Lesson 2 Primary Documents: Moral “Improvement”

Document No. 1

Publication: The Philadelphia Inquirer  
Date: September 16, 1863  
Title: “Interesting Services at Camp William Penn”

The large tent used during the revival of 1858, by the Young Men’s Christian Association of this city, having on application of a committee from this encampment, been granted to the colored recruits for school and other purposes of useful character, divine service was held in it last Sunday afternoon, on which occasion nearly all of the men encamped at this place availed themselves of the opportunity of hearing a sermon preached.

There were hundreds of persons drawn tither by the announcement that there would be divine service, all of whom appeared to take a lively interest in the proceedings.

Document No. 2

Publication: The Philadelphia Inquirer  
Date: March 31, 1864  
Title: “Temperance Movement at Camp William Penn”

A day or two since three colored women visited Camp William Penn with a lot of whiskey, which they intended to sell the soldiers at the camp; but strict temperance principles being carried out by the officer in charge, and a vigilant eye kept over those who appear in any way was suspicious, they were soon detected. One of the women had 10 quarts of whiskey on her person. They were all paraded around the camp with a card on their backs on which was written - "I brought whiskey in Camp." After marching through camp for some time, and showing feelings of contrition on account of their violation of the rules, two were let off after promising to do so no more. Before leaving, one of the three became quite insulting, and as a means of punishment her head was shaved, after which she was permitted to take her departure.

Document No. 3

Publication: The Philadelphia Inquirer  
Date: March 1, 1864  
Title: “A Man is Known by the Company He Keeps”

This old saying has a rival in these times, as the following incidents shows: - At Camp William Penn, the other day, a man was found who had smuggled whiskey into the Camp, which is
against the rules, when Colonel Wagner had him dressed up in a barrel, marked on it, "I smuggled whiskey into Camp," showing that a man is known sometimes by the clothes he wears.

Document No. 4

Publication: *The Philadelphia Inquirer*
Date: April 8, 1864
Title: “Camp William Penn”
Location: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The following order was issued on Wednesday in relation to female visitors at Camp William Penn:

Head-Quarters Camp William Penn, April 6, 1864.-
General ORders No. 15 - Female visitors to Camp William Penn will be admitted only between 10:30 and 11:30 A.M. and 3:30 and 4 P.M.

By command of

Lieut.-Col. LOUIS WAGNER
Com. Post.

Document No. 5

Orders
General Order No. 31
Thursday, June 16, 1864
General Orders, NARA Philadelphia

Head Quarters Camp “William Penn”
Chelten Hills, Pa.
June 16, 1864

General Order
No. 31

The Commanding Officer of this Post, having been creditably informed that women of immoral character have been employed in various capacities in this Camp, it is ordered that all women engaged as cooks for Officers messes or in other capacities will furnish to these Head Quarters satisfactory certificates of respectability before they can be so employed.

Those already engaged will be expected to comply with this order within 48 hours or be excluded from within the limits of the camp.

By order of

Louis Wagner
Lt. Col. 88 Pa Vols
Questions

1. Identify several ways in which the white officers of Camp William Penn planned to “improve” the character of their soldiers.
2. Why were women restricted from coming into the camp?
3. What problems did female visitors pose to the directors of Camp William Penn?
4. What is the temperance movement, and why was it important to Colonel Louis Wagner, the commander of the camp?
5. Through a variety of means, Camp William Penn’s organizers attempted to “improve” the character of their soldiers. Do you think soldiers accepted these “improvements”? Did they prefer some to others?