

**James Barber, Evangelical Preacher:
His Life and Times, 1797 - 1867**

by Denny Williams (his great-great grandson)

The reasonably-read historian knows that the 1700's and early 1800's were a period of great turmoil amongst the general population – and especially those of religious faith, both in Europe and, increasingly, in North America. Roy Adkins, writing of the times, notes,

It was a time of social upheaval... Intellectuals were discussing everything, trying to make sense of a planet about which, in comparison with modern knowledge, they knew virtually nothing. At the same time they also looked for a morality and a philosophy to replace the failing superstitious piety that had maintained this state of ignorance for so long. From the intimately personal to the public and political, it was a very different world, yet because the written languages of the time are still easily read today and because modern costume dramas, using modern speech and accents, greatly reduce the feeling of strangeness in portrayals of the period, it is easy to form a false impression that life two hundred years ago was closer to life today than it actually was... it is useful to pause occasionally and remember how the world has changed in the last five or ten years and how much more it has changed in the last two centuries.¹

Conditions in Europe were a significant cause of migration to North America.

Thousands of German people [principally from the region of Germany known as the 'Palatinate'] came to this colony of William Penn; so many that when Jacob Albright was born in 1759, the entire south eastern section of Pennsylvania, with the exception of Chester County, was occupied principally by them. Their numbers were estimated at 280,000 by 1783.²

But increasingly, the religious atmosphere in North America deteriorated to conditions ranging from the alcoholic to the bawdy, the intolerant to the persecutory, the coarsely impious to the blasphemous. God was still in his Heaven, but most definitely, all was not right with the world.

John Seybert³ wrote of conditions of the day,

¹ Nelson's Trafalgar – The Battle that Changed the World, Roy Adkins, Viking Press, 2004, pp. 369.

² Jacob Albright – The Evangelical Pioneer, Robert Sherer Wilson, Church Center Press, 1940, p. 12.

³ An early leader and later a bishop of the Evangelical Association in the mid-1800's.

About the year 1800 the German population⁴ of Pennsylvania consisted chiefly of Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Reformed, Mennonites, Old School and New School Baptists (Dunkers), Schwenkfelders, etc... The majority... were guilty of gross violation of God's law – profanity, Sabbath desecration, drunkenness, etc., being quite common among them. Baptism, and confirmation, with an occasional reception of the Lord's Supper, constituted the essentials of their religion. The preachers themselves, with but few exceptions, were wicked and hostile toward converted⁵ people. The Mennonites and Dunkers in general had a more pious exterior; in reality they were, nevertheless, enemies to the true experimental religion, which manifested itself among them, and also among the Schwenkfelders, when persons were converted to God.⁶

Disagreement and dissatisfaction with established religion caused many a split among congregations and families, and even between husbands and wives.⁷ Onto this chaotic religious scene came a number of fervently dedicated men. Together they underwent great personal sacrifice, ostracism, persecution, bodily harm, and even the threat of death.⁸

The early ministers of the Evangelical Association were impelled in their work by a true apostolic spirit. Aroused to a deep sense of the moral depravity of the age and the formal worship of the established churches, their hearts were set on fire with a burning zeal for perishing souls... in many places the preachers met great opposition there. They were decried as 'heretics,' 'false prophets,' and 'deceivers.' ...Those who received them, or sympathized with them, were persecuted by their fellow Church members, friends, and neighbors. Their names were cast out as vile, and all manner of abuse was heaped upon them. Their work called for sacrifices and self-denial unsurpassed in the history of the Christian Church.⁹

Humbly but confidently they brought a message of renewal, commitment and hope to those who would listen. They traveled to wilderness communities,

⁴ "These German settlers continued to speak their own German dialect, chiefly the Palatine, in the New World, but contacts with the English-speaking people resulted in a modification of the original dialect into what is now generally, but erroneously, termed 'Pennsylvania Dutch.'" – Jacob Albright, p. 13.

⁵ "Converted" was a term used to describe those who had renewed their spiritual commitment and joined the Evangelical Association.

⁶ Jacob Albright, p. 19. Wilson's description of spiritual conditions, too lengthy to fully quote here, is found on pages 16 – 21 of that book.

⁷ Many accounts of family splits are found in the historical narratives of the Evangelical Association.

⁸ The literature reflects numerous accounts of intimidation, injury, threatened and actual, and even attempted murder of the early Evangelical preachers including Albright, Miller, Dreisbach and others.

⁹ Annals of the Evangelical Association of North America and History of the United Evangelical Church, Rev. Ammon Stapleton, et al., Publishing House of the United Evangelical Church, Harrisburg, PA, 1900, p. 181.

villages, homes, and farms across central Pennsylvania and beyond. They went out to evangelize the German people, to present the Word in fresh and refreshing settings in their native tongue.¹⁰ Of the leader, Jacob Albright, Rev. George Miller has written,

This godly man preached the Gospel for almost twelve years, and the fruits of his work were almost 300 souls converted¹¹ to God. These strove after goodness in accordance with disciplinary order and endeavoured to do what God teaches us in His word, to flee from and avoid all sins and everything evil and to edify one another in communal exercise, in the unity of faith in accordance with the mandate of Christ and His Apostles as this faithful teacher set forth in the instructions that he has given to his brethren. This same teaching of doctrines of faith and Christian disciplinary order also with God's blessing appeared in print about a year after his death and accomplished great blessing and brought many upon the way of truth and the true knowledge of God.¹²

The feats of traveling preachers Jacob Albright, Abraham Liesser, John Walter, John Dreisbach, George Miller, Jacob Fry, Adam Ettinger, John Seybert, Henry Niebel, John Erb and their contemporaries in the Evangelical Association – pious, serious, resolute – have already been recounted and many of their biographies are well known. This work does not presume to adequately tell their story, though the interested reader will find rich information in the bibliography included herein.

But there was one among them whose life and times have heretofore not been documented, who devoted his entire adulthood to the Evangelical cause, and who ministered to his assigned flocks, traveling by bony horse in the steamy heat of summer and the frigid cold of winter in central Pennsylvania: a circuit preacher and Church leader who devoted his life in service to God for almost fifty years, from his ordination in 1817 to his death in 1867. This is the story of Rev. James Barber, Evangelical Preacher and man of God.

¹⁰ “Albright believed that preaching in German was needed, because of the great number living in spiritual darkness, who could not understand much English, or at least would not attend English services for gospel preaching.” – *Jacob Albright*, pp. 65 – 66.

¹¹ A cornerstone of beliefs of “The Albrights” was the concept of “conversion.” As the term is used often in various accounts, we briefly explain it here. “To know one’s need [for a more intimate connection with God] is the first step in conversion... the second step is... [heart-felt and genuine] repentance... [and the third step is to undergo] ...a change of heart and a radical reformation of the life.” – *Jacob Albright*, pp. 33 – 34. In *Jacob Albright*, Wilson writes, “Albright’s conversion was genuine according to Biblical standards. He was convicted of sin, repented for his sins, and then trusted Christ as his Saviour, and received a great blessing. These three steps are necessary in every conversion, though they may take different forms.”

¹² “Short Description of the Effective Grace of God in the Enlightened, Protestant Preacher, Jacob Albright” by George Miller; Translated and Edited by James D. Nelson, page 9. This may be seen on www.united.edu/eubcenter/albright-english.pdf.

Early Years

Like the Christ he served, James Barber was of humble origin. Official records in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania show that he and his twin sister Maria were “love children,” the products of an illicit relationship. Court records reflect the conviction of their biological father in March of 1798 on charges of “fornication and bastardy,” committed in July of 1796. Quite an ignominious beginning.

The children were born 21 or 22 April 1797 in Manor Township, Lancaster County. Baptism records of Trinity Lutheran Church in Lancaster document God’s blessing on the children on 27 August of that year.

But those records reflect a curious note. No father’s name appears in the records. Their mother is listed as Louisa Rummel. She had the babies baptized “Jacob” and “Maria” Rummel. Then on the next line of the same baptismal record, she re-christens the boy as “James Barber.” (“James,” we are told, is the English equivalent of the German “Jacob.”) Why she did this is unknown, perhaps to cement ties to the biological father, perhaps to shore up her testimony in preparation for the forthcoming “paternity suit,” as we might call it today.

Extensive efforts have thus far failed to establish the identity and lineage of this man, “the original” James Barber. Does the Anglicization of “Jacob” to “James” imply that the biological father was of English origin? From whence did he hail? What happened to him? Most of the “leads” we’ve pursued have ended in dead ends, the suspects being of the wrong age or locale to have been involved. What an ominous cloud under which to grow up, in the years 1797 to 1801!

But it may be that these lowly beginnings of Jacob Rummel/James Barber **steeled** him for the trials and tribulations, which were to become the centrepiece, the magnum opus, of so much of his life. We don’t know how much he knew of these origins while he was a youngster growing up, but we may surmise that at the very least, he knew he was “different.” Perhaps he was an outcast, a pariah scarcely tolerated in the Rummel household, a sort of “Oliver Twist” of Pennsylvania. We prefer to believe that his early years were spent in a loving home, that his mother and Grandfather Valentine Rummel doted on him, shaping his character for a life of humility and devotion to God.

So we imagine that there was a warm and caring home life for young James, but his young days were not without tragedy: his twin sister Maria died at the age

of thirteen months (4 May 1798).¹³ Even though he may not, at that age, have understood fully her sudden disappearance from the household, the loss of Maria must surely have weighed heavily on young James, for they would certainly, as twins, have been soul mates.

The German-speaking communities in Pennsylvania, including the Mennonites, the Huguenots, the Pietists, the Dunkards, the Moravians, and the Schwenkfelders,¹⁴ were close-knit, God-fearing, churchgoing people, workers of the land. Piety, poverty, hard work, dedication, discipline, honesty, and humility were deep-seated characteristics of the Pennsylvania Dutch. These traits would have been well ingrained into the character of James Barber during his youth, and we can be sure that James Barber had a strict moral upbringing. As he grew to manhood, James Barber's character and beliefs would have been shaped by the morals and mores of Lancaster County.

Labor is necessary, for man is commanded to work, and in the sweat of his brow to eat his bread, and an indolent man can be no Christian. 'If any would not work,' says Paul, 'neither should he eat,' for God has commanded us to labor."¹⁵

And as he approached manhood, James must have been a strapping strong fellow¹⁶ who would have been a great help to his parents around the farm. Further speculation about those growing-up years would be fruitless; nonetheless, we may assume that loving and supportive adults raised him up, and that James had great love and respect for them.

Somehow out of his origins, his environment, his upbringing, and his conversion he must have been inculcated with a deep-felt desire to reach out to fellow beings, and to nurture their souls.

Whatever his early circumstances, they certainly changed in 1801, for it was in that year, when James was age four, that his mother Louisa married one

¹³ "Research on Louisa Rummel Kneisley," Reports of the Staff Genealogist, Lancaster Historical Society, Spring 2005. Maria was buried in the Sauder Graveyard in Manor Township, Lancaster County. As shown on an 1864 map, the former site of this graveyard was on the East side of Walnut Hill Road, near farm buildings. At some point the gravestones were moved to the Masonville Mennonite Cemetery on Safe Harbor Road between Letort Road and Stehman Church Road, not far from Safe Harbor, PA.

¹⁴ Kneisly Genealogy, Harry Loren Kneisley, 1932. Available on CD from Quintin Publications, pp. 5 - 7.

¹⁵ Rev. George Miller, writing in "Life and Labors of George Miller," Jacob Albright and his Co-Laborers, R. Yeakel, Publishing House of the Evangelical Association, Cleveland, Ohio, 1883, p. 259.

¹⁶ He is described by an earlier biographer as being a "...man of large frame and commanding appearance, with excellent voice..." ("Briefer Sketches of Sainted Ministers," Annals, p. 537.)

Christian Kneisley.¹⁷ They went on to have several children. It's not clear whether and how James fitted into their household, if at all.

A court record filed in 1811 or 1812, has James Barber, "a young man not yet an adult but over the age of 14," successfully petitioning the court to have another adult, one Christian Stouffer,¹⁸ appointed to be his legal guardian.¹⁹ Why was this court action necessary?

One possibility is that Christian and Louisa Kneisley were moving out of the area (possibly to Southern Ontario, Canada; there's a suggestion of their presence there) and James was opting to stay behind in Pennsylvania.

A second possibility is that the teen-aged James had developed an affinity for the preachings of Jacob Albright and his co-laborers, and (as happened in so many families) James may have split with his step-father and his mother over his religious intentions. As documented in the following accounts, Manor Township was the site of evangelism by Jacob Albright as early as 1800-02,²⁰ and the number of followers steadily grew.

Among the first in Lancaster county to receive Albright was a widow named Elisabeth Thomas, who resided in Manor Township, near the confluence of the Big and Little Conestoga... Albright began his labors in this place in 1802 or 1803. Souls were saved from time to time, and a class²¹ was formed in 1806 or 1807. During the latter year a considerable revival occurred at Millerstown... In 1809 another gracious

17 Christian Kneisley is documented numerous times in official records of Manor Township, Lancaster County. He and his family are enumerated in the 1810 Federal Census; he is listed as a land owner and entrepreneur, and his will was probated there following his death in the late spring of 1835. "Kneisley" is a venerable old Swiss family name, well documented in the immigration records and in the early government and church records of Pennsylvania. The Kneisley families, like so many others, escaped the religious persecution and prosecution of Europe to find religious freedom and new opportunities in North America. – Reports of the Staff Genealogist

18 Christian Stouffer was documented as being a neighbor of the Kneisley's and the Rummels in Manor Township. – Reports of the Staff Genealogist

19 A curious notation appears in this court record regarding "the original" James Barber, the biological father. It refers to him as being "late of Manor Township," meaning (in the context of those days) that he had removed from that jurisdiction, not that he was deceased. Nothing in the record reveals why this was legal action was necessary. – Reports of the Staff Genealogist

20 Albright and John Walter are documented in multiple sources including Annals as having visited the area multiple times in the early 1800's.

21 A "class" was a small group of believers organized under the leadership of a lay person which would meet from time to time to further their religious studies and beliefs. With ordained Evangelical pastors only available on an occasional basis, perhaps no more often than every two to four weeks, a means was needed to enable believers to come together for spiritual sustenance. Albright and his associates borrowed the idea from the Methodists, who first began the practice in England. A class would consist of perhaps 10 to 12 persons, and class leaders were expected to stay in close touch with each of them in their everyday lives to further the idea of Christian fellowship. There is an excellent discussion of how the idea originated and grew both in England and in North America in Jacob Albright – the Evangelical Pioneer, pp. 26 – 27.

revival took place all along the Conestoga and many prominent conversions occurred... Christian and David Thomas and John Rippley were licensed as preachers soon after their conversion. John Rippley's was for many years a noted place for meetings... About 1810 John Walter preached there... A daughter of John Rippley married Michael Kneisley, who also became a prominent member, and was for many years one of the pillars of the work on the Conestoga.²²

Another early church in the Safe Harbor area was the Evangelical Association or, as it was known in some localities, 'The Albrights,' after Jacob Albright, a soldier under George Washington and the founder of the sect. This group organized and built its first church in Conestoga Township in 1846 on the south side of the road between Safe Harbor and Conestoga Centre. Some time later the congregation moved into a new building across the land leading into the Catholic Church. It is now a private residence. In 1873 the church moved into a new brick building on the north side of the road at the west end of Conestoga Centre. The congregation split in 1896, one group, Mt. Zion, continued to use the church building, while the other group erected a new frame building across the road and became the present Bethel Evangelical Congregational Church.²³

The area described in the quotes above is exactly the area in Manor Township, Lancaster County, where James Barber grew up.

On analysis, we have concluded that the most likely reason for getting a new legal guardian appointed is that James' Grandfather, Valentine Rummel, was and always had been his legal guardian since his birth. Valentine died in October of 1811. If Christian Kneisley never legally adopted James, then Valentine's passing would have necessitated appointing a new guardian for James. Why didn't Christian Kneisley adopt James? We shall likely never know, but the theory that he did not is supported in the fact that when Kneisley died in 1836, James Barber was not among the named heirs in Christian's will. In fact, when we reflect further on this, we see that there is the possibility that Valentine raised James as if he were his own son, and that James was never much a part of Christian and Louisa Kneisley's household. But Valentine never changed his will, either: James was not among the heirs, but his mother Louisa was. And notwithstanding this speculation, we do know that years later, James honored his parents by naming one of his own sons, John **Kneisley** Barber.

All we know is that at the culmination of an unknown sequence of life-shaping events, the specifics of which we can only present as educated guesses,

²² Annals, pp. 49 - 50.

²³ "Two Rivers and a Village – The Story of Safe Harbor," Ernest T. Schuleen, Journal – quarterly publication of the Lancaster County Historical Society, volume 85, number 3, 1981, p. 96.

James is said to have converted in 1815 to the Evangelical Church. How this came about is another matter for an informed hypothesis. He may very well have been present at a Manor Township preaching-place of John Walter. He may have known and been influenced by John Rippley, an early supporter of the Evangelical Association in Lancaster County whose home was often used as a preaching-place and overnight stop by the itinerants (see above). A possible connection is that a daughter of John Rippley married Michael Kneisley, the brother of James' step-father. We also know that at least one of James' step-brothers, Benjamin Kneisley, later converted and became a local preacher with the Evangelical Association.

So it is reasonable to infer that the efforts of "The Albrights" in Manor Township resonated with the young James Barber and the Kneisley's.

The Itinerancy

By whatever set of events, in 1817, twenty year-old pastoral candidate James Barber applied to and was provisionally accepted by the Evangelical Association at their "tenth Conference, held in the new church at New Berlin June 2-7."²⁴ He was admitted on trial and assigned to be the Junior Preacher²⁵ on the "Lancaster Circuit."²⁶

We are informed that it was common practice in those days, that the first assignment of newly admitted Evangelical ministers was to the area where they already lived, the reasoning being that they would know the surrounds and that they could comfortably make their rounds out of their present home. Thus we may infer that at the time of his becoming a minister in 1817, James Barber was still living in Manor Township, Lancaster County. Previous speculation was that he might have originally made his way up the Susquehanna River to New Berlin

²⁴ *Annals*, p. 225.

²⁵ "There were usually two preachers on each circuit, one known as the senior preacher and the other known as the junior preacher." – *Jacob Albright*, p. 69.

²⁶ The "Lancaster Circuit" encompassed Manor Township in Lancaster County, but may have been much larger. The "Annals of Martin Dreisbach," pp. 34-35 report that "[in 1809]... the 'old' circuit, which embraced 20 appointments in parts of Dauphin, Lebanon, Lancaster, Berks, Bucks, Montgomery, Northampton, Lehigh, and Schuylkill Counties, PA." The biographical notes on John Dreisbach note, "When elected Presiding Elder in 1814, his conference district encompassed southern New York and much of Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio, and four times a year he visited the whole territory, making these long-distance visitations on horseback." So it may be seen that these traveling preachers did labor mightily to encompass wide geographical areas in the days before anything like modern travel. To give the reader a sense of the challenge, consider 1807: "The First Annual Conference was to be held on November 15th at the home of Samuel Becker, at Muehlbach ["Millbach," about thirty miles east of Harrisburg, east of the Susquehanna River; Linglestown and Kleinfeltersville are nearby]. "In order to reach this place [on horseback], John Dreisbach and members from the Northumberland circuit left home on November 6th." – *Jacob Albright*, p. 81.

to find work as a farm hand; once in New Berlin, the theory went, perhaps ensconced as hired help on the Michael Maize farm, he would have been exposed to the message of the Evangelical Association²⁷ and would have met his future wife, Mary Maize. We discount that theory now, and believe his first travel to New Berlin was in connection with his admission at the Annual Conference in 1817.

On the Lancaster Circuit for the year 1817–18, James Barber, Junior Preacher, was teamed with Adam Ettinger, Jr.²⁸ We are told that this pairing of a neophyte with a Senior Preacher was intended to foster a sort of “on the job training” program for the newly appointed. Moreover, companionship must have been an important factor for the otherwise lonely life of the itinerant, and one imagines many hours of discourse and mentorship along the trail. Most important, there was physical protection; Ettinger must have appreciated Barber’s physical size as a welcome deterrent against rowdies or thieves who might be encountered in the wilderness, or even in the villages.²⁹

Since James Barber originally hailed from Manor Township of Lancaster County, we assume the Circuit encompassed the geographical area east of the Susquehanna River and south of present-day U.S. 30, which runs on a line from Columbia on the River to Lancaster to the east. Though it’s possible that in 1819 the Lancaster appointments were geographically more widespread than this, we have to keep in mind, as a practical matter, just how large an area could be traversed by a man on horseback. The Lancaster charge was a part of the “old circuit,” the original area in which Jacob Albright traveled and preached, and in 1808,

The Old Circuit (Lancaster-Schuylkill) consisted of appointments in Lancaster, Lebanon, Dauphin, Berks, and Schuylkill counties. There were forty preaching places where stated services were held, as well as a number of homes and other places open to occasional preaching. Some

²⁷ *Annals*, pp. 66 - 67. “[Michael Maize] ...opened his house as a preaching place upon the establishment of the New Circuit in 1804... many conversions took place at the house of Michael Maize. In consequence of his support of ALBRIGHT, Brother MAIZE was sorely persecuted. So great was the opposition against the work that on one occasion when John Dreisbach preached at his house an attack was made and the preacher narrowly escaped serious injury. Persecution, however did not daunt the zeal of Brother Maize. Through his instrumentality entrance was gained in the town of New Berlin.”

²⁸ Adam Ettinger, Jr.’s biography appears as published by Paula Heck on the website <http://boards.ancestry.com/mbexec?htx=message&r=an&p=surnames.ettinger&m=122>, taken from the book, *History of York County, Illustrated 1886*, John Gibson, Historical Editor; a version can also be found in *Annals*, p. 540.

²⁹ “...about this time there arose a storm of opposition and persecution against the Evangelical Association and United Brethren. Libels were uttered; and as they obtained many believers, the feeling of enmity ran high against the new and struggling church. Violence was often threatened and some declared willingness to take up arms against the people of the little flock, and exterminate them if it were not against the law.” “Annals of Martin Dreisbach,” biographical notes on John Dreisbach.

of the appointments were from thirty to forty miles apart, and required some time to travel by horse to reach them.³⁰

So we can safely conclude that all of the traveling preachers including Ettinger and Barber spent a great deal of time in the saddle.

...traveling in those days was no easy task, and being probably not sufficiently protected, they frequently got wet and contracted heavy colds. Their meals were often at irregular hours, and their sleeping accommodations certainly not first class, as a rule, and of recreation they knew nothing.³¹

One itinerant (Harlacher) wrote of his travels,

... In one round I had to preach in four counties. We had thirty-two preaching places, all in private houses except one, which was in a school-house. I had to preach every evening in the week except Saturday, and sometimes then also, and twice on Sunday. In August, 1832, I traveled on horseback 274 miles and preached thirty-three times. The first twelve months of my itinerancy I rode on horseback 3,300 miles.³²

The perilous life of an itinerant preacher has been described by Wilson:

Of course, the work in this section [New Berlin] had its opposition as well as its blessings. One outstanding instance of this was when Albright preached in the Michael Maize home in 1807. Near the close of the sermon, a man named Adam Christ asked Albright to step outside that he might speak with him privately... It was discovered that this man Adam Christ, had a crowd of roughs outside to manhandle the preacher...³³

No record has yet been discovered of that first year that the two men, Ettinger and Barber, spent together, but it is reasonable to posit that something (or some things) remarkable took place. And here, Barber couldn't have had a better springboard for his career. Adam Ettinger later grew to a position of considerable power and prominence within the Evangelical Church.³⁴ And because Ettinger

³⁰ Jacob Albright, p. 84.

³¹ "Life and Labors of John Walter," Jacob Albright and his Co-Laborers, p. 164.

³² "Old-time Circuit Riding," Annals, p. 134 - 135.

³³ Jacob Albright, p. 80.

³⁴ "Rev. Adam Ettinger... was one of the original clergymen of the Evangelical Association in York County... In the fall of 1813, under the administration of Rev. John Walter, the first fellow-laborer of Rev. Jacob Albright, founder of the Evangelical Association, Adam Ettinger joined that denomination which at that date, had only fifteen preachers and 769 members in America. In 1815 he was licensed to preach, and the next year joined the conference. No minister of the gospel was a more devoted follower of the doctrines and principles of the church of his choice than he, giving not only his time but his means to the support of the cause he so faithfully advocated..." – biographical notes by Paula Heck, seen on <http://boards.ancestry.com/mbexec?htx=message&r=an&p=surnames.ettinger&m=122> and quoted by her in turn from "History of York County, Illustrated 1886" by John Gibson, Historical Editor.

most likely already had the ear of Evangelical Church leaders back in New Berlin in 1817, it's easy to imagine that word got back to New Berlin of their exploits, their accomplishments, the natural ability of James Barber, or some such combination of intelligence. At the next Annual Conference in 1818, James Barber rocketed forward in his standing. Two or three years ahead of the normal schedule, he was ordained a Deacon,³⁵ – and only two years after that, in 1820, he was named an Elder.³⁶

The thirty-two years that followed saw Rev. James Barber assigned to a number of different charges. That he served so many years in the itinerancy is an extraordinary fact; most of his peers only lasted a year, or sometimes two. Several factors typically worked against their continuance.

First, as has been previously noted, it was an arduous life of difficult travel under extremes of weather and living conditions. Accommodations along the circuit were sparse. Welcoming farm homes with a warm hearth, a hearty meal, and a dry bed were the hoped-for setting for an overnight stay, but there were no guaranteed reservations.³⁷ Typically, the circuit preacher took “pot luck,” hoped for a supportive householder, and “sang for his supper,” since the isolated hosts would be hungry for news of the outside world as well as spiritual unction. But it wasn't always a positive experience.³⁸

Secondly, in those days, families raised their own food, crops and livestock. The married itinerant left his wife and children to care for the farm while he spread the word of God. Unfortunately, the family often starved or almost starved as a result, and if the wife couldn't convince the traveling pastor that he was needed back home to operate the farm, peer pressure from neighbors often did the trick.³⁹

³⁵ Annals, p. 226.

³⁶ Annals, p. 228.

³⁷ “I traveled through Dauphin and Lancaster Counties... several times not knowing where to find a night's lodging. One night I was received nowhere, and was compelled to let my hungry horse run into a field, and take my saddle for a bed.” – Rev. George Miller, “Life and Labors of George Miller,” Jacob Albright and his Co-Laborers, R. Yeakel, Publishing House of the Evangelical Association, Cleveland, OH, 1883, p. 201.

³⁸ “In –'s meeting-house I had little success. The man with whom I lodged had a large bank barn full of fodder, and yet my horse was allowed to suffer, and was hitched under the shed in the front of the barn!” – Rev. George Miller, “Life and Labors,” p. 203. The itinerants were not always welcomed, and their journals sometimes record overnight conditions bordering on hostility coupled with neglect, abuse of their horses, and vandalism of their saddle and kit. – Jacob Albright and his Co-Laborers, p. 162 and elsewhere.

³⁹ Lucrative incomes were not part of the career. Annual salaries in the range of \$20 to \$66 are mentioned in the histories. In 1804, the ministers met and decided to divide equally, share and share alike, the monies contributed across the year by the members. It's been written that often in those early years the proceeds did not even cover expenses. Because the preachers weren't very good at asking their audiences for

Thirdly, the arduous travel and exposure to the elements took a toll on travelers' health, and more than a few including Jacob Albright himself were forced to abandon the vocation for reasons of illness and exhaustion. Albright himself died on the trail, in the sparse bleakness of a farmer's guest room for itinerant preachers.

Of another traveling preacher (John Everhart), it was stated,

His travels extended over nearly all the southern part of the state, and great revivals were promoted through his almost ceaseless labors. During these itineraries he... was known to travel in storm and snow until his feet and hands and face were frozen. At other times he would swim turbulent streams at the risk of life; or if a ferry boat were accessible, he would pay out all his money to get over. Once he pawned his Bible to the ferryman in order to reach his appointments on time, hoping that he might be able on his return to redeem the dear old Book which was as sacred to him as life itself.⁴⁰

So the fact that James Barber *endured* thirty years of travel in these conditions speaks to his constitution as well as his fortitude.

But what of the home front? In 1822, James married the daughter of Michael Maize, himself an early and ardent supporter of the Evangelical Association. The home of Michael Maize in Dry Valley, Union County, often hosted visits by Jacob Albright, John Walter, John Dreisbach, and other early leaders of the Evangelical Church.⁴¹ Maize rescued,⁴² he supported,⁴³ he hosted,⁴⁴ and he

money, in 1805 it was decided that collecting the funds would be one of the duties of the junior preachers. – Jacob Albright, pp. 67 – 69.

⁴⁰ “Lorenz Everhart: A True Soldier for Christ,” The Chronicle, Journal of the Historical Society of the Central Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church, PO Box 2053, Mechanicsburg PA, Volume XVI, Spring 2005, page 90.

⁴¹ Annals, p. 21.

⁴² “A furious attack was made upon him by a godless mob, and the result would doubtless have been serious to him had not the arm of the Lord encircled him. At the critical moment when a rush was about to be made upon him, a powerful man, named Maize, who saw his danger, seized him, and carried him away, as though he were a child. The cowardly mob well knew the strength and courage of Maize, and made no further attempt to harm him.” – Annals, p. 35.

⁴³ “A ‘big meeting’ was held on October 18, 1800 [under the auspices of the pastor of the nearby Dreisbach church in Buffalo Valley] in the home of Michael Maize, a prominent resident of the community. This meeting was held two years before Albright conducted any of his ‘big meetings.’ These evangelistic efforts provided a splendid foundation for Albright’s work when he [later] came to visit the community.” – Jacob Albright.

⁴⁴ “... in June, 1829, an amusing incident occurred. A considerable number of the preachers were the guests of Michael Maze [sic], who lived nearly two miles east of the town. Once, when this company of ministers, among whom were John Seybert (afterwards Bishop), and James Barber,* were sitting on the porch, facing the road... [a local rascal harassed them and they drove him off in a chorus of song] * Rev. James Barber son-in-law of Michael Maize, was born in Manor Township, Lancaster County, Penna., April 22, 1797. Entered the Evangelical ministry 1817; elected presiding elder 1823; President of the Conference

arranged.⁴⁵ He was the leader of the first class organized west of the Susquehanna River, formed in 1806.⁴⁶ The first German camp-meeting in American was held by the Evangelical Association on his land in Dry Valley in 1810.⁴⁷ He was a local preacher⁴⁸ and fervent supporter of the construction of the first Evangelical Church building, in New Berlin.⁴⁹ About Michael Maize, the biography of his great-grandson James Barber Krause notes,

He was a well-to-do farmer and a 'local preacher' who was intimately associated with the Rev. Jacob Albright, the founder of the church now widely known as the Evangelical Association of America, and out of which the United Evangelical Church was organized, after the great schism of 1891-94. Michael Maise [sic] was sorely persecuted for his adherence to and public support of the new sect. In 1810, the 'Albrights,' as the followers of the Rev. Jacob Albright were dubbed, held a camp-meeting in a grove on the Maise farm, 'the first German camp-meeting held upon American soil.'

The hardy fore bearers of these pious men and women formed part of the immigration to Pennsylvania from the German Palatine, being driven from their Rhenish homes by religious intolerance. In the founding of the church now widely known as the Evangelical Association they were not schismatics, but aimed to revive the spiritual element in the church – to return to the Evangelical beliefs of 'the Fathers,' a protest against the formalism prevailing in the churches at the beginning of the Nineteenth century. The attitude of Jacob Albright, the

1827; died at New Berlin, Penna., Sept 19, 1867. His wife, Mary Maize, died 1870, aged 65 years." – Flashlights on Evangelical History, A. Stapleton, York, PA, 1908, p. 7.

⁴⁵ Flashlights, p. 3. At the request of John Walter, who was visiting the Maize home, Michael Maize arranged for the use of the school house to be used as a preaching-place by Walter on the New Berlin Circuit. Once, upon going there, Walter found himself locked out and preached one of his most memorable sermons from the steps – at the height of which the door to the building mysteriously burst open, and Walter declared, "God has opened for himself a door in New Berlin, and He will build up His work here in spite of the opposition of hell and wicked men." Subsequently, New Berlin was established as the headquarters of the Evangelical Association and its first church building and publishing house were erected and dedicated there in 1816. (Incident also reported in several other references.)

⁴⁶ "Evangelicals in New Berlin," New Berlin, PA – 1792-1992 – a Bicentennial History, compiled by Vincent E. Barsch, New Berlin Heritage Association, 1992, p. 63.

⁴⁷ "The first one was held on the land of Brother Michael Maize, about one and a half miles east of New Berlin, Pa., and began May 10, 1810... Great multitudes attended it, and the society entered a new epoch of its history... another was held [there] beginning Sept. 8, [1813]." – Annals, p. 188; also discussed in Flashlights on Evangelical History, pp. 18 - 19. In Flashlights, the author recounts (p. 20) that hosting a camp-meeting was a serious responsibility, for the host took on the obligation to receive the campers and in particular to provide suitable feed and pasture for their horses. New Berlin notes, "Some historians believe this to be the first German camp meeting in the world. Camp meetings were common on the frontier and were not only a religious but a social event."

⁴⁸ The Evangelical Association employed "local preachers" who were authorized to minister to the needs of church members while the circuit preacher was away. Local preachers could conduct church services, perform weddings, and preside at funerals, basically providing a wide range of services to their congregation, except for administration of the sacraments.

⁴⁹ Flashlights, p. 2 – 4.

founder, toward the orthodox church, was similar to that of John Wesley's toward the Church of England. Among their Pennsylvania German neighbors these seceders were spoken of as 'die bekehrte lait,' 'the converted,' to distinguish them from 'die kirche leit,' 'the church people.'⁵⁰

There's a saying, "Behind a good man is a good woman." That had to be the case with James and Mary Maize Barber. She would have grown up fully imbued with the beliefs and the fervor of the Evangelical Association, and she must have learned unquestioned, devout support for "The Albrights" at her father Michael's knee.⁵¹ She herself would have often been present at gatherings of the Evangelical church leaders, during their numerous visits to her father's house, and a witness of the infamous story of Maurer's fiddling and the incident with John Walter at the New Berlin school house.⁵² With James continually away, it would have fallen to her not only to raise the children, but also to run the household, operate the farm, manage the livestock, raise and tend the crops – often while pregnant, for to their union were born 10 or 11 children. So Mary Maize Barber must have been an extraordinary woman, wife, and mother, and she must have been devoutly committed to the Cause.

Rev. Ammon Stapleton recognized the role of the wives many years ago, and his writings on the subject brought us to these realizations about our great-great-great-grandmother, Mary Maize Barber.

Too much credit cannot be given the wives of the early Evangelical preachers for the loyal support they gave their husbands in their arduous work. In the early days the traveling preachers, some years, did not make their actual preaching expenses. No matter how much an individual preacher received, at the conference session an average of all was made, and each man received that amount. The lowest salary recorded for any one year was in 1821, when it was \$26.66. Pray, how could a man support himself and his horse, traveling almost every day for a whole year, on this pittance? But what of the itinerant's family?

⁵⁰ "Krause Family / James Barber Krause," published on www.searchforancestors.com/bios/pennsylvania/history_of_lycoming_county/krause_james.html and credited there to *Genealogical and Personal History of Lycoming County*, John W. Jordan, Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1906.

⁵¹ Many Evangelical preachers, beginning with Jacob Albright himself, endured persecution, threats, and even bodily harm. "One of his preaching attempts was made on the streets of Schaefferstown, Lebanon County, where on October 8, 1797... His message brought conviction to many hearts, but some were antagonized... and made attempts to abuse him. But a strong man by the name of Maize took Albright in his arms and carried him out of the crowd..." – *Jacob Albright*, p. 46. This is perhaps the beginning of the lifelong friendship and devotion of Michael Maize to Jacob Albright and the Evangelical Association.

⁵² It was her father Michael Maize who arranged for use of a school building in New Berlin for the purpose of adding that village to the locales where Walter would preach, and the Maize family was in the audience when Walter found the door barred to his entry in 1805, whereupon he proceeded to deliver one of his most powerful sermons from the steps of the building. – *Flashlights*, p. 3.

Who supported them? As a rule the burden fell on the wife's shoulders... who would not suffer them to retire when the hour of temptation came [to give up the ministry and return to a more lucrative profession].⁵³

His Assignments ⁵⁴

After his initial assignment as Junior Preacher on the Lancaster Circuit with Adam Ettinger, James went on to responsibilities in more than fifteen different circuits in Pennsylvania and Ohio.

In previous accounts of the assignments held by James Barber during his career, we've seen only a cryptic list of dates and names of the charge. We wanted to develop a greater sense of the geography, and hence the travel challenges faced by James Barber and his peers, so we've attempted to provide more details of where these places were, how far distant, and a bit of background information about each locale. For those who do not live in Central Pennsylvania or have not visited there, these descriptions will still be inadequate, for it is only by going there, traveling the roads, and traversing the steep ridges, that you will gain an inkling of the rugged beauty of the countryside – and then, mentally erasing today's convenient laneways, paved roads, and high-speed Interstates, ponder what it would be like to travel those rugged hills and valleys astride a plodding horse. A map of central Pennsylvania will help the reader gain some perspective on the relative locations, the distances, and the strategic importance of the Susquehanna River as a gateway to the interior of the state.

We've also tried to identify the co-laborers and leaders of the Evangelical Association with whom James worked, thus to document his circle of acquaintances and those who continued to impact his life.

Chronologically, then, here is a summary of the rest of James Barber's career as an itinerant pastor.

1818–1819: Somerset Circuit, part of Salem District.⁵⁵ Somerset County is in southwestern Pennsylvania, a road distance today of over 150 miles from New

⁵³ *Flashlights*, pp. 126 – 127.

⁵⁴ Each year at the annual conference, a “stationing” committee made the assignments of traveling preachers to the various charges. As the Association grew in members and new geographical areas were opened up, circuits were shuffled and districts were revised, expanded, divided, and/or renamed. Therefore, it wasn't automatic down through the years that the names of the geographic divisions stayed the same. Likewise, there was originally one conference, then two (Eastern and Western), then several with “Western Pennsylvania” being renamed to the “Central Pennsylvania” Conference. The identifications are somewhat confusing. As we progress through the career of James Barber, some of these progressions will be noted.

Berlin and a similar distance from Manor Township in Lancaster County. One assumes that James, having traveled out to this far-away circuit, probably seldom if ever got home in the entire year, and that during that year he and Samuel Witt, with whom he was teamed, were probably pretty much on their own. Witt had been newly received in 1818; he was thus the junior preacher, and now it was James Barber in the role of mentor. Faith, perseverance, and endurance would certainly have been sorely tested in this wilderness, but they were surely welcomed by settlers in the area who would have been anxious for news of the outside world and sustenance for their souls. Note: Shanksville, site of the United Airlines Flight 93 crash on September 11, 2001, is but a short distance to the east-northeast of Somerset, Pennsylvania.

1819–1820: Lancaster Circuit, Fairfield County, Ohio, teamed with David Wolf, who was newly received that year. From 1816 to 1840, all the Evangelical Association territory in southern Ohio comprised a single field – the original Lancaster Circuit. In 1819 the circuit was supplied from Pennsylvania, as the Western [later named Ohio] Conference wasn't formed until 1827. James Barber was a faithful and obedient servant. Unquestioning, he did as he was bid by the Church leadership and accepted a far-distant assignment. Ohio, then the new frontier, was rapidly being settled by German families from central Pennsylvania. It followed that they would need spiritual unction, and James and David were tapped to go to Ohio, a distance of almost four hundred miles west of Manor Township, PA. Unfortunately, we have no correspondence, diaries, or other documentation of their Ohio experiences.

1820–1821: York Circuit, with John DeHoff. Shortess⁵⁶ notes, “[York] ... had its beginnings through the labors of Jacob Albright, founder of the Evangelical Association, who visited York in 1806 and 1807 and preached in the Courthouse, which was located in Continental Square, where the congregation worshiped for thirty years.”⁵⁷

Though York seems a long way from New Berlin – about eighty miles to the south – it is less than twenty miles directly west of Manor Township, Lancaster County. So for James, travel to the assignment – listed as “Freysville” – would not have been as daunting as for someone coming from the north. Consulting a

⁵⁵ In 1818, “Salem District” consisted of Somerset Circuit, as well as Union, Centre, Bedford, Lancaster Circuits in Pennsylvania and Canton Circuit in Ohio.

⁵⁶ John David Shortess, son of Samuel Irvin and Elizabeth Kline Shortess, is a distant cousin by marriage to this author; he married Minerva Lee Spittler, granddaughter of James and Mary Maize Barber, on 22 Dec 1881. He entered the ministry in 1881 and his first appointment was to Center Circuit in 1882. He spent forty-one years in the pastorate. – History of the Central Pennsylvania Conference of the Evangelical Church, 1939, J.D. Shortess et al., p. 330.

⁵⁷ History, pp. 227.

modern map, we infer that the “old” York Circuit encompassed the area south-southeast of York, Pennsylvania, an area bounded today by I-83 on the west, the Susquehanna River on the east, and U.S. 30 on the north.⁵⁸

1821–1822: Somerset and Bedford Circuit with Daniel Middlekauff, part of Salem District, John Kleinfelter presiding elder.⁵⁹ Like Somerset, Bedford and Bedford County are in the southern part of Pennsylvania, over a hundred miles from New Berlin and from Manor Township. To get there, James would most likely have passed through the village of Gettysburg, later the site of the decisive turning point of the War Between the States.

As with the appointment to Ohio, the distance was sufficient to suggest that James and his co-laborer might have stayed afield for much if not all of the entire year, and we surmise that from the time of his entering the ministry in 1817 until 1822, James would have spent little if any time in New Berlin. In 1822, however, a watershed event occurred: James married Mary Maize, daughter of Michael Maize. So notwithstanding the considerable distance from New Berlin, some time in the 1821–1822 timeframe, James courted Mary. They were probably married in the first church building erected by the Evangelical Association, in New Berlin.⁶⁰ We believe he owes the balance of his long career to the heartfelt support of Mary and her family.

1822–1823: Union Circuit, which included New Berlin. Union County, Pennsylvania lies in the interior of Central Pennsylvania on the west bank of the west fork of the Susquehanna River. The county was originally much larger, Snyder County to the south of Penns Creek having been carved off in 1855. New Berlin was once the county seat, and the village declined significantly after the court house was moved to Lewisburg, now a thriving city on the Susquehanna River. This is an area of steep ridges and beautiful valleys, but not quite as mountainous as the area of Pennsylvania further to the north. The biography of James Barber Krause⁶¹ notes that (John) Michael Maize, his widowed mother Eva Elizabeth Kimmerling Maize, and his brother John Maize came to Dry Valley, Union County from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, about 1796. Dry Valley extends westward from the Susquehanna River through the Village of Winfield

⁵⁸ That year, York Circuit was listed as being part of Canaan District, J. Erb being the presiding elder. The other charges included Schuylkill Circuit, Lancaster Circuit, Franklin Circuit, Berkley Circuit, and Lake Circuit. – *Annals*, p. 228 – 229. In later years, York District included numerous locales in Southern Pennsylvania, Maryland, West Virginia, and Washington, D.C. – *History*, pp. 200 – 232.

⁵⁹ The other charges that year in Salem District were Union Circuit and Centre Circuit in Pennsylvania and Canton Circuit and Lancaster Circuit in Ohio.

⁶⁰ James Barber is documented as having been received into the ministry in this church in 1817. “It was erected at New Berlin in 1816, and dedicated March 2, 1817, by Rev. John Dreisbach” – *Annals*, p. 69.

⁶¹ “Krause Family / James Barber Krause”

and westward past New Berlin. Much earlier in the life of the Evangelical Association, there is reference to a “Shamokin Circuit’ in this vicinity:

The region around Sunbury, and westward was formed into a circuit in charge of two of the co-laborers – Walter and Liesser, in 1804. This was called the Shamokin circuit, later being changed to the Northumberland circuit.⁶²

1823–1827: Salem District, where he served as the Presiding Elder. In 1823, the Ohio District was formed, but Salem District still included all of Pennsylvania west of the Susquehanna River and southwestern New York – an area of several thousand square miles. This was no “desk job;” the Presiding Elder traveled the District extensively:

In April, 1814,... Dreisbach was elected presiding elder... district embraced the entire Evangelical Association of that time. It was about three hundred miles long, and North and South about one hundred miles in width. He traveled it on horseback, and made many and difficult journeys over bad roads and through all kinds of weather. He sought out new preaching places everywhere, and preached nearly every evening during the week, and on Sabbath days.⁶³

The continuing absence of James during these four years must have weighed heavily on the young marriage. It could only have worked if Mary and the rest of the Maize family were supportive.

1827–1829: Centre Circuit, with George Schneider in 1827 and William W. Orwig in 1828.⁶⁴ Centre County is located to the northwest of Union County. The headwaters of Penns Creek, which flows past New Berlin to the Susquehanna River, are located here. Early settlers were struck by the wide valley, the vistas, and the agricultural potential. It’s coal and iron country, and it played a huge role in the industrial revolution. Hard-working Pennsylvania Dutch farmers surged into the area in the early 1800’s, and would have welcomed the traveling

⁶² Jacob Albright, p. 67. This area east of the Susquehanna River became Northumberland County. Annals (Chapter III, pp. 56 – 88) identifies and details this circuit as the “new,” or Northumberland Circuit, but describes a widespread area on both sides of the River, including Middle Creek Valley in what is now Snyder County, Dry Valley, in Union County (site of New Berlin, and the home of Michael Maize), Buffalo Valley, White Deer Valley, and Penns, Brush, and Sugar Valleys. It also extended north into Luzerne County, south into Perry and Juniata Counties, and westward into Bedford and Cambria Counties “... and had over fifty preaching places prior to Albright’s death – 1808.”

⁶³ “John Dreisbach as presiding elder,” Jacob Albright, p. 297 - 298.

⁶⁴ The records and minutes of the Evangelical Association refer variously to “Centre Circuit” and to “Center Circuit.” After analysis, we have concluded that these are but variations in spelling and both terms refer to the same general area. A listing of “Former Pastors and their Appointments, 1840 – 1938” summarizes the career of James Barber, and uses only the “Center” spelling. In 1827, Center Circuit was listed as part of Salem District, Philip Wagoner, presiding elder. In 1828, the presiding elder was Thomas Buck. The charges in both years included Union Circuit, Center Circuit, Somerset Circuit, all in Pennsylvania; and Lake Circuit, in New York State.

preachers who came to nurture them. Penn State University in State College dominates the region today. It was also in 1827 that James Barber served as President of the annual conference, held in Orwigsburg, Pennsylvania.⁶⁵

1829–1830: Union Circuit again, possibly closer to home, teamed with J.G. Zinzer. Details as to the specific appointments not documented; theirs may or may not have been the same charge as in 1822 – 23.⁶⁶

1830–1831: Centre Circuit again, this time alone.⁶⁷ As the crow flies, Centre County towns like Bellefonte, Blanchard, and Millheim are about forty miles west-northwest of New Berlin. James Barber may have ridden along Penns Creek in his travels to the area from New Berlin; it is the most logical route for him to have taken.

1831–1832: White Deer Circuit, originally known as “Buffalo Circuit,” teamed with Charles Hammer. (Note: in 1832, the term “Buffalo Circuit” instead described a charge in western New York state.)⁶⁸

White Deer Valley is separated from Buffalo Valley by a mountain known as White Deer. Most of this region is embraced in a township of that name. This place was frequently visited by Albright and his colleagues. The principal preaching place was at Jacob Hoch’s.

South of the mountain, on the west branch of the Susquehanna, is the village of New Columbia. Here our first preachers also found entrance... This was the home of father John Rank, Sr., who in 1796 removed hither from Lancaster County with his family. His house became a preaching place for all godly ministers soon after his arrival... and in his woods camp-meetings were held many years in succession... thirty-three junior preachers had their homes with him in the same number of successive years.⁶⁹

An 1878 geological map pinpoints the region as being just north of Lewisburg on the west side of the Susquehanna River, straddled today from east to west by Interstate 80. (The 1884 annual session minutes lists it as part of Lewisburg District, including Lewisburg, Buffalo Valley, White Deer, Danville, Bloomsburg, Columbia, Berwick, Luzerne, Catawissa, West Clifford, Wyoming, Tunkhannock, Maple Grove, Dushore and Bernice, Hughesville, New Columbus, Milton, and Irvine.)

⁶⁵ *Annals*, p. 234.

⁶⁶ *Annals*, p. 237. John Seybert was the presiding elder of Salem District. The charges in the district included Union, Centre, and Somerset Circuits in Pennsylvania; and Lake Circuit in New York.

⁶⁷ Centre was part of Salem District, presiding elder John Seybert; other circuits in the district included Union, Somerset, and Lake (New York) – *Annals*, p. 238.

⁶⁸ *Annals*, p. 109.

⁶⁹ *Annals*, p. 82 – 83.

This assignment would have taken James Barber farther from home for longer periods of time, but it is likely that he found friendly welcome, solace, and lively discussion at the home of Jacob Rank.⁷⁰

1832–1833: Lycoming Circuit, with John Young, who returned in 1835 and 1839 (as did James Barber in 1840). This circuit was located well north of Williamsport in northern Lycoming and southern Tioga Counties, and may also have extended well northeastward. U.S. route 15, a modern four-lane highway, wends its way from Williamsport up through the area today, connecting to New York State near Corning. Interstate 99 is now partially finished and much of the rest of the route is under construction. It's a lovely drive up through the northern Pennsylvania mountains.

Lycoming Charge, Lycoming County, PA. is the oldest charge in Central Pennsylvania Conference retaining its original name. The charge was formed at the conference session meeting at New Berlin, PA. in 1832 and became part of the Salem District with John Seybert presiding elder, and James Barber and John Young as pastors. Blockhouse settlement, now Liberty, Pa., and Blooming Grove seem to have been the first appointments on the old charge." [Liberty is about 30 miles north of Williamsport, a 34-minute automobile trip today! On the other hand, Blooming Grove is now on the northern edge of Williamsport. Ten charges were eventually carved from Lycoming Circuit.]⁷¹

The authors of History note that while they don't know exactly how big the circuit was, "...the preaching places were numerous and the area of the circuit extensive."⁷² Imagine what travel was like over this large, mountainous area in 1832! In 1832, James also served on the Evangelical Association's Book Commission.⁷³

1833–1834: Franklin Circuit, with Samuel Baumgardner. Franklin Circuit in the south-central part of the state included the region known as the Cumberland Valley, of which Carlisle and Chambersburg are the key cities. It was about fifty miles west of Lancaster and of Manor Township, and about the same distance southwest of New Berlin. This being the locale, we may assume that James Barber would have been absent from his wife Mary Maize Barber for many weeks at a time. If you look at when their children were born, there is a gap of three and

⁷⁰ Three daughters of Michael Maize married into the Rank family: Elizabeth, married John Rank; Barbara, married (1) Jacob Eyer and (2) John Rank; and Lea, married Urban Ranck. John Rank, Jr. (born 1783) was very active in the business administration of the Evangelical Association. – Annals, p. 88.

⁷¹ History, p. 285.

⁷² History, p. 285.

⁷³ Annals, p. 243.

a half years between the birth of James Maize in July 1834, and the birth of John Knisley in March 1838.⁷⁴

1834–1836: located.⁷⁵ None of the minutes of the various annual conferences or church histories we consulted reveal a reason why he would have withdrawn from the circuit in these two years. Moreover, we could not correlate this timeframe with any other events in the life of James or his family, such as the birth of children or the death of a relative. We can only guess that it was a time when he was urgently needed at home. One possibility is that his wife Mary might have been ill in connection with the birth of their son James Maize Barber on 18 July 1834. There are one or two other children for whom we don't have birth dates, who may have been born and even died at a young age in this time period.

James was, however, present for the Fifth General Conference,⁷⁶ held in Orwigsburg, PA on 25 May 1835. He is listed as being one of the Elders present at those meetings.⁷⁷

1836–1837: Schuylkill Circuit,⁷⁸ teamed with Henry Westhafer. Named to correspond to Schuylkill County, this circuit was well east of the Susquehanna River. In 1836 it was part of Canaan District with John Seybert as the presiding elder; other charges included Reading, Lebanon, Lancaster, and Philadelphia. This the area has a rich Evangelical history, as the “old circuit” where Albright originally traveled and preached in the early 1800's included Schuylkill and Lancaster Circuits.

The number of preaching places on the old circuit, prior to Albright's death (1808), was upwards of sixty. Communities included Bucks County, Northampton County, Berks County, Lehigh County, Schuylkill County, Lebanon County, Lancaster County, and Dauphin County.⁷⁹

1837–1838: Lykens Circuit. This charge encompassed an area east of the Susquehanna River about twenty miles north of Harrisburg, that part of Dauphin

⁷⁴ In 1833, Franklin Circuit was part of Zion District, W.W. Orwig, presiding elder. The other charges in the district included York, Gettysburg, and Shenandoah.

⁷⁵ History, page 35. “Located” means “not available for assignment.”

⁷⁶ “ ‘General meetings’ were meetings held at irregular intervals in various parts of the society. They usually began on a Saturday, and continued over the Sabbath. As the work became more established, these meetings gave way to the ‘quarterly meetings’” – Annals, p. 26

⁷⁷ Annals, p. 249.

⁷⁸ At that time, part of the Canaan District, John Seybert, presiding elder. The other charges in the district included Reading, Lebanon, Lancaster, and Philadelphia. That John Seybert was the presiding elder is yet another piece of evidence of the close relationship between Seybert and James Barber. – Annals, p. 249.

⁷⁹ Annals, Chapter II, pp. 24 – 55. This area, described in considerably greater detail in Annals than can be quoted here, is the geographical heartland of the Evangelical Association.

County “over the mountain” from Harrisburg. It would have been in the range of thirty to forty miles from New Berlin, a significant distance from home for James.

1838–1839: Columbia Circuit, teamed with B. Eppley and F. Krecker. In 1838 Columbia Circuit included the entire area between the West branch and the North branch of the Susquehanna River. It was part of Salem District; John Seybert was the presiding elder that year, and the other circuits in the district included Union, Centre, and Lycoming.

This old circuit may trace its origin to the labors of Jacob Albright under whose labors Col. Leonard Zimmerman was converted and opened his home in Schuylkill County in 1797 as a preaching place for Albright and his co-laborers. His daughters Maria and Eve married brothers, John D. and Michael Seybert respectively. Another daughter, Catherine, married John George Zehner who became the grandparents of Revs. Isaiah Bower and John George Zehner. The Seyberts and Zehners moved to the North Branch valley of the Susquehanna River and established homes near Berwick... Their spiritual father, Jacob Albright, and his co-laborers followed them and used their homes as preaching places. In 1806 annual conferences were started and preachers were stationed to the two existing circuits. The new circuit covered the area which gave rise to Columbia Circuit... in 1814 Union Circuit was formed, on which were the preaching places that later became Columbia Circuit... In 1816 at the conference held in the Eyer barn at Winfield, Columbia Circuit was separated from Union Circuit and received its name, which it has retained to the present time.⁸⁰

1839–1840: Union Circuit, with Joseph Best. George Brickley was the presiding elder of Salem District, and the other circuits in the district included Centre, Columbia, and Lycoming. A contemporary of James Barber was John Lutz, who traveled forth to Illinois and Wisconsin in this year to take the “Bread of Life” to German-speaking peoples in those areas.⁸¹ Only a brief description of the efforts of Lutz is made known to us, but among James Barber’s descendants, a son and a grandson were named “Joseph Lutz Barber,” so there must have been an affinity between Rev. John Lutz and Rev. James Barber.

1840–1841: Lycoming Circuit, apparently without a co-laborer. Lycoming was part of Salem District. George Brickley was the presiding elder, and the other charges in the district included Union Circuit, Columbia Circuit, and Center Circuit.⁸² Lycoming Circuit extended from Williamsport up to “Blockhouse settlement” (a.k.a. Liberty) where it was later noted that “five congregations

⁸⁰ *History*, p. 237.

⁸¹ *Annals*, p. 160.

⁸² *History*, p. 65.

comprise the charge: Liberty, Nauvoo and Beuters in Tioga County; Buttonwood and Oregon Hill in Lycoming County.”⁸³ As the crow flies, the area is about 60 miles north-northwest of New Berlin. It would have been a return to familiar ground for James Barber:

In 1830, when John Seybert was presiding elder of Salem District, he once passed through the ‘Block-house settlement,’ in Tioga County, Pennsylvania, which is situated on a plateau of the Allegheny Mountains... He asked for the privilege to preach in [John] Sindlinger’s house... Before the close of the services which lasted several hours, a considerable number of souls were converted... Rev. James Barber was sent to the ‘settlement’ to continue the work which within a short time spread many miles around.⁸⁴

The term represents a region of country in the northern part of Pennsylvania known as the Liberty, or Blockhouse Valley, situated in Lycoming and Tioga counties. It is a rugged region, about 1,500 feet above sea level, surrounded by the broken ridges of the Allegheny Mountains. In the middle of this valley lies the town of Blockhouse, or Liberty, in Tioga County. This valley contained a large number of Pennsylvania or European Germans. In the fall of 1830 John Seybert, presiding elder of Salem District, passed through this region... stopped for the night at the house of John Michael Sindlinger... [and there conducted] a memorable service. James Barber, preacher-in-charge of Centre Circuit, then made a journey to the Blockhouse to establish the work more fully. A number of other preaching places were secured in the valley the following year... [in April 1832 Seybert and Barber, still ‘preacher-in-charge,’ continued their efforts and] many souls were converted... became one of the strongholds of the Church, and has since developed into four flourishing charges...⁸⁵

1841–1843: Center Circuit, part of the Salem District,⁸⁶ with Jacob Heiss in 1841 and Joseph Truby in 1842. This is a smaller (geographically, but not

⁸³ *History*, p. 281. The notes include “In the year 1830 John Seybert, presiding elder of the Salem District, found open doors in Blockhouse settlement among German people who had migrated to this section from central and southern Pennsylvania. ‘Vices of all kinds, especially that of drunkenness were the order of the day. The people indeed had churches and preachers, but the latter like the people were godless. Seybert’s preaching soon made a stir in the neighborhood; sinners were awakened and converted, houses and churches were opened to him.’ – Orwig. Seybert made several visits to this section as a result of which a flourishing society was organized and a firm foundation for a lasting work was laid.”

⁸⁴ *Flashlights*, pp. 63 – 64.

⁸⁵ *Annals*, pp. 105 – 106. Also documented in *Flashlights*, pp. 63 – 64.

⁸⁶ Charges within the Salem District that year included Columbia Circuit, Lycoming Circuit, Union Circuit, and Centre Circuit. – *Annals*, p. 263.

numerically) region than James Barber served alone in 1830–1831, but it still encompassed Centre, Mifflin and Clinton Counties.

1843–1845: Union Circuit, teamed with Henry Rohland in 1843 and Conrad Link in 1844. Here we see the career of James Barber as an itinerant beginning to wind down. He may have been suffering illness from the continuing hardships of the travel, for he accepted the “Junior Preacher” position, likely to reduce the workload burden. In addition, he was assigned to a charge closer to home, perhaps in and around New Berlin. In 1843 Salem District, with Philip Wagoner as presiding elder, also included Columbia, Centre, and Lycoming Circuits. A reorganization in 1844 put Union Circuit in Susquehanna District (Philip Wagoner, presiding elder) with Clinton, Columbia, Lycoming, Centre, Perry, and Loyalsock Circuits.

1845–1847: Buffalo Circuit, Susquehanna District, still with Philip Wagoner as presiding elder in 1845, and Charles Hammer in 1846. This charge took him further from home again, perhaps with improved vigor. The first year, his companion was William Reeser. The next year, it was Daniel Kreamer (also appears as “Kramer.”) The other circuits in the district included Union, Centre, Clinton, Lycoming, Columbia, and Loyalsock.

Buffalo Valley Charge is located in Union County. When our first ministers came to preach here is not known; it is certain they labored here long before 1845. They worshiped in homes and schoolhouses, preaching at times in the German language. There were some [members] who took [subscribed to] the *Botschafter*.⁸⁷

Sunday schools were organized and the enrolment in 1852 was over 300.⁸⁸

1847–1848: Mahantongo Circuit, Susquehanna District (Charles Hammer, presiding elder). Here James assumed the duties alone, no other having been appointed at the Eighth Annual Conference in Letort Spring Church, near Carlisle, to accompany him. This relatively compact but populous circuit lay along the west bank of the Susquehanna River and westward, including the Mahantongo Creek drainage, in what in now Snyder and Juniata Counties.

In Lower Mahantongo Valley lived John Haldeman, whose house became a preaching place for Albright and his associates... a noted stopping place for the preachers in their travels to and fro.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ *Der Christliche Botschafter* (“The Christian Messenger”), the German-language periodical of the Evangelical Association, begun in 1835. The “power of the press” was recognized early on by the fathers of the Evangelical Association, and John Dreisbach was charged with purchase of a printing press in November 1815, when he traveled to Philadelphia for this purpose. – *Annals*, p. 208.

⁸⁸ *History*, p. 235.

⁸⁹ *Annals*, p. 34.

The circuit is about twenty miles south of New Berlin, so we presume James might have been able to return home a bit more often.

1848–1849: Union Circuit, Susquehanna District, again as the Junior Preacher, teamed with Daniel Kehr.

1849 – 1850. Here there is a discrepancy in the records. Finsterbush⁹⁰ shows him assigned to Union Circuit, now listed as being in Center District, but Shortess⁹¹ lists him as “superannuated.” In 1850, Finsterbush also lists him as “superannuated.”⁹² This year he is credited as having served on the Jubilee Committee: “James Barber, P. Wagner, W.W. Orwig, H. Roland and Uriah Eberhart were appointed as a committee on ‘The proposed Jubilee in our church this year.’”⁹³ James and his co-members reported plans back to the Conference that included a special day of Thanksgiving prayer in mid-October, and special fund-raising efforts, notably to support the establishment of a co-educational academy of higher education in the district, undertaking of foreign missions, and also to support the construction of a memorial church at the gravesite of Jacob Albright.⁹⁴ Apparently this was a committee that had lofty and significant goals, more than just the planning special ceremonies.⁹⁵ (Note: Minutes from the next year, the 1851 12th annual session, state that the committee reported having collected \$144.11 for the ‘Albright Church,’ \$227.00 for retirement of debt on the York church, and \$350.52½ for the ‘Academy.’)

In the years 1850–1860, younger men now took up the itinerancies, each year being “stationed” during the annual sessions as had been the custom since the early 1800’s, when indicating “willing to travel according to the direction of

⁹⁰ “Abstract from Central Pa. & Eastern Pa. Conference Annual Minutes,” by Tom Finsterbush, 2005

⁹¹ History, p. 35.

⁹² We presume 1849 or 1850 to be the point in time wherein James gave up traveling because of impaired health and settled down in semi-retirement in (which is to say, just outside of) New Berlin. (One who did so was said to have been “superannuated.”) Though we haven’t yet located the site of the Barber farm, we believe it to have been in what is now Jackson Township, Snyder County. (Snyder was created in 1855 from part of Union County; the dividing line at New Berlin is Penns Creek, but further East, as the Creek doglegs to the south, the county line continues to the east.) Educated guesses put the Barber farm just south of the Michael Maize farm with the Johannes Maize farm also nearby. (Note: Johannes Maize was the brother of Mary Maize.) This is not necessarily on the south side of Penns Creek, because as the creek changes direction and veers off to the south; the county line, established in 1855 when Snyder County was formed, does not. We also found a notation indicating that some of the land assigned to Snyder County was later annexed back to Union County. This fluid boundary may be a significant clue to the locale of the Barber farm if our theory of support for Mary Maize Barber is true. The 1850 Census establishes neighbors of James and Mary Barber, but we have yet to be able to get Union County or Snyder County officials to own up to who has the tax records which would document the precise geographical locations.

⁹³ History, p. 71.

⁹⁴ Annals, p. 294.

⁹⁵ History, p. 72.

conference.” James Barber is listed⁹⁶ as either “supernumerary” or “superannuated.”⁹⁷ However, we know from examining detailed annual session minutes for these years that he was active in special projects and in administrative capacities with the Evangelical Association.

In the 1862 minutes of the annual conference, James is recorded as having been present and active in the discussions and business of the Central Pennsylvania (formerly called the Western Pennsylvania) Conference.⁹⁸ It was at that conference held in Millheim, PA, that the attendees formally agreed to conduct their business and record the minutes in English rather than in German.⁹⁹ Union Seminary in New Berlin, so near and dear to the heart of Michael Maize, James Barber, W.W. Orwig, and other of the early leaders, was (as in the past) suffering financial woes; consideration was seriously devoted to closing it, though again the church leaders rallied to its support. We can imagine James Barber actively participating in the discussion, arguing for continued support.

That same year, the Civil War was underway, and politics of the day invaded their agenda. A resolution was drafted and tabled supporting the federal government and condemning the “unholy rebellion” of the Southern states. In microcosm, the Evangelical Church leaders probably reflected attitudes of the general populace, for the resolution, while eventually adopted, was not passed unanimously. For reasons not documented, James Barber, who sided with those against tabling the resolution, was eventually counted with three other “neutrals” on the issue of its passage. We infer that their position derived from a desire to keep the Church apolitical and separate from the affairs of state. A couple of particularly strongly worded (some would say patriotically feverish) phrases in the resolution may have been the basis of their disagreement.

Cracks also appeared in other of the church business, centering on the missionary work and how it would be funded. Essentially this appears to have been a struggle between those who favored central control and funding by the Evangelical Association, versus those who favored de-centralized control at the Conference level. In microcosm, perhaps a “state’s rights” kind of issue! These conflicts, inevitable perhaps in a growing and increasingly diverse organization,

⁹⁶ Finsterbush

⁹⁷ “Retired”

⁹⁸ History, pp. 91-92.

⁹⁹ A cornerstone of the Evangelical Association was that it existed of, by, and for German immigrants to North America, and it was not until some years later, commencing in 1843 [Annals, p. 259] that any effort was undertaken in English. Had it not been for the language factor, Jacob Albright would most likely have merged his congregants with the Methodist Episcopal Church. Negotiations to this end were never successfully concluded, and the two movements went forth separately for several years, often to the detriment of the Evangelical Association. – Annals, p. 174.

must certainly have been of major concern to the Founding Fathers of the Evangelical Association, including James Barber.¹⁰⁰

James Barber died 19 Sep 1867. According to his published obituary, the place of death was “in Jackson Township, Snyder County, PA,”¹⁰¹ and this is where we believe his home and farm were located.

On 5 March 1868, the Central Pennsylvania Conference annual meeting took their final leave of him. The notation “Died – Father James Barber” appears in the minutes.¹⁰² His biography, included in an Evangelical history printed in 1900, reverently noted:

James Barber was born in Manor township, Lancaster County, Pa., April 22, 1797; converted in 1815; entered the active ministry in 1817; was elected presiding elder, and stationed on Salem District in 1823; was chosen president of the conference in 1827. Barber was a man of large frame and commanding appearance, with excellent voice, a preacher of more than ordinary ability, and held in high esteem by his brethren. He spent over thirty years in the active work. His arduous labors completely undermined his health and he was compelled, much against his will, to locate. He suffered much for many years and finally died of paralysis, Sept. 19, 1867. His wife MARY, daughter of Michael Maize of Dry Valley, Union county, Pa., died in 1870, aged sixty-five years. Both are buried in the Evangelical cemetery at New Berlin, Pa.”¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ In an editorial notation following his summary of the 1891 annual session, Shortess comments, “With the close of the 52nd annual session, the Central Pennsylvania Conference has reached a distinct period in its history. First: At this time, the Church, The Evangelical Association, was being rent by internal discord and divisions. In the unfortunate situation, the Central Pennsylvania Conference has stood, almost unanimously with the so-called “minority” which, in 1894, became the United Evangelical Church. Second: The records and sources of information and historical data available for the compiling of this history have been rather limited, and hence required patient and very exhaustive research to conduct the same.” – *History*, p. 138. Like Shortess and his committee, we have had to make some educated guesses to piece together a picture of the career of James Barber; for there seem to no tangible documents of any kind to guide us – no correspondence, no diaries, no memoirs, no images.

¹⁰¹ From his obituary which appeared in the Lewisburg Chronicle, as researched for us by the Union County Historical Society. Here, the reference to the location of his death lends credence to the theory that the Barber residence (farm) was on the south side of Penns Creek; “Jackson Township” helps locate the area, but we have not yet been able to pinpoint the exact location. By cross-referencing 1860 Census records with property records, we hope to document their home, but since they probably did not own the property, it’s not as easy as it sounds. The problem is compounded by the 1855 division of Union County; the property records are either in Union County, Snyder County, or elsewhere. No one has yet discovered the answer. We hope to search again next year.

¹⁰² *Annals*, p. 364.

¹⁰³ *Annals*, p. 537.

Summary

When we began to research our Barber ancestors, all that the family remembered of Rev. James Barber was that “he was some kind of preacher.” We are pleased to have been able to correct the record with this snapshot of the man, his family, and his career. He was a man of character and conviction. He had a stalwart belief in a cause, and gave his life to further it.

The story of his fortitude, his dedication, and his perseverance, only presented here in skeletal form, is a tale of inspiration for all of us who have descended from his line. With additional research, we hope to complete his biography as a tribute to his life.

Perhaps no more fitting tribute could be presented in commemoration of his career than the following:

The Circuit Rider¹⁰⁴

Stout heart – that lonely figure
Riding in the mists of yesteryear.
You dreamed of trails wider than you traveled, pioneer.

So you have won untarnished glory since that long ago
You journeyed through a wilderness, braved the swollen flow
Of bridgeless streams and hewed your path with spiritual elation,
To carry Gospel tidings to a far-flung congregation.

Stout heart – that solitary traveler
Blazing trails forever wider, wider.
You set a goal, and gained it, staunch and sturdy circuit rider.

Astride your horse your journeys led through woods and dangerous swamp,
The Book within your saddlebags. No praise. No pomp.
And that dauntless courage that unfaltering zeal supplied.
A faith-forged link, from Church to lonely fireside.

Stout heart! No mighty monuments have been erected
To mark the way you trod.
But your deeds emblaze celestial records, man of God!

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¹⁰⁴ By Malura Weaver Thomas as published in History, p. [i].

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