

**Portrayal of Rev. Johann Michael Enderlein/Enterline - St. John's Lutheran,
August 21, 2005 for the 225th Anniversary**

(Heb 13:7 NASB) Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.

As this portrayal of Rev. Enderlein is given, may each of us consider the result of his conduct and be motivated to imitate his faith.

Rev. Johann Michael Enderlein was born in Fischbach, Rhineland Palatinate, Bavaria (Germany) on Sep. 14, 1726. His father, Michael Anderlein, died when Rev. Enderlein was only 4 years of age as a result of, what is believed to have been, a mining accident. He was awakened to the seriousness of Christianity in his youth during the devotions of Pastor Stack of Frankfort, graduated from the University of Leipsic, in 1751 and was ordained in Germany as a Lutheran minister that same year . It is believed that he emigrated to America by way of Philadelphia, arriving Sept 24, 1753 on the ship Neptune. On November 10, 1760 at St. Michael's & Zion Church in Philadelphia he married Anna Barbara Pfeiffer, a daughter of John Martin Pfeiffer of Philadelphia, PA.

In America Rev. Enderlein became closely associated with Rev. Henry Melchoir Muhlenberg, now referred to as the Father of the Lutheran Church in America. Rev. Muhlenberg served at Trappe, PA covering a congregational area from Germantown to Pottstown. John Michael Enderlein, Jr. was baptized in Trappe near Philadelphia by Rev. Muhlenberg on Feb. 14, 1762.

In the first stage of Rev. Enderlein's ministry he taught church school for some time and concurrently entered upon the duties of a supply minister for outlying congregations in the Trappe - Germantown area where he lived.

In the 2nd stage of his ministry Rev. Enderlein served regularly from 1763 to 1771 in neighboring Bucks County. Evidence exists that he preached in the area of the Nockamixon, Bucks Co. congregation as early as 1761 when that congregation was still holding church services in a barn. He was elected on Aug. 6, 1766 as their first regular pastor. He was also elected as the first regular pastor of the neighboring Tohicken (Keller's) Lutheran Church in 1763 and at Springfield that same year. It was at Keller's Church in Bucks County that his son, John Paul Enderlein, was baptized on March 1, 1767. These 3 churches are located in northwestern Bucks County. It appears that Rev. Enderlein was living in that area while serving those congregations as Muhlenberg lists him in his notes as being, "of Tohicken," on May 24, 1770. In 1767 the Indianfield congregation, located in what is now northern Montgomery County, was added to his pastorate until 1771. While some of those congregations were small when Rev. Enderlein came, they began to flourish. He made his last baptismal entry at Keller's Church, July 1, 1770.

The 3rd stage of Rev. Enderlein's ministry began with a move to Elizabethtown, Lancaster County. We know this from an entry in Muhlenberg's notes dated Sept. 28, 1772 which mentions him as being, "of Elizabethtown", and an entry in the family Bible which states that in 1776 John Michael, Jr., was educated in the evangelical Lutheran religion and confirmed in Elizabethtown, Lancaster Co., PA.

While in Elizabethtown Rev. Enderlein entered into regular duties at Sand Hill near Hummelstown on March 1771, became the 3rd pastor at the Maytown and Elizabethtown Lutheran congegations with his first communion session held on May 12, 1771 and also became the first pastor at what is now called the Trinity Lutheran Church at Colebrook, Lebanon County in 1771. His regular service in this area lasted about 6 or 7 years from March 1771 to 1777 or early 1778.

During this period, while serving these churches, he journeyed up the Susquehanna River on horseback to organize and serve congregations there as far north as Sunbury some 80 miles from where his family was living. While covering this wide area on horseback, he often conducted a funeral service, a marriage and a baptism in the same home on the same day of his visitation. Visitations were necessarily far between. It appears that these trips into the wilderness may have been motivated in part by the ministerium's failure to regularly furnish the needs of the Lutheran families in those remote parts.

From PENNSYLVANIA HISTORY (pages 66-67) under GERMAN LUTHERAN AND REFORMED CLERGYMEN we find that in 1773 members of the ministerium had discussed the possibility of trying to locate a temporarily unoccupied clergyman in the "district called Schamokin, whither a very large number of families are moving to settle." Little or nothing resulted from these deliberations. It was only after many years had passed that they were able to see the needs of their field in terms of a more concerted effort than a series of isolated preaching journeys. It was not until 1805, 5 years after Rev. Enderlein's death, that the ministerium provided for a system of traveling preachers to visit and organize congregations on the frontier with 3 men being assigned to the Susquehanna valley.

Nothing resulted from the discussion by the ministerium in 1773; but later that same year John Michael Enterline took up land in Lykens Valley, Dauphin County, and in about 5 years became the first resident Lutheran clergyman in the upper Susquehanna Valley.

Rev. Enderlein had taken it upon himself, possibly at the urging of Muhlenberg, to extend his missionary work for the Lutheran church by serving as the first circuit rider to regularly visit the white settlements along the Susquehanna Valley to the north.

He served or organized the following Churches before his move to Lykens Valley:

West of the Susquehanna River

St. Michael's in Pfouts Valley, Perry County from Oct. 1774 to April 1789.

It is considered the oldest Lutheran church in Perry County.

Salem Church at Salem, Snyder County 1775 as an occasional minister.

It is considered the oldest Lutheran church in Snyder County.

East of the Susquehanna River

Salem (Kissel) Church near Dauphin, Dauphin County in 1774.

Wert's (Salem) Church at Killinger, Dauphin County in 1770-1779.

It is the oldest Lutheran church in Lykens Valley. He may have visited this church while still living at Tohicken.

St. John's Church near Berrysburg, Dauphin County 1773-1800.

This became his home Church in 1780.

Himmel's Church at Rebuck, Northumberland County 1773-1787. In 1774 a log school house was erected upon a 60 acre church tract where Rev. Enderlein administered public divine services and the Holy Sacraments while Mr. C. H. Kaufman was the local school teacher.

The last stage of Rev. Enderlein's ministry began with his move to Lykens Valley in 1778 at age 52.

We know that he was residing on his land in Lykens Valley by 1778, because of a letter to Halle, Germany dated Oct. 31, 1778 written by Rev. Mulenberg which states that "The Catechist, Mr. Enderlein lately had moved to Schamokin with his family, which is a new settlement."

In 1780, 2 years after settling in Lykens Valley, Pastor John Michael Enderlein officially organized a school house parish here at St. John's. His circuit riding missionary ministry continued from his new base in Lykens Valley.

He served or organized the following additional Churches after his move to Lykens Valley:

East of the Susquehanna River

Stone Valley Zion Church in Lower Mahanoy Twp., Northumberland, County in 1777.

This too was a school house congregation in typical Enderlein fashion of school building first, then church building later.

Fetterhoff's, or St. Peter's Church in Armstrong Valley, near Fisherville, Dauphin County from 1795 to 1800.

St. Peter's at Red Cross, Northumberland County 1788.

West of the Susquehanna River

Botschaft's Church near Freeburg, Snyder County 1785-1790.

Christ Church at Paxtonville, Snyder County 1785-1790.

St Paul's Church near Lowel, Snyder County about 1790.

Zion's Church at Freeburg, Snyder County 1790

One source credits him with serving as many as 15 congregations in the upper Susquehanna River area even reaching into Schuylkill County.

Rev. Enderlein was the only Lutheran minister to regularly serve from 1777 to 1800 in the Mahanoy, Mahantango, Wisconisco, Armstrong and Powell Valleys while continuing to serve the vast area west of the Susquehanna beginning near present Liverpool to Middleburg, Freeburg and Selinsgrove.

His activities on the west shore seem to have been carried so far north that when that Great Runaway of 1778 occurred he was driven back by the Indians along with other white settlers. The Great Runaway of 1778 occurred along the west and north branches of the Susquehanna above present Sunbury.

A description of the way people went to church at Fetterhoff's Church near Fisherville was probably true in most of the churches served by Rev. Enderlein during his ministry. On page 133 of the "History of Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Eastern Pennsylvania" it is recorded:

"On Sundays, the early worshipers of this church came with their guns on their shoulders; not so much on account of the wily savage, as on account of the wild beasts that might cross their pathway. For a number of years this was the only church in Armstrong Valley. The settlers of Powells Valley worshipped here. From all around the people came on horseback, or on the big wagon; more often on foot, walking many miles. It was nothing unusual for mothers to cross the ridge with their babes on one arm, and their shoes on the other. They were accustomed to go barefooted, but put on their shoes, which they carried with them, before entering church."

In his great-grandson Soloman Enterline's biography it states of Rev. Enderlein, "By his self sacrificing devotion and faithful and able services he endeared himself to the people and was held in high esteem."

Rev. Enderlein is listed along with 5 other men on pages 117-118 of "Patriarchs of American Lutheranism" where the author concludes, "They called no man master, they acknowledged no head but Christ; no absolute authority but the Bible. They bound themselves to no set of forms derived from the old country, but retained the grand landmarks of Lutheranism, doctrinal, practical, and liturgical, they adapted them to their altered circumstances in this country. Thus the Bible in their hands, and their eyes fixed on the leadings of God's providence, they passed forward, and felt at liberty to adopt any improvement which was developed in progress of society, and of the church, and which commended itself to reason and scripture."

There seems to be some question as to whether he was ordained by the church. However, there are records that show he was performing the duties of one ordained, perhaps if only out of necessity. Regardless, this church and the numerous other churches that he served and organized are proof that he was ordained of God. You are, as it is put in 2 Cor. 3:1-3, "his letters of commendation known and read by all men and written by the Spirit on tablets of the heart."

In 1792 he entered into an agreement to purchase 350 additional acres of land along the Wiconisco Creek. This was for his 2 oldest sons who completed the purchase after his death. He

provided 50 acres for his youngest son, Daniel, in his will and that his brothers should help him build a house and stable there if he chose to live on it.

When his will was probated on March 29, 1800 he was survived by his wife, Anna Barbara, and his sons, John Michael, Jr., John Paul and Daniel, all of Lykens Valley and daughters Anna Maria, the wife of John Adam Lenker of Mahantango Valley and Elizabeth, wife of John Henry Wirth then of Lykens Valley but later of Lower Mahanoy Twp., Northumberland County.

Rev. Enderlein was recognized as one of the leaders of the early Lutheran Church in America. His known ministry reaching parts of 10 Pennsylvania counties. He was one of the 27 Lutheran ministers who drafted and signed the first constitution of "An Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of North America" in 1781. For many years he was a recognized minister in the Ministerium of PA serving and ordaining new ministers with such recognized ministers as Rev. Henry M. Muhlenberg and his famous sons, Nicholas Kurtz, Krug, Emanuel Schulze, Schmidt, Helmuth Horsel, Kunze., Wildbahn, Buskirk, Moeller, Melsheimer, Lehman and others.

John Michael Enderlein was a pioneer missionary when Pennsylvania was a foreign mission territory. He was a builder of churches, and of congregations, a faithful and intrepid servant of God in the days when the forest of this state contained many dangers from man and beast alike. Even in his declining years he traveled long distances without comforts or conveniences to give his scattered brethren in the faith the Bread of Life. Most of the churches he planted are still thriving in the work of the Lord. We honor him for his labor and sacrifice and can indeed say that we have examined the conduct of his life and have seen the results of that conduct and have found it to be good. His faith is truly to be imitated and we can say along with Christ, "well done good and faithful servant."

His earthly remains were laid to rest here at St. John's Lutheran cemetery after his death on March 6, 1800. The grave until now had remained unmarked for present generations and we had only to look upon the church schools, the churches and congregations with their early system of worship and Christian centered education for all those pioneering wilderness inhabitants which Rev. Enderlein organized or served as the everlasting markers of his existence.

Today this shortcoming is being rectified in the dedication of a stone and plaque in his memory at St. John's cemetery near where he is believed to be buried. I pray that as we honor him, we do not forget that the best way to honor him is to worship, serve and honor the Lord and Savior whom he worshipped, served and honored; the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dennis G. Cass
husband of
Georgina Enterline

SOURCES: Pastors and People, Pennsylvania History - German Lutheran and Reformed Clergymen, Patriarchs of American Lutheranism, Rev. Johannes Michael Enterline Brings Religion to Berrysburg, Last Will and Testament of John Michael Enderlein, A History of the Eden Evangelical Lutheran Church, Biographical Encyclopedia of Dauphin County, Northumberland County Biographies, Egles Notes and Queries, Northumberland County Historical Society, Wert Family History Association, Township Histories of Northumberland County, PA, The History of Bucks County, History of Montgomery County, A Letter Written by Fred B. Koppenhaver, The Pioneer by Earl Bowman, One Hundred Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of St. John's Church booklet, Rev. Henry M. Muhlenberg's Notes as copied by William E. Enterline author of The Genealogy of Rev. Johann Michael Enterline 1726-1800 and Descendants.