

Early Life of the Pennsylvania Germans



EARLY LIFE OF THE
PENNSYLVANIA
GERMANS

BY

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EUROPEAN BACKGROUNDS OF THE GERMANS SETTLED IN PENNSYLVANIA

THE HISTORY OF THE PENNSYLVANIA GERMANS is a most interesting subject. It began more than three hundred years ago, and the end is not in sight.

One of many things to be remembered about the people called Pennsylvania Germans (or Dutch), is that they came here of their own free will from the Old World, and supported themselves without any help from what might be called the mother country.

Not so in other instances, viz: Spain was in Florida; France had a good chunk of Canada and Louisiana; Holland was in New York; England was firmly rooted in Massachusetts and Rhode Island; Sweden had a foothold in New Jersey, and the governments of those respective countries pushed the colonization ideas to the limit.

It has been estimated that before the Revolution there were 100,000 Germans and Swiss in Pennsylvania alone, with many others in Georgia, the Carolinas, Virginia, Maryland and New York.

The Germany of that day (the Germany still to be), was made up of a number of more or less loosely related independent principalities, etc., without a central government such as had England, Spain and France. Thus it was that these many thousands of pioneering people, the cream of her population, fell under the influence of other governments; the mother country did nothing toward colonizing. This policy of neglect was so unlike the Germany of a hundred years later.

Excuses have been offered, the main one being the demoralized condition of the country after the terrible religious and civil wars which were so common at that time in Europe. About half of the German-speaking people finally were merged with the peoples of Hungary and Bohemia, forming Austria, the other half being split up into small kingdoms, or principalities, etc.

The Reformation.--One of the real reasons for the original and almost spontaneous emigration to America goes back to the Reformation. It was after that upheaval that the Protestant movement grew ever stronger, until through its many clashes with other faiths and civil authorities, many of these believers in the new freedom of worship, cast longing eyes on the possibilities of the New World.

The German people who went through the Thirty Years' war experienced all of the ravages that war can bring, since most of those old conflicts usually resulted in untold misery and suffering unto death. They did not have in those early days the all 'round type of warfare that we now know, but history records the damage to the physical man, to his mind, and to Mother Earth.

Before the Thirty Years' war the peasants enjoyed life about as well as any ordinary folk, for they had plenty of this world's goods; they could store-by for the "rainy days" that might come--that surely did come.

Soon everything was to be destroyed--everything but the indomitable spirit of men and women. They, like people in our most recent war, lived in caves, in marshes, woods--everywhere but in houses, or barns. Destruction was so complete that it took two hundred years to rebuild as many houses as were destroyed, and as for the population, more than that many years to reach the same level.

The Palatinate.--Much of the population which we know as Pennsylvania German today, came from a section of Germany called the Palatinate. Its inhabitants were descended from a group of German tribes called the Rheinfranken, with an admixture of Alemanni.

There seems to be little doubt but that the farmers in the Palatinate section of Germany were the world's best farmers. They were in their day, but their offspring in America are not such bad farmers by whatever method of comparison.

The great water-ways of Europe traversed their lands, and travelers said that they not only could farm well, but credited them with a reputation for keen wit, indomitable industry and a high degree of intelligence.

About three hundred years ago, during the years 1635-36 there was great suffering and misery due to the wars and famine. The eating of grass and roots, even cannibalism, was noted.

Another "peace" came along in 1649, at Westphalia, and the map was settled to the satisfaction (supposedly) of three faiths--Catholics, Lutherans and Reformed.

This was of short duration for the Palatinate had become as desolate as the desert. But nature would have her way, and again farms produced, people built new houses, and church memberships grew. Under Karl Ludwig, the Mennonites, who had heretofore been outrageously oppressed, were given freedom of worship. These people knew how to farm, and before long there was prosperity in the land.

War Between France and Holland.--In 1674-75 war between France and Holland brought destruction again to the Palatinate. Again in 1685 to 1689 more devastation for these poor unfortunates, who were always caught in civil or religious embroilments that were so bitter and destructive as to stagger the imagination; or, to compare it with the latest tortures we know of, we need but look at the bestial butchery of World War II. This is fresh in mind, and must picture what had happened long before. That is war!

It was at this time (1685) that Lutherans and Reformed were pretty much at loggerheads, and much blood had been spilt. This went on for some time, and it pleased the Catholics, no end.

There was little left of the Protestant church in the Palatinate after the cessation of the wars between France and Germany, ending with a peace treaty at Ryswick in 1697. Most of the property of the Protestant churches was taken over by the State, or more specifically the Catholic church.

Protestants were tolerated, more or less, but they enjoyed little rights in the matter of church property, and were compelled to bend the knee at the passing of the Host.

Exclusion from the Palatinate.--Up to this time many Huguenots, Walloons, and Swiss Mennonites had found their way into the Palatinate; now they were driven from the land; some went to Prussia, others to Holland, and some to America.

Inasmuch as the conditions brought about by the warring civil and church leaders extended to Zweibrücken and Würtemberg, and others in the vicinity of the Palatinate, the inhabitants of those parts started the trek to other parts and lands.

Switzerland was a country which was spared the horrors of the several wars. It received oppressed peoples, churchmen, and others, from neighboring borders. But not everything was milk and honey in little Switzerland.

Until the French Revolution Switzerland was little better than an aristocracy, with the offices in the hands of the same families for generations. Menial services of all sorts, high taxes, and other complaints gave impetus to the idea among the persecuted that if there could be freedom to worship as they pleased elsewhere, there they would go.

Mennonite Beginnings.--Much of the background of the Mennonite movement is to be traced directly to Switzerland. This movement was active back in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and records indicate attempts to root these people out because of their refusal to bear arms, a trait they adhere to today with all the tenacity they can command.

The government in time of war can make Mennonite and Amish boys rake leaves, but can't get them to bear arms!

One student reaches the conclusion that the Amish and Mennonite roots go back to the days of the early Christians who sought haven in the catacombs at Rome.

The Reformed churchmen didn't like the Mennonites from the beginning, and many of the latter were subjected to persecution of all sorts, some being sold as galley slaves to the Turks.

Mennonite communities had existed in the Palatinate since 1527, and to these places like-believers in Switzerland would flee across frontiers; by 1671 a considerable emigration took place when seven hundred persons left their native home to settle on the banks of the Rhine.

We are now approaching the time when these early Mennonite settlers in the Palatinate and the newcomers agreed to help their compatriots in Switzerland who left there in after years--willingly, or otherwise. They finally found themselves under such a heavy yoke that they decided on a large movement of their people to America, and the settlement at Pequea, in Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, resulted.

Zürich and Berne, in Switzerland, published decrees forbidding emigration, the latter city rescinding a policy previously planned, for a Swiss colony to settle in Georgia. Subsequently some Germanic people did come to America, through Georgia, and up through the Carolinas.

The main reasons for emigration from Europe to America, by the Germans, motivated and included also the Huguenots; the latter got into this picture by reason of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, by Louis XIV, in France, in 1685, when many of France's most substantial citizens went to Holland, Germany and Switzerland, all in fear of their lives.

In connection with the subject of enforced slavery it may be noted that Huguenots from France were likewise sold as galley slaves. In 1896, Henry S. Dotterer, editor of "Historical Notes Relating to the Pennsylvania Reformed Church," was making some researches in the archives of Dortrecht, Holland. Here he discovered a printed list of Huguenot galley slaves who had been released by the order of Louis XIV of France, on condition that they leave the realm.

There was another list of many who were not so lucky. This list numbers 39,336 names of Huguenots who were not released! And this is but a fraction of those who were enslaved.

Historians, almost with one accord, agree that this exodus caused such a severe blow to the economic, religious and other forms of expression common to man, to the country of France, that it finally led to the first Revolution. The depriving of her people of the right to worship as they pleased caused France a mortal blow from which she never recovered.

Penn Advocates Emigration.--William Penn traveled in Germany, and his pamphlets describing his "Holy Experiment" (published in English, Dutch and German), were scattered in large numbers in parts of Holland and Germany.

Queen Anne and her "Golden Book" caused a flood of Palatines to proceed to London in 1709. From this movement developed the settlements about the Schoharie and Mohawk in New York, and later the Tulpehocken, in Berks county, Pennsylvania.

In addition to stirring up of interest by Penn and others, once the early arrivals were here, they sent some capable person back to the Fatherland every so often, to tell others of this new land of great opportunity. Likewise, the ship-owners lost no time in noting the increase in their profits, and they sent out agents to intrigue more and more people to sail the great Atlantic, often making statements about the easy life in Pennsylvania that were far from the truth.

These Germanic people, the Swiss and Huguenot elements, constitute the people who, generally speaking, came to America's shores before the Revolution, or before 1800. They form the back-bone of what are called "the Pennsylvania Germans," or "Dutch." Social and literary groups require heredity in their organization to be based on immigrant arrivals before the year 1800.

Those Germans who came soon after that year have been well assimilated, but after that date new arrivals are not counted as being from the same parts of Germany, nor with the same general characteristics and aspirations.

Later arrivals found more room in cities to the West, and they contributed nothing to the art, culture, or customs of Lancaster and the many other counties in Pennsylvania settled by those who arrived on the earlier dates.



IMMIGRATION TRENDS ARE DIVIDED INTO THREE GENERAL PERIODS

The German Immigration Into Pennsylvania was by far greater than in any of the other States previously mentioned, but, for the purposes of keeping the record straight, when we speak of the "Pennsylvania Germans" we might just as readily include the Germans settled early in the history of Maryland, Virginia and New York.

The Germans settled in those states had the same causes for leaving the Fatherland, and, in the case of Maryland and Virginia, many were for some time residents of Pennsylvania before removing southward.

As mentioned previously, the pioneers arrived here in the main prior to the Revolution. They came in what may be called three waves: 1683-1710, beginning with the founding of Germantown to the coming of the Swiss Mennonites; 1710-1727, at which time immigration was reaching large proportions, and when publishing of statistics was begun; 1727-1776, at the outbreak of the Revolution, which, of course, put an end for the time being to all immigration.

Few came during the first period, the second increasingly, so that some sort of control seemed in order, and the third brought in large numbers.

The First Period; 1683-1710.--Like the Pilgrims, the Pennsylvania Germans had their own "ship," for in the year 1683 the "Concord" landed at Philadelphia with a small number of German and Dutch Mennonites, who came from Crefeld and Kriegsheim. It is with this group that the interesting story of the Pennsylvania German people begins.

Like many other great movements of history, religion was back of this small beginning.

Already we have noted that William Penn was greatly instrumental in that movement which came to make the Province named for him a noble experiment in religion, the arts and sciences.

As we know, the politicians and ruling families of England and the continent always found it convenient to have some sort of "religion" handy, for emergencies, if not the motivating principles of their lives.

The Reformation did to England what it did to other countries--it upset the apple-cart. It should be explained that in the case of the Lutheran church in Germany, its counterpart in England was the Church of England; the Reformed (or Calvinists) were matched by the Puritans (or Presbyterians); the continental Mennonites, or Anabaptists, were like unto the English Quakers and Baptists.

The Quakers Were Like the Mennonites.--Barclay says of George Fox, founder of the Quakers: "We are compelled to view him as the unconscious exponent of the doctrines, practice, and discipline of the ancient and stricter party of the Dutch Mennonites." The late judge, and one time Governor of the Commonwealth, Samuel W. Pennypacker, a

keen student of history, says: "To the spread of Mennonite teachings in England we therefore owe the origin of the Quakers and the settlement of Pennsylvania."

Penn was a zealous missionary, making at least two trips to Holland and Germany, the second in 1677. His companions were George Fox, Robert Barclay, and George Keith, and they landed at Briel, in Holland, with the purpose in mind "to extend the principles and organization of the Quakers in Holland and Germany."

Penn visited the German cities of Frankfort-on-the-Main, Kriegsheim (near Worms) on the Upper Rhine, and Mühlheim-on-the-Ruhr, and we can thus appreciate why it was that residents in those parts were among the first to come to settle what is now Germantown, in Philadelphia.

Penn Awarded Grant of Land.--Charles II, of England, owed Admiral Penn, father of William, a debt of £16,000 sterling, and to rid himself of this obligation the king tendered, in 1681, an immense tract of territory to the son.

The wording of the grant caused some bitter fighting at times between men from Maryland and Pennsylvania, since it was mentioned in the grant that the land was situated between New Jersey and Maryland.

The land was named "Pennsylvania" by the king, over the protests of Penn.

Having thus fallen heir to such a vast holding of real estate, the Quaker who was fired with a missionary spirit, planned what he called a "Holy Experiment" in government. Here was to be the nearest thing to Eutopia thus far planned on earth; religious and political freedom should here be the lot of all.

To make the experiment, he set about at once to attract the necessary colonists; these are the ones mentioned above, in the Valley of the Rhine. Numbers of them remembered their visitor of years before, and it was but a short time until their minds were made up, and they were enroute to the New World.

Francis Daniel Pastorius, of Germantown fame, was one of those in Germany who, having heard of Penn and his plan for a place where religious freedom might be in fact, as well as in name, obtained consent from his father to sail for America--and a sum of money.

Pastorius consulted with the leaders of the intending-settlers at Kriegsheim, Peter Schumacher and Gerhard Hendricks and others, regarding the plans for the long journey, something not done every day in the year. He conferred with Thomas Kunders, Dirck Herman, the Op den Graeff brothers, and others, at Crefeld. These followed him across the terrifying Atlantic some six weeks later.

Pastorius became agent for the Frankfort Company of men from the two above-mentioned cities. He sailed June 6, 1683, and arrived in Philadelphia August 16, warmly greeted by Penn.

The Good Ship "Concord" sailed July 24, with thirteen men and their families, reaching Philadelphia on October 6, 1683, at a time when that place had about 80 houses and

cottages. This group settled at what is now Germantown, then separated from Philadelphia by a thick forest, with a bridle-path the only connection.

Under Pastorius, a learned man and scholar, far ahead of his times, the settlement cleared land, built houses, and after many hardships had a prosperous community in good season. But the first winter or so was a hard one for the newcomers, since good, warm accommodations could not be made ready at once.

The success of this original settlement became known as fast as word and messengers could be dispatched to the old settlements. New arrivals came every year, and in 1694 an interesting band of mystics settled on the banks of the Wissahickon.

Some forty in number, under the guidance of Johann Kelpius, they came here to await the coming of the Lord, believing He would appear here probably where they elected to sojourn, on or about the turn of the century. In addition to practicing spiritual perfection, etc., they built an astronomical tower from which to further search out signs for the coming of the Lord.

The Wissahickon Community wasted away in a few years, to be succeeded by another "community experiment," that at Ephrata, under the famed Conrad Beissel. This, too, because it discouraged propagation of the race, eventually passed from the scene. Today we note but the remains of buildings erected by human hands, and a religious offspring which worships elsewhere, but which propagates by means of the body as well as the mind.

The Second Period; 1710-1727.--This period is chiefly concerned with the coming of the Swiss Mennonites in 1710. The movement is closely connected with that of Germantown. The Mennonites of Holland and Switzerland had always been friendly, and close; protests were made by the former to the Swiss authorities regarding persecutions, and monies were raised to alleviate sufferings of their fellow believers in the Palitinate.

The Holland group were doubtless instrumental in getting their Swiss fellows to go through their port of Rotterdam to go to America.

Of the Swiss Mennonites, it is said that they were, if anything, quite "stubborn." By that is meant, they would refuse to bear arms for the State, and it seemed that wars were conducted then, as now, for the benefit of the few--the propaganda philosophy being that "the majority are to reap the rewards." Whether the Swiss were actually engaged in wars or not, they had to have a goodly number of men under arms, especially if any of her neighbor countries were engaged in armed conflict.

Exiled time after time, these Mennonites would again return to Switzerland. Then a plan was tried to force a large number of them to proceed through Holland, hoping they would thence be deported to America. But Holland would have none of this, nor would England.

In 1711 the Mennonites of Berne got a break--they were permitted to sell property, take their families with them with free passage down the Rhine--if they would promise never to return!

Many of them agreed, and later others did likewise. The trek began about the middle of 1710. On October 23 of that year Hans Herr and Martin Kündig, agents for others, took out a patent for ten thousand acres of land on Pequea Creek, Conestogoe (subsequently Lancaster county, organized 1729).

Figures seem somewhat elusive, for few were kept, as to the number of those early arrivals. For some years there were probably only a few scores a year, up to 1710 (the year of the Pequea settlements), when perhaps several thousand all told arrived.

In 1717 the numbers seemed to alarm the authorities, who were afraid there would be too many Germans here, eventually leading to a preponderance of the wrong kinds of people, so far as the authorities were concerned.

Tulpehocken.--Another important colony in the second period is that of the Tulpehocken, in Berks county.

Failure of certain plans for the enforced emigration of what might be termed refugees in Holland and England, which eventually forced numbers of them to go to Ireland and America, brings us to the Germans settled in New York State. Difficulties among those settled in the Schoharie and Mohawk valleys of New York, including their right to titles to the land on which they had built homes after years of hardship, forced them out of the State bounding Pennsylvania on the north.

Coming by the water route via Binghamton and Wilkes-Barre, down the Susquehanna to the mouth of the Swatara, they followed that stream to what we know as Tulpehocken, upwards of some thirty families arriving in 1723.

The Third Period; 1727-1776.--On October 14, 1727, the Provincial Council did, something for the Germans in Pennsylvania and their descendants, of great and lasting value to historians and genealogists.

Council adopted a resolution requiring all masters of vessels importing Germans and other foreigners to prepare a list of such persons, their occupations, and place from whence they came; further, these immigrants should sign a declaration of allegiance and subjection to the king of Great Britain, and of fidelity to the Proprietary of Pennsylvania.

Such lists with names, over thirty thousand in number, may be found in print.¹ They are also of interest to the amateur researcher. These lists contain also the names of the vessels, captains, port from which last sailed, and date of arrival in Philadelphia. The lists are not too detailed as to the specific parts of Germany, or wherever, that these

¹ Prof. I. Daniel Rupp's "Thirty Thousand Names of Immigrants," 1856; also later dates, some editions carrying part of the text in German, as well as English. (No index).

Vol. XVII of Second Series of "Pennsylvania Archives"; with an index.

"Pennsylvania German Pioneers," by Ralph Beaver Strassburger and Dr. William John Hinke; 3 vols., Norristown, Pa., 1934. Has an index, and a volume of facsimile signatures of the original lists.

people hailed. Generally the names are of men, from age 16 upward, women of that day not being too able to write their names, a short-coming noticeable on the lists is they pertain to men, too, by reason of the familiar "[X]."

A number of the lists did state that the arrivals were from this, or that place, and, for a time toward the middle of the 1700's, the lists would state the number of Protestants and Catholics on board. But after 1754 practically no such information is given, probably due to the excitement prevalent at that time relative to the French and Indian War.

Catholics in Canada were suspected of trying to deal with the Germans living here, but the latter would have no commerce with the French Catholics, having too vivid recollections of their persecutions in France over many long years before.

The immigration through the port of Philadelphia by so many people of the same characteristics, and with much the same objects in life, soon crowded the sections more or less adjacent to that growing city. Penetration was not long in coming, through dense forests into Lancaster, Montgomery and Berks counties.

Wherever there was limestone or black walnut trees, there you would soon find some Germans either farming, or setting up a home prior to turning the soil, for they liked limestone. This for the reason it made fine stone for building homes and churches, as well as lime for fertilizer. Walnut trees growing in healthy stands were also a good sign of fertility of the soil.

Lands Quickly Taken Up.--Once the lands on the east side of the Susquehanna were well taken up, the movements went to the west, and to the north, York and Cumberland timber falling early under the axe of the pioneer farmer and woodsman. The spread was not long in coming, once the troubles with the Indians were controlled.

The Revolution was to prove that the Germans were loyal to the land they had come to populate and to cultivate. And if they fought against the principles and demands of the English crown, they did it alongside hardlaced and stiffbacked Presbyterians whose veins were filled with blood like that of the enemy they fought.

But you must give the Germans their due: they were not among the last to fight--but among the first. It was not the Mennonite who fought with ball and musket--he fought with the plow. Others of his countrymen who had no scruples about "bearing arms" were the ones who went out with Washington to wallop the would-be "tax-leviers."

Those who did not fight were self-sustaining and self-sufficient, and their efforts at farming and making warm clothing, and those who made shot and shell, contributed no little in making a revolution of the people an American independence indeed.

In this group of arrivals after 1710, there must be noted that a number of Pennsylvania Germans under the leadership of Jost Hite, moved down the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, to settle the counties of Frederick, Rockingham and Shenandoah. The western part of North Carolina had a large number of such settlers emigrate from Pennsylvania.

The French and Indian War was still simmering when some Pennsylvania Germans went to Ohio, to be followed by larger numbers at the close of the Revolution. Then to Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Iowa, Kansas, Texas, California, etc.

People in those states to the west of us probably feel that they are "Westerners," but would it be improper to say that they are in a large sense "Western Pennsylvania Germans?" or "Pennsylvania Germans in the West?"



PIONEER IMMIGRANTS WERE FARMERS AND TRADESMEN

Farmers Were Kept Poor.--The Pennsylvania German farmers were good farmers by practically all standards. They were descended through thirty generations of tillers of the soil. All things being equal in their Old World haunts they would have been on the average well-to-do. But the wars kept them poor, or, if they were on the wrong side of the political or religious "fence" they again were likely to be mulct of what they had.

Travel, being what it was in those days, was expensive, and the more so because unscrupulous ship owners found they could get the price, either from the pioneer or some one who would pay for this passage.

Those who undertook to pay off their passage under a bond which sometimes took twenty years to redeem, would be termed "redemptioners." This took on a form of "white servitude" in the early days, and much of interest may be read about the subject.

Fine Soil Ready in Pennsylvania.--It has been pointed out that the situation greeting the newcomers was pretty nearly made to order. There was little barrenness; fertilization was not necessary in the same degree that it was in Germany, where tilling for many years required more attention.

The farmers were smart enough to rotate their crops; they grazed cattle for fattening and got back fertilizer quite precious. They fed their horses well, so that they could do twice as much work in a day as horses underfed; they were kept warm in winter, and were excused from doing extra work, such as dragging logs, or pleasure driving.

"Swiss Barns" Erected.--The early pioneers first cleared sufficient land to get a start on farming; then came an immense barn, well built, of the "Swiss" type. The first barns were built of logs. Later there were some of stone, then frame or brick. Interesting features of some of the barns included the stars on the sides and ends; also the ventilator designs obtained by omissions of bricks which formed the designs, or cut-outs in the odd shapes of hearts, diamonds, quarter-moons, clubs, etc.

Most barns were double-deckers, and allowed for threshing-floors, mows and lofts for storing hay. The complete barns had a granary on the upper floor, a cellar under the drive-way, in addition to the usual stalls for horses and cattle. They ranged from 50 to 60 feet wide, and 60 to 120 feet long, with an overhang of 8 to 10 feet beyond the stable doors.

Originally barns and houses had thatched roofs; in later years they were shingled, slated, or tinned. If painted, it generally was of deep red, for lasting qualities.

Lumber could be obtained on the spot; likewise good building stone might be found nearby, needing but the blows of the stone mason to dress them for use. But it might be a decade or two until they got around to the building of a substantial house.

Houses built by the pioneers were generally of logs, if the builder was pioneering some miles away from centers of population. These could be built in a few days after a clearing was made.

Two-story houses were the general rule at the outset, with the familiar two-and-a-half-story to follow. The first with pitched roof, and with cornices run across the gables and around the first story.

Types of Construction.--The English and Scotch fashion was to build the chimney at the gable-end, but the German style was to bring it right up through the center of the house. Most of them seemed to be spacious, with open fire-places in most rooms, and with deep-set window and door frames. Window weights were used quite early.

Travelers usually note on these older houses the odd inscriptions, verses, dates or initials found well up on the gable wall. This is a hangover from customs in Germany and Switzerland.

There are many variations held by people today as to the meanings of the decorations on barns, certain markings found here and there on houses and necessary outbuildings; even on cooking utensils, etc.

Gaudy Colors and Designs.--It will hardly suffice to say that the farmer liked to have his barn look attractive, and to be in good state of repair, as a sign of his progress and success; nor that his wife was odd, in that she had a lot of dishes with gaudy decorations of birds, flowers, alphabets, scenes and verses painted thereon; nor that the good housewife had these same decorations on her bed linens, and her furniture as well.

Most of the decorative schemes came from the Old World, a throw-off, or hand-me-down from ancient Persian and Chinese ideas. We are informed that German houses today have on their walls counterparts of many of the ideas expressed by our own native artists with a slight touch or blend of native instinct which do not in the least detract from the value or interest of the items in question.

The farmers were not alone the great builders. We had the well-known preachers and teachers; scientists and astronomers; inventors and many others. A catalog of German firsts in Pennsylvania is an imposing array of talent and accomplishment.



LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION AT FIRST NEGLECTED, THEN PROMOTED

German Language Remained with Newcomer.--Of the language and literature of the Pennsylvania Germans we had at best be brief--the students and scholars are still trying to define and settle the matter.

The remarkable thing about the "dialect" as it is called, is that there should remain so much of it in use today in sections where there is likewise an abundant use of English. Two hundred years ago there was every reason for them to continue using the only language they knew. With all the intermarriages of these people with English, Scotch and Irish families, the "Dutch" will "out."

From the days of their residence in Europe, until comparatively modern times they have been without the benefit of any grammar or book of guidance for the use of the "dialect" conversation on the street or in the home.

Early Printers.--The Pennsylvania Germans had printing shops in operation in larger centers of population almost as soon as they could get the material to set up shop.

Thus the press of Christopher Sauer had printed three editions of the Bible, complete, in little Germantown, before there was one edition of the same book printed in Philadelphia in English. A few years before his first Bible Sauer had printed a large hymn-book entitled "Zionitischer Wayrauchshugel," containing 654 hymns in 33 divisions.

Conrad Beissel and his Ephrata "Breuderschaft" were responsible for the publishing of a number of remarkable books for those times, including a complete translation of Van Bragt's "Blutige Schauplatz oder Martyrer Spiegel" in German from the Holland Dutch, at the Cloisters, at Ephrata. Fifteen men worked for three years to complete translations, make the paper and print and bind this massive work, up to that time about the largest single book published in the New World.

Education was at first frowned on by the farmers who thought their children needed little more than to be able to read and write and figure a little bit. In later years they found that education was the best bet, and with the exception of the Amish, most other denominations and sects have gone over to college education.

The German language, or dialect as it is more familiarly known, gave way in part to English as the official language of the Commonwealth in 1836. But it did not "give way" in many homes, and towns!



RELIGIOUS GROUPS WERE NUMEROUS BEFORE THE REVOLUTION

Variety of Faiths.--The religious background and life of the Germans is varied, to say the least. We have little space to detail them at length, but separate accounts may be found in libraries for particular readers.

The German Baptists, or Brethren, are a denomination of Christians who emigrated to this country from Germany between the years 1718 and 1730; they are commonly called Dunkers; but they have assumed for themselves the name of "Brethren".

The United Brethren in Christ came into activity in the United States about 1755, differing in name from the Moravians, or Unitas Fratrum, (or United Brethren's Church) by adding "in Christ." The former mentioned denomination enjoys a healthy membership scattered throughout the country.

The Moravians (Unitas Fratrum), or United Brethren's Church, dates from 1722, descendants of the Bohemian and Moravian Brethren who were persecuted in their native country, and who founded a colony under the patronage of Count Zinzendorf, on an estate of his in Upper Lusatia. American history is replete with accounts of activities of the Count, and David Zeisberger, who labored among and learned so much from his association with Indian tribes. Their establishments in the early days were primarily, at Bethlehem, Nazareth and Lititz.

The Schwenkfelders take their name from Casper Schwenkfeld von Ossing, who was born seven years after Martin Luther, with whom he had many disagreements. This denomination arrived in Philadelphia on September 22, 1734, settling principally in Montgomery, Berks, Bucks and Lehigh counties.

Ephrata Cloister.--One of the most notable of the early pietist movements was this Ephrata community, under Conrad Beissel, who was born in Eberbach, in 1690. He was a baker, as was his father. He came to America in 1720, becoming a hermit on the Cocalico. Others built cabins around him and imitated his ascetic life. But any religion that prohibits race propagation soon eliminates itself.



THE DERIVATION OF FAMILY NAMES IS ALWAYS INTERESTING

A Knowledge of Family Names is not only of passing interest but may be of great value to students and researchers. Names, as we know, undertake to make many changes, even in the same family, even today.

"Pennsylvania German family names may be divided into three classes: first, those derived from personal names; second, those derived from occupation; and third, those derived from the place where the individual lived (including house signs) or whence he came," says Kuhns,² and "in this last class may likewise be properly included nicknames, or those due to personal peculiarities, physical or mental."

The smaller type following is an excerpt from Kuhns' book:

These personal names exist today in Pennsylvania, some of them but little changed; such are Albrecht: of distinguished race (P.G. [Pennsylvania Germans] Albright); Arnwald: one who rules as the eagle; Bernhard: strong as a bear; Conrad: bold in council; Dietrich: ruler of people; Eberhart: strong as a boar; Eckert: strong sword; Garman: spearman; Gebhard: generous giver (P.G. Kephart); Gerhard: strong spear; Gottschalk: servant of God; Hartman: strong man; Heidrich: of noble rank; Hildebrandt: battle-sword; Hubert: bright of intellect; Irmintraut: friend of the Walkyrie Thrudr (P.G. Ermentrout); Lühr: war-people; Reinhard: strong in counsel; Reinhold: ruler of council; Trautman: follower of the Walkyrie Thrudr.

In most cases, however, these double-stem names were shortened by dropping the second stem, whence such names as Kuhn (from Kunrat), Hein (from Heinrich), Ott (from Ottman), Traut (from Trautmann), Bär, Barr (from Berhard). To these stems diminutive suffixes were added; thus from "i" we have the forms Bürki (from Burkhard), Ebi (from Ebarhard), Egli (from Agilbrecht), Hägi (from Haginbert), Lichti (from Ludger: P.G. Light), Stäheli (from Stahal), Welti (from Walther), Geissle (from Gisalhart: P.G. Yeissley); from "izo" we get Boss and Butz (from Bodomar), Dietz (from Dietrich), Fritz and Fritschi (from Friedrich: cf. Barbara Frietchie), Heintz (from Heinrich), Kuntz (from Kunrat: P.G. Koons and Kuhns), Landis, Lentz, and Lantz (from Landfrid), Lutz (from Ludwig), Seitz (from Siegfried: P.G. Sides), Tietz (from Dietrich), Waltz (from Walther), from "iko" we get Frick (from Friedrich), Illig and the genitive Hilleges (from Hildebrand), Kündig (from Gundobert), Leidig (from Luithart); from "ilo" we get Ebli and Eberli (from Ebarhard), Bechtel (from Berchtold), Bickel (from Botger), Diehl (from Dietrich), Hirzel (from Hieruzleip: P.G. Hartzell), Hubeli (from Hugubert), Markel and Märgli (from Markwald), Meili (from Maganhard), Nägeli (from Nagalrich), Rubli (from Hrodebert: Robert), Schnäbeli (from root Sneo--snow: P.G. Snavely); from "z" plus "l" we get Künzel (from Kunrat), Reitzel (from Ricohard: Richard), and Tietzel (from Dietrich).

² Oscar Kuhns, in "The German and Swiss Settlements of Colonial Pennsylvania: A Study of the So-called Pennsylvania Dutch;" New York, 1901 and 1914; The Aurand Press.

From all the above forms patronymics in "mann," "inger," and "ler" are formed: Bausman, Beidleman, Denlinger, Dietzinger, Gehringer, Grissinger, Heintzelman, Hirtzler, Hollinger.

In addition to the purely German personal names we have also many names taken from Biblical characters and from the lives of saints: Bartel (from Bartholomaeus), Klause (Nicholas), Martin, Theiss, and Theissen (Matthias), Peters, Hensel (Johannes), Jäggi and Jäckli (Jacobus: P.G. Yeagy and Yackley), Jörg, Jorge (George: P.G. Yerrick and Yerkes), Brosius (Ambrosius), Bastian (Sebastien), Flory (Florus), Johst (Justus: P.G. Yost).

The second class of Pennsylvania-German family names are derived from the occupation of the individual; among the best known are Becker (baker), Baumgartner (orchard-grower), Brenneisen (blacksmith), Brunner (well-digger), Dreher, Trachsel, Trechsler (turner), Fischer, Gerber (tanner, currier: P.G. Garver), Glöckner (bell-ringer: P.G. Klackner, Kleckner), Heilman (doctor), Huber (one who owns a "hube"--a small farm), Jäger (hunter), Kärcher (carter), Kohler, Koehler (coal-burner): P.G. Kaler, Cayler), Kaufman (merchant), Küfer and Kufner (cooper), Küster (sexton), Maurer (mason), Metzger (butcher), Lehmann (one under feudal tenure), Leineweber (linen-weaver), Müller, Probst (provost), Reifschneider, Riemenschneider (harness-maker), Sauter, Suter (shoemaker), Schaffner (steward), Schenck (cup-bearer), Scherer (barber), Schlegel (one who hammers), Schmidt (smith), Schneider (tailor), Schreiber (writer), Schreiner (joiner), Schütz (shooter, or archer: P.G. Sheets), Schultz (mayor), Siegrist (sexton), Spengler (tin-smith), Steinmetz (stone-cutter), Tschudi (judge: Swiss), Vogt (bailiff), Wagner (waggoner), Wannemaker (basket-maker), Weber (weaver), Wirtz (landlord), Widmeyer, Widmer (one who has land from church or monastery), Ziegler (brick-maker), Zimmerman (carpenter).

The first subdivision of names in the third class comprises those which denote the place where one lives or whence one comes; such are Algäuer (from the Allgau in Switzerland), Altendörfer (from village in St. Gall, Switz.), Amweg (beside the road), Amend (at end of village), Bach, Bacher, Bachman (who live near a brook), Berner (from Berne, Switz.), Basler (from Basel), Berger (lives on mountain), Beyer (a Bavarian), Biemendörfer, Blickensdorfer (from village in Canton Zürich), Boehm (a Bohemian), Brechbühl (unploughed hill: P.G. Brightbill and Brackbill), Breitenbach (village in Solothurn, Switz.), Brubacher (village in Zürich), Büttigkoffer (from village Büttikofen, Berne), Detweiler (village in Canton Zurich), Diefenbach (Tiefenbach, in Canton Uri, Switz.), Dieffendörfer (from Tiefendorf), Flückiger (village in Canton Berne), Fahrni (village in Berne), Frick (in Aargau, Switz.), Haldi, Haldeman (from Halden, common name for village in Switzerland), Hofstetter (name of several villages in Zürich, St. Gall, and Berne), Eschelman (from Aeschi, village in Canton Berne), Imgrund (in hollow land), Imboden (in bottom-lands), Imhof (in farm-yard), Köllicker (village in Aargau), Longenecker (village in Berne), Mellinger (village in Aargau), Neuenschwander (village in Berne), Oberholtzer (several villages in Berne), Ruegsegger (Berne: P.G. Ricksecker),

Schollenberger (castle and village, Zürich), Schwab (a Swabian: P.G. Swope), Urner (from Canton Uri), Zug (Canton Zug), Zürcher (from Zürich).³

During the Middle Ages the houses were not numbered as now, but had signs painted on them, something after the manner of hotels at the present time. From these many names were derived: Bär (bear), Baum (tree), Bieber (beaver), Bischof (bishop), Engel (angel), Fasnacht (Shrove Tuesday), Faust (fist), Fuchs (fox), Fünfroch (five-coats), Haas (hare), Hahn (rooster), Helm (helmet), Hertzog (duke: P.G. Hartsook), Holtzapfel (wild-apple), Kalb (calf: P.G. Kulp, Culp), Kaiser (emperor), König (king), Krebs (crab), Münch (monk), Oechsli (little ox: P.G. Exley), Pfaff (priest), Ritter (knight), Vogel (bird), Voegli (little bird: P.G. Feagley), Würfel (die, cube), Wolf.

Finally we have names given from personal peculiarities. Such are: Braun, Dürr (dry, thin), Fröhlich (cheerful: P.G. Frailey), Frei (free), Freytag (Friday), Gut (good), Hübschmann (handsome), Hoch (tall), Jüng (young), Kahl (bald), Klein (small), Kleindienst (small sevice), Krause (curly), Krumbein (crooked legs), Kurtz (short), Lang (long), Lebengut (good-liver: P.G. Livingood), Rau, Rauch (rough), Reich (rich), Roth (red), Rothrock (red-coat), Rothaermel (red-sleeve), Schwartz (black), Seltenreich (seldom rich), Weiss (white).

These German names almost all came from the Palatinate and Switzerland. Even today we can trace the Swiss origin of many--for instance, Urner (from Uri), Johns (Tschantz), Neagley (Naegeli), Bossler (Baseler).

Some are of French Huguenot origin, which by combined German and English influence have often received a not very elegant or euphonious form: examples are Lemon (Le Mon), Bushong (Beauchamp), and Shunk (Jean); the original Fierre was changed to German Faehre, and later became anglicised into Ferree.⁴

The number of different of spelling even the simplest names is often surprisingly large: thus, for the original Graf we find today Graaf, Graff, Groff, Groft, Graft, and Grove. So Baer gives us Bear, Bare, Bair. Of course the vagaries of English orthography are largely responsible for this.

There were three ways in which the change of names took place: first, by translation; second, by spelling German sounds according to English methods; and third, by analogy.



³ Some of these names may come from homonymous places in the Palatinate; almost all the Lancaster County family-names, however, which are derived from places, are of Swiss origin.--O.K.

⁴ Other Huguenot names in Pennsylvania are Fortuné (Fordney), Correll, Florey, De Frehn, Farney, Ruby, Saladé, Benetum, Bevier, Bertalot, Broë (Brua), Lefevre, Levan, Erny (this name may be Swiss), Gobain, Hubert.--O.K. (See also Rev. A. Stapleton's "Memorials of the Huguenots in America, With Special Reference to their Emigration to Pennsylvania," Huguenot Publishing Company, Carlisle. Pa., 1901.--A.)