

GERMAN SETTLEMENTS ON THE EASTERN SHORE OF MARYLAND

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Just what part Germans played in the early colonization of the Eastern Shore of Maryland extending from the Susquehanna River around the head of the Bay south, to the Pocomoke River is difficult to ascertain. Research in the field is greatly complicated by the fact that many German names were mutilated beyond all recognition. To add to the confusion, Germans were often called "Dutch," or Bohemians, or Hessians, or Palatines, but seldom Germans. Nevertheless, enough German names are found to warrant the assumption that several German families must have settled on the Eastern Shore during this early Colonial period, most of these being, however, indentured servants.

Undoubtedly the most important of all these early colonists was Augustin Herman.¹ The Bohemian River, Bohemia Manor, and numerous signs along the main roads in Cecil County recall to the modern traveler the significance of this man in the early history of Maryland.

Brief mention should be made here of the Labadists, for their little colony on Bohemia Manor at the end of the 17th century represents the first settlement within the present limits of the State of Maryland which contained a considerable number of Germans. The Labadists were Christian communists, followers of Jean de Labadie. The leaders of this religious sect in America were Sluyter (Vorstmann) and Danker (Schilders), who were sent by the mother colony in Westfriesland to find a suitable place for a colony in America. Upon landing in New Amsterdam, these two

leaders met Ephraim Herrman, son of Augustin, who became a convert and who invited them to settle upon his father's estate. This they did in 1683. At one time there were 100 members of his sect living in the colony, who engaged mainly in the planting of tobacco and corn. The community was short lived, however, for by 1698 only nine male members remained.

From this brief sketch of the early German settlers, one can assume that, during the 17th century, Germans had not migrated to Maryland in any great numbers. During the 18th century, although there was a steady influx of Germans into Maryland from both the mother country and from Pennsylvania, most of the immigrants settled in Western Maryland and in Baltimore. Most of these Germans, who founded the agricultural wealth of the colony, came from the Rhineland and Neckar Valley and there was certainly nothing in the topography of the Eastern Shore which would remind them of the vine-clad hills of the fatherland.

Furthermore, the fact that the Eastern Shore lies off the beaten path, separated by the Chesapeake Bay from Washington, Annapolis, and Baltimore, probably discouraged immigration to this section. The Germans who settled in America in the 18th century were mostly farmers who purchased or were granted small tracts of land and sold their produce in the cities. The early English immigrants, on the other hand, who settled on the Eastern Shore, owned large estates, the main crop being tobacco. It was not until the 19th

¹Only brief mention of Herrman and the Labadist settlement in Cecil County will be made here, since copious material on this interesting subject is accessible to the interested reader.

century, when more varied crops, such as fruits, wheat, corn, and tomatoes, became common, that this part of Maryland began to attract the German immigrant. Thus the Eastern Shore of Maryland escaped the rush of immigration in the 18th century, which accounts, perhaps, for the fact that in this section there resides a more homogeneous population than in any other part of the United States.

The German settlements which one finds today on the Eastern Shore are of more recent date, most of them having been founded at the end of the 19th century by farmers from the Middle West. These farmers had left the fatherland, partly because of their desire to escape military service, partly because of the widely advertised reputation of cheap farmland in America. They had been given government tracts in Iowa and Nebraska, but after several years of residence here had become disappointed with the meager results of their farming, industrious and efficient as it had been. Invited by friends or informed by advertisements in German papers of the advantages of farming on the Eastern Shore, they had moved to this section. Thus near Easton in Talbot County there are several families who moved from Iowa about 1895. They came originally from northern Germany and still speak their Low German dialects. A few miles from Easton one finds the little settlement of Cordova, consisting mostly of Germans who moved to this district from Nebraska. There are enough Germans here to support a Lutheran Church in which a German service is conducted once monthly. Other similar settlements are near Preston in Caroline County and Vienna in Dorchester County. (The villages of Vienna and Berlin were not German settlements originally and the names have nothing to do with the European cities of like names. According to unofficial sources of tradition, the name Vienna is derived from the name of the Emperor

of the Naticoke Indians, Vinnacokasimmon, who negotiated a treaty of peace with the Lord Proprietary somewhere near the present site of the village. The name Berlin is apparently derived from Burleigh's Inn, a station centrally located in Worcester County where horses were changed in stage-coach days. Here a town arose, which assumed the name of the plantation. In time this was abbreviated into "Berlin.") There are German Lutheran churches also in Chestertown in Kent County and in Salisbury and Wicomico County.

A brief description of the German settlement in Preston will give a better idea of these farming communities on the Eastern Shore.

Preston, a small town in Caroline County, eleven miles south of Easton, is the home of one of the largest German settlements on the Eastern Shore. The town, however, is of rather recent origin and the original settlers were not German. It was founded about 1846 and was first called Snow Hill, the name being changed to Preston in 1856, in honor of a prominent Baltimore lawyer.

It was not until after 1890 that German families began to settle here. Some of these early German settlers came directly from Germany, but the majority moved from other parts of the United States. In either case they came to this particular neighborhood because they had friends or relatives already residing there who had become successful farmers. By the end of the century enough Germans had settled here to support a Lutheran Church and, a few years later, a parochial school. The church is still flourishing, owning about two acres of land, upon which are located the school house built in 1902 and the original church dedicated in 1901. The school was the first public school in Preston and continued to instruct the children of the village until 1917 when it was closed. The Lutheran minister taught English, German, geography, history, mathematics, and

religion, the classes in religion and German being conducted in the native tongue.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church was organized in 1897, Pastor G. Thomas being the first minister. In the same year Rev. Thomas was obliged to resign because of poor health. He was followed by F. P. Wilhelm who preached until 1899, when he was succeeded by R. W. Huebsch (1899-1909). The latter is perhaps more widely known because of the publication, in collaboration with R. F. Smith, of a very excellent German Grammar, *Progressive Lessons in German* (1911). The present pastor, Louis Geiger, has had a long and successful pastorate, the church having at the present time a total membership of 347, consisting almost entirely of members of German extraction. Some of the original settlers, who came directly from Germany, are still active members. Rev. Geiger is himself of German extraction. Both his maternal and paternal grandparents were born in Germany and migrated to this country about 1855. He speaks German fluently and each month conducts two services in the German language.

The charter members of this congregation, twelve of whom are still living, were as follows:

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| George Fuchs | Heinrich Nagel |
| August Marquart | Theodor Schülke |
| Wilhelm Engle | Gottlieb Plutshak |
| Ernst Glenwinkel | Wilhelm Krueger |
| Johann Rieck | August Gadow |
| Franz Gadow | Wilhelm Kriger |
| Edward Plutschak | Charles Ruf |
| Gustav Rieck | Wilhelm Rieck |
| Ferdinand Gadow | Edward Dietrich |
| John Bridegroom | Louis Haverkamp |
| J. Peter Seemann | Philip Jungmann |
| August Schülke | Johann Jungmann |
| Hugo Kleinwachter | Charles Kreiger |
| Carl Desselberger | Konrad Schmück |

(This list offers a very interesting example of the mutation of names, Krueger, Kriger, and Kreiger all being members of the same family.)

The reasons for the migration of these Germans are diverse and, in many cases, difficult to establish. Several came from Pomerania; a few mi-

grated from Saxony. A very striking fact is that several came from a German settlement in Russia along the Volga, Jagodnaja Poljana. In most of these cases the migrations were due apparently to the urgent invitation of friends and relatives already living in the United States. Sometimes the boats, arriving from Germany, were met at the piers in Baltimore by agents of Land Offices. Farmland on the Eastern Shore was at that time very badly run down and could, therefore, be purchased very cheaply. This, together with the possibilities for diversified crops, appealed to the Germans who had a reputation as good farmers.

For example, there is the interesting case of August Gadow, who came to America in 1891. A brother of August was working on the estate of a Dr. Trümmel, located at Wye Heights near Longwoods. Dr. Trümmel was so pleased with the efficient work of Herr Gadow that he requested him to write to his brother in Germany inviting him to join his relative in America. August remained at Wye Heights for five years, moving then in 1896 to Preston, where he still resides.

Several Germans came from the Middle West, mostly Illinois, Kansas, Ohio, and Nebraska. These farmers were attracted by advertisements appearing in German papers (notably "Der Lutheraner," a German Lutheran paper published in St. Louis), praising the cheap farms, diversity of crops, and healthful climate of the Eastern Shore. Excerpts from a booklet published in Baltimore in 1908 will probably give a good idea of these alluring invitations to greener pastures.

... There are many farmers in the northern or northwestern States, remote from markets and suffering from the severities of an inclement climate, who would be glad to sell their property and make their homes in Maryland where all the conditions are favorable. It seems almost incredible to the farmer upon lands selling at \$100 an acre that there should be good and fertile, well improved farms within ten or twenty miles of the capital of the United States to be had at from one-fifth to

one-half the price of prairie lands in Iowa. Maryland's invitation to agricultural immigrants with some capital, is sincere and alluring. She offers good lands easily improved at very low prices. The products of these lands are within easy reach of railroads or steamboats, or both. . . .

All classes of farmers can find locations in the State suitable for the class of agriculture to which they may be accustomed. . . . In nearly all of the counties corn is abundantly produced as well as wheat. Some of the finest and most productive wheat lands in the country are found in the central and western counties and on the Eastern Shore. . . . The lower counties of the Eastern Shore also grow vast quantities of small fruit. . . . In most of the counties grass can be produced and cattle and sheep successfully grazed. . . .

What adds vastly to the attraction of these farms in Maryland is the fact that they are in a State distinguished for the maintenance of good order, for the excellence of its colleges and libraries. . . . To buy a farm and settle down in Maryland is not like going into a new country. Every farm has its farm buildings and fences and the new settler will find well disposed, hospitable and kind neighbors close to him. . . .

The climate of southern and eastern Maryland is mild and equable and healthful. The winters are not severe and the summers not excessively hot, the cold of winter and heat of summer being moderated by the proximity of the Atlantic Ocean and the Chesapeake Bay. . . . The salt waters afford to the enterprising citizen an abundance of the most delicious food and if he is inclined to be a sportsman he can add wild ducks and other birds to his bill of fare. ("The State of Maryland, a description of its Lands, Products, and Industries," compiled by T. J. C. Williams for the Board of Public Works, 1908, Baltimore. The Sun Job Printing Office.)

A rather interesting side-light is the case of a few Germans who had come from Kansas upon the urgent invitation of the Lutheran minister of

Vienna, who apparently was connected with some farm development swindle. Upon arrival, they were disappointed with the possibilities of successful farming in marshy land and accordingly moved north to Caroline County.

In conclusion, it is reasonably safe to assume that Germans began to settle on the Eastern Shore by 1680. Subsequently they moved southward into the lower counties, either as settlers or indentured servants. However, aside from the settlement on Bohemia Manor, there was no important emigration of Germans to the Eastern Shore during the Colonial period. Occasional mention is made of individual Germans who settled on the Eastern Shore during this earlier period, but apparently they were of little importance, for one does not come across their names again. At the present time (1942), there are sizable settlements of Germans at Cordova, near Easton, and at Preston, near Denton. As far as it has been possible to determine, these settlements were founded in the late nineteenth century by German farmers, who came here from the Middle West, particularly from Iowa and Nebraska. The German farmer, here as elsewhere, enjoys the reputation of being honest, thrifty, efficient, and industrious. In all cases he has been welcomed by the community and has helped improve the conditions of the places where he has settled.