Abraham Rudisill
(1811-1899)
United Brethren soldier (and preacher)

Abraham Rudisill was born in Hanover PA on April 14, 1811, and entered the Pennsylvania Conference of the United Brethren Church in 1871 at the age of 60. A truly unique personality, he was a soldier throughout the Civil War, including the Battle of Gettysburg. He was also a self-educated scientist who contributed many articles to scientific journals. As much at home with Greek and Hebrew as with English, he was also a scholar and writer – and for a while he published a paper called The Monthly Friend.

Rudisill enlisted in Harrisburg July 19, 1861, and mustered into federal service there July 26 with Battery G, 1st Pennsylvania Light Artillery (43rd Pa). Above the legal age to enlist, he understated his age by seven years. Strongly opposed to slavery and always willing to commit himself to causes in which he believed, he may have had an ulterior motive for enlisting – trying to spare his own three sons from the horrors of war. In that effort he was not successful, for all three eventually enlisted to fight in the Union Army.

Abraham and Sarah Wehrley Rudisill were the parents of eight children. Their birthdates and stations in life during the Battle of Gettysburg, are as follows.
• Charlotte Rudisill (b. 11/4/1833) – Charlotte was deceased, having died on June 6, 1856. She had been married to Alfred A. Fisher.
• Mary Magdalene Rudisill (b. 3/20/1836) – Mary was 27 years old and living at home. She never married and lived to about 85 years of age.
• Isaac Rudisill (b. 6/6/1838) – Isaac was 25 years old and married, as of 12/22/1861, to the former Miss Emeline Baker. He lived in York, near his parents. He later enlisted and served until the end of the war.
• George Rudisill (b. 8/1/1840) – George was the first of the brothers to enlist and was serving elsewhere during the Battle of Gettysburg. He married Eliza Neater in 1871 and died in 1917.
• Catherine Rebecca Rudisill (b. 2/15/1843) – Kate was 20 years old and living at home. She never married and lived to be 89 years of age.
• Abraham Wehrley Rudisill (b. 6/22/1846) – “Abram” was 17 years old and living at home. He enlisted for 3 years on December 24, 1863, and served until the end of the war. He then became a Methodist Episcopal minister in the Baltimore Conference and went on to be a missionary, author, and head of that denomination’s publishing house in Madras, India. He died in 1922 and is buried in Baltimore.
• Sarah Rudisill (b. 12/17/1849) – Sarah was 13 and living at home. She would later, on 3/16/1868, marry Charles Christian Kottcamp and die of complications from her 11th childbirth in 1890.

• Margaret V. Rudisill (b. 6/18/1852) – “Mardie” was 11 and living at home. She never married and died in 1883 at the age of 30.

Abraham Rudisill kept a detailed diary. In 1936 his great-grandson James Jefferson Rudisill published The Day of Our Abraham, a book of 500+ pages consisting mainly of excerpts from that diary and Civil War letters back and forth between Abraham and his family. As noted in that volume, “There have been 200 copies of The Day of Our Abraham printed – after which the type was destroyed.” The Susquehanna Conference archives are in possession of copy #141, which was presented to Louise Wheatley by the author on July 1, 1946. Miss Louise Wheatley (5/5/1905–3/1/1980) was a school teacher in York and believed to be related to the Rudisill family through Abraham’s wife Sarah Wehrley. The book was given by Miss Wheatley to her friend Catharine Laird Mundis, who in turn passed it to her sister Ruth Laird Carman, who presented it to the archives in 2011.

The Chronicle presents the story of Abraham Rudisill in three sections: THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG, THE TRANSITION BACK TO CIVILIAN LIFE, THE UNITED BRETHREN MINISTRY. The letters and diary entries are reproduced from The Day of Our Abraham, with the endnotes and other commentary assembled from various materials at the conference archives.

THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG

Wednesday, June 17, 1863 – letter from A.W. in York PA to Abraham at Fairfax VA

Dear Father:

[6/16] We received your letter on Saturday evening and were very glad to hear from you. I also received an answer to my letter of the 3rd. I am very glad that the York Republican proved so interesting to you. We did earn $13.00 in one week: I, Kate and Mary. I got myself a new coat and pants for Sundays.

There is a great excitement here right now, on account of the invasion into Pennsylvania. The Rebels, while I am writing, are reported to be in Gettysburg. The stores are all packing up their goods and sending them away. The Governor issued a Proclamation for 50,000 men from Pennsylvania, just for the emergency. All that volunteer, to be credited in the draft. They are raising companies everywhere.

Just now, all the sick soldiers are marching to the depot. They are to be removed to Philadelphia. The Hospital stores were also removed this morning.
[6/17] The excitement is still intense. The Rebels are fortifying themselves at Chambersburg. They are raising troops in town. Companies are forming everywhere. I must close my letter as the mail will soon leave. I will let you know how things look in a day or so. 

Your affectionate Son,

A.W. Rudisill

Sunday, June 21, 1863 – diary entry

Yesterday evening I had an unusual blessing in the shape of letters. Four at one time were handed to me, also the Religious Telescope of June 3. One letter mailed the 15th from Catharine; one mailed the 15th from Mary; one mailed the 17th from Abraham; one mailed at Abbottstown, June 18, from George.

Sunday, June 21, 1863 – letter from Abraham in Fairfax VA
to A.W. in York PA

Dear Abraham, my son:

Your letter mailed the 17th is now before me, stating that you received a letter from me and were glad that you received an answer to your letter of the 3rd. I am really surprised that you earned so much money in one week. You now write of the great excitement that exists at York on account of the Rebels’ invasion into Pennsylvania. By the way, I might remark that we had mounted inspection this forenoon some distance from here in a field.

It is now about 1 o’clock PM and ever since this morning there is a continuous and very heavy cannonading heard in the distance. I saw in a Washington paper of yesterday that Lee with his forces is not far from Centerville.

I suppose there must have been considerable excitement in York. No wonder. In my imagination I can see the storekeepers hastily packing up their goods to send them away. I can see the sick soldiers marching to the depot to be sent to Philadelphia, while the Hospital stores were being all removed. And then men all busy raising companies. I shall be glad to have a continued account of things and how they come on at York.

Your affectionate Father,

Abraham Rudisill

Sunday, June 21, 1863 – letter from Abraham in Fairfax VA
to Kate in York PA

My Dear Catharine:

[6/21] Yours of the 15th is now before me. I am glad to hear you are so thankful for my effort to interest you and for my attempt, though feeble, to write a little about Heaven; and that you conclude that we should bear the ills of life with cheerfulness in the joyful hope of enjoying Heaven.
I knew it would please you all by me going forward in the faith of duty regardless of consequences. It proved, in this instance, the road to victory. I am highly pleased that you are teaching a class in the Sabbath School. The Lord be with you. Amen.

Now you write, Mr. Frederick Kottcamp is going to take his melodeon in the lecture room; the Sunday School children are to attend and you are to play. And on Sunday the melodeon is going to be in Sunday School in order to improve the singing; expecting to increase the number of scholars; and whether I do not think it is a good idea? Yes, my dear Daughter, it is doubtless a most excellent idea. Some of the most charming, moving, and delightful movements I experienced were while visiting a Sunday School in the basement of a church near the City Hall, Washington, last summer; I went there every Sunday it was convenient; in this Sunday School, a half hour or so previous to the opening of School is spent in singing some more sweet air, accompanied by the melodeon. Oh it proved a Heaven to my soul. And then I see before me in the Religious Telescope of the 3rd, pp. 160, 2nd column, half way down the following: “At the tap of a bell the school sings a short piece which is sung every Sunday accompanied with the melodeon.”

[6/22] About 7 o’clock AM. Just now nearly a whole regiment of “Johnny Rebs,” prisoners, were marched past our camp; a hard looking crowd, looking like a set of real desperadoes; no soldiers’ dress about them; clothed in a kind of gray and red, dirty looking Kentucky Jean; broad brimmed hats of all kinds and colors. They looked like a mean, wicked set of rascals. Perhaps more so than any I ever saw before.

You now state, dear Catharine, that you were in church and Mr. Erb preached from the text: “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” It must have been delightful to listen to Brother Erb while preaching from such a text. Oh how sweet is the communion of Saints! The child of God can ever exclaim, “Tis love that drives my chariot wheels, and death must yield to love.”

I admire your plan, adopted in your letter before me, to write on different days. I thank you a thousand times for communicating so fully and plainly your proceeding and success in Mr. Baird’s Life Insurance. Charity contains, as well as facts give us, hope to conclude that all is well in the case of Mr. Baird. I shall always be pleased to be informed of any facts you may feel inclined to write me in connection with Rev. Baird. It appeared quite unexpected as well as surprising to me that you received any thing. God make it a blessing to you. He has given it to you. Glorify Him.

The heat has also been at times very great, way down South, here in Dixie. Today, however, it is some cool.

You hoped I would receive your letter. It was received nearly a week after you wrote it. You also remarked that you will write in the future. I am glad, thank you. I am much pleased that you have plenty of work and that you get from
75 cents to 80 cents for pants. I received a very long and kind letter from Mary, which I shall answer, perhaps tomorrow.

Sarah, you write, is making a dress for herself. I am so glad that Sarah is well again. She was so sick when I was at home. Oh how sad everything looked; nearly all sick as I came in the house at midnight; but I left you all better; and now all well and prosperous. Abie, you state, is altering a vest for your new neighbor, Mr. Bubb.

Dear Daughter, you hoped I was well. I am very happy to inform you that I enjoy the very best of health of body and a high degree of peace of mind; hoping you will continue to enjoy the sweetest dreams of every blessing from the great above, I remain your affectionate Father,

A. Rudisill

**Tuesday, June 23, 1863 – letter from Abraham in Fairfax VA to Mary in York PA**

Dear Mary:

Your very welcome and pleasing letter is now before, mailed the 15th. It informs me that my warrant came safe to hand. Your letter was the only one in which I found a stamp, and also a fine comb which I desired you to send. Thank you. Well, it appears your letters at last reached me. I am not sure if one failed finally to reach me. I must only have a little patience.

The 12th you took a walk to the cemetery with Emma, Catharine, etc. No doubt it must look very beautifully. You give a very nice description of your visit to the cemetery. I can almost see you walking in it with my imagination. It does me good. How I love to read of such trips.

On Friday the 12th Aunt Bart was at your house – or should I write, our house. Saturday the 13th Aunt went home. Mother accompanied her to the cars. The remainder of the day you were busy. In the evening when you were all done, you received a letter from me and Sis read it. You read my account of Heaven. On earth you and I may meet no more. May God help that we may meet in Heaven.

I remember well of having seen that a worm had spun itself in at the back porch when I was at home. And now you tell me a most beautiful butterfly came out. Oh what a fit emblem this is of us worms of earth. If we are the Lord’s, though our bodies be consigned to the cold ground as you have seen in the cemetery, yet in the morning of the resurrection we shall all rise beautiful, glorious and heavenly filled; with wings to carry us through space with the rapidity of thought.

Oh I wish I could hear you sing: “I Want to be an Angel.”

O, let my days glide simply by. Amen. Heaven is my home; God is my beloved, Mary. You seem to desire me first to tarry a while with you; yet in our earthly home the Lord’s will be done. Mary, I continue to pray for her. Good bye. Write soon. Your affectionate Father,

Abraham Rudisill
Dear Wife:

Near Sundown. Just received a letter from you. It was mailed yesterday, the 23rd. I hasten to reply to it. I am well. I was glad to hear you were all well. I am sorry you did not receive my last letter. You now write about young Ettinger and the rain, farmers, class meeting, etc.; that the Lord was with you. You wish I was at home. You feel lonesome; having many trials, difficulties to contend with.

Yes, I have my good share; yet the Lord supports me and will support you also. Oh, may we trust in the Lord. Amen. You have great excitement at York. I do not wonder. I am glad you make a statement of public affairs. God reigneth. Let all the earth be still. Soon all the storms of life will have blown over and God’s children, all the people of God, will enjoy an eternal calm.

You had potatoes and meat for dinner. “You are going to clean the front room tomorrow if the Rebels don’t come.” I suppose then if the Rebels come you will wait awhile. You seem to take it quite cool. That is right; our sins deserve ten thousand times worse. You think I do not get all your letters. It may be so. The plums are growing finely, you write. Send the grapes.

You wish again I was at home. Your prayer to God is that the war might end soon; yet the Lord’s will be done, you add. He knows best. When you all join in giving your love to me, I return my love, also to you all; hoping to hear from you soon again, and that God would be your and my Guide, even unto death, is my sincere prayer.

From your affectionate Husband,
Abraham Rudisill

P.S. A stamp was in your kind letter.

I enclosed a little jewel which was in an envelope I bought with paper.
Put it in the museum.
Today some more Reb prisoners passed here.

---

Wednesday, July 1, 1863 – letter from Abraham near Taneytown MD to Mrs. Rudisill in York PA

Dear Wife:

I mailed a letter for home today, addressed to Isaac. I just heard that some of our mails were captured and some of your letters to me may be among them; also one of my letters I sent, the last one before today, mailed at Fairfax Court House. I may perhaps soon know.

[7/2] This morning we left our camp near Taneytown. I had charge of the guard, etc. the latter part of last night. I was directed to call on our Lieutenant at 3 o’clock last night, which I did. The Captain at once bid me to tell our bugler to blow the first call. Our camp was soon on motion; roll call, packing up, hitching up, etc. and soon we were on our march to Gettysburg. Here we are halting and resting in a meadow, not far from the Baltimore Pike.
Part of the road today was exceedingly hilly, stony, muddy, with the improvement of the land and buildings somewhat indifferent. Some of our men remarked they thought it worse than Virginia. We passed a village called Hiny\(^5\), if I understand right. As we approached this place we saw indication of the engagement that had taken place yesterday; passing some prisoners; some men wounded; some wrecks or remains of batteries that had retired from battle, etc.

Soon after we arrived here, there was some cannonading a short distance in front of us. We are some 2500 yards in the rear of our extensive battle line. The Lord grant to be with our way-worn troops. Let us trust in thee. We made a very hurried march to this place. I was tired and weary.

Toward evening. Brisk cannon firing is going on immediately on our left. We hear the shells, which may soon reach us.

Near sundown. For some time past the most fierce battle raged and we were exposed as usual – and now while I am writing the battle goes on without intermission.

I wonder whether you do not hear the cannonading at Hanover and York. I am acting chief of caisson. We are behind the skirt of a woods. Our guns were just sent forward to enter the line in front; but no room for them, they returned.

\[7/3\] I am writing while in the very front with our gun, just across from the building by which the cemetery or graveyard of Gettysburg is entered, at the edge of the town towards Baltimore. The minnie bullets of the sharp shooters are paying us visits. I hear them. Sometimes they strike near me.

The battle rages. We have been firing much with our batteries. A number of horses were killed; some of our men wounded and killed.

Later in the afternoon. After a most terrific cannonading and continued vast rattling of small arms, we heard heavy cannonading far to our right front, which seemed to be some of our troops coming to our aid. Soon firing gradually ceased, more or less, and now while I write at the side of our cannon number 1, there is comparatively a great calm. Perhaps the Rebels are charging or falling back. We will see; but the storm may rage again ere long. Lord keep us.

Praise the Lord for His goodness. I see men reading the Testament. Just in front of me cannons are booming; now and then a shell passes here, sometimes cutting the limbs of trees. Musketry is also rattling most briskly. Lord grant us the victory if consistent with thy will. For thine is the Kingdom, Power, and Glory. Amen

\[7/4\] Praise the good Lord for the great deliverance and victory He has given our troops, though undeserving and unworthy as we are. Oh, it is indescribable what we passed through since I wrote yesterday. The line of battle was the Rebel battery around us on three sides, our batteries inside.

Such a cannonading took place on both sides as was scarce ever witnessed in similar circumstances in the annals of warfare. I was busily engaged in preparing for the firing; yet amid the mighty thundering of this vast collection of artillery, actively engaged, I found delight in praise and relief in prayer.
The papers will describe some of the scenes I participated in. Here I was in the very front trying to do what I could.

Your affectionate Husband,
Abraham Rudisill

Incidents

Dear Friends, if you would have been with me, you might have seen the poor horse limping, bleeding, wounded in the most shocking manner passing where I was – with entrails, guts all hanging out on both sides. And I heard the poor horse actually uttering a shriek or clear voice of agony. Dead horses all around.

But oh, what is still more horrible, one of my dying comrades, by whose side I stood, drank water from a canteen a few moments before he entered the spirit land – his entrails hanging out of his belly, having been struck by a piece of shell.

This morning and last night nearly all quiet. A commissioned officer who was in town said that the most and heaviest cannonading was from the hill we are on. He asked if we held the hill all the time. We did hold the hill all the time was our reply.

Our troops entered Gettysburg this morning. It is described as looking awful. Women and children sought refuge cellars. This morning as our men came from town, they came out saying this is the happiest “Fourth of July” they ever saw.

The Lord be with you. Amen. Oh, how I wonder how you all are and what you experienced. What were your hopes and fears; what you knew or conjectured about me. Sometimes I thought I knew you were praying for me.

What little I slept was on the ground, except for a small bit of rag or gun blanket; no covering on me; all had to lay down at our posts ready for any emergency in a moment. I am now at the grave of Anderson, one of our men who was killed on the 2nd in battle. On the same day I had him on my guard list and posted him on guard, on the first relief. I am taking a walk in the cemetery

Sunday, July 5, 1863 – letter from Abraham in camp near Gettysburg PA to Mrs. Rudisill in York PA

Dear Wife:

I had the great desire for the pleasure of a visit from home. Oh, how rejoiced I was to see Isaac and Abraham. I sent my Journal with them. You can learn how good the Lord was to me. The boys will also tell many things I cannot write.

[7/6] We are now at the edge of Littlestown, on the Baltimore Pike. We left late in the afternoon at Gettysburg. We came to this place near midnight. I wonder what time Isaac and Abraham came here, whether they were here last night. We were all day at Littlestown camp.
[7/7] We rose this morning at 3 o’clock. After a hard day’s march through mud and rain, we encamped some miles on the road from Woodbury to Frederick City.

[7/8] This morning I was unable to walk much; so when we got on the pike I was allowed to ride where it best suited me. We encamped some miles west of Frederick. I felt scarce able to walk.

[7/9] The doctor examined my case. About noon we began to pack up for another march. Captain Ricketts came to me and said I should get ready to go to the hospital; an ambulance would soon come for me. In a short time afterwards I found myself in the U.S. General Hospital at Frederick City.

[7/10] I am not much sick but have a lameness. It is with difficulty and pain that I can walk.

[7/11] This morning we were ordered to take cars for Baltimore. We passed through Baltimore and some time before sundown we arrived at the convalescent camp. I am improving fast; almost well again. I may rejoin my company.

[7/12] I am nearly quite well; except lameness from being exhausted and having over-exerted myself. I know not how long I may remain here. Perhaps I may leave any hour. Yet you might write a line or two directed here. God bless you. Pray for me. Give my love to all. The news is cheering. You will hear from me again soon, if it is the Lord’s will.

Your affectionate Husband,
Abraham Rudisill

Tuesday, July 14, 1863 – letter from A.W. Rudisill in York PA to Abraham Rudisill, Paterson Park Hospital, Baltimore MD

Dear Father:

This morning I received a letter from you stating that you are at the hospital in Baltimore. I am sorry that you are not well and hope that this letter will find you perfectly well. Isaac is coming through Baltimore and will come to see you, if the cars run this afternoon.

The draft is being enforced. They are drafting in Carlisle for York, as it is the headquarters of this large reserve district. We have not yet heard if any of our boys are drafted.

Immediately after we left you at Gettysburg, we had the pleasure of being informed by Latimer Small that if we went to the 12th Corps Hospital, we could ride home. From there the wagon was going to start. At 3 o’clock we were on our road home. There were a good many in the wagon; so it took a good while to crawl home; for it went till 2 o’clock in the night. We would have got home sooner, but they stopped some time at Gettysburg.

At the present, things look encouraging. The Rebels have been badly whipped. They expected to reach Philadelphia; but how sadly they were
disappointed when they found that they could not cross the Susquehanna River. It is said that when they arrived at Gettysburg they thought they had nothing but the militia to fight. But when they saw the noble Army of the Potomac, they became disheartened and gave up in despair. And now the great probability is that they will never reach their “Dixie” in arms against us, but as prisoners of war.

Vicksburg, of which they boasted so much, and even acknowledged that the Confederacy would be near an end if it would fall, has fallen. Glorious Vicksburg! It cuts the Confederacy right in two; depriving them of all the supplies they received from the post.

We are all well at home. Isaac will tell you how we are getting along. I am staying in the store until Isaac comes back.

Your affectionate Son,

A.W. Rudisill

Abraham Rudisill
THE TRANSITION BACK TO CIVILIAN LIFE

Monday, May 29, 1865 – This is a nice, blessed, new day. I thank the Lord for all His mercies to me. I desire to lean on Jesus and say to my soul, “Be still and calm.” The best description of President Lincoln’s death I have yet read is found in the Williamsport Sendbote des Evangeliums of May 1, 1865. It is in effect stated of Lincoln that he did not like to go the theater, but would go to prevent the public from disappointment, since it was announced in the papers he would be present. The President died so calmly, that only the stopping to breathe indicated his death. Soon after death took place, his countenance assumed an expression of rest, joy and friendship. The little that we know of his experience of religion permits us to hope that his death was a blessed one. Not long ago, he declared with tears in his eyes that he loved Jesus. He was accustomed to have family worship in the morning early. He gave two native missionaries of the Sandwich Islands five hundred dollars in gold. But that President Lincoln should be assassinated in a theater is indeed a mournful circumstance, and causing very serious reflection in the heart of the earnest Christian. The editor also exclaims that it makes his heart sorrowful. But it should be considered that some prominent Christians visit theaters and think it lawful, or at least harmless. But we agree by no means with such an idea.

Tuesday, May 30, 1865 – I thank the Lord for my well being. May the Lord still support and comfort me. The morning I finished reading the Sendbote. It was very interesting indeed. Praise the Lord. Amen.

This evening at roll call it was announced that our company would start for Harrisburg some time tomorrow. During the evening the camp was illuminated, bonfires were made in different places, turpentine or fire balls thrown up, cheering and every demonstration of joy. Late in the evening a torchlight procession was formed, five artillery companies participating, marching up a steep hill to the headquarters of General Hays, who has command of the artillery reserves. The General’s enclosure tents and every part of the headquarters were illuminated. The men formed in the yard, and a vast bonfire started, for which purpose the brush used in making the fence around the yard was freely used. Numerous loud calls were made for General Hays to make a speech. The men being drawn up in a line, the General appeared in front and spoke, in effect, as follows:

“Soldiers, I am happy to meet you on this occasion. Though I have been twenty-five years in the service, I never made a speech to soldiers – but under the present circumstances, I will comply with your wishes. I rejoice to see you here before departing to your homes. You have been out now a long time, some of you enduring hardships and self-denials in defense of the Union, and after the toils of war you are now about to start to your homes. I wish you a safe journey and prosperous and happy life hereafter while you resume the peaceful avocation of domestic life. I am happy to have had command over such a jovial and humored
body of artillerymen. I never had command over men who were so full of glee and merriment, and should our country in the future ever again have occasion to call out troops, which I hope will not be the case, I trust you would alike volunteer so cheerfully in her defense. Thank you."

Three tremendous cheers were now given to General Hays, and as quite a number of the fair sex were present to witness this interesting scene, three tremendous cheers were given for the ladies. All now returned with great hilarity, and it was unusually late till all subsided into the ordinary stillness of the camp at a late hour.

**Wednesday, May 31, 1865** – O God, grant me a calm and heavenly frame of mind this day, this new day. Oh, may my soul not forget all of the mercies of God – but may all within me praise His Holy Name, for goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life. Bless my wife and children. Make us fruitful – a fruitful vine, or branches rather, engrafted in Christ the living and life-giving Vine. Lord, send prosperity to Zion. Amen.

**Thursday, June 1, 1865** – This day has been appointed by President Johnson as a day of humiliation and prayer in view of the assassination of President Lincoln. Truly this was a sad event in the history of our nation. May it lead us to humiliation and mighty prayer. Lord, sanctify the mournful event to our good as a nation and individuals to shun all places of amusement where God is not glorified.

This morning we broke camp once more and marched to Washington, where we took the cars and are now, while I write, resting near Calvert depot, Baltimore. It is between 3 and 4 o’clock PM, as near as I can judge. Lord, still take care of me. Direct and guide me by thy counsel. Amen.

About sundown we left for York, where we arrived about 1 o’clock in the night. I at once concluded to stop and pay a visit home, for which I had the precious consent of some of our officers. I soon was at home, with my beloved family, with whom I enjoyed a most happy and agreeable time.

**Friday, June 2, 1865** – I spent the day with my family most pleasantly.

**Saturday, June 3, 1865** – This morning at 1 o’clock in the night I started for Harrisburg, arrived there about sunrise, and repaired to Camp Curtin, where I found our Battery. This is the same place where we encamped July, 1864. During the day I also saw George several times. He was paid off today and discharged. Toward evening Governor Curtin made a speech to the soldiers as some flags were turned over to the state. My heart was melted to weeping. Praise the Lord, O my soul, for His mercies to me.

**Sunday, June 4, 1865** – God’s goodness, O how great. May I confide in His rich promises, and all that is within me praise constantly His Name. Lord, be
with me this holy Sabbath day. I am less than the least of Thy mercies. Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah, and bring me safely to the promised land. Amen

This forenoon I went to the Locust Street Methodist Church. I heard a good sermon on faith. There was an unproportionate number of females present. Praise the Lord for His goodness.

**Monday, June 5, 1865** – This is a most beautiful day. Praise the Lord for another day. Oh, my heart, be calm and serene. Bless my reading this day. Help, O Thou Spirit Divine, to improve each shining hour. Oh, for a grateful heart. O, my soul, forget not all the mercies of God.

I finished reading the *Banner of Covenant* published in Philadelphia June 1, 1865. Much interesting matter. I just finished reading this evening the *Daily Telegraph*, having a most faithful account of the flag presentation on last Saturday afternoon. Also other interesting articles. I feel myself happy in having accidentally secured a copy. It will prove a valuable item of history. Thank God for His mercies. Amen.

**Tuesday, June 6, 1865** – The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures and leadeth me by the still waters. The Lord has done marvelously. He has caused us to triumph over our foes. Oh, praise the Lord, everything that hath breath. My only plea is the blood of Jesus shed for me. Oh, may my robe be washed white in the Blood.

It is cloudy and cool today. Oh, how wonderfully strong and remarkable is the coincidence. This morning I was greatly impressed that I should visit our dear Charlotte’s grave. I obeyed. I started and was soon seated in the rank clover at her grave, which almost hid it from view. I pushed the clover aside a little and read: “To the memory of Charlotte, wife of Alfred A. Fisher. Born November 3, 1833. Died June 6, 1856. Because I live ye shall live also. John XIV:19.” Also: “Samuel C., infant son of Alfred A. and Charlotte Fisher. Born January 25, 1856. Died July 9, 1856. Treasure in Heaven.” June 6 – so, indeed, I am returning from the great four year’s war, and it was just as though a kind Providence directed in visiting her grave on the identical day and month she went to glory, her body fallen asleep until the resurrection morn. This is indeed a sacred spot. Oh, may the sanctified dead never be forgotten. Alas, the proverb is “That the dead and the absent are soon forgotten.” But I wept once more at her grave. I often felt during the toils of war, while on guard duty at the midnight hour, amid the rapid crack of the picket firing and among the boom of artillery, that the blood-washed spirit of Charlotte was hovering around me. Doubtless she looked down from the battlements of heaven, witnessing my privations while I shared the perils in the bloody conflict of the dreadful war with my comrades. Amazing Grace Divine, that while thousands fell by my side and ten thousand around me, God conducted me through safely and crowned the cause in which I enlisted with brilliant victory. Everlasting glory to Jehovah. I am writing this while seated at Charlotte’s grave, just the day 9 years since she died.
On returning I came to the cross-roads near the lunatic asylum, where the handboard reads: to the mountain, 3 m. Shoops Church, 3½ m. River, 1½ m. Harrisburg, 2 mi.

**Wednesday, June 7, 1865** – Praise the Lord for delivering grace and mercy that all is so well this morning. It is cloudy and cool. Lord, let Thy presence cheer me this day. May I ask of Thee, that my joy may be full. Lord, I am base and vile, all unworthiness, yet my hope is in Jesus’ precious blood, which cleanses from all sin.

**Thursday, June 8, 1865** – I have been unwell at times for a few days past, but thank the Lord I am much improved now. The heat is intense. Today I had the pleasure to receive four letters: one from York, one from George (enclosed were two dollars), one from Mary (mailed in York on May 31st), and one from Abram (mailed in Nashville on May 30th). Praise the Lord for these letters. This afternoon George came to see me. I was much rejoiced to have the pleasure of his society once more.

**Friday, June 9, 1865** – George slept with me in my tent last night. He left for home near noon. Today I bought a record for myself of the perils my comrades and I have passed through. II Corinthians 11:23 and 27. God’s Grace alone brought me through all, and to Him be all the glory. There was rain this afternoon, accompanied by exceeding heavy thunder, the lightning striking into three telegraph posts near our camp, splitting one into splinters. Praise the Lord for continued support, protection and comfort.

**Saturday, June 10, 1865** – Here I raise mine Ebenezer, thither by Thy help I am come. Oh, praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all His benefits. How great is the loving kindness of the Lord towards them that love Him and remember His Name. I am base and vile, but Jesus’ blood is my only plea. God so loved us that he gave His only Son to die for us upon the cross that we might not perish but live forever. Amen.

I was scarcely done writing the above “Amen” when we were called to “Fall In,” which was done very promptly – and we were at once mustered out of the service, the war being over. I feel an unspeakably deep consciousness of the fact, but no emotions especially manifesting themselves in outbursts of joy or ecstasies. My judgment demonstrates to me the cause of joy the most transporting, yet my feelings are calm, rather rejoicing with trembling. Yet I would exclaim, “Glory to God.”

**Sunday, June 11, 1865** – Here we still are, being the tenth day since the Battery arrived here. Yet the time seems with me to pass pleasantly. Let Patience
have her perfect work. May I fulfill my heavenly calling. By the grace of God we have made another forward move. About 3 o’clock we signed the pay roll. Oh, may God be with us. Late in the afternoon we were paid off and discharged. I received three hundred and four dollars. I had an opportunity to ride into town, for which I paid 25 cents, stopping at the United States Hotel.

I commit my soul and body to the kind protection of Jehovah. I desire to praise the Lord for all the goodness He has shown me during my absence during the war.

Monday, June 12, 1865 – Through the great goodness of the lord I have been brought safely through another night. Though I slept but little last night, yet I rested sweetly and the hours of the night glided swiftly by, while the blissful presence of Jesus cheered the midnight hour, my soul magnifying the Lord, and my eyes filled with tears of gratitude and love.

I had a neat little chamber to myself, furnished with a bed covered with a snow white spread, all comfortable and inviting – a large mirror, nice carpet, a waterstand with basin and pitcher, filled with water, a neat receptacle containing the best of shaving soap all perfumed richly, a towel folded neatly all white and clean, a sufficiency of candle, a good lock inside the door – in short, everything complete or desirable or pleasing. The table and other accommodations in accordance and such as made it an agreeable sojourn for the night, supper and breakfast for $2.00. I expect now soon to be on my way home. The Lord be my protection. Amen.

I soon was on the cars. I paid my sixty cents for passage, had a pleasant trip to York, and soon was once more amid home and friends. I am indeed less than the least of the mercies of God, all unworthy, yet the Lord made my cup run over with mercies.

Tuesday, June 13, 1865 – This is a very pleasant day. I heard from Abram today. Oh, may God praise the lad. Jesus be with him, in the hour of gloom and temptation, cheering him. Amen.

I mailed a letter today for Abram, enclosed some ointment and one stamp. I also sent one stamp in a letter George sent him. God bless him. This evening I was in prayer meeting. I enjoyed it well. God was with us. Praise His Name.

Wednesday, June 14, 1865 – I received a letter from Abram very full of the deepest emotions, congratulating me on my return home. God bless him. Today I sent the Telescope to Abram, enclosed one pair of white gloves and chevrons. I also mailed a letter to Abram, enclosed a stamp.
THE UNITED BRETHREN MINISTRY

The original adult affiliation of Abraham Rudisill was with the Methodist Episcopal Church, although he always maintained friendships and fellowship within the United Brethren denomination. After returning from Ohio to Hanover in 1840, Abraham moved the family to the educational advantages of Carlisle in 1849. Here the family joined the local Methodist Episcopal Church. But when Charlotte married former Dickinson College student Alfred A. Fisher in 1851, the ceremony was performed by the United Brethren pastor of the Carlisle circuit, Zephaniah Colestock.

In 1852 the family moved to York and took up residence at 122 W. Philadelphia Street, which would prove to be the family home for the rest of Abraham’s life. This was directly across the street from the Methodist Episcopal Church\(^{13}\), where the family promptly joined. In 1861, however, the Methodist preacher assigned to York was David Shoaff\(^{14}\), a Southern sympathizer who would not attack the institution of slavery. This was too much for Abraham, and he transferred his membership to the denomination he would support the rest of his life – the United Brethren Church.

When he returned from the war, he and the family attended regularly the United Brethren Church, located just a few blocks from their home on the northwest corner of Philadelphia and Newberry Streets. Abraham worked at both his tailoring and printing vocations, and wrote religious articles for various publications. Son Abram was still in the Army and stationed in Nashville TN. The following selections from Abraham’s diary indicate the importance he placed on corporate worship and his gradual assumption of more and more leadership responsibilities that eventually led him into the ordained ministry.

**Thursday, June 15, 1865** – Praise the Lord for his continued mercy. This evening I was in Uncle Conn’s\(^{15}\) class, leading part of it. God was with us. Wife and Mary were in the meeting.

**Saturday, June 17, 1865** – Received a letter from Abraham, written and composed with great care and attention.

**Sunday, June 18, 1865** – Today thirteen years, our dear Margaret was born. This forenoon Rev. Erb preached a good sermon on thankfulness, especially intended for the returning soldiers.

**Tuesday, June 20, 1865** – This evening I was in prayer meeting. On returning, I found a huge cake. Two small flags were stuck in it – on one my name was written, on the other George’s name. In the center was a paper on which was written: “A slight token of esteem to the returned heroes, Abraham and George Rudisill.” I felt much humbled and indeed unworthy of such a
manifestation to us. My prayer is, that the very modest donors may meet an eternal reward at God’s Right Hand, as well as peace and prosperity in this life.

Thursday, June 22, 1865 – This is Abraham’s 19th birthday. Oh, may God favor our young son. Jesus, do Thou still support and comfort him. We are about sending him some of the cake by which we were surprised on Tuesday evening. The weather is very warm. Wife and I design going to Conn’s meeting this evening.

We were in Conn’s meeting, which was very good. Oh, may we ever love the communion of saints.

Saturday, June 24, 1865 – This evening I was in preaching. Heard a sermon on Christian Liberty by the presiding elder Rev. Altman. I also attended quarterly conference.

Sunday, June 25, 1865 – In the forenoon, Rev. Altman preached on the mustard seed, being one of the most extraordinary sermons I ever heard. It would do exceedingly well for a general tract. There was also communion of the saints, in which, through the Grace of God, I participated. At 6 o’clock in the afternoon I was also at meeting. Heard sermon by Rev. Altman on the Gospel. George has been sick for some days past. His mind and body seem to be suffering much. O God, bless his affliction to him and to us.

Tuesday, June 27, 1865 – Today I received a long letter from Abraham. God bless him. This evening, wife and I were in prayer meeting. I was called to lead it. It was held in the church. I read the 8th chapter of Romans. It never seemed so delightful.

Monday, July 3, 1865 – Praise the Lord for this new and delightful morning. Lord, direct me this day for Jesus’ sake. Amen. Mrs. Stahle died this evening suddenly.

Tuesday, July 4, 1865 – O God, be Thou my Guide this day. Amen. This evening we were in meeting. I felt the Lord was near. Praise his name.

Thursday, July 6, 1865 – Today I wrote a letter to Abram, enclosed $2.00 and a flower. I also sent him the Democrat and enclosed a piece of bread. This evening wife and I were in meeting at Conn’s. I felt a blessing.

Sunday, July 9, 1865 – This is a delightful, cool and pleasant morning. Praise the Lord for the return of another Sabbath. May we be blest this day. May the Lord be our guide and comfort. May we do all to His glory. This forenoon I heard Rev. Erb preach on Christian Duties, deduced from part of our Lord’s sermon on the mount. In the afternoon I heard him again on the Coming of
Christ. Wife is sick of inflammatory rheumatism. God be merciful to her and bring her through for Jesus sake. Oh, guide us all. Amen.

Sunday, July 16, 1865 – Wife is still confined to bed with inflammatory rheumatism. Oh, may God grant His Blessing and Guidance. I was in our church this forenoon. Rev. Erb preached on the miraculous draught of fishes – and very interestingly, a lively and entertaining and most instructive sermon. It rained some today, some windy in the afternoon, somewhat warm. This evening I was in meeting. Heard a discourse. It rained very hard.

Monday, August 14, 1865 – Abram sent me a check for $520.00, directing me to invest $500.00 in 7-30 bonds. I purchased a bond for $500.00, numbered 79771. George has $250.00 in bonds. I have $650.00. Today I deposited the above money in the First National Bank of York. Lord, grant thy blessing.

Saturday, August 19, 1865 – My friends have been urging me all along to publish something of my adventures in the war for the last four years, among the rest is my worthy and venerable class leader Uncle Conn. If consistent with the will and smiles of heaven, why should I longer tarry or hesitate? May the needful unction from the Holy Ghost be administered to me that I may in all modesty and humility with a full reliance on Jehovah Elohim for wisdom and direction, commence this responsible task that all may be done for the glory of God. I praise God that He has afforded me so many opportunities to collect materials for such a work, sparing unharmed my life.

Tuesday, August 22, 1865 – Today old Mr. Menges visited me. He prayed with us, and invited me to call and see him. There will be sacrament five weeks from next Sunday at Lischy’s Church.

Friday, August 25, 1865 – Yesterday I was at camp meeting below Dallastown. I enjoyed the trip very well, and the services were blessed to me. There was Communion, preceding which an experience meeting was held, in both I participated. Praise the Lord.

Monday, September 11, 1865 – It is warm and cloudy. Wife is still sick. O God, do Thou restore her health, if consistent with Thy will. I have been busy about the house this morning. Studied a little Hebrew. For some time past I have been writing out my journal with a view to get it printed. God grant His blessing. I now have 27 pages written.

Tuesday, September 12, 1865 – Today I mailed a letter for Abram, but soon after learned that on yesterday their regiment left Nashville for Pittsburgh to be mustered out of service there. This evening I was in prayer meeting, prayed
and spoke at the close of the service. Though weak and unworthy, yet I feel that God has not forsaken me.

**Wednesday, September 13, 1865** – Praise God, wife is improving in health. I have been sewing some this forenoon, for Mr. Rutlege. Translated a verse from Hebrews. Today Mr. Menges called with a two-horse carriage, desiring to take me and my wife to his house, about ten miles up the country. He spoke so very kindly. As it did not suit for us to go, thanking him for his offer, he said he felt to do everything for the good soldiers who went out to save our country, inviting us to come up any time to his house and he would give me a horse and buggy to visit all my friends, also desiring me to labor among them to enlighten them, as many were bewildered about the war, etc. God bless Father Menges, and all who showed me kindness.

**Friday, September 15, 1865** – Last evening I was in class. Called to lead part, felt it was good. God was present, praise His Name.

**Monday, September 18, 1865** – This morning I had the great blessing to see the safe return of Abraham from Nashville. Oh, how can I praise the Lord enough for returning my three sons and me safely from the army – from the way in which we participated. The War is now over, the victory won, and this forenoon our beloved pastor, Rev. Erb, was just accidentally present, my three soldier sons and myself, he praying with us. It was indeed a happy scene, to have our venerable pastor kneel down with us, returning thanks to God for our safe return. God bless us all. Amen

About the time George and Isaac entered the service of the United States, we put out a flag. This remained out all the time till today, when Abraham returned, except three days when the rebels were entered into York.

On February 27, 1866, Abraham came into possession of 7 acres of land in northwest York County, a few miles northwest of Dover. The next day Margaret and George accompanied him to the property. As reported by Abraham: “Made some garden, removed a fence, began a bank stable, used some wood to burn. Margaret worked finely.” The family kept their home in the city of York, and they maintained both residences – giving them both a city house and a country cottage. On Easter, April 1, 1866, Abraham stated: “Through the blessing of God, my cottage is nearly ready to occupy.” And on the 8th he wrote: “Last Tuesday we occupied our new home for which we praise the Lord.”

Abraham named the property HARMONY GROVE, in recognition of the 43 different varieties of trees and shrubs he catalogued on the land. Always a person to take seriously any project in which he involved himself, he studied the weather, did an analysis of all the planting times, and mastered the rules for successful gardening.
The one ingredient that was missing from this idyllic retreat was a United Brethren Church. It was the absence of a United Brethren Church in the immediate vicinity, and Abraham’s concern for the spiritual welfare of not only his own family but also his new neighbors, that led him to erect a church building on the property and enter the United Brethren ministry in order to serve that church and others in the area. The following selections from the diary lead the reader through those events.

**Sunday, May 13, 1866** – The woods now for the first Sunday this spring have a green appearance fully. It is very delightful indeed. Streams of mercy unceasingly flow and should call forth constant thankfulness and joy in one’s soul. Margaret is gone to church to hear Rev. Deininger. Wife and I are reading an edifying sermon in Helffenstein.

**Wednesday, February 27, 1867** – This is a clear, warm and most charming morning. One year ago today I came in possession of Harmony Grove. And now, at the end of the first year, through the rich blessing of God we may consider our enterprise a great success. Will the Lord still guide and keep us even to our journey’s end, and then may we range the sweet field of Eden for ever and ever. Amen.

**Saturday, March 16, 1867** – At 3 o’clock PM it has been snowing all day. The snow is some 4 inches deep. George and Abram came up [to Harmony Grove] yesterday and went home [back to York] this forenoon.

Abram entered Dickinson College in the fall of 1867, having no preparation for college other than what he had received at home. Abraham, having given himself a scientific and classical education, apparently also instructed his son well. Abram’s report for the month ending November 15 was as follows:

- Mathematics, Professor Hillman…………………exemplary
- Latin and Classic Literature, Professor Stayman…exemplary
- Greek and Hebrew, Professor Bowman…………highly satisfactory, almost exemplary
- Habits and deportment…………………………….exemplary

Even during the winter weather, as shown by the following entries, the family maintained the two residences – with Abraham and wife and the girls living mainly at Harmony Grove and the boys residing mostly in York.

**Wednesday, December 11, 1867** – This afternoon wife and I went to York. The weather is some cold, snow and rain. Arrived at York about dusk.

**Thursday, December 12, 1867** – Last night it snowed considerably, which continued this morning accompanied by a most severely cold north-eastern storm, making it impossible to return with the spring wagon. Disposed of “Tip”
Abraham Rudisill

[the horse] and alone started on foot about 11 AM for Harmony Grove. It was related in my hearing at Weigelstown that there was no day last winter that was so cold and severe to be out. Mr. Lewis Strayer told me at York he would not make my trip for a “Golden horse.” Yet through the goodness of the Lord, I reached our mountain cottage a little before night and could say my yoke was easy and my burden light. Wife said as I started home from York that she pitied me. As I pulled my boots off in the evening, one of my stockings was frozen fast to the boot. Mary loosed it.

Thursday, January 16, 1868 – At home in York. Yesterday Casper Oberdick\(^{21}\) was at the mourners’ bench at the United Brethren Church. He lately came to this country. I am informed he was in the Prussian army during the war of Sleswig-Holstein,\(^{22}\) and also in the Prussian army in the war of Prussia with Austria, having received several marks for distinguished service. I have for some time desired to see him and even made efforts to do so but failed to know him till last night, having for the first time the gratification to see and know him while he arose going to the mourners’ bench. The pastor then requested me to speak words of encouragement to him, in which I felt happy and my poor heart warmed in doing. God bless this soldier. Oh, how I love to see soldiers come to Jesus. Lord bless.

Friday, February 28, 1868 – Was once more enabled to issue another number of the *Monthly Friend*.\(^{23}\) For a long, long time I had great and strong desire to print once more. Peter Wenerick from Harrisburg, one of my fellow soldiers, was to see me last night. I was also in Uncle Conn’s class. Was at Sally McGinly’s funeral. Gave a *Monthly Friend* to Brother George Wehrley and ordered one to be given to Donovan\(^{24}\) who is sentenced to be hung on the 31\(^{st}\) of March, next.

On March 16, 1868, Abraham’s daughter Sarah (18 years old) was married to Charles Christian Kottcamp\(^{25}\) (20 years old). The wedding took place in the evening at the York United Brethren Church “witnessed by a most densely crowded house, even so much so that many found no admittance.” The ceremony was performed by the congregation’s pastor Jacob C. Smith, and the couple would be lifelong faithful members there.

Later that fall Abraham’s son Isaac testified as to how he was blessed at the Methodist camp meeting in Shrewsbury. As recorded by Abraham in his diary: “He went forward as a seeker for sanctification – and praise the Lord, he found what he sought. I have every reason to rejoice for the work of Grace in his heart. Lord keep him, Amen. Isaac’s wife Emma also dates her real conversion from the same camp meeting.”
These and other incidents convinced Abraham of the need for a house of worship in Harmony Grove, where the family spent its summers. In December he released some of his ground for church purposes, began preparing the ground for the erection of a building to be called Pisgah Chapel, and took the leading role in raising funds. One place where Abraham solicited was among his friends and relatives in Hanover, where Christina Lohr, widow of the recently deceased patriarch Martin Lohr, donated her husband’s overcoat valued at $30.00.

During this time Abraham had been struggling with a call to the ministry. A February 1869 entry in his diary, for example, states the following: “My time is much taken up this week in study and writing for publication, etc., that unless the church makes an urgent call for my services, Providence seems to indicate my labor in another direction. I am sure God calls me – but does the church desire my labor?”

At this point there is some confusion in the records about the progress of the church building. It appears that the plan to erect a chapel on Abraham’s property with Abraham bearing sole responsibility became a larger vision. On May 25, 1869, Henry Kapp deeded sixty perches of ground for a United Brethren church at Harmony Grove – with Philip Altland, William Beitzel and Abraham Rudisill as trustees for the project.

On August 8, 1869, the cornerstone was laid for the church building at Harmony Grove. An announcement of the event read as follows.

**CORNER-STONE LAYING OF HARMONY GROVE CHURCH**  
**NEAR CONEWAGO (EMIG’S) MILLS, DOVER TWP**

On Sunday, August 8, 1869, the weather permitting  
At 8 o’clock, A.M., a number of Sunday Schools are expected to be present, and a Report will be read by J.B. Baughman, Esq., the energetic Sunday School Missionary of York County.  
At 10 o’clock, A.M., a Sermon will be delivered in the English Language, by Rev. J.C. Smith, pastor of the U.B. Church, corner of Philadelphia and Newberry Streets, York, Pa.  
At 2 o’clock, P.M., Rev. J.H. Menges, pastor of the Fourth Lutheran congregation, York, Pa., will preach in the German Language, after which the CORNER-STONE WILL BE LAID.  
Select ANTHEMS will be sung at the commencement of each Service, by a well-trained CHOIR.

**ALL ARE RESPECTFULLY INVITED TO ATTEND**

An extended newspaper article describing the dedication of the finished building is given below. While the precise date of the dedication is not given in any known available records, it likely took place in the spring of 1870.

“The dedication of Harmony Grove Church in Dover Township, belonging to the United Brethren in Christ, took place on Sunday last. Services were held on
the Saturday evening previous by Rev. A.W. Rudisill. On Sunday morning at 9 o’clock an appropriate and impressive dedication sermon was delivered by W.B. Raber, Presiding Elder, in the German Language. Rev. Mr. Seifert, Lutheran, of Lewisberry, also preached a powerful sermon in the English Language. The church was filled to its utmost capacity, and there were still large crowds of people collected around the outside who were unable to gain admittance for want of room.

“In the afternoon at 2 o’clock Rev. D. Eberly, A.M., Principal of Cottage Hill College, preached an eloquent sermon in the English Language, followed by Rev. Jacob Ziegler, Pastor of New Salem’s congregation, in the German Language. Much attention was given to these excellent discourses.

“In the evening a sermon was preached by Rev. A.W. Rudisill, of the Baltimore Methodist Episcopal Conference. The services of the entire day were of great interest, and this dedication will long be remembered in the neighborhood of Harmony Grove as an event of more than ordinary importance.

“This church is open for orthodox Christians of all denominations to worship in. It is a neat building, with a steeple which is mounted with a spire and vane. The windows are of stained glass, and the whole building is a model of symmetry and graceful proportions. Rev. Abraham Rudisill is Pastor.”

When the church was ready, Abraham assumed the pastoral duties as a local pastor – and proved to himself and the conference that he was more than capable of filling the pastoral office. At the February 1871 annual session of the Pennsylvania Conference of the United Brethren Church, meeting in Baltimore MD, Abraham Rudisill was formally received on trial as a minister of the gospel and assigned to the Harmony Grove Church.

At the following year’s conference, in February 1872, the nearby Bethany and Dover appointments were taken from the large Liverpool [Manchester] circuit and joined with Harmony Grove to form the Dover circuit, to which Abraham was assigned.

Beginning in 1873, Abraham no longer received an appointment – but he continued to preach and assist in the church and the Conference whenever and however the opportunities arose. While no records survive specifically indicating why Abraham no longer received an appointment, there are several factors which undoubtedly contributed to the decision.

1. Abraham was now 61 years old. Commuting on the Dover circuit during the winter months when he resided in York was not an easy task.

2. His printing business and other ties to York made it impractical for him to offer himself unreservedly for appointment anywhere in the Conference.

3. During the winter of 1871 his unoccupied cottage at Harmony Grove was destroyed by an act of arson and never rebuilt, thus diminishing his ties to the Dover area.
The following selected journal entries are representative of the final years of Abraham’s life.

**Monday, March 17, 1879** – Today 38 years Jehovah sanctified my soul. Hallelujah! In April it will be 51 years since the Lord converted my soul, and any one that would attempt to make me doubt my conversion would attempt more than the devil ever did. Just before I was converted: “O that my load of sin were gone.” I then shouted “Glory! Glory!! Glory!!!” with loudest voice, clapping my hands.

Just before I was sanctified, the hymn “O ‘tis delight without alloy” was sung. “Love the Divinest of the train” took hold of my inmost soul, but the last line “Death must yield to love” was the climax. Then a still small voice came. With a calm voice I said “Victory! Victory!! Victory!!!”

**Tuesday, April 14, 1881** – Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Today is my 70th birthday.

**Tuesday, August 31, 1882** – Yesterday two months, the wife of my youth very gently passed over the valley of the shadow of death. Oh, Jehovah, make me ready in my turn to pass over also to the regions of everlasting pleasure.

**Monday, November 9, 1885** – Isaiah 51:3 “Joy and gladness shall be found in the garden of the Lord.” This forenoon I received a letter from Isaac. Oh let me never once repine when called with all to part. There is a calm retreat at the blood of the mercy seat. Isaac will soon be fifty years old, and then the shadows of old age will begin to flit across his vision. Oh thou great Jehovah, may my children, children’s children and I suffer thee to prepare us for a home in heaven.

**Wednesday, April 14, 1886** – Isaiah 60:6 “They shall show forth the praises of Jehovah.” I was born April 14, 1811, 75 years ago. Dissolve my heart in thankfulness, and my eyes to tears.

**Friday, August 15, 1890** [the death of daughter Sarah] – How sad is death, and yet how tenderly appropriate when life’s duties have all been nobly done. It makes but little difference then whether in the morning of life, at noonday, or in the evening.

Abraham grows quite feeble and almost blind as the years roll on. His last letter to son Abraham W., which the latter fondly saved all his life, was written in large letters with a blue crayon: “Dear Son: Dr. Stokes says, ‘Duty always before pleasure.’ My love, Father.” It was written in answer to an apology from A.W. for not visiting because of pastoral duties.
It is reported that Abraham often said, “If I had the opportunity to preach once more, I would give out for the hymn to be sung – *There is a fountain filled with blood.* My text would be Psalm 92:10 – *I shall be anointed with fresh oil.* My theme would be – *How to get religion and how to keep it.*” But it was not to be. One evening without much warning, but in the presence of his beloved children then at home, January 20, 1889, he raised his head and called “Isaac! Isaac!” and then fell asleep in Jesus.

At his funeral, his grandchildren James Rudisill, John F. Rudisill, Edward C. Kottcamp, Herbert R. Kottcamp, and John P. Kottcamp carried the black casket containing his earthly remains to its resting place in York.
While the story of Abraham came to a close, the story of the church he founded at Harmony Grove did not. After Abraham was no longer associated with the building, the United Brethren presence dwindled away. In 1895 the United Brethren turned the work over to the Lutherans, but that denomination could not sustain a congregation either. In 1918, United Brethren layman Charles Strack reorganized the Sunday School, and by 1932 there was a call for regular preaching services at the site. The pastor of the Dover circuit led in the reorganization of a United Brethren congregation in 1933, but the project failed to develop as well as had been hoped for.

By 1950 the United Brethren [now the Evangelical United Brethren] were no longer using the building, and some local people formed an independent congregation and began using the facility – as the original deed had specified that “all other Christian denominations shall have the privilege to worship in the Church and for Sunday School, if not occupied by the United Brethren in Christ.” When this congregation desired to make improvements to the building, they sought assurances from the Pennsylvania Conference of long-term access to the property. All the necessary legal arrangements were made, and the property is now part of the Harmony Grove Community Church – a large independent congregation. A modern worship complex has been erected across the road, and the original Harmony Grove building now serves as their center for making clothing and other materials available to persons in need.

ENDNOTES

1 Kottcamp, Frederick (1839-1874) – a citizen of York PA. Born in Germany and buried in Prospect Hill Cemetery in York, he is a brother to Abraham’s future son-in-law Charles C. Kottcamp.

2 Erb, Jacob (1804-1883) – the United Brethren preacher in York 1863-66. A prominent figure in the denomination, brief biographies of him appear in Weaver’s 1908 Minutes of the 1819-24 Conferences (page 46), the 1911 denominational study guide Our Heroes (volume 2, chapter 6), and Holdcraft’s 1939 History of the Pennsylvania Conference (page 317).

3 “Tis love that drives my chariot wheels, and death must yield to love” is a line from an Isaac Watts hymn that begins “O ‘tis delight without alloy, Jesus, to hear thy name.” The hymn appeared in Methodist Episcopal hymnals of the era.

4 “I Want to be an Angel” was a popular hymn written in Philadelphia in 1845 by Mrs. Sydney Paul Gill. She supposedly was teaching the nursery school class about angels when one of the little girls remarked, “I want to be an angel.” After that girl died suddenly a few weeks later, Mrs. Gill felt compelled to compose the hymn.

5 This is likely the village of Harney, on the Taneytown Road in Carroll Country MD.

6 Der Sendbote des Evangeliums [The Messenger of the Gospels] was a German Baptist [i.e., Church of the Brethren] newspaper printed at various times in Cincinnati OH (1853-1864), Williamsport PA (1864-1866), Cleveland OH (1866-1960), and Park Forest IL (1960-1971).

7 General William Hays (1819-1875) graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1840 and was a career soldier. He fought at Gettysburg and since April 1865 was in
command of the Artillery Reserve of the Army of the Potomac. He is buried in the West Point Cemetery.

This congregation is now Grace UMC on State Street. They worshiped in the Locust Street building from 1839 until the present structure was completed in 1873. Prior to 1839, the congregation, organized in 1810, had worshiped at a variety of locations.

Banner of Covenant is believed to have been a Presbyterian publication.

Alfred A. Fisher was born in Carlisle on May 22, 1830. He was converted at the age of 17 and immediately engaged in church work, including regular visitation to the jail and poorhouse. Unable to afford regular attendance at Dickinson College, but exhibiting intelligence and determination, he received private instruction from the school’s president, Dr. Jesse Truesdell Peck. After finishing apprenticeship as a mechanic, he married Charlotte and the couple moved to Harrisburg. They united with the Locust Street Methodist Episcopal Church, where under the ministry of Rev. Alfred Cookman, Alfred received first an exhorter’s license and then a local preacher’s license. He was instrumental in beginning the daughter congregations at Vine Street and Ridge Avenue. After Charlotte died, he gave up his trade all together under the ministry of Rev. David Bartine and joined the Philadelphia Conference (of which Harrisburg was then a part) as an itinerant minister in 1859. His son (by his second wife) Curwin Bartine Fisher (1863-1948) was a member of the New Jersey Conference.

Shoop’s Church in Lower Paxton township was a union Lutheran and Reformed building, an arrangement that lasted until the Reformed congregation erected their own structure in 1926. The successor congregations today are St. Mark’s Lutheran Church (4200 Londonderry Road) and Colonial Park United Church of Christ (5000 Devonshire Road).

The Religious Telescope is the denominational newspaper of the United Brethren Church.

This was the two-story building erected on the northeast corner of Philadelphia and Beaver Streets erected by the Methodists in 1837. That structure was replaced by a larger and more ornate edifice in 1873. In 1926 the congregation relocated to 340 East Market Street and is now Asbury United Methodist Church.

David Shoaff (1823-1871) was born in Juniata County PA, but his life experiences perhaps his Baltimore Conference appointments in the southern part of the Conference apparently gave him a Southern perspective. In 1866 he withdrew from the conference to join the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

“Uncle” George Conn lived on George Street and was a member of the Methodist Church when Christian Newcomer lodged with him in 1799. He later became a prominent member and class leader in the United Brethren Church. He donated his grandfather’s clock to adorn the parsonage, and gave to the trustees of the church $1000 as a sacred fund, the interest of which was to be used in perpetuity in support of the local church. He died January 6, 1877, at the age of 93 years, 9 months, 27 days.

Nehemiah Altman (1813-1878) was born in Germany of Jewish parents. He came to America in 1838 and settled in Ohio, where he became acquainted with the United Brethren Church and converted to Christianity which caused his mother and brother, the latter a rabbi, to renounce him and consider him dead. He was an effective preacher, church organizer, and district superintendent.

Five-twenty bonds and seven-thirty bonds were bonds issued by the federal government to pay for the Civil War.

This is a visitor from Abraham’s old home area of Hanover. The Menges family lived between Spring Grove and Hanover, and in that area is St. Peter’s [Lischy’s] Union Lutheran and Reformed Church.
Andrew G. Deininger (1794-1880) was the pastor for 51 years at Salem Lutheran Church, one mile southwest of Dover. By the intersection of Canal Street and Salem Church Road, it would have been one of the closest church buildings to Harmony Grove.

The Helffenstein name is well-known in the history of the German Reformed Church, as it was the name of seven prominent pastors. Rev. John Albert Conrad Helffenstein (1748-1790) was the father of Rev. Samuel Helffenstein Sr. (1775-1866), Rev. Charles Helffenstein (1781-1842), Rev. Jonathan Helffenstein (1784-1829), and Rev. Albert Helffenstein (1788-1869). Samuel Sr. was the father of Rev. Samuel Helffenstein Jr. (1800-1869) and Rev. Albert Helffenstein (1801-1870), who is often denoted Albert Jr, to distinguish him from his uncle. All seven Helffensteins labored in Pennsylvania. The text Abraham and his wife were reading was likely Eine Sammlung Auserlesener Predigten by the patriarch JAC Helffenstein. This is a collection of his sermons preached at the German Reformed Church in Philadelphia that was published in Carlisle in 1810 by Friederick Sanne.

Abraham wrote five days later that “Mr. Oberdick professed to have obtained peace, going around shaking hands with his friends in the presence of the large congregation. Lord keep him faithful.” God apparently answered Abraham’s prayer, for in the 1915 75th Anniversary Souvenir Booklet of the congregation, the Oberdick surname is mentioned 21 times, with Casper as one of the trustees and his wife as the treasurer of the Women’s Missionary Society. This experience helping Casper find full salvation was likely one of the key events that eventually guided Abraham into the ministry.

Sleswig and Holstein are the two provinces on the southern end of the Jutland peninsula, and as such have often been the subject of disputes between Denmark and Germany. In the 1840’s those tensions rose to the point of requiring military intervention.

Monthly Friend was a religious paper begun by Abraham Rudisill in Hanover in August 1843. It was published by him in Hanover for five years, and then in Carlisle for three years, and now revived in York.

Other sources confirm that William Donovan was hung in York on March 31, 1868, but his offense and his connection to Abraham Rudisill are unknown.

Charles Christian Kottcamp (1847-1925) was born in Germany and came to America when his widowed mother moved the family here in 1854. He returned home from the Civil War with a discharge from the army, back pay which had accumulated, and bounty money which included substitute fees. An experienced tinsmith, he started a small establishment in the 100 block on North George Street during the summer of 1866. In those days tin ware was almost exclusively used for cooking utensils and this, together with tin roofing and spouting, became a large part of the business. In order to obtain a larger volume of country trade, this shop was moved to Dover in 1872. After remaining there for seven years, Mr. Kottcamp returned to York and located at the intersection of what is now Belvidere Avenue and Market Street. At this time, slate roofing was added as a separate department of the business. Five years later, in 1884, the business was moved to 515 West Market Street and exists there today as C.C. Kottcamp & Son – a plumbing, heating, and air conditioning business.

Martin Lohr (1803-1868), an extremely effective local preacher and a true patriarch of the United Brethren work in southern York and Adams counties, is the namesake of Lohr’s Memorial UMC in Hanover. The friendship of Abraham with Martin Lohr goes back at least to 1847, when Abraham sold Lohr and others the plot of land on Broadway where Hanover’s first United Brethren church building was erected.

Philip Altland (1807-1891) and William Beitzel (1822-?) were United Brethren laymen living in Warrington township. They had both been converted during the great 1851-52 revival at the Bentz school house that led to the 1854 erection of the Mount Zion church building, of which they were trustees, south of Dillsburg.
APPENDIX: ACROSTICS BY ABRAHAM RUDISILL

In addition to publishing his religious newspaper *The Friend* and tending his regular commercial printing business, Abraham delighted in printing personal items for special occasions involving his extended family. In particular, he composed and printed acrostics, typically embellished with ornate engravings. Because they give insight into both Abraham and his family, a few of them are presented as an appendix to the article.

For his wife Sarah, dated November 26, 1877.

**TO MOTHER**

*I will never leave thee.* Hebrews 13:5
See in the great Jehovah’s Word
Are promises of sweet accord.
Remember a most precious one:
Always His light on thee shall dawn.
He never leaves thee – nevermore.
Remain with Him, and Him adore.
Until the storms of life are past,
Do thou always remain steadfast.
In every strait call on His name,
So shall His love your heart inflame.
In joyful songs go sound His praise,
Love then His honor high to raise,
Live happy in yon endless days.

For his daughter Sarah, on her 29th birthday, dated December 17, 1877.

Sarah! A birthday token heed:
Always the Bible do thou read.
Read it to all you children dear,
And teach them the great God to fear.
Have Timothy before your eyes;
Knowledge impart as did Eunice.
Oh! Meditate by day and night,
Teaching the way that’s ever right –
Teaching to prize God’s Holy Word,
Courageous wield this mighty sword.
Ah! Who can estimate God’s Home.
More sweet than the pure honey-comb –
Preserve it ever in your home.

For his son, Abraham Wehrley Rudisill, dated August 9, 1884
[Observe the spelling “Wehrly” – one of several variants of that name.]

A missionary for the Lord!
Blest is the work to preach His Word,
Removing far to India’s strand
And rescue souls from Satan’s hand.
Hosanna to the Lamb of God!
Alone we’re pardoned through His blood.
May you this gospel boldly preach,
With power each list’ning soul thus reach.
Eternal life to all proclaim,
Henceforth in Jesus’ blessed name.
Repentance, faith, and the new birth,
Let all proclaim throughout the earth.
Your work is great – yea, most sublime.
Rescuing souls in life’s short time.
Unto the Lamb be glory given,
Divinest name in earth and heaven.
Into our world to save He came;
Sing loud the praise of Jesus’ name.
In every strait he will defend;
Let us alone on Him depend.
Lo! He’ll lead us to the end.

Note: Abraham’s son, Rev. A.W. Rudisill of the Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church was such a significant figure in Methodism that he merits a separate article in the definitive 1974 Encyclopedia of World Methodism. It seems fitting to close the article in *The Chronicle* with the tribute paid to him by the noted Dr. John F. Goucher (1845-1922) of the Baltimore Conference.

“Dr. Rudisill was a man of varied experiences, wide range of ministries, unquestioning confidence in God, and a devotion which was willing to undertake any enterprise which he believed to be the will of the Lord – no matter how impossible it might seem to human vision, or impracticable to friends with whom he consulted. This led him into a series of extraordinary experiences dating from his attendance at Dickinson College and running through his relations to the Baltimore Conference as pastor, presiding elder, and subsequently as missionary to India. In India he founded and built up the great printing plant at Madras, at first using the little hand press, and leaving it the best-equipped printing establishment in Southern Asia.

“Dr. Rudisill was a man of deep spirituality and was always consistent in his relation to others. Somewhat of a mystic, nevertheless he was loyal to the teachings of his Church and to the vows of his ministry.”

*[He was a joy and credit to his father, but as they say – “The fruit doesn’t fall far from the tree.” – ed.]*