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Left to right: Minister William A. Shafer, Deacon Edward A. Shafer; Bishop William W. Graybill in the 1940s; Barner meetinghouse, erected by Lutherans and Mennonites, near Liverpool. See article on Page 2.

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Names involved in the German migration from the Palatinate to Friedrichstadt in the late 1600s suggest a link to the Pennsylvania migration within two decades later.

Palatine Mennonites in Schleswig-Holstein, 1693-1698
by Sem C. Sutter

Wars and rumors of wars have often intertwined the lives of Mennonites of diverse backgrounds who live in different countries. Concerned Christians have learned of sisters and brothers in need and have reached out with assistance. One thinks, for example, of John F. Funk, a Pennsylvania native in Indiana; Christian Krehbiel, a German immigrant in Illinois; and Jacob Y. Shantz, a Canadian; and their roles in facilitating the Mennonite exodus from Russia to the plains of United States and Canada in the 1870s. North American Mennonites aided both Mennonites and non-Mennonites in Europe in the wake of World War II. In the last decade cooperation by Mennonites from India, Japan, Europe, and North America through the Mennonite Central Committee relief program in Vietnam provided yet another example.

A fascinating but little-known encounter of this nature occurred in the 1690s among Mennonites in the Palatinate, Schleswig-Holstein, and the Netherlands. Because of its indirect relation to Mennonite migration to eastern Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century, this incident should capture the attention of Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage readers. Indeed, the wealth of knowledge of local history and genealogy represented by the readership may provide clues necessary to link this story more closely to Pennsylvania.

Trials of the Palatinate

The last two decades of the seventeenth century proved to be trying years for the Palatine Mennonites, most of whom had recently emigrated from Switzerland or Transylvania. In 1685 control of the territory passed from the Protestant Simmern line to the Catholic house of Zweibrücken-Neuburg. The new Elector, Philipp Wilhelm (1685-90), renewed the Mennonite concession of limited toleration, but his son and successor, Johann Wilhelm (1690-1716), delayed renewal from 1690 to 1698 and demanded higher protection fees.

The physical and economic disruption of war compounded this insecurity. The French troops of Louis XIV invaded the Palatinate in 1688 in what is variously known, depending on the observer's viewpoint, as the Nine Years War (1688-97), King William's War, and the War of the League of Augsburg. French land and sea forces fought on multiple fronts against a Grand Alliance, which eventually included the Holy Roman Empire, the German princes, the Netherlands, England, Spain, Sweden, and Savoy. After their initial invasion of the Palatinate in the summer of 1688, the French concentrated their efforts against the Dutch and Spanish in the Low Countries.

Unable to maintain active operations along the entire front, they conceived a strategy for releasing their troops from the Palatinate without allowing German forces to reoccupy the positions they were evacuating. In the winter of 1688-89 they began the systematic devastation of the territory by burning towns and villages, pillaging, and destroying supplies they could not take with them. Damage was severe and widespread. They destroyed the capital of Heidelberg and the bishopric cities of Trier, Worms, and Speyer. Scores of villages lay in ashes. Even rural districts suffered crippling and destructive blows to their grain fields, vineyards, forests, and wildlife and confiscation of their livestock and grain. In some areas farmers were unable to plant crops as a result of nearly constant disruption.

This view shows the port city of Friedrichstadt, Germany, built on a network of canals and called a “little Amsterdam.” The spire visible in the background is that of the Lutheran church, built between 1643 and 1649.

Mennonites, including the Palatine refugees, have attended this meetinghouse in Friedrichstadt since 1652. It was erected in 1626 for secular purposes and is under state protection as an architectural monument. The rear portion served as the meetinghouse for the Flemish congregation and after 1708 for the united Flemish-Frisian-High German congregation. Presently it is the worship center for the small Mennonite congregation as well as for the Danish-speaking Lutheran congregation.

The Palatinate continued to be a theater of hostilities in the years of war that followed. In 1693, for example, Heidelberg was again destroyed. Marauding bands of German hussars and highwaymen plagued the citizenry as much as did the French. Villagers whom the French had robbed found themselves punished for this “cooperation” by German plundering when control of the area shifted, and they could well expect the cycle of recrimination to continue with the return of the French.

We can thus understand that some Mennonites in the Palatinate began to consider migration to a more peaceful location. They turned first to the Dutch Mennonites who had collected money for their relief from earlier hardships. The Dutch sent shiploads of grain and clothing up the Rhine and aided some refugees in settling in the Netherlands.

Probably through the Dutch Mennonites the congregation at Niersheim in the Palatinate learned about Friedrichstadt, a port town in Schleswig-Holstein founded in northern Germany in 1621 by Mennonites and Remonstrants from the Netherlands and embodying religious toleration in its charter. By the late seventeenth century the religious bodies in the town included Lutherans, Catholics, Remonstrants, Quakers, Jews, and Mennonites.

The Mennonites were represented by two congregations: one, a Flemish-High German congregation, and the other, Frisian. Earlier High German, Huiskooper, and Waterlander elements had blended with the Flemish group. Their members included businessmen and artisans in the town as well as farmers in surrounding rural districts. Mennonites played an active role in town government. They served on the council as early as 1625, though they reserved the right to withhold participation in decisions and functions to which they were conscientiously opposed. Both congregations were still Dutch-speaking at this time and maintained regular contact with congregations in the Netherlands. Thus we can speculate that their Dutch benefactors may have drawn the attention of some of the Palatine Mennonites to Friedrichstadt.

In 1693 Christian Plien, a minister at Heppenheim in the Palatinate, wrote to the ministers of the Flemish congregation in Friedrichstadt regarding the possibility of refugees’ settling there. A letter of inquiry dated July 27 (New Style) survives which, according to internal evidence, was at least the second such letter. Plien described sufferings at the hands of both the French and the Germans, who stole livestock and extorted large sums of money by physical torture. He reported that a number of families were prepared to migrate to Friedrichstadt if farms could be found for them to rent. They intended to leave as soon as they could liquidate

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5 Mennonite Encyclopedia, s.v. "Friedrichstadt," by Christian Neff.
6 Mennonite Encyclopedia, s.v. "Phlein, Christian," by N. van der Zijpp. This is probably the same man. He also figures in the letters of the Amish division. See Milton Gascho, "The Amish Division of 1693-1697 in Switzerland and Alsace," Mennonite Quarterly Review 11 (October 1937): 239-240.
their household property and livestock. With aid from Mennonites in Holland and Hamburg they would perhaps be able to afford renting one farm for every two families. He asked for more information regarding farm rental, currency, and other particulars. 7

Another source, however, reveals that Plien himself had already been to Friedrichstadt, probably to survey firsthand the potential for resettlement. The membership book of the Flemish congregation records that he baptized six local persons into membership on May 10, 1693. 8 No evidence exists that Plien ever returned to Friedrichstadt.

**Palatinate Refugees**

Two groups of refugees bound for Friedrichstadt via Amsterdam did indeed leave the Palatinate in the fall of 1693 as attested by church letters of October 13 and 26 (New Style). The letter of October 13 was signed by Christian Plien of Heppenheim, Hanss MeYer of Rutelsheim (Rüdesheim), and Hanss Mülller of Ibersheim. Plien and MeYer plus Hanss Henrich Bär, Rudolf Bletscher, and Christian Bächel signed the letter of October 26. The October 13 party consisted of:

- Hanss Jacob Hestand, minister, with wife and child
- Hans Löttweiller, deacon, single
- Hanss Gochenauwer with wife and siblings
- Hanss Jacob Bropacher with wife and child
- Hanss Strickler with wife
- Hanss Weber with wife and children
- Christian Eicher with wife and children
- Christian Kensinger with wife
- Benedickt Kiner’s widow with her daughter Anna
- Hanss Cunratt Egle
- Hanss Cunrad Strickler
- Jacob Strickler
- Jacob Mülller
- Josep Gochenauwer
- Hanss Jacob Forer
- Hanss Heinderich Hestand
- Maria Hestands
- Maria Gochenauwer
- Feronicka Gochenauwer
- Barbara Mallinger
- Jonas Melinger, brother of former, not yet a member of congregation

The October 26 group follows:

- Hanss Heinderich Kauffman, just ordained deacon, with wife and two children
- Ullrich MaYer, just ordained deacon, with wife
- Hanss Huber with wife
- Dauttt Hiniger with wife and one child
- Osswolt Sigfritt with wife and two children
- Benedickt Jose with wife
- Hanss Jau, widower with one child
- Jost Millematter with wife and one child
- Jacob Pletzscher with wife and two children
- Anna Rütschne, widow with two children

**Single persons:**
- Casper Moseman
- Anna Wenger
- Barbara Wenger
- Elisabeth Oberholtzer
- Anna Schneider
- Barbara Wenger
- Christina Stöckeler

**Young people not yet members:**
- Petter Hodell, a tailor
- Margreta, Mattelena, and Barbara Wänger, three orphans
- Christian Gunden
- Michell Mosseman
- Hanss Gritter
- Petter Kässler
- Hanss Gunden
- Christian Guth
- Michell von Zotzenhausen

**Postscript:**
- Mardien MaYle, widow with five children
- Samuel Baßer with wife and six children 9

Whether all these persons actually reached Friedrichstadt is uncertain. Their names do not appear as a group elsewhere in the records of the Friedrichstadt congregations. Only those who were baptized, married, or buried in Friedrichstadt, as noted below, appear there. We do know that some spent a number of months in Amsterdam before continuing on their way. For example, David Rutgers, deacon of the Lamist congregation and active in the relief effort for the refugees, wrote a church letter on October 31, 1694, on behalf of Hanss Henrik Heystand and Barbara Millinger, who had lived there for “some time” and were only then departing for Friedrichstadt. 10 Others may have remained in the Netherlands permanently.

**Vital Statistics Records**

The following Palatine names appear in the marriage, baptismal, and burial records of the Flemish-High German congregation, with which most of the refugees appear to have associated:

- November 18 (bans) and December 3, 1693 marriage of Hans Conradt Egly and Fronica [sic] Gognoury
- December 30, 1693 (bans) and January 14, 1694 marriage of Hans Conradt Eg[ł] and Fronica [sic] Gognoury

7“Brieven aan de Gemeente van 1623-1782,” Mennonite Archives, Friedrichstadt, West Germany.
9“Attestatie van Lidmaat-schaap,” No. 31, Mennonite Archives.
10Ibid.
cause the membership records of the Frisians for the period immediately preceding the merger are missing, we have no verification for this conjecture.

Others of the refugee group may also have associated with the Frisian group but left before the merger. Because the membership records of the Frisians for the period immediately preceding the merger are missing, we have no verification for this conjecture.

The archives of the Remonstrant congregation also contain evidence of the sojourn of the Mennonite exiles in Friedrichstadt. The treasurer's account book contains the following records of burials in the Remonstrant cemetery, which served all churches in the town except the Lutherans and Jews, who each had their own:

- November 13, 1693—child of the Palatinate
- November 29, 1693—child of Hans Hendricks Koopman from the Palatinate
- January 18, 1694—child of Christiaen Akker from the Palatinate
- June 29, 1694—child of Hans Wever
- November 25, 1694—child of Hans Hendricks Koopman
- December 16, 1694—wife of Hans Konraed [Egli]
- January 6, 1695—Christina Marja Koopmans
- February 12, 1695—child of Christian Eiger
- April 5, 1696—child of Christiaen Kissingen
- June 7, 1696—child of Hans Jacobs [Brubacher] Palser
- November 29, 1696—child of Hans Jacobs Palser
- March 25, 1697—wife of Hans Strickler

May 30, 1697—Hans Jacobs [Brubacher]
June 20, 1697—child of Hans Strickler

Of particular interest to the Pennsylvania reader is the notarized statement in the Remonstrant records that on November 29, 1694, the heirs of Jacob van der Schagen had sold to Marten Mel̄ a parcel of land called “Tamkenbalg,” located in Stapelholm, the rural district just east of Friedrichstadt. Might this be the Martin Meylin of Pennsylvania rifle tradition, a relative, or merely a coincidence of names?

The treaty of Ryswick in the fall of 1697 brought peace to the Palatinate, and the refugees must have been eager to return home after a four-year absence. A church letter signed April 9, 1698 (Old Style), by the “ministers, elders, and deacons of the so-called United Flemish, Frisian, and High German Mennonite congregation” lists twenty members leaving Friedrichstadt for the Palatinate:

- Hans Jakob He’ystandt and his wife
- Hans Ludtweyler
- Henderich He’ystandt and his wife
- Hanss Henderik He’ystandt and his wife
- Samuel Be’yher and his wife
- Hanss Weffer and his wife
- Josep Kognauwer and his sisters, Le’ysbet and Katr’yna
- Hanss Strechler and his wife, Antie
- Hanss Haubert and his wife
- Olderich Haubert and his wife

Only the Strickler, Egli, and Grütter families remained in the area permanently.

Does this episode have any relevance for early Pennsylvania Mennonite history? I believe it does in at least two ways. It enhances our sketchy knowledge of the Mennonite experience in the Palatinate in the generation preceding migration to Pennsylvania. The trials of the war years were among the factors which accumulated over many years to cause dissatisfaction. We can better understand the psychology of migration: people accustomed to frequent moves in response to religious or economic pressures were likely to find attractive the potential opportunity an ocean away in Penn’s woods.

A cursory examination of the names involved in the Friedrichstadt migration strongly suggests that some of these persons or their descendants eventually settled in Pennsylvania. Genealogists and local historians should test this thesis with American evidence for corroboration or refutation and share their findings.

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11 "Ledemaartenboek," passim.
12 Ibid.
14 Doos 17, Remonstrant Archives.
15 "Attestatie van Lidmaat-schaap," No. 31, Mennonite Archives.