

## **A PENNSYLVANIA-GERMAN DIARY (1847-1868)**

by

THOMAS B. BRUMBAUGH

Vanderbilt University

It is more than a little remarkable that Charles Hartman (1800-1864), an unlettered farmer and burgher of Greencastle, Franklin County, Pennsylvania, should have felt the need to record his concerns with family, church, politics and local events in a journal or "diary" (his word), begun in 1847 and continued until the year of his death.<sup>1</sup> Preserved in the Lancaster Archives, Historical Commission of the United Church of Christ, it is a unique document of some of the community's most memorable events, and one of its most interesting early residents. The diary gives us the date of its author's birth and some pertinent facts of his life, but a county history supplies a few others:

Hartman was a very prominent member of the Reformed Church, holding official positions in the Church and serving it in some way nearly all his life. He was also prominent in politics, a Democrat, and served Greencastle as its burgess, and in other local offices. He died in 1864, his widow in 1879; they are buried side by side in the Reformed Church graveyard at Greencastle. He had been a resident of the place fifty-six years.<sup>2</sup>

In the introductory sentences of the diary we have sketched for us a clear if sometimes naive self-portrait of a hard-working, pious and ambitious man, living contentedly within the confines of his small town. There is an ungrammatical flatness of manner in the writing which reminds us of the fresh realism of tintype photographs, or the awkward style of early nineteenth-century portrait limmers:

If there is any mistakes forgive. I have written as others have told me and what I have read in the papers.

Dear Children I will give you my school days. We walked in snow to our knees. Snow drifted in the lanes. We walked in snow higher than the fences. My education is limited. Now it takes years to learn our children.

Three years I went to German school. At 18 years of age I went to an Irish school teacher by the name of William McCutchora. He taught spelling, writing, and ciphering. Six months I went to him. I tried to learn all I could in this short time. I was anxious to learn. I knew the want of it when I come to the years of knowledge and understanding. This was all the schooling I ever had.

Evidently Mr. Hartman moved to Greencastle from the Franklin County farm where, we are told, he, his three brothers and two sisters were born. His parents had moved from near Allentown in Leigh County about 1793. In the following excerpt some light is also shed upon the Protestant parochial schools of the time, which were the origin of the public school system, and we can appraise the homespun philosophy which guided his dealings with family, students and others:

I come to Greencastle in March 1824.<sup>3</sup> I asked for a Sunday school and I was told that it was a union Sunday school held in the Lutheran church. I went up. Mr. Simon Rupley was the superintendent. The second Sunday it was held in the German Reformed church. Our pastor Rev. John Rebaugh organized one in our church, spring of 1838. Two years later the Methodist school and United Bretheran schools were organized, each being formed out of this one union school. In fall of 1840 I was elected superintendent of the school and served till 1861 when I felt younger ones should take my place and give me a rest from the care that was resting heavily upon me. The school numbered 220 and was in a very prosperous condition. My own selfishness in business affairs I left at home. I felt in my heart I was working for the Lord, to

the upbuilding of his church — that I would have to give strict account before the law of God for my honesty and truthfulness both with pastor, officers, teachers and scholars. I pray God he will forgive me if I acted or was deceitful in any way. In my long experience in the Sunday school work, I find it is sinful and wrong to do or act false in trying to wound or trifle with the feelings of others. I see in my children how quickly they observe every movement or action in their teachers or those who are over or around them. I tell them they must see and not see.

Before Sunday schools were organized, they had what was called a parochial schools held at intervals in the Lutheran and German Reformed churches where they were taught to spell and read and study the catechism and scriptures. Old members of the church would tell me how they sat around a large table and the minister and elders would instruct them in the different books of the church in the German language.

Along with the names and dates of ministers to the congregation, and minor matters of local interest, Mr. Hartman recorded stories of the still-remembered hardships of colonial days:

The first German Reformed church was a long church built on the corner of an alley near Druck's stable where the graveyard is. Rev. Michael Schlatter preached in the old log church at the lower end of the graveyard. Our neighborhood was then in 1749 run over with Indians when our forefathers worshipped in this old log church. Old Father Helfenstine, a good faithful minister of the church often told me about these good old German fathers who went to the house of *God* with swords and rifles to worship, sometimes running for their lives to the fort at the spring at the lower end of town.<sup>4</sup> Sister Elizabeth, brother Charles and I were all baptized in the old log church.<sup>5</sup>

Mr. Hartman's record of the Enoch Brown Massacre, a local incident of the French and Indian War, is a personal one, no doubt based on oral accounts. The old and simple-minded Archibald McCullough, who had been scalped there and recovered, was still alive when he was a young man. Indeed, as a child of ten, the writer of this article was awed by the recollections of a local octogenarian, Miss Grace Eby, whose father, Samuel Eby, had remembered the tonsured Archie wandering about the streets of Greencastle.

The summer of 1764, July 26, three miles northwest of Greencastle, was perpetrated the great fiend-like massacre of a Mr. Brown, a kind hearted Christian school master and scholars, scalped by the merciless savages, three Indians. The teacher with Bible on his knees, pleading, take my life, spare the children. My parents and their neighbors said one boy played truant, the name of Poe. Archie McCullough was scalped but God spared his life to tell the story. They are buried on the farm of Mr. Christian Koser. But who can describe the agony of the parents, or the horror of the scene in that old log school house. In the center lay the lifeless teacher, scalped, with a Bible clasped in his hand. Around the room lay the dead bodies of boys and girls. Heart rending.

An account of the erection of a new church building, the present, but much-remodeled United Church of Christ, is dated throughout 1853 and 1854. We learn that its builder was William McClure of Shippensburg, credited with at least one covered bridge and fine field-stone and brick houses which still grace the Cumberland Valley, and that his workmen were farmer-carpenters who took time off in order to harvest their crops.

The building committee advertised to receive proposals for building the new church. Captain William McClure from Shippensburg, making an article of agreement with the committee for the sum of five thousand two hundred and fifty dollars and the old brick church. McClure was to finish the church and deliver up the keys

to the committee. The church was consecrated to the *Triune God and Father* on Sabbath, June 5, 1855. Pastor Rev. J. S. Foulk stated the debt on church \$102.75. The brethren present on this occasion were Rev. Henry Harbaugh, D. D.; Rev. B. C. Wolff, D. D.; Rev. F. A. Rupley.<sup>6</sup> The cost of the new church was \$7,000. February 15, 1855, I paid \$1.00 for articles in the sale of goods from the old brick church. I bought 2 chairs that had been in use in the first log church, for my little girls, which I keep in remembrance of the church in which my dear parents often worshipped.

As might be imagined, weather was a major concern of this farmer who had moved to a small town. The prices of grain are recorded, and the effect of weather on crops is appraised. "In the fall of 1855 we had the largest crop of corn ever raised in the United States." The daily details of snow piled upon snow throughout the hard winters of 1856 and 1857, the latter "the coldest and longest winter I ever saw," are awesome in their cumulative effect. Nonetheless, he thought "the fields looked nice all covered with snow." And weather gives way to war in the entries of 1861:

One Greencastle company left on the 18th of April 1861 for Harrisburg; 19th of April for Cockiesville. Remained there two days, one night. Surrender of Fort Sumter by Major Anderson. Weather was cold. 6th of May we had snow if fallen in winter, would have been 6 inches deep. Battle of Bull Run was fought on July 21. The summer of this year yielded a plentiful harvest of wheat Oats and corn in abundance.

More records of weather and occasional items from the newspapers on the progress of the war take us through 1862 and into June and July of 1863 when a number of the most important events of Charles Hartman's life took place. No doubt because of their seriousness, the welfare of the church appears to be first in his thoughts:

We celebrated in our Reformed church . . . the Tercentenary of the Heidelberg Catechism, first Sunday after

the army marched through here, states the number at 47,000 Confederate army which passed through Chambersburg, was as follows: Ewell's corps, 15,000 men, infantry, artillery and cavalry with sixty pieces of artillery Trinity. Our church was beautifully trimmed in evergreen. I worked with active energy on this occasion, knowing that I will not be on this side of the eternal world very long. Rev. Thomas G. Apple devoted a great part of his time arranging everything with the assistance of his consistory and making everything very interesting on this occasion. On one side of the pulpit, encircled with a laurel wreath, was the date 1563 and on the other 1863, decorated in like style. It was a happy day for me.<sup>7</sup>

I hold the Heidelberg Catechism as the only symbolical book of recognized authority in the church. Other churches have their symbols of faith which are excellent, yet I prefer ours above any other symbol of faith. We are favored with all the blessings of the gospel, which are enjoyed in common by all Christian denominations in this highly favored, though at present, greatly afflicted land. We still have our pastor with us to break unto us the bread of life. Thank God for all his blessings.

Charles Hartman seems to have seen the invasion of Pennsylvania through a combination of newspaper clippings and personal observation. There is a curious similarity of the description of the Corporal Rihl incident as told here with the account in Jacob Hoke's *The Great Invasion of 1863*,<sup>8</sup> and it is possible that both Hoke and Hartman used the same sources, or that the diary itself may have been Hoke's source.

That part of this army which passed through Chambersburg was carefully estimated by competent persons both at Greencastle and Chambersburg, July 8, 1863, while the matter was fresh in the minds of the people, and taking its figures from the several estimates made by citizens as and over 1,000 wagons, the entire army did not number over 48 or 50,000 men, infantry, cavalry and artillery. This is an estimate made by a competent person from his own

actual observation, the result being noted at the time. Now taking 50,000, the numbers generally fixed upon by all who estimated them that passed through Chambersburg and add to them Early's division that passed by way of Waynesboro, Quincy, Funkstown, and Greencastle, Stuart's cavalry which passed around east of the Federal army, and we have already 70 to 75,000 men. It may safely be said that the entire strength of the invading army did not excel that number.

When within a half mile of Greencastle, Jenkins' cavalry with the advance of Rhodes' infantry were met, and seeing the scouting party retreating pursued by Captain Boyd and his troopers, and not knowing the number of Federals who might be near at hand, and upon them, their line of battle was hastily formed. Fences were torn down to the right and left of the road. Rhodes' infantry took position on the high ground of Mr. John Kissecker's farm. Jenkins threw his cavalry forward and formed a skirmish line upon the land of Mr. William Fleming, about a quarter of a mile in advance of the infantry. Jenkins established his headquarters in Mr. Fleming's house. As soon as the Union cavalry came within range of their guns, fire was opened upon them. For a time the noise and clatter were quite lively. A sister of Mrs. Blair Fleming going to the window to look out, barely escaped a ball which came crashing through the glass close by her head. As soon the dash and curiosity of these bold riders were satisfied, they withdrew out of range and were then pursued by part of Jenkins' force. All persons who saw and witnessed this brave engagement says of all the bold and fearless soldiers they ever saw, these New York cavalry any in these qualities. Had they gone but a short distance further they would have come into a cross fire which would have swept them nearly all away. Their foresight however was equal to their courage. They knew when to stop. The result of the fight was one man *killed* and one wounded upon the Federal side. The

killed was Corporal Rihl. He was shot through the upper lip, the ball passing through his head, his blood bespattering the paling fence in front of Mrs. Fleming's. Corporal Rihl was buried by the Confederates in a shallow grave. The citizens of Greencastle a few days afterwards disinterred his body and placing it in a coffin, reburied it in the Lutheran graveyard.<sup>9</sup> Sergeant Cafferty was taken in charge and cared for by the Greencastle people; attended by one of our physicians he recovered. Rihl Post of the Grand Army of the Republic of Greencastle was named after this brave soldier who fell in that engagement. This fight was the first to occur upon Pennsylvania soil during the rebellion, and Corporal Rihl was the first Union man to lose his life. In front of Archibald Fleming's house.<sup>10</sup>

From the time Jenkins' cavalymen fell back to Greencastle, Wednesday 17th until Monday morning the 22nd, the whole southern portion of Franklin County was plundered by these men. What they got was sent to Rhodes' division at Williamsport. It would be difficult to estimate the value of property taken in this raid, it coming in the season of the year when the farming interests required the use of the horses, followed a few days afterwards by Lee's vast army. Many croppers who had little else than their stock were bankrupt. Monday morning the 22nd Jenkins' command had all rejoined the main body between Greencastle and Hagerstown. On that day they were joined by Rhodes' division of infantry, when the real invasion of the state was begun.

One of the exciting features of the day was the scouring of the fields about town and searching of houses for negroes. These poor creatures, those of them who had not fled upon the approach of the foe, concealed in wheat fields about the town. Cavalry men rode in search of them and many of them were caught after a desperate chase and being fired at. In some cases the negroes were rescued from the guards. Squire Kaufman and Tom Pauling did this and if they had been caught the rebels would have



killed them. I was one of the town council. We were marched all day in the hot sun and dusty roads through the town and country. Heavy demands made upon us for salt, meat, onions and such. Also bridles and saddles, harness. The town council was held till their demands complied with. This was the hardest day in all my life. I never was the same strong man afterwards. I was marched till I was worn out. Andrew Stiffel they gave an old nag to ride, but then Dr. J. K. Davison, Wesley Rhodes and myself told the officers that they had the wrong man. This was an innocent citizen, a tanner by trade. They were after Sam Stickel, the man that had interfered with their wagons. They told Stiffel to rest on my porch at the pump awhile. They all mounted their horses again and left without him. They would have taken him to Richmond prison if we would not plead for him.

In 1865 John Hartman added that that summer "corn rated from \$1.87 per half barrel to \$2.12 per one third of a barrel in ears, and hard to get at that. The farmers still held it for higher prices. This shows the character of the rich farmers, still greedy for more. There was a great many poor people lost everything they had. Times was hard. All was trouble and confusion." But Charles Hartman was not to live to see those days, and after recording the names and deaths of local young men in the army, he addressed his family in a shaky hand still marked with the lessons of the old German school:

My dear children, think of what your dear father truly from his heart of hearts now says. Do to others as you would have them do to you. This is the golden rule. Always be faithful to your church and Sunday school. However ill others treat you, think God marks it down against them in his great Book of Life. Not you but he will punish them accordingly. I know this will be hard for you to do. Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth. When thou art old, thou wilt not depart from it. One regrets the softness and inadequacy of our times.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>A few fragments of the diary have been quoted in J. Edward Omwake, "The German Reformed Congregation at Greencastle," *The Kittochtinny Historical Society, Papers Read Before the Society*, XI (Feb., 1928-June, 1939), p. 365, and in the same author's pamphlet, *A History of Grace Reformed Church* (Greencastle, Pa. 1930). Spelling has been normalized in transcribing sections of the diary, but changes in syntax, grammar and punctuation have been kept to a minimum, dictated by the obvious sense of a passage. A number of brief entries were made in the manuscript by Hartman's brother, John, as late as 1868. The editor's maternal grandfather, Thomas W. Brendle (named for Dr. Thomas G. Apple), was fond of telling how he rescued the diary from a smoldering bonfire at the rear of the Greencastle church, ca. 1919. The widow of Isaac Newton Peightel, a distinguished minister of the period, seems to have reduced the church records by a good deal that winter, while in the process of leaving a tidy parsonage.

<sup>2</sup>*History of Franklin County, Pennsylvania . . .* (Chicago: Warner, Beers and Co., 1887), p. 702.

<sup>3</sup>This date contradicts the printed account of his fifty-six years of residence in Greencastle, and is surely more trustworthy.

<sup>4</sup>Michael Schlatter was one of the first itinerant preachers to make his way through the southern Pennsylvania settlements. Johann Albertus Conrad Helffenstein was minister of the Reformed Church of Germantown, but his travels seem to have taken him to this remote settlement soon after 1772. See William J. Hinke, *Ministers of the German Reformed Congregations in Pennsylvania and Other Colonies in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by George W. Richards (Lancaster, Pa.: Historical Commission of of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, 1951). The "fort" was a stone garrison house and trading post built ca. 1750 and demolished ca. 1900.

<sup>5</sup>Sentence in the hand of John Hartman.

<sup>6</sup>The group was composed of faculty from the newly founded Franklin and Marshall College at Lancaster. Henry Harbaugh was the famous Pennsylvania-German literary figure and preacher.

<sup>7</sup>Dr. Apple was later made president of Mercersburg College, Mercersburg, Pa., and a professor in the Reformed Theological Seminary, Lancaster. See also, Eve Bock, "Contribution of the German Reformed Church to American Culture," *German-American Studies*, VI, (1973), esp. 64-65.

<sup>8</sup>Jacob Hoke, *The Great Invasion of 1863; or, General Lee in Pennsylvania*, (Dayton: W. J. Shuey, 1887), pp. 123-126.

<sup>9</sup>On June 22, 1886, the body was again reburied with elaborate ceremony on the site of the action, and marked with an impressive granite obelisk.

<sup>10</sup>The sentences concerning the Rihl G.A.R. Post seem to be in the hand of John Hartman.