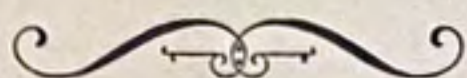


# “The Upper Places”



NAZARETH, GNADENTHAL *and*  
CHRISTIAN'S SPRING

*by*

ELIZABETH L. MYERS

*Member the Executive Committee*  
*Northampton County Historical and Genealogical Society*  
*Vice-President Moravian Historical Society*  
*Pennsylvania Historical Commission*  
*Historian of Bethlehem, Pa.*



Read before the Northampton County Historical and Genealogical Society in the Chapel of the present County Home, (*once called Gnadenthal*) on the occasion of the Spring Pilgrimage of the Society to “*The Upper Places*”.

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## "THE UPPER PLACES"

When the Moravians founded Bethlehem, in 1741, they had already built a working base up here in what was afterward called Old Nazareth; a few log houses around the old stone house, now known as the Whitefield House. Within a few years they settled upon and developed farms to the west of Old Nazareth, called Christian's Spring and Gnadenthal, and a grist mill, a stockaded mill, to the east, on what is now the Stockertown highway. The mill was called Friedensthal. These places were frequently referred to, by the diarists writing down in Bethlehem, as "the upper places."

The little settlement, called Gnadenthal, was commenced in 1745, and the tract of land on which it lay was one of unsurpassed fertility. The development of this farm, and others near it, was part of the policy of expansion adopted by Bishop Spangenberg, and Henry Antes, that prominent and progressive settler who became connected with the early Moravian church in Pennsylvania.

While the first house was being erected, in January, 1745, the workmen slept at Nazareth, then only a few log houses, and continued to do so until the new house was ready for them. Bishop Spangenberg, resident in Bethlehem, often came up to inspect the work. On Jan. 13 of that year, he was here with Capt. Nicholas Garrison, of the ship *Irene*; Thomas Noble, sugar merchant, of New York, and George Neisser, schoolmaster, at Bethlehem. On that occasion they were so happy to perceive the rapid progress of the work, that the bishop proposed a love feast, or a service of song and praise, at once and on the spot. They rolled some logs together for seats and contrived a table out of the split logs that lay around. At this crude board they seated themselves, and conducted the first lovefeast held at Gnadenthal. At its conclusion they returned to Bethlehem. When the first house was completed, George Zeisberger was installed as Haus Vater, and Christoph Demuth as assistant, both from Moravia. Before Christmas of that year a second house was ready, and the first farming household of six married couples was sent up from Bethlehem, in pursuance of the plan of Antes. Other buildings were planned, including a mill to be erected across the fields on the little Monocacy, the mill that became the center for the little village of Christian's Spring.

The raising of crops and farming in general was the great need

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of those first colonists. They had acres and acres of fertile land, and the first duty was the clearing of that land, which was done under the superintendency of George Zeisberger, who also developed the farms. He lived all his days at Gnadenthal, dying in 1781, age 93 years. Workers had to come to his assistance from the other Moravian settlements, a need that was recognized, for the Bethlehem diaries are full of references to work "in the upper places,"—viz: Nazareth, Gnadenthal and Christian's Spring.

The months of July and August of the year 1746 form an interesting and important part of the history of "the upper places," for the first harvest was reaped, and it proved a great one. The harvest season ran into months, in those days, for only the sickle was used. There is an interesting entry in the Nazareth Diary under date of July 19, 1746: "At ten o'clock in the morning Br. Nathaniel Seidel, at the head of 24 single brethren, each carry his sickle, marched into Nazareth, all singing. They came from Bethlehem to assist in the fields. Later in the day Br. Seidel took his single brethren to Gnadenthal, where they were to begin harvesting. As an introduction to the harvesting a love feast was held. At its conclusion Franz Blum went after the sickles, and with uncovered head presented them to the reapers, and Br. Reinke called aloud the signal for them to start. Thus the work began.

During the season Bishop Spangenberg and Henry Antes came up from Bethlehem to visit them, bringing with them a large quantity of flour to be baked into bread; they were accompanied by a few of the sisters who came to assist the Nazareth sisters in the pulling of the flax, for that was the work of the women.

On August 2 some of the new grain was thrashed for the use of the house, the old stock being exhausted, and the pulling of flax being finished, the Bethlehem women returned. By August 8, the barley and oats were gathered, and on the 22nd at noon, a love-feast and service of thanksgiving was held for the ingathering of the crops, which now were all housed.

On August 4 they celebrated a Thanksgiving Day, a day that we know nothing about. It was appointed to celebrate the defeat of "bonny Prince Charlie" in January 1746, at Culloden, and was held in the Whitefield House. The brethren from Gnadenthal attended the services at Nazareth and accompanied the singing with their French horns. There were three special love feasts, after which in the late summer twilight the Gnadenthalers returned home across the fields, singing as they strolled.

It is rather interesting to remember that up here on the county frontier there were some Indians who were friendly, and came to the farms on brief visits. They even helped in the harvesting and

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gave good service. They also acted as outposts in times of danger when wild Indians were lurking in the vicinity.

The harvest was so abundant in this year of 1746 that it has come down in the records as the "Great Harvest." The joy of the workers was so great, and their souls so filled with thankfulness for the generous provender for the coming winter stored in their granaries, that the season was closed with a special love feast and a service of thanksgiving conducted outdoors, with the musicians leading the singing. This was doubtless a great feast, for the lovefeasts of those days were apt to be a thanksgiving feast, as we know that feast today. At a notable lovefeast held in 1745 there were consumed 20 fowls, 30 ducks, 1 sheep, 1 tongue, bacon and bread and butter, costing £2, 4 sh. 9d., and upon the visit of a larger number, 2 bushels of wheat flour, 20 eggs, 10 lbs. butter, 6 lbs. sugar, 10 qts. milk and 2 oz. tea, charged at £1. 1sh. After the abrogation of the Economy system, this feasting at lovefeasts was radically changed; a simple bun or piece of bread was used, and the spiritual side of the service became the leading characteristic in both large and small lovefeasts.

After the building of the mill on the little Monocacy in 1749, activities began to center there, and Gnadenthal was simply a large farm with a few large buildings upon it. As the years passed Zeisberger had other assistants added to his staff, John Nicholas Weinland came in 1754, and Matthew Krause, who was born in old Nazareth in 1742. Matthew was connected with both Gnadenthal and Christian's Spring for many years; his son, John Samuel Krause, the well-known clockmaker of Bethlehem, was born in Christian's Spring in 1782.

Michael Miksch also lived at Gnadenthal for a long time. He was born in Moravia, and after itinerating in the Baltic Provinces and East Prussia, came to Pennsylvania and settled at Gnadenthal. He was the ancestor of the Northampton County family of that name. John Bonn was a superintendent for thirty years, and the names of Jacob Van Vleck, Andrew Busse, Johannes Schnall and Paul Miksch are also connected with it. The early surveyor, George Golkowsky, known even yet as "Old Gully," lived there.

In the beginning the settlement was known as Gnadenhoh, but it was afterward changed to Christian's Spring, in honor of Christian Renatus von Zinzendorf, the son of Count Zinzendorf, and the fine spring that there welled up from the earth. The water from this spring was led through the cellars of the Chapel House to the dairy in the Brethrens' House.

The date accepted as the founding of Christian's Spring is Dec. 17, 1749, when a company of twenty-two young men in Beth-

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lehem, under Br. Nathaniel Seidel, held a farewell lovefeast in the Brethren's House there, preparatory to leaving for "the upper places." As they departed the horns and trumpets were blown and a number of their friends went along with them. At Christian's Spring they were received by Br. and Sr. John Nitschman and Br. and Sr. Matthew Krause, and were welcomed with a lovefeast. It was a community of young men and boys who managed their own affairs with the aid of several married families up to the year 1796. They conducted their own industries, producing all of their living necessities, and sending commodities to market. There were at one time sixteen buildings in the little settlement; the cellar of the Family House had a vaulted ceiling that was a model of fine masonry, and its groined arches were admired by all who saw them.

The gristmill, the sawmill, the tannery, and the brewery were the most lucrative of the industries. The beer was sold all over the country; it was of unusual quality and achieved real local fame. In the beginning of the settlement the brethren were in the habit of raising tobacco, each for his private consumption; later, tobacco was included in the regular crops raised.

The crops included all the cereals then used, and hemp, and flax were raised to make up into clothing and fabrics. The stock of the farm consisted of 277 head of horned cattle. Six yoke of oxen were employed for work, and there were 46 swine. There were 146 acres of woodland fenced in, 97 acres of land were in meadow, and 353 acres were in tillage. They made their own shingles for roofing, and had ovens for burning tiles, and limekilns for lime. The oxen did the ploughing, and also hauled the freight wagons when wheat, etc., was sent to Bethlehem or Philadelphia. The team was also sent to New Brunswick to assist in the transport of goods from New York to Bethlehem. Oak timbers used for building was felled in the vicinity, and also up in the Blue Mts., where pine logs were more plentiful. In winter, when the ground was covered with snow, the young men, with all their sledges, set out to hew pine trees and haul them home. It is recorded that on Feb. 15, 1757, the sleds arrived from beyond the mountains with forty-five pine logs for the purpose of being sawed into boards at the sawmill; some of these boards were sent to Bethlehem. The smiths used charcoal, which was burned in pits on the spot. We are told that for many years the horned cattle were driven over the Blue Mts. to graze during the summer, and that they were left there until autumn, when they were brought home.

Statistics are usually most uninteresting, but the produce of this forgotten farm in the year 1766 may interest you, now that a cement highway runs by its old front door. In that year the farm

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and dairy produced 1,124 bushels of wheat, 1,144 of rye, 1,397 of oats, 462 of barley, 710 of buckwheat and 106 of corn. They had 91 loads of hay with a second crop of 28 loads. There were 4,948 pounds of butter turned out. The butchery reported 1,771 pounds of mutton, 3,194 of pork, 246 of bacon, 10,940 pounds of beef, 856 of veal, 1,919 of tallow and 130 pounds of lard. Last, but not least, the orchardist reported 2,000 gallons of cider. Bees were raised, and a house erected for the apiary; the honey was readily sold in that day of flapjacks and cornbread. A quantity of it was annually sold in the Philadelphia markets, where Quaker breakfast tables welcomed Bethlehem buckwheat and honey when the frosts touched the pumpkins. Crisp mornings sharpened the appetites for a toothsome breakfast.

The Indian wars always caused much anxiety to the inhabitants of this exposed hamlet, but there was never any attack made upon them. Convert Indians from the Moravian Mission stations beyond the mountains made many visits to Christian's Spring. The journeying between Bethlehem and these farms being mostly on foot, it is a wonder that so few serious encounters occurred between the Brethren and their unfriendly neighbors. A few adventures arose from solitary rambles through the chestnut woods that then crowned these hills. In October 1757, as Br. Nathaniel Seidel was returning to Bethlehem he spied two naked Indians armed with guns, standing behind trees, about two miles from Christian's Spring. He promptly turned around and came back to the farm house in safety, zigzagging his way through the trees; but he was not followed. After this incident, the palisades were strengthened and more sentinels placed.

In the year 1763 the wild Indians began again to lurk in the vicinity, and it was found necessary to appoint a night watch. During the month of October, after the massacre at Stenton's tavern, when Jane Horner and others were massacred, some of the families of the Irish Settlement fled to Christian's Spring for protection; they were given a place of security in the Gemein Haus, or Family House.

In 1756 a party, of Quakers came to inspect the plantations of "the upper places," conducted by Richard Poppelwell, a clothier from Yorkshire, who had come to establish the weaving industry in Bethlehem and Nazareth. The Quakers are on record as "departing well-pleased with what they saw."

On July 10, 1760, a Reaper's Lovefeast was celebrated in connection with the consecration of the new Liturgy Hall. Bishop Spangenberg and his wife, "Mother Martha," she was called, and a number of other Bethlehem people arrived at noon, and early in the afternoon consecrated the hall; after which the company proceeded to the fields, led by two musicians in charge of Br. Andrew

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Albrecht. During the lovefeast an ode was sung, composed especially for the occasion by David Tanneberger, the well-known colonial organ builder, who was then resident in Christian's Spring. An inscription to the Workers of the Fields, written by Br. Graff, was read by him, and then Br. Albrecht and the younger boys performed a special piece of music.

This Br. Albrecht, or Albright, had been a soldier in the army of Frederick the Great. He emigrated in 1750, settled in Christian's Spring, and became music teacher to the boys; he also sang tenor in the church choir. He was a gunsmith by trade, and again took up that work during the Revolution over in Lititz, Lancaster Co., where he died in 1802.

Br. Albrecht closed the daily work with a Sing stunde. Every evening the boyish voices sang the old chorales, accompanied by violins, and often, the horns, also. In the dormitory, at bedtime, he had every boy standing by his bed, and at attention, until he gave the signal, when they sang an Evening Blessing before tumbling into bed.

During the long winter evenings those young men sometimes made their own musical instruments. There is a violin in the museum of the Moravian Historical Society at Nazareth; a violin that was made at Christian's Spring in the year 1763. The name of Azarias Smith is on the inside.

When the officers and statesmen of the Revolutionary period began coming to Bethlehem, they were invariably taken on a tour of inspection of "the upper places," provided they remained long enough. Under date of Oct. 7, 1777, we find that Gen. Woodford, Col. Banister and Col. Elliot visited Christian's Spring, with Bishop Ettwein, and in November of that year a company of Light Horse encamped there, in charge of a number of prisoners of war, and remained until Feb. 22, 1778. One April morning in 1775, Bishop Ettwein arrived with Gen. Gates, for breakfast; the general was on his way to Ticonderoga. A most interesting visit occurred in November 1778, when the same good bishop brought the first French Ambassador to Christian's Spring, Gnadenthal and Nazareth, accompanied by Silas Deane, one of the American Commissioners to France, who had earlier in the year, brought the news of the French Alliance to Gen. Washington. With them was also the courtly Spaniard, Don Juan de Miralles, unofficially representing his nation. Later, there came Augustine Washington, Colonel in the Virginia militia, and some of his brother officers, all of whom were pilgrims to these "upper places," as were many others.

An interesting personality connected with Christian's Spring

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was Matthias Tomerup; he was a bell-founder, and cast the Northampton County Court House bell which rang out the news of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, in the square at Easton. The bell was made in Bethlehem where Tomerup then lived. When the Single Brethrens' House there was commandeered as a hospital base for the Continentals, Tomerup was one of those who lost his home. He came up here to Christian's Spring in that snowy December of 1776, and did not return again. He liked the quiet of these "upper places", and remained for the two years of life left to him, for he died in 1778, and is buried in Nazareth. His grave should certainly be marked.


The young men also conducted a shoemaker's shop, a blacksmith shop and a bakery; in the smithy there was a corner for the gunsmith who did odd jobs on rifles for travellers, and even the Indians. A brick and tile works was a prosperous industry. During the Revolution, and even before, this was in charge of Joseph Stotz, who was born in Gnadenthal in 1757. He was the son of \*Christian Stotz, and his wife Anna, m. n. Herr, from Wurtenburg.

This method of living continued until 1796, when it was officially dissolved, again at a lovefeast which Bishop Ettwein came up from Bethlehem to conduct. After this the lands were let out to responsible tenant-farmers and the few bachelors' who could find nothing left in life for them to do, were allowed to remain as more or less helpless dependents.

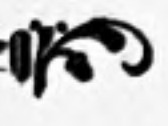
Gnadenthal was finally sold in June 1837, almost a hundred years ago, to the Commissioners of Northampton County for use as a County Poor House; the price was \$90.00 an acre, 235 acres. The last tenant-farmer was George Schlabach.

That little grove across these fields and beyond the highway, shelters the only one of the old Christian's Spring houses left. The others have all fallen before the so-called march of progress. A clump of willows and an old linden tree still guard the stone house, changed beyond recognition, except to him who has the inner vision. In the late evening light, when details are invisible, it is quite possible to stand in the quiet old garden, listening to the trickle of the stream, and translate the last sleepy note of a bird into the Evening Blessing sung by the little boys to the musical beat of Dr. Albrecht's finger. It is even possible that the night breezes, blowing from the north, may bring strains of old chorales played by the Nazareth Trombone Choir today, but once upon a time, played from the roof of that old stone house in the shadows of the trees by the brook, upon the Waldhorner of those musicians of long ago. The moon rises late these nights; so late, that it touches the hour of the spirits. Surely tonight it will shine upon the wraiths of those who





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once cleared this land and fished that stream, come back tonight to the garden of their earthly joys. For today I have raised their ghosts for you, and they cannot go back to the beyond without once more touching their old-time quarters made homelike again by the magic of the moon.

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\*Christian Stotz was the first ancestor of Judge Robert A. Stotz in Pennsylvania.

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