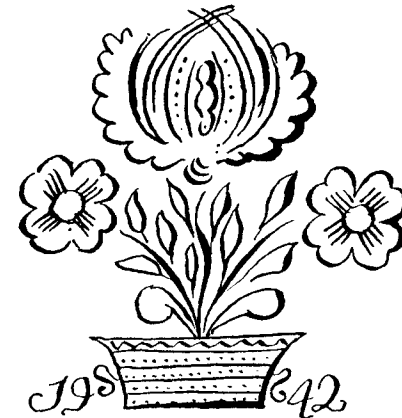


THE PENNSYLVANIA GERMANS

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unity. In the eighteenth century sense the term German could be applied to parts of Switzerland, Luxembourg, Alsace, Lorraine and the Low Countries as readily as to Bavaria, Prussia or Saxony. Politically there was no Germany.

A large group of continental Europeans who settled in Pennsylvania were designated as "Dutch," a corruption of the ancient word Deutsch, meaning, the "folk." The causes which led to the emigration of these people can not be grouped under one head. Swiss Mennonites suffered economic persecution in the Old World because of their religious beliefs. Desolation gripped the hearts of the dwellers on the lower Rhine when their lands were laid waste by recurring religious wars. Moravians or Unitas Fratrum, left Bohemia in order to secure religious liberty and to proselyte among heathen. Schwenkfelders, forced out of Silesia because of their religious tenets, joined in mass migrations to the New World. Thousands were lured by the glowing pictures of bounteous harvests, and other thousands endured the privations of redemptioner ships in the hope of improving their worldly station. Scoundrels and saints, charlatans and scholars, impostors and earnest zealots joined in the exodus, "Wir reisen nach Amerika."

In 1681 King Charles II discharged some of the debts which had been incurred by his impecunious father by granting a vast tract of land in America to William Penn. By a deft stroke of advertising, the deprecating term "Penn's Woods" was changed to the euphonious Pennsylvania and a large scale campaign was under way to induce immigration into the young colony. Only by converting his "Woods" into farms and building lots could the proprietor hope to realize financial profit for the wilderness that he received from his king instead of the eighty thousand pounds sterling, which Admiral Penn, William's father, had lent to Charles Stuart.

Colonists had to be procured to settle the Penn domains. Englishmen were already pouring into all of the neighboring provinces. For decades before Penn became the owner of his lands westward from the Delaware, the Proprietors of New

York, New Jersey and Maryland were beckoning Englishmen to populate their holdings in the New World. Penn sought a new source of supply. True, the English Quakers provided a nucleus for a settlement, but their numbers were too small to penetrate the "Woods" with their dwellings, and their mercantile proclivities fastened them to the seaport towns. Farmers, craftsmen, and doughty woodsmen were needed to feed the city and to supply the merchants with goods for their seagoing trade.

William Penn had traveled in Germany. His mother was Low Dutch and through his continental associations he had formed a high opinion of the husbandry of Rhenish farmers. The Mennonites and other members of the plain sects held many religious beliefs which were similar to those of the Quakers. "They are very near the Truth," Penn declared in a letter to his confidant, James Logan. Here were desirable settlers for his far-off wilderness! Consequently his invitation went forth. It spoke a message of hope to the forlorn victims of centuries of strife; it proclaimed a new chance for those who wished to shake the dust of the Old World from their boots, and sanctuary to the harried devotees of persecuted faiths. For almost a century thereafter the Germanic states were being depopulated by mass emigrations, Pennsylvania bound.

Less than one year after Penn extended his invitation, Francis Daniel Pastorius led his band of devout Mennonites to America and established the village of Germantown on the outskirts of Philadelphia. Because this early group came from the neighborhood of Crefeld not far from the Holland border, there were many Low Dutch persons in the first settlement. Within a few years of their arrival this group of Germans had established a non-English community in the New World. Houses were built of native stone; garden plots extended along the rear of the houses—gardens which furnished Philadelphia with a variety of vegetables unknown in England at that time. Soon a linen industry was established; a paper mill, the first

in America, was built by William Rittenhouse; spreading northward into the valley of the Schuylkill these people discovered the iron ore, one of the great treasures underlying Penn's wilderness.

The German immigrants took an immediate interest in the affairs of their new homeland. Within six years of their settlement, the Germantown folks, led by Pastorius and the brothers Abraham and Dirck Op den Graeff, issued the first protest against Negro slavery ever uttered in North America. This declaration came one hundred and seventy-five years before the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation.

For thirty years after the arrival of the first band of German Mennonites the new arrivals from Europe were members of the plain sects. New settlements were formed along the Skippack Creek in Montgomery County and in widely scattered sections of Lancaster County where the newcomers found limestone soil whose merits they understood so well.

The early years of the eighteenth century saw the beginnings of the great Palatine migrations. Like an index finger pointing northward to Holland, the Rhine River pointed the way to freedom for thousands of distressed Palatines who had suffered a long series of economic disasters and religious persecutions. Rotterdam, Holland, was the first stage of a pilgrimage which led them to England, there to await transports to carry them to the New World.

The first large group of Palatine refugees was sent to New York Province. It was planned to engage them by a system of mass indenture in the manufacture of naval stores for Great Britain. They were settled in seven villages on both sides of the Hudson River. After two years of toil the project was abandoned by its sponsors, the British Board of Trade, and the refugees were forced to shift for themselves.

In the Valley of the Schoharie, near Middleburg, New York, the wanderers established new settlements only to find that their titles to these lands were insecure and eviction once again threatened them, because Dutch patrols produced evidence

to show that the Schoharie lands were included in their original patents.

Pennsylvania was the land of promise to these eighteenth century Israelites. Scouts sent to the valleys of Pennsylvania in 1722 reported that the land between the Susquehanna and Schuylkill rivers was good and that the heirs of the great benefactor, William Penn, would welcome new settlers. With the aid of some Indian guides a vanguard of thirty-three Schoharie families found their way to the eastern reaches of the north branch of the Susquehanna River. There they constructed rafts, placed their families and belongings on them and floated down that broad river into Pennsylvania. They found their Canaan in Berks and Lebanon counties, and in the succeeding years their countrymen in Schoharie joined them in their new and, as time has proved, permanent settlements. Most of these immigrants were members of the Protestant denominations—Lutheran and Reformed—and not of the plain sects.

Letters went back to the German states painting glowing pictures of Pennsylvania and urging relatives and friends to seek their fortunes in the New World. After 1727 German immigrants paid little attention to the efforts of other English colonies to attract them. Attempts to route them to New York or Maryland failed. As soon as the immigrants landed at New York or St. Mary's they set their faces in the direction of Pennsylvania.

In 1727 the Provincial Assembly of Pennsylvania passed a law requiring all immigrants to take an oath of allegiance to the British Crown and to sign the ship's register. Consequently there are records available for study in determining the number of Germans who entered the province by way of the port of Philadelphia. In the year 1751 sixteen vessels brought 4,134 German immigrants to Philadelphia. In the peak year 1749, more than six thousand emigrants from Württemberg, Zweibrücken, Mannheim, the "Pfalz," Switzerland, and other German states found new homes in America.

In a mass migration such as this it was not to be expected that any selective process was at work winnowing the good from the bad. With the devout followers of conscience came charlatans and rogues of the worst sort. Thirty scholars who were honored with degrees from German universities came to Penn's colony along with hundreds of illiterate peasants who could do no more than place their mark on the ship's register. The indenture system offered huge profits to the masters of the vessels which dumped their human cargo on American shores. A group of traffickers in human bodies came into being. They were known as the Newlanders. They wove their slimy trail through the German states, acting as procurers for the ship masters, enticing hopeful victims to the filthy tubs which herded human souls in their holds like dumb cattle.

Proud merchants on High Street in Philadelphia viewed the inpouring of bedraggled foreigners with alarm. Benjamin Franklin characterized them as "Palatine Boors," declaring that German gaols were swept to populate the province of the Penns. Parliament was asked to fix limits to the immigration of these people. A dreaded disease in colonial Philadelphia was named "Palatine Fever" because it was believed to be brought to the city by the ill-fed, ill-clothed and ill-smelling immigrants from south Germany. A pesthouse was erected in 1743 where all ships bearing redemptioners were quarantined. Little wonder therefore that men like Franklin spoke with scorn.

Fanwise from Philadelphia these strangers in a strange land spread northward into the valleys of the Schuylkill, the Perkiomen, the Lehigh. Their settlements reached the Tulpehocken and Swatara where they met with those of the Palatines who had come into Pennsylvania by way of New York Province. In these valleys they found limestone soil and black walnut trees, both familiar signs of nature's richest land. There was no "starving time" among the German settlers of Pennsylvania. They could smite the earth and force it to feed them. Most of them were farmers, bred in the culture of intensive tilling of the soil, familiar with nature's whims and conversant with her

language. Lacking food they could find it, above and under the soil, hanging from trees as fruit and nuts or ornamenting bushes as berries. Given sufficient growing time they could bid nature serve them up a bountiful harvest.

The improvement in their economic status caused Franklin and others who had doubted, to speak more kindly of the newcomers as the eighteenth century moved into its sixth decade. The naturalization of the German immigrants served to make them, as a group, a political factor. Their votes were courted by both political parties of the young province. The Quakers, known as the Sticklers, held most of the elective offices in the colony prior to 1756. The deputy governors sent to Pennsylvania by William Penn's heirs were not Quakers, and generally they found themselves at odds with their assemblies on questions which called for military defense of the province. Persons who favored the governor's policies were known as "Governor's men."

In these controversies the vast body of Germans usually sided with the Quaker party. For the Mennonites, Amish and Dunkards, the teachings of George Fox had much in common with the founder of the sects, Menno Simons. They too were conscientious objectors to war and opposed to the taking of oaths or bringing suits at law. However, the sect people were very much in the minority among the German settlers after the great influx which began in 1740 and continued until the French and Indian War of 1756. Those who were not members of the sects also preferred the Quakers' policies. Military operations would result in higher taxation and these newcomers did not relish paying taxes. Then, too, there was a general conviction that the Quakers were the rightful masters of the province. Had not William Penn spread his sheltering cloak over the forlorn and oppressed of the Old World and provided them with good homes in his wilderness?

Self-interest should have impelled the German settlers to support the governor's party. Their farmsteads were close to the frontier where there was always danger of an Indian up-

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