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# Die Shilgrut fun der Tulpehock

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**Tulpehocken Settlement Historical Society**

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**The Pennsylvania Germans**

**An Address**

**Delivered at the Dedication**

**of**

**Palatinate College**

**Myerstown, Pa., Dec. 23, 1875**

**by**

**George F. Baer**

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### Our Contributor

On December 23, 1875, at the dedication of Palatinate College in Myerstown, Pa., the address was delivered by George F. Baer. Title of his oration was THE PENNSYLVANIA GERMANS.

Baer, an outstanding trial lawyer in Reading, also was well known as a successful industrialist, and in much demand as a speaker.

His biographical sketch in M. L. Montgomery's *History of Berks County*, was typical of the high-flown, bombastic language so popular a century ago: "GEORGE FREDERICK BAER. The World knows the name of George Frederick Baer, but in the city of Reading and the State of Pennsylvania his lofty achievements are of vital and permanent significance to the people. In the history of American advance his name stands out in the brilliant galaxy of the great, for in various and important fields he stamped the impress of a forceful, yet wise and discerning spirit, upon the progress of his time . . . His admission to the State and National Supreme Courts gave his fame ever wider scope and placed among his clientele some of the most important interests of his native State."

Baer, whose great-grandfather, Christophel Baer, came to America in 1743, was proud of his Palatine ancestors. In his oration, he emphasized why their descendants should always honor the character and achievements of these German immigrants.

Baer's oration (doubtless made with appropriate gestures) contains many flowery, sentimental phrases, but the Society's editorial board felt it is an interesting example of what our Pennsylvania German ancestors liked to hear in that age.

Palatinate College was founded August 28, 1866, when the Lebanon Classis of the Reformed Church met in the German Reformed Church in Myerstown, Pa. and the resolution was made to purchase the Myerstown Academy for a Classic Institute. The Academy had been founded in 1840 by twenty-one citizens of Myerstown.

When the Civil War began in 1861 the male students and the principal of the Academy, J. H. Bassler, immediately enlisted. The Academy closed in 1867.

On January 21, 1867 the committee for the founding of the Classic Institute reported that the citizens of Myerstown pledged \$7,000 to erect suitable buildings. The Lebanon Classis met again in the church, and the subscriptions increased to over \$10,000. Judge Coover donated three acres of ground as a site. The cornerstone was laid on Whitsunday, June 10, 1867. The school opened in the old Academy buildings on East Main Street. These were used until the new buildings on South College Street were ready in 1868. The school was named Palatinate College.

One reason for establishing the college was a liturgical controversy in the Reformed denomination. The group backing the Myerstown project opposed those who sponsored Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pa. The Palatinate backers also organized Ursinus College in Montgomery county. Although the educational facilities were exceptional, financial troubles were so burdensome that in 1893 consideration was given to selling the college to some other group.

Soon after 1891 there was a denomination-wide difference of view in the Evangelical Association. In 1881, the Conference in Easton, Pa. had opened a Junior College, Schuylkill Seminary, in Reading. In 1886 this was moved to Fredericksburg, Pa., due to generous financial help from Colonel John W. Lick. Differences regarding church government and use of the German language resulted in two denominations seeking control in Fredericksburg.

The United Evangelical Church group were dispossessed of the property by the courts. During Christmas vacation the students, faculty and trustees took over Palatinate College, bringing with them all they could manage. In January 1895 they opened as East Pennsylvania Seminary, later changed to Albright College Institute. In 1898 the name was changed to Albright College, and chartered as

a four year college under state regulations. In 1902, Central Pennsylvania College, another Evangelical College merged with Albright.

In 1922 the two factions that separated in 1891-94 voted to unite, except for 20,000 members in eastern Pennsylvania who objected to the basis of the union, due to the form of government. The anti-merger group tried to keep the school in Myerstown, but the other branch who had developed Schuylkill Seminary in Reading wanted the school moved there.

In 1927 the Pennsylvania Supreme Court decided against the legality of the Myerstown delegation. This opened the way to merge the two schools. The city of Reading won because it had more community support. The name was retained, and the students, faculty and equipment were moved to Reading in 1929, where Albright College is still maintained.

Reading, Pa., Dec. 30th, 1875.

GEO. F. BAER, Esq.,

Dear Sir:—At the late meeting of the Board of Trustees of Palatinate College, the following was unanimously agreed to:

*Resolved, That we tender Geo. F. Baer, Esq., our hearty thanks for the timely, able and eloquent address delivered this day, on the occasion of Palatinate College dedication.*

*Resolved, That we respectfully solicit a copy of the same for publication in the "Mercersburg Review," and in pamphlet form.*

We sincerely hope you will comply with the request. We are sure that the facts therein set forth, and the kind spirit in which they are clothed, are calculated to do much good, and should be generally read.

Very truly, yours, &c.,

H. MOSSER,  
Sec'y of the Board.

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Rev. H. MOSSER, Secretary, &c.

Dear Sir:—In compliance with the wishes of the Board of Trustees, I place the "address" at your disposal. It was hurriedly written, in the midst of arduous professional labors, but I give it to you for what it is worth. The subject ought to be of sufficient general interest to atone for any short comings in its treatment.

Yours, truly,

GEO. F. BAER.

# The Pennsylvania Germans

by George F. Baer

Ladies and Gentlemen:—A descendant of a Palatine, I count it a high privilege to meet with you at the dedication of Palatinate College. Most heartily do I wish the part assigned to me had fallen to some more worthy representative of our people. But let my interest and zeal for whatever concerns the Pennsylvania Germans, offset my unfitness, and my want of thorough preparation be atoned for by a heart whose every pulsation is true to my own people. It speaks well for the future of our people that here in Eastern Pennsylvania a college should be founded and named Palatinate. The impulse which prompts us to honor our ancestors, is one of the noblest of our nature. Next to the Christian principle which requires our walk and conversation to be perfect before the Lord, there is no greater conservator of public morality, nor stricter censor of private action, than the reflection that a given line of conduct will be unworthy of our ancestors, and bring disgrace on our children, even beyond the fourth generation. This respect was in the very beginning implied in the command of the decalogue, "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land the Lord thy God giveth thee."

If it be true that the departed dead can look from their mansions in the skies upon the abodes of mortal men, there will be joy in heaven, that after a century and a half of neglect of, and indifference to the fame of the pious Germans, who for the sake of religious freedom, and rest and peace from strife and war, settled these lands, and made this wilderness to blossom as the rose, their descendants, in recognition and commemoration of their trials and merits, meet to dedicate a college named in honor of them.

No people are so little understood as the Pennsylvania Germans. They have never been given their true place in the history of this continent. They and their descendants who have migrated to different parts of the United States, constitute a large proportion of the population of this country; but the written histories fail to give any fair account of them. They are either completely ignored, or if mentioned, it is in the most casual way, and too often with the sneers and the gibes of narrow-minded men who can see no merit in the German people.

The stories of Plymouth Rock, of Jamestown, and of New Amsterdam, are as familiar as household words, all over the land.

Their minutest details have been carefully preserved and recorded. In history, in poetry and song, in school-books, on every national fast or festival, in the halls of legislation, at the hustings, and in the pulpit the story of the Pilgrim fathers is told; How, because of religious persecutions, a little band of oppressed English Christians fled to Holland, and from thence ventured on the bosom of the great deep, after being storm-tossed and tempest-driven, landed on a bleak, wintry day on Plymouth Rock; how they suffered privation and want, were wasted by famine and consumed by fevers, braved the ferocity of savages, bore untold hardships, to find freedom to worship God, to found an asylum for the oppressed of the earth.

Grand, sublimely grand, was the heroism of the men, and grander still the fortitude of the women and children who composed that Pilgrim band! I bow in respectful deference to the memory of the Pilgrim fathers.

Happy Pilgrims! They have had such poets as Hemans, such orators as Webster to perpetuate in words that shall never be lost, their undying fame; and if the truth of history itself be not sufficient, the fame of their great orator will surely supply the defect, and accomplish and fulfill his proud prediction that, "It shall yet go hard if the three hundred millions of people of China shall not one day hear and know something of the rock of Plymouth too."

I would not take one leaf from the proud chaplet, the sons of New England have woven for their Puritan fathers. I can forget their faults, their shortcomings, their inconsistencies, their crimes, when I remember how much their descendants have done to build up and defend our great fabric of Constitutional American liberty. The great public services of one such man as Webster, is more than a propitiation for a century of mistakes and errors of the people from whom he sprang.

But there is a story untold by the historian, neglected by the poet, forgotten by the many, perverted by the few, of a people whose descendants outnumber the Puritans, which, when truthfully told, is worthy of no mean place alongside the story of Plymouth Rock. I need not hesitate to tell it to this audience; for it is the glorious record of a noble people, you may well exult to call your ancestors.

It starts with the great German Reformation that gave birth to Protestantism. Here at least history gives no uncertain sound. I need not dwell on the scenes of that first great struggle. For almost two centuries those noble old German heroes, with a faith in God that never faltered, defended the faith and principles of Protestantism with their lives and property. The records of history, whether sacred

or profane, contain no more heart-rending accounts of privations, sufferings, persecutions, and martyrdoms, than those which fell to the lot of the defenders of Protestantism in Germany, France and Switzerland. All the sufferings and persecutions the Anglo-Saxons of England inflicted upon the Puritans, were "trifles light as air," compared with the beastly violence, inhuman tortures and fiendish cruelties inflicted by Spanish and French fanaticism on the followers of the Reformers. The direst punishments pagan imagination could create, as the fit doom of the greatest criminals, were in actual practice exceeded by the religious fanaticism of the people who sought to exterminate Protestantism in the countries of the Rhine.

The armies of France after Louis XIV revoked the edict of Nantes (1685,) were let loose upon the Protestants to terrify them into conversion. Whole troops of dissolute soldiers were allowed to practice the most revolting cruelties and frightful barbarities. Not only were the French provinces subjected to these barbarities, but the Palatinate was over-run, and her devoted people treated in the same way.

The French army on the Rhein was ordered to reduce everything to ashes. "The French generals who dared not refuse to obey," writes Voltaire, "were then obliged to drive out in the middle of winter the unfortunate inhabitants of the Palatinate and the neighboring provinces. It was the second time during the reign of Louis XIV this beautiful country was rendered desolate; but the fires with which Turenne had burnt ten cities and twenty villages of the Palatinate were but sparks in comparison with this last conflagration. Spires, Worms, Heidelberg, Manheim, and a multitude of burghs and villages were given to the flames. The Palatinate, the Electorate of Treves and the Margravate of Baden were covered with ruins. Never had the Vandals, who at a former epoch passed over this country, committed such awful atrocities."

The whole country was pillaged; houses were burnt and crops destroyed; men, women and children were left without homes, food or shelter. Not only were they stripped of all earthly possessions and reduced to beggary and starvation, but they were denied the right in their distress to call upon God for protection and help in the only modes of worship and forms of prayer their tongues knew, or their souls could pour forth. The peace of Utrecht (1713), and Rastadt (1714), brought only partial relief. As late as 1719 a decree prohibited entirely the use of the Heidelberg Catechism in the Palatinate.

The loved fatherland, the Rhine, as dear to them then as it still is to the German hearts, who, on the field of battle and in the councils of State, have made "*Die Wacht Am Rhein*" resound through the

world, and have wiped out centuries of contumely and reproach, had no home, no rest, no peace, no future for them. Where shall they go? Europe offered no asylum; England had the heart, but not the space to give homes to so large a migration. There was but one hope. Across the mighty ocean a continent was still to be redeemed from barbarism and made the home of civilized men. Thither they turned their longing eyes. I speak it reverently: The forty years' wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness were not years of greater trial for (God by miracles provided for and protected them), than the years of suffering and privation our German forefathers endured between the repeal of the edict of Nantes, and the beginning of that great migration which transplanted them to this land, across a mightier water than the Jordan. No pillar of cloud by day nor fire by night guided their path; but who can fail to discern, with the eye of faith, the finger of God in guiding them to a province destined to become a goodly inheritance, an empire within itself.

In New England they were still burning witches and persecuting all who dared to differ from or question the narrow tenets of rigid, stern and frigid Puritanism. The prospect for religious freedom there was less inviting than the scalping knife of the savage was terrible. The Roman Catholic settlements, though to their credit be it spoken, the most liberal and tolerant, were not to be trusted, because they were Roman Catholic. The province of Penn alone promised a sure and safe retreat. Thither they fled by the thousands. They settled the "back parts of the province."

On the 17th September, 1717, the Lieutenant-Governor "observed to the Board that great numbers of foreigners from Germany, strangers to our language and constitutions, have lately been imported into this province." In the proceedings of the Council between the Indians and the Government of Pennsylvania, held at Conestoga on the 15th day of March, 1721, the fact that the Palatines undertook to furnish the corn to be presented to the Indians is specially mentioned. They experienced great trouble in securing titles to the lands they improved. The Indians claimed title. An Act of the General Assembly, passed in 1700, prohibited the buying of lands of the natives. The proprietary agents treated them unkindly, and refused to sell them lands. In 1724 they formally petitioned the governor and Council that they "would recommend them (Palatines), to the favorable usage of the proprietaries' agents, and that they might be allowed to purchase lands in this province."

In 1726, Logan, the Secretary of the Province, writes, "We shall soon have a German colony, so many thousands of Palatines are already in the country. They say the proprietary invited people to

come and settle his country."

The extent of this great exodus from the Palatinate to these shores may be gathered from a report to the Synod of Holland, made in 1731, which gives the number of Reformed members of the oppressed inhabitants of Germany, particularly out of the Palatinate, already here, as 15,000, and there were perhaps as many more Lutherans.

Exiles from the home of their birth, martyrs to Protestantism, they only asked permission to settle the back parts of Penn's province. They had known all the horrors of war, of famine, of torture, of oppression. They had suffered all that the ingenuity of civilized men could invent to wrong their fellow-men, and they were perfectly willing to risk finding peace and rest among the savage tribes of the new world. They should have been kindly received and heartily welcomed, for their own sakes, as well, as for the sake of Him in whose cause they had suffered so much. But they were not. For many years they were subjected to great annoyances at the hands of the Government officials of the province.

Here is the action of the Government of Pennsylvania. It speaks for itself: At a meeting of Council, held on the 14th September, 1727, at Philadelphia, "The Governor acquainted the Board that he had called them together at this time to inform them that there is lately arrived from Holland, a ship with four hundred Palatines, as 'tis said, and that he has information they will very soon be followed by a much greater number, who design to settle in the back parts of this province, \*\*\*, and it would be highly necessary to concert proper measures for the peace and security of the province, which may be endangered by such numbers of strangers daily poured in, who, being ignorant of our language and laws, and settling in a body together, make as it were a distinct people from His Majesty's subjects."

"The Board, taking the same into their serious considerations, observe, as these people pretended at first that they fly hither on the score of their religious liberties, and come under the protection of His Majesty, its requisite that in the first place they should take the Oath of Allegiance, or some equivalent to it, to His Majesty, and promise fidelity to the Proprietor and obedience to our established constitution; and therefore, *until some proper remedy can be had from home, to prevent the importation of such numbers of strangers into this or others of His Majesty's Colonies.* 'Tis ordered, &c."

Think of it, ye descendants of the Palatines! The Government of Pennsylvania, in history set down as so peaceful and tolerant, sought to prevent your ancestors fleeing hither, on the score of their religious

liberties, from settling even the "back parts of this province." The world will never cease to admire the sterling integrity of the founder of Pennsylvania, who could not endure the thought of dispossessing the native Indians of their lands without just recompense, and out of pure honesty and philanthropy paid the extravagant price of a string of beads and a belt of wampum for half a State. It was not to be expected that lands bought at such high figures would be given to the exiles from the Palatinate, but for years the proprietary agents refused to *sell* the German exiles any portion of this costly domain. It was part of a determined purpose to prevent the Germans settling in Pennsylvania.

There is a history yet to be written of the landed system of the Proprietaries of Pennsylvania, "the state and management of which," the Assembly as early as 1755, in an address to Governor Morris, declare "is pretty much of a mystery." How the settlers were taxed, not only to meet the expenses of Government and to buy the Indians presents which formed the consideration of extensive grants of lands to the proprietaries, but for "raising to the Proprietary and Governor" large sums of money; how the Acts providing a sinking fund for the bills of credit to raise grants to his Majesty "by a tax on all estates real or personal and taxables within the Province" were required to be amended "to prevent the operation of the proposed tax on the proprietary estate;" how the German settlers were sorely oppressed and burdened, so that in the quarrel (1754), between the Assembly and the Proprietaries, "the Assembly charged the Proprietaries with the design of putting every one under burthens like those of the German peasants;" how the settlers were left to themselves to defend the Province from hostile invasions until the Germans marched to Philadelphia (24th Nov., 1755,) crowded the halls of the Assembly, and demanded that means for their protection and safety be adopted, wisely answering the objections of the Assembly by declaring "that their liberties were of no use when the enemy was taking their life and property;" these are matters of no small interest, and when truthfully told may break the gloss of fame thrown around the Proprietary Government.

Thus far I have given a hurried outline of the general migration of Palatines to this State, and the causes which led to it. There is a particular migration which ought not to be overlooked. It is fitting that it should be referred to at this place and on this day.

When the Palatinate was invaded by the French army, many of the Palatinates sought refuge in England, under the protection of Queen Anne. Their story is best told in the opening words of the petition to the Queen for relief in 1709:

"We, the poor distressed Palatines, whose utter ruin was occasioned by the merciless cruelty of a bloody enemy, the French, whose prevailing power some years ago, like a torrent, rushed into our country, overwhelmed us at once, and not being content with money and with food necessary for their occasions, not only dispossessed us of all support, but inhumanly burnt our homes to the ground, when being deprived of both shelter and food, we were turned into the open fields, driven with our families to seek what shelter we could find, being obliged to make the frozen earth our lodging and the clouds our covering."

An Indian Sachem saw them in London. His savage heart was moved to pity, and he offered them part of his own country in Schoharie, New York. The bounty of Queen Anne provided them the means of transportation. In 1711 they landed in New York, after six months' voyage, seventeen hundred of their number having died at sea. Their treatment in New York is one of the most disgraceful chapters of American history. I cannot take time to give the details. Sent into the wilderness they were only saved from starvation by the friendliness of Indians, who taught them to subsist on roots. When, after years of toil and privation they had improved little farms and constructed dwellings, they were cruelly driven from them, again to become wanderers on the earth. Governor Keith invited them to Pennsylvania. They constructed rude rafts, floated down the Susquehanna to the mouth of the Swatara, then up the Swatara to the fertile plains of the Tulpehocken. Conrad Weiser, a son of one of their most prominent men, came with this migration. They were your ancestors. The story of their migrations, of their sufferings and wrongs, will some day, when the Pennsylvania Germans become fully aroused, form as grand an epic as that of Plymouth Rock. Then, too, the name and fame of Conrad Weiser, the great Indian Interpreter and peace-maker, will be rescued from comparative obscurity, and he will be given the high rank and place in history which he so faithfully earned and so richly merits.

Exhausted and impoverished by wars and persecutions, and wearied of strife, the Palatines settled down in what was then the back parts of Penn's Province. They formed the advanced outposts of civilization; the barrier to protect the English settlements from the tomahawk and firebrand of the Indians. Instead of the peace and security of the Province being endangered by these strangers, ignorant of the English language, (as was so much feared by the Governor of the Province when they landed,) it was steadfastly maintained by them. Here, year after year, with German fortitude and thrift, and with German faith, they toiled ceaselessly; clearing their lands,

building houses, making for themselves and their children comfortable homes, and erecting churches, for they were devout men. They had brought their Bibles and hymn-books with them, and with

*"The sounding aisles of the dim woods rang"*

the melody of the grand old German chorals they had sung on the banks of the Rhine. In a few years they made the Province of Pennsylvania the most prosperous and flourishing of all the colonies. Governor George Thomas, as early as 1747, attributes the great prosperity of the Province to the thrift, industry, energy, and the moral, law-abiding character of the German settlers.

Superstitious it is true they were, but it was the superstition of religion, and not of fanaticism. They burned no old women on the charge of witchcraft. They delivered no friendly Indian benefactor into the hands of savage executioners. No man was denied a home among them because he could not accept their religious belief. It is true, they at first took no part in governmental affairs, because the English language was strange to them, and the Latin petitions and addresses they presented to the government were perhaps as strange to the officials. Yet they steadfastly set their faces against the introduction and perpetuation of human slavery in the Province. Their conduct on this subject extorted from Whittier, the Quaker poet, these words of praise:—

*"And that bold-hearted yeomanry, honest and true,  
Who, haters of fraud, give to labor its due;  
Whose fathers, of old, sang in concert with thine,  
On the banks of Swatara, the songs of the Rhine—  
The German-born Pilgrims, who first dared to brave  
The scorn of the proud, in the cause of the slave"*

When the great struggle for Independence came, they were the steadfast defenders of liberty. They never for a moment swerved in their allegiance to the new government. It could and did rely implicitly on the German counties of Pennsylvania, for aid and support, when many of the neighboring settlements were disaffected and not to be trusted.

If history fails to give them credit for their real deserts, it records no wrongs, no outrages, no persecutions, no deeds of violence and crime for which their descendants need blush or bow their heads in shame. In their lives and works they came as near to the measure of the apostle, as a body of men well can:

*"Cleaving to that which is good," "not slothful in business," "fervent in spirit," "serving the Lord," "rejoicing in hope," "patient*

in tribulation," "given to hospitality," "minding not high things," "condescending to men of low estate," "recompensing no man evil for evil," "providing things honest in the sight of all men," "living peaceably with all men."

More than one hundred and fifty years have passed since these pious, persecuted Palatines, destitute and penniless, settled these lands. Tradition has it, that there was an ancient prophecy current among the Palatines, at the time they were so sorely persecuted, that God would bless the Germans in a foreign country. Behold the fulfillment of the prophecy! Look you out on this fair land! See the beautiful rivers, the well-watered plains, the thriving cities, the rich pastures, the productive farms, the comfortable homes, the wealth, the great industries, the long lines of railroads and telegraphs that cover it like a network! See the hills filled with untold mineral wealth! Behold the pleasant landscape! The climate is healthy. The air is salubrious. The skies rival those of Italy. Truly it is a goodly land, flowing with better things than milk and honey. It has been the fruitful nursery of a hardy, honest race of men. This is the home of the descendants of the persecuted Palatines. This is the land God gives them in exchange for the land of the Rhine. Dear as the Rhine is to the German hearts, it is barrenness itself compared with this. It is a nobler land than the land of the Rhine, for it is a land of freedom. Truly God has been merciful unto our people and blessed them, and caused His face to shine upon them.

It is passing strange that after our German people have done so much to build up a country, after their social organism has produced a population so thrifty, orderly, solid, substantial, law-abiding and meritorious, the same prejudices which were excited when they first migrated here, should continue. With rare exceptions it is the misfortune of those who do not understand German to misrepresent and take a narrow and unfavorable view of our people. We are used to the jeers and sneers of small men, but it is hard to bear the defamation of a historian like Parkman who, in his history of the Pontiac conspiracy, says:

"The counties east of the Susquehanna supported a mixed population, among whom was conspicuous a swarm of German peasants, who had been inundating the country for many years past, and who for the most part were dull and ignorant boors, a character not wholly inapplicable to the great body of their descendants."

Indeed, this defamation has gone so far that some of our people, when thrown among English-speaking people or educated at New England colleges, grow ashamed of their German origin and oft-times

make ludicrous attempts to Anglicize their names. The day will come when they will wish their names still had the broad German accent.

To this almost general misconception and belittling of our people by men whose veins contain no German blood, there is a noble exception. Years ago, a man of Scotch descent, of great distinction among his own people, saw by the pure light of his extraordinary mental vision the real merits and the true character of the Pennsylvania Germans. With a self-abnegation that is without a parallel, he left high position to cast his lot among and devote his life to the task of arousing the latent energies of the Pennsylvania Germans, and to the development of the great gifts entrusted to their keeping. At a time when Protestantism was threatened with disintegration into a thousand illogical and narrow schemes of religious faith, he came like a prophet of God, and by the most masterly presentation of Christian truth the age has seen, restored the theology of the Reformation, and developed from it the true churchly principles of Protestantism. But I mean to speak of him in a narrower light. It was his influence on our people that first aroused them to a full realization of their mental and moral capacities and smothered greatness. The great educational work which has been steadily going forward among them is largely due to him. The foundation of this very college can be as certainly traced to him, as the fountain can be reached by following the stream. The Germans of Pennsylvania owe him a debt of gratitude which they can never pay. His fame will be as lasting as the race whose cause he championed. Need I name the man? Your descendants will wonder what manner of men their ancestors were who failed thoroughly to appreciate the extraordinary abilities and superior merits of Dr. John W. Nevin, for among the men of this century there is none greater.

I have not wearied you with these things simply because the location and name of this college naturally suggest them, nor because the truth of history required our ancestors to be vindicated from the charge often made, that they were a band of mercenary adventurers ignorant boors, and stupid peasants, without any redeeming traits of character. My object in calling attention at this time to the true reasons and causes which led to the migration of our people from banks of the Rhine to this State, to their great prosperity and good behaviour since here, to the fact that the English-speaking people have utterly failed to understand, or to find any good in them, was to show that there is a radical difference of character between the two races; one which lies much deeper than the difference in language, and therefore that the system of education which meets the



wants of the one, must necessarily fail to properly develop and educate the other.

There is something very attractive and plausible in Puritan principles and theories. But they are too superficial, narrow and contracted to suit the broad, comprehensive grasp, and the thoroughness of the German intellect. A tree will not attain to vigorous growth unless the soil and condition of its growth correspond to the law of its development. It may thrive as an exotic, but exotics are only beautiful to gaze upon. They are of no practical use. So, too, in education. A man can only be properly educated when placed under influences which harmonize with his character, and assist in developing his latent powers. Any system of education which makes no account of the traditions, the habits of thought, and the general character and surroundings of those to be educated, falls far short of what it ought to be.

The great secret of the success of New England in impressing her ideas on the age, and wielding so large an influence in the affairs of this continent, lies in the fact that in her educational systems she has made full account of the traditions, the ideas, and the peculiarities of her people. The descendants of the Puritans have been educated as Puritans. Students from all parts of the United States return from New England colleges, saturated with New England history, Puritan philosophy, Puritan ideas and prejudices. I find no fault with this system of New England education. I mean rather to commend it, because exactly suited to the wants of her people. What we need in Pennsylvania is a system of education which shall be broader and more liberal than hers, but shall certainly be just as successful as hers has been, in bringing out the traditions and history of our people—in developing and propagating the philosophy and systems of thought peculiar to our Germanico-American race. In this way only can we hope to fulfill our destiny.

The very first great lesson to be taught to our people is this: That as long as we cling to the German language, in the sense of preferring it to English, the development of our people will be retarded. It is no question of merit between two languages. The language of this country is unalterably fixed. The English is the language of the government, of legislation, of courts, of business, of newspapers; it follows that it must be the language of the literature of the country. No other language can supplant it. No literature printed in any other language can ever reach the masses, or become known and read, as literature must be, in this age of invention and learning, by those who desire to keep pace with the onward progress of the world. To seek to ignore this fact and all that is implied in it, is simply to commit

a great crime against our race. Pure German can never become a general language here. As for Pennsylvania German, it is a mere dialect, the *patois* of the Palatinate, with a sprinkling of English words. It is a mere vulgar delusion, to suppose that it can be elevated to the dignity of a language, capable of being taught, and used in writing as a medium of expressing thoughts. It can never become a written language. It has never been used except in conversation. The Pennsylvania Germans would not for one moment tolerate its use in the pulpit. Think of the German in Luther's translation of the Bible, or in those grand old chorals and hymns being changed to Pennsylvania German, and read and sung in church, and that, too, in this age! It is impossible to create a literature in Pennsylvania German. The whole literature of the country must be made available and accessible to our people. If this is not done, all educational efforts among them might as well be stopped. It may be necessary to teach German along with English, for the purpose of facilitating and aiding them in acquiring English; to enable them the better to understand and comprehend the best writers and ablest thinkers of the great Germanic people. But their general education must be English. They must be taught to speak and write good English, if they are ever to make an impression on this continent; if they are ever to reach the power, influence, and position which justly belongs to them. No man need ever fear the eventual ascendancy of the Germanic race. Wherever it has been true to itself, it has demonstrated the greatest capacity for leadership in government, science, arts, theology and politics. But on this continent, the first step towards equality and ultimate ascendancy, necessarily involves a change of language.

Nearly all of the misconceptions of the true character of our people come from the tenacity with which they have clung to a language which is foreign to the ruling, active, and literary language of the country. One-half—more than one-half—of the best descendants of our German people have been driven from the churches of the Reformation by the obstinate refusal of our fathers to know any other than the German tongue in worship. It is a natural prejudice, but one unworthy of our race. A man does not lose his German character, his German faith, his German worth and thrift, his hard common sense, by ceasing to use the German tongue, no more than a Jew ceases to be a Jew when he forsakes Hebrew.

Without attempting to define in detail what the educational system suited to our people should be, let me briefly refer to several requisites:—

• First—It must be Christian. Any other will be false to the traditions and character of our people. I do not mean that it shall be sectarian, in the sense of turning over all who cannot adopt the faith of the Germans, to the uncovenanted mercies of God. But positive, practical Christianity must be taught. A grace-bearing, historical Christianity, that holds fast to the form of sound words, and is not swept away by every wind of doctrine. I do not know what greater good the Pennsylvania Germans could do for this continent than to hold fast and extend their childlike, steadfast, trusting faith in God.

We are living in an age of rationalism and materialism. Darwin, Huxley and Tyndall, mighty men of science, are, like the fabled giants, trying to scale the heavens and dethrone our God. It is true they thunder from masked batteries, but the fire is only the more destructive, because hidden. Now, more than ever, it is demonstrated that faith is the gift of God. The people who have this great gift, must take care to cultivate and preserve it. Our ancestors held fast to it through good and evil report. Let us teach it to our children, that blessings may continue to follow our people.

Prof. Tyndall, when told that Agassiz refused to accept the theories of the Darwinian school, accounted for it by the fact that he was descended from a race of theologians. It is the admission of the cautious man of science that the gift of faith descends from parent to child, and is full of significance. I would not limit the bold ventures of men who seek to pry into the hidden secrets of the universe, or like

*"Expertus vacuum Daedalus aera  
Pennis non homini datis,"*

but in religion I feel like heeding Jeremiah's advice: "Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."

Secondly—It must be liberal. The times foretold by Daniel—when "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased," are upon us. Fifty years more like the past fifty will change the very face of the earth. This is the age of progress—

*"We are living, we are dwelling  
In a grand and awful time,  
In an age on ages telling  
When to live, is to be sublime."*

The liberal education demanded for this age requires not only the mastery of the learning of the past, the assimilation of all that is good and true wherever found, without limitation of creed or race, but

the capacity to develop things new. It must be as broad and general as the casing air.

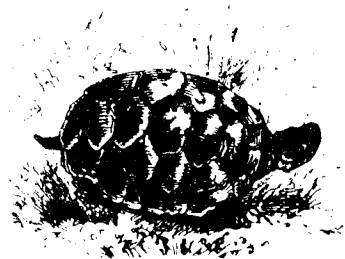
Lastly—It must be true to the spirit of our institutions and the theory of our government. The crucial tests to which free government can be subjected, are not all passed through. It is no small problem to nationalize the many men of different races, countries and creeds who constitute our population. It will always require the wisest acts of the best statesmen to harmonize the conflicting material interests of this country because of the diversity of climate and production. Worse than all, demagogues will be found endeavoring to stir up religious strife and sectional animosities. It will be an evil day for our land when religion shall enter into politics. The history of the world is but a confirmation of Christ's teaching, that His kingdom was not of this world. The most intolerant governments the civilized world has seen, have been those ruled by religious bigotry and priestcraft. Whenever the clergy exercise or control temporal power, it is a melancholy truth, that they imbibe the zeal of Saint Peter, draw their swords and set about cutting off ears. If ever the evil hour comes, that makes the affairs of State a football between the different religious denominations, the hour will date the beginning of the downfall of this republic. The common sense, the peaceful, conservative character, the liberal, religious views of the Pennsylvania Germans, who, whilst preferring their own forms of faith, see much that is good in Catholicism, as well as in the various forms of Protestantism, and regard them all as brethren in Christ; and the German love of home, and of his neighbor, must exert a powerful influence in allaying strife, and in preserving and perfecting our great system of free government. They may yet prove the leaven to leaven the whole lump.

I have no fears for the future of the Pennsylvania Germans. Under circumstances most unfavorable to intellectual development, they have already given Pennsylvania a number of her best Governors and wisest statesmen. Their patriotism, courage, and ability to command, has been demonstrated in every war this country has known. Whenever entrusted with power, they have shown themselves honest, faithful and capable. They have given to theology the soundest thinkers and most scholarly men. In every branch of art, in every department of science and knowledge, you can find scores of prominent men whose names indicate their German origin, and whose lineage can be traced back to the German settlers of Pennsylvania.

A people that have done so much, weighed down by a strange language, and cut off from general literature, must have within them

the healthy germs of great intellectual and moral vigor. They have subdued the wilderness. They have restored their wasted fortunes. They are far removed from penury and want. Riches and honor belong to them, because they have earned them. They have by their lives and works shown themselves honest, industrious, lawabiding citizens. They have preserved their vigor of mind and body. Now, if they will in earnest turn attention to the thorough education of their children, the day will come, if it is not already here, when no man will wish for a greater birthright, than to be counted one of the descendants of the Pennsylvania Germans.

To the high and noble work of educating the descendants of the Palatines, and of the Germans of Eastern Pennsylvania, let this college be dedicated today. May the God who watched over our people, and brought them safely over the great deep, and blessed them in this land, with wealth and children, watch over, and rule it, that it may become a co-worker with similar institutions, in educating, elevating and developing into the full stature of perfect men and women, the youth who crowd its halls.



Tulpehocken - land of the turtles

at Mennonite College  
Goshen, Indiana  
9/4/2000