

The vignettes form an appropriate sequel to *The Central Pennsylvania Conference (EV) 1850-1871* and personalize the information presented in two ways. First, each vignette covers both the time period and a particular appointment mentioned in the previous paper. Second, because Stapleton was born in 1850 and licensed in 1871, the previous paper covers precisely the formative years of the author. It was the events and drama of these two papers that shaped and prepared the Rev. Ammon Stapleton for the valuable service he rendered to his denomination.

I. Mrs. Amanda Kinsloe Wagoner

[Editor's Note: The Bakers appointment appearing in 1871:7 of *The Central Pennsylvania Conference (EV) 1850-1871* was the eventual home congregation of Mrs. Amanda Kinsloe Wagoner (1842-1906).]

In the year 1854, a young girl twelve years of age who was employed as a domestic at Penn's Creek, four miles above New Berlin, undertook a journey on foot to her parents at Lewistown, a distance of over forty miles. This girl, whose name was *Amanda Kinsloe*, was of humble parentage. Her people being very poor, she was put out to service in early childhood without any school or religious advantages. Little Amanda made this long and difficult way alone, and yet not alone, as the sequel proves.

After traveling half the distance, she was overtaken by darkness. Being a stranger, she knew not what to do. On Red Oak Ridge she halted at a farm house and was met by an old man, of whom she asked permission to remain for the night. The request was granted. The man was Squire William Baker -- a pillar in the church in the early years, whose house was a preaching place for Jacob Albright as early as 1803 and the predecessor of Baker's Church.

That night the little traveler had a sweet and pleasant dream. She dreamed that she was on a journey, and came tired and hungry to a country home, where she was met by an aged man. The people were so kind and good to her and took her as their own child, and she remained with them and lived with them in the enjoyment of happiness and plenty.

The little traveler was much impressed with the dream, and in the morning resumed her journey, after receiving the blessing of Father Baker. Reader, mark the gentle leadings of Providence! The dream, the family prayers, and the patriarchal blessing awoke in the young girl's heart an earnest desire to be saved. Her people were godless, and her moral training had been neglected. She yearned for such a home as she had dreamed of, and such a life as she believed the Baker family led.

One day she told her mother of all these strange experiences and feelings, but was met with stern rebuffs and forbidden to attend any Evangelical meetings. After prayerful consideration, the young girl determined to follow the promptings of her

convictions. Her dream was not visionary to her, but a revelation and a prophecy certain to be fulfilled in God's own time and way.

The day came at last which she had set on to leave her parental home, which was her Egypt, for the land of Canaan, as it were, where milk and honey flowed. No serious efforts were made to restrain her, and she started eastward down the valley. The evening shades were falling as she neared the home of Father Baker. Sitting down by the wayside, she pondered and hesitated. Shall she venture? Mustering up courage, she approached the door, and, knocking, she was admitted.

After partaking of supper and recovering somewhat from her weariness, she told Father Baker, in a childlike way, that she wished to make her home there. But the old Squire told her that he had no use for a girl her age. That night our little wanderer went to bed with a heavy heart. In one single moment all her hopes were crushed, and the dream in that very house, which she had taken as a revelation, was only a dream -- an idle dream, after all. Her eyes suffused with tears soon closed in slumber, and she saw not the silver lining to the dark clouds that hung so heavily around her.

That night the old Squire lay upon his bed and pondered over the strange circumstances of the child's visits. He saw the hand of God at work and determined to provide for her. In the morning he sent for his son George, who farmed his place. The son was past middle age and had no children. To him the aged Squire committed our little Amanda. So she went to live with George Baker and became one of the family. Year after year came and passed. She never thought of taking wages; but her dream came true. All her heart could wish was hers.

To the aged Squire, whom she called *Grandpap*, she became a joy and comfort. When in 1863 his last illness came, she became his ministering angel to make his bed in his affliction and cheer his declining years. She had now grown to the strength and beauty of mature womanhood. She was gifted with a very fine voice, which cheered and comforted old Father Baker in sweetest song to his last moments on earth. When at last the old patriarch received the call to go home, the strong arm of the woman whom the Lord undoubtedly sent to cheer his last days, supported his dying head. What a marvelous Providence!



Mrs. Amanda Kinsloe Wagoner

In course of time her foster father George Baker, son of the Squire, also died - and also his wife. And the whilom pilgrim performed the same tender offices to them. She was of course well rewarded with earthly goods from the Bakers; but her

full reward came in later years, when she answered the summons to join in Heaven the noble family with whom she was providentially joined through a dream.

After the death of the Bakers, Amanda Kinsloe was married to Solomon Wagoner. She died at McClure July 4, 1906, aged 63 years, 10 months, and 8 days. She personally communicated the above facts to the author.

II. Mrs. Louisa Aughenbaugh Eisenhart

[Editor's Note: The Aughenbaugh appointment appearing in 1861:6 and 1870:2 of *The Central Pennsylvania Conference (EV) 1850-1871* was the home congregation of Mrs. Louisa Aughenbaugh Eisenhart (1825-?). Her grandfather George Aughenbaugh and father David Aughenbaugh are buried in the cemetery beside the old church/school building where the class met.]

In 1825, when the intrepid John Seybert served York circuit, he made the acquaintance of a prominent old gentleman named George Aughenbaugh, who lived in the village of Strinestown, about ten miles north of York. Aughenbaugh was the chorister (*vor-sanger*) of the Quiggle's Lutheran church, a position which he had filled for forty years.

One day Seybert came to visit him and told him his house was large and well adapted for meetings, and that he would like to preach there *that night*. To this the chorister objected -- for the reason that it would cause him trouble in his church relations, and also that it was too late in the day to make the appointment known. To this Seybert replied that "all who would live godly must suffer persecution" -- and unless we are willing to bear it, we are not worthy to be called His disciples. As to the congregation, *he* would see to that.

The old man then withdrew his objection, and Seybert made a house to house canvass that afternoon, with the result that a large audience was present. At the close of the service Seybert announced that he would thereafter preach regularly there -- to the great astonishment of Aughenbaugh, who had given no such permission. The old man arose and said he liked the services, but they were Lutherans and, said he, "Think of what our old preacher will say to all this." Seybert made answer that where the salvation of souls was at stake, no heed should be paid to what others think or say.

This was the commencement of an Evangelical class which for many years was strong and aggressive. Father Aughenbaugh and all his children, most of whom were heads of families, soon connected themselves with the Evangelicals.

A short distance from Strinestown lived David Aughenbaugh, a son of the chorister. Among his children were twin girls, named Louisa and Maria, born September 30, 1825. These little girls lived in the atmosphere of prayer and song,

and when they were three years of age sang very well the stirring songs for which the early Evangelical meetings were noted.

In the rear of their house was a meadow in which was a little elevation, or hillock, covered with moss. The little girls chose this beautiful spot on which to play, and here whiled away many happy hours in childish sport. Among other things they did was to "hold meetings" in imitation of the older people. They sang and prayed in regular order, day by day, and never missed their "meeting" unless the weather interfered. The hillock being their "church," they were "excused" from attending on damp or wet days.

When the children were about three and one half years of age occurred a remarkable circumstance, which we commend to the attention of parents who have little children under their care. The little girls were holding "meeting." They had both prayed and were singing, when suddenly *they felt different*. They grew "happy" and praised the Lord. Then they ran home and told their parents and all that they were *converted*. From that time on their "meetings" were different. They had a real joy in the service which to them was no longer *play*, but *worship*.

One day their happy, joyful meeting on the mossy hillock was held for the last time. In the summer of 1829, when the children were less than four years of age, Maria took sick and died. Her little sister Louisa grew very homesick for the meetings which had been the joy of their young lives. She could not bear to go to the hillock alone -- her heart was too sad. One day, with tears in her eyes, she took an older brother by the hand and wanted to lead him over to the hillock and continue the meetings -- but he refused to go, and the mossy bed became a memory.

Our little Louise is still living, at the age of eighty-three. She was married in April 1843 by Rev. Jacob Boas to E. Eisenhart. She is a widow and resides in York. The Divine testimony given her at the early age of three and a half years still abides. She is probably the oldest in Evangelical experience in the church. She hopes soon to renew the happy meetings on the hillock with her many friends who have long since crossed over death's silent river. To her wonderful memory, the author is greatly indebted for these and other incidents.

III. Mrs. Ruthanna Vallerchamp

[Editor's Note: The Vallerchamp appointment appearing in 1869:6 of *The Central Pennsylvania Conference (EV) 1850-1871* was hosted by relations of Mrs. Ruthanna (1805-1886) and Rev. Azima (1805-1854) Vallerchamp. The Vallerchamps are buried in the Evangelical section of the cemetery at New Berlin. References to other locations broaden the story geographically, and the connections of the Vallerchamps with Methodism prophetically broaden the story denominationally.]

In the month of February, 1868, the writer of this memoir bowed as a penitent at the altar in the first church ever erected by the Evangelical Association. This was at New Berlin, in Union County, Pennsylvania, a place memorable in the history of the Evangelical Church. The minister in charge was Rev. M.J. Carothers of blessed memory. While thus engaged in struggling amid doubts and fears, and the darkness of unbelief had well nigh settled upon his soul, a loving arm was placed tenderly around his neck and a sweet voice spake into his ear, "O, my son, do not despair; see the bright light of the cross." This was the turning point of his penitential struggle.

But who was this mother whose loving voice, though hushed in death these many years, still vibrates on the tenderest chords of his soul? It was *Mother Ruthanna Vallerchamp*, widow of Rev. Azima Vallerchamp, an itinerant preacher of the Central Pennsylvania Conference of the Evangelical Church. Mrs. Vallerchamp was one of the most remarkable women with whom it was our privilege to become acquainted. Her life was one great and unwearying effort to save souls and do good, and eternity alone will disclose the number of souls she was instrumental in saving, and the weak and inexperienced whom she helped by her prayers and wise counsels.

Mrs. Vallerchamp was descended from several lines of English nobility. Her parents were Quakers, and on the Pennington side had been Quakers from the days of George Fox, the founder. She was the daughter of Jonathan and Rebecca Davis, and was born in Catawissa Valley, Columbia County, Pennsylvania, March 20, 1805. Her great-grand-parents, Griffiths and Elisabeth Davis, were married in Wales in 1724 and came to Pennsylvania soon afterwards. They settled in Solebury Township, Bucks County, where they were eminent in the Friends' Society.

Her Conversion and Persecution

At the age of eighteen, the subject of this memoir attended a protracted meeting conducted by a Methodist preacher named Taneyhill. She was deeply convicted of sin, and was converted in a most remarkable manner. Although her parents did not sanction her course, they deemed it best to allow her to choose her own way in the matter.

One day her mother requested her to accompany her to her son-in-law, who was very much opposed to Ruthanna's connection with the Methodists, who were then the objects of ridicule and abuse. Upon their arrival, he began to taunt and berate Ruthanna to such an extent that she left the house to seek relief in prayer. She wandered through the thick darkness of night to a lonely spot, where she fell on her knees to implore God's help and sustaining grace amid her sore trials. After agonizing in prayer for some time, she fell into a sort of trance, in which she saw a heavenly vision. She saw a great company of angels clothed in beautiful white gather around her to cheer and comfort her. (Psalm 34:7)

After remaining in this condition several hours, she returned to the house. Her friends, meanwhile, had become greatly alarmed because of her prolonged

absence, and had been searching for her. From the time of this vision her whole being underwent a remarkable change. Her entire nature seemed "filled with the Spirit." (Ephesians 5:18) Her faith was truly wonderful. Her prayers were deep and sympathetic, and clearly indicated that her life was hid with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:3)

An Invalid Restored through Prayer

When Mrs. Vallerchamp was about nineteen years of age, she attended a Methodist camp-meeting in the Catawissa Valley, at which time her faith was displayed in a wonderful manner. Among the attendees was a large family, the father of which was an invalid. One day, as the condition and circumstances of this family were discussed in the presence of Ruthanna, the remark was made that according to all human prospects the father would soon die. His family of ten children, nearly all of whom were small, would have a hard way of getting along in the world.

The heart of Ruthanna went out in warmest sympathy. She repaired to a secret place and laid the matter before the Lord. Long and earnestly did she plead for the recovery of the invalid father, that he might be spared to his family. Suddenly she received the impression that the man would recover. She arose from her knees and informed the invalid father of the impression she had received through the Spirit. She told him not to be discouraged, but have faith in God and all would be well.

Many years afterwards, when her husband was pastor of Cherry Circuit, in Sullivan County, they had a camp-meeting near Dushore. During the meeting an old gentleman came to Mrs. Vallerchamp and asked whether her name had not been Ruthanna Davis. She answered in the affirmative. He then asked whether she remembered how she prayed for a sick man at the Catawissa camp-meeting and the assurance she received that the prayer was answered. This, she said, she remembered well. Then he informed her that *he* was the man and that his recovery began from the time she made the announcement to him that he would get well. He had lived to raise his family, and God had prospered him temporally and spiritually.

Rescuing a Seeker

The remarkable power of Mrs. Vallerchamp as the result of her faith is illustrated by the following incident. At one of the great camp-meetings in the Catawissa Valley which she attended while she was yet unmarried, there was a young man at the altar seeking salvation. His father, however, was violently opposed to his course and hired two strong men to go into the inclosure and bring out his son. They quietly proceeded to the altar, and before anyone realized their purpose, they were carrying the young man up the aisle toward the front of the grounds.

Mrs. Vallerchamp quickly went to them and in a loud and commanding voice, in the name of God, demanded the young man's release. They stopped at once, seemingly paralyzed by her power, releasing the young man without a word. She

then took the young man back to the altar, where he was happily converted and became a pillar in the church.

Marriage to Mr. Vallerchamp

On January 25, 1829, Ruthanna Davis was married to Mr. Azima Vallerchamp, who, like herself, was a Methodist. His father, Simon Vallerchamp, was born in 1757 in the Province of Lorraine, France, to wealthy parents of the patrician class. Young Simon accompanied the Marquis de Lafayette to America, to join the Colonists in their struggle for freedom. He remained to the close of the war, and was seven times wounded. He returned to France, but soon thereafter again came to America to make it his home. He located in Huntington, Luzerne County, and died in 1825 as the result of a ball in his body which he had received during the Revolution. His son Azima had studied both the Allopathic and Homeopathic systems of medicine, also dentistry. He was a very learned man, who had he entered the ministry earlier in life, might have risen to distinction in the ranks.

Some time after their marriage they removed to Roaring Creek, where Mr. V. kept a store and the post-office. In 1835 they moved to Mount Pleasant Township, where they had purchased a farm. In 1845 they connected themselves with the Evangelicals, and were instrumental in gathering a class and building a church. Mr. V. was a local preacher, in which capacity he did a great deal for the church of his choice. In 1847 he entered the regular ministry. But before following our subject into the itinerant field, we take the present opportunity to record one of the most remarkable incidents of her consecrated life.

A Fearful Retribution

Several years after her marriage, when her husband was engaged in the mercantile business on Roaring Creek, the class with which she was connected was bitterly persecuted by the nominal Christians and such as were opposed to experimental religion. This opposition had a certain ringleader, who made his boast that at a certain time and place they would make an end of the "heretics." Inasmuch as the man's character was such that he would not hesitate to carry out the threat, the praying people had every reason to fear. They had borne much already, and their meetings had been broken up, but the trials they had endured were nothing compared with the danger that now threatened them.

That the disturbers intended to wreck the house and do violence to the persons of the praying people was the general belief. It now became an open question whether they should continue their prayer-meetings at all. There was one brave, trusting spirit who did not heed the threats of the ungodly. That was Mrs. Vallerchamp. She told her classmates that the Lord would stand by and defend them. When the prayer-meeting time came, at which time the ruffians had decided to mob them, Mrs. Vallerchamp betook herself to God in prayer.

During this prayer she received the Divine intelligence that she should trouble herself no more, that the Lord would frustrate the designs of the wicked men and all would be well. That same afternoon the ringleader was instantly killed by the falling of a tree upon him. This ended the opposition, and the praying people were molested no more.

In the Gospel Ministry

Their entry upon the active work of the ministry afforded Mrs. Vallerchamp an enlarged field for Christian work, and especially that of soul-saving. She was a true companion to her husband in his arduous labors. It may be truly said, many meetings owed their revival interests to her earnest assistance to her husband with her sweet voice in song and exhortation. Camp-meetings were her special delight. During the prime of her life, she frequently pitched her tent at three different camp-meetings in one season.

Mr. Vallerchamp's service in the active ministry was brief. He labored on the following charges: Luzerne 1847-48, Columbia 1848-49, Cherry 1849-51, Perry 1851-52. In the spring of 1852 he located, and soon thereafter removed to New Berlin, Union County, for the purpose of giving his children better school facilities. Mr. V. died rather suddenly on October 7, 1854, aged 49 years. This was a terrible blow to his family, as all their earthly plans and hopes were frustrated.

After her husband's death, Mrs. Vallerchamp wrote the following lines, which appeared in connection with his obituary a month later in the *Evangelical Messenger*:

His soul was calmly stayed on God;
His heart though pressed with care,
Meekly submitted to his lot,
He felt his Saviour near.
He now on weeping friends looks down,
And sees each falling tear,
And sweetly whispers in our ears,
Be still; I'm happy here!
My ransomed soul is now at rest,
I'm free from toil and care.
My soul is now in Jesus blest;
Prepare to meet me there.
Dear husband, I shall there once more
Behold thy lovely face,
When all my trials here are o'er
And I am saved by grace.

Her Poetic Gifts

Mrs. Vallerchamp had poetic talents of a very high order. During her lifetime she wrote on almost every theme of the Christian life. Her religious nature was so intense that she was never known to have written purely secular poetry. Some of her poems have decided merit, and are marked by a freshness and intensity of feeling that glow with the light and warmth of true poetic fire.

Unfortunately many of her poems (and probably her best) were lost by the burning of a house occupied by Miss Kate Swineford, a gifted literary friend to whom she had entrusted them for inspection and correction. It is probable that had not this accident occurred, the Evangelical Church would have been favored with a volume of poems from one of its own daughters. Such a book has not yet to this day appeared.

Her husband published a juvenile temperance and Sunday-school song book, in which it is believed a considerable number of Mrs. Vallerchamp's productions appeared. We have sought in vain for a copy of this book, which was the first of its kind in the Evangelical Church. A number of Mrs. Vallerchamp's poems appeared in the *Evangelical Messenger*, the English organ of the church, and these are the only ones that have been preserved.

The immortal song *The Gospel Ship Is Sailing*, which is sung all over the world, appears in all hymn books as *anonymous*, or of unknown authorship. During our intimate acquaintanceship with Mrs. Vallerchamp, it was generally understood that the song was written by her in her earlier years. Unfortunately we failed to ask her for particulars. The circumstances of its first publication are unknown, until its appearance with its beautiful tune by the noted composer William Bradbury. *The Heavenly Rail Road** is a song we know emanated from Mrs. Vallerchamp, although like *The Gospel Ship Is Sailing*, its first publication was *anonymous*. It appeared in many of the early religious song books.

Her Work Among the Students

The loss of her husband seemed to stimulate Mrs. Vallerchamp to greater zeal and devotion to the Master's cause. The founding of Union Seminary (afterwards changed to Central Pennsylvania College) opened up a new avenue of usefulness for her. She sought the acquaintance of the students, and invariably impressed upon them with a sense of her deep interest in their welfare. Her special work was to single out poor and discouraged students and act the part of a Christian mother to them. She made such the special objects of prayer, invited them to her house to share her hospitality, and thus afford them both social and religious enjoyment.

* Not to be confused with *Life's Railway to Heaven* [a.k.a. *Life Is Like a Mountain Railroad*] by Methodist preacher Charles Tillman.

Over a quarter of a century did she thus carry on her good work at that time. Such are the ways of life! We fail to appreciate the fragrant flowers and ripe, rich fruitage of summer until the autumnal blasts have swept them away! The writer of this, and many others who became successful ministers, owe very much to this dear and sainted mother in Israel.

In Her Family

Mrs. Vallerchamp was a model mother. In her family she was always careful not to use vulgar or unseemly expression in the presence of her children. In fact she followed this rule invariably. Any one conversing with her would at once be impressed with her refined and beautiful spirit, the earnestness of her life, and her constant and solemn sense of personal responsibility to God.

While they were engaged in business, prior to their entry into the active ministry, Mr. Vallerchamp was frequently away from home. At such times the fire on the family altar as not allowed to burn low. No matter how many workmen were employed, or what their sentiments or character might be, no matter how pressing the work, there was never a time when she could not say with a clear conscience:

*Lord in the morning, thou shalt hear
My voice ascending high.*

Christian mother, can you not do likewise? Let not the family devotion fail because of the husband's absence. Be a true priestess and head the family in bringing the morning offerings without interruption to the altar.

Borne down with the weight and infirmities of age, Mother Vallerchamp felt her end approaching. As she neared her journey's end, her faith and hope never faltered. She often ex-pressed herself as being conscious of the presence and ministry of angels and the blessed Lord by her side.

Finally, on February 18, 1886, her long-cherished hopes were consummated and her beautiful spirit went home to God, and her body was laid to rest by the side of her husband at New Berlin. Many years have passed since Mother Vallerchamp was called to her rich reward, but the grandeur of her work stands out in bold relief. The author could name many men of prominence, especially in the ministry, who freely acknowledge themselves indebted to the prayers and encouragement of Mother Vallerchamp for what they are in life. Eternity alone will reveal the measure of her work.



Mrs. Ruthanna Vallerchamp