

#842 The Lutheran Seminary at Gettysburg – The Muhlenbergs and Just War, part 2, Peter Muhlenberg: From Pastor to Soldier



John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg (October 1, 1746 – October 1, 1807). John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg (pictured on the *left*), the eldest son of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, was born in Trappe, Pennsylvania, in 1746. He served in churches in New Jersey as a Lutheran pastor from 1769 to 1771, then became a minister in Woodstock, Virginia, in 1771. Toward the end of 1775, Muhlenberg was authorized to raise and command as its Colonel the 8th Virginia Regiment of the Continental Army. After Washington personally asked him to accept this task, he agreed. In early 1776 (some sources say this occurred in 1775), he gave a sermon to his church based on the text from Ecclesiastes chapter 3, which starts with *“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.”* When he got to verse 8, which

includes, *“a time of war, and a time of peace,”* he said, *“and this is the time of war.”* He removed his clerical robe to reveal his Colonel’s uniform. The next day he led out 300 men from the county to form the nucleus of the 8th Virginia.

The story of Pennsylvania German minister Johann Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg throwing off his clerical robe to reveal a uniform underneath became an inspirational symbol of American patriotism. Pennsylvania artist Stanley Massey Arthurs (1877-1950) in the early 1900’s painted this version of the famous scene.



Muhlenberg commanded troops at the Revolutionary War battles of Brandywine, Germantown, Monmouth, and Yorktown, and rose to major general. He later represented Pennsylvania in the United States Congress from 1789 to 1791, 1793 to 1795, and 1799 to 1801. Muhlenberg died on October 1, 1807, his 61st birthday. A statue of John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg is one of two representing Pennsylvania in the U.S. Capitol in Washington D.C.

Here is **#842–Doc 1**, a picture of **“the Muhlenberg window”** that is in the present-day Muhlenberg Lutheran Church in Harrisonburg, Virginia, a congregation of the Virginia Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Harrisonburg is perhaps 30-35 miles south-southwest of Woodstock.

[Click here](#) for #842–Doc 1

[Click here](#) for the Original Source of #842–Doc 1

Key Understanding: *The founders of the Lutheran Church in America believed in “just war.”* Martin Luther clearly believed in the doctrine of “just war.” The Muhlenbergs – whose patriarch was Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, founder of the Lutheran Church in America – also believed in “just war.”

*1 Chronicles 28:3 (KJV) But God said unto me [King David], **THOU SHALT NOT BUILD AN HOUSE FOR MY NAME, BECAUSE THOU HAST BEEN A MAN OF WAR, AND HAST SHED BLOOD.***

[<< Previous](#)

[Main Page and List of Unsealing Summaries](#)

[Next >>](#)