance of Onesimus into enough strength to wrest control of Ephrata away from the Prior. The three weeks' long struggle terminated when Onesimus, humiliated by his defeat and unwilling to efface himself before Beissel and those he had once controlled, fled to the wilds of West Virginia on September 4, 1745. Eventually his brothers and the most dynamic members of the community joined him in turning Mahanaim on the Great Kanawha River into a rallying point of malcontents.[20] With Onesimus went the final opportunity for any significant commercial venture to prosper at Ephrata. In the premature destruction of the Eckerlins' work the potential for social, cultural, and economic fulfillment died.

Once back in power, Beissel resolutely purged the brotherhood until all those supporting the departed Eckerlins had been expelled. To rid the Cloister of those "worldly" influences introduced by Onesimus, the triumphant Beissel directed a general rebaptism of each member.[21] Meanwhile, the commercial ties with Philadelphia merchants were permitted to wither away, and the mills closed with the accompanying cancellation of all contracts. All the workers from the surrounding region hired by the brethren were dismissed, and the only production countenanced by Beissel was that required for home consumption. But Beissel did not tire of his relentless battle against the inroads of the world, until the supernatural agency of God appeared to step in. On the night of December 5, 1747, fire totally destroyed the flour mill showing the impermanence of worldly goods in the face of God's wrath and proving to Beissel and his following that God approved of his campaign.[22]

So the bright promise that Ephrata had offered under the Eckerlins as a commercial center and as the logical avenue for fusing the Pennsylvania-German and Anglo-Saxon cultures into an assimilated whole vanished under the resurgent authority of Conrad Beissel. By 1748, Beissel had systematically eradicated all traces of Onesimus' activities in the community. This meant, too, that the process of cultural exchange between Ephrata and Philadelphia which had been developing as a by-product of the commercial liaison was arrested. The barriers separating the Germans and English were again mounted by Beissel, who showed no indication of lowering them.

Indeed, Beissel went to great lengths to insure that no such challenge as the Eckerlins had presented would ever again commence from within. He drove out the most ambitious and energetic members of the congregation in the "purge" of 1745-1746, and constantly guarded against any sign of initiative on the part of others by gathering up all the reins of authority. It would be impossible for any future Prior to use that position as a weapon against Beissel, but to make doubly sure he inserted his loyal follower, John Peter Miller, in that post. Beissel brooked no opposition, choosing to run roughshod over any dissidents, apparently preferring "the groveling

subservience of a small, but wholly devoted"[23] following to compromising his leadership or his views by accepting new ideas. He had long compared himself to Christ and now he did not protest when his adoring but unsophisticated and uneducated flock accorded him a semi-divine status.[24] This "honor" would be helpful as another aid in keeping strong grip on the minds and loyalties of the people. Thus as the years passed it became increasingly difficult to advance any idea unacceptable to Beissel, for he was backed by a loyal coterie convinced that the *Vorsteher* was the chosen of God and sole possessor of the knowledge of God's truth.

Beissel by capturing the minds of the religious of Ephrata enforced an isolation which excluded all cultural influences, even those emanating from other settlements of Pennsylvania Germans. It is significant that early in Ephrata's history Beissel ended any hope for a reconciliation with Germantown. That band of German Dunkards was prevented from leavening the harsh Ephrata brand with their own more sophisticated and less dogmatic principles. Close by the heart of culture in the colony, the Germantown group soon gained an ascendancy among the German settlers of Pennsylvania, but Ephrata shared in none of this glory.

Nor did Beissel utilize the potentially profitable exchange of ideas with the rapidly growing band of Moravians who had settled in the Lehigh Valley. This sect was even then especially well-known for beautiful music and for magnificently illuminated manuscripts done in the traditional German style. However Beissel, fearing the impact that so strong a personality as Count von Zinzendorf might have upon his impressionable followers, procrastinated throughout the desultory discussions with the Moravian leader that occurred during the 1740's. Finally, mutual distrust, doctrinal disagreement, and Beissel's reluctance to promote a union that might destroy his power ended the talks. No further contact between the Ephrata Seventh Day Baptists and the Zinzendorf Moravians was ever recorded; the alienation of the two groups was irrevocable.[25]

Henry S. Bornemann, who has studied Pennsylvania-German art forms thoroughly, notes that while the art of illuminating manuscripts first revived at Ephrata about 1745, this revival had no effect whatever upon the development of illuminating elsewhere in Pennsylvania. Ephrata's artistic endeavors, retaining a strong identity with Old World forms, were uninfluenced by later achievements in the other German communities. Any superior talent was greeted not as the expression of individual genius, but as the sign of the presence of God's grace.[26] Accordingly, the possessor of extraordinary gifts was not encouraged in his pursuits, and would either become an embittered member of the congregation like Ezechiel Sangmeister, or drift away into the outside world.

Similarly, although some enthusiasts claim a wide sphere of influence for the music of Beissel and the Cloister, the musical forms were not heard beyond the confines of Ephrata in colonial days and remain obscure and unknown today, in obvious contrast to the success and influence achieved by the Moravians through

their music. Although highly distinctive and original in nature, the melodies were too tightly integrated into the overall culture of the Cloister to be withdrawn from their surroundings. The haunting quality of the hymns prompted some incautious and overly enthusiastic visitors to predict lasting fame for the music,[27] but the death of the Cloister meant death as well for Beissel's beautiful melodies, too delicate a blossom to exist in the harsh air of the world outside the artificial barriers encircling Ephrata.

Beissel and Miller were the primary writers in the community, and their literary shortcomings limited their effectiveness and prevented their works from becoming an influence among the German immigrant population in Pennsylvania. Beissel, in particular used mysterious and mystical language, full of fantastic ideas that were probably even then difficult to understand. He continually used obscure metaphors in which sensual love images expressed spiritual depth and experiences.[28] At best, their works exhibited a baroque style that was typical of the literary style in vogue in Germany, but, at worst, their efforts were unintelligble. Beissel's *Mysterion Anomias* was the first German book printed in America, the job being performed by Ben Franklin in 1728.[29] Since these segments of Ephrata's culture contributed little to the advancement of either the Pennsylvania-German cultural pattern or that of the dominant culture, they merely illustrate the insignificance of the cultural influence exerted by Ephrata.

A more important consideration is the printing press established at the Cloister in 1742 by Israel Eckerlin—the second German press in Pennsylvania. A flood of works poured forth, the community's own production of German works, other items by Germans into the life of the colony. Today, the Pennsylvania-Gering John Bunyan's **Pilgrim's Progress** and Anthony Benezet's **Obesrvations on the Enslaving, Importing and Purchasing of Negroes.**[30] The most notable performance by the Ephrata printers was the printing in 1748 of Van Bragt's **Blutige Schauplatz oder Martyrer Spiegel,** the largest book printed in colonial America. Every phase of the publishing process from start to finish could be handled at Ephrata, including making the paper and binding the completed volumes.[31]

This activity aided immeasurably in solidifying the derivative German culture of America, but unfortunately in colonial America, where the unconscious effort was being made to amalgamate many cultures into one universally applicable culture, any strengthening and extension of an inimicable culture was destructive to the interests of the society at large. In this period while Germans were flowing into the Penns' colony, intelligent men such as Ben Franklin were perplexed and alarmed over the difficulty of assimilating the Germans into the life of the colony. Today, the Pennsylvania-German sects still maintain a unique culture, resisting assimilation into the pattern of American life. The chance for easy absorption passed in colonial days when the German settlers found it easier to embrace old ways than to modify them or to develop new thought-patterns. An outpouring of German books made this even

easier and prevented the English language from spreading among the Germans. For this Christopher Sauer and the Ephrata printers must bear equal responsibility.

It is not surprising that Beissel would encourage the printing business of the Brotherhood, for not only did it not weaken his position within the community, but afforded him an opportunity to circulate his message throughout the colonies. The Cloister members read only literature prescribed by Beissel so that the Mennonite tracts and other outside works' published at Ephrata did not threaten those thought-patterns imposed by Beissel. In 1745 his burning of the books printed under the Eckerlins illustrates his willingness to take drastic measures to exclude heretical and opposing ideas from the community.[32]

Characteristically, Beissel himself never mastered the English language and always required the services of an interpreter, although certainly he had many opportunities to learn. His mastery of the language "was checked by his indolence and pride more than by his want of capacity; and, above all, it was not the absence of qualified teachers that hindered him." Possible tutors soon found "Beissel's stolid unwillingness to learn new habits or even to meet the demands of ordinary courtesy" insurmountable obstacles in the path of learning. The few Englishmen attracted by the Cloister, Israel Seymour, Thomas Hardie and others all discovered their new abode was uncongenial and left after a short trial at this new way of life. Study of the English tongue floundered on the rocky soil of the Ephrata Cloister, and none but German was ever spoken there.[33]

This same inflexibility of Beissel and his band of Germans can be discerned in their religious attitudes which continued unchanged from the Old World presuppositions in spite of a totally new environment. The "odd" religious practices observed at Ephrata immediately separated them from their neighbors. In turn, the alienation from surrounding communities caused the Cloister members to adopt a more self-contained outlook. The increasingly introspective tone of religion in the community helped to perpetuate the sense of isolation felt by the members, for they unconsciously tended to narrow their horizons and to close about themselves in an exclusive world. America proved to be a tough new world demanding modification of religious doctrines hoping to meet the challenge and, in general, those doctrines fared best which offered a code which could be used in the world, and not in withdrawal from the world. By refusing to modify their beliefs the German Seventh Day Baptists at Ephrata thus forfeited any hopes of influencing the development of America.

Most Americans never viewed the mixture of mysticism and piety at Ephrata with great favor. Beissel's theological brew was concocted of ideas advanced by the Inspirationists and Pietists of his youth, and certainly contained nothing original, for Beissel was not an original theologian. Just how little effect the salient features of Beissel's eclecticism had upon the main stream of American

thought is evident when the beliefs followed at Ephrata are understood.

Even the most distinguishing feature of the Beissel theology, Seventh Day Sabbatarianism was not unique among Christian sects in Europe. He probably took much of his thinking on this subject from the Keithian Baptists, a schismatic Quaker group who had joined the Baptists about 1700. Then, too, there was a large German Jewish settlement at Schafferstown only eighteen miles from Ephrata which, if Beissel needed more inspiration, provided it for him.[34] Quite obviously, however, this belief engendered little enthusiasm among other Americans.

Beissel also advocated the celibate life, claiming that the only merit found in marriage stemmed from the discipline given natural man who was thus protected against illicit, carnal complications. In his *Die Ehe das Zuchthaus fleischlicher Menschen* Beissel lamented that "Conjugal relations were an abomination, revolting to God and unworthy of anybody who had a serious interest in religion.' " But here again Beissel applied the views of an earlier thinker, taking his conceptions of marriage from a German theologian, Ernst Christoph Hochmann von Hochenau.[35]

Try as he would, Beissel never succeeded in producing a uniform attitude towards sex and marriage even among his most devoted followers. The ideal of complete abstinence from sexual indulgence was imperfectly realized, for in the Western world, especially among Protestant denominations, the good Christian marriage had always been upheld as an ideal. Add the natural predilection for union and companionship between the sexes to the drift of a frontier civilization where marriage was believed to be essential to the general well-being of society, and the hurdles in Beissel's way were indeed difficult to overcome. On the frontier where labor was scarce, large families were common and actually imperative if this vast new land was to be wrested from nature. The subconscious urge on the part of Americans to push the Indians out of the way and to populate all of this vast territory finally proved too much for Beissel's theories on celibacy to conquer, and fortunately, the "American dream" did not embrace celibacy.

In spite of the efforts of the Quakers and many German sects such as the group at Ephrata, pacifism proved an unpopular doctrine in America and had a negligible effect upon American history. Pacifism was another Old World idea transplanted to the hostile soil of the New World, for the idea of passive nonresistance had spread among those very sects which were most persecuted and which were most easily abandoned by the German state governments to the vicissitudes of invading armies. Non-resistance developed almost as a rationalization for these people's inability to defend themselves. They began to visualize war as the "logical fruit of illogical compromise." War was not just an interlude in the normal peaceful tenor of living, but the oppressive and violent pattern of life as they knew it to be.[36] On the frontier pacifism was not well-received and Pennsylvania with its pacifist elements

Views of archaeological exploration at the site of the Bethania, or brothers' house, and printing shop.

became an ideological battleground. Eventually, the pacifist ideal became discredited, and while today the feeling of "turning the other cheek" still exists in America, it exerts only minor influence.

For centuries, the Roman Catholic Church had developed to a high degree the cenobitic life for devout individuals. Beissel installed this mode of living at Ephrata during the 1730's in a change from the hermit-like life previously encouraged. Celibacy was one requisite for the brothers and sisters who professed vows in writing after 1738. The members of the orders vowed chastity and perhaps poverty and obedience as well (no evidence exists on this point). While the vows functioned as the legalistic framework of the cenobitic orders, tangible evidence of their life of withdrawal was the hooded white garment, an exact copy of the Capuchin habit.[37] The total impact of the contemplative life of isolation pursued at Ephrata was phrased most succinctly by the astute Peter Miller, "yet have we through the Grace of God, both Brethren & Sisters, hither to maintained our Ground and a visible Congregation. But shall not propagate the Monastic Life upon the Posterity: since we have no Successors, & the Genius of the Americans is bound another way."[38] Americans then as now wanted action, not meditation.

In addition to celibacy, pacifism and the cenobitic life Beissel's theology absorbed the fundamental Anabaptist doctrines which had been prominent in Germany for almost two hundred years. The most common characteristics of this interpretation of Christianity were: The Bible was the only standard in life; the church was a fellowship of believers entered through adult baptism; partnership between temporal and spiritual authorities was impossible; the members were to pursue the unworldly life of evangelical simplicity; and excommunication to maintain uniformity of belief was justified. Beissel like any other Anabaptist leader demanded implicit adherence to these tenets. The foundation of the Anabaptism emphasized by Beissel at Ephrata was the reliance of the individual upon the "inner word." God worked through the soul to reveal His truths.[39]

The larger Protestant denominations which imposed their beliefs upon American life producing an American, Protestant culture never accepted Anabaptist doctrines, just as they had rejected the other religious practices found at Ephrata. In the broad realm of Protestantism there was no room for the "inner word" which threatened the accepted method of Biblical exegesis. Adult baptism was likewise rejected by the major denominations. The separation of church and state has become standard policy in the United States, but not because of any pressure exerted by the German Seventh Day Baptists. Rather the major denominations sponsored this movement, and thus it became part of the main stream of American cultural life.

As the figure solely responsible for developing the thought patterns held by the simple folk at Ephrata, Johann Conrad Beissel must in turn bear the responsibility for directing the Cloister into cultural stagnation. Arrogant yet humble, clever yet simple, con-

tentious yet pacific, Beissel's character is not an easy one to explore especially when seeking an answer to why he would deny the world so completely. Beissel's rejection of both worldly influences and the comrade spirits of Germantown can be explained in part by his grasping for power over men's lives, and in the sense of security such power afforded a poor German orphan boy buffeted by hostile forces in a world incomprehensible to him. Reacting in the most narrow and negative manner to the stimulus of the Eckerlins, Beissel would not accept the challenge of leading the Pennsylvania-German into an early partnership with the dominant Anglo-Saxons in evolving an uniquely American culture. With this failure, he has left little more than a legacy of myths fostered by adulatory histories written about him and the German Seventh Day Baptists at Ephrata's Cloister.

NOTES

1. A Culture is a "continually changing pattern of learned behavior and the products of learned behavior (including attitudes, values, knowledge, and material objects) which are shared by and transmitted among the members of society." This workable definition can be applied to both the specific behavior patterns at Ephrata and the broader patterns of America. In talking of "culture," it is understood that these behavior patterns exist not only in material objects, but in intangible thought-habits as well, and these patterns tend to be generally uniformly shared by the individuals composing a society. John F. Cuber, *Sociology, A Synopsis of Principles,* (New York, 1955), p. 66.
2. To avoid confusion it must be understood that in speaking of Pennsylvania-German culture reference is made to the Germans first settling in Pennsylvania during the colonial period, especially in the 18th century. The phrase Pennsylvania-German sects includes Seventh Day Baptists, Amish, Mennonites, Brethren.
3. Julius F. Sachse, *The German Sectarians of Pennsylvania,* 1708-1742, *A Critical and Legendary History of the Ephrata Cloister and the Dunkers,* (Philadelphia, 1899), 1:34-40.
4. Walter C. Klein, *Johann Conrad Beissel, Mystic and Martinet,* (Philadelphia, 1942), pp. 14-15.
5. Brothers Lamech and Agrippa, *Chronicon Ephratense,* (Ephrata, 1786), pp. 20-40; John L. Gillin. *The Dunkers, A Sociological Interpretation,* (New York, 1906), pp. 115-123.
6. Sachse, *Sectarians,* 1:172-178; Klein, *Beissel,* pp. 74-78.
7. Lamech and Agrippa, *Chronicon,* p. 247.
8. Klein, *Beissel,* pp. 49-50, 118.
9. *Ibid.,* p. 2.
10. *Ibid.,* p. 134.
11. Eugene E. Doll, *The Ephrata Cloister,* (Ephrata, Pa., 1958), p. 25.
12. Redmond Conyngham, "An Account of the Settlement of the Dunkers at Ephrata, in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania Historical Society Memoirs,* 1827, 2:139.
13. Members of the religious sect who did not adhere to the celibate ideal.
14. Klein, *Beissel,* p. 181.
15. Doll, *Ephrata Cloister,* pp. 21, 22. Doll states that Ephrata became "one of the most remarkable religious communities in the history of America." It was a noble experiment stressing individual freedom and individual relations with God.

16. Klein, *Beissel*, pp. 152-5. The name, Eckerlin, has also been spelled Echerlin, Eckerline, and Echerle.
17. Julius F. Sachse, *Die Bapier Muhle Der Bruderschafft Zu Ephrata*, (Lancaster, Pa., 1897), p. 5; Doll, *Ephrata Cloister*, p. 9.
18. The name *Vorsteher* which was bestowed upon Beissel by his adoring congregation is mute proof of this father authority.
19. Klein, *Beissel*, pp. 155-6.
20. Sachse, *German Sectarians*, 2:215-7.
21. Klein, *Beissel*, p. 158.
22. Sachse, *German Sectarians*, 2:121-4. Sachse notes that this fire was incendiary in nature and that many settlers believed Beissel knew who had started it. I suspect, too, that Beissel had a hand in igniting the blaze. The mill was rebuilt, but on a greatly reduced scale.
23. Klein, *Beissel*, p. 95.
24. Sachse, *German Sectarians*, 1:102-3: Samuel W. Pennypacker *Pennsylvania In American History*, (Philadelphia, 1910), p. 329-32, relates the feud with Christopher Sauer over this implication in a Beissel hymn published by Sauer in 1739.
25. Klein, *Beissel*, pp. 100-7.
26. Henry S. Bornemann, "Pennsylvania German Illuminated Manuscripts," *Pennsylvania German Society Annual*, (Norristown, Pa., 1937), 46:47, 5.
27. Doll, *Ephrata Cloister*, p. 12.
28. L. O. Kuhns, *German and Swiss Settlements of Colonial Pennsylvania*, (New York, 1901), p. 129.
29. Doll, *Ephrata Cloister*, p. 9.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
31. Kuhns, *German Swiss Settlements*, pp. 132-3; Klein, *Beissel*, pp. 143-4; Julius F. Sachse, *Die Bapier Muhle Der Bruderschafft zu Ephrata*, (Lancaster, Pa., 1897), p. 9.
32. Klein, *Beissel*, p. 170.
33. Klein, *Beissel*, p. 170.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 67-8.
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 69, 31.
36. G. Paul Musselman, "The Sects, Apostles of Peace," in *The Pennsylvania Germans*, Ralph Wood, ed., (Princeton, N.J., 1942), pp. 80, 67-8.
37. Klein, *Beissel*, pp. 18-20; Conyngham, *An Account*, p. 139; William E. Fahnestock, "Historical Sketch of Ephrata, Together with a Concise Account of the Seventh Day Baptist Society of Pennsylvania," *Hazard's Regulations of Pennsylvania*, (1835), 15:163.
38. Julius F. Sachse, *A Unique Manuscript by Rev. Peter Miller*, (Lancaster, Pa., 1912), p. 4.
39. Klein, *Beissel*, pp. 18-20; Conyngham, *An Account*, p. 139; William E. Fahnestock, "Historical Sketch of Ephrata, Together with a Concise Account of the Seventh Day Baptist Society of Pennsylvania, "*Hazard's Regulations of Pennsylvania*, (1835), 15:163.

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