

GERMAN-AMERICAN FAMILIES

IN MARYLAND.

ONE of the most magnificent scenes in our State is a bird's-eye view from some lofty eminence on the Western Maryland R. R. over the vast expanse of forest, rock and mountain gorge, over thickly clustering farms and villages below in the valley which stretches to the Northeast and Southwest into Pennsylvania and far away to the Southland. This is the Cumberland valley with the Blue Mountain ridge, the Switzerland of Maryland, the scene of probably the earliest German-American labor and enterprise in the province of Maryland. From the Pennsylvania border and through this beautiful region with its healthful and invigorating climate, the German-American spread East and South, clearing and improving the country, founding villages, which grew into flourishing townships, and urging on and directing the settlers of his race who followed in his wake till they find their way to the Patapsco and the Chesapeake. A hundred interests to the German-American of to-day, cluster round this region. It tells him the story of those sturdy, honest men who would not submit quietly to intolerance in the fatherland, but came to America to worship according to their conscience, and that, wherever they settled — in the lonely moorland valley or in the heart of un-cleared forest — they went on year after year reclaiming the wilderness, until their houses became enringed by bright meadows and cornland, and by flourishing orchards. It tells how their villages soon became schools for mechanics and trades for all the country about them, and their cities manufacturing centres of that time, and that they contributed much to the prosperity of the Province and the progress of true civilisation. It also tells of a time of political intolerance, gallantly overcome by Jonathan Hager of Hagerstown, of devotion to the

country and good service during the Revolutionary War, of extensive commerce and great industries, and last but not least, of superb loyalty to flag and country.

To this region we may trace perhaps the larger number of those early German-American names that in time became so prominently identified with Maryland's progress and prosperity, and that bore no inconsiderable share in the material and moral development of her cities. Among them we find the Alberts, Bakers, Hoffmanns, Millers, Newcomers, Reeders, Schleys, Steiners, Miltenbergers, Staufers, Uhlers, Slingluffs, Shrivvers, Shryocks, Diffenderfers, Yeizers, Leverings, Strickers, Keysers, Van Bibbers, Kings, Schmukers, Baers, and a host of others.

The ancestor of the late Wm. Julian Albert of Baltimore came to America in 1752 from Würzburg, Bavaria, and settled in Monaghan township, York county, Pennsylvania, where by thrift and honest industry he acquired a handsome property, which, we are told, was considerably augmented by the diligence and ability of his son Andrew, Andrew's son, Jacob, removed to Baltimore in 1805 and founded the hardware firm which soon ranked amongst the leading houses south of Mason and Dixon's line. Associated with him and succeeding him were his sons William J. and Augustus, who after marked success retired in 1855. From this time on to his death, William devoted his life and great means to the welfare of his native city, state and country at large, and many are the commercial enterprises, charitable and educational institution that have his name on the list of honor. He was prominent in the reorganisation of the Baltimore and Cuba Smelting and Mining Company which during the entire term of his directorship was eminently prosperous and gave employment to hundreds. In 1863 he helped to call into life the First National Bank of Baltimore. He assisted in establishing the "Soldiers' Home" and an Asylum for orphans, and took a leading part in the foundation of the society for the moral and educational improvement of the blacks after the abolition of slavery. His charity and influence among friends caused the establishing, at great expense, of a normal school for colored teachers in Baltimore. During the war of the states, Mr. Albert was a strong Union man and zealously supported the administration in connection

with which the following incident is told by his biographer:

"In the latter part of the month of December, 1860, nothing seemed to portend the destruction of the Union more than the embarrassed condition of its finances. The treasury was empty, and the public credit appeared gone. Upon apprehensions being expressed at the depository in Baltimore as to the ability of the United States to meet the interest on the public debt due on the first of the following month, Mr. Albert volunteered, in case the anticipated exigency should arise, to advance what would be necessary to defray the demands upon the Government in this city. Although it was not found necessary to accept his offer, it was none the less patriotic."

Among the early German-American merchants of Baltimore the house of Peter Hoffman & Sons occupies a very prominent and honorable position. The founder Peter Hoffman sen., who was born in Frankfort-on-the-Main in 1742. emigrated to this country when quite young, settling near Frederick upon his own farm, which he sold again in 1776 for a large sum of money, to go to Baltimore, where he established the dry-goods house that eventually became the mercantile firm of Peter Hoffman & Sons. Upon its site now stand the building of Hamilton Easter & Sons and the Adam's express offices. In his position as one of the selectmen of "Baltimore town" before the adoption of the city government, Mr. Hoffman labored incessantly to improve and beautify the town. The grounds round the once well-known "City Springs" in Calvert street, then an ornament of the city and the favorite resort of the best people, claimed his particular attention.

Mr. Hoffman, sen., died in 1809 after a life of honorable effort, leaving to his loved and loving children a memory as precious as it is honored by the city of his adoption, in the building up of which he took so conspicuous a part. He was buried in the cemetery attached to the old Otterbein German church. With the exception of his youngest boy David, who adopted the profession of law, and was widely known as an author, all his sons became active and prosperous merchants. Jacob, the oldest son, established a sugar refinery in Alexandria, Virginia, but subsequently retired to

his farm in Loudoun county. John Hoffman. carried on a successful business in Hanover street, between German and Lombard streets, a locality which then contained some of the best residences in Baltimore. The warehouses erected by him on Charles and Lombard streets, ranked among the largest in the city. Those on Lombard street, between Charles and Hanover streets, were eventually sold to John Eager Howard who converted them into the "New Assembly Rooms."

Mr. George Hoffman, another son, was looked up to during his lifetime as among the foremost in promoting every enterprise that redounded to the fame of his native city, and like his brother, Peter, jun., took a prominent part in all that affected the progress and commerce of Baltimore. His name is associated with what was once one of the finest residences in Baltimore, the beautiful mansion with its extensive grounds on the corner of Franklin and Cathedral streets, formerly occupied by the Maryland club. Peter Hoffman, jun., whose many deeds of public and private charity have made his memory honored, was one of the incorporators and trustees of the "Baltimore Orphan Asylum" and the builder of the "Law Buildings" on the site of the first Athenaeum, corner of St. Paul and Lexington streets.

In 1825 two sons of Peter Hoffman, sen., Jeremiah and William, returned from London, England, with a handsome fortune acquired by successful trading, and settled in their native city. William died unmarried in 1828. Jeremiah purchased a home and extensive grounds near the present intersection of Franklin and Chats-worth streets, later owned by Mr. Daniel B. Banks and now occupied by a fine row of dwelling houses. Samuel, the last of the merchant sons of the founder of the family in America, equally successful with his brothers and as highly esteemed by his fellow-citizens, passed away in 1852.

"Among the early settlers of Roxborough township in the county of Philadelphia and State of Pennsylvania, now forming part of the twenty-first ward of the city of Philadelphia, were two brothers, named Wigard and Gerhard Levering. They were from Germany, and their father's name was Rosier Levering." Thus begins the account of the pioneer

settlers of Roxborough. The precise date of their arrival in Pennsylvania is not known, but it was no doubt before the month of August 1685, for, in a deed (written in German) Francis Pastorius, attorney for the Frankfort company, conveys to Wigard Levering "on the sixth month of Christ 1685, in the sixteenth year of the reign of King James &c.," a lot in Germantown, containing 50 acres. On the 19th of June, 1692, Wigard conveyed this land to one Jacobus de la Plaine after purchasing from Thomas Hill of the city of Philadelphia, merchant, for the sum of sixty-eight pounds, a tract of two hundred acres situated in Roxborough. This was no doubt the period of "Weekhart Libering's" (as he is designated in this deed) settlement in Roxborough, as his name does not appear among the records of Germantown, after this date. Prior to acquiring this land, Wigard was duly naturalized, "having solemnly promised faith and allegiance to William and Mary, and fidelity and lawful obedience to William Penn &c.," and the emigrant had now become a landed proprietor and added to his occupation of weaver and joiner that of farmer. Wigard, the pioneer ancestor of the Leverings, died February 2nd 1744. His death was announced in the "Pennsylvania Gazette," No. 844, February 12th, as follows: "Last week died, not far from this city, Mr. Wigard Levering, aged 109 years. His great-grand-children Aaron and Enoch through the influence of their brother-in-law John Brown, a native of Belfast, Ireland, removed to Maryland and became the founders of the Levering family in Baltimore. Aaron was a revolutionary soldier. He was appointed in the early part of July, 1776, one of the captains of the Flying Camp, and was commissioned as Major, 31st of July, 1776. He was in the battle of Brandywine and at the defence of Mud Fort and Fort Mifflin. He was honorably discharged with the rank of colonel at Perth Amboy. Both Aaron and Enoch became successful merchants in Baltimore.

Gen. John Stricker, the son of Col. George Stricker of revolutionary fame, was born in Frederick in 1759. His mother was a Miss Springer. He served as a cadet in Capt. Geo. P. Keepert's company in the German battalion, of which his father was lieutenant-colonel, until commissioned as officer

in Boctar's artillery, in which he rose to the rank of captain. He was at the battles of Trenton, Princeton, Brandywine, Germantown, Monmouth, and others, and accompanied Gen. Sullivan on his expedition against the Indians. In 1783 Capt. Stricker came to Baltimore and associated himself in business with Commodore Barney. He took a keen interest in the organization of the militia, and formed and trained one of the earliest commands in Baltimore and soon was made brigadier-general and commander of the State troops. During the attack on Baltimore in 1814 by the English under General Ross, Gen. Stricker commanded the brigade, which was sent forward to check the enemy's advance, and performed this difficult task with rare discretion, conspicuous gallantry and success. He died on the 23rd of June 1825, leaving to all who knew him a profound and tender memory.

It certainly is pleasant and of interest to the German-American to contemplate the record of a family that for ability, pluck and uprightness, almost from their first appearance in the colony of Maryland to this our day, have stood as high as the Schleys of Frederick. Thomas Schley, the pioneer, who built "the first house" in Frederick in 1746, came with a colony, comprising about one hundred families, from the Palatinate in Germany, in 1735, and settled in the lovely valley of the Catoctin, in which Frederick city is situated. One of his sons, Jacob Schley, was a captain in the revolution. One of Thomas Schley's grandsons was William Schley, member of Congress and Governor of Georgia. Schley county was named for him. John, his brother, occupied the Supreme Bench in Georgia, while another brother rose likewise to eminent judicial honor. Henry Schley, father of Dr. Fairfax Schley, was born in Frederick city in 1793, and died there in 1871,; he participated in the battles of Bladensburg and North Point in 1814, and after the campaign returned to Frederick where he filled during many years various places of important public trust, William Schley, who for many years was one of the leaders of the Baltimore bar, and one of the most distinguished and successful advocates whom the State of Maryland has ever produced, was born in Frederickstown, October 31st, 1799. He commenced the practice of his profession in 1824 in his

native city, but removed to Baltimore in 1837 where he rapidly rose to distinction at the bar. In the same year in which he began to practice law, he married Miss Ringgold of Conococheague Manor, in Washington county, a sister of the gallant Major Samuel Ringgold, of the U. S. army, who was killed at Palo Alto in Mexico. Mr. Schley's life and energies were almost entirely devoted to his profession, and after his retirement from the State Senate, of which body he had been a member, he rarely took an active part in politics. Mr. Schley's professional reputation extended far beyond the limits of his city and State, and no man was more frequently consulted by clients from abroad or in other States. The gallant Winfield S. Schley, the rescuer of Greely and commander of the cruiser Baltimore, belongs to the family. Dr. Fairfax Schley, one of the most popular citizens of Frederick, married into the Steiner family, one of the oldest in Western Maryland, and of whom the late Dr. Lewis H. Steiner, librarian of the Enoch Pratt library was a member.

Among our older German-American families are many whose ancestors came to Maryland from Germany direct by the Chesapeake and settled from the beginning in Baltimore and Annapolis. They were young merchants and traders, who, trained in the Fatherland in habits of industry, and familiar with all the details of the counting-house, rose to wealth and influence, leaving to their descendants an untarnished name and to the city of their adoption lasting monuments of their liberal spirit and enterprise. Such were the Mayers, the Brantz family, the Appolds, Fricks, Bollmans and many more. Christian Mayer and his partner and household friend, Lewis Brantz, both of whom were so intimately connected with the early commerce of Baltimore, emigrated from Germany in 1784.

Mr. Mayer entered the mercantile house of Valk, Burger & Schonten of Baltimore, and upon a change of the firm to Valk & Co., was admitted a partner in the house. Mercantile disasters in 1800 caused its downfall which swept away the small fortune of Mr. Mayer, but they did not leave him despondent or idle. His energy, pride, and sense of duty to his family urged him to immediate industry and enterprise. On his return from Europe in 1802 he formed a partnership with

Mr. Lewis Brantz, a man of similar stamp and acquirements „in the transaction of business on commission“, continuing at the same time their tobacco trade from Maryland with the Netherlands. Mr. Christian Mayer also assumed the duties of president of the Patapsco Marine Insurance Company, and later, of the Neptune Marine Insurance Company. As Consul-General of the kingdom of Würtemberg, he received the most flattering testimonials from the sovereign and ministry of that country for his distinguished devotion to the interests of the German emigrants, many of whom were shiftless, inexperienced, ignorant of the language and sometimes ill-treated. A desire of just protection for them induced Mr. Mayer to ask the co-operation of leading German - Americans in forming a "German Society of Maryland." It was founded and incorporated in 1817, Mr. Mayer becoming its first president, holding the office till 1821, when other duties made him decline a re-election.

As an oracle on insurance he was referred to for opinions, not only by eminent lawyers and law writers, but by the courts also. He was a thoroughly educated gentleman and merchant. His education, both classical, and commercial had been of the best in Germany and Switzerland, and valuable books were his constant and dear companions until within a few weeks of his death, at an advanced age in 1843. To his fellow-citizens he left the memory of a conspicuous example of the highly cultivated merchant and gentleman "of the old school." Well may the German-American of Maryland be proud of such pioneers and rejoice in the high qualities of the settlers of his blood, who won influence and renown in a state that at all times was rich in distinguished citizens.

C. F. RADDATZ.
