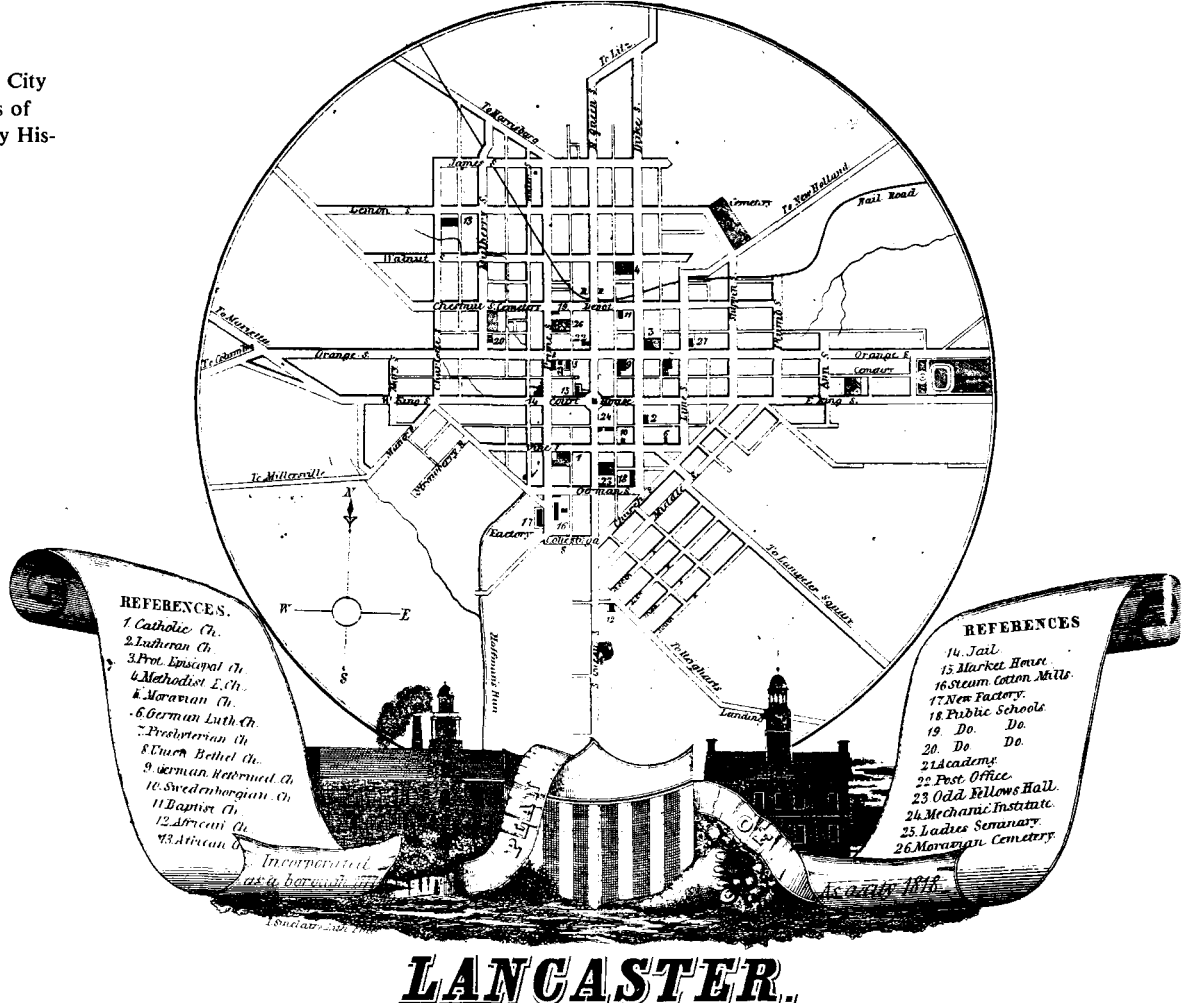


Figure 23. Lancaster City circa 1850. (Archives of the Lancaster County Historical Society)



REFERENCES.

- 1 Catholic Ch.
- 2 Lutheran Ch.
- 3 Prot. Episcopal Ch.
- 4 Methodist E. Ch.
- 5 Moravian Ch.
- 6 German Luth. Ch.
- 7 Presbyterian Ch.
- 8 Church Bethel Ch.
- 9 German Reformed Ch.
- 10 Swedenborgian Ch.
- 11 Baptist Ch.
- 12 African Ch.
- 13 African Ch.

REFERENCES

- 14 Jail
- 15 Market House
- 16 Steam Cotton Mills
- 17 New Factory
- 18 Public Schools
- 19 Do. Do.
- 20 Do. Do.
- 21 Academy
- 22 Post Office
- 23 Odd Fellows Hall
- 24 Mechanic Institute
- 25 Ladies Seminary
- 26 Moravian Cemetery

LANCASTER.

Muhlenberg Influence on a Local Level

by Mary Ann Long

Flaunting his motto "*Ecclesia Plantanda!*" (The Church Must Be Planted) like a modern-day T-shirt slogan, Henry Melchior Muhlenberg (1711–1787) arrived in the New World with his work cut out for him—unaccredited pastors occupied many Lutheran pulpits; disorder, dissention and disagreement ran rampant in churches and congregations.

The man appropriately called the Father of Lutheranism in this country, restored harmony and stability with firmness and courtesy . . . and with a determination that surfaced shortly after his arrival in South Carolina, September 1742. "I was called, not to Charleston or Georgia, but to Pennsylvania," he protested when advised against any travel north until spring. Hiring a more-than-reluctant captain of a less-than-seaworthy ship he was in Philadelphia by November.

Much has been written about Muhlenberg . . . his achievements were great; his influence national. This paper seeks to show Muhlenberg influence on a *local* level; equally strong; in places like Lancaster, churches like Trinity, and people—like your ancestors—and mine.

Parallels of time and place exist between several generations of the writer's ancestors—the Kellers of Lancaster—and the famous Muhlenbergs. Does a gentle scattering of the Muhlenberg name in the Keller family hint of a special relationship? . . . or is it merely a reflection of one family's respect and admiration for another.

Johann Peter Keller (1718–1803)—the writer's 4-greats grandfather—was not yet in Lancaster when Muhlenberg made his first visit there in 1746—a



Henry Melchior Muhlenberg
1711 - 1787

town of 1500 inhabitants. Assumed still in Germany, the Keller (Koehler/Köhler/Kehler) immigrant village remains a mystery but names of baptismal sponsors (sometimes a clue) at Trinity Church, suggest the Northern Kraichgau. “Peter” Keller and his wife Anna Maria (1724–1782) arrived in Lancaster sometime prior to 1756 with three children: Maria; Carl Andreas (“Andrew” 1750–1803)—the writer’s 3-greats grandfather; and Christina.

An urgent request for help first brought Muhlenberg to Lancaster—“the wrangling congregation” as he would come to call Trinity Church. Trouble with their Swedish minister, Lorentz T. Nyberg—accused of Moravian sympathies—had closed the church when the religious mediator arrived at not the red-bricked, white-steeped edifice we know and love today, but one of stone construction built in 1738. The Swedish minister problem resolved (with his ouster), another quickly took its place: no regular pastor.

Rev. John Frederick Handshue came to the church of 243 communicants via Muhlenberg in 1748, but left in 1751. Had some of Muhlenberg’s determination rubbed off on Trinity fathers? . . . in 1753 they boldly bypassed the Lutheran Patriarch and appealed directly to Wurtemberg, Germany for a minister.

Rev. John Siegfried Gerock arrived the same year. Thanks to Gerock we have present Trinity Church—except for the steeple, begun and finished in his tenure—1753–1767.

Thanks to *all* the early *Pfarrers* at Trinity for dedicated record keeping—a duty always stressed by Muhlenberg. Pastoral acts of baptisms, marriages, burials. Names, dates and events. Yellowed pages that spill out joys and sorrows of people like your ancestors—and mine:

16 October 1756. A son, Adam, born to Peter Koehler and his wife Anna Maria.

1 January 1759. A son, Johann Peter, born to Peter Kehler.

Miffed at not having been consulted in Gerock's selection, Muhlenberg had not visited Lancaster for ten years—but in May 1761, the Lutheran Monarch arrived for the cornerstone laying of new Trinity Church.

Black robes swished as clerics walked from the old stone church to the corner of Duke and Mifflin where the new brick structure rose. The foundation was in; walls several feet high. Prayers were offered and hymn-singing—then as now the key to the particularity of Lutheran worship—filled the air. Muhlenberg was no doubt glad to be back in Lancaster—his fine strong voice rising above the rest in the old favorite, “All praise and thanks to God most high.”

Surely the writer's ancestor—church member Peter Keller was there. Later, did he and Anna Maria make their way through the wagons, horses, noise and general tom-foolery (that accompanied all such gatherings), to the cemetery across the alley and the still fresh grave of Peter's little namesake buried just two months previous?

11 February 1761. Johann Peter little son of Peter Koehler. Died and was buried the next day. 2 years, 6 weeks old.

Perhaps Anna Maria needed assistance over the rough ground of the cemetery—she was heavy with a child born two months later:

13 July 1761. A son, Johann Peter, born to Peter Keller.

Two years later, he joined his brother in the churchyard:

29 November 1763. Died, little Johann Peter, son of Anna Maria and Peter Koehler. 2 years, 4 months, 15 days. Buried next day.

The Church of The Holy Trinity—newly named and 700 members strong—was dedicated May 4, 1766! Despite the Great American Church Hero's protests: “incapacitated and too weak to travel,” Henry Melchior Muhlenberg was there. So was Lancaster's predominance of Pennsylvania Germans—two-thirds of her total (2100) population. Heads turned up to urns

at peaks and corners of the roof; eyes straining in the sun to read the name—in Latin and German—high on the west wall; hands folded in prayer inside a sanctuary the same size today—(except for the addition of an apse)—eighty by sixty feet.

As Peter Keller (a brass founder by trade) listened to Rev. Muhlenberg preach from the goblet-shaped pulpit on dedication Sunday, did he ponder the cost of the magnificent structure? Church pledge? What about newly instituted “pew rent?” Or—watching the sand glass run—was he simply caught up in the angelic setting. (At age eighty-four, Peter would claim—in a second will later disallowed)—to be visited by “two angels” who “came every night singing, flying in the air with chairs on their backs, and when they were tired they sat down on the chairs.”)

Pastor Gerock left Trinity the spring of 1767. This time asked for his help, Muhlenberg returned to Lancaster in “an old fashioned coach, like the long wagons used in Germany for carrying grain or hay.” Was his route from Philadelphia? . . . over the King’s Highway? . . . thirty-two miles of ruddy, dirty, bumpy and in the spring impassable “Publick Road?” He arrived ill and was forced to stay two weeks.

Implying Gerock had neglected the church record book (the writer takes respectful exception to this), Muhlenberg began a new one. He introduced *Kinderlehre* (forerunner of Sunday School) and stressed religious education at every opportunity. “After all,” he would write in 1769, “preaching is for the most part like a local shower which dampens no more than the surface and quickly passes.”

In the pastorless years following Gerock’s departure, Muhlenberg did not forget Trinity. With determination (and probably a good deal of clout) he asked churches in the surrounding area to service the Lancaster pulpit whenever possible. In 1769, he brought a new arrival from Germany to the inland community—Rev. Justus Heinrich Christian Helmuth.

Peter Keller was a property owner in the borough as early as 1763 (according to Lancaster County tax assessor’s lists) with “out lots” in nearby Manheim Township. Later he owned land in the township with his son Andrew—the writer’s 3-greats grandfather.

But by 1779, Andrew Keller—a brass founder like his father— had his own fifteen acres in Manheim Township; an occasional horse and/or cow to help the family economy; and land that would remain in the Keller family for generations.

Lancaster hosted the 25th Pennsylvania Ministerium Convention in 1772. A quarter-century since the establishment (by—who else—Muhlenberg) of the synod (territorial unit) still structuring the Lutheran Church today. Back home in Philadelphia, his youngest son, Gotthilf had just returned from seven years of Minister education in Germany. It would be the elder Muhlenberg’s last visit to Lancaster, but Gotthilf was yet to make his own significant contribution to the locale.



Gotthilf Henry Ernest Muhlenberg
1753 - 1815

Carl Andreas (Andrew) Keller and Judith Barbara (Barbara) Biegler (1755–1831)—the writer’s 3-greats grandparents—were married in April 1774. No record of the union can be found in Trinity archives but thirteen children born to them over the next twenty-eight years, are all carefully recorded.

Rev. Helmuth was at Trinity’s helm through most of the Revolutionary conflict. A Private Andrew Keller served with the First Pennsylvania in 1777—(Captain James Ross’ Company—recruited in Lancaster); Private Andrew Kehler (ascribed township Manheim) was in the Lancaster County Militia—1778, 1781, 1782. Either—or both—is the writer’s patriot ancestor.

During the war years, six children were born to Andrew and Barbara: Anna Maria 1775; John Peter 1776; John George 1778 (died 1778); Maria Elizabeth 1779; Johannes 1781; and Andreas 1783.

When Helmuth wanted to leave Trinity in 1779 to work more closely with Muhlenberg in Philadelphia, he suggested a swap to the aging Patriarch: he (Helmuth) would go to Philadelphia and Muhlenberg’s youngest son, Gotthilf, could go to Lancaster.

Young Muhlenberg made the trip in January 1780—weatherwise, one of the worst winters recorded. A sermon, a pastoral nod and Gotthilf Heinrich Ernest Muhlenberg (1753–1815) began a reign at Trinity unequalled in pastor/congregation love and friendship ending only with his death thirty-five years later.

Completion of the church steeple was a G.H.E. Muhlenberg project begun in 1785. Ten years later, Trinity wore her crown—a steeple and spire that pierced Pennsylvania blue 195 feet up—to the pride of congregation and city alike.

Hand-carved wooden figures of the four evangelists were hoisted to the corners of the steeple base in September 1794, keeping their vigil for 155 years (since 1949, replaced by replicas and preserved in the church narthex). Seventy six year old Peter Keller may have watched Matthew, Mark, Luke and John maneuvered into place high above the church that fall day, but Frau Keller did not:

9 July 1782. Anna Maria Koehler buried in our cemetery. Wife of Peter K. Died suddenly of apoplexy. Was 58 years old.

Significantly missing from the Lancaster/Trinity scene for several years was the familiar figure of a tall man in flowing black robe, a white collar and hair. Henry Melchior Muhlenberg—the German missionary whose determination and dedication had taken him up and down the Atlantic seaboard and inland—had passed from this world in 1787. “*Ecclesia Plantanda!*”—the church “planted” in the New World now flourished in a new nation.

By the turn of the century, six more children had joined Andrew Keller’s family: Adam 1784 (a great greatgrandson of Adam is a prominent Lancasterian today); Jacob 1786; Sophie 1788; Michael 1790; Heinrich 1792 (died of “purples” 1799); and Benjamin 1794 (the writer’s 2-greats grandfather). Yet to be born: Mattaeus 1802.

The Patriarch’s middle and perhaps most celebrated son—Frederick Augustus Conrad Muhlenberg (1750–1801)—was appointed Receiver General of Land and moved to Lancaster in 1800. His untimely death only a year later, left little time to renew brotherly ties with Gotthilf, but his influence in Lancaster and at Trinity the last year of his life should not be underestimated.

A scattering of *Frederick* and *Augustus* is found in the families of three of Andrew Keller’s sons: John Peter (1776–1859), Adam (1784–1863), and Michael (1790–1861); who all married (interrelated) Shaeffers: Catherine, Elizabeth, and (1) Margaret (2) Barbara Margaret, respectively. As Frederick Augustus Muhlenberg’s wife Catherine was also a Schaeffer, is there a possible relationship between these women who bore the same distinguished—but rather common—name?

Andrew’s son, Benjamin (1794–1864)—the writer’s 2-greats grandfather—chose the name *Frederick Augustus Muhlenberg* for his first born. Married to Catherine Eliza Crever Schaeffer (who was the widow of Rev. Frederick Solomon Schaeffer and mother of Rev. Charles W. Schaeffer), Benjamin Keller was a well-known Lutheran minister in the Philadelphia area. He tutored under Rev. Frederick David Schaeffer (Solomon’s father), and his “revered and beloved pastor, Dr. (Gotthilf) Muhlenberg.”

Andrew Keller's death appears in Trinity records on February 22, 1803:

Carl Andreas Koehler. Buried in our cemetery. Suffered a long time with apoplexy. 52/7/1

The widow "barbara Köhler" (as her signature is scrawled on several documents) was bequeathed "one ten Plate Stove with the Pipe," (plus other household items), and the "Parcel of Land situate in the Township of Manheim in the County of Lancaster aforesaid containing Fifteen acres," where she lived and died thirty-two years later at the "residence of her son, Adam," (1784–1863)—by 1809 the owner, according to Lancaster County tax assessor's lists. The property next belonged to *his* son, Adam S. (Schaeffer) Keller (1825–1905).

The writer was able to approximate the location of this property in Manheim Township as on the Lititz Pike ("the Great Road") between the Lancaster city limits and Ephrata Pike. An 1864 gazetteer lists "Estate of Adam Keller" on the west side of the pike just north of the present intersection of Keller Avenue (for whom named the writer does not know—many Kellers lived in the vicinity in later years). Of nearby property owners on the old map, several names agree with neighbors, witnesses and friends mentioned in early Keller documents. In 1890, the property is identified as "A.S. Keller" (Adam Schaeffer). Today's streets in the area carry names of residents and landmarks of a bygone time: Hess Place, Fordney Place, Toll Gate Road.

Old Peter Keller followed his son in death by seven months—September 13, 1803:

Peter Koehler was buried in our cemetery. 85/6/13

A group of Lancastrians meeting at the house of John Bausman before John Reitzel Esquire, High Sheriff of Lancaster County evaluated Peter's "two story brick house and lot of ground situate on the east side of Queen Street in the Borough of Lancaster adjoining lots of Christopher Gump(f) and Christopher Demuth," at "eight hundred and seventy five pounds."

Rev. Gotthilf Muhlenberg passed from this mortal life in 1815, after thirty-five years of baptizing and catechising; marrying and burying (one more for the Kellers in 1803: "Mattaeus, buried in our cemetery, little son of Barbara Koehler, widow. 1/9/4"); administering sacraments; visiting the sick and conducting worship services. One of the nine men of the parish who carried Trinity's beloved pastor into the church was an Adam Keller . . . Andrew and Barbara's son?

The Muhlenberg era had ended in Lancaster—but if the Kellers are any example—the name lived on for generations in families whose lives had been influenced by them.

Andrew Keller's grandson—through Jacob—was named *Muhlenberg* Keller

His great grandson—descended from Benjamin—was Louis *Muhlenberg* Haupt.

Another great grandson—also from Benjamin—carried the famous name to Minnesota in the twentieth century: *Muhlenberg* Keller Knauff (1868–1947)—brother of the writer’s grandmother, Sarah Emily Knauff (1865–1956).

Henry Melchior Muhlenberg’s place as the dominating figure in the history of American Lutheranism is secure. His achievements were great; his influence national. He gave the church a uniform liturgy and established the synod. He lifted the church from dependence on Europe and laid a foundation for American-trained ministers. He “fathered” a religion in this country that today boasts over nine million members.

But on a *local* level, Muhlenberg influence was equally strong—perhaps beyond measure—in places like Lancaster, churches like Trinity, and people—like your ancestors and mine. People who might not have survived hard conditions, personal tragedy, and war without the strength of their religion and churches. People who in return led Christian lives of courage and dedication—and oftimes in the finest of tributes—bestowed the Muhlenberg name on their children.

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