
EARLY
GERMAN SETTLEMENTS
IN WESTERN MARYLAND.

Early German Settlements in Western Maryland.

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The settlement of the Germans in Western Maryland in colonial times was undoubtedly an important factor in the development and history of our State. They not only increased the numbers of our inhabitants but brought new industries and arts, intelligence and learning, indomitable perseverance and energy, but above all sturdy arms, an immense working capacity and frugal, simple habits. They brought with them their school teachers and their pastors, and one of their first acts was to erect a school house and have their children taught in the principles of Christianity, and the useful arts of life. From them have sprung many illustrious men, who rendered our nation great services, in times of war and peace, in the council of the nation, on the judicial bench, in schools and colleges, and in every other department of life. They turned the wilderness of Frederick county of the year 1730 into a blooming garden, so that in 1790 Frederick county was the largest wheat producing county in the United States.

If our children or strangers learn the history of our State from some of the so-called histories, until now published, they will never become aware that a German ever set his foot on the soil of Maryland in colonial times, or that the Germans ever exercised any appreciable influence on the destiny of our State. If German names have to be mentioned they are anglicized and corrupted beyond recognition. In some of these histories the immigration of the Germans is merely mentioned. All they deem worth relating is the succession of the English officers, the political conflicts, and constant reference to the English home government. This is only a partial history, but not the history of the people of our State. It is my object by this historical sketch to draw the attention to some facts relating to the early German immigration to Maryland.

Maryland was an insignificant colony before the German immigration set in. It was first settled in 1633 and, after a period of fifty-six years, in 1689 it had only about 25,000 inhabitants. The immigration from England had, after the restoration, practically ceased. In the next 21 years, until 1710, the population increased only 5,000, for it then numbered but 30,000 inhabitants: in 1733 the number of taxable inhabitants of the colony which comprised all males above the age of 15 years and all negroes, was but 31,470. About this time the Germans began to arrive in large numbers and, fifteen years later, the population had increased to 130,000, which was more than double the number of the preceding 100 years; in 1756 it had 154,188 and in 1761 164,007 inhabitants. How much of this remarkable increase from the years 1733 to 1761 is to be credited to the German immigration must remain a mere surmise. The following facts may help us to form some estimate.

The immigration of Germans to Pennsylvania had commenced in larger numbers as early as 1683, and by their numbers and industry, this province soon surpassed the other colonies, which attracted the attention of the Governors of Virginia and Maryland. In the year 1714 twelve German families, consisting of fifty members, had arrived and settled on the Rappahannock River in Virginia, in 1717 twenty German families with eighty members followed and settled in the same neighborhood. They built a church, and enjoyed the special favor and friendship of Governor Spotswood, others continued to follow, and the German settlement in Virginia was in regular communication with the Germans in Pennsylvania. It was in consequence of this settlement and the kindness of Governor Spotswood shown them, that the German-Pennsylvanians in the last century called Virginia by no other name than Spottsylvania. The first opened road from Lancaster, York and Hanover to the Virginia settlements was by the Monocacy river to the Potomac. About 1729 the first Germans drifted into Maryland near the Monocacy river, and between the years 1732 and 1734 the first German church in Maryland was erected on the West side of the Monocacy, where the Virginia road crossed the river, about ten miles above where Frederick town was afterward laid out.

The Governor, of Virginia and afterwards Lord Fairfax made strenuous efforts to direct the German immigration to Virginia, and in 1732 the Governor ceded a tract of land of some 25,000 acres to a certain Jost Hite, a German, and Jacob van Meeter, a Dutchman, on condition that they would settle 200 German families on the land ceded to them. Hite and van Meeter traversed Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Germany in search of the immigrants, and directed them by the road of the Monocacy to Virginia. Charles Lord Baltimore, Governor of Maryland, to outdo the Governor of Virginia, thereupon, on the 2nd of March 1732, made the liberal offer of 200 acres of land in fee, subject to a rent of 4 shillings sterling per year (payable at the end of three years) for every hundred acres, to any person having a family, who should within three years actually settle, with his or her family, on the land between the rivers Potomac and Susquehanna; and to each single person, male or female, between the age of fifteen and thirty, an offer of one hundred acres of the same land on the same terms, with the assurance that they should be as well secured in their liberty and property in Maryland, as in any part of the British plantations in America, without exception.

The settlers on their way to Spottsylvania, seeing the rich soil of Frederick county, offered to them on such liberal terms, did not proceed further but stuck their spades into the ground right then and there, and in a few years there was a prosperous settlement in and about Monocacy. From there they spread East, South, and West, but for many years the church at Monocacy was their meeting place. It was a frame building and was there until the end of the 18th century, when it was abandoned, and no vestige of it remains to mark the spot where it stood. Its members joined the more prosperous churches at Frederick and other places, and as the old town of Joppa was absorbed by Baltimore, so Frederick took in Monocacy. The first church was of the Lutheran denomination, a German reformed church was organized soon thereafter and appears to have been more prosperous than the Lutheran. The Moravians at an early period sent their Missionary George Ninke and his wife to Monocacy, who made deep inroads into the Lutheran church, and caused much bitter feeling and strife amongst its members. The Moravians, however, left

Monocacy about the year 1746 taking with them many settlers, and founded a church at Graceham. The names of the first ministers at Monocacy are not known. Rev. David Candler preached there, in and before the year 1743; he died in Conewego, Pa., in 1744. Rev. Lars Nieberg of the Swedish Lutheran church, who preached in the German language, was for some years the pastor of the Monocacy Lutheran church, and preached also at Frederick, but in 1745 or the beginning of 1746 he joined the Moravians, and his congregation dismissed him, Germans had settled about Frederick as early as 1734. In 1735 about one hundred families arrived from Germany. Among them was Thomas Schley, their school teacher, who is said to have erected the first house in Frederick, but the town of Frederick was not laid out until the year 1745, and three years after, in 1748, Frederick county was organized and Frederick made the county seat, and thereby soon rose into prominence. We have no information of the time when the German church was organized in Frederick but it may be safely presumed from what we know of Mr. Thomas Schley, that it was soon after his arrival as early as 1735 or 1736. He belonged to the German Reformed Church. The Lutherans organized at a later period, and until then attended the Monocacy church. The first entry in the Lutheran church register of baptism at Frederick is dated the 22d of August 1737. It was a son of Frederick Unsult who was christened by a Rev. Mr. Wolf. It is surmised, however, that the christening of this child actually took place in New Jersey, where the Rev. Mr. Wolf was stationed, and the entry in Frederick was made at a later period. From the year 1741 a regular church registry of baptisms etc., in the Lutheran church, in the German language, was kept in Frederick, and in the year 1743 a German Lutheran church, a frame building, was erected. When Rev. David Candler came there in 1743 he found an organized congregation. In the year 1745 or 1746, Carl Rudolph, Prince of Würtemberg, as he styled himself, came to Monocacy and Frederick. He was a talented and gifted rogue, who pretended to be a regular ordained minister of the German Lutheran Church, and supported his claim by forged documents and letters. He led a most dissolute, immoral life, and wherever he came he brought scandal, strife and disgrace. He had been

among the Salzburgers at Ebenezer in Georgia, and preached the Gospel, but, getting into conflict with the criminal law, he left, remaining for a while in the German settlements of the Carolinas. He next visited the German settlements in Madison county, Va., where his conduct was again the cause of a great scandal. When he came to Maryland he succeeded in obtaining the charge of a German and of an English congregation, and for a time was the regular pastor of the German Lutheran church at Monocacy. From Monocacy he drifted into Pennsylvania, then to New Jersey, and from there to the New England States, where he enlisted in the army and, committing a crime, was sent to prison and not heard of thereafter. The Monocacy Lutheran Church then appealed to the Lutheran Synod of Pennsylvania to send them a minister, and the Rev. Dr. Mühlenberg requested Rev. G. Nasman, of Philadelphia, to visit the churches at Monocacy. In October 1746 Rev. G. Nasman arrived at Monocacy, and on the 31st of the month preached, and baptized six infants and a young man of 19 years. He found the entries of 54 baptisms in the Lutheran church register. The best report of the Monocacy settlement is given by Rev. Michael Schlatter, the organizer of the German Reformed church in North America. He arrived for the first time at Monocacy on the 6th of May, 1747, and on the following day baptized twenty-six children; on the 8th he administered the Lord's supper to eighty-six members of his church, and after Divine service was ended, 46 heads of families at once offered to raise for the support of a minister, in money and grain, the amount of forty pounds. Schlatter remarks in his report that, if this congregation were united with the German Reformed church at Conogocheague, lying 30 miles distant, these two would be able to support a minister. Conogocheague was the first settlement in Washington county and entirely settled by Germans. He ordained elders and deacons at Monocacy and, speaking of the church, he says it appeared to him to be one of the purest in the whole country, one in which, he found the most traces of the true fear of God, and one that was free from the sects with which the other places of the country were filled. For, on 7,000 acres in that neighborhood, there were none but such as were of the German Reformed faith. On the 24th of June, 1747, about seven

weeks after the visit of Rev. Mr. Schlatter, the Rev. Heinrich Melchior Mühlenberg, the great organizer of the German Lutheran Church in America, arrived at the Monocacy. He found the German Lutherans not in as good a condition as Mr. Schlatter found the German Reformed. The Moravians had been among them, and many Lutherans had joined the Moravians under the charge of Mr. Geo. Ninke, and the Faithful, after they had dispensed with the services of Rev. Lars Wieberg on account of his leaning to the Moravian church, had elected the notorious Carl Rudolph as their pastor, who had brought disgrace upon them before he left. Mühlenberg conducted the service in the Lutheran church and tried, but did not succeed to reconcile the members who had joined the Moravians. By these reports it appears that more than a thousand Germans must then have lived near Monocacy.

On the 25th of June Mühlenberg proceeded to the newly laid out town of Frederick to visit the Lutherans, who had settled there and belonged to the Monocacy church. He complains that a certain N. Schmist, formerly a dentist of New Hanover, who since 1736 professed to be a minister of the Gospel, and had removed from Pennsylvania to Virginia, and then, returned to Frederick, had officiated there as a clergyman. On the 7th of May, 1748, Rev. M. Schlatter again visited Monocacy, and the following day he proceeded to the newly laid out town Frederick and preached a sermon, in the school house. The German Reformed congregation were then in the act of erecting a church. He started from there to visit the German settlements in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, and an elder from Frederick voluntarily accompanied him. After a journey of thirty-four miles they arrived the next morning in the westernmost settlement of Maryland, Conogochegue. It was the first settlement in the present Washington county and remained for many years, and until after the French-Indian war, the frontier settlement. The first settlers there were Germans and members of the Reformed and Lutheran churches. At the time Rev. Mr. Schlatter visited the settlement, there were still many Indians in the neighborhood. They seemed to him to be well disposed and very obliging, and when not made drunk by strong drink, friendly towards Christians (Schlatter 174). The settlers, however, had built

a stockade fort near Clear Spring and on the Potomac, in which their families took refuge when the Indians became hostile. Among the earliest German settlers in this neighborhood, were the Prathers, the Pols (Poes), Brinkers, Kerchners, Seiberts, Seller, Prices and Jonathan Hager, the founder of Hagerstown. Rev. Mr. Schlatter and his friend received a hospitable welcome at Conogocheague. He preached there the next day, on the 9th of May, 1748, to the German Reformed congregation. After the sermon he left and traveled ten miles further to the Potomac river and, crossing over into Virginia, he continued fifteen miles without having seen either a house or a human being. On the 10th they took their dinner at Fredericktown, Va., afterward called Winchester. In the evening he came to the German Reformed congregation at Shenandoah river, now Strassburg. He preached there on the 11th to a large number of hearers, baptized many children and adult persons. The next day he proceeded forty-two miles up the valley to New-Germantown, now New-Market, preached there to a large congregation, and on the 13th, in the afternoon, they retraced their steps to Frederick, Md. On the 15th he preached there in the new church which was then not yet completed. After the sermon he administered the Lord's supper to ninety-seven members, baptized a number of children, married three couples and installed new elders and deacons. Referring to this congregation, he writes: It is of great advantage to this congregation, that they have the best schoolmaster I have met with in America. He spares neither labor nor pains in instructing the young and in edifying the congregation according to his ability, by means of singing and reading the word of God and sermons on every Lord's day. This schoolteacher was the Mr. Thomas Schley already mentioned. He was a man of learning and an accomplished musician. He is the ancestor of William Schley, who emigrated to Georgia, and was in 1825 elected Judge of the Superior Court, in 1832 Member of Congress, and in 1835 Governor of Georgia; of John Schley, who was elected Judge of the Supreme Bench of Georgia; of William Schley, the late distinguished lawyer in our city of Baltimore; of Col. Wm. Louis Schley, in the late war; of Capt. Winfield S. Schley, the commander of the U. S. Cruiser "Baltimore", and other famous

men of that name. About the time when Mr. Schley was the teacher of the German Reformed, Otto Rudolph Crecelins was the schoolteacher at the German Lutheran school at Frederick. After Crecelins came Theodor Frederick Haux, born 1723 in Kummern, Germany, who arrived here in 1753 and taught for forty-one years school at the Lutheran church in Frederick, three years in Sharpsburg, and six and a half years in Middletown, Md. He was highly esteemed and died in Frederick on the 14th of March, 1802. In the year 1749 the venerable Rev. Valentine Kraft settled in Frederick and preached there until his death in 1751. He had been a Lutheran minister at Zweibrücken in Germany and as an old man emigrated to America in 1742. He was pastor at Mossellen, Germantown, and Lancaster, before he came to Frederick. His close association with the Moravians estranged him from his Lutheran brethren. In 1751, a former school teacher, by the name of Streiter, came to Frederick and took charge of the Lutheran church. He had been a pastor at Indianfield and Goschenhoppen, Pa., and claimed to be an ordained minister, which was however disputed. The pastor of the English Episcopal church thereupon applied to the Court for an injunction to restrain the Rev. Mr. Streiter from marrying people. The Court did not grant the injunction, but told the Rev. Mr. Streiter he should confine himself to marrying only German people. In 1752 arrived Rev. Mr. Frankenfeld, of the German Reformed church. Rev. M. Schlatter who had been on a visit to Europe had brought him, with five more ministers, from Germany. He accompanied him to Frederick town and duly installed him as the pastor of the German Reformed church in May 1753. The emigration of the Germans to Western Maryland had at first extended from the German settlements of Pennsylvania, then from Germany to Philadelphia, and by way of Lancaster to Maryland. Knowledge of the rich soil and the liberal terms on which it could be obtained, became more widely spread in the old fatherland, and the emigrant ships, instead of landing as heretofore in Philadelphia, now sailed up Chesapeake Bay and landed their passengers in Annapolis and Baltimore. The records are partly lost and destroyed, we know of only four ships which landed 1060 emigrants at Annapolis in the years 1752 to 1755, and have no record of the emigrants land-

ing at the port of Baltimore during colonial times. From these ports the emigrants journeyed to Baltimore, Carroll and Frederick counties, taking up the rich farm land, and forming settlements. On the 14th of October, 1752, Christopher B. Meyer, a prominent citizen and former notary of the city of Ulm, Germany, and his son-in-law, the Rev. Bernhard M. Hausihl, (his descendants write their name Houseal), landed at Annapolis on the ship *Patience*. Mr. Meyer, a cousin of Christian Meyer, the first president of the German Society of Maryland, had letters of introduction from Lord Cecilius Calvert. Rev. Mr. Hausihl was a graduate of the University of Strassburg and a highly accomplished and talented man. His descendants are now members of the English nobility. He received a call to the Lutheran church at Frederick, which he accepted and, on his arrival there, the Rev. Mr. Streiter left for other fields. We suppose it was by the influence of Mr. Hausihl's father-in-law (C. B. Meyer) that Daniel Dulaney, the original owner of the land upon which Frederick is built, deeded on the 30th of May, 1752, for a nominal consideration, a lot of ground in Frederick for the erection, of a German Lutheran church. Under the energetic guidance of Rev. Mr. Hausihl the Lutherans laid the foundation of a fine stone church and commenced to build, but unforeseen sad events interrupted the progress, and ten years passed before they could dedicate their new church to the service of the Lord. The French-Indian war broke out in its fury, the formerly well-disposed Indians, instigated by French money and influence, at midnight set the torch to the homes and barns of the peaceable settlers in Frederick county, and massacred whosoever fell into their hands. The men brought their families to places of safety and, instead of the plough, took guns and swords in their hands. Washington writes in 1756: "The whole settlement of Conogocheague has fled, and there remain now only two families from there to Fredericktown. It was in these troublesome times that the famous Indian fighters, the Prathers, Pohs (Poes) in Maryland, and the Wetzels in Va., all German settlers, first became known. Col. Thomas Prather lived two miles from Conogocheague and was the commander of the Frederick county militia (Md. Archiv 1757-'61 page). The old stockade fort was in 1755 rebuilt by the Government at an expense of upward of £6000 and named Fort Fred-

erick. It was quadrangular in form, the exterior lines being 120 yards each, with heavy stone wall bastions and curtains, with barracks sufficient to accomodate 300 men. The fort was for a time under the command of Col. F. Haldimand, a German Swiss officer, commissioned by the English Government. A number of smaller stockade forts within convenient distance from each other were also built along the frontier. General Sharp, in his report to the Governor, praises the alacrity of the men of Frederick county in enlisting as volunteers for the war. Fort Frederick was garrisoned by Frederick county militia men, and 200 volunteered to strengthen the distant Fort Cumberland, an outpost in that war. Captains Butler, Middagh, and Brengle, are names of German settlers mentioned in this war. The capture of Fort de Quesne (Pittsburg) by the British in 1758 subdued the Indians, and the farmers returned to their homesteads, peace and quietness following the turmoil of war in Western Maryland. The Lutherans at Frederick began again to build their church, but their talented Pastor Hausihl left in 1758 and went to New York where he became a prominent figure in the Revolutionary War. The great burden and complaint of the German settlers in Maryland at that time, was, that in addition to the expense of maintaining their own churches and schools, they were also compelled to contribute to the support of the English Episcopal church, and this was one of the causes which led them to espouse unanimously the cause of Independence in the ensuing war. Rev. Mr. Mühlenberg came to Frederick in 1759 and remonstrated in a letter to the Governor of Maryland about the injustice of this taxation and claimed an apportionment among the different churches, but without success. The English church being at the time without a minister, Mühlenberg preached for them, and they offered to elect him their pastor, but he declined. In 1762 Rev. J. C. Hartwig, an eloquent, learned minister of the Lutheran church and a close friend of Lord Fairfax of Virginia came to Frederick. Some of his relatives had settled there. He remained and officiated for a time and dedicated the new Lutheran church which was now completed. (The old church was afterwards used as a school-house.) He declined however to accept the permanent position as their pastor. He also declined the same

offer from the Zion Church in Baltimore where he preached at different times, saying he could not bind himself anywhere to a congregation. He became the founder of the Hartwig Seminary in the State of New York. In October 1763 the Lutheran Synod of Pennsylvania sent the Rev. Samuel Schwerdfeger to Frederick who remained there as their pastor until 1768. Schwerdfeger was raised an orphan at Neustadt in Bavaria, and was a graduate of the University of Erlangen. He had studied law and theology. He was very poor and as a young man of 24 years, fell into the hands of emigrant runners, who shipped him as a redemptioner to Baltimore. He arrived here in the Spring, 1753, and was offered as "a studious theologian" for sale for a term of years, to pay for his passage. The Lutheran Congregation of York, Pa., being at the time at loggerheads with their good old Pastor Rev. Mr. Schaum, heard of this bargain and concluded to buy Schwerdfeger as their pastor. He remained at York until 1758, when he went to Earltown and from there to Frederick. In 1768 he paid a visit to Germany. The Rev. J. C. Hartwig took charge of his congregation during his absence, but when Schwerdfeger returned, his congregation refused to take him again, and gave a call to Rev. John Andrew Krug of Reading, Pa. one of the German missionaries; Rev. Mr. Krug accepted, and remained their pastor until his death the 30th of March 1796. He is said to have been a worthy, honest and godly man of humble demeanor. We find from his entries in church records, that he married and baptized many of the prominent English residents, and 300 communicants of the town and county. In the colonial time there were large German settlements, at Middletown, Shepards town, Creagerstown, Sharpsburg, Hagerstown, Taneytown, Thomas Creek, Point Creek, St. John, Littletown, Owens Creek, Conogoeheaque, Mechanicstown, Union Bridge, Emmitsburg, Woodsborough &c.

In most of these settlements they had German schools and religious services in the German language. Rev. Mr. Wildbahn attended to eight of these congregations.

In 1763 I find Ludwig Weltner entered as a resident of Frederick. He was first a Major and then the Colonel of the German regiment in the Maryland line during the war of Independence. The war of Independence was very popular

among the Germans of Maryland and it is said that there was not a single tory among them. Among the officers of Frederick county were Col. Geo. Stricker, Col. Ludwig Weltner, Major Heinrich Hartman, Jacob Miller, Captains Michael Rudolph, Charles Baltzell and Michael Boyer. On September the 12th a revolutionary committee of observation for Frederick County was chosen at the court house in Frederick and George Stricter, John Steiner, Adam Fisher, Conrad Grosch, John Adlum and John Haas, old German settlers, were among the numbers. How many of the Germans of Frederick joined the army in the war for Independence I do not know. The church register of the German Lutheran church in Frederick contains 180 births in the year 1772, 107 in 1776, and only 65 in 1777, 89 in 1778, 127 in 1779, 118 in 1780, 96 in 1781, 103 in 1782, 152 in 1783, 124 in 1784, 176 in 1785, when it rises to the normal condition as before the war.

The early German settlers raised large families; among others I found in the church register:

1) John Michael Roemer, born Sept. 3, 1715 in Burkenau, Germany, settled near Frederick in 1738, died there November 24, 1801; had 2 sons and 6 daughters, left surviving him 2 sons, 3 daughters, 37 grandchildren, 51 great grandchildren and 7 great great grandchildren. (103 descendants.)

2) Anna Barbara Hoehn, wife of Jacob Hoehn, born 1710 in Grossenbach, Palatinate, came here 1738, died Sept. 16, 1764; had 6 daughters and 1 son, left surviving her 5 daughters and 1 son, 52 grandchildren and 1 great grandchild. (60 descendants.)

3) Eva Rosina Boehm, born 1690 in Sickingen, came to Frederick 1753, died 1774; had 3 sons and 6 daughters, left surviving 3 sons, 3 daughters, 58 grandchildren, and 32 great grandchildren. (99 descendants.)

4) Anna Juliana Bene, born 1715 at Newvied, married in 1730 Rev. Streiter, died 1774; 11 children, 6 grandchildren and 29 great grandchildren surviving her. (46 descendants.)

5) Hans Friedrich Geyer, born 1696 in Langensalze, died in Frederick July 2, 1775; was twice married and left 17 children; his grandson Henry S. Geyer, born in Frederick 1798, removed in early life to Missouri, became a prominent lawyer, and was in 1851 elected U. S. Senator to succeed Senator Benton, serving till 1857 and died 1859.

6) Michael Spohn, born 1701 in Estadt, died in Frederick 1779; had 16 children, of whom 14 survived him, grandchildren not given.

7) Sybilla Wehage, born in Germany, came here 1727, died March 10, 1776, left 62- descendants surviving her.

8) John Conrad Grosch, born 1717 in Germany, died 1794; left 55 descendants.

9) Susanna Apfal, born 1703 in Wurtemberg, came 1713 with her parents to this country, died 1773 at Frederick; left 37 descendants.

Many of the descendants of the early German settlers of Maryland, were our western Pioneers, and their families are now found in every Western State up to the Pacific Coast.
