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## Pennsylvania Folklife Vol. 38, No. 2


William B. Fetterman

James D. McMahon Jr.

Monica Pieper

Lorett Treese

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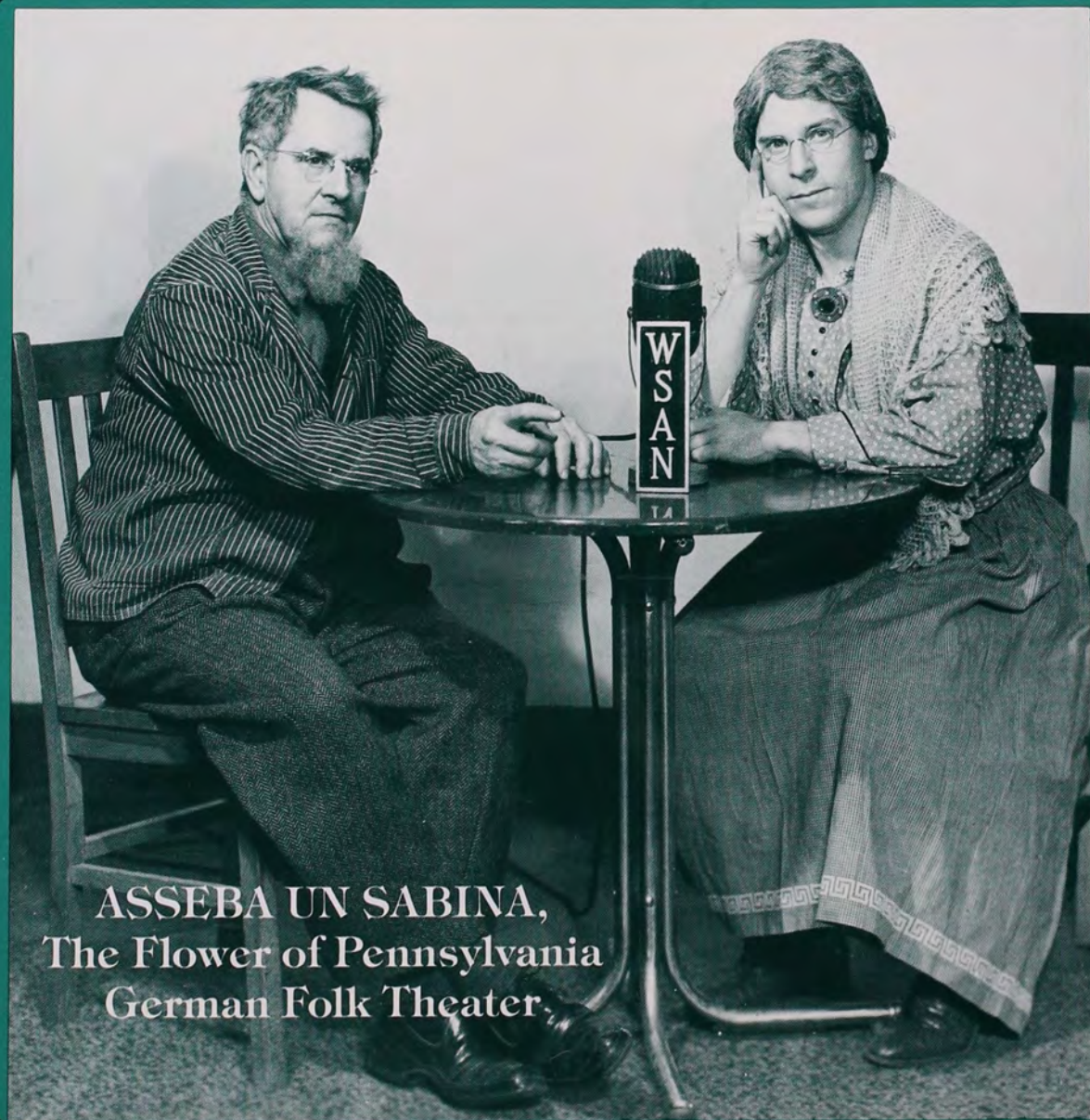
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# Pennsylvania Folklife

Winter 1988-89



ASSEBA UN SABINA,  
The Flower of Pennsylvania  
German Folk Theater.

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### CONTRIBUTORS

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#### COVER:

*For more than ten years — from 1944 to 1954 — an extraordinary Pennsylvania German dialect program was broadcast over radio station WSAN in Allentown, Pa. That program, *Asseba un Sabina*, "involved the most outstanding talents in Pennsylvania German folk theater at the time." Two of those talents — seen here in a photograph taken in late 1944 or early 1945 — were Harry Hess Reichard (*Asseba*) and Paul Wieand (*Sabina*).*

*Layout and Special Photography*

WILLIAM K. MUNRO

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# ASSEBA UN SABINA, The Flower of Pennsylvania German Folk Theater

by William Fetterman



*The cast of Asseba un Sabina from Nov. 3, 1946 to Nov. 9, 1947: seated, Harry H. Reichard and Paul Wieand; standing, center, Art Mickley, Mabel Wieand, Johnny Van Sandt; Ken Leiby and his Orchestra.*

## INTRODUCTION

*Asseba un Sabina Mumbauer Im Eihledaahl (Asseba and Sabina Mumbauer of Owl Valley)* was a radio program broadcast over WSAN, Allentown, every Sunday at 1:00 p.m. from January 16, 1944 until June 27, 1954.<sup>1</sup> It was advertised as an "all-star Pennsylvania German radio program," and it was; it involved the most outstanding talents in Pennsylvania German folk theater at

the time. Many people considered it the best to be found in dialect entertainment, and I have been told that one could walk down the streets of many small towns in southeastern Pennsylvania during the summer and hear the program playing on radios all along the block.

Listening to the program became a regular Sunday afternoon ritual—people came home from church and ate dinner while listening to the radio. Or, if dinner was

finished before one o'clock, the dishes would wait in the sink until the broadcast was over. In either case, the children had to be quiet. People loved *Asseba un Sabina* because the characters, situations, and philosophy touched their own personal lives in an intimate and meaningful way. In reaction to a particular episode, listeners would mention that such things happened in their own house, or that something in the story reminded them of their own parents or grandparents.

I was born on October 27, a day called "Sabina" in the old farmer's almanacs; and, although *Asseba un Sabina* was before my time, as a young boy my Grandma and Grandpa Fetterman would tell me about the "old days." They enjoyed *Asseba un Sabina*, and they enjoyed telling me about it. My grandparents have been gone for several years now, but their voices came to life again for me as I read the scripts in preparation for this essay—an essay which will provide a cursory examination of the radio program and its relationship to the wider tradition of Pennsylvania German dialect theater through biographies of the main persons involved, and the basic content of the scripts.

### BEGINNINGS

The historical development of Pennsylvania German folk theater is a complex subject, and I cannot hope to fully summarize its traditions previous to *Asseba un Sabina*; however, a few brief comments will help to put the series in some context. The early immigrants to Pennsylvania did not have the luxury of time to make "folk plays"; they were too busy providing for the basic necessities of life. But at Christmas time in early homes there was usually time for an appearance by the Belsnickel, and his performance can be considered a precursor to the development of formal theatrical presentations in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Belsnickel, who wore a grotesque mask and costume, questioned the children of the household to find out whether or not they had behaved during the preceding year; good children were rewarded with nuts or hard candies, while bad children were whipped slightly as punishment. Then the children were told to expect the *Grischtkindel* (the Christ-Child and the Christmas present he left) during the night of Christmas Eve. Belsnickling, which existed throughout the Pennsylvania German areas of settlement, declined in the early decades of the twentieth century. It was incorporated into the contemporary Mummer's tradition at New Year's in Philadelphia on the one hand, and was replaced by the American version of Santa Claus on the other.<sup>2</sup>

Since the beginnings of Pennsylvania German dialect comedies in the 1830s, such plays have been performed in the southeastern section of Pennsylvania from Lehigh and Northampton counties in the east, to Lancaster and Dauphin counties in the west. From the latter part of the nineteenth century to the present, these stage plays

have usually been performed during the summer in outdoor groves or in Sunday School recreation halls. In the spring or fall a fire hall, Grange hall, or local school-room or auditorium serves the same purpose. Dialect plays are almost always sponsored by Lutheran or Reformed churches to raise money for building improvements or other congregational needs.

Traditionally, Pennsylvania German plays have been predominately situation comedies which feature a couple in later married life; the wife is shrill, bossy, and unsympathetic to her somewhat naturally lazy but nonetheless hardworking husband. This tradition may be traced to Hugh Lindsay's Pennsylvania German dialect *Punch & Judy* puppet shows (*Der alt Waffelbach un sie Fraw, die alt Waffelbachsey*), given at county fairs and circuses throughout southeastern Pennsylvania from the 1830s through the 1850s.<sup>3</sup> Edward Rauch's version of *Rip Van Winkle*, (1883);<sup>4</sup> Clarence Iobst's *En Gwart Millich un en Halb Beint Raahm (A Quart of Milk and a Half Pint of Cream, 1928)*;<sup>5</sup> Paul Wieand's *Im Grund-sow Loch (In the Groundhog's Home, 1941)*; and Irwin and Verna Frantz's *Der Silas un die Betz* skits (1939–1952) also follow this tradition which continues at the present with the radio skits of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Bechtel (*Der Buschnibbel un die Minnie Schnauss*), and the stage skits of Irwin Klinger and Irene Wiest (*Der Sam Schleeferich un die Betz Grossmaul*).<sup>6</sup>

The first known radio programs given in the Pennsylvania German dialect were written by George W. Kunsman and broadcast from Reading around 1927;<sup>7</sup> such dialect radio shows became increasingly popular after the mid-1930s, and in 1937, Paul Wieand's group presented *Wer Sucht, Der Findt (He Who Seeks, Finds)* on April 12, 19 and 26; and on May 3 and 10 (9:30–10:00 p.m.) on WCBA in Allentown.<sup>8</sup> Also heard on the radio at this time was a short skit called *Elfetritschelcher (Elf Tricks)*, originally presented by Clarence Egolf and Carl Hinnerschitz at the Civic Little Theater in Allentown. (Reichard describes this skit as "based on the popular gag, whereby a dullard is out on a cold blustery night at the coldest, windiest corner holding the bag (while the rest proceed to the warm fires of the kitchen stove) to round up the fabled creatures, and drive them into the bag.")<sup>9</sup> By the early 1940s people were tuning in regularly to hear "Pumpernickel Bill" (William Troxell) in Allentown or *De Wunnernaus (The Gossip, G. Gilbert Snyder)* in Reading give fifteen minute weekly radio programs of local gossip and folklore.<sup>10</sup>

During World War II dialect entertainments diminished as some organizations—such as Grundslow Lodge No. 1 in Allentown—did not meet (as a patriotic gesture), and some participants—such as the cast members of Esther Billiard's *Des Happened Yuscht Tzu Uns (This Happened Just to Us, 1942)*—were in the military service.<sup>11</sup> As a result of these circumstances, *Asseba un Sabina* was created in 1944.

*Asseba un Sabina* producer Arthur H. Mickley, in a photograph from the 1940s. All photographs, unless otherwise identified, are from the author's collection.



#### THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

Arthur H. Mickley—the advertising manager for the program's sponsor, Hummel's Furniture Warehouse—was the producer and director of *Asseba un Sabina*. Mickley (1900–1978), of French Huguenot stock, graduated from Muhlenberg College in Allentown in 1922, and during his younger years was a popular local bandleader with his own musical group.<sup>12</sup> During the Depression in the early 1930s, Mickley gave up music and for a time ran an advertising agency with Fred Shankweiler. When their business began to dwindle, Hummel's, of Allentown, was suggested as an alternative. From 1937 until his retirement in 1976, Mickley was an advertising executive at Hummel's, where he did newspaper layouts and radio spots.

In December of 1943, Mickley began coordinating the radio station programming, hiring musicians, and looking for someone to write a series of scripts. By early January of 1944, he had a scriptwriter—Lloyd Moll—and he then created the broadcast format, and wrote the announcer's script of announcements, commercials, and cues. When the program actually got underway, Mickley's role as director was minimal. While the script was being rehearsed, Mickley divided the actors' readings into thirty-second segments, and he was always on hand for the broadcasts each Sunday to make sure everything ran according to schedule, but the actors were free to develop their own characterizations and interpretations of individual episodes.

*Asseba un Sabina* became so popular that by May, 1944, the cast began making regular personal appearances, complete with costumes and make-up—aspects of production that were not a part of the radio broadcasts. During the run of the series, *Asseba un Sabina* made over 250 of these personal appearances. As their manager and producer, Mickley went along to collect the money.

\*\*\*

Lloyd Moll (1879–1944)<sup>13</sup> not only wrote the first scripts for the new program, he was the series' first *Asseba* as well. Born in Macungie, Lehigh County, Moll was a professional musician,<sup>14</sup> a concert violinist who was accompanied for many years by the harpist Charles Hunsberger. (My father, who took violin lessons from Moll in the 1930s, recalls that he was “rather serious and demanding” as a music teacher.) He was also at one time the concertmaster of the Lehigh Valley Symphony Orchestra under Andrew Weingartner, and when the Allentown Symphony Orchestra was founded he became its conductor; a position he held for the last twenty years of his life.

Moll wrote some fine verse, but it was his short stories in dialect prose which were his greatest achievement. Forty-nine sketches entitled “Am Schwarze Baer” (“At the Black Bear Hotel”) appeared in *'S Pennsylvawnsch Deitsch Eck* (*The Pennsylvania German Corner*) from



*Lloyd Moll (seated, left) the program's original Asseba with Paul Wieand (Sabina), Producer Art Mickley (behind Moll), Announcer Johnny Van Sandt (behind Wieand), and the Jerry Reinsmith Orchestra. Moll also wrote the first four Asseba un Sabina scripts, and began a fifth which was completed by Wieand. (Photograph taken in January, 1944.)*

November 30, 1935 to January 14, 1939. On August 1, 1938, he began a thrice-weekly column of his own, "'S Gebobbel Im Sctor'" ("The Gossip at the Store") which continued until his death. Another series, thirty-three pieces in all, was "'Schtimme Aus'M Kaerrich Hof'" ("Voices From the Cemetery"), which first appeared in the *Eck* column of March 1, 1941.

Moll's first play was a one-act piece, "'S Gebobbel Im Sctor'" ("The Gossip at the Store"), presented at the Berks County Fersommling at Reading on April 14, 1939.<sup>15</sup> Apparently the script of this no longer exists, but it probably was new or adapted material from his newspaper column of the same name. What is striking about this first play is that it was a marionette play, with actors speaking the dialogue.

Asseba and Sabina first appeared in one of the episodes of "Am Schwarze Baer" entitled "Die Sabine un der Asseba Heiere" ("Sabine and Asseba Marry").<sup>16</sup> This story relates the courtship and marriage of Asseba Schantz to Sabine Weiler. In the story they first meet and marry during later middle age. For the radio show, these two characters (now Asseba and Sabina Mumbauer) were taken as an archetypal farm couple in their latter years of life.

Moll completed four radio scripts; a fifth, unfinished script was completed for broadcast by Paul Wieand. Moll lived to portray Asseba only three times—January 16, 23, and 30, 1944. How long this original program would have lasted can only be conjectured. Moll orig-

inated the characters, but he did not live to develop fully the potential inherent in his model. As a tribute to his work, an introduction by Preston A. Barba, with the complete "Schwarze Baer" stories, was published by the Pennsylvania German Folklore Society in 1947, and the last script he lived to perform was published by the Lehigh County Historical Society in 1949.

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As already mentioned, Moll's fifth, unfinished script was completed by Paul Wieand who was then (and for many years afterward) the show's Sabina. Wieand<sup>17</sup> was born in 1907 at Guth's Station, just north of Allentown, and has lived most of his life there. (From 1915 to 1924 when his father was a tenant farmer for Charles O. Hunsicker the family lived in Guthsville.) He graduated from William Allen High School in 1926, and after attending Muhlenberg College for several summer sessions, transferred to Kutztown State College, where he received his B.A. in art in 1941. Until 1954 he was a school teacher, at first teaching all subjects, later teaching arts and crafts at William Allen High School in Allentown.

Originally Wieand wanted to become an undertaker, a profession he regrets not pursuing, "because it's a great art taking care of people when they are dead, making them look good." Instead his interests turned to more conventional arts, and he became one of the most extraordinary and versatile creative figures in Pennsylvania folk culture. He painted in oils, decorated furniture,



*In addition to his role as Sabina, Paul Wieand also portrayed Davie Nexer, the Mumbauers' neighbor. The versatile Wieand was also the voice of the Mumbauers' dog, Wasser. (1948 photograph.)*



modeled clay, fashioned jewelry, made block prints, and collected folklore on games, songs, and everyday life. He wrote *Outdoor Games of the Pennsylvania Germans* in 1950, *Folk Medicine Plants Used in the Pennsylvania Dutch Country* in 1961, and edited a local history, *South Whitehall Then and Now*, in 1976.

In addition, Wieand is one of the key figures in Pennsylvania German folk theater. From 1933 through 1944 he wrote about twenty-six plays and skits for his own group of performers, for church organizations, and for Grundsow Lodge No. 1, Allentown. Beginning in 1935, his group also began presenting folklife pageants which incorporated obscure folk games, dances, songs, riddles, and lore about the seasons and about life on the farm during the latter part of the nineteenth century. His success in producing pageants resulted in the annual programs given during the early years of the Kutztown Folk Festival from 1950 through 1963.

Wieand's fame as an actor lay in his ability to do female impersonations. He recalls that when about six or seven years old, he dressed up in girl's clothing and fooled the neighbors. In December, 1943, he did a series of impersonations at the Hotel Allen in Allentown, and Lloyd Moll, also on the program, saw him and asked him to play the part of Sabina on the proposed radio series. Wieand would play Sabina from January 16, 1944, through January 17, 1954. He also played the part of Wasser, the Mumbauers' dog and, beginning October 10, 1948, he also portrayed Davie Nexer, the Mumbauers' neighbor. Wieand's versatility—his ability to speak Sabina's lines in falsetto and then to answer in Davie's gruff tones—clearly establishes him as the most resourceful actor in the tradition of Pennsylvania German folk theater.

Wieand was a very busy man in his middle years, creating folk art, raising a family, running a mail-order company specializing in his crafts and foods, teaching school, collecting folklore, producing his own plays and pageants, and acting on the radio. All of this came to an abrupt end shortly after the broadcast of January 17, 1954, when he was arrested at his home and placed by the court at Rittersville State Hospital. He spent several months there recuperating from a "nervous breakdown." This incident was a traumatic event not only in Wieand's own personal life, it shocked the community as well; he was forced to retire from teaching school. On the radio broadcasts the sudden absence of Sabina and Davie broke the momentum of the scripts, for no one could really replace his characterizations. Moreover, the circumstances of his real life so disturbed the audience and those involved in the production that interest in continuing the skits dwindled, and when the series finally left the air on June 27, 1954, it was already a memory for many people.

Wieand's life after *Asseba un Sabina* is a triumph over misconceptions and prejudice. He could no longer play Sabina, the role he had made his own, nor could he teach school. Instead, he concentrated upon selling mail-order goods to displaced Pennsylvania Germans as far away as Africa. And, for about twenty years, beginning in the early 1960s, he operated a stand at the Allentown Farmer's Market called "Der Greitsweg Sctor" ("The Crossroad Store"), a charming environment that re-created a typical nineteenth century general store. This was a magical and wondrous place. The name of the stand itself was the title of Wieand's first musical comedy, written in 1933. The last day the "Greitsweg Sctor" was open for business was December 24, 1981.

From the fall of 1964 until that last day of operation, I was a regular visitor at the store. It was a great pleasure to study the shelves crammed with antiques, pots and pans, handkerchiefs, toys, candy, old posters (including one for *Asseba un Sabina*), and to talk with Mr. Wieand, or to simply observe the people who came in. In a sense, the store was a type of "living theater," with a highly personal and dramatic atmosphere; a place where one could go to listen to or to speak the Pennsylvania German dialect. The highlight of the store was a visual joke that, for me, typifies the core of Pennsylvania German humor: In the middle of the room was a pot-bellied stove, and next to it was a cracker barrel. On the lid of the barrel was a sign which read "Look Once in." Lifting the lid, one saw a stuffed cat lying contentedly on a layer of crackers, its glass eyes staring directly up at the observer. Many people were shocked and frightened by the fact that it was a *real* cat stuffed by a taxidermist. I first saw the cat when I was about seven years old, and for many years after that it was fun to look in and relive that original experience, or to wait in the store for an hour or more to see someone else discover this for the first time.

Since retiring from business Wieand likes to relax and take his time, a luxury that he did not enjoy for much of his life. He enjoys traveling, and has organized several bus trips throughout the United States and Canada. He also continues a folk singing group, and is a founder and secretary of Grundsow Lodge Number 16 in Ore-field, Lehigh County. His most recent play, and his first since finishing the uncompleted *Asseba un Sabina* script by Lloyd Moll, is *Haes Wasser Weibslait! (Hot Water Women!)*, 1986). Written for a dialect writing contest sponsored by the quarterly dialect publication *Da AUSAUGA*, it is a dramatization of the "Hot Water Rebellion" of Lehigh County in 1799.

As an actor Wieand's greatest moment was in reprising his role as Sabina (with the Reverend Phares O. Reitz<sup>18</sup> as Asseba), performing Rahn's "Der Asseba Gricht die Hohr G'schnitte" ("Asseba Gets a Haircut") on September 24 and 26, 1983, under the sponsorship of the Lehigh County German-American Tricentennial Committee. This episode had been broadcast first on June 18, 1944, and repeated in public appearance performances by Wieand and Prof. Reichard (Moll's successor as Asseba) until late 1953. Now, Wieand continues acting, taking small parts in the annual skits written by Francis Laudenslager for Grundsow Lodge No. 16. At present he is in the midst of writing his autobiography.

Wieand's accomplishments in varied art forms have influenced many current folk artists. In folk theater his plays are the most familiar and the most frequently revived, especially by the congregation of Huff's Church in Berks County. His plays, as well as his aesthetics of performance and production, have directly influenced virtually *all* of Pennsylvania German folk theater since



*The Reverend Phares O. Reitz, who played the role of Asseba in a revival of the personal appearance skit "Der Asseba Gricht die Hohr G'schnitte" in Sept. 1983.*

the 1940s. In Japan, the masters of traditional arts and crafts are designated "living national treasures." For Pennsylvania Germans, Paul Wieand is such a treasure.

\*\*\*

When Lloyd Moll died suddenly on February 1, 1944, Paul Wieand asked Harry Hess Reichard,<sup>19</sup> college professor and Pennsylvania German literature scholar, to play the part of Asseba Mumbauer. Reichard (1878-1956) was born in Lower Saucon Township, Northampton County, and died in Allentown. In 1903 he married Ida Ruch (1879-1960), and together they were responsible for pioneering work in collecting and studying dialect literature. He received his doctorate from Johns Hopkins in 1911, and after various assignments in New Jersey, Illinois, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, became professor of German at Muhlenberg College in 1925; he retired as Professor Emeritus in 1949. Reichard's two main studies, *Pennsylvania German Writings and Their Writers* (1918) and the *Anthology of Pennsylvania German Verse* (1940), remain the basic textbooks on the subject.

Although his earlier studies concerned poetry primarily, Reichard had an interest in the theater, particularly in acting. In 1926, the *Deutscher Verein* (German Club) of Muhlenberg featured him in a standard-German version of the Pyramus and Thisbe scene from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and, from 1933 through 1935, he acted in dialect plays performed by that organization. He was also a popular lecturer, and was particularly noted for his moving recitations of dialect verse.



*Paul Wieand and Harry H. Reichard during a broadcast in the mid-1940s.*

Reichard never wrote a play, but with his introduction to Clarence Iobst's play *En Gwart Millich un En Halb Beint Raahm*, published in 1939, he traced Pennsylvania German folk theater back to the 1830s and up through the 1930s.<sup>20</sup> At his death, Professor and Mrs. Reichard had almost completed a two-volume anthology of dialect play scripts with introductions. Reichard's desire was to gather and publish as much representative material as possible, to teach successive generations. Much of this material, together with his scrapbooks and programs from Pennsylvania German folk theater presentations collected from the late 1920s until his death in 1956, remains unpublished in the archives of Muhlenberg College.

It is ironic that Reichard's greatest accomplishment in the folk theater he loved so much was not as a scholar but as the actor who portrayed Asseba Mumbauer. Reichard was originally asked by Paul Wieand to fill in for one Sunday, and he agreed to play Lloyd Moll's script for that performance. But the subject was never mentioned again; Reichard portrayed Asseba from February 6, 1944 through June 27, 1954. Of all the people connected with the program, his involvement was the longest. Reichard loved playing Asseba, and people loved him in the role. He had a great reputation as an academician and a folklorist, and the authority he enjoyed in real life complemented the cultural authority that the fictive Asseba embodied. Reichard was, even in the beginning of the series, already in his late sixties. With his gentle, humble attitude, and his natural ability as an ac-

tor, he was an authentic spokesman for the best in Pennsylvania German culture.

\* \* \*

Lloyd Moll's unfinished fifth script—completed by Paul Wieand—was broadcast on February 13, 1944; it concluded the first period of the radio series. The script for the next broadcast was written by the Reverend Clarence R. Rahn,<sup>21</sup> who was recruited for the job by Art Mickley. Rahn (1898–1977) lived his entire life in Temple, north of Reading, in Berks County. He graduated from Keystone State Normal School (now Kutztown State University) in 1919, and began teaching at the Allentown Preparatory School on the Muhlenberg campus, but transferred to the Student Army Training Corps at Schuylkill Seminary (now Albright College) at Reading in 1920; he then transferred to the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church (now Lancaster Theological Seminary), where he graduated in 1923. In 1930 he married R. Catharine Hain (1896–1982), and they had a daughter, Ruth (Mrs. Richard Schaefer).

Pastor Rahn began his ministry at the Jacksonville Reformed Charge in 1922; it consisted of four churches: Jacob's in Jacksonville, New Bethel in Kempton, Albany Township, St. Peter's in Lynnville, and Lowhill Church in Lowhill Township. In 1960, a fifth church, the Jerusalem (Red) Church, was added to the Jacksonville Charge. In addition to serving five congregations, Rahn periodically returned to teaching in local schools.



*Professor Harry Hess Reichard (Asseba) and Paul Wieand (Sabina) in costume; mid-to-late 1940s photograph.*

Rahn was an extremely busy and talented individual who loved life and loved his heritage, which included youthful experiences in his grandfather's blacksmith shop. His speaking career began in 1938 when William Troxell, dialect gossip columnist for the Allentown *Morning Call*, asked him to be a speaker at Grundsow Lodge No. 1 in Allentown; and, until his death (shortly after speaking at Bowmanstown Grundsow Lodge No. 11) he was considered "the dean of Pennsylvania humorists," often appearing at several places in one evening. In addition to his heavy schedule, his avocations included farming, baking bread (to be shared with friends), woodworking (making tobacco pipes and salad bowls), and experimenting with sound equipment. Throughout his life he was fascinated with electronics—in the 1920s building radios, and, before his death, working with stereo and tape cassette equipment.

When Pastor Rahn agreed to write the continuing scripts for *Asseba un Sabina*, it was the beginning of a strange labor of love. He did not enjoy desk work, and although the characters were always in his mind, it was usually not until early Thursday morning that he would type out the eight-page scripts which he delivered to Professor Reichard's house in Allentown on Thursday afternoons—his usual time for going to Allentown to visit hospitalized members of his congregations. Rahn took over the writing of the series because he realized the need for such a thing within the culture. The radio program was a convenient and accessible medium through which to depict his experiences in the Pennsylvania German



*The Reverend Clarence R. Rahn who wrote all but the first five *Asseba un Sabina* scripts. (Photograph taken in the late 1940s; courtesy of Ruth Rahn Schaefer.)*

community—the humor, the philosophy, and the love he found there. He understood the common people, and was able to portray them with humor *and* dignity.

In contrast to his contemporaries Clarence Iobst and Paul Wieand, Rahn was not specifically interested in the theater, but drama does seem to have occupied some of his time before he began writing the *Asseba un Sabina* scripts. Early in his ministry, for instance, he wrote a play for the Sunday School youth group at Jacksonville, and during the mid-1930s he performed as interlocutor in amateur minstrel shows given in English. Apart from these beginnings, his real training for folk theater came as he gave his sermons or his humorous speeches and, more prosaically, as he simply talked to people and listened to what they had to say. He did not write down his sermons or jokes and, so organized was his thinking, he wrote the *Asseba un Sabina* radio scripts in one draft and at one sitting. Professor Reichard, in his notes on the series, writes that “when amazement was expressed at his ability to find new and interesting episodes week after week (for ten-and-a-half years), Rahn’s reply was, ‘Interesting things happen in life every day, why not a new skit every week?’”<sup>22</sup>

*Asseba un Sabina*’s success was due to a magical combination of good acting and good material, and that good material was very much a product of Rahn’s fertile imagination. When the program was broadcast each Sunday afternoon at one o’clock, Pastor Rahn and his family were either having dinner at someone’s house, or were driving to his next parish. If they were guests somewhere and the hosts did not automatically turn on the program he did not like to ask them to do so; but when they were driving he would pull off the road and they would all listen to the script being performed for the first time, just like everyone else.

Rahn was only mentioned as the author of the series when the first and last of the episodes he wrote were broadcast. He was pleased to be a part of the enterprise, but he early received an anonymous letter saying it was disgraceful that a minister should be involved with the theater. But although his name was not mentioned in the regular program credits, many people knew that he was the author; it was not a secret. Indeed, when *Asseba un Sabina* gave personal appearances it was often specified in the contracts that the author should also be the master of ceremonies.

Rahn loved having his writing presented so professionally, and he loved imagining new situations for the characters; but when Paul Wieand had his “break-down” it crushed Rahn’s interest and enthusiasm. In consideration of the program’s many faithful fans, it was decided that the show should have a smooth ending. In comparison to earlier episodes, however, these last scripts—from February through June, 1954—are not particularly inspired. The final program on June 27, “Der Dreeyer” (“The Pall Bearer”) had Asseba return-

ing from the funeral of a friend. There is some humor in the situation—Asseba’s good hat has been ruined—but Rahn had clearly ended the comedy. Life would continue in Eihleddaahl, but listeners would no longer be making weekly visits there.

\* \* \*

On November 3, 1946, a new character, Sussie the maid, was added to the cast of the program. Sussie was played by Paul Wieand’s wife Mabel.<sup>23</sup> Mabel Schraden (1904–1976) was born in Allentown but grew up in Crackersport, so named according to legend because a cracker barrel once fell off a wagon there. In June, 1929, she married Paul Wieand and moved to Guth’s Station where she made her home for the rest of her life. The Wieands had three daughters, Kathryn, Phyllis, and Isabel. Though different in temperament—he was outgoing, she was retiring—Mabel Wieand was supportive of her husband in all his various enterprises. She appeared in his plays and pageants, but was never a featured performer; apparently she did not particularly enjoy performing, or at least she did not want the spotlight. Paul Wieand describes her as “shy, not forward. She helped as much as she could. Whatever she did, she did for me. She didn’t venture into something strange or new, she was a homebody who felt obligated to do everything she could with me.”

Mrs. Wieand portrayed Sussie Schussel for only one year, not because of any lack of acting skill, but because of a lack of preparation in the previous scripts. From the show’s earliest episodes, Asseba and Sabina Mumbauer talked about their neighbors, Davie and Keturah Nexer. It would have been logical for these characters to finally appear, but instead, Sabina suddenly had a maid to help her with the housework.

Mabel Wieand’s voice was perfectly suited to the character of Sussie, a youthful, bright, giggling girl just discovering life. Rahn made good use of the character, particularly in slapstick episodes such as “Heeb Aw” (“Hold On,” October 19, 1947) where Asseba, Sabina, and Sussie try to get a skunk out of the barn with disastrous results. Another effective plot device was using Sussie to arouse Sabina’s jealousy of her husband. In “Die Nacht Iss Dunkel” (“The Night is Dark,” January 5, 1947), for example, Asseba comes home late and, having house-key problems, decides not to wake the women but instead use a ladder to enter through a second-floor window. Unfortunately, it is Sussie’s window he tries to enter and when Sabina, fearing burglars, hits him over the head, he must explain why he chose Sussie’s window in the first place.

The character of Sussie was introduced to keep the characters of the Mumbauers from becoming monotonous. But not only was the character introduced abruptly, ultimately she was unable to significantly advance the action in Eihleddaahl. Thus, when Sussie went

Audra Miller as Keturah Nexer,  
1948.



off to marry Jerry Fenstermacker, the star pitcher of the Eihledaahl baseball team, her presence was not missed. For many years Mrs. Wieand was known particularly for her dried string beans, sold by "Wieand's Pennsylvania Dutch." She acted because her husband asked her to, but her true talents, like Sussie's, were domestic; there is little reason to believe that she missed the maid any more than the audience did.

\* \* \*

Sussie's last appearance was in the episode of November 9, 1947; the following week Keturah Nexer, the Mumbauers' much-talked-about neighbor, made her first appearance; she was played by Audra Kuhns Miller (1903-1969). Audra Miller,<sup>24</sup> one of the outstanding performers in Paul Wieand's folk group from the early 1930s through the early 1960s, had a difficult life. Her husband did not provide any support for her, or for their two sons, George and Arthur. In the late 1930s they separated, and a few years later Audra finally obtained a divorce, although she retained her married name. At her family's farm in Snyderville, Lehigh County, she was the sole support of her sons, her parents, a grandmother, and an epileptic aunt. As a child her back was damaged in a farm accident, leaving her slightly crippled as an adult. Her oldest son, George, was killed while serving in the army during World War II. The farm was never very prosperous, but Audra Miller managed; she was a strong, determined woman who believed in hard work and faith in God as a way of life.

It was not only Audra Miller's character that was strong—her physical strength was very effectively demonstrated in a stunt she and Paul Wieand performed as part of Wieand's folk pageants (1935-1964). In "Budder Wiega" ("Weighing Butter"), two people stand back-

to-back and link arms at the elbows. Each in turn lifts the other off the floor by bending over. Wieand, a small, slightly-built man, would lift Audra onto his back with some difficulty, while she would lift him high into the air with ease. Visually, it was quite effective.

Although she never went to school after the eighth grade, Audra Miller had a quick mind and an effective style of oratory. In such Wieand plays as *Der Greitsweg Sctor* (*The Crossroad Store*, 1933) and *Tzu Forwitsich* (*Too Forward*, 1941) she portrayed the grandmother—a cranky, short-tempered, hard-of-hearing character much older than Miller herself was. In 1936, in tribute to Audra Miller's performing power, Wieand crystallized her persona as exemplified in "Budder Wiega," in a short skit entitled "Sis Weg Gelaind" ("It's Loaned Out").<sup>25</sup> This skit depicts a day in the life of a Pennsylvania German family, whose members, as they go about their normal activities, discover that several missing items have been loaned to a neighbor and not returned. Just as their complaints are exhausted, the neighbor (called Audra) makes a surprise appearance, angrily returning each missing item with complaints of her own. This skit might just as well have been Keturah's first appearance on *Asseba un Sabina*, when she comes to quarrel with Asseba about his shooting her cat while he was hunting.

Audra Miller's acting talents were realized to the fullest in the role of Keturah, a role she played until the last broadcast. It is not possible to determine whether or not Pastor Rahn had Audra Miller in mind when he developed the character of Keturah, but the earliest off-mike situations (dating back to 1944) involving her reveal the type of character Miller was most effective in playing. And, when Keturah finally appeared in the show, Miller's portrayal so completely embodied the character that no refinements of the role ever occurred.



*Paul Wieand (seated) as Davie Nexer, Audra Miller (Keturah), and Prof. Reichard (Asseba) in the personal appearance skit "Der Davie Macht sei Wille" ("Davie Makes His Will"); summer, 1951. (Courtesy of Paul Wieand.)*



*Verna Peters Frantz who replaced Paul Wieand as Sabina in early 1954.*

The role of Keturah Nexer was important to Audra Miller. Like Reichard and Wieand, she was paid only five dollars per episode; she played the part simply because she loved to perform. Bessie Haas, a cousin, remembers that sometimes there was so much work to be done on the farm that Audra was unable to get to the regular script rehearsals on Thursday afternoon at Reichard's house in Allentown. On such occasions she would read her part, without rehearsal, for the first time on the live broadcast.<sup>26</sup>

In the summer of 1952, Paul Wieand went on a tour of Germany. By now he was playing two roles regularly (Davie Nexer made his first appearance on October 10, 1948), but his parts were written out of the scripts from July 13 through August 24; they featured only Asseba and Keturah—Davie was away on business, and Sabina was away nursing a sick sister. And, when Wieand had his sudden breakdown and the script for January 24, 1954, "Schnee" ("Snow"), could not be produced, Asseba and Keturah were again featured—this time in a personal appearance skit entitled "Schnitselle" ("Whittling"). And, speaking of public appearances, the last one was given in Audra Miller's church (perhaps in recognition of her contributions to the show) in early July, 1954. Featured were Miller, Professor Reichard, and the new Sabina, Verna Peters Frantz (1903–1974).

\* \* \*

Verna Peters<sup>27</sup> was born in Washington Township in Lehigh County; she married Irwin Frantz (1896–1952) and they had two children. The Frantzes had a dairy farm at Sheidy's, in Lehigh County, and they lived and worked on the farm, but they also enjoyed performing.



*Scene from **Dar Silas Hut Maud Druvel** (1948-49);  
seated Irwin Frantz, Verna Frantz, standing, right.*

Irwin was a well-liked figure in Pennsylvania German circles, particularly in his role as Hauptmann at Grundsow Lodge No. 1 in Northampton. At the Grange in Laurry's Station, Irwin was Master and Verna was Lecturer; in their life and work together, the Frantzes were the real-life embodiment of the fictive Asseba and Sabina.

The Frantzes had begun acting in Paul Wieand's Labor Day Apple Butter Festivals at Dorney Park (west of Allentown) in 1936. Around 1939 they began writing and performing their own skits of *Der Silas un die Betz* (characters much like Asseba and Sabina, although they never enjoyed the same popularity or acclaim) at their own or other Grange halls, and for local festivals and entertainments. They continued doing their short, two-character sketches until Irwin's sudden death in May, 1952.

The skits, plays, and monologues of the Frantzes were very much a collaborative effort. When Irwin, doing farm chores, thought of an amusing idea or situation, he stopped work and jotted it down in a small, pocket-sized notebook; at home in the evening, he discussed it with Verna, and she then typed the script. Their most interesting, and longest (about one hour), play is *Dar Silas Hut Maud Druvel* (*Silas Has Maid Trouble*, 1948-49).<sup>28</sup> It deals with the darker side of a long-term husband-and-wife relationship, when the marriage has become untenable for both; a situation *Asseba un Sabina*

only hinted at. In the play, Betz leaves Silas but is unable to support herself since she is starting life anew in late middle age. Silas, too, has troubles, for he cannot cope with ordinary housework, and he places a newspaper advertisement for a housekeeper. Due to her situation, Betz is forced to accept the offer; she returns to Silas, but only as a housekeeper, not as a wife; and only after he agrees to make the major concessions which she demands.

When Art Mickley asked Verna Frantz to replace Paul Wieand as Sabina on February 23, 1954, she agreed with mixed emotions. She was thrilled with the role—it was a choice character—but having known Wieand for many years, she was deeply hurt by the circumstances which made it necessary. Her willingness to play the part during the final months of the series allowed for a graceful conclusion, but she was unable to generate much interest in her portrayal—a portrayal that differed substantially from Wieand's; where he was shrill and harsh, she was light-hearted and gentle. The audience had grown accustomed to Wieand's Sabina over a ten-year-period; the sudden appearance of a new actor in the role simply came too late in the development of the series to be acceptable. But, although her involvement with *Asseba un Sabina* was minor, she and her husband deserve recognition for their considerable contributions to Pennsylvania German folk theater in the 1930s and 40s.

\* \* \*



*Art Getz, the program's announcer from March 12 through June 11, 1944. (The Art Getz Collection.)*



#### THE BROADCASTS

During its ten years on the air *Asseba un Sabina* had only three regular announcers: Johnny Van Sandt held the job from January 16 through March 5, 1944, and again from January 21, 1945, through June 27, 1954; Art Getz was the announcer from March 12 through June 11, 1944; and Charles Petrie from June 18, 1944, to January 14, 1945. (In the latter years of the broadcasts, Art Getz or Sammy Anderson would substitute occasionally for Van Sandt.)

There were also three musical groups associated with the show: Jerry Reinsmith and his Orchestra (Reinsmith, flute; Tiney Kulowitch, bass fiddle; Herman Kulowitch, accordion; Harry Sell, guitar; dialect songs and vocals, Tiney Kulowitch) appeared January 16, 1944, through June 30, 1946; Ken Leiby and his Orchestra (Leiby, violin; Hal Miller, accordion; Robert Schtauffer, electric guitar; Loosh Marino, bass fiddle; Paul Geiger, dialect songs and vocals) appeared from November 3, 1946, through June 15, 1947; and Ray Herring and his Band (Herring, trombone; Henry Neubert, trumpet; Al Doster, bass fiddle; Jimmy Betz, accordion; Marvin Trach, clarinet; Henry Neubert, dialect songs and vocals) appeared from September 28, 1947, through June 28, 1953. In the summer months (July to September, 1946 through 1953) an abbreviated version of the format included the skit actors, the announcer, and George Snyder playing organ cues and themes. From October 4, 1953, through June 27, 1954, the full-program musicians were George Snyder, organ and Henry Neubert, trumpet and vocals.



*Charles Petrie at the microphone; Petrie was the program's announcer from mid-June 1944 to mid-January 1945.*



*Ray Herring and his band on stage at Dorney Park during a personal appearance skit in the summer of 1948.*

The average half-hour “full-length” broadcast had the following format: 1:00 to 1:01—opening announcements with theme song (“Ta-ra-ra Boom-de-ay) and cue for instrumental number by the band; 1:01 to 1:02—instrumental, frequently a march; 1:03 to 1:11½—first part of *Asseba un Sabina* skit; 1:11½ to 1:12½—announcement of vocal number by the band; 1:12½ to 1:14½—dialect version of popular song; 1:14½ to 1:16—furniture commercial announcement and music cue; 1:16 to 1:17½—another dialect version of a popular song; 1:17½ to 1:18—announcement of second half of skit; 1:18 to 1:26½—second part of *Asseba un Sabina*; 1:26½ to 1:27—announcement of another musical number; 1:27 to 1:28½—instrumental number, frequently a polka; 1:28½ to 1:30—closing announcements, cast credits, sponsor, theme song, and “teaser” announcement for the following week’s episode.<sup>29</sup>

This format shows that music was an important part of the broadcast; the songs on the program were either dialect versions of current popular songs such as Cole Porter’s “Don’t Fence Me In” (“Fence Mich net nei”), or turn-of-the-century popular songs such as “By the Sea,” “I Can’t Give You Anything But Love, Baby,” or “I Want a Girl, Just Like the Girl That Married Dear Old Dad.” The actual versions sung on the program were written by the individual vocalists for specific broadcasts. Songs of this type—“Dutchified American popular songs”—may still be heard at Grundsow Lodges and Fersommlinge.<sup>30</sup> They are not considered true folk songs, but are rather nostalgic expressions of the changing times which reveal a longing for a particular time in an increasingly distant past. Often these dialect versions

did not make very good use of the language, but it was the novelty of hearing popular songs in Pennsylvania German that was most important to the listeners. Thus, while these dialect versions of popular songs do not have the literary merit of the *Asseba un Sabina* scripts, they do have an undeniable charm and entertainment value quite apart from their value as social documentation.

### THE SCRIPTS

Asseba and Sabina Mumbauer lived next door to their neighbors, Davie and Keturah Nexer. They were farmers in Eihledaahl (Owl Valley), located about ten miles from “the city.” Occasionally Asseba and Sabina would go to Philadelphia, and they had an unmarried daughter, Lizzie, who lived in New York; but when they went to “the city,” they went to Allentown—although that name was never explicitly mentioned in the scripts. (For Reichard, Wieand, Frantz, and Miller, “the city” in real life would also have been Allentown; for Rahn, it would have been Reading.)

Although the scripts gave only an indefinite location for Eihledaahl, some people thought they knew exactly where it was. For example, the Allentown *Morning Call* for January 24, 1947, had the following story about where it was actually located:

EILA DAHL: Owl Valley, in Carbon County, got considerable notice in the press during farm show week because it is where the Ira Hottenstein and L. F. Graver orchards are located and they carried off top honors in the apple exhibit.

In the Pennsylvania Dutch vernacular “Owl Valley” is “Eile Dahl.” It is reported that residents of the Carbon valley intend to claim the place as the home of Asseba and Sabina Mumbauer of the Pennsylvania Dutch skit “Asseba un Sabina Mumbauer im Eila dahl.”



*Scenes from the personal appearance skit "Yeeder's Hut Blessier" ("Everybody Has His Pleasure," 1948). In this skit, Asseba has just received a fishing rod ordered by mail, and Keturah, the Mumbauers' neighbor, has just bought a new hat. Of course, Keturah and Sabina think the fishing rod is an unnecessary luxury, while Asseba and Davie argue that a new hat is a needless expense. As so often in the program's skits, the men and women have opposing points of view; each has a different idea of what constitutes "pleasure."*

Paul Wieand, who plays "Sabina" says there is absolutely no foundation for such a claim.

There are a lot of "Eila dahls" in the Lehigh Valley; several in Lehigh County. There is one near Breinigsville and another in Washington Township near Slatington.

In bygone days small valleys that, because of their smallness did not warrant the dignity of a more distinctive name, were invariably called "Eila dahl," because they were a favorite hang-out for owls.<sup>31</sup>

Asseba and Sabina's Eihledaahl was a backwater community that preserved the old ways of life; it was not a particular place, it was *any* place in rural southeastern Pennsylvania. WSAW's broadcasting range was only about a thirty-mile radius, but the skits became popular as far south as Philadelphia, and as far west as Lancaster and Dauphin counties. For many, Eihledaahl became a cherished, symbolic place where time almost stood still; where there was little change and life went on as it had always done. Eihledaahl was a quiet and happy place where work was hard and benefits were few, but life was a sweet and joyous experience; an experience to be made the most of.

It was not only the program's locale which prompted

nostalgic feelings in the radio audience; the characters, too, brought back memories of childhood experiences that for many dated back to the turn of the century. (Frequently, Asseba and Sabina talked about the lives and times of their grandparents, back in the 1840s.) In the earliest episodes of the show the Mumbauers lived rather primitively—Sabina still cooked on a wood-burning stove, and Asseba still did most of the farm work without modern machinery. But Asseba and Davie drove automobiles, and later in the series Sabina and Keturah got modern electric kitchens, complete with stoves and refrigerators.

Although the characters were representative of a time almost gone, the situations that confronted them were contemporary. They continued a traditional way of life, but due particularly to Asseba's open-mindedness and willingness to try new things, they made attempts to modernize and accommodate to new ideas. In "Television Kummt Noch'm Greitsweeg" ("Television Comes to the Crossroads," June 13, 1948), for example, Asseba and Davie, much to the consternation of Sabina and Ketu-



rah, become fascinated with watching *der Guckbox* (the look-box). But their willingness to consider new ideas within the context of traditional folkways is illustrated best in a personal appearance skit from the summer of 1950, “En Hunnert Yohr Leewe” (“Living a Hundred Years”). It begins with Asseba having read a book on vegetarianism that states one can live a hundred years if meat is not included in the diet. He is unable to convince Sabina, Keturah, and Davie of the sense of this, and in the end—with typical Pennsylvania German commonsense logic—Asseba (now eating a piece of ham) acknowledges that he has already lived to old age without following the advice of modern “experts.”

Asseba was a gentle, somewhat easy-going farmer in his late 60s or early 70s. Reichard’s thin, nasal drawl had a sensitive inflection which was capable of expressing a delighted giggle, seriousness, or sentimental reflection. Asseba’s two joys in life were smoking his pipe and taking a nap on the *holskischt* (woodbox). Sabina, his wife, was a nervous and excitable woman in her mid-60s. Wieand played Sabina in a shrill, complaining voice,

with an undercurrent of the cooing of a flirtatious schoolgirl. Sabina was always nagging Asseba, trying to get him to do something else on the farm; work was never done as far as she was concerned. No sooner would Asseba try to relax on his beloved *holskischt*, than she would think of another chore that could not wait.

The Mumbauers also had a dog, Wasser (Water), played by Wieand. (Traditionally, many Pennsylvania German farms had a dog called Wasser as protection against lightning—it was believed that having a canine so named insured against fires from electrical storms.<sup>32</sup>) The relationship between Asseba and his dog was best illustrated in “Der Wasser Iss Ferlohre” (“Wasser is Lost,” November 15, 1953). In this episode Wasser has been missing for two days, and Asseba is so upset that he cannot eat. Sabina tells Asseba that it is just a dog, but when Asseba replies, in rather mournful tones, that “*der Wasser war net en hund, er war mei buddy*” (“Wasser was not just a dog, he was my best friend”), it becomes clear that the relationship between Asseba and Wasser is closer than that between Asseba and Sa-

bina. Davie and Keturah come over to the Mumbauers' to try to help, but to no effect. Eventually it is discovered that Wasser has been locked in the attic, which is why Sabina thought there were mice there the night before.

Keturah was Sabina's best friend, but she and Asseba just refused to get along, and Sabina was always trying to keep peace between them. As played by Audra Miller, Keturah had a crackling, nasal voice that was authoritatively snappy and inquisitive. Keturah was a narrower character than Sabina in her outlook. She was superstitious, and forever bringing up the belief that when something bad happened, it was the result of some hex's spell from the sixth and seventh books of Moses. Keturah married Davie Nexer off-mike in January, 1945. The Nexers were about the same age as the Mumbauers, so it was too late in life for them to begin a family.

Davie Nexer was a perfect match for Keturah, although he was even narrower in outlook than his wife, and Keturah's complaints about him were usually justified. Davie Nexer, as played by Wieand, had a low, grumbling voice. His guttural speech reflected his stubborn nature. Davie was in love with money more than anything else, and Keturah would often complain that he would rather save a few pennies than eat a good meal. Davie, even more than Keturah, was prone to superstition, and before the character appeared on-mike, Asseba would often play tricks at night to fool Davie into thinking that "spooks" really existed. After Davie appeared in person, he and Asseba became constant companions.

Davie and Asseba, as men, reinforced each other's complaints about women. Keturah and Sabina likewise reinforced each other's complaints about men. The women felt that men were lazy, foul, and stupid. A man needed a woman to tell him what to do, otherwise nothing would get done (or get done correctly). The men felt that women were too talkative, overly critical, and unsympathetic to the complexities of life's problems.

Much of the comedy was in knowing these characters so well that what they said to each other was both expected and a surprise. The relationship of Asseba and Sabina was one of constant quarreling and finding out who was "the boss." "Ken Ruh" ("No Rest," performed May 20, 1945) illustrates the constant give-and-take of their battles. The first part takes place in the Mumbauers' bedroom late at night. Sabina cannot sleep, thinking that the frost will spoil the young tomato plants. She wakes Asseba, and after much prodding, he finally agrees to help. In the second part they are out in the garden covering the young tomato plants with tin cans. Just as they are finished, Asseba notices that there is a fire in the neighborhood. Sabina wants to go back to bed, but Asseba insists that she accompany him in the car. He has helped her cover the tomatoes; now she must do what *he* wants.

With rare exceptions, the *Asseba un Sabina* skits consisted of a single, non-continuing episode or situation;

continuity was provided by the characters and the locale. The seasons of the year, life on the farm, and special days of the calendar provided the setting for situations. In January, for example, Asseba would give a traditional New Year's wish; February marked Valentine's Day and Fasnacht Day; the first week of March would feature an episode about the Red Cross, and in late March or early April dandelion salad with bacon dressing would appear. Spring meant plowing and planting, and in the summer, Asseba and Sabina would sell their produce at their roadstand. In autumn the roadstand would be boarded up and a ground cellar dug in the yard to store winter vegetables. In late November, they had Thanksgiving dinner, and in December there would be Christmas shopping and cookie baking. At Christmas there was either a party in the Eihledaahl Grange Hall, or Asseba would play the Belsnickel at home for the Mumbauer grandchildren. The situations, then, were transparent, but more important than the story for a particular week was experiencing the characters in new interactions.

And, paradoxically, it was the specific techniques of radio production that made the scripts so lively and vivid. The actors, each with their uniquely expressive voices, were able to communicate not only states of mind, but physical place and action as well. Recorded sound effects such as an automobile engine, door slams, or group noise; and live sound effects (performed by Paul Wieand) such as swishing the hand in a tub of water to represent a rowboat, completed the illusion.

Because all the information was through dialogue (and their continually unfolding conversations were articulate and life-like) and sound effects, the skits could take advantage of locations not easily represented on the stage. Asseba and Sabina could be driving in the car, fishing on the pond, or harvesting wheat in the fields. There was also a feeling of intimacy generated through radio drama; it is best illustrated in the many episodes that took place in the Mumbauers' bedroom late at night; episodes such as "En Schpeckmaus Un En Unruhiche Nacht" ("A Bat on a Restless Night," October 7, 1945); "Der Asseba Schwetst I'm Schlof" ("Asseba Talks in his Sleep," September 8, 1946); and "Die Nacht Iss Dunkel" ("The Night is Dark," January 5, 1947).

### COMPARISONS

*Asseba un Sabina*, in comparison with the national commercial radio programming of this period, emerges as a uniquely authentic portrayal of American folklife. One of these network programs, *Amos 'n' Andy*, is remembered as a national institution, but the "Negro" comedy team was played by white actors Charles J. Correll and Freeman F. Gosden. Publicity photographs show the two in typical minstrel show blackface and, although for the radio show make-up did not matter, the white actors still had to pretend a "Negro dialect." Though

popular on the radio from the late 1920s through the early 1950s, the modern view of *Amos 'n' Andy* sees it, at best, as a continuation of blackface comedy from the nineteenth century minstrel show; and, at worst, as a perpetuation of racial stereotypes.<sup>33</sup>

The "Allen's Alley" segments of Fred Allen's popular radio shows of the 1940s offer a better comparison with *Asseba un Sabina*. Each week Allen, with his uniquely droll New England inflection and wry sense of humor, would knock on the doors of "Mrs. Nussbaum" (an urban Jewish lady), "Titus Moody" (a New Englander, or "Yankee"), "Senator Claghorn" (a braggart Southerner), and "Ajax Cassidy" (an Irish-American); he would then ask each their opinion on some topical subject of the week such as preparing income taxes, or home remedies for the common cold. Because Allen wrote the scripts, there was a personal association with the Titus Moody and Ajax Cassidy characters; Mrs. Nussbaum and Senator Claghorn, like Amos and Andy, would be better called stereotypes.<sup>34</sup>

The program best compared with *Asseba un Sabina*, however, is *Vic and Sade*, written by Paul Rhymer. It was broadcast Monday through Friday afternoons (in fifteen minute episodes) from 1932 to 1945. It took place in a typical mid-western town, in a typical house "half way up the next block." The characters were Vic and Sade Gook, and their son, Rush; later in the series, Vic's Uncle Fletcher became a permanent guest in the Gook household.<sup>35</sup> Although *Vic and Sade* was not so much ethnic as regional American humor, it has more in common with *Asseba un Sabina* than any other nationally broadcast radio show. For example, both shows had a small and readily identifiable cast of characters; both authors—Rhymer and Rahn—based their characters and plots on their own backgrounds and experiences; and both used a recognizable and authentic mode of everyday conversation (rather than simple jokes with punch-lines) to provide humorous situations combined with a sympathetic yet critical understanding of character. As much as *Vic and Sade*, *Asseba un Sabina* provides a rare but genuine insight into regional American character, which in hindsight becomes not only a document of popular entertainment, but also a truly artistic expression of traditional values.

### CONCLUSION

It is impossible to convey in words the laughter and warmth that *Asseba un Sabina* generated, or to explain its importance to the culture it so humorously portrayed. The philosophy that permeated the scripts expressed a way of life. One is not his own boss—everyone needs help. It is easier to start a thing than stop it, but every beginning has an ending, and everything comes out in the end. One can't go on everything one sees or hears. It is not good to know everything, but one can always learn, and without trying one *can't* learn. If it isn't one thing it's something else, but every day there is some-

thing new. . . .

Such was the philosophy that the characters generated. More than any other Pennsylvania German playwright before or since, Rahn's focus was upon using humor to examine the moral values and way of life of common people. In a rare essay on the value of folk humor, Rahn wrote:

Humor takes in the whole person. It therefore involves a man's religious faith, his moral code, his ideals and his attitude toward all the elements that go into the making of his life. What a man laughs at tells a great deal about the kind of person he is. Humor is sizing up the experiences of everyday living in such a way that it creates a pleasant sensation within the individual as within those associated with him. Through humor the Pennsylvania German people were able to relieve the tensions of work and create their own fun. Their humor lives through the years and has a great deal of depth. It is like a spring flowing out of the hillside. It is like a spring in its spontaneity, and also in its power to refresh. Pennsylvania German humor makes use of an abundance of philosophy which time and change has not been able to destroy. In general, Pennsylvania German humor is outstanding for its depth and wholesomeness.<sup>36</sup>

This essay can only whisper at the significance of this series of radio broadcasts, now a fading memory. But the feelings it inspired must not be forgotten. *Asseba* would often exclaim that "*unser leeve is siess*" ("our life is sweet"). To understand that statement is to know what *Asseba un Sabina* was all about.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks to Muhlenberg College for open-hearted support with researching Pennsylvania German materials in the library; to C. Richard Beam, Nancy Gaugler, Arthur Getz, Mahlon Hellerich, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Brooks McNamara, Henry Neubert, William Parsons, Frederick Weiser, and Don Yoder for varied criticisms, information, and prodding with this study; and especially to my family . . . this is dedicated. . . .

### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>This, and all the following information on scripts and dates, is taken from the Arthur H. Mickley collection, which includes the complete scripts for announcer and actors, the dialect songs, and supplementary publicity materials, including newspaper clippings, posters, personal appearance programs, photographs, fan letters, and contracts. The Mickley collection is currently in the possession of the author.

This study should be read in reference to the only other published study. See J. William Frey and Don Yoder, "Assebee [sic.] un Sabina Fun Eiladawl—Most Popular Pennsylvania Dutch Team in History," in *The Pennsylvania Dutchman*, May 19, 1949, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>See Alfred L. Shoemaker's *Christmas in Pennsylvania: A Folk-Cultural Study* (Kutztown: The Pennsylvania Folklife Society, 1959); and Harry Hess Reichard's *Christmas Poetry of the "Pennsylvania Dutch"* (Allentown: The Pennsylvania German Folklore Society, 1941).

<sup>3</sup>Harry Hess Reichard, "Introduction to *En Quart Millich un en Halb Beint Raahm* [A Quart of Milk and a Half Pint of Cream] (Allentown: The Pennsylvania German Folklore Society, 1939), pp. 7–28.

<sup>4</sup>Edward H. Rauch's *Rip Van Winkle*, in *The Reichard Collection of Early Pennsylvania German Dialogues and Plays*, ed. Albert F. Buffington (Lancaster: The Pennsylvania German Society, 1962), pp. 53–91.

<sup>5</sup>Clarence Iobst, *En Quart Millich un en Halb Beint Raahm* (Allentown: The Pennsylvania German Folklore Society, 1939).

<sup>6</sup>For further information on historical and contemporary practice, see C. Richard Beam's essay "A Century of Pennsylvania German Plays, 1880–1986", in the *Historic Schaefferstown Record* Vol. 20, no. 3 (July 1986); and William Fetterman, "A Brief Historical Ap-

preciation of Contemporary Pennsylvania German Folk Theater," in *Der Reggeboge* Vol. 22, no. 1 (Spring 1988), pp. 15-32.

<sup>7</sup>Heinz Kloss, "George W. Kunsman—Dialect Columnist, Advertiser, Radio Writer," in 'S *Pennsylfawnisch Deitsch Eck* [The Pennsylvania German Corner], ed. Preston A. Barba, *The Allentown Morning Call*, 25 April 1952.

<sup>8</sup>William Fetterman, "A Partial List of the Pennsylvania German Plays, Skits, and Radio Scripts by Paul R. Wieand," *Historic Schaeferstown Record* Vol. 14, nos. 3 & 4, July-October 1980, pp. 33-39.

<sup>9</sup>Harry Hess Reichard, "Pennsylvania German Literature," in *The Pennsylvania Germans*, ed. Ralph Wood (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1942), p. 220.

<sup>10</sup>Newspaper clippings in the Reichard Collection of folk theater materials housed in the Pennsylvania German Archive of Muhlenberg College provide information on the radio work of Troxell and Snyder.

<sup>11</sup>Interview with Mrs. Esther Billiard Rothrock, Slatington, Pennsylvania, August 1982.

<sup>12</sup>Interview with Mrs. Arthur H. Mickley, Allentown, Pa., April, 1980. Mickley played drums with "Mickley's Fantasy Five" (and also "The Jazzland Five") after he graduated from William Allen High School in 1918. In the winter months they played the Hotel Traylor in Allentown, and in the summer months they played hotels in Atlantic City.

<sup>13</sup>Preston A. Barba, "In Memoriam—Lloyd Moll" (Allentown: The Pennsylvania German Folklore Society, 1947), pp. 1-7.

<sup>14</sup>As was John Birmelin (1873-1950) who is considered the greatest Pennsylvania German dialect poet.

<sup>15</sup>Program in author's collection

<sup>16</sup>Lloyd Moll, "Die Sabine and der Asseba Heiere" ("Sabine and Asseba Marry"), 'S *Pennsylfawnisch Deitsch Eck*, *The Allentown Morning Call*, 26 January 1936.

<sup>17</sup>William Fetterman, "Paul R. Wieand, Lehigh County Folk Artist," *Pennsylvania Folklife*, Winter 1980-81, pp. 87-93.

<sup>18</sup>Interview with Phares O. Reitz, Allentown, Pa., November, 1983. Reitz was born on April 20, 1917, at Leck Kill in Northumberland County, the sixth of eight children. His father, William Oscar Reitz, was a farmer who taught school briefly during the early 1900s. His mother, Flora Sevilla Brown, was a farmwife.

Pastor Reitz was an exceptionally gifted intellectual during his childhood. He advanced to high school level at the age of eleven, and began attending Muhlenberg College at age fifteen, receiving his A.B. degree in religion and philosophy in 1936. He graduated from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia in 1939. From 1939 through 1950 he served at Berrysburg. During the mid-1940s he helped the congregation produce several of Paul Wieand's plays. From September 1950 through 1956 he served at St. John's at Hamburg. From January 1957 through February 1975 he served at St. Stevens in Allentown, finally retiring in 1981. From 1975 through 1981 he also served as assistant to the Bishop at the Lutheran Synod office at Wescoesville. On September 18, 1943 he wed Eleanor Lippiatt, their union being blessed with two daughters and two sons.

Pastor Reitz had heard of the *Asseba un Sabina* series, but was not totally familiar with it. He was asked to play *Asseba* after Paul Wieand had heard him officiate at some dialect church services. Although Pastor Reitz has not had the opportunity to portray *Asseba Mumbauer* apart from the single skit performed in 1983, he has essayed the role with a remarkably well-balanced sense of seriousness and playfulness, resulting in a performance that is every bit as good as Reichard's portrayal. Pastor Reitz grew up learning the dialect as his original language, and although he has never had any ambition to be an actor in dialect plays, his real-life self has exactly the depth of experience that is required in order to effectively portray *Asseba Mumbauer*.

In addition to occasionally giving sermons for dialect services, Pastor Reitz is also one of the most accomplished and individualistic speakers at Grundsow Lodges and Fersommlinge. His humorous talks feature not only a fluent and eloquent use of the dialect, but also incorporate several traditional verses and riddles which have been all but forgotten.

The revival of the *Asseba un Sabina* skit in 1983 may very well be the conclusion of these plays in performance. The audience, and the actors who can perform dialect plays, are all growing older. The like of *Asseba* and *Sabina* are perhaps not likely to be seen again. At least not the way they were. But how beautiful it is to have once known

them, if only for a little while. . . .

<sup>19</sup>William J. Rupp, "Harry Hess Reichard and Ida Reichard," in *The Reichard Collection of Early Pennsylvania German Dialogues and Plays* (Lancaster: The Pennsylvania German Society, 1962), pp. ix-xviii.

<sup>20</sup>Harry Hess Reichard, "Introduction to *En Quart Millich*," pp. 7-28.

<sup>21</sup>Interview with Mrs. Clarence R. Rahn and Mrs. Ruth Rahn Schaefer, Lauraldale, Pennsylvania, November 1980.

<sup>22</sup>Harry Hess Reichard, "Introduction to *Asseba un Sabina*," unpublished manuscript written c. 1955, in the Pennsylvania German Archive of Muhlenberg College, Allentown.

<sup>23</sup>Interview with Paul R. Wieand, Guth's Station, Pennsylvania, October 1982.

<sup>24</sup>Interview with Arthur Miller, Allentown, Pennsylvania, August 1981.

<sup>25</sup>Author's collection.

<sup>26</sup>Interview with Bessie Haas, New Tripoli, Pennsylvania, September 1980.

<sup>27</sup>Interview with son Stirling Frantz, Sheidy's Pennsylvania, August 1982 (their daughter's name is Virginia). After Irwin died, Mrs. Frantz continued living on the farm. Until her death she was active in church and Grange activities, although her interest in writing virtually ceased after 1952. In her later years she concentrated on quilting, collected Amber Ware, and assembled a fine collection of bells from around the world. She went to work for the Parkland School District as a cook. In 1960 she again married, this time to Francis Bear, a teacher at Parkland High School. Mr. Bear died in 1968.

<sup>28</sup>Author's collection.

<sup>29</sup>The abbreviated summer broadcast had this typical format:

1:01	to 1:01 ½	Announcement of first half of skit with musical introduction on the organ
1:01 ½	to 1:06 ½	First part of skit
1:06 ½	to 1:07 ½	Furniture commercial announcement
1:07 ½	to 1:08	Announcement for second half of skit with musical introduction on organ
1:08	to 1:12 ½	Second part of skit
1:12 ½	to 1:14	Announcement for personal appearances
1:14	to 1:15	Closing announcements—cast credits, sponsor, theme song on organ, and "teaser" announcement for next week's episode.

<sup>30</sup>Grundsow Lodge Number Ains (Groundhog Lodge Number One) first met in 1933 at Allentown. Several other Lodges have been formed since then. Number One meets every February 2 (Groundhog Day). The Lodges are attended only by men, who meet to socialize, eat, and hear dialect speakers tell jokes and humorous lay sermons. Fersommlinge began in 1935 with the Berks County Fersommling, held at Reading. The Fersommling is basically the same as the Grundsow Lodge, except that in most cases the Fersommling is open also to women. Fersommlinge are usually held in spring or fall. The Grundsow Lodge has the reputation of being a haven for the tradition of "earthy humor," however the jokes presented at Grundsow Lodges are the same as those presented at Fersommlinge. On the other hand, while there are many examples of "dirty stories," it must also be stressed that this is certainly not the extent of Pennsylvania German humor.

<sup>31</sup>"Eila Dahl," *The Allentown Morning Call*, 24 January 1947, p. 33.

<sup>32</sup>Interview with Paul R. Wieand, Guth's Station, Pennsylvania, October 1982.

<sup>33</sup>Charles J. Correll and Freeman F. Gosden, *Here They Are—Amos 'n' Andy* (New York: Ray Long & Richard R. Smith, 1931).

<sup>34</sup>Fred Allen, *Treadmill to Oblivion* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1954).

<sup>35</sup>Paul Rhymer, *Vic and Sade*, ed. Mary Frances Rhymer (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976).

<sup>36</sup>Clarence R. Rahn, "Pennsylvania German Humor," in *Intimate Glimpses of the Pennsylvania Germans*, ed. Homer Rosenberger (Gettysburg: Rose Hill Seminar and the Pennsylvania German Society, 1966), p. 43.

# AN ELIZABETH FURNACE TENANT HOUSE: A PENNSYLVANIA GERMAN STRUCTURE IN TRANSITION

by James D. McMahon, Jr.



*Fig. 1: Front view of the Stiegel-Coleman ironmaster's mansion, typical of the 18th century English Georgian style of architecture.*

Traveling north on Pennsylvania Route 501 just above the town of Brickerville, Lancaster County, as the road overpasses the Turnpike, one can view the remains of several structures reminiscent of the great early American iron producing community known as Elizabeth Furnace, and its equally well known nineteenth century counterpart, Elizabeth Furnace Plantation. From the inception of the furnace operation in 1750, the property has undergone successive cultural, economic, and physical changes which have manifested themselves in the overall built landscape. For example, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, as charcoal iron furnaces declined in relative importance, the iron producing operation was discontinued and the extensive lands formerly used for charcoal production were used to create a plantation-like dairy and farming concern. Farmhouses, barns, and numerous outbuildings were erected at this time to reflect the changing economic emphasis. As agriculture declined in relative economic importance following the end of World War II, the property too began a parallel reduction in the scope of its operation. Today the property is known as Elizabeth Farms and is utilized primarily as an evergreen tree nursery.

Unfortunately for the built landscape of Elizabeth Furnace and Elizabeth Furnace Plantation, Elizabeth

Farms cannot provide for the necessary upkeep of the many eighteenth and nineteenth century structures which remain on the grounds, but which are no longer directly involved in the present-day operation. As a result, many of these buildings and living quarters have either been converted into rental units or simply abandoned. If one operates on the premise put forth by Edward A. Chappell that "form in folk architecture is primarily determined by the traditions and the symbolic needs of the people who construct and live in the buildings," then much of the culture and history of a vital industry and people of early Lancaster County is in danger of obliteration.<sup>1</sup>

The loss of architectural evidence pointing to the establishment and growth of (as well as subsequent changes to) an early community in northern Lancaster County means the loss of the cultural identity of those early settlers as well as later inhabitants who, motivated by their own cultural experiences and value systems, carried out modifications to fit their own culturally determined concept of living space. To unveil the cultural identity and attitude of those who lived at Elizabeth Furnace, this study will examine in detail the form, function, and uses of the last remaining free-standing central chimney one-and-one-half story house type on the property.





*Fig. 2: Front view of the first of three stone tenant structures on the grounds of present-day Elizabeth Farms. This particular house is located within eye-sight of the ironmaster's mansion and is visible from Route 501.*

According to Henry Glassie, the Central Chimney house type, based on the Continental Plan of architectural organization, was common to people of German-speaking culture before their emigration to America.<sup>2</sup> These immigrants soon developed their own particular New World culture, based on Old World antecedents, which was reflected in their material culture. Architecturally, the particular use of, and attitude about, room space and function set these Pennsylvania Germans apart from other colonial groups. William Woys Weaver noted that “while the problems of shelter faced by the Pennsylvania Germans were basically the same as those faced by other immigrants, the Pennsylvania Germans found functional solutions that were highly distinctive, but less well understood than their similarly distinctive decorative arts.”<sup>3</sup> Thus, in the New World the material culture of the Pennsylvania Germans developed independently of its Continental heritage, yet remained distinguishable from proximate cultures as well.

In addition to pointing to the existence of a vibrant eighteenth century German-speaking community in northern Lancaster County, the architectural evidence provided by the structure under study allows one to examine the changes in form, function, and use that enabled the German house type to adapt to the culture of later dwellers and possessors. These subsequent modifications and changes in room function and spatial organization reflect a decline in the dominance of the original culture and, at the same time, indicate a rise in the importance of a new cultural form dependent in many ways upon the first.



*Fig. 3: View of the second of three stone tenant structures on the grounds of present-day Elizabeth Farms. This particular dwelling, in an even greater state of decay, is located approximately two hundred yards from the first along the same trail leading from the ironmaster's mansion.*

The particular structure I have chosen to study is a tenant, or worker's, home built of native brownstone and located on present-day Elizabeth Farms, Farm Number Two. I have chosen this example because, as a worker's home, it serves as the best example of eighteenth century German vernacular architecture on the estate. Moreover, unlike the ironmaster's mansion and the few farmhouses on the estate, this structure is presently unoccupied and has remained so for many years. Small, isolated, and unoccupied, there has been little impetus for architectural modification or destruction in recent years. This dwelling, unlike the other two stone tenant homes surviving on the property, has not sustained great structural damage (Figures 2-3). This particular structure provides a unique architectural example of an early Pennsylvania German iron producing community — and the subsequent changes to that community — without the hindrance of occupancy, recent modification, or imminent collapse.

Externally, the structure consists of two joined sections — one of wood and the other of stone. The stone portion of the whole is a four-walled, self-supporting structure in contrast to the wooden portion which is simply a three-sided abutment placed against the rear wall of the original structure at some later date (Figure 8). An architectural analysis of the stone structure pursuant to discovering the original room function and spatial organization of the builder yielded the following physical data. From the outside the house measured twenty-eight feet across the front and rear, and twenty-four feet along each side. Measured from ground level, the top of the pitch measured approximately twenty-two

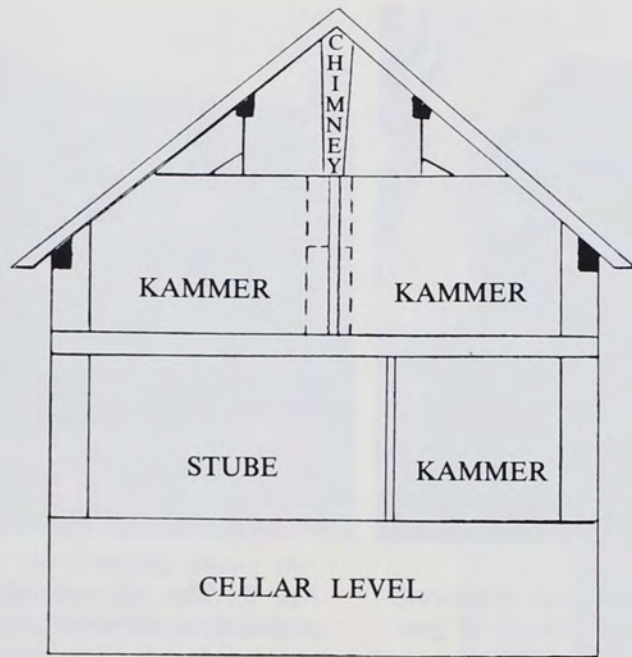
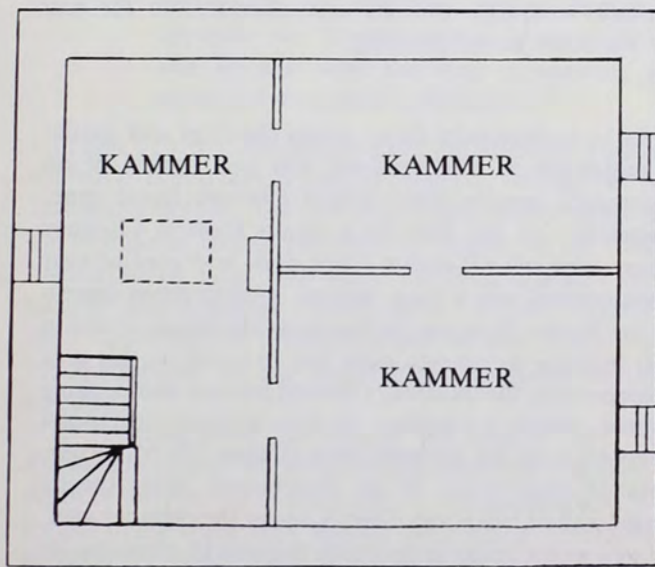


Figure 4

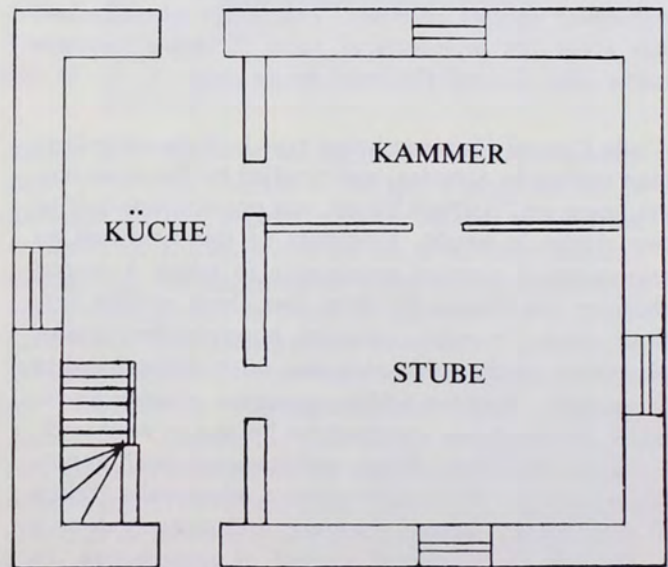
Cut Away South Side

Scale: 1/8 in. = 1 ft.



Loft

Figure 5



First Floor

Figure 6

Stone Tenant House  
Elizabeth Farms  
Farm Number 2

feet in height. The internal organization of the first floor living area and second floor loft is similar to the floor plans of eighteenth century German houses in America as drawn by Henry Glassie and Edward A. Chappell and referred to as the *Flürküchenhaus*, or half kitchen house, because of the floor space allotted to the

*Küche*, or kitchen (Figures 4-6).<sup>4</sup> While structures such as this in the New World are also referred to as Central Chimney house types, it is incorrect to refer to them as simple Continental Plan dwellings since this implies an unchanged and static Old World form.



*Fig. 7: Front view of the third and most structurally intact stone tenant structure on the grounds of present-day Elizabeth Farms. This *Flürkuchenhaus*, or half kitchen house, is located on Farm Number Two and is the structure under discussion in this study. Note the asymmetrical front appearance and off-center central chimney. This latter characteristic has given the architectural form its more common name—the Central Chimney house type.*

The Central Chimney house type built by early German settlers in America, and typified by the stone tenant house on Elizabeth Farms, was one-and-one-half or two stories in height. Dwellings of this type had an asymmetrical external appearance in which a central chimney was flanked by either two, three, or four first floor rooms. In many instances, however, the window placement on the gable ends was often symmetrical in appearance.<sup>5</sup> Exterior walling consisted of either an exposed timber-frame construction known as *Fachwerk*, stone, or hewn logs. Stone, which served as an important symbol in the German culture, projected a feeling of permanency, accomplishment, and status and, as a result, was the preferred method of construction. In seventeenth century Germany and Switzerland, for example, stone construction was a symbol of the *Herrschaft*, or ruling class, and as a symbol stood for order, permanency, and community. In the New World, the Hans Herr house in southern Lancaster County was built of stone to serve as a dwelling for the Mennonite leader as well as to serve as a symbol of community and permanency.<sup>6</sup> The structure under study here was typical of this form in that it was built of local stone, that it exhibited both an asymmetrical front appearance as well as a symmetrical placement of gable-end windows (Figures 7, 8, 11), and that the first floor consisted of three rooms organized around a central chimney (Figure 6).



*Fig. 8: The left side of the dwelling also shows architectural elements common to people of German-speaking culture including overhanging rafter projection (which can be seen along the front face) and symmetrical window placement on the gable end. Also note the existence of the dependent wooden addition, with its own chimney, to the rear of the main stone dwelling.*

As in architectural form, room function and spatial organization of this structure was also typical of an eighteenth century New World German house type. Generally, on the first floor of the Central Chimney house type, an off-center front door and parallel rear door opened into a long, narrow kitchen room known as the *Küche*. Running the length of the house — and in this instance measuring eight feet in width — this area incorporated the dwelling's central heating and cooking source, usually a fireplace. In this particular instance a fireplace does not presently exist (Figure 12). Moreover, detailed observation of the floorboards along the interior wall of this room directly under the chimney vent, as well as the cellar underneath the area in question, indicates no evidence of the existence or subsequent removal of a fireplace or of its foundation. Instead, directly above this area is a stovepipe hole leading to the second floor loft area. I believe an iron stove was used in the kitchen, from which a pipe ran up to the second floor to provide heat, then into the wall, and finally into the chimney to vent the smoke and excess heat.

Because one of the main products of the iron furnace in the eighteenth century was the six-plate (and later ten-plate) stove, it seems quite logical that workers' homes would simply integrate the available technology. The use of self-contained iron stoves decreased the likelihood of accidental fires and most likely reinforced the workers' sense of community. Also, combining the



*Fig. 9: The rear view of the dwelling shows the extent of the wooden addition as well as the existence of a concrete patio/porch which provided a second entrance to the structure.*

*Fig. 10: This close-up of the rear window of the first floor **Kammer**, located at the rear of the stone portion of the structure, shows that it was placed opposite the front window, located in the **Stube**, and in line with the only connecting doorway to allow for maximum ventilation.*



function of stove and hearth gave the operator greater control over the rate of heat diffusion as well as that of fuel consumption. The cast iron stove simply replaced the traditional central fireplace, or hearth, in the Continental house type, creating in the process a new vernacular and distinctly Pennsylvania German architectural form without destroying the cultural identity of the inhabitants or the architectural integrity of the dwelling.

Its function much like that of the English hall, the *Küche* served the German-speaking family of the eighteenth century as the hearth room — the cooking and informal living space area. Behind the cooking structure a broad front room known as the *Stube* served as the formal gathering area. Much like the English parlor, this room was the center of family life. In this particular *Flürkuchenhaus*, the *Stube* measured fifteen feet in width and thirteen feet in length. The size of the house also allowed for the partitioning of this family room into a small, unheated sleeping chamber known as the *Kammer*. This room, measuring fifteen feet in width and seven feet in length, fulfilled the growing need for privacy within the family unit; it was accessible only through the one door leading from the *Stube*. Typically, as in this instance, one window was placed in the room to take advantage of cooling cross-currents rather than to admit light or invite interest (Figure 10).<sup>7</sup>

Like the first floor, the form and function of the loft

area is also typical of the eighteenth century German-built house type. Access to the loft is provided by an enclosed, narrow circular stairway located in the front corner of the *Küche*, just to the left of the front entrance (Figure 12). The placement of rooms on the second level varies considerably in Pennsylvania German architectural forms. This divergence of form has been termed by William Woys Weaver as “part of a complex evolution of Pennsylvania German culture into something American.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the architecture of eighteenth century German immigrants did not maintain an artificial or protracted Old World form, but rapidly developed a character of its own; a character we today call Pennsylvania German. Thus, the Continental Plan German house model of the Old World became the basic architectural form of the German immigrant home in the New World, thereby utilizing the immigrant’s only knowledge of previous construction techniques as well as assuring a continued sense of community.

The flexibility of the German house model allowed it to adapt to changing emphases in the New World within certain culturally determined guidelines of room function and spatial organization. The aforementioned need for additional privacy within the developing family unit allowed for the division of the second floor loft area into any number of sleeping chambers. Usually, as in this instance, the loft was divided into two rooms by a wall running parallel to that separating the first floor



*Fig. 11: The right side of the structure, like the left, exhibits architectural elements common to people of German-speaking culture including overhanging rafter projection (here seen along the front and rear faces of the dwelling) and symmetrical window placement on the second level of the gable end. Also note that the wooden addition provides a new doorway and gives access to the former *Küche* area (now serving as an English Georgian-style hall) from the rear.*

*Fig. 12: This view of the original *Küche* area is taken from the front entrance of the original stone portion of the dwelling. With the completion of the wooden addition, the parallel rear exit became an internal passageway between the two sections. The circular stairway on the left side of the photograph is yet another architectural feature common to people of German-speaking culture.*

*Küche* from the rest of the house. Here, the wall is approximately nine feet from the interior left wall. The area to the right of this wall was further divided into two rooms in this particular dwelling (Figure 5). However, as in Old World models, the original attic space remained undivided and the roof framing was left exposed. As a fairly orthodox example of the so-called Continental Plan of architectural organization, this house is most likely an early example of that particular material culture.

Though it is impossible in this instance to tell (based on empirical observation alone) if the wall dividing the two chambers on the right side of the upstairs loft is original, it appears certain that the second floor ceiling was added later. By looking into the attic, the viewer can see that the attic space was left undivided and the interior roof framing exposed as in a typical German cultural form (Figure 13). A plaster ceiling was added at one time, however, either for aesthetic reasons or to minimize heat loss, so that while the attic itself remained undivided, the roofing was no longer exposed. Instead, a deliberate and purposely finished hole was cut into the rafter space to produce an area much like that of the English attic. The resulting ceiling-to-floor space was approximately seven feet, three inches in height.

As members of the same German-speaking cultural community, the attitude and appearance of the homes of eighteenth century German immigrants to America



shared patterns of similar external appearance as well as internal form, function, and spatial organization. The stone tenant house at Elizabeth Farms offers ample evidence supportive of this declaration. However, just as importantly, structures built by people of similar cultural backgrounds also exhibit shared patterns of construction methods and techniques. For example, a feature common to the roofs of early German-built structures in general, and to this stone dwelling in particular, is the projection of rafters, boarding, and shingles beyond the face of the external wall below to form what is called an exposed or overhanging eave (Figure 14).

The projection of the eave originally served as a watershed; the eave prevented water from entering the home or becoming entrapped in the roof where it met the wall, much like the function of the modern enclosed soffit. In the eighteenth century German model, the point where the eave rested upon the outside wall was known as the plate. The plate was that rectangular end of a beam, known as the plate beam, which ran the length of the dwelling, carried the weight of the rafters and shingles, and tied the house together lengthwise. The plate and eave construction provided a strong, interrelated roofing method particular to the German-speaking peoples of central Europe. Because they knew no other means of construction, this style of construction likewise became central to the emerging Pennsylvan-

*Fig. 13: This view of the roofing substructure is afforded by an access cut into the second floor ceiling. As pictured above and as employed by early German settlers in America, arched wooden rafters and horizontal supports, known as purlins, running the length of the building rested upon large vertical posts and formed a strong and practical roofing system.*



*Fig. 14: This is a close-up view of the overhanging eave at the rear of the structure. This construction technique, commonly used in dwellings of early German settlers in America, prevented water from entering the home or becoming entrapped under the rafters. Note that the rafters rest upon the plate beam which runs the entire length of the structure.*

nia German architectural form in America as well.

A second example of the shared pattern of roofing technique common to the early German-speaking immigrants was the use of vaulted interior rafters supported by a complex and heavy substructure. Like the eave, this construction method represented a common-sense approach to architectural integrity by providing for even weight distribution, excellent bracing and support, and durability as exemplified in its longevity. One of the most common Germanic roofing methods utilized arched rafters and horizontal supports, or purlins, which ran the length of the building and rested upon pairs of large vertical posts (Figure 13). These posts were connected to the attic floor beams, known as joists, by additional braces.

The roofing construction employed in the Elizabeth

Farms stone structure under study is typical of the previously described manner of German construction technique in both the Old and New Worlds. The fact that after all this time the roof has remained generally intact and unchanged attests to its excellent design and durability. Another feature common to this type of architectural construction was the existence of a cellar intended to provide for the storage and protection of food. In order to accomplish its goal of food preservation, the cellar needed to be well insulated. A common method of cellar insulation, in addition to its subterranean design, was to place a mixture of clay and straw between the beams of the cellar ceiling. According to Chappell, this type of insulation was commonly found in early Germanic structures north of the Shenandoah Valley. He cites two specific examples from this area



*Fig. 15: This view of the cellar shows the massive ceiling beams which could be packed with mud and straw to provide insulation for food storage. Note, too, that the floor is dirt.*

which employed the clay and straw technique of insulation — the Alexander Schaeffer house in Lebanon County and the Ephrata Cloisters in Lancaster County.<sup>9</sup>

Like the roof, the cellar of this house has been little modified since its original construction. The dirt floor is still exposed and the supporting beams of the first floor (which form the “ceiling” of the cellar) likewise remain exposed and clear of any encumbrances or modifications save for the addition of electricity (Figure 15). The beams themselves measure nearly eight inches in thickness, providing ample space for a clay and straw packing. Apparently, such a method proved adequate for the inhabitants over the lifetime of the structure. Unfortunately, neglect, possible vandalism, or natural decay have destroyed all but the most circumstantial evidence upon which to base this assumption. What is clear, however, is that no other form of insulation common to this type of eighteenth century culture, such as a cooling spring or stone vaulted *Gewolbkeller*, was included in the cellar.

Architectural evidence — including documentation and evaluation of room function, spatial organization, and method of construction in the one-and-one-half story Central Chimney house under study — points to the existence of some type of eighteenth century Germanic community in the area of present-day Elizabeth Farms; a community strong and vibrant enough to erect at least three examples of vernacular architecture based on Old World Germanic models. While it is possible to contend that these structures represent simple anomalies, structures not representative of a general community or of eighteenth century Elizabeth Furnace,

the historical record makes it clear that this was not so. Elizabeth Furnace was established by German immigrant John Jacob Huber in 1750 as the first blast furnace in Lancaster County.<sup>10</sup> Soon after, another German immigrant named Henry William Stiegel of Manheim (later known by the more famous name Baron Stiegel because of his lavish lifestyle), came to work at the furnace. By 1752 Stiegel had married Huber’s daughter Elizabeth and entered into a partnership with Huber. In 1758 Stiegel and three other partners purchased the furnace from Huber.

Because he was most familiar with the iron operation, Stiegel assumed the title of ironmaster from Huber and with the financial backing of his partners, ran the furnace as he saw fit. Under Stiegel, the furnace, officially known as Elizabeth Furnace since 1752 in honor of Huber’s daughter, prospered and expanded in both capacity and physical size. As a sign of the increased prosperity of the furnace operation, the present Stiegel-Coleman ironmaster’s mansion was constructed for the Stiegel family (Figure 1). Stiegel was one of the first ironmasters to see the coming substitution of stoves for fireplaces. A pioneer in this field, he made the manufacture of cast iron stoves and firebacks one of the most important operations of the furnace.

As his prosperity and good fortune increased, Stiegel turned his resources to glass making and established his now famous glass works at the new village of Manheim (Lancaster County) which he had founded. However, the free-wheeling and autocratic Stiegel soon overextended himself financially and was forced to borrow heavily from Daniel Benezet. In 1768, Benezet replaced

Stiegel in the furnace partnership. As a result of continued hardship, the innovative entrepreneur was forced to declare bankruptcy in 1774, losing all his business holdings as well as a great fortune.

The fall of one entrepreneur created an opportunity for the rise of an even more successful businessman, and one of the most famous ironmasters of the colonial and early national periods of American history. In 1776, Robert Coleman, of Scotch-Irish descent, leased Elizabeth Furnace from the new four-man partnership. Coleman's own rise to prosperity closely paralleled that of Stiegel's. Coleman, after working for James Old, owner of Speedwell Forge, married Old's daughter and acquired virtual control of the forge operation. Elizabeth, located only three miles northeast of Speedwell, was indeed a logical acquisition for the prosperous and ambitious Coleman. Armed with his own financial backing, Coleman eventually bought out his landlords and assumed total control of the furnace operation in 1794.

Coleman's good fortune in making a success of Elizabeth Furnace was helped a great deal by the outbreak of the American Revolution. During the conflict, Elizabeth furnished iron munitions to the Revolutionary forces and supplied domestic products to the colonists; products which before the outbreak of hostilities had been subject to British regulation. After the war Coleman continued to expand his own fortune as well as that of Elizabeth Furnace. Indeed, as iron production increased, Coleman acquired outright control of Speedwell Forge in 1785, and nearby Hopewell Forge in 1802. By the time of his death in 1825, Coleman had acquired several mines, forges, and furnaces in both Lancaster and Lebanon counties and had become a leading and prominent citizen of the area.

With the termination of iron making operations in 1858 in response to overwhelming competition from the new anthracite furnaces located in populated areas close to developing rail and shipping points, Elizabeth turned its vast land resources to farming and eventually to the present nursery operation. However, historical records, in conjunction with architectural evidence, show Elizabeth Furnace existed as a prosperous iron making community after 1750, was founded and populated by German immigrants, and remained an enclave for the German community at least until 1776 and the arrival of the Scotch-Irish Coleman and the subsequent expansion of both the capacity and the working community of Elizabeth. The strength of that eighteenth century German community was exemplified in the still unresolved controversy over the selection of the name Elizabeth for the new township to be formed from Warwick Township in 1757, and including within its boundaries Elizabeth Furnace.

According to standard historical explanation, James Old, one of the original ironmasters of the county, is

credited with proposing the name of Elizabeth to honor Queen Elizabeth of Great Britain. However, according to H. M. J. Klein, a Lancaster historian, a much more subtle (and conveniently coincidental) reason existed for the naming of the township. Klein believed that to placate the large number of Pennsylvania Germans in the area, the name Elizabeth was picked in honor of Stiegel's wife, while at the same time satisfying the English leaders of the county.<sup>11</sup>

It is readily apparent that the German-speaking community of Elizabeth Furnace and the surrounding area exerted a great deal of influence in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Except for the unoccupied remains of the three tenant structures on the estate, and a few scattered examples of preserved Continental-influenced and Pennsylvania German built structures in the Lancaster-Lebanon county area, examples of this type of culturally influenced architecture have disappeared from the landscape. This disappearance was not sudden or violent however, but the result of acculturation. Acculturation is the process whereby one culture is slowly displaced and blurred by a second culture to form a unique new culture.

In the case of Elizabeth Furnace, the original Old World Germanic culture rather quickly developed into the New World Pennsylvania German culture in the iron making community organized by the German immigrants Huber and Stiegel. With the expansion of the furnace operation under the Scotch-Irish Coleman, especially after the Revolution, that German cultural homogeneity was most likely quickly dissolved. Forced to employ even greater numbers of men, and as a man from a different cultural background than his German workers, Coleman almost certainly would not feel compelled to use only workers of German background. The resulting acculturation, moreover, was reflected in the built landscape. In a nation predominately English in its cultural orientation, the original Germanic house form (now thoroughly Pennsylvania German) soon combined with the popular Georgian English house form to produce the now familiar Mid-Atlantic farmhouse type. This new architectural form, complete with German bank barn, can still be seen throughout rural Pennsylvania and indeed on the grounds of present-day Elizabeth Farms as well.

The classic floor plan of the Georgian architectural form consisted of two rooms on either side of a broad central hall. Combined with features of German vernacular architecture, the resulting Mid-Atlantic farmhouse exhibited the following architectural characteristics:

The farmhouses most usual in the Mid-Atlantic region, however, combine Georgian with earlier folk features — old Rhineland peasant interiors stuffed into stylish eighteenth century shells. They are two rooms deep, have internal gable-end chimneys, a placement of windows and doors which approximates symmetry, and a low pitched roof like the Georgian



houses, but they lack most of the stylish trim, the broad open stair has been replaced by a narrow boxed-in medieval stair which curls up in one corner, the hallway is absent, and the house has a three or four-room Continental plan and often two front doors. Like many of the Pennsylvania-German houses, these houses are frequently built into a bank with a semisubterranean cellar.<sup>12</sup>

Structures of the Continental, or Pennsylvania German, architectural form ceased to be relevant by the turn of the century and, indeed, probably ceased to be constructed in eastern Pennsylvania long before that date. According to Henry Glassie, "In the German areas of the region, including spots in New Jersey as well as the more predictable arc in Pennsylvania from Northampton to York counties, an off center chimney characterizes a common house type built regularly up to about 1770."<sup>13</sup> The dwelling under study is such an architectural form (Figure 7). Available historical, architectural, cultural, and scholarly evidence indicates this structure was most likely constructed between 1750 (when the furnace and the iron making community was founded) and 1776 (when Coleman first assumed responsibility for operation of the furnace) with an emphasis towards the latter.

Even though Robert Coleman did not become involved with Elizabeth Furnace until 1776, I believe the process of acculturation was evident earlier. The Stiegel-Coleman house, built by Stiegel in the 1750s, is a fine example of the stylish English Georgian symmetrical manor home (Figure 1). As a prosperous and proud man, Stiegel probably wished to emulate the rich entrepreneurs of Lancaster and Philadelphia who built these Georgian style homes from the 1730s to the mid-1790s. As a man interested in profits, Stiegel probably allowed, and even encouraged, his workers to build dwellings in which they felt comfortable, and which ultimately allowed them to be more productive.

The earlier workers of Elizabeth Furnace obviously felt the need to preserve their sense of identity by constructing dwellings of an architectural form particular to their culture. By the late eighteenth century, however, that sense of identity and the resulting material culture changed to reflect the growth of English influences. In the dwelling under study, the existing architecture combined with the English Georgian concept of house to create a new house form — a sort of Mid-Atlantic tenant workers' house type. Modifications made to the tenant house included enclosing the open rafters of the second floor to produce an attic area, and the placing of a wooden addition onto the rear of the original stone home to allow more space for the increased specialization of room function along the English culturally-determined model.

With the completion of the wooden addition and the attic modifications, the Pennsylvania German house type was converted into a dwelling influenced by the English two-room deep, two-story high Georgian model

complete with all the decorative trappings, including symmetrical window placement, a gable-end internal chimney, and a pitched roof (Figures 8,9). The addition of the two-story wooden area to the left side of the original stone portion made both floors two rooms deep. By continuing the roof line of the second floor addition through the original stone section of the house (which created the attic), a full second floor was created from the former loft area. The new porch entrance of the addition became the front entrance of the new whole, and the first floor of the addition became the new kitchen, thereby completing the transformation to the Mid-Atlantic architectural folk form. Indeed, according to Glassie, "kitchen wings off to one end or the rear [of the early Pennsylvania German houses], which often have built-in porches and shed roofs, are common appendages of the usual Mid-Atlantic folk house."<sup>14</sup>

A Mid-Atlantic folk house, based on the English Georgian house type, had been created from a former Pennsylvania German dwelling by effecting change in internal room function, form, and spatial organization as a result of external modification. Specifically, the first-floor room plan was changed to that of a two-thirds Georgian house type. In this instance two rooms are arranged along only one side of a broad hallway. In the new architectural form of the tenant house, one now enters through the porch into the kitchen, complete with its own internal gable-end chimney. Adjacent to the kitchen is the former *Küche* area, now serving as the Georgian-style broad hallway providing access to the two rooms on what is now the left side of the house.

The acculturation of the German Central Chimney house type into the Mid-Atlantic folk form as realized in the two-thirds Georgian house type allowed the rear of the original form to serve as the front of the new architectural form without completely destroying the external architectural integrity of the original stone portion. This blurring of ethnic material culture, in architectural forms at least, is often carried out even today. Both businesses and private individuals often purchase older buildings, fix them up on the outside to a "restored" appearance, but completely modify the interiors to fit their own conceptions of room form, function, and organization. In either instance the superimposition of a new cultural attitude upon an older attitude does not completely erase the original form. Instead, a new form containing elements of both cultures is created.

Keeping alive elements of earlier architectural forms whether consciously, as in the exterior restoration of historic buildings, or unconsciously, as in the modification of the stone tenant house by nineteenth century inhabitants, leads to the preservation of some elements of the original culture. For example, many Victorian and other English cultural customs, especially in weddings and other ceremonies of great importance, are still used

today by Americans. Likewise, examples of the German culture, such as the Pennsylvania German dialect, fraktur painting, and Germanic symbols and motifs are used today by people far removed from the original German cultural heritage.

The existence of a strong early Germanic tradition in Lancaster County is attested to by the fact that over two hundred years of Anglo-American acculturation have not erased the German heritage of the county. Instead, later citizens of Lancaster County often built upon this tradition. Perhaps this preservation and utilization of the original culture and subsequent architecture of early German settlers is what attracts visitors to this area. These visitors, coming mostly from New York and New Jersey, live in areas where the cultural and architectural attitudes of original settlers, and even of recent inhabitants, is often destroyed to make way for "progress."

Visitors to Lancaster County come to see the preservation of the German culture and tradition in general. One of the most popular sites they visit is the restored Hans Herr house in Willow Street. This home is an attempt to preserve an absolute period of time in county history, the year 1719, as well as a static architectural form "restored to its original medieval Germanic charm."<sup>15</sup> While this structure is important historically and architecturally to the early history of the county, its restoration hardly shows the dynamics of the New World Germanic culture as it developed apart from its European antecedents and in combination with other New World cultures. Visitors to the area leave sites such as this with the misleading idea that the German culture of the eighteenth century was essentially a medieval culture, that it has no relevance or impact on the modern world, and that it exists only in the "peculiar" communities of the Amish and Mennonites.

An interpretation emphasizing the dynamics of the German culture of the eighteenth century would provide a picture of present-day Lancaster County congruent with its cultural development. The stone tenant house at Elizabeth Farms provides an excellent example of a historic structure adapting to changing needs in the surrounding culture. Unfortunately, the structure is on private property and in great disrepair with little chance of revitalization or relocation. This is a sad and inauspicious end for a piece of material culture with so much left to tell and virtually no one willing to listen. With the loss of this structure, the loss of the cultural, historical, and architectural record of an early American pioneering community and its adaptation to change will be permanent.

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Edward A. Chappell, "Acculturation in the Shenandoah Valley: Rhenish Architecture of the Massanutten Settlement," *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1986), p. 27.

<sup>2</sup>Henry Glassie, *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), p. 48.

<sup>3</sup>William Woys Weaver, "The Pennsylvania German House: European Antecedents and New World Forms," *Winterthur Portfolio* 21, no. 4 (Winter 1986), p. 243.

<sup>4</sup>Henry Glassie, *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States*, pp. 50-51. Edward A. Chappell, p. 40.

<sup>5</sup>Edward A. Chappell, p. 32. Window and door openings within the *Flürkuchenhaus* were placed with an emphasis in relation to internal spaces rather than external balance. Thus, while these openings often appear random and asymmetrical from the outside, they often tended to balance in relation to internal walls and structures. However, window placement on the gable ends was not usually affected by off center internal wall divisions. For a detailed illustration of this appearance, refer to Figures 4 thru 11.

<sup>6</sup>William Woys Weaver, p. 243.

<sup>7</sup>Weaver, p. 259.

<sup>8</sup>Weaver, p. 264.

<sup>9</sup>Edward A. Chappell, p. 36.

<sup>10</sup>Joseph E. Walker, "The Iron Industry of Lancaster County," *Lancaster County: Vignettes of People and Places* (Ephrata, Pennsylvania: Science Press, 1975), p. 65. Walker goes on to say that unfortunately no examples of an eighteenth century furnace and forge have survived to this day in Lancaster County.

<sup>11</sup>Henry Martin John Klein, *Lancaster County Pennsylvania — A History* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., Inc., 1924), p. 346.

<sup>12</sup>Henry Glassie, *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>13</sup>Henry Glassie, "Eighteenth Century Cultural Process in Delaware Valley Folk Building," *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1986), p. 406.

<sup>14</sup>Henry Glassie, *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States*, p. 55.

<sup>15</sup>"Hans Herr House Visitors' Brochure," (Willow Street, Pennsylvania: The Hans Herr House).

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# A TRIBUTE TO TRADITION AND NECESSITY: THE SCHWENKFELDER SCHOOLS IN AMERICA

by Monica Pieper



*Inside cover and first page of Isaac Kriebel's cyphering book, 1793. Two leaves of his copybook dated March 29, 1788, were used as the cover. The first page is set up in the usual format of question*

*and answer, and also includes a pence conversion table. Isaac Kriebel probably attended the Skippack school.*

The following essay will deal with the Schwenkfelders and the remarkable schools this Plain religious sect established in colonial Pennsylvania. There is no doubt that the educational efforts of this group are worth detailing and discussing; there are many testimonials by historical personalities praising the effectiveness of Schwenkfelder educational practices.

Pennsylvania governor—and historian—Samuel Penypacker (1843–1916), for example, said that the Schwenkfelders were “the most intelligent group of people who came to America in the colonial period.”<sup>1</sup> And a member of the group, Isaac Schultz, in 1844 looked back at the history of his co-believers in Pennsylvania and said: “They pay great attention to education, [and] to the religious and moral training of their children. . . . There is scarcely a family among them that does not possess a well-selected and neatly arranged library among which you will find manuscript copies from their learned fathers.”<sup>2</sup> A third statement—made by a man well able to see the differences between the educational practices

of various American sects—must be added. That man was Carl Stocks, who served several terms as a teacher in Schwenkfelder schools, and his observations were as follows: “I must say this, of all the sects and religious bodies I have met, and they are many, I have found none with whom I was so well pleased. I have now lived with you for some time and have never heard an oath or blasphemous word. I never saw one of your people drunk. . . . You do not waste your substance and richness in clothing as others do.”<sup>3</sup>

These three statements are enough to give us a first impression of the Schwenkfelders—of their character and culture. Now we must ask other questions: How was it possible for them to establish schools of extraordinary form and content? What conditions did they find in their new homeland which might have influenced them, and to what extent were they influenced by their own historical background? By looking for answers to these questions, we can perhaps find the reason for the special methods of education the Schwenkfelders initiated



# Journal

aller und jeder

Einrichtungen, particularer Anordnungen  
und Fortsetzungen, so in Dessen gebühren,  
zur Unterhaltung und  
Verwaltung

Derer

Schul-Anstalten  
bei den so genannten Schwenkfeldern,  
so wohl für die, als für die  
anzumerken

nöthig und erforderlic sind;

Woh auch:

Aller Güter, die dazu veranfalteten

Funde

samt der Rechnung, aller Einnahmen und  
Ausgaben

welche in diesen Dörfern, derselben Plan  
nach, von Zeit zu Zeit anfallen,

Obgleich gehalten registriert, zur Vergleichung  
und Ermittlung, dessen gültigen und richtigen Be-  
standes, zur Ausrichtung, aller nach Bedarfs, gemäß  
man sich nach den Ordnungen und Regulationen,  
in Dörfern im Gebiet, Dessen hinsichtlich, nach der  
Ordnung der Vorbestanden, und Unterthut, gebühret  
Funde

Anfangen und Eingerichtet im

Jahr

M D C C L X I V

Title page of the Towamencin and Shippach (Skipack) School Book. (All photographs courtesy of the Schwenkfelder Library, Pennsburg, PA.)

among the German settlers in Pennsylvania.

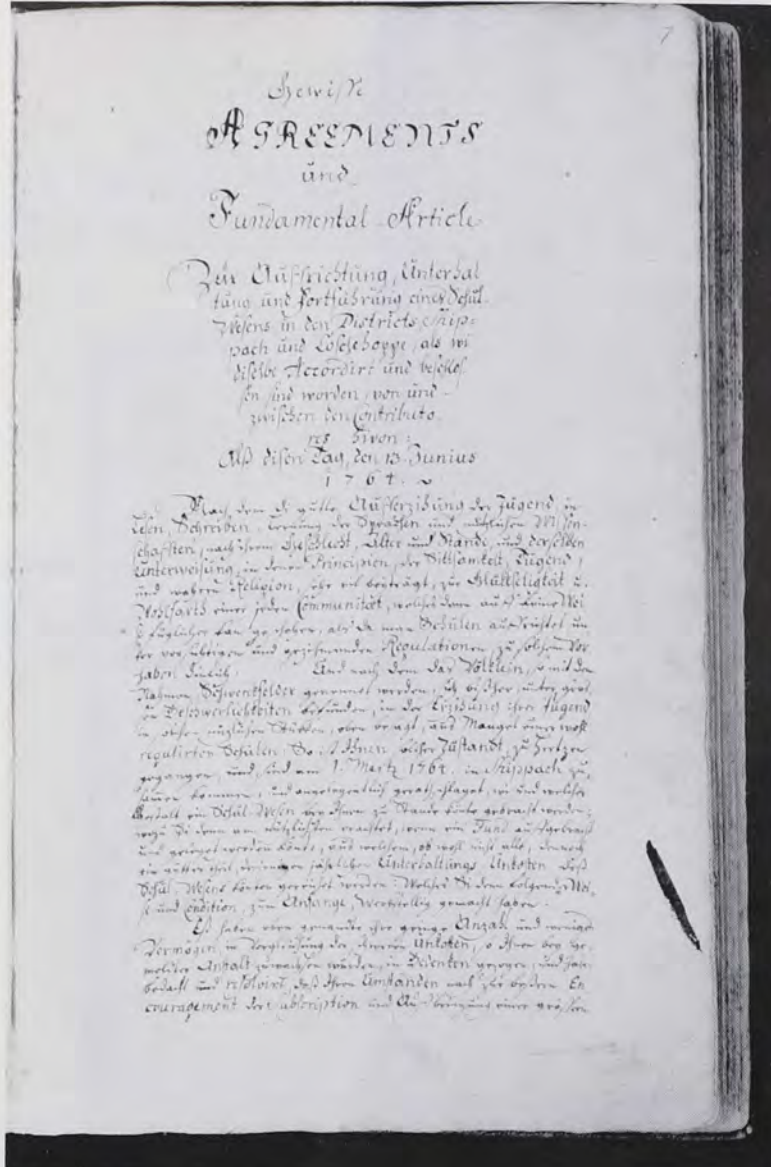
As a first step we must examine the educational laws and efforts in the colony in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1683, William Penn brought elementary education to the attention of the Assembly, and by law it was decided that all of the children in the colony should be taught to read and write.<sup>4</sup> In consequence, a first school was established in Philadelphia, but it did not have much success. In 1712, religious bodies were permitted to purchase land for schools, for the Assembly—recognizing that Pennsylvania was divided into many different groups—decided it was best to leave education to private and parochial efforts.<sup>5</sup>

In the second half of the eighteenth century the “charity school movement” was started. It was supported by the English king, who felt responsible for the people in his colonies, especially the “poor Germans.” Twelve schools were established among the Germans in Pennsylvania, all of them for boys.<sup>6</sup> The movement at once created suspicion among the Germans, who feared for their independence in matters of language and faith. To realize the scope of the problem, we must know that

there were about 30,000 German immigrants living in Pennsylvania in 1730; that number increased to 90,000 by 1750.

Concerning the educational efforts of the government, the German farmers thought that real education could take place only on the farm, with the church responsible for the teaching of eternal truths.<sup>7</sup> Thus, government-established schools were called *Zwingschulen*—schools of force.<sup>8</sup> And, when the first schools of higher education were started in Pennsylvania, the German immigrants refused to let their children attend. Most of them thought that higher learning led to worldliness and pride.<sup>9</sup>

To make clear the differences between government-established and parochial schools, it is necessary to clearly define the terminology. A real parochial school system—with schools started and run by an established church—did not exist in colonial Pennsylvania, which had a great number of different religious denominations.<sup>10</sup> It is better, therefore, to speak of “neighborhood” (rather than parochial) schools, which were composed of the children of several families in little



Page from the Goschenhoppin School Book setting down "certain agreements and fundamental articles for the establishment, support and continuation of a school system in the districts of Skippack and Goschenhoppin . . ."

communities. They were also called "pay" or "subscription" schools. In 1834, about 4,000 such schools existed in the state.<sup>11</sup>

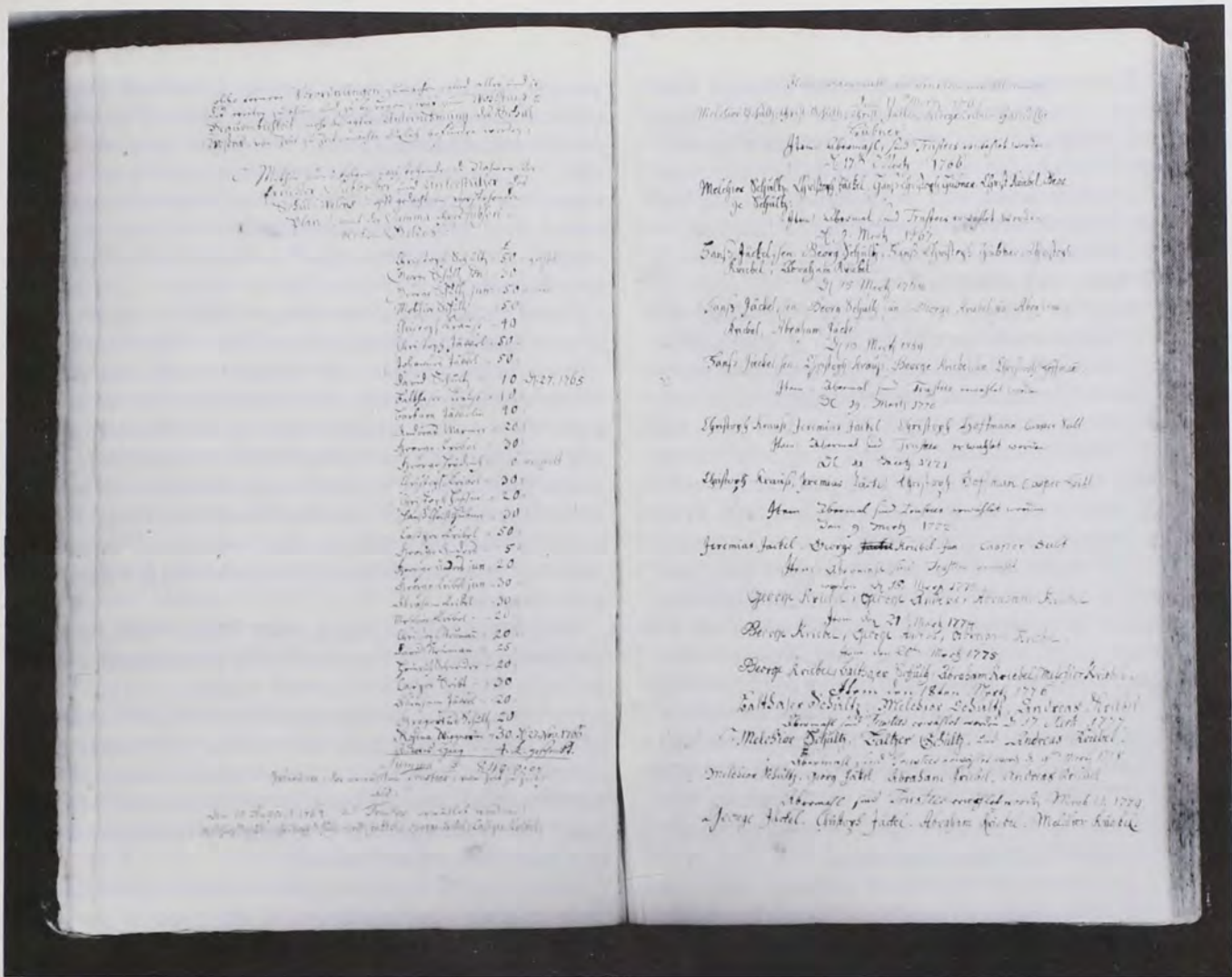
These schools were established and run without any controlling laws; most used rough log cabins for schoolrooms,<sup>12</sup> and most had the same beginnings—some enterprising men had the idea and a plan to establish a school; a meeting of the heads of families followed; a board of trustees was appointed; and a teacher (often a wandering schoolmaster) was employed. Thus, an elementary education was available to most children.<sup>13</sup> During the first half of the eighteenth century, the establishing of such private schools became an important task among the various religious denominations.

Among the Church Germans, the Lutherans remembered a statement by their founder: Martin Luther had said that were he to leave his office of preacher, he "would next choose that of a schoolmaster of boys; for . . . next to preaching this is the greatest and most useful vocation."<sup>14</sup> The schools of the Lutherans were considered an auxiliary of the church, and the first Lutheran school in Pennsylvania was erected in 1726 at Skippack.

The German Reformed Church members also had their own ideas concerning the aims of a school: the teacher was to serve as a chorister, to read sermons on Sundays, to give catechetical instruction to the youth, to play the organ, and to lead a pure life. In 1760, they developed a "Regulation" for the management of their schools.<sup>15</sup>

Among the immigrant Germans, the Moravians were known as the most active in educational undertakings. Even before 1750, they had at least thirteen schools.<sup>16</sup> Later, they established Nazareth Hall (1785); a seminary for young ladies at Bethlehem (also in 1785); and Linden Hall at Lititz (1794).<sup>17</sup> In 1788, the regulations for the seminary at Bethlehem stated that the girls had to sweep their rooms, make their beds, and take part in evening devotions. Subjects taught were reading, writing, and grammar; history, geography, and arithmetic; plain sewing and knitting; and spinning and weaving.<sup>18</sup>

The largest Plain German sect, the Mennonites, erected their first meeting- and schoolhouse in 1706; for some terms they succeeded in engaging the famous Christopher Dock as schoolmaster.<sup>19</sup> And, in considering briefly the contributions of Germans to education



Two pages from the Towamencin and Skippack School Book listing (left) founders, subscribers and supporters of the school system with the amount of

money subscribed by each. This list is followed by the names of trustees from August 1764 through March 1779.

in colonial Pennsylvania, we must not forget the Dunkers, who emigrated to America between 1719 and 1729. Among them was Christopher Saur, who founded the first German and English printing office, and who also published a large number of schoolbooks.<sup>20</sup>

In comparison with all these undertakings, we now want to discuss the special educational developments of the Schwenkfelders. Between 1731 and 1737, about 210 followers of the Silesian Reformer Caspar Schwenckfeld von Ossig emigrated to Pennsylvania, with the main body leaving Saxony (where they had gone for refuge when persecution against them in Silesia became intolerable) in 1734, and sailing to America together. They settled in Montgomery County, between Skippack and the Goshenhoppen region, and, as we have heard, were among the best educated of the early German settlers.<sup>21</sup>

During their first thirty years of settlement in Pennsylvania the Schwenkfelders had to deal with many eco-

nomic problems, so there was not much time to devote to educational matters.<sup>22</sup> But even in those difficult times they were able to continue a tradition begun in Saxony—the *Kinder Lehr*, or Sunday School. In Saxony George Weiss—who would become the group’s first leader in America—had given lessons in the classical languages, and religious instruction to youths.<sup>23</sup> In Pennsylvania Weiss first traveled around to teach young people in their homes, and later organized Sunday School sessions in the various districts. These sessions took place every second Sunday,<sup>24</sup> and were the first enterprise of this type in the English colonies.<sup>25</sup>

Between 1759 and 1762, the idea of organizing a school system was born and discussed, and in 1764 a new period began for the Schwenkfelders. Once again they concentrated on their spiritual life, and thus recognized the need of an organized education for their children. In March of that year the “housefathers” met for the first time and were confronted by a number of “personal ques-

tions." These "questions" were meant to show that man's duty is to instruct his children in Christian principles and in the right way of life. They were written by Christopher Schultz (another Schwenkfelder leader, and a pupil of George Weiss who taught him Greek and Hebrew), who emphasized the tradition of education by quoting such Christian teachers as Gottfried Arnold, Adam Reisner, and Valentin Krautwald.<sup>26</sup>

After that first meeting of the heads of families, the *Articles of Agreement* were composed in June, 1764, with many families subscribing to the pact. The motivation behind the plan was mainly religious—God created man with the intention that he have a blessed and eternal life. The foundation for that had to be laid in youth, so consequently young people had to learn 1) to recognize good and bad; 2) to control their will; 3) to use their memory; 4) to control their passions and emotions so they might be governed by a good and pure mind; and 5) to show themselves respectful in outward appearance.<sup>27</sup> Ignorance had to be considered a "nest of sin"<sup>28</sup> which covers and befores the mind. The preamble to the *Goschenhoppen Schul-Buch* further testifies to the founders' aims: it announces that the main purposes of school education are to impart a "true knowledge and fear of God, [and to prepare pupils for] temporal and eternal life."<sup>30</sup> The result would be young people who were "useful citizens, good members of the church, and intelligent members of the community."<sup>31</sup>

Under the Articles of Agreement a school fund was collected, and five trustees were elected to run the school. Their tasks were to establish rules for the governing of the school; to examine differences between parents, teachers, and pupils; to elect and dismiss teachers of pupils; and to make visits to the schools.<sup>32</sup> This financial plan, made in 1764, was revised in 1780 when the Schwenkfelders decided to continue their school system in the same manner as before.<sup>33</sup> Classes were first conducted in private homes; later, schoolhouses were erected, often combined with a house for the teacher. Between 1765 and 1828, five schoolhouses were built.<sup>34</sup>

All of these facts are well known among the members of the group, and are recorded in the *Towamencin Schul-Buch* and the *Goschenhoppen Schul-Buch*, which together comprise the most important record of the establishment and administration of the Schwenkfelder schools.<sup>35</sup> Thus, it is not necessary to give more than a brief summary of those facts here. Rather—since what has been written until now indicates that Schwenkfelder schools were not much different than the schools of other religious denominations—another question will be of more interest: In just what ways *were* the schools of this small group distinctive?

According to one description of the Schwenkfelder school system, it was "small and typical of the times, but outstanding in several of its characteristics . . . [it was] public, that means open to all children in the com-

munity; secular, that means without prescribed religious indoctrination; centrally administered; [and] supported by Schwenkfelder residents."<sup>36</sup> Another opinion states that ". . . we can't help but feel that the sons and daughters of the Schwenkfelders and their neighbors enjoyed educational advantages far in advance of what the average farmers' children enjoy in these days in country communities."<sup>37</sup>

These "educational advantages" were no doubt due to some unusual admission policies: Schwenkfelder schools were open to *all* children—rich and poor, Schwenkfelder and non-Schwenkfelder, male and female. (Since the Schwenkfelders did not believe in the segregation of the sexes, they had a co-educational system in their schools.<sup>38</sup>) And, to get a more complete picture of the differences between Schwenkfelder and other contemporary parochial schools, we have to compare subject matter, teaching methods, and the influence of some teachers.

Concerning subject matter, most Pennsylvania schools decided to take into account chiefly the necessities of a farmer's life. Children learned reading, writing, and arithmetic, with instruction in religion which consisted of learning the catechism and reading the Psalter and the New Testament.<sup>39</sup> Reading was accompanied by memorization, and the teaching of spelling and writing was "wholly mechanical,"<sup>40</sup> so the only faculty expected of a pupil was a good memory.

Schwenkfelder teachers chose another way; for them, memorization was only one tool employed in carrying out their task. Biology, for example, was taught from nature, and geography was not simply learning place names, it also meant practice with the globe, while the reading of the Scriptures was accompanied by an explanation of the text.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, religious instruction was free from any indoctrination since "special sectarian beliefs and creeds remained outside the curriculum of the schools."<sup>42</sup>

Teaching methods in colonial Pennsylvania have been described as "exceedingly severe."<sup>43</sup> Discipline was usually maintained by meting out punishment, and oftentimes "the punishment did not fit the crime."<sup>44</sup> Again, Schwenkfelder teachers had another idea: discipline was not merely a system of rules and methods designed to keep order in the classroom, but "true discipline would lead to the establishing of good character."<sup>45</sup>

Realizing that the implementation of pedagogical goals is mostly dependent upon the teacher, the Schwenkfelder board of trustees was very careful in choosing schoolmasters. During the fifty-eight years (1764–1822) when the schools were in active operation, twenty-three different teachers were employed in the two districts, some of them for seven, eight, or nine terms.<sup>46</sup> Fifteen years after the beginning of their school movement, the trustees decided to employ mostly teachers of Schwenkfelder origin, because they had had bad expe-

riences with others.<sup>47</sup>

In part this may have been due to the fact that for most Pennsylvania German farmers teaching school was a job “so simple that almost anyone was equal to it.”<sup>48</sup> Consequently, most teachers were inexperienced young men or immigrant wandering students, some of them with “eccentric manners.”<sup>49</sup> The Schwenkfelders, on the other hand, expected a teacher to have high qualifications: he had to be holy, educated, and moral; he had to lead a Godly life, to be able to control his tongue and his passions; he was not allowed to show partiality, and he had to prove “a good fund of useful knowledge,” and a “true fitness to teach.”<sup>50</sup> Among the Schwenkfelder teachers two are significant: Abraham Schultz (1747–1822) who served as a trustee and inspector as well as a teacher; he was known for his “comprehensive mind”<sup>51</sup> and good memory; he knew German and English and was a counselor and member of several committees; and George Kriebel (1732–1805), who was selected to teach when some of the non-Schwenkfelder teachers began to teach doctrines contrary to the group’s beliefs.<sup>52</sup>

One of the Schwenkfelders’ very best decisions, however, was made in 1790, when they hired George Carl Stocks as teacher. Stocks came from Halle, Germany, and he strongly influenced the Schwenkfelder school system during his two-year career among them—he was the founder of the Schwenkfelder Hosensack Academy, which provided higher education. His pedagogical methods sound very modern for he emphasized “social learning”—older pupils setting an example for those younger—among his students. This was Stocks’ version of group education, which is finding favor again today in many school systems. Stocks was able to give advanced studies, including German, English, Latin, and Greek; higher mathematics; geography; theology; and history.<sup>53</sup> When he taught foreign languages, he used only that language in his lessons—also an idea being rediscovered in the twentieth century.

George Carl Stocks also emphasized practical work; he felt that students should not see only one part of life—the academic part—but that they should also be responsible for the tasks that made everyday life possible. Older pupils were obligated to cut the wood which heated the schoolroom, younger pupils had to carry it indoors. This work also facilitated another of Stocks’ pedagogical goals—that of making the children feel at home in their school. For that purpose, too, he organized the school day so that it included free time for playing; and during that time the schoolhouse remained open, so the children could always feel they had a refuge there.<sup>54</sup>

Concerning discipline, Stocks did not follow the example of so many Pennsylvania German teachers with their severe methods of punishment. Before punishing a child he tried “kind admonishing”; if that method did not succeed, pupils older than fourteen had to pay a fine,

which was used for the welfare of the poorer students.<sup>55</sup> Stocks also took an interest in the life of his students outside of school, an interest also shared by the more famous Christopher Dock. Indeed, the teaching methods of Stocks and Dock meet in their practice of singing and praying during lessons, and in their publishing of rules of behavior for students both in and out of school; the intent of such rules being to lead children to a good and successful life.<sup>56</sup>

The Schwenkfelder school movement ended when the group decided to work together with their neighbors in establishing neighborhood or subscription schools about 1825. In 1842, they adopted the state school system when it was offered in their area of the commonwealth. Nevertheless, even today the Schwenkfelders run their own school of secondary education, the Perkiomen School (formerly known as Perkiomen Seminary). The Perkiomen School was founded in 1892 for the purpose of educating young people in the various branches of science and literature, the useful arts, and languages. Its intention was that instruction should be “Christian, but not sectarian.”<sup>57</sup>

Often Schwenkfelder schools are seen as forerunners of the public school idea which identifies with the aims and ideals the Schwenkfelders had represented for centuries. Indeed, their schools “give evidence of the fact that the common or public school idea had thus early taken hold among the German people of the province.”<sup>58</sup> In light of that statement, there remains the question of the roots of their wise and enlightened system of school management. Although we do not know whether it ever found its way to Pennsylvania, there is an extraordinary text which discusses all the above pedagogical ideas, and which appeared among the first Schwenkfelders in Silesia. It is Valentin Krautwald’s *Ein kurtzer bericht von der weise des Catechismi der ersten Schuler im Glauben und dem anefang Christlicher Leere* (*A Short Report on the Manner of Catechism of the First Students in the Faith and the Beginning of Christian Teaching*).

Krautwald wrote this in 1534, and it was included among Schwenckfeld’s documents in the *Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum*.<sup>59</sup> We have not been able to find any traces of this text in Pennsylvania (the author would be happy for information from any individual who has a copy, or has information about it), but nevertheless want to show that the ideas of this early Schwenkfelder teacher have influenced his followers in such a way that an unbroken tradition existed which led to the establishment of their educational system.

Valentin Krautwald thought that successful lessons could only be given by a teacher able to demonstrate his love and personal convictions to his pupils. As his co-religionists would later do in Pennsylvania, he emphasized the importance of the teacher’s personal life: he must be moral, not abandoning himself to laziness or



to the pleasures of gambling and drinking.<sup>60</sup> Again like his Pennsylvania brethren, Krautwald had concrete ideas about the responsibilities of, and the qualifications for, the job; he compared a teacher to a mother or a nurse—one who must be able to assess the capabilities and capacities of those under his care. Having made that assessment, the teacher is to then differentiate between those who must receive spiritual truths as “pulp,” as “bread,” or as “meat.” He must further be able to present these truths in the right manner or, as Krautwald says, he must know how to “prepare the pulp . . . cut the bread . . . and cook the meat.”<sup>61</sup> He thought that to succeed in the profession, a teacher had to be a scholar for scholars,<sup>62</sup> but he also knew that knowledge alone was not enough. There is more to the art of teaching, says Krautwald, than having quality goods to bring to market; it consists also in knowing exactly how to sell them.<sup>63</sup> If a teacher does not have this art his efforts remain wind and sound coming and going through human ears.<sup>64</sup>

On a practical level, Krautwald thought the most important and effective way to teach was by using a question-and-answer method.<sup>65</sup> He was well aware of mental and other differences between pupils even of the same class, so he suggested that separating fast and slow learners would oftentimes be beneficial. But sometimes it would be helpful for both groups to learn together, so that each would have a better understanding of the other.<sup>66</sup>

Krautwald went on to state specific principles for the instruction of youths. The first concerns the content of the lessons, which he felt should be based on the observation of God’s creation. The teacher must discuss heaven and earth, day and night, sun and moon, the seasons and the weather. He must show his pupils the world of plants and animals as examples of God’s grace.<sup>67</sup> Things which cannot be demonstrated from nature should be shown in pictures. He also suggests that teachers and pupils visit churches to see pictures of Christ’s passion, not forgetting to remind readers that such pictures are only illustrative; they are not to be adored or worshipped in any way.<sup>68</sup>

Krautwald also thought that Christian songs were a good teaching tool. In his opinion, Christian songs were an important help when instructing students in the main tenets of the faith.<sup>69</sup> And if a teacher wants to preach he must be like a doctor, who gives one dose to youngsters, and another to adults. The same distinction must be made by the teacher when he chooses pedagogical remedies for his pupils,<sup>70</sup> for he is responsible for the success or failure of those pupils. Again Krautwald illustrates his thought by saying that a teacher must give the kernel of the nut to the weak, but he can give the whole nut—together with the branches—to the stronger pupils, for they can find the kernel themselves.<sup>71</sup>

When Valentin Krautwald published his ideas, the Reformation movement in Europe was still new, and people were still looking for ways to put such ideas into practice. When his fellow Schwenkfelders settled in Pennsylvania they got the chance to implement his ideas, and, as we have seen, they succeeded in setting up “a school system which incorporated ideals and features later recognized as fundamental to the American public school system.”<sup>72</sup> Their aims for education came to fruition because of an unbroken spiritual tradition, the basis of which were the admirable ideas of men like Krautwald.

Even by modern pedagogical standards, Krautwald must be recognized as an important forerunner and sensible teacher. And, even if his text has not been found in Pennsylvania, we might assume that the Schwenkfelders had accepted his precepts for their lives well before they emigrated, so their newly established schools in Penn’s colony could be governed by the spirit he had created. Indeed, because of his teachings—and the teachings of his fellow believers—the Schwenkfelders were able to establish schools in which generations of pupils not only got a good education, but which also provided them with clear orientations and personal helps for their future lives as well—an aspect of education which modern schools sometimes forget.

#### DEDICATION

To Wolf-Guenter Mutzbauer, from whom I have learned a lot about school life.

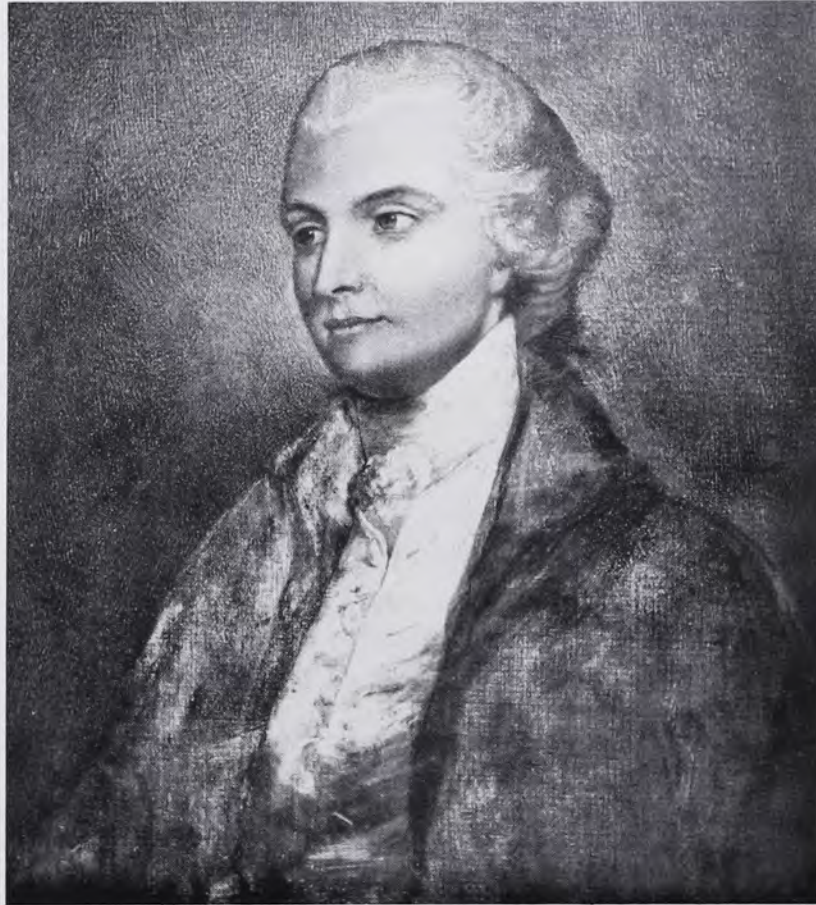
#### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Board of Publications of the General Conference of the Schwenkfelder Church, *Selections from the Genealogical Record of the Schwenkfelder Families* (Pennsburg 1923); without page numbering.
- <sup>2</sup> Howard Wiegner Kriebel, *The Schwenkfelders in Pennsylvania. A Historical Sketch* (Lancaster 1904), p. 137.
- <sup>3</sup> Kriebel, p. 171.
- <sup>4</sup> Gerald Studer, *Christopher Dock, Colonial Schoolmaster* (Scottsdale, Pa. 1967), p. 93.
- <sup>5</sup> Studer, p. 93.
- <sup>6</sup> Samuel E. Weber, *The Charity School Movement in Colonial Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia 1905), pp. 12 and 44.
- <sup>7</sup> Ralph Wood (ed.), *The Pennsylvania Germans* (Princeton 1942), p. 105.
- <sup>8</sup> Wood, p. 117.
- <sup>9</sup> James Pyle Wickersham, *A History of Education in Pennsylvania Private and Public, Elementary and Higher. From the time the Swedes settled on the Delaware to the Present Day* (Lancaster 1886), p. 162.
- <sup>10</sup> Studer, p. 96.
- <sup>11</sup> Wickersham, p. 178.
- <sup>12</sup> Wickersham, p. 178.
- <sup>13</sup> Wood, p. 112.
- <sup>14</sup> Wickersham, p. 124.
- <sup>15</sup> Wickersham, p. 140.
- <sup>16</sup> Wood, p. 108.
- <sup>17</sup> Wickersham, p. 148.
- <sup>18</sup> Wickersham, p. 156.
- <sup>19</sup> Wickersham, p. 164.
- <sup>20</sup> Wickersham, p. 170.
- <sup>21</sup> Wickersham, p. 168.
- <sup>22</sup> Kriebel, pp. 56 and 120.
- <sup>23</sup> Elizabeth G. Landis, “The Schwenkfelders and their School System, 1764–1842.” In *Historical Review of Berks County*, Vol. XXXV, Number 3 (1970), p. 99.

- <sup>24</sup> See note 1.
- <sup>25</sup> Landis, p. 99.
- <sup>26</sup> For the English text of the "Personal Questions" see: Elmer Schultz Gerhard, "The History of Schwenckfelder Schools and Education." "In, *Schwenckfeldiana*, Vol. I, Number 3 (Schwenckfelder Schools and Education), edited by the Board of Publication of the Schwenckfelder Church, Norristown, Pa. 1943, p. 7ff.
- <sup>27</sup> For the English text of the "Articles of Agreement" see: Marvin Gerhard Schultz and Selina Gerhard Schultz, "Goshenhoppen Schul-Buch. Records of the Schwenckfelder Schools 1764-1842." In, *Schwenckfeldiana* I, 3, p. 26ff.
- <sup>28</sup> Complete title, "Personal questions regarding the doubtfulness of the need of schools, submitted to the House-fathers of the Schwenckfelders for their earnest consideration and conscientious solution."
- <sup>29</sup> For the English text of the "Preamble" see: Schultz/Schultz (Schwenckfeldiana I, 3), p. 23ff.
- <sup>30</sup> Kriebel, p. 24.
- <sup>31</sup> Kriebel, p. 24.
- <sup>32</sup> Jesse H. Snyder, "Origin and History of the Schwenckfelder Schools in Pennsylvania," in *The Schwenckfeldian*, February/May 1940, p. 34.
- <sup>33</sup> Kriebel, p. 30.
- <sup>34</sup> Landis, p. 114.
- <sup>35</sup> Landis, p. 102.
- <sup>36</sup> Landis, p. 99.
- <sup>37</sup> Kriebel, p. 24.
- <sup>38</sup> Selina Gerhard Schultz, *A Course of Study in the Life and Teachings of Caspar Schwenckfeld von Ossig (1489-1561) and the History of the Schwenckfelder Religious Movement (1518-1964)*, ed. by the Board of Publication of the Schwenckfelder church, 1964; p. 153.
- <sup>39</sup> Wickersham, p. 190.
- <sup>40</sup> Wickersham, p. 203.
- <sup>41</sup> Schultz and Schultz, *Schwenckfeldiana* I, 3, p. 26.
- <sup>42</sup> Kriebel, p. 19.
- <sup>43</sup> Wickersham, p. 207.
- <sup>44</sup> Studer, p. 117.
- <sup>45</sup> Kriebel, p. 19.
- <sup>46</sup> Kriebel, p. 21.
- <sup>47</sup> Snyder, p. 65.
- <sup>48</sup> Wickersham, p. 210.
- <sup>49</sup> Wickersham, p. 210.
- <sup>50</sup> Kriebel, p. 18.
- <sup>51</sup> Biographical notes; see *Genealogical Record of the Descendants of the Schwenckfelders* (1879), p. 940.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 349.
- <sup>53</sup> Landis, p. 113.
- <sup>54</sup> Selina Gerhard Schultz, "The Hosensack Academy," in *Schwenckfeldiana* I, 3, p. 75.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.
- <sup>56</sup> "Regulations for the Hosensack Academy," by George Carl Stocks, published by Selina Gerhard Schultz, *Schwenckfeldiana*, I, 3, p. 74f.
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- <sup>58</sup> Marion Dexter Learned, ed., "Schwenckfelder School Documents," *Americana Germanica*, Vol II, p. 71f.
- <sup>59</sup> *Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum* (= C. S.), eds. Chester David Hartranft, Elmer Ellsworth Schultz Johnson, Selina Gerhard Schultz and published under the auspices of the Schwenckfelder Church Pennsylvania and the Hartford Theological Seminary Connecticut. Volume I (Leipzig 1907)—Volume XIX (Pennsburg 1961); mentioned text: C.S. V, p. 221-246.
- <sup>60</sup> C.S. V, p. 226f.
- <sup>61</sup> C.S. V, p. 224.
- <sup>62</sup> C.S. V, p. 224.
- <sup>63</sup> C.S. V, p. 226.
- <sup>64</sup> C.S. V, p. 226.
- <sup>65</sup> C.S. V, p. 243.
- <sup>66</sup> C.S. V, p. 223.
- <sup>67</sup> C.S. V, p. 228.
- <sup>68</sup> C.S. V, p. 230f.
- <sup>69</sup> C.S. V, p. 232.
- <sup>70</sup> C.S. V, p. 236.
- <sup>71</sup> C.S. V, p. 237.
- <sup>72</sup> Landis, p. 99.

# “ENCHANTING PROSPECTS”: JOHN PENN IN CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA

by Loretta Treese



*John Penn, grandson of William Penn.  
(Courtesy of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.)*

On April 6th, 1788, John Penn saddled his horses and rode northwest from Philadelphia on the road running roughly parallel to the Schuylkill. It took him through the township of Roxborough, past woods and patches of cultivated ground, and through an area dotted with scattered farmhouses. Penn was rich, handsome, and only twenty-eight years old. His mother's rank made him an English nobleman; his father's tireless industry had already assured him of a healthy income. Very much the master of his own time, he rode leisurely, stopping to inspect soil conditions and, perhaps, to make notes for the journal he was keeping.

Since arriving in America some five years before, Penn had made several trips through Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, New York, and Delaware. He liked to travel and observe America's unspoiled scenery, as well as the sometimes puzzling customs and mores of the infant nation now known as the United States. This time he would travel the back roads of central Pennsylvania, and this would be the first time he kept a detailed journal

of what he saw and experienced. Exactly what he intended to do with the journal is not clear, but the document shows the modern reader how an English gentleman viewed Pennsylvania's back country not long after the Revolutionary War.

Penn's horses grew tired before he did, and he stopped to rest them at a roadside tavern called Cochran's. In John Penn's day, taverns were an important part of every community. Travelers of all classes and conditions frequented them, while professionally-inquisitive tavern keepers pumped them for news that could be passed on to others. At Cochran's, the tavern keeper served John Penn a light meal from the day's bill of fare and relaxed with him, taking the opportunity to discuss his own finances. Another guest at the tavern, an elderly man, took a liking to John Penn and invited him to visit his home in Reading. Penn joked with him about his age and the old man referred to Penn as "Honorable Proprietor."

This was no longer true. The Penn family had ceased



*John Penn's route through central Pennsylvania can be traced on this map of the colony, circa 1770. (Courtesy of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.)*

to be Pennsylvania's proprietors some years before, when Revolutionary leaders stripped them first of their governing powers and then of the vast, still largely uninhabited lands William Penn's charter had granted them. Though the Penn proprietorship was no more, John Penn, who would otherwise have been Pennsylvania's chief proprietor, tended to expect more deference than some Americans cared to show him. Penn liked the genial old man, but he could not help being slightly offended that he did not rise in addressing him. He observed in his journal, "how qualified respect is in this democratical country."

John Penn left Cochran's and continued along the road, passing through a neighborhood where the houses were roofed with tile and the barns with thatch, reminding him briefly of England. Towards evening, he looked for a tavern where he could pass the night. Taverns beckoned travelers with their colorful signs: works of art painted by "limners" or professional sign painters. Penn found a promising prospect at a tavern where the sign boasted a likeness of his friend, Dr. Franklin, painted by George Rutter, the noted limner of Philadelphia. He dismounted and, after enjoying what he called a "refreshing tea," went to his bed.<sup>1</sup>

John Penn had been born in 1760. He was the eldest surviving son of Lady Juliana Fermor and Thomas Penn. He was also the grandson of the first Earl of Pomfret on his mother's side, and William Penn on his father's. He had a cousin, also named John Penn, who had served as Pennsylvania's governor from 1763 until the Amer-

ican Revolution.<sup>2</sup> While John Penn was growing up, his father succeeded in doing what William Penn had tried—and failed—to accomplish: making Pennsylvania a source of income and wealth to the Penn family. Thomas Penn did this by creating a network of family members and loyal officers who all contributed to the operations of selling land, and administering the quasi-feudal proprietary landholding system that allowed the Penns to collect ground rents and quit rents from settlers who leased or purchased land.

Not everyone liked the seemingly anachronistic proprietary system. At one point, Benjamin Franklin and Quaker supporters in the Pennsylvania Assembly had led a movement to make the province a royal, rather than a proprietary, colony. Later, radical Revolutionary leaders in Pennsylvania ousted the Penns from government when Pennsylvania's constitution was rewritten in 1776. Though former Governor Penn had been very careful to give no offense to the state's Revolutionary leaders, these leaders also confiscated much of the family's property through the Divestment Act of 1779. The old proprietary system had allowed the Penn family to survey and keep "proprietary tenths" or "manors" covering one-tenth of each new tract of land they bought from the Indians and opened for public sale. The Divestment Act only permitted them to keep proprietary manors that had been surveyed before July 4th, 1776. The rest of Pennsylvania's unsold land became public domain. The Divestment Act compensated the Penns for their losses, but allowed them only a fraction of what

their own records told them the land was worth.

Thomas Penn died in 1775. The gentlemen most keenly affected by divestment were John Penn and his cousin, the former Governor John Penn, who had inherited shares of the proprietorship from their respective fathers. The former governor had a one-quarter share, while Thomas Penn's then still-underage son held a three-quarters interest.<sup>3</sup>

Though their losses on paper were tremendous, the Penns retained enough cash to sit the American Revolution out comfortably and take a "wait and see" attitude about their property. They were still rich enough to send young John Penn to Cambridge and to allow him to travel on the Continent following his studies. While traveling, he had amused himself by writing poetry, reading the classics, and taking up the harpsicord.<sup>4</sup>

Although John Penn derived great enjoyment from these artistic pursuits, another side of him resembled his father, Thomas Penn, the consummate man of business. Upon coming of age, Penn began keeping a commonplace book in which he recorded his thoughts. In this notebook, among the drafts of several poems, he also transcribed the content of laws affecting the proprietorship and jotted down his own estimates of how much the Penns had lost in both acres and pounds sterling.<sup>5</sup>

While the American Revolution wore on, there were scant opportunities for the Penn family in England to communicate with their officers and relations in America. Few ships carried letters between London and Philadelphia; moreover, Penn family officers in Pennsylvania (including the former governor) became extremely careful about what they put in writing lest they be accused of treason.

After the British occupation of Philadelphia in 1777 and 1778, several years passed before one American Penn officer managed to get a letter through. Finally, in 1782, Edmund Physick, who had looked after the family's account books and been the Penns' receiver general for purchase and rent money, wrote John Penn assuring him that he had done his best to promote the family's interests during the war. He wrote, "I have always endeavored to act for the best in all your affairs, but the times have puzzled many and injured many." His good news was that land was again selling well. He wondered whether John Penn might be interested in selling some land in manors that had been confirmed to the Penn family.<sup>6</sup>

The following year there was peace between England and America. John Penn was still traveling in Europe and happened to be in Paris when the peace treaty was signed. There he waited upon American peace commissioners John Jay and Benjamin Franklin, who no longer held the family in such contempt now that his personal enemy, Thomas Penn, was dead.<sup>7</sup>

That same year Penn's former guardian and brother-in-law, William Baker, had more good news from Amer-

ica. He had heard that many of the Revolutionary leaders, who had been such radical proponents of the new concept of democracy, had been voted out of office. In what historians have called a conservative counter-revolution, these leaders lost popularity because they failed to solve the state's economic problems. The Revolution had created a very poor economy, and people were tired of inflation and unsuccessful attempts at price fixing; they began voting for conservatives who were able to get control of the state's Assembly in 1781. William Baker was delighted with this turn of events, and wondered whether the new Assembly might reconsider the legislation "by which the property of the family has been so deeply affected." Perhaps the Penns could get their land back or get more money for their losses.<sup>8</sup>

Suddenly it was important for John Penn to come to America. He would need to work with his cousin, the former governor, to reopen the issue of the Penn lands in a way "as shall neither give offense to the new government yet be satisfactory," as Baker put it. Edmund Physick wrote Penn's mother, Lady Juliana, explaining that John Penn's presence in America was vital to this effort.<sup>9</sup>

The Penns lost no time in sending this young man who just might, once again, become Pennsylvania's chief proprietor. Unfortunately, instead of helping the Penn cause, his presence in America had exactly the opposite effect. As the radicals felt their power ebbing in 1781 and 1782, they began accusing conservatives of plotting to restore the Penn proprietorship. Bringing back the old system would force people to start paying the Penn family those anachronistic quit rents again. That specter proved very unpopular, and conservative leaders quickly abandoned any plans they might have had to help the Penns. However, in 1784, the Pennsylvania Assembly did sell some land in Philadelphia's Northern Liberties, creating a fund from which the two John Penns could be paid the £130,000 compensation the Divestment Act had promised them.<sup>10</sup>

This money made the younger John Penn a very rich man. For several years he remained in America, uncertain exactly what to do with his life or where to eventually settle. In his commonplace book he noted that he "sometimes [felt] a Republican enthusiasm which attached me to America and almost tempted me to stay."<sup>11</sup> Penn bought fifteen acres of land overlooking the Schuylkill River, and built himself a small but elegant house he named "The Solitude." He tried to make his country estate resemble an English manor, even providing it with that true mark of a gentleman's country seat—live deer. After finally returning to England, Penn wistfully referred to The Solitude as "a place which made my stay in a distant country so full of trouble and anxiety more tolerable to me."<sup>12</sup>

The "trouble and anxiety" he experienced might have been factional strife among Pennsylvania's conserva-



*Two views of The Solitude, the elegant Federal mansion John Penn had built for himself overlooking the Schuylkill River. The house still stands today; it can be found on the grounds of the Philadelphia zoo.*



tives and radicals; they had been squabbling over Pennsylvania's constitution ever since it had been rewritten in 1776. Conservatives lost control of the Assembly in 1784 and 1785, and John Penn dated his "becoming wholly an Englishman" from those years. Radicals resented conservative attempts to change the forms of government they had established, and the Penns, symbols of the old proprietary order, may have been caught in the middle of many political arguments. In his commonplace book, John Penn noted that by one political party, "we were almost branded as thieves." He concluded that America had liberty but no justice, and began contemplating a return to England.<sup>13</sup>

In the meantime, like other former Penn officers, John Penn found that the new concepts of Federalism embodied a lot of appealing conservative ideals. Federalist George Washington dined with him, and Penn recorded in his commonplace book the names of members of the Constitutional Convention (which he referred to as a plan "for improving the American government"<sup>14</sup>).

John Penn and Edmund Physick became close friends. What the wealthy poet had in common with this meticulous, hard-working accountant is unknown, but John Penn rewarded Physick for his services with land and presents of cash. He paid him a salary to continue acting as his agent to sell confirmed land and to collect ground rents. Penn also presented Physick with a portrait he had had painted of himself, and allowed Physick and his family to live at The Solitude after he departed for England.<sup>15</sup>

But while he resided in America, John Penn traveled.

Sometimes the scenery inspired him to write poetry, like his "Ode to Bethlehem," and the journal he kept of his trip through Pennsylvania in the early spring of 1788, shows how the physical scenery and the political atmosphere in Pennsylvania's back country looked to him at that time.

On the second day of his journey, John Penn continued along the road to present-day Pottstown, which he knew as Pottsgrove and which he described as "no contemptible village." The road then afforded some river views as he rode on to the Black Horse Tavern in present-day Douglassville. He rested his horse there and then pushed on to Reading, where he located the proprietary manor called Penns Mount, one of the tracts that had been confirmed to the Penns. He sent his horses ahead and walked for two miles examining its valleys and mountains. Apparently he encountered a lingering trace of anti-proprietary sentiment among the area's settlers, for he made a point of staying at Whitman's Tavern to dine on river catfish. Whitman, he found, had been the only tavern keeper in town who "had not lately petitioned against the confirmation of the proprietary estate."

Word spread that John Penn was in Reading and two town worthies, James Biddle and Daniel Clymer, called on him at Whitman's. The next day these gentlemen accompanied him as he inspected another proprietary farm. Biddle invited John Penn for a pleasant dinner at which his married daughter, Mrs. Collins, presided at table. Biddle's unmarried daughter was also present. John Penn might have made an excellent catch, but he



*The Harris ferry and frontier house as depicted in Watson's Annals.*

was not attracted to Biddle's daughter. In describing the ladies, he wrote only, "They are of low stature, but rather pretty."

On the following day, April 9th, Biddle took John Penn to visit the farm of General and Mrs. Mifflin. The Mifflins gave their visitors a second breakfast, and the general proudly showed John Penn around the twelve-hundred-acre estate, pointing out the improvements he had made. John Penn glimpsed one of Mifflin's neighbors at work in a meadow. The man's long beard let Penn identify him as "one of the marrying Dunkers," a member of one of the many sects William Penn had encouraged to settle in Pennsylvania. Mifflin and Penn stopped briefly to chat with the farmer.

The Mifflins provided Penn with an early dinner, but John Penn did not remain with the family long. Soon after dinner, he mounted his horse and rode three miles to the Carlisle Road at Sinking Spring. As he continued his journey, he saw less and less cleared ground. He was surrounded instead by steep hills covered with trees still bare of their foliage, in an area he found increasingly "desolate." He wrote, "The beauties are chiefly those of wildness and the romantic."

He spent that night in present-day Womelsdorf, where he again found cultivated land; there was also a church on a hill and a tavern whose owner also owned extensive lands in the area. But he could not enjoy Womelsdorf for long. The next day he had to rise early in order to make it by nightfall to Harrisburg, that tiny town on the Susquehanna that Pennsylvania radical leaders were hoping would become the state capital. On the way to Harrisburg, Penn passed several mills on the picturesque Tulpehocken Creek. He also rode through present-day Myerstown and Lebanon which he described as "a handsome town containing some hundred inhabitants." He admired Lebanon's well-built houses, but pressed on to Millerstown to rest his horses.

At sunset he finally came within view of Harrisburg. Though he found the town small compared to Lebanon, he admired its situation on the river, which he called

"one of the finest I ever saw." He stayed at the Compass, a tavern he found particularly well situated; it was close by the water, about two hundred yards below the present Harris mansion.

As always, Penn managed to meet the town's prominent citizens. He had breakfast with the town's founder, John Harris, who spoke with him about the business of land. Harris accompanied him to the ferry which provided John Penn with one of the more exciting moments of his trip. The Susquehanna's waters were high that morning which made crossing difficult. At one point, the ferry was nearly swept into rapids below its designated landing place. "At length," John Penn wrote, "[we] escaped a disagreeable situation."

Penn then rode on to Carlisle where he saw the buildings the Continental Congress had erected as magazines in 1777, and were currently in the process of granting to Dickinson College. The college itself he described only as "a small, patched-up building of about sixty by fifteen feet." On April 12th, he spent the day in Carlisle. Despite rain, he walked along the course of a stream to its spring. He noted the town had both English and Presbyterian churches, but in general he found the countryside populated by many poor farmers "who are all opposed to the new government, proposed by the late [Constitutional] Convention."

While still in Carlisle, John Penn called on General John Armstrong, a friend of the Penn family. Armstrong went back to the tavern where John Penn was staying, and where several other country gentlemen also convened to discuss their lands and a Penn manor in the area. The following day, Penn wandered to a cave near Conedogwinit Creek and observed the stalactites dripping from its roof. He rambled out of his way along the Yellow Breeches Creek, through countryside he also termed "romantic." Then he proceeded through the woods back to the ferry, pausing to notice how local farmers had girdled many trees, which allowed them to plant corn in a formerly wooded area without "the too great trouble of cutting down every tree."



*The area around the Susquehanna was considered “wild” and “romantic” by travelers like John Penn. This engraving—called **Scene on the Susquehanna**—is by Jesper Harding and shows how Penn and his contemporaries might have visualized it. (Courtesy of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.)*

Crossing the river, he rode south to Middletown on the eastern bank of the Susquehanna. He had ample time to observe the majestic opposite bank “rising to a vast height,” its uncultivated forests stretching down to the water’s edge for many miles. He wrote in his journal that night, “The ideas of grandeur and immensity rush forcibly upon the mind, mixed with the desert wildness of an uninhabited scene.”

John Penn stayed the night at Middletown where the next day he viewed “a very fine mill” on the Swatara, belonging to a Mr. Frey. Soon after he left Middletown it began to pour. Pennsylvania’s back roads turned to mud during violent rains, and John Penn was forced to slog along roads that “proved the worst of the whole journey.” He rode through Elizabethtown and crossed the Conewago and Chickesalunga creeks before the rain finally drove him to seek refuge in a tavern. Later, he continued on to Lancaster where he found himself once again surrounded by the signs of civilization. Lancaster pleased him. He wrote, “The town itself has a far superior appearance to any I had passed thro’. The streets are regular, and the sides are paved with brick, like Philadelphia, or else stone; and separated by posts from the street.”

John Penn spent April 15th in Lancaster. He examined land in the Lancaster area including some “excellent meadow lands” which the recent heavy rain had made “perfectly green.” From Lancaster, Penn rode south toward Nottingham, Delaware. He crossed the Conestoga Creek, putting him in an area “acknowledged friendly to the new Constitution.” Nevertheless,

in conversation with those he met along the road, he found “but one for it, but two against it.” He stayed the night at the sign of the Horse and Groom in Nottingham, a town where his grandfather had granted forty acres to a Quaker meeting.

On April 17th, John Penn made his final journal entry. He roamed south through Newark and stopped at a tavern at Newport. Here he had the pleasure of eavesdropping on two “rustics” in the kitchen, both drunk and “by degrees becoming less intelligible. Each seemed perfectly apprised of the other’s [drunkenness] tho’ unconscious of his own.” Despite the tavern entertainment, he continued on to Wilmington and ended his day “agreeably, by waiting on Mrs. and Miss Vining.”<sup>16</sup>

Throughout most of the eighteenth century, people tended to prefer an ordered and cultivated landscape to an uninhabited one. Yet a new appreciation for natural beauty was forming, and the poet in John Penn admired such scenes though he described them as “wild” and “desolate.” The landowner in Penn also admired the settlers’ improvements on nature that would help ensure good prices for his own land.

John Penn’s reasons for making his trip seem clear. He wanted to gather information about Penn estates in the areas he visited; or, as he put it, he wanted to “examine at leisure my own ground.” Many of the “enchancing prospects” he observed in the back country were no doubt financial ones. Whenever he stopped to talk to other gentlemen, the conversation always turned to land and related concerns. Penn also took the time to record real estate values in his trip journal for several





*Present-day view of the sparsely inhabited Susquehanna region; it no doubt looked much the same in John Penn's day.*

different areas he visited.<sup>17</sup>

Why John Penn kept so detailed a journal of this particular trip is another matter. It may be that he was hoping to publish it. In the eighteenth century travel accounts were popular, and in the period following 1750, several notable American travel accounts were published by authors Crèvecoeur, Chastellux and Brissot de Warville. Since John Penn considered himself a writer, it's possible he was beginning to make notes for a similar account. His style is not unlike that of Chastellux, with the same emphasis on travel conditions, observations of the countryside, and descriptions of where he stayed and with whom he dined. John Penn's trip journal might have been the start of one of his literary projects.

However, Penn's trip journal ends in mid-sentence. And, less than one month after his final entry, Edmund Physick was at the wharf in Philadelphia bidding him adieu as he sailed to England, never to return. His departure was abrupt, and left Physick with a number of problems to solve. The faithful Penn officer had to find a tenant for John Penn's town house and sell his furniture and plate. Physick was also left in charge of The Solitude, and wrote John Penn, "I am puzzled to know how I shall get your deer accommodated."<sup>18</sup>

John Penn's trip journal shows that while he was contentedly traveling through Pennsylvania, he had had no definite plans to leave the state. In fact, he was obviously thinking of remaining longer in America. While staying

in Lancaster, he wrote, "I rode alone over to the Blue-rock, and spent a great part of the day in examining the grounds, not returning till dusk. The consequence of this ride was the resolution I made of keeping or purchasing near two hundred acres round a spot admirably calculated for a country-seat."<sup>19</sup>

Instead of building another mansion outside Lancaster, John Penn must have been suddenly informed that in England, commissioners had been appointed to examine the losses of loyalists during the American Revolution so they could be considered for compensation by Parliament. He quickly made plans to return, carrying papers he hoped would substantiate the Penn family's considerable claim. When his ship landed briefly in Halifax, he wrote Edmund Physick expressing his hope that he had all the papers "necessary for the cause of the proprietors and to recommend their claim."<sup>20</sup>

Upon arriving in England, John Penn took up residence in Pall Mall and met with the commissioners. To his chagrin, he discovered that his papers were "not of weight sufficient for [them]." He hastily wrote Physick for more documentation, including a copy of the Divestment Act with Pennsylvania's great seal, records of what the Penns had so far been compensated, and a tally of acreage the family had purchased from the Indians but not yet sold to settlers when the Divestment Act was passed.<sup>21</sup>

In September, 1788, he informed Edmund Physick that

the Penn memorial had been presented to the American Commission. It was subsequently presented to the House of Commons in 1789. Though the two John Penns jointly claimed the enormous sum of £944,817, Parliament awarded them a not inconsiderable total annuity of £4,000.<sup>22</sup>

John Penn never did return to America. Instead, he devoted the rest of his life to artistic, intellectual, and generally expensive pursuits. He took up the gentleman's hobby of architecture, building a fine new mansion on the Penn estate at Stoke, a new town house in London, and a residence he called Pennsylvania Castle on Portland Island in Dorsetshire. He served as a member of Parliament, and as a lieutenant colonel in the royal Bucks Yeomanry and the Portland Troop of Horse. He continued writing, but charmed neither the public nor the critics. In 1796, he published and produced a tragedy which contemporary critics promptly raked over the coals.

Penn also founded something he called "The Outinian Society" in 1817. The Society was supposed to promote marriage among the upper classes by keeping records of

the personal qualities and financial situations of marriageable ladies. The Society also branched out into other areas of what John Penn considered social reform. It met regularly at his town house, or at the country estates of its members. These members attended lectures followed by walks in the gardens, as John Penn attempted to re-create the atmosphere of a Greek philosophical academy.

It is difficult to speak of this elegant, sophisticated man-of-the-world in the same breath with his grandfather. Yet John Penn thought he was following in William Penn's footsteps, particularly in founding the Outinian Society which he believed was carrying on the "useful business of the form of humanity established by William Penn." He even put William Penn's bust on the Society's commemorative medal.<sup>23</sup>

The Outinian Society did not outlive John Penn, nor did his literary endeavors find much of an audience. But the journal he kept of his trip through central Pennsylvania does provide a vivid picture of what Penn saw and experienced during one twelve-day period in the spring of 1788, in the province his grandfather had founded.

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>John Penn's Commonplace Book. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA.

<sup>2</sup>Howard M. Jenkins, *The Family of William Penn, Founder of Pennsylvania, Ancestry and Descendants* (Philadelphia, PA: the author, 1899), pp. 145, 154-155.

<sup>3</sup>Robert L. Brunhouse, *The Counter Revolution in Pennsylvania 1776-1790* (Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1942), p. 80; William R. Shepherd, *The History of Proprietary Government in Pennsylvania* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1896), pp. 91-92.

<sup>4</sup>Jenkins, *Family of William Penn*, p. 155.

<sup>5</sup>John Penn's Commonplace Book.

<sup>6</sup>Edmund Physick to John Penn, 2 April 1782. Penn-Physick Collection, III, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA (hereafter cited as 'Penn-Physick').

<sup>7</sup>Jenkins, *Family of William Penn*, p. 155.

<sup>8</sup>William Baker to James Hamilton, 13 January 1783. Penn-Hamilton Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA (hereafter cited as 'Penn-Hamilton').

<sup>9</sup>William Baker to James Hamilton, 13 January 1783. Penn-Hamilton; Edmund Physick to Lady Juliana Penn, 12 April 1783. Penn-Physick, III.

<sup>10</sup>Shepherd, *Proprietary Government*, p. 92; Brunhouse, *Counter Revolution*, pp. 119, 140-141.

<sup>11</sup>John Penn's Commonplace Book.

<sup>12</sup>John Penn to Edmund Physick, 8 August 1788. Penn-Physick, I.

<sup>13</sup>John Penn's Commonplace Book.

<sup>14</sup>John Penn's Commonplace Book; Jenkins, *Family of William Penn*, p. 158.

<sup>15</sup>John Penn to Edmund Physick, 26 January 1787, 18 December 1787 and 26 April 1788. Penn-Physick, I.

<sup>16</sup>John Penn's Commonplace Book.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Edmund Physick to John Penn, 13 May 1788 and 30 June 1788. Penn-Physick, III.

<sup>19</sup>John Penn's Commonplace Book.

<sup>20</sup>John Penn to Edmund Physick, 27 May 1788. Penn-Physick, I; copy of American Commission Documents, Penn-Physick, I.

<sup>21</sup>John Penn to Edmund Physick, 9 July 1788, Penn-Physick, I.

<sup>22</sup>John Penn to Edmund Physick, 2 September 1788. Penn-Physick, I; Shepherd, *Proprietary Government*, p. 93; copy of American Commission Documents, Penn-Physick, I.

<sup>23</sup>Jenkins, *Family of William Penn*, pp. 160-165.

# Altes und Neues



Old and New

## REVIEWS

Karl J.R. Arndt. *George Rapp's Years of Glory: Economy on the Ohio 1834-1847*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1988. 1163pp. In German, English and French, with some translations. \$193.00.

Readers and researchers will find this to be another of Karl J.R. Arndt's carefully prepared, scholarly accounts of the Rapp Family chronicle in America. It is a volume of letters and papers which relate to the third phase of this major social and economic experiment, and which includes Rapp's personal statement of the theology and mission of the Harmony Society in six paragraphs. Many other personal letters deal with food supply, travel and the products made at Economy.

The human side of George Rapp is revealed in many ways, as are the accomplishments and frailties of this spiritual leader. Arndt the historian accomplishes this by including a variety of documents as originally written in German, French and English, some with English translations by the original author, and some by Arndt himself.

These writings show that Rapp was both open and secretive at times, evangelical and dogmatic at others. Financial success was tempered by his fear that the public might someday discover just how wealthy the Harmony Society was. The discontent of some members was chronicled in 1834, a year in which conspiracy and riot cases had to be settled before the law. There were indeed many physical and political threats against the Society (1839) which Arndt documents; as balance the editor also recognizes Gertrude Rapp's Gold Medal for her silk exhibit at New York in the same year. (The subject of silk recurred the next year when a London silk manufacturer sought employment at Economy.) Arndt also reminds us that "Rapp the Harmonist" was specifically cited by Lord Byron in his *Don Juan*. Readers of *Pennsylvania Folklife* are already familiar with Rapp and the folk culture and religious beliefs of the Harmony Society in several articles by Karl J.R. Arndt. Here now is the ultimate detailed account.

Each page reveals more about Rapp and the Society, yet details of everyday living unfold almost casually as Rapp documents succeed each other. A correspondent of Rosina Rapp's writes of the hazards of travel in 1845, when deep snow halted railway travel and necessitated horse-drawn transport to complete the journey.

Thoughtful gifts accompanied letters at times, as in 1846: "Ihr Brief, nebst Cyder habe ich richtig erhalten, wofür ich Ihnen abschläglichs meinen verbündlichsten Dank abstaden." (I received your letter and the cider with it in good condition, for which I immediately return enthusiastic thanks. —trans WTP)

Differences in spelling remind us that a spelling standard for the German language was not set until 1911. Confusions of language and law bothered claimants to the profits from the Harmony Society, particularly in 1847, the year of George Rapp's death. Unexpected tributes to the Harmony Society include a notice (page 1122) of the high quality of Society whiskey at 75 cents a barrel. Their top grade whiskey cost \$1.00 cash payment per barrel. Whiskey is not often recognized as a product of the Harmony experiment.

This is a work which imparts much information and which affords much enjoyment; every scholarly library should have a copy.

WTP

William T. Parsons. *Tramps and Peddlers*. Collegeville, PA: Chestnut Books/Keschte Bicher, 1988. 130pp.

In a work he prepared for the annual Goschenhoppen Folk Festival this year, William T. Parsons has collected numerous accounts of tramps and itinerants (*rum-laefer* in Pennsylvania German dialect) from the pages of *The Pennsylvania Dutchman* and *Pennsylvania Folklife*, which he first used as textbook material in his PGS 307: Pennsylvania German Folklife classes at Ursinus College for a decade. He has included folk culture items by Alfred L. Shoemaker, George Dunkleberger, William J. Rupp and Frances Lichten among others, but has drawn most heavily from the reminiscences of Victor C. Diefenbach, "aus'me Dumm Fattel" ("from the dumb Dutch quarter," i.e. northwest Berks County.) It is appropriate that the author planned this production to coincide with the Goschenhoppen Festival, for there one may find a local appreciation for the place of tramps and their kind in the fabric of local folk tradition. This is one of two "fun pieces" which Parsons published through Chestnut Books in the first months after his retirement from classroom teaching in Spring, 1988.

Baltser Blosballick



Clarence G. Reitnauer. *Karabet Lumba Party*, (The Carpet Rag Party) A Play in Three Acts. Huffs Church: Huffa Karrich Deitscha Leit, 1988.

Just when we thought we had seen everything, "Der Dum Olt Shdivvel Knecht" gives us a view of still another facet of his remarkable personality. Reitnauer has written over a thousand newspaper columns in the *Pennsylvaniaanisch Deitsch* dialect for the enlightenment of thousands of *Town and Country* readers from Boston to San Diego and from Alpena, Michigan, to Fort Myers, Florida. Now, as novice playwright at the age of eighty-seven, he has written the fourteenth annual Huffs Church play.

Of course it is slapstick—it is a Pennsylvania Dutch play. Still it is a reminder of bygone days when the family was close, finances were harsh but simple, and country folk in America made their own fun and provided most of their own entertainment. We don't know when the play may be performed again.

WTP

#### CONFERENCE SCHEDULED

The center for Appalachian Studies and Services at East Tennessee State University is hosting a conference entitled: "Old Time Dancing in the Appalachian Mountains." The conference will be held at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee, April 27-29, 1989.

Papers, workshops, and films will consider: Regional and cross-cultural comparisons; historical roots; social and economic influences; effect of clogging teams and festivals on current practice; relationships between traditional dance and music; and mountain dance in urban settings. Special events include the annual Home Folks Festival, and field trips to local music and dancing establishments, including the Carter Family Fold in Hiltons, Virginia.

For further information, contact: Susan Spalding, Conference Coordinator, Box 19180A, Johnson City, TN 37614-0002

#### SOUTHERN FOLKLORE TO RESUME PUBLICATION

*Southern Folklore*, continuing *Southern Folklore Quarterly* and incorporating *Kentucky Folklore Record*, will resume publication in 1989 with Camilla A. Collins as Editor. Beginning with volume 46 (1989) *Southern Folklore* will be published three times a year and will be available from The University Press of Kentucky, 663 South Limestone Street, Lexington, Kentucky 40506-0336, at \$20.00 per year (\$22.00 outside the U.S.). Direct editorial inquiries to Camilla A. Collins, Program in Folk Studies, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky 42101.

#### BOOKS AVAILABLE FROM UMI RESEARCH PRESS AT SPECIAL RATES

In July 1986, UMI Research Press offered members of the Pennsylvania Folklife Society a twenty percent discount off the retail price of two of their books in the American Material Culture and Folklife series. Since these titles are now part of their backlist, they are selling them at reduced rates—and want to let our membership know about their now *extra* special prices.

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