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SQUARE NOTCHING

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(Inside front cover)

COVER:

The so-called square notch is common in the Midland carpentry tradition which arose in colonial times in southeastern Pennsylvania and adjacent parts of New Jersey and Delaware, and which subsequently spread to most forested parts of the United States and large adjoining areas of Canada.

SQUARE NOTCHING IN THE LOG CARPENTRY TRADITION OF PENNSYLVANIA EXTENDED

by Terry G. Jordan and Jon T. Kilpinen



Fig. 1: Square notching on hewn logs, near Durant, Bryan County, Oklahoma. (Photo by T.G.J., 1981)



Fig. 2: Slavic square notching, in the village of Belá, near Žilina in western Slovakia. The narrow wooden strips conceal chinking. Square notching is common in many Slavic regions of eastern Europe. (Photo by T.G.J., 1982)

Southeastern Pennsylvania, together with adjacent parts of New Jersey and Delaware, forms the cultural hearth in which a distinctive Midland American variety of notched log carpentry arose in colonial times, derived from multiple European prototypes. Subsequently this Midland or Pennsylvanian carpentry spread to most forested parts of the United States, as well as to large adjoining areas of Canada, especially Ontario and British Columbia.¹ In this woodworking tradition, corner notching presents a highly visible and readily recognizable feature that has been categorized by folklife scholars into a small number of easily identifiable types, some of which are so distinctive as to be diagnostic not only of Midland log construction, but also of specific European source regions.² The so-called *square notch*, also referred to as “quarter” notching, “tenant” cornering, “squared lap key,” “halving,” and “lapping,” is common in the Midland carpentry tradition (Fig. 1).³

Square notching lacks the diagnosticity of certain other forms of corner timbering, both because it occurs in some non-Midland log buildings in North America and because it appears in several different parts of Europe (Figs. 2, 3). For these reasons, the origins of square notching remain uncertain and can never be conclusively established. These difficulties should not, however, prevent a consideration of the evidence concerning antecedence. In the present article, we draw upon six seasons of field research in various parts of Europe between 1978 and 1989, as well as upon our extensive observation of North American log buildings, in an attempt to address the question of origin, hopefully in the process enhancing understanding of the development of Midland carpentry and of the material folk culture of Pennsylvania Extended.

HEWN SQUARE AND HALF NOTCHING

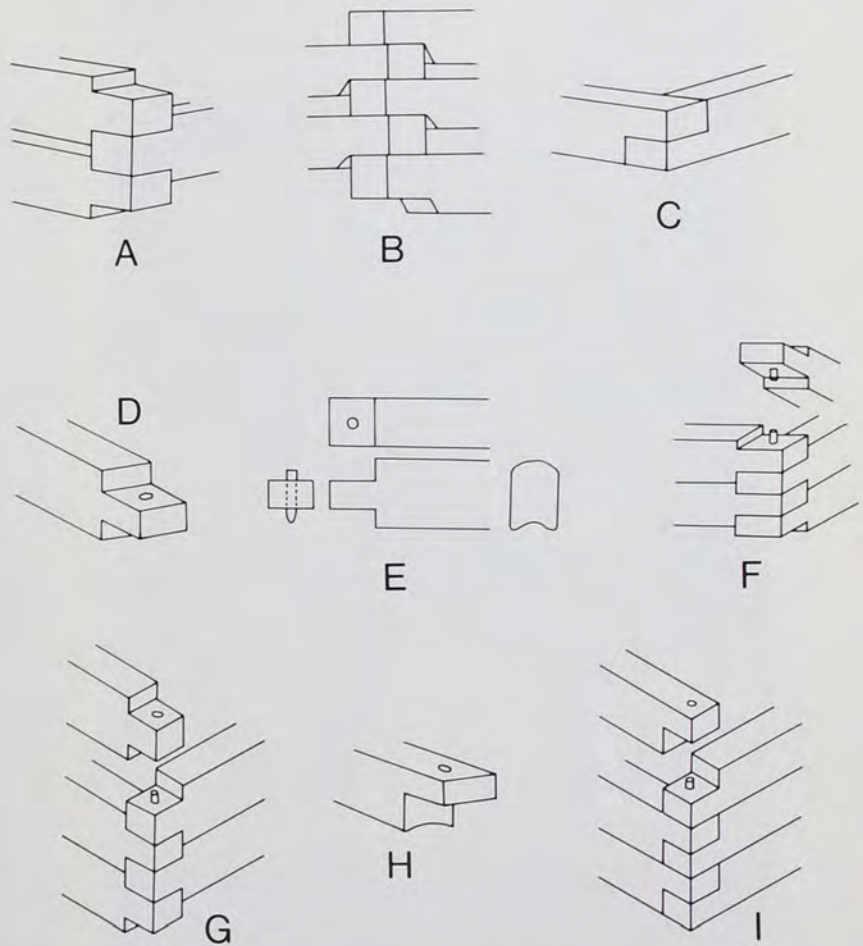
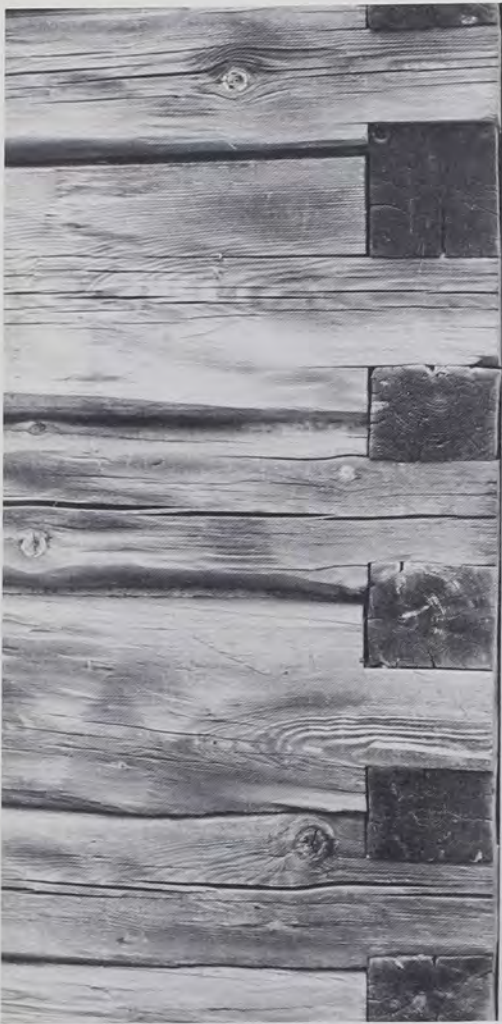


Fig. 3: Finnish square notching, in the Hankasalmi open-air museum, Hankasalmi, Keski-Suomi (Häme) province, Finland. This region of interior Finland is noteworthy as a major ancestral source of the Finns who settled on the Delaware River in the colony of New Sweden in the 1640s and 1650s. Note the chinking. (Photo by T.G.J., 1985)

DESCRIPTION AND SUBTYPES

Square notching consists solely of flat surfaces and right-angle cuts, unlike other Midland types, and can be relatively easily fashioned, using only a saw (Fig. 4). Small rectangles are removed from the top and bottom of the butt ends of each log, forming a tongue-like projection or tenon which, rather than being inserted into a mortice, rests upon the like tenons of logs in the adjacent wall. Because no crown is left on the log butt and the horizontal flat surfaces of the tenons do not form a locking joint, square notching must be drilled vertically with a brace and bit for insertion of pegs, or else rein-

Fig. 4: Sketches of square notching in Europe and North America. A = square notch, United States; B = half notch, United States; C = half notch with unstag-gered tiers of logs (false corner-timbering), United states; D = square notching, Södra Råda church, Sweden; E = square notching, Dalsland province, Sweden; F = square notching, Russia; G = square notching, Europe (place not specified); H = half notch-ing, Pelarne church, Småland, Sweden; I = half notch-ing in false corner-timbering, Europe (place not speci-fied). Sources: references cited in endnotes 2, 4, 26, and 29, by Kniffen, Kniffen and Glassie, Wasmuths Lex-ikon, Phleps, and von Schoultz. See also the Nordiska Museum Archives, Stockholm, Dalsland regional file, manuscript page entitled "Knutformer i Dalsland."

forced with iron corner ell braces. In the Rocky Moun-tains, the notch is, instead, often spiked at each log in order to prevent lateral slippage.⁴ Following conven-tion, we once labeled such uncomplicated craftsmanship as "crude" or "degenerate," but after observing square-notched structures in Europe that have stood for seven centuries, we no longer make such facile remarks (Fig. 5).⁵



Fig. 5: Medieval Swedish square notching, mixed with full-dovetailing, on the 1323 Södra Råda log church in Värmland province, Sweden. The notching is normally covered with shingles, as during my 1981 visit, but this photograph was taken during restoration work. (Photo from Boëthius, Studier, cited in endnote 29, p. 319; copy courtesy the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at The University of Texas, Austin.)

Midland American square notching occurs in several variant forms. Most elementary is the round-log variety, confined today largely to the western half of the continent and especially to the Rockies and other mountain ranges, as well as the Ozarks (Fig. 6). Closely related, but far less common, is a half-log or split-log subtype



Fig. 6: Square notching on round logs, in the Rocky Mountains of Benewah County, Idaho, a common type in the western mountain districts of North America. (Photo by T.G.J., 1987)

(Fig. 7). Overall, the most common variety is hewn-log square notching, usually on “planked” timbers six inches or so in thickness and not infrequently on milled logs (Figs. 1, 8). This more refined type, often employed on buildings covered with siding at the time of construction, is overwhelmingly dominant in the eastern half of North America. Some square-notched structures, especially in the western mountains, and occasionally even as far east as the Ozarks, Minnesota and Ontario, are hewn only toward the end of the log, with the remainder left round (Figs. 9, 10).⁶



Fig. 7: Pioneer cabin with square notching applied to split-log construction. Dating to the 1830s, this cabin is one of the oldest structures in Gonzales County, Texas. (Photo by T.G.J., 1989)



Fig. 8: Square notching on sawn logs, Fanthorp Inn, at the town of Anderson, Grimes County, Texas. The inn, built in 1834, was covered with siding at the time of construction. (Photo by John Weaver, 1985, and used by permission of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Austin.)



Fig. 9: Rocky Mountain square notching hewn only near the corners, with the greater part of each log left round. This technique, possibly an archaic Pennsylvanian frontier method now surviving only in the mountain West, has abundant northern European prototypes. The structure stands near Jackson, Beaverhead County, Montana. (Photo by J.T.K., 1989)



Fig. 10: Canadian square notching, on logs hewn only near the corners, at Black Creek Pioneer Village, Toronto, Ontario, a museum displaying the folk architecture of the northern shore of Lake Ontario. (Photo by T.G.J., 1984)



Fig. 11: Half-notching on a hewn-log house in Conway, Faulkner County, Arkansas. The half notch is best classified as a subtype of square notching. (Photo by T.G.J., 1988)

Another variant form is the so-called “half notch” or “half-lapped” joint, created by cutting a rectangle of wood from only the bottom side of the log butt or, very rarely, from only the top side, instead of from both top and bottom (Figs. 4, 11). Half notching often appears in the same wall with the square notch, “as a means of adjusting the position of particular timber,” but it also occurs throughout some entire structures.⁷ In the Midland carpentry tradition, both square and half notches are employed in such a way as to produce staggered or alternating tiers of logs in adjacent walls, but occasionally

one finds the so-called “false corner-timbering,” in which all logs lie in even tiers in a full lapped or rabbeted joint (Fig. 4).⁸ Most, but by no means all, American square notching occurs in “chink” construction, in which a crack or space is left between each of the logs, then chinked with some filler and daubed tight, covered with riven boards, or left open for ventilation (Figs. 6, 9). Others, a small minority, consist of logs carefully shaped to fit together lengthwise, eliminating the chinks (Fig. 12). All of these diverse varieties will be considered as a single type for the purposes of the present article.



Fig. 12: Chinkless, square notched wall on the John Morton house, Prospect Park, Delaware County, Pennsylvania. This room of the house, built in the middle 1700s, ties square notching to the Pennsylvania hearth area of American notched log construction and to the area and people of the colony of New Sweden. (Photo by T.G.J., 1980)



Fig. 13: Chinkless square notching in the New England garrison house carpentry tradition, alien to the Pennsylvanian culture complex. The structure, the Gilman Garrison House at Exeter, New Hampshire, allegedly dates to about 1650. Square notching was not used consistently in the building. This tradition apparently never spread westward, remaining confined largely to the Maine-New Hampshire border area. (Photo copied from Mercer, "Origin of Log Houses," see endnote 3, p. 12.)

CHRONOLOGY

Implantment of the square notch in North America occurred very early, in the colonial eastern seaboard. The oldest surviving examples, possibly dating from as early as about 1650, are found in the New England "garrison house" type of chinkless notched log construction, genetically unrelated to the Pennsylvanian tradition. A few remnants of garrison house carpentry can still be found along the Maine-New Hampshire

border (Fig. 13).⁹ In southeastern Pennsylvania, a chinkless specimen of square notching, reputedly dating from 1696 but actually a mid-eighteenth-century structure, survives in Delaware County (Fig. 12), while another, of the chinked variety and supposedly built in the early 1700s in Montgomery County, was, fortunately, photographed before its destruction about the turn of the present century.¹⁰

SQUARE - NOTCHED LOG BUILDINGS

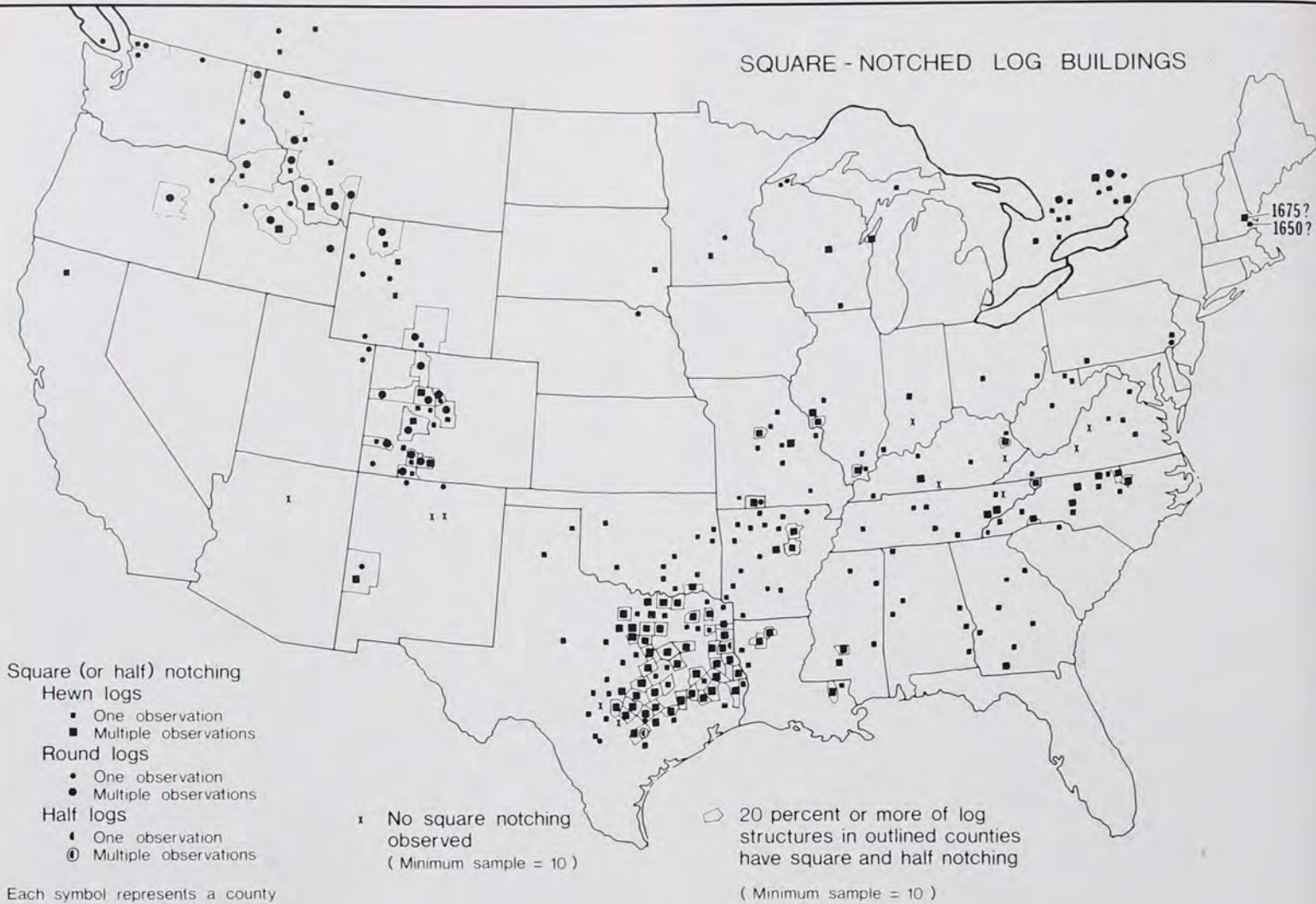


Fig. 14: Distribution of square notching in the United States and southern Canada. Carpentry hewn only at the corners is shown as round-log. Sources: primarily field research; see also the references and museums cited in endnotes 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 22, as well as Leslie Hewes, "The Geography of the Cherokee County of Oklahoma," Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1940, plate 20b; Marian Moffett and Lawrence Wodehouse, *The Cantilever Barn in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee School of Architecture, 1984); Donovan Clemson, *Living with Logs: British Columbia's Log Buildings and Rail Fences* (Saanichton, British Columbia: Hancock House, 1974), p. 26; Norman D. Weis, *Ghost Towns of the Northwest* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1971); Gwynn S. Taylor, *From Frontier to*

Factory: An Architectural History of Forsyth County (Winston-Salem: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1981), p. 23; Henry Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1975), p. 128; Carl Lounsbury, *Alamance County Architectural Heritage* (n.p.: Alamance County (North Carolina) Historical Properties Commission, 1980); Davyd F. Hood, *The Architecture of Rowan County* (Salisbury, North Carolina: Rowan County Historic Properties Commission, 1983); Albert E. Wood, ed., *Forgotten Places and Things* (Albuquerque: Center for Anthropological Studies, 1983), p. 88. Data were also kindly provided by Patricia Irvin Cooper (for Georgia), Lynn Morrow, James M. Denny, Don Brown, Joe DeRose, and Carl Jameson (for Arkansas and Missouri), and Steven Ebell (for East Texas).

These oldest examples are hewn, even though the round-log and split-log types would seem more closely tied to the early pioneer period. The western concentration of round-log square notching, almost certainly a relict distribution, strongly suggests that this simpler type was linked to the settlement frontier and formerly occurred far more abundantly in the East (Fig. 14). In Texas, some of the oldest surviving log buildings we have inspected, dating from the 1830s, display half-log square notching.¹¹ Obviously, it is incorrect to claim, as some have, that square notching characterized only a later, postpioneer period of log building.¹² Even hewn specimens often date to early settlement episodes, though the dominance of this variety in the East does imply a chronological succession of types. One hewn example of square notching in East Tennessee dates to the Cherokee occupation, and in the Ozark and Ouachita Mountains, older hewn houses are often square notched.¹³ At the same time, many examples of hewn square notching date from late in the log building era, in some cases even after the advent of sawmills, and almost all such latter-day houses were covered with siding at the time of construction (Fig. 8). We can conclude, then, that the westward diffusion of square notching from the colonial seaboard was associated with all chronological phases of log construction, from the earliest pioneer cabins to the well-crafted houses of later periods.

DIFFUSION AND DISTRIBUTION

Apparently the Yankee garrison house carpentry complex did not contribute to the diffusion of square notching in North America, failing even to gain noteworthy acceptance in New England proper beyond the Piscataqua River Valley. The square notch did not appear in the log building traditions of the highland Hispanos of New Mexico or the French Canadians and Hudson Bay Company.¹⁴ We must assume, as a result, that the far greater number of observations of square notching recorded on the map represent diffusion of Midland carpentry and testify to the influence of Pennsylvania Extended (Fig. 14).

The North American distribution is impressive, indeed. Square notching occurs from Georgia to Vancouver Island, from the Delaware Valley to Texas, on houses, barns, and smaller outbuildings alike.¹⁵ The pattern, however, is quite uneven. In some areas, square notching is very common, often more numerous than any other type. One concentration lies in the inner coastal plain of the South, from the Potomac River to Texas, spilling over into parts of the adjacent Virginia Piedmont. In Alabama and Mississippi together, square notching accounts for 26 percent of all field observations and in Texas for 22 percent of a sample of 698.¹⁶ A second major cluster lies in the mountain West, es-

pecially the Rockies, where, for example, 47 percent of 70 buildings we observed in Gunnison County, Colorado, is square notched, as is true of 45 percent of a sample of 110 in Beaverhead County, Montana; 35 percent of 55 in Custer County, Idaho; 26 percent of 58 in Carbon County, Wyoming; and 35 percent of 23 in Grant County, Oregon.¹⁷

By contrast, in the southern Appalachians and the huge Ohio River drainage basin, square notching is far less common. Already in the Carolina Piedmont the percentage drops to 14, and within the Appalachians proper, the square notch becomes rare. In Tennessee only one out of 146 surviving log houses in Grainger County is square notched, as compared to 10 percent of sizable samples in nearby Blount, 6 percent in Sevier, and 3 percent in Coffee Counties. Not a single specimen was found in Hamblen County, Tennessee, or among 64 log buildings of all types in a remote part of Knott County, Kentucky. In Ohio the notch is uncommon, and in southern Indiana it appears on less than 3 percent of log dwellings.¹⁸

Nearer to the Mississippi River, in Illinois, observations of square notching increase substantially. It is reputedly the most common form of corner timbering in the Shawnee Hills of far southern Illinois, and in Jersey County, on the western border of the state, it rivals half-dovetailing for dominance with 25 percent of the total. West of the Mississippi, square notching becomes common in the Ozark and Ouachita Mountains, excluding the Courtois Hills of Missouri, occurring both in hewn and round-log forms. On the eastern edge of the Ozarks, in Independence County, Arkansas, square notching is by far the most common type on log houses, while in adjacent White County it accounts for fully three-fifths of all dwellings, according to a comprehensive survey.¹⁹ The square notch is supposedly also common among settlers of New England ancestry in the upper Midwest, especially in Michigan and Wisconsin. These Yankees did not introduce garrison house carpentry, but instead had adopted Midland techniques during a brief pioneer interlude during which they employed notched log construction.²⁰

Square notching, then, occurs most commonly around the peripheries of the great stronghold of Midland log construction in the Upland South. Noting this pattern, Fred Kniffen and Henry Glassie suggested that, as an easier-to-fashion form, it represented the deterioration in quality and craftsmanship that normally occurs toward the geographical margins of occurrence of any item of material culture.²¹ Others have sought to link square notching to particular kinds of wood, noting that it appeared more commonly in pine and fir forests and implying that folk carpenters knew how to fashion a variety of notches, choosing among them partly on the basis of wood type. Nationwide, one does indeed find a weak correlation between square notching and the soft-

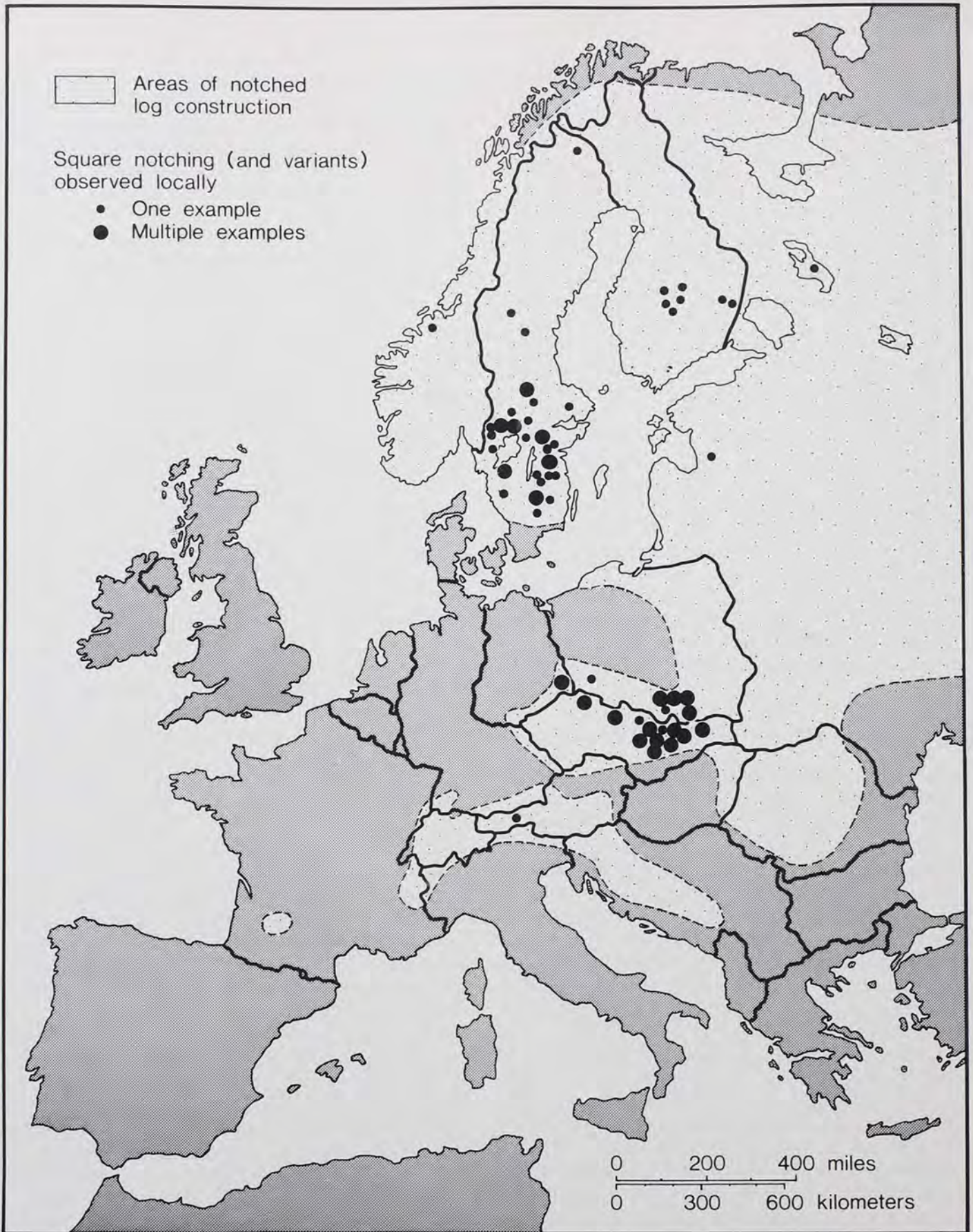


Fig. 15: Distribution of square (and half) notching in Europe. Only buildings in which square and/or half notching were the dominant type employed are included. "Locally" means at the level of the county or

commune. Sources: primarily field research carried out in 1978, 1981, 1982, 1985, and 1989. See also the references and museums cited in endnotes 27, 28, and 29.

woods. The Piney Woods of the South constitute one of the major concentrations of square notching, and a Cyclopean version of the notch appears in the fir forests of the Cascade Mountains of Washington. In Texas, square notching occurs more commonly than half-dovetailing on pine houses and 12 times as frequently as V notching, while on oaken dwellings the half-dovetail notch appears twice as often as the square type and V corner timbering is about equal in number to square notching.²² Others reject out of hand any correlation between notch selection and wood type.²³

THE QUESTION OF ORIGIN

In spite of the antiquity of square notching in the Atlantic colonial seaboard, most influential students of folk architecture have interpreted it as an Americanism. Glassie suggested that the notch type first appeared among English settlers in the central Virginia Piedmont as a degeneration of the V notch. British carpenters, minimally skilled in corner timbering techniques, supposedly developed this simplified form through ineptitude. Glassie, with Kniffen, also proposed that a second, independent such degeneration, from the half-dovetail notch, yielded the square notching of southwestern Appalachia, and they implied that a similar, third process among westward-migrating New Englanders produced the square notching of the upper Midwest. We once accepted this explanation, writing of “uninitiated culture groups” such as the English making a “fumbling effort to copy an alien technology” and even sketching the presumed degenerative process.²⁴ Triple, or even single, independent invention now seems to us unlikely. Diffusion, we believe, can more plausibly explain the distribution, and we are more attracted to scenarios such as the one proposed by John Morgan that a westward spread from the Carolina Piedmont brought square notching into southern Appalachia.²⁵

In fact, seasons of field research in Europe convinced us that the square notch was introduced from the Old World and that an American degenerative process among British settlers never occurred at all. The square notch occurs in all three log construction zones of Europe that sent noteworthy numbers of settlers to colonial America: (1) German-speaking sections of the Alps in Switzerland and Austria; (2) the Slavic/German borderland in Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, and Saxony; and (3) central Sweden (Fig. 15). Most of the American variant forms are also present in these European source areas, including the half notch and pegging at the joints (Fig. 4).²⁶

German-Swiss, though representing the largest contingent of colonial immigrants familiar with notched log carpentry, seem unlikely agents of diffusion, as do the Salzburg Protestants from Austria. The square notch is extremely rare in the Alps (Fig. 16). I observed only six



Fig. 16: Square notching on a barn near Kuhtai in the Sellrain Valley, North Tirol, Austria. This is the only structure observed in the entire Alpine mountain chain that displayed square notching throughout. (Photo by T.G.J., 1978)

examples in the field, among about 1,500 structures, including none in the Salzburg source area and only three in the contributing German-Swiss cantons. Only one of the six Alpine structures revealed consistent use of square notching throughout the building, and it lay in Tirol, outside the emigrant source areas (Fig. 16). The others all had only one or several square-notched joints in walls dominated by other notch types. Furthermore, I have found no Pennsylvania log structures attributed to Alpine Germans that contain square notching.²⁷

In the Slavic/German borderland, original home of Pennsylvania's Moravian Brethren and Schwenkfelders, square notching is much more common than in the Alps. The distribution within the region, however, is quite uneven, and square notching is confined largely to the traditionally more purely Slavic districts, above all



Fig. 17: Chinked, square-notched building in the town of Zakopane, Galicia province, Poland. Square notching is common in this Slavic area. (Photo by T.G.J., 1982)



Fig. 18: Square notching, mixed with half notching, on the chinkless wall of the Chabowka church, near Rabka, south of Krakow, in Poland. The church dates from 1757. (Photo by T.G.J., 1982)

Slovakia, Moravian Valachia, and Polish Galicia (Figs. 2, 17, 18). No square notching was found in the small Schwenkfelder source area between Lwówek Śląski and Złotoryja in Silesia, and very few examples occur in the ancestral villages of the Brethren in Moravia and Bohemia. Upper Lausitz, the East German district containing the refuge settlements of Herrnhut and Berthelsdorf, where the Brethren and Schwenkfelders gathered immediately before migrating to America, contains ex-

amples of both square and half-notching. Neither refuge village has any specimens, however, and there is no evidence that carpenters belonging to these two sects ever employed this type of corner timbering. Not a single surviving log structure in North America attributed to either the Brethren or the Schwenkfelders is square notched.²⁸ The Slavic/German borderland is, for these reasons, an unlikely source of Midland American square notching.



Fig. 19: Square-notched cowshed (*ladugård*) in *Voxtorp* open-air museum, near *Värnamo* in *Småland* province, Sweden. Built in the first half of the nineteenth century, the shed is typical of many in the area. (Photo by T.G.J., 1989)



Fig. 20: Half-notched storage shed, built in the 1700s, at *Voxtorp* open-air museum, *Småland* province, Sweden. (Photo by T.G.J., 1989)

In the provinces of central Sweden, which contributed the large majority of the Swedes and ethnic Finns who settled the colony of New Sweden on the lower Delaware River in the middle seventeenth century, square notching and its related variants are both common and of great antiquity. Indeed, the type appears widely through northern Europe, including those parts of Finland that had earlier, in the 1500s, sent ancestors of Delaware settlers to central Sweden (Figs. 4, 14). The

northern European square and half notches are known collectively in Swedish as the *bladknut*—literally, “leaf notch”—or *knuting på halvt timmer*—“halved-log notching.” Joints normally reveal drilling and pegging, as in America. All specimens of square and half-notching we found were hewn (Figs. 3, 19, 20), but round-log construction and hewing only at the corners occur widely and consistently in the Baltic lands in association with other notch types.²⁹



Fig. 21: An obvious instance of vertical double notching sawed off to form square notching, here done so ineptly that abundant evidence of the alteration survives. The building, from the Swedish city of Östersund in Jämtland province, now stands in the Jamtli open-air museum in the suburbs of that city. (Photo by T.G.J., 1985)

Ethnically, the northern European square notch seems most closely linked to Swedes, although it does occur among Finns (Fig. 3). Perhaps the oldest surviving square-notched structure, dating from 1323, is the Södra Råda church in southeastern Värmland province, Sweden (Fig. 5), although the log church at Tidarsrum in Östergötland, built in 1283, reputedly has the same notch. Another medieval log church, at Pelarne in northeastern Småland province, possibly dating to the year 1250, provides the earliest specimen of the related half notch. We visited all three of these structures, in 1981 and 1989, only to find the corner timbering fully hidden by a sheath of wall shingling. In fact, most *bladknut* corners in Sweden are concealed beneath some sort of siding. Usually vertical boards are nailed over only the corners, covering the notching and leaving the logs exposed elsewhere. Innumerable barns and other outbuildings in central Sweden have square or half notching concealed in this manner.³⁰

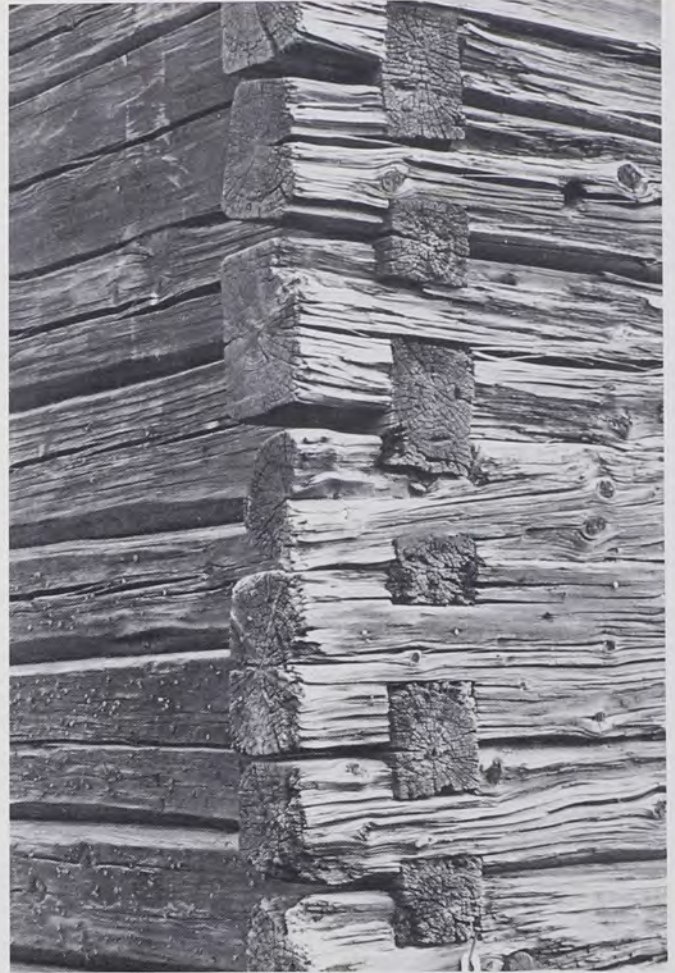


Fig. 22: The transition from vertical double notching to square notching suggested on a log outbuilding in Värmland province, Sweden. The structure stands in the Ransäter open-air museum. (Photo by T.G.J., 1981)

Karl-Olov Arnstberg, an ethnographer with the Nordiska Museum in Stockholm, implied that the square notch was less common in central Sweden in the 1600s, having achieved part of its present widespread distribution in the nineteenth and even early twentieth centuries (Fig. 19). Be that as it may, the fact is that both square and half notching have been present for at least 700 years in Swedish source areas of the Delaware Valley colonists.³¹

The typical insertion of pegs or dowels to secure the Swedish square notch, as at Södra Råda church, leaves no doubt that the logs never had a projecting crown, which would have produced the locking joint called a *vertical double notch*, one of the most common Swedish and Finnish types. Even so, the northern European square notch probably evolved from the vertical double type, particularly for use on buildings covered with siding at the time of construction, another parallel to American practice. By removing the projecting crowns



Fig. 23: Mixture of square and vertical double notching, hewn only at the joint, in the Grand Encampment open-air museum, Carbon County, Wyoming Rockies. This combination strongly suggests a genetic link between the two notch types within the Midland American carpentry tradition. Compare it to Fig. 22. (Photo by J.T.K., 1989)

of the vertical double notch, carpenters could produce a smooth corner easily covered with siding. Some Swedish square notching even bears saw scars and other evidence that the log crowns were sawn off at a later time to accommodate siding (Fig. 21). In Sweden, as well as in the Slavic/German borderland and the Alps, square notching occurs in geographical juxtaposition with vertical double notching, often on the same buildings. At Södra Råda church and elsewhere in central Sweden, some corners are square notched and others have crowned vertical double notching on one face, with sawn-off square notching on the contiguous wall (Fig. 22). An identical combination occurs on certain Midland American structures in West Virginia and Wyoming (Fig. 23). Clearly, square and vertical double notching are genetically related. Indeed, we suggest that the vertical double notching seen occasionally in the Anglo gentile American West is simply an archaic, crowned version of Midland square notching, representing a type that has



Fig. 24: Vertical double notching dating from about 1850 on the Campbell log house, 211 East Liveoak Street, Seguin, Guadalupe County, Texas. Note the thinness of the crowning. The Pennsylvania/Midland heritage of this dwelling is abundantly revealed in its "dogtrot" double-pen plan, chinking, two-sided planking of the logs, and score-marked ax/adze hewing. This structure attains importance as one "missing link" between the vertical double notching of the western mountain regions and the Pennsylvania hearth of Midland construction. Its presence strongly suggests that vertical double notching belongs in the Pennsylvania log carpentry tradition as an archaic type, now vanished from the East, and that square notching is genetically related to vertical double notching in Anglo-America, as in Europe. (Photo by T.G.J., 1989)

vanished from the eastern states, where it once also existed. Examples of Anglo-American vertical double notching, in areal juxtaposition with the square notch, occur in Texas as well as the Ozark and Rocky Mountains (Figs. 24, 25, 26). In dominantly Anglo-American Gunnison County, Colorado, for example, vertical double notching accounted for 7 percent of a large sample of corner timbering we observed, and in adjacent Hinsdale County one of the four Lake City buildings inspected was double notched. In Siskiyou County, northern California, round-log vertical double notching accounted for 20 percent of all specimens recorded. This Anglo-American double notching of the Mountain West seems unlikely to have been derived from similar timbering techniques used by highland Hispanos in New Mexico and Scandinavians in Utah, since such typically Midland carpentry features as chinking and ax/adze hewing are missing in those traditions but present in the Anglo-American structures.³²



Fig. 25: This highly significant structure, a barn standing alongside highway 76 at its junction with road VV in Taney County, Missouri Ozarks, displays throughout a mixture of crowned vertical double notching (arrows) and square notching. It further combines round-log, hewn-log, and hewn-only-near-the-corners shaping. Locationally, it represents a giant stride eastward from the Mountain West towards the Pennsylvania hearth of Midland carpentry, in a purely upland southern cultural context. It, together with a sprinkling of similar Midland structures in the East, convinces us that all of these are archaic features belonging in the Pennsylvania log carpentry tradition. (Photo by J.T.K., 1989)

The abundant survival of a Scandinavian-like crowned V-notch in the West, almost certainly representing an ancestral Midland type now gone from the East, provides a striking parallel to the square/vertical



Fig. 26: Vertical double notching, Lake City, Hinsdale County, Colorado. Such notching, we feel, once co-existed with the square notch in the eastern United States, as part of the Pennsylvania carpentry tradition, and its presence in the Anglo Rockies, in our view, represents an archaic survival of a frontier type. The Anglo-American/Midland cultural context of this structure is revealed by the score marks left from typical Pennsylvania ax-and-adze hewing and by the chinked construction. (Photo by T.G.J., 1987)

double notch pattern. We would be foolish not to consider the possibility that older notching forms, linked to the pioneer stage of Midland carpentry and no longer occurring east of the Mississippi, survive in Texas, in the Ozarks, and in western mountain refuges. That would help explain the curious absence of vertical double

notching in the eastern Midland culture area in the United States—curious because this notch is such a common type in the Alpine, Silesian, Saxon, and Scandinavian sources of colonial American log builders. The Salzburg Protestants did successfully implant vertical double notching in coastal Georgia, an introduction which conceivably could have contributed to the eventual importance of the square notch on the southern coastal plain. Dare we suggest that not all Midland carpentry techniques derive from Pennsylvania?³³

Northern European square notching may also have evolved from full-dovetailing. Not infrequently in central and southern Sweden, square notching and gently-splayed full-dovetailing appear on the same structure, implying a genetic link (Fig. 5).³⁴

As in America, then, square notching is geographically a peripheral type in Europe, most abundantly present in the northern and eastern sections of the zone of log construction. It represents a Slavic, Scandinavian, and Baltic type, rather than German.³⁵ The most plausible explanation for the presence of square notching in the carpentry of Pennsylvania Extended is to attribute it to ethnic Swedish settlers of the colony of New Sweden on the Delaware. Previously, diamond and V notching, two other Midland American types, were linked to origin in central Sweden, and while the case for northern European origin of square notching necessarily remains more circumstantial, both morphology and chronology argue for a Swedish connection.³⁶

Supporting evidence for this conclusion is provided by the well-known John Morton house at Prospect Park, Pennsylvania, which contains a chinkless, planked, square-notched room reputedly built in 1696 (but in fact of mid-1700s origin) and linked ancestrally to the New Sweden colony (Fig. 12).³⁷ While this family reputedly came from Vaasa, in Finland, they may well have been ethnic Swedes, and in any case the coastal fringe of Finland, where Vaasa is situated, is much Swedified in its material folk culture.

Present in Pennsylvania log carpentry from the seventeenth century, probably as a minor type initially, square notching was part of the wood-working repertoire available to neophytes adopting the Midland techniques and would, because of its relative simplicity, have appealed to new adopters. Rather than developing as a degenerate form among the Virginia English or upper Midwestern Yankees, it simply achieved greater prominence among them and other uninitiated pioneers who sought an uncomplicated notch and chose accordingly from what was already available.

We leave unresolved the antecedence of square notching in the New England garrison house complex. Perhaps mercenary soldier-engineers hold the explanation, part of a British military frontier tradition of blockhouse building that drew upon a continental European background. Indeed, the very word "blockhouse"

is German. In any case, the failure of colonial New England log construction to achieve a noteworthy diffusion renders the issue of antecedence less consequential.

The often proclaimed Germanist position that Midland American log carpentry is preponderantly of Teutonic origin finds virtually no support from our analysis of square notching. As we have urged before, let us at last acknowledge a growing, overwhelming body of evidence that points to central Sweden as the source of many if not most elements of Midland American log carpentry, to northern Europe as an important contributor to the material folk culture of Pennsylvania Extended.

ENDNOTES

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⁴Fred B. Kniffen and Henry Glassie, "Building in Wood in the Eastern United States: A Time-Place Perspective," *Geographical Review*, 56 (1966), pp. 55-56; Mercer, "Origin of Log Houses," p. 11; Kniffen, "On Corner Timbering," pp. 3, 5. For an excellent example of spiking, see the Stringham Cabin, a preservation exhibit in Ashley National Forest, Daggett County, Utah.

⁵Jordan, *Texas Log Buildings*, pp. 65, 68; Kniffen and Glassie, "Building in Wood," p. 64.

⁶Kniffen, "On Corner Timbering," p. 5; Kniffen and Glassie, "Building in Wood," p. 56; Sultz, "Architectural Values," pp. 35, 37; Paul W. Klammer, "Collecting Log Cabins: A Photographer's Hobby," *Minnesota History*, 37 (1960), p. 73; exhibits at the Gonzales Pioneer Village Living History Center in Gonzales, Texas, at the Cody Old Town Open-Air Museum, Cody, Wyoming, and at the Black Creek Pioneer Village, Toronto, Ontario.

⁷Donald A. Hutslar, *The Log Architecture of Ohio* (Columbus: Ohio Historical Society, 1977), pp. 70-71; Hutslar, *Architecture of Migration*, p. 224; Kniffen, "On Corner Timbering," p. 5; Kniffen and Glassie, "Building in Wood," p. 57.

⁸Kniffen and Glassie, "Building in Wood," pp. 49, 52. A good example of lap-jointed false corner-timbering is the Petch log house, ca. 1810, in Whitechurch Township, York County, Ontario.

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¹⁰Morton House Museum, Prospect Park, Pennsylvania; Mercer, "Origin of Log Houses," pp. 16, 18; Jordan, *American Log Buildings*, pp. 50, 56.

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²¹Kniffen, "On Corner Timbering," p. 3; Kniffen and Glassie, "Building in Wood," p. 64.

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²³Newton and Pulliam-Di Napoli, "Log Houses as Public Oc-

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²⁶Hermann Phleps, *Holzbaukunst: Der Blockbau* (Karlsruhe: Fachblattverlag Dr. Albert Bruder, 1942), p. 59; "Blockwand," *Wasmuths Lexikon der Baukunst* (Berlin: Verlag Ernst Wasmuth, 1929), Vol. 1, p. 553, fig. 7; Jordan, *American Log Buildings*, pp. 52, 93, 133, 147.

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³⁰Boëthius, *Studier*, p. 319; see also photo No. 3536:36 in the archives of the Finnish National Museum, Helsinki. Good examples where loose or damaged corner boards permit a view of the concealed square and half notching can be seen at the local open-air museums in Vånga and Regna, both in northern Östergötland, Sweden.

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LETTERS FROM HOME TO A WANDERING FARM BOY

by Robert P. Stevenson

*Edwin Stevenson
during his time in the U.S. Navy.*



The letters began soon after Edwin Ellis Stevenson took a morning train to Pittsburgh in early 1919 to enlist in the U.S. Navy. A farm boy from New Geneva, Pennsylvania, he had planned this since he turned eighteen nearly a year before — on March 18, 1918. His enlistment was both an act of rebellion and patriotism. He knew his parents were opposed. But as he later told me (his younger brother) he always would have regretted having no part in the war.

From the time he began his naval training in Newport, Rhode Island until he came home for good about ten years later, a stream of letters reached him from those at home — his mother, his brothers, Will and Robert, and his sisters, Bessie, Priscilla, and Ruth. His father, Al Stevenson, seldom wrote letters to anyone.

Obviously, Edwin treasured the letters. When he died in 1975 at the age of 75, the three-inch-thick packet of letters came to me. Only homely matters are related in them — events of no particular consequence even when first written. But from them, perhaps I can give an idea of what one family's life was like just after World War I on a hundred-acre farm along the Monongahela River a mile north of the village of New Geneva in Fayette County, Pennsylvania.

The first letters reached Edwin while he was training in Rhode Island. From there he went to sea on the U.S.S. Texas. While the battleship was en route to the Panama Canal, the Armistice was signed on November 11, 1919, and World War I came to an end.

But before going to sea for the first time, Edwin had



Stevenson brothers and sisters line up for a family photo in 1930. From left to right, Edwin Ellis Stevenson, Ruth Stevenson Morris, William Stevenson, Bessie Stevenson Robertson, Priscilla Stevenson Lockard, and Robert P. Stevenson. The youngsters in foreground are Jimmy and Shirley Stevenson, children of William Stevenson. Except for the children, Robert P. is the only one still living.

come home on furlough, stopping off in New York City to have a photo taken. When he showed up at home, resplendent in his new uniform, we were all proud of him and gave him a tearful sendoff when his leave was up. All of us were proud of him, that is, except perhaps for our father — and now, years later, I suspect that, secretly, he was, too. However, Al Stevenson was a man who did not forgive or forget easily.

In fact, his first reaction to Edwin's enlistment was to schedule a farm auction. His reason: with his eldest son gone, much of the farm machinery and many of the animals would no longer be needed. Some details of the auction are found in a letter I wrote to Edwin on March 15, 1919. A neighboring farmer "bought nearly everything," I told him, "and if it hadn't been for him there wouldn't have been much of a sale." My letter continued "this morning, Charlie Williams (then the spare-time barber in New Geneva) came for two colts he had bought — and the pony jumped the fence and started to follow them home." My brother Willie and I went after the pony "and I rode it home."

The auction also provided home news in letters from sisters Bessie and Priscilla. The latter observed that "there was a large crowd" but "no women." Animals sold, she said, included sixteen sheep taken by a neighboring farmer while another neighbor had bought two ewes and two lambs.

Bessie, then teaching school, said most of the crowd had gone before she arrived home. She said everyone felt the sheep had sold too cheaply at "only \$6 a head." An old buggy brought just \$2 and a spare work horse named Don went for \$86. Bessie added: "I don't think anything brought what it should. The total sale amounted to \$696.31."

After reaching the Pacific Coast, young Edwin

Stevenson was assigned to a naval electrical school in San Pedro, California. Completing a course there, he shipped out to Honolulu where he was posted to the submarine U.S.S. U-14. He remained on this vessel throughout the rest of his enlistment, making many training voyages on it.

When Edwin went off to the Navy, our family was still intact. He and Bessie, a year older than he, had recently completed high school in Mapletown across the Monongahela in Greene County. In order of age, next came Will (or Willie as we usually called him), a year or so younger than Edwin. Willie had finished grade school and had gone for half a year to German Township High School in McClellandtown, Pa., before dropping out. After him came Robert (that is, me), some two years younger, followed by Priscilla and Ruth. We three youngest were still attending the one room Pleasant Hill School.

Bessie was teaching at the Martin School about a mile distant. She wrote Edwin that John S. Carroll, the Fayette County Superintendent of Schools, had visited her classroom. He was a man whose smiling face we all knew from his regular visits to Pleasant Hill School. Mr. Carroll had told her, Bessie wrote, that she should take "the professional examination" as a teacher "so I am going to review physical geography and literature. I expect I can fail — if nothing else." In those days, any high school graduate could qualify as a beginning teacher, as Bessie had.

At this time in his life, our father, Al Stevenson, had a financial and business interest in The People's Bank of Greensboro. This bank was then operating in the town across the river where he had been born and grew to manhood. Bessie reported that he had just been elected to the bank committee. A year or so later he became vice

Edwin Stevenson standing beside the Republic truck in which he hauled soft coal from the Stevenson Coal Company mine to railroad cars at the coal village of Martin, Pa., a mile and a half away. He was working at this job just before enlisting; he was eighteen.



president and finally president of the bank.

When Bessie next wrote, on June 10, 1920, tragedy had struck. She wrote from Mercy Hospital, Pittsburgh, where she was suffering from what was still an undiagnosed ailment. Physicians eventually pinpointed it as tuberculosis of the bone. This settled in the little finger of her left hand and the finger was amputated. But the incision never healed. Her hand remained bandaged throughout her long life, which ended on June 11, 1979 at the age of 82.

But on June 20, 1920, this was still far in the future and Bessie wrote that the Nicholson Township school directors “were awfully good to me. They gave me Martin School again and I didn’t even send in an application.” However, she never recovered sufficiently to return to teaching.

During his years in the Navy, Edwin learned a craft that employs cord of different colors as the basic material, something like macrame. One of his first projects was a belt for me. Edwin offered to make Bessie a handbag in the same way. She answered that she would like this very much, adding that “Robert thinks an awful lot of his belt.”

In a letter to Mother on April 12, 1921, from San Pedro, California, Edwin began like this:

“Ready, aim, fire — bang! bang! bang! — and then taps. We were laying a fellow out, fore and aft today — in other words I was at a funeral this afternoon. He was an ensign who had been killed in an airplane crash. He lived in Los Angeles. A whole company and the band went there on busses.”

Mother wound up the final hours of 1921 by writing to Edwin. Everyone in the family was enjoying the apples stored in the cellar, she wrote. These came from a two-acre orchard on the hillside above the farmhouse.

Some were eaten out of hand. Some went into delicious pies, and applesauce was served at every meal. “There is no sale for them,” Mother wrote, “so we will have to eat them all.”

In 1922, letters to Edwin were being addressed to the Submarine Base, U.S.S. R-14, Honolulu, T.H. Mother wrote in mid-December that a coal train had wrecked on the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie tracks along the Monongahela just below the Stevenson farm. “No one was hurt,” she noted, “but 26 cars of coal were smashed and it took two days to clean up.” Then she added:

“Will went off with a State Cop this afternoon” — a statement which at first sounds like an arrest. But not so. In 1922, the Pennsylvania State Constabulary was still mounted on horses. One of a detail assigned to New Geneva had asked Bill to take him to Masontown because his horse was sick.

In the same letter, Mother wrote that her new set of false teeth were giving her “lots of trouble but maybe they will be all right some day. Your father is having three gold ones put in.” Lindsay Dils would be coming the next week to “butcher for us. We have five to kill this time.” Lindsay was our uncle, the husband of Mother’s youngest sister, Lida. For Christmas, Mother told Edwin, “Priscilla is sending you a box of candy of her own make.”

A letter Priscilla wrote a few days later may have accompanied the candy. After observing that “we are going to have a Christmas tree this year,” Priscilla told her brother that a new chicken house was being built and that when that was completed a new garage also had been planned. Previously, the cars had been kept in an old carriage house.

Writing on New Year’s Eve, December 31, 1922, Mother was aware that Edwin’s enlistment was drawing

to a close. "I hope," she wrote, "I won't be sending any more letters out there to Honolulu. I have been so afraid that those 'higher up' you speak of would get you to re-enlist. You should be coming home where you belong."

Edwin did come home in early 1923, but not for long. After a brief stay, he headed for East Pittsburgh and was promptly hired by the Westinghouse Electric Company. After a time there he had enough money to buy a Model T Ford roadster. In this, he took off for another job at a steel mill in Steubenville, Ohio.

On February 23, 1923, Mother was addressing him there in one of her late night letters. A bad ice storm had just hit the New Geneva area, she wrote. The storm had lasted two days and heavy ice felled telephone and power lines. Robert and Priscilla had missed two days of high school because the storm had knocked out the West Penn trolleys on which they rode the dozen miles to McClellandtown.

Writing again on March 18, Mother penned "I guess you know what day this is." It was his 23rd birthday.

In the early 1920s, radio was just becoming important for news and entertainment. Soon after Edwin returned from the Navy, he and I drove to Uniontown and brought home a set. Our home had been wired for electricity about this time. The radio we chose was a Federal, an outfit with both a horn (or speaker) and a headset. As I remember, we paid \$100 for the set and a man from the store came out to put up an aerial, stretching from the house to a pole especially put up for it.

During evenings thereafter, the entire family might gather around to hear news and music. But when the others had gone to bed, I blocked out the speaker, donned the headset, and began tuning across the dial in search of new and distant stations. I told Edwin about this in a letter dated February 3, 1924. Eventually I was able to list forty-five stations. But the supreme prize always eluded me — to bring in a station in either Los Angeles or San Francisco. Our Federal would just not reach that far. Denver was my westward limit. Stations in Chicago, St. Louis, Montreal, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Ottawa, Philadelphia, New York, and Havana, Cuba, were regulars.

When I tuned in a new station, I addressed a postcard to it. Almost always these were acknowledged, usually with a card, sometimes by letter. On one occasion, a box of candy arrived, addressed to me but without a letter. I finally decided it may have come from a station in Davenport, Iowa. But I never found out why. Perhaps the candy was some sort of prize.

In Ohio, Edwin remained restless. Before long he came home again. Then, leaving his Model T behind in Bill's hands, he took a train back to California. In the next few years, he worked at a succession of jobs in that state, in Oregon, and in South Dakota.

Edwin was in Los Angeles when brother Bill wrote to

him on November 25, 1923. Bill said he had recently taken a load of apples to the mill and came home with a barrel and two-thirds of cider. In the Stevenson household, the cider was used in three ways. We drank some of it fresh. Mother used large quantities as the basis for apple butter which she canned for use as a delicious spread during the fall and winter. And some of the cider was allowed to turn to vinegar, which she also used in cooking. We never made "hard" cider as some of our neighbors did.

Bill also told of hauling in the field corn, a wagon load and a half going into the crib at one end of the barn. Two more small loads were dumped on the floor of the barn where the grain was readily available for feeding the animals. Each year, a bushel or so of field corn also was taken to the mill for grinding into meal, the main ingredient for breakfast corn cakes during the winter.

Edwin was still in the Los Angeles area when Mother wrote on January 14, 1924 that the annual hog butchering had been completed the week before. On February 6, she began another like this: "Well, I wonder where my wandering boy is tonight? We have not heard from him for a long time, it seems to me." Willie, she said, was "having all kinds of trouble filling in the blanks for his driver's license." She observed that it then cost a dollar to renew a license, as Will was doing, and \$2.50 for the first one. "Dad is getting a license and will learn to drive this summer," she added.

I recall Dad's first learning episode very well. Without instruction of any kind, he got behind the wheel of our Ford touring car and set out. Very quickly he took off the gate to the large yard between the house and barn. That was the end of his attempt to drive a car. Almost always thereafter, so long as I remained at home, I served as his pilot when he wanted to go somewhere. This began even before I had a license to drive — while I was still only twelve or thirteen years old.

Our youngest sister Ruth reported to Edwin on January 25, 1924, that "Willie has a cold and it is the funniest thing to see him doctoring himself. Last night he sent Robert to town for some VapoRub and lemons. This evening he was sitting in front of the fire (we then had a soft-coal fire in a grate in the dining room) with a spoon of melted VapoRub in his hand. First, he would put the stuff close to the fire to get it hot. Then he would put it up to his nose, draw in his breath, and go zzzzzzz! I laughed until Mama made me stop because Willie was cussing a streak. Next he had some hot lemonade. And finally, he took some salts. When I came home from school today, he was wrapped up on the couch, going oererer uhhhood, etc. He is now very well except for when I tease him. Then he cusses and says 'you haven't got no sense is all that's the matter with you!'"

In a letter sent along with Ruth's, Mother said Bessie had been staying in New Salem at the home of Uncle

Will, Dad's younger brother. "We are having lots of music," Mother added. "Priscilla is taking piano lessons on the organ. Robert has a violin. Ruth has learned to play a hymn all by herself. When the radio is on, too, they make lots of noise."

The organ Mother mentioned was an old-fashioned foot-pedal instrument. She herself played it quite well. Priscilla became reasonably proficient. I never did master the violin. But, all by myself, I learned to play a harmonica (or mouth organ) quite well.

Bessie, who by then was active again, wrote on February 3, 1924, that her Sunday School class was giving the play, "Aunt Dinah's Quilting Party" and that she would be going to practice on Friday evening. She continued: "Ex-President Wilson died today at 11:15 a.m. and we got the word at 11:35 a.m. — just twenty minutes later. It was announced by one of the preachers in Pittsburgh." Throughout her life, Bessie listened to sermons via radio.

In a letter in late March 1925, Mother referred to what had been a big event in Dad's life. Always an ardent Republican, Al Stevenson had long wanted to see a Republican President take the oath of office. Finally he had done so. In company with Gideon Huhn, of New Geneva, he had gone to Washington, D.C., by train and watched Calvin Coolidge being sworn in on March 4 for his second term. While in Washington, the two had stayed with Will Black, a nephew of Dad's, who was employed as a cattle expert in the Department of Agriculture. Dad's travelling companion, Gid Huhn, was known in New Geneva as the man who, in his cups, was wont to shout: "Hurrah for Teddy!" The Teddy referred to, of course, was a Republican President named Roosevelt. "Dad had a good time," Mother said. "He enjoyed it very much."

In a letter on March 24, 1926, sister Ruth wrote to Edwin in what seems a scolding manner: "Mama received your letter tonight and it was very short and sweet, I must say. You sure have me beat at keeping your affairs to yourself. You tell nothing and I tell everything I know and (perhaps) some things I just guess at. Isn't that about right?" Noting that she would soon be fifteen, Ruth added: "That seems terribly old." Her birthday was March 30.

Writing on the morning of September 7, 1926, Bessie reported that Mother and Will had just started off in the family's 1926 Buick to take Robert to State College to enter Penn State. Despite much recent rain, fall plowing was just about completed, Bessie wrote. While Mother and Will were away, Lena Baker, our mother's unmarried sister, was staying with Bessie. The two of them, Bessie said, had been busy drying sweet corn. For this, they cut the corn from the cob, then spread it out in the hot sun on an old sheet. Within a few hours, all moisture had evaporated from the kernels. After a day or so, the dried corn was packed away in cloth bags and

hung up in an airy place. Drying concentrated the corn's sweetness. During the winter, after it had been soaked in water and then boiled, the corn became food fit for any king.

In a letter just before Christmas in 1926, Ruth wrote to Edwin that Bob was home from Penn State for the holidays and was "trying to teach Priscilla to dance and they are having a wonderful time."

By early 1927, Bessie was really back in the swing of things on the Stevenson farm. She wrote to her brother on April 6 that she was hatching chickens, that she had eight peeps already, with two more brooding hens scheduled to complete their twenty-one-day task the next Sunday. Over the next few years, Bessie not only kept the family supplied with eggs and chickens to eat, but had enough surplus to sell for a good profit at Davenport's general store in New Geneva.

Others letters that Bessie wrote in 1927 spoke of two common activities in the Stevenson household — blackberry picking and ice-cream making. She wrote to Edwin on July 25 that Mother and the two girls had gone up over the hill to pick blackberries. These grew in thick brambles in fields where no mowing had been done for some years. From these expeditions, the pickers usually returned with at least two pails of berries. When cleaned, some berries were eaten fresh. But a goodly portion were converted into jam, which was then canned for use during the fall and winter. Some went into pies. Blackberries continued to ripen until late August.

The ice-cream making of which she wrote on August 13 was really an unusual event. Ordinarily, we made ice cream only in the winter when we could chop a supply of ice from a stream on the farm, or perhaps from the watering trough out at the barn. The summertime ice-cream making was done with a bucket of hail stones.

Bessie said the hail storm had been the worst she ever remembered. Hail stones falling on the house roof and then coming down to the back-porch roof were funnelled into a pile on the brick walk. Bessie concluded: "Ruth gathered up a pail of the hail stones and Robert insisted we have ice cream. There was just enough ice to freeze it nicely."

After both of our parents had died, and Will had married and taken over the home farm, Bessie set off for California. There, she met and married James Robertson. She lived out most of her life in that state.

In the meantime, Edwin had returned home for good — in 1928. He then courted and married Louise Sandusky, a girl whom we all knew as a member of our church. After their marriage, the couple went to house-keeping on the Gans farm, adjoining ours — a property that Dad owned and turned over to them.

Finally, Mother's wandering boy had come home. And I was happy to see that before Dad died in 1932 he and Edwin had become the best of friends.

PARRE SHTORIES

by Richard E. Wentz



The subjects of Parre Shtories are the clergy of Pennsylvania's Lutheran, Reformed, and Evangelical congregations. This is Augustus Lutheran Church in Trappe, Pa., the oldest (1743) unaltered Lutheran Church in the United States. (Pennsylvania Folklife Society Archives)

Die Pennsylvanischdeitsche gleiche ihre Parre, un sell ofkors iss fer was sie so viel Shtories verzeehle vunne. Wan sie ihre Parre net gleiche deede, waer's ken Gschpass, Shtories zu verzeehle vunne.¹

The Pennsylvania Dutch will have little difficulty in sorting out those lines of Professor Buffington's. However, the uninitiated must be indulged: "The Pennsylvania Dutch like their pastors, and, of course, that is the reason they tell so many stories about them. If they didn't like their pastors, it would be no fun telling stories about them."

WHAT ARE PARRE SHTORIES?

In the many stories to which Buffington alludes, there are two terms used to designate the clergy: the one is *Parre*, the other *Bredicher* (from the German *Prediger* - preacher). The latter reference represents the adaptation of an Americanism to which we shall return later. *Parre*, of course, comes from *Pfarrer*, the German word for pastor or parson. The *Parre* was most often the pastor of a Lutheran or Reformed congregation, although the emergence of German-American Methodism in the nineteenth century occasioned the use of the term among ministers of United Brethren and Evangelical

churches. However, members of these denominations were more ready to delight in their clergy as *Bredicher*. The tradition of *Parre Shtories*, nevertheless, begins among the German-speaking people of Pennsylvania probably as early as the eighteenth century. *Parre Shtories* are a variety of anecdotes, tall tales, and legends that feature the clergy of the Lutheran, Reformed, and Evangelical denominations of Pennsylvania. Buffington, for example, tends to include among the *Parre Shtories* the tales associated with the life of Mose Dissinger, popular camp-meeting *Bredicher* of the nineteenth century who ridiculed and burlesqued the college-bred clergy of Lutheran, Reformed and Presbyterian vintage.²

The earliest *Parre Shtories* tend to be associated with the lives of known clergy. They are anecdotes some of which reveal the esteem in which the pastors were held. Accordingly, many are of legendary character and others become paradigmatic tales which later are separated from their historical source. In other words, stories that appear to have been associated with a particular person are dissociated and told in anonymous reference: "Down in Lancaster County there was once a pastor, who . . ."

The most prevalent form of *Parre Shtories* is the humorous anecdote that is very much like an English-language joke about the minister. Of course, the stories are told in the dialect and, according to most raconteurs or folklorists, should not be translated. We are usually told that the jokes are funnier in the dialect than in translation; and in most cases this is true. The dialect is itself an unsophisticated speech, a bit clumsy, coarse, and almost buffoonish in the manner in which it takes liberties with the German and English languages. The storytellers also usually tell us that the humor in these tales depends upon the dialect and that English translations would sound vulgar whereas the dialect preserves a kind of special earthy humor. Literal translations of dialect tales would be offensive. Professor Buffington, as a scholar, linguist, folklorist, and storyteller certainly espoused this interpretation.

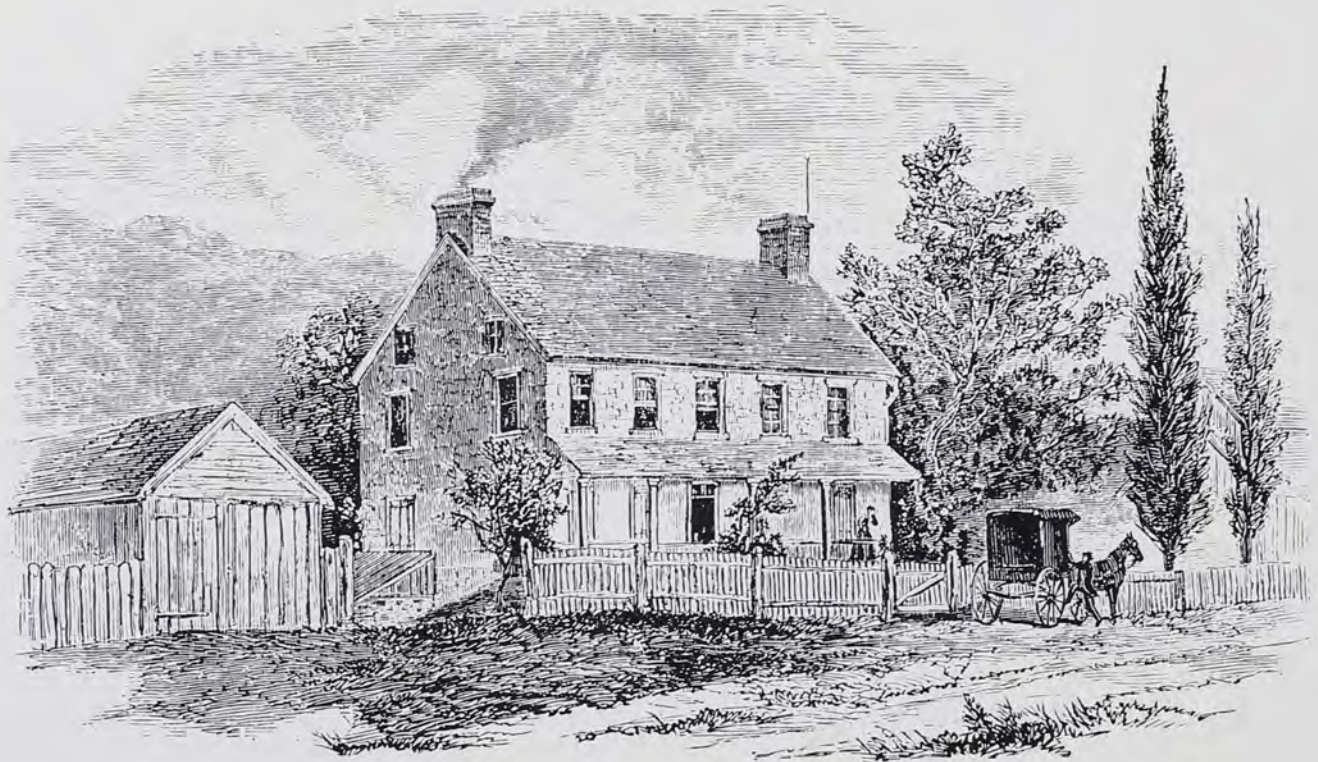
What becomes readily apparent is that the most important function of dialect storytelling is the preservation of the dialect itself. Almost all of the pioneering Pennsylvania Dutch folklorists were Dutch persons who spoke the dialect, collected the evidence of the culture, and told stories. During one period in the late 1970s I spent considerable time in Eastern Pennsylvania, among my own *lansmann*, interviewing some of the storytellers. They were people with names like Tiny Zimmerman, Mountain Bummy, Paul Weiland, Carl Arner, Mark Trumbore, and Richard Wolf. Their attitude toward the dialect was reverential and all of them maintained that good *Shtories* should not be translated — even if there was evidence that the story may have originally been told in English. And, as with all storytellers, the assumption was made that one didn't tell dialect stories on public occasions without an appropriate apprenticeship. The stories became vehicles for dialect preservation and transmission. And the family reunions, *versammlinge* (conventions), and *grundsau lodches* that became prominent in the twentieth century served as forums for dialect storytelling. Reformed and Lutheran churches, particularly in the small towns and the crossroads of the open countryside, preserved the German language (*Hochdeutsch*) itself well into the present century. Many of the people spoke or understood the dialect as well; and the pastors of those churches were frequently devoted to the dialect culture and told its stories. Social occasions at the churches, as well as Sunday School meetings, served as occasions of formal and informal storytelling and conversations. Humorous tales, many of them told by pastors, became a prominent feature of town and country life. *Parre Shtories* emerged as a genre of humorous anecdote.

By the turn of the twentieth century these stories, both in their legendary mode and in the form of humorous anecdotes, had established themselves as a cultural phenomenon among the folk. *Parre Shtories* are not high culture; they are folk and popular culture.

They already appear in the poetry and prose dialect collections of Daniel Miller of Reading, Pennsylvania, in 1903 and 1911. And, although L. A. Wollenweber's *Gemälde aus dem Pennsylvanischen Volksleben (Pictures of Pennsylvania Folklife, 1869)* contains few references to *die Parre*, it provides interesting sketches of people and places, revealing a pattern of anecdotal reminiscence that lends itself to the development of *Parre Shtories*. However, Daniel Miller's work suggests that the genre is well in place by the turn of the century. The first volume of almost three hundred pages includes at least twenty *Parre Shtories* among fifty-nine entries. In addition, several parsons are among the poets, collectors, and storytellers whose works appear. Miller's second volume includes a survey of customs that range among churches and pastors. Many of the collected authors are pastors. There is a brief sketch of Dr. Henry Harbaugh, Reformed pastor, theologian, and pioneer among dialect authors and storytellers. "Through his beautiful poems," wrote Miller, in the dialect (here translated) "*Parre* Harbaugh helped to make Pennsylvania Dutch a much loved and respected language. He was a pious and much-loved person. He was born in Franklin County and was one of the most famous Reformed *Parre* in the state, at the end of his life a professor in the seminary at Mercersburg. He wrote many books and died in 1867." Harbaugh is in many respects not only a pioneer among the preservationists, but remains a paradigmatic figure — the pastor as champion of the people, the teller of their stories, one who understood them and celebrates their ways.

In the same volume of Miller's there is a lengthy anecdote concerning what people expect of their pastors, followed by two interesting reflections of a similar character. One is entitled "*Wann Ich En Parre Waer*" ("If I were a Pastor"), the other "*Wann Ich Net Parre Waer*" ("If I were not a Pastor"). There is evidence in my copies of the Miller works (the originals of which I once borrowed from Professor Buffington) that Buffington made careful use of Miller's *Parre Shtories* and his reflections on church life among the Pennsylvania Dutch. Buffington often restructured Miller's (and the many authors whom Miller had collected) tales, and sometimes supplied a different vocabulary and orthography. Inasmuch as Buffington was a prominent linguist and orthographer of the dialect, as well as a folklorist, we must treat his actions with utmost respect. Buffington collected *Parre Shtories* and was aware of their significance. He also recognized Miller as a source for many of the stories he heard in all the counties where the dialect was spoken.³

Albert Buffington, Daniel Miller, and the works of Clarence Rahn, Thomas R. Brendle, and William Troxell are a special source of *Parre Shtories*. I have listened to other storytellers as well. Mark Trumbore's *A Superficial Collection of Pennsylvania German Erotic*



Henry Harbaugh, a paradigmatic figure in Pennsylvania German culture, remained very much the Franklin County farmer, having been born in this farmhouse near Waynesboro. (The Pennsylvania-German Society)

Folklore might more accurately be entitled “A Collection of the Earthy Tales and Folklore of the Pennsylvania Germans,” inasmuch as erotica exists in only part of the collection.⁴ However, there are several *Parre Shtories* and some *Parre Lar* (lore) among the selections, all of them earthy or erotic (perhaps downright vulgar, especially in translation). There are enough *Parre Shtories* in the oral and written traditions to justify raising some important questions about the significance of this material. What do *Parre Shtories* tell us about Pennsylvania Dutch culture, or more broadly, what do Pennsylvania Dutch *Parre Shtories* contribute to the understanding of American culture?

THE THEMES OF THE *PARRE SHTORIES*

In order to answer these questions it may be helpful to discuss the nature of the stories themselves. There are at

least a dozen themes that provide frames for a great variety of stories. This is partly the result of the art of storytelling itself. The hotels (taverns) of Eastern Pennsylvania have always been gathering places for farmers and delivery men who take breaks from the routine of chores and errands. There is always time for a beer in the middle of the afternoon. On such occasions a swapping of tales may occur. A humorous anecdote on a certain subject inspires others on the same theme. Friday night is often a special time among the remaining small taverns in the Dutch country. Husbands and wives gather for a few drinks and some stories. The alert public storyteller and his apprentices pick up a great many stories for their repertoires by making the rounds on separate weekends. When picnics, conventions, and reunions bring large numbers of people together, the storytellers are a regular feature. They often work with themes.

Early Lutheran and Reformed congregations were often without proper support and leadership. Pictured above is the Ludolph (Stone) Church in Perry County, near Elliotsburg, Pa. It was built in 1841 by Lutheran and Reformed congregations on land donated by Henry Ludolph Spark, teacher and unordained Lutheran preacher. (Pennsylvania Folklife Society Archives)



One of the recurrent themes of the older *Parre Shtories* calls attention to the congregation (usually Reformed or Lutheran) which does not meet its stipendiary obligations to its pastor. There are numerous reasons for this and a variety of resolutions provide the basis for numerous plots that develop the theme. Related to it are stories told about misers who often trick the pastor out of his attempt to get a sizeable donation for a new church roof, bell, or some other item essential to the welfare of a church building. One version of this story shows the ingenuity of the pastor who is called to the deathbed of a *geiziche* (stingy) old man who never gave much of his wealth to the church, or to anyone else for that matter. The old man was worried. "Do you think if I leave \$5000 to the church I'll go to heaven?" he asked. "It's worth a try," replied the pastor.

Then there is the story of John Wagner of Lancaster County, a rich and miserly fellow who was a member of the church council. A meeting was called in order to decide how to raise funds to fix the church building. The plastering was loose, the roof leaked, and the floor was rotten in places. The pastor opened the meeting with prayer and, as he prayed, a piece of the ceiling fell onto the head of old John Wagner. It frightened and angered the old man so much that he shouted out in the middle of the prayer: "Damn it all! I'll give \$500 to help fix the church!" The parson kept right on praying: "Dear Lord! Give old John yet another shot!"

There are also stories of congregations who refuse to pay the pastor so long as he preaches sermons that make them uncomfortable. The argument often goes like this:

when we go to the store, we don't pay for things we don't want; so why should we pay a pastor who's always telling us how bad we are. Of course, there are tales told of pastors who are popular funeral preachers. They are sought out because they have something nice to say about everyone. Some anecdotes tell of people who regularly go to funerals in order to hear what the *Leichtspredicher* (funeral preacher) can possibly say about some of the rather disreputable characters of the county.

The length of sermons is a frequent theme of stories. A short sermon is desirable and there are ways to teach the pastor how to do a short one. A dull sermon is intolerable and is likely to diminish the congregation or make them seek devious and oftentimes humorous ways to facilitate a change in homiletical responsibilities. One story collected by Daniel Miller in his 1904 edition tells of a pastor who abandoned his congregation because they seldom managed to pay him even though the salary was very low. A meeting of the consistory (church council) was held to call a new pastor. However, there were difficulties to be faced. The classis (ecclesiastical judicatory, like a presbytery) was hesitant to recommend a pastor if he was not likely to be paid, and most likely candidates would avoid the congregation when they heard that the former pastor was treated so badly. The elders and deacons came up with a plan to circulate preaching responsibilities among the elders. Inasmuch as services were held only once a month in this rural congregation, four elders could easily assume annual responsibility for four sermons each. Short sermons were the ideal, anyhow. And the consistory decided they

didn't need the pastoral services of an ordained clergyman. For funerals they could always find an outside pastor and the young folks liked to go to the city to get married. So who really needed to hire a pastor?

And so the experiment began. The first elder to be assigned preaching duties was the president of the school board, who sometimes had to make short speeches. Some of the other elders were farmers and were a bit sheepish about their task as preachers, but they were reassured that many pastors in the past had also been farmers. Well, the president of the school board worked two weeks on his first sermon. Everybody in the region was excited about the new plan and filled the church on the appointed Sunday.

The elder had learned his sermon well and had practiced it six times in his attic. When he mounted the pulpit and looked out over the congregation, all his thoughts left him. Finally he collected himself. "I could say a lot about this text, if I could just remember what it was. You people down there in the corner, who think it's an easy thing to preach, come on up here and try it." So saying, he sat down. A collection was taken, the choir sang a number, and church was over. It had been the shortest sermon ever preached in that congregation and it was the end of the great plan to keep from paying a pastor.⁵

I've told this story at some length (in translation) because it illustrates the character of the folk and the manner in which churches, pastors, and sermons were understood among this people who were the heirs of Reformation traditions with a strong sense of ecclesiastical order and great respect for the tasks of the parson. In this case the significance of the pastor's role is vindicated in spite of tendencies among the folk to deface it.

Many stories deal with tricks played on the pastor as he is ready to serve as preacher — to exegete a text and proclaim the gospel. In one he discovers bees in his trousers and says, "Brothers and sisters, the word of God is in my mouth, but the Devil is in my pants." And in Lehigh County two *nixnutziche* (mischievous) boys glued together two pages in the Bible where the pastor's text was located. The pastor read his text: "And Jesus sat down upon a stone and . . . and flew away." The words embarrassed him. They made no sense. He got red in the face, took out his handkerchief and cleaned his glasses, and read: "'And Jesus sat down upon a stone and' . . . yes, the Devil take me . . . 'he flew away.' That's what it says."

Other anecdotes provide folksy accounts of well-planned services, some for special occasions like Easter, that end as a comedy of error and circumstances. Some of the older stories come out of the period in which certain pastors achieved the status of folk hero. The tales of Mose Dissinger frequently demonstrate the physical prowess of a man who brooks no nonsense inside the

church or outside on the streets. He challenges rowdies and puts hecklers and teasers in their place — sometimes with words, often with a physical force not typically associated with a clergyman. Mose, of course, is part history, part legend; and he was *Bredicher* (preacher) in the Evangelical Association, a revivalistic movement sprung out of Wesleyanism and very suspicious of the education and order of Lutheran and Reformed churches. Many of the Mose Dissinger tales may be of types or motifs that predate Dissinger's own life during the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Certainly they serve as the frame for later *Parre Schtories* that occasionally celebrate the physical strength of a pastor, and are used as a kind of object lesson to those who make light of the faith or show disrespect for the parson.

However, the stories frequently present the pastor as clown or fool. He may be nearsighted, fall into a well, and cry for help. By the time some members of the congregation reach him, he is frantic. "Don't worry," they tell him. "Don't get so excited; we don't need you until Sunday." Or, the pastor may be a poor preacher or an inexperienced one, both of which circumstances are occasions for practical jokes, ridicule, or wholesome teasing. The pastor gets drunk and does foolish things, sometimes because he is *tricked* into drinking, at other times because he is unacceptably a drunkard and thought of moralistically as a hypocrite. And people liked to lure the pastor into circumstances where he might use bad language. A version of this theme has the pastor inform his associates that in a fix he uses the same language they do — he has had good teachers for crisis situations. Sometimes he is presented as vulnerable to women or revealed as a freeloader, cajoling his parishioners into free chicken dinners. He may be clever or stupid. There are some *Parre Schtories* which depict a crude and lascivious pastor, whose favorite pastimes involved the ravishing of women. As a clown, he is also a bit of a buffoon, a bungler, or a misfit.

Now of course the tradition of the clown or fool is an important element in the history of religions. Whether we deal with tribal traditions, such as the Native American or African, or world religions like Christianity or Buddhism, the clown appears as one who revises the usual order of things. He reveals the precarious state of our ordered existence by upsetting those conditions. If, for example, we rely upon a strict code of sexual behavior the clown may engage in crude and vulgar actions. He may engage in ritual intercourse. In this case, the clown has become the trickster. However, the clown may simply be an innocent misfit, one whose values appear to be a naive renunciation of the world's standards. He may even be a madman. Certain interpretations of Christ present him as a fool; as the clown who reveals a truth the world cannot comprehend by its ordinary

means. Insofar as many religious traditions speak of a truth not ordinarily available, the role of the fool would seem indispensable.

PARRE SHTORIES AS EVIDENCE OF DEMOCRATIZATION

It is conceivable that Pennsylvania German *Parre Shtories* should be understood as evidence of a kind of folk wisdom which recognizes the vulnerability of the sacred: "God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise . . . God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are" (1 Cor. 1:27a, 28). Perhaps, in other words, the *Parre Shtories* are evidence of the manner in which a folklorization of theology takes place, in which the people express the profundity of sacred truth by dragging the holy through the barnyard. In more eloquent and sophisticated language, this notion has been called kenotic theology. Certainly the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation itself might be understood as an example of this principle.

However, it is the thesis of this essay that *Parre Shtories* are evidence of the democratization of Christianity in America. The story of religion in America is an account of the constant diversification of religious ideas and practices to conform to the will of the people. In the case of Christianity, America's most hegemonic cluster of identifiable religiousness, we observe the transformation of hierarchical, aristocratic, and magisterial traditions into a religion of the American people. In his brilliant new book on the formation of early American Christianity, Jon Butler notes that "we know surprisingly little about [lay authority] in the society where people were first declared sovereign." Butler uses the term popular religion to mean "no less and no more than the religious behavior of laypeople."

It is defined by its clientele rather than by its theology, by its actors rather than by their acts. In the period I am discussing, popular religion was not necessarily anticlerical or anti-institutional, nor was it necessarily rooted in occult or quasi-pagan folk customs. Popular religion was what the laity made of it. In some historical instances it emerged as anti-institutional, anticlerical, occult or pagan. In others it became closely linked to religious institutions and leaders . . .⁶

I would agree with Butler's assessment of the importance of lay authority in the formation of religion in America. However, he insists upon too tidy a definition of religion as "belief in and resort to superhuman powers," a definition which at times affects his description of Christianity with too strong an emphasis upon "Christian adherence" as a "regular or steady attach-

ment to institutional Christianity." This emphasis interferes with his desire to relate occult, magical, and folk practices to the story of Christianity itself.

The story of Christianity among the Pennsylvania Germans is incomplete without an understanding of lay authority and folk religion. However, here there is no anti-institutionalism or anticlericalism. Instead, the institutions and their clergy are demythologized by a folk religiosity demonstrated in customs such as the telling of *Parre Shtories*. Among the Pennsylvania Germans the institution and its clergy are saved by a process of democratization which shapes Christianity into a popular religion that is willing to *include* the churches as well as its own forms of occult and magical ideas and practices. It has not been uncommon for Hermeticists, herb doctors, pow-wow doctors, exorcists, astrologists, and Rosicrucian sympathizers to be faithful members of Reformed and Lutheran congregations.

THE EMERGENCE OF CHRISTIAN POPULISM

As Nathan O. Hatch has shown, Christianity in America underwent a significant degree of democratization during the history of the early republic. Hatch maintains that the "wave of popular religious movements that broke upon the United States in the half century after independence did more to Christianize American society than anything before or since."⁷ Methodists, Baptists, black churches, and Mormons were exemplary of relentlessly energetic movement-building that provided common people with "compelling visions of self-respect and collective self-confidence."⁸ What emerged was a kind of religious populism that afforded stability even as it promoted equality and the social changes necessary to achieve it. The democratization of Christianity was advanced by what John Williamson Nevin, theologian of the Mercersburg movement, called the twin principles of Bible and private judgment.

This religious populism must be understood as among the most significant aspects of American society and culture. It was a primary shaping force in our way of thought and action. Religious movements were laboratories, workshops for the exaltation of the ordinary and the vernacular. We have been a leveling society, and religious movements and ideas have played a dominant role in this achievement. A study of our folklore reveals that we exalted the likes of Davy Crockett, a plain man, "down-home" and unlettered, who could outwit, outthink, and outperform any sophisticated and educated buffoon from back East or up North. Our religious life was very summarily transformed into the Gospel according to Crockett. And we may understand the "sectarian" proliferation of the nineteenth century as the odyssey of religious Crocketts claiming virtue for ordinary people.



A LETTER WRITTEN BY
God Himself
AND LEFT DOWN AT MAGDEBURG

**It was written in golden letters, and sent by
God through an Angel; to him, who will
copy it, it shall be given; who
despiseth it, from him
will part**

THE LORD

Whoever works on Sunday is cursed. Therefore, I command you that you do not work on Sunday, but devotedly go to church; but do not adorn your face; you shall not wear strange hair, and not carry on arrogance; you shall give to the poor of your Riches, give plenty and believe that this letter is written by my own hand and sent out by Christ himself, and that you will not act like the dumb beast; you have six days in the week, during which you shall carry on your labors, but the seventh day (namely, Sunday,) you shall keep holy; if you do not do that, I will send war, famine, pests and death among you and punish you with many troubles. Also, I command you everyone, whoever he may be, young or old, small and great, that you do not work late on Saturday, but you shall regret your sins, that they may be forgiven you. Do not desire silver and gold; do not carry on sensualities and desires; do think that I have made you and can destroy you.

Do not rejoice when your neighbor is poor, feel moreover sorry with him, then you will fare well.

You, children honor father and mother, then you will fare well on earth. Who that doth not believe these and holds it, shall be damned and lost. I, Jesus, have written this myself with my own hand; he that oppnes it and scandalizes; that man shall have to expect no help from me; whoever hath the letter and does not make it known, he is cursed by the Christian Church, and if your sins are as large as they may be, they shall, if you have heartily regretted and repented of them, be forgiven you.

Who does not believe this, he shall die and be punished in Hell, and I, myself will on the last day inquire after your sins, when you will have to answer me.

And that man who carries this letter with him, and keeps it in his house, no thunder will do him any harm, and he will be safe from fire and water; and he that publishes it to mankind, will receive his reward and a joyfull departure from this world.

**Do keep my command which I have sent through my
Angel. I, the true God from the Heavenly Throne,
Son of God and Mary. Amen.**

THIS HAS OCCURED AT MAGDEBURG, IN THE YEAR 1783

BOYER PRINTING & BINDING COMPANY, Lebanon, Pa.

Among the Pennsylvania Germans, Christianity has been shaped into a popular religion that is willing to include the churches as well as its own forms of occult and magical ideas and practices. Above is a Himmelsbrief (letter from heaven) which was believed to protect the house and person from harm.

Nevertheless, Hatch's thesis must be amended somewhat. The process of democratization was endemic to life in the New World from the beginning. The old order of life in which the Reformation was born on the continent of Europe was to give way in the circumstances of the colonial settlements. Hierarchical and aristocratic assumptions about truth and its maintenance were inhospitably received in the American wilderness. Hierarchical understanding assumes that truth is revealed only to those who are prepared to receive it. There is a custodianship to truth — it must be preserved, nurtured, and taught. Hierarchical understanding requires initiation, discipleship, and a discipline of learning. In the Church, the salvation of humankind is mediated throughout a lifetime. The Church is a sacramental entity, sharing its life through a priesthood. Therefore, the Church has orders of ministry which require education, appointment, and sacramental transmission.

Even the Reformed and Lutheran traditions maintained a certain fidelity to this hierarchical conception of truth and its structures of maintenance. Martin Luther's concern for the priesthood of believers was not really an individualistic conception. The priesthood was communal and organic — of *all* believers, not *each* believer. There was still a need for theology, councils, and ordination. The catechisms had to be taught properly, the sacrament *rightly* administered, and the Word rightly preached. However, the American experience facilitated the evasion of hierarchical understanding and practice. Only the Roman Catholic Church (and American Anglicanism to some extent) managed to hold onto its traditional patterns, primarily through its celibate priesthood and religious orders.

Reformed and Lutheran churches were often without proper support and ordained leadership. If we may trust the implications of some of the *Parre Shtories* and the insights of Ludwig Wollenweber's *Gemälde aus dem Pennsylvanischen Volksleben*, the people were often satisfied without clergy or the responsibilities for maintaining a building and its services. More frequently, however, they devised their own substitutes for an ordered ministry by gathering for catechism, Bible study, prayer, and hymnody in private houses, school buildings, or temporary quarters.⁹

Such practices as these nurtured independence, self-sufficiency, and changed the hermeneutical conditions in which the Christian faith was taught and practiced. The people were on their own and the democratization of Christianity was under way from the beginning. There were temporary setbacks in the eighteenth century as the denominations struggled to devise organizations for appropriate ecclesiastical regulation and missionization. As Jon Butler has shown, a certain sacralization of landscape and society took place as emergent American denominations (Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran,



Pennsylvania Germans often gathered in private houses or school buildings for religious services. In 1976, Huff's Union Church in Berks County printed a historical souvenir booklet which lists the earliest period of the church's history (c. 1760-1775) as the Home Worship Period, and the second era (c. 1775-1815) as the School House (shown above) Period.

Reformed, Anglican, Congregational, and Quaker) built more churches and meetinghouses than ever before, even as they developed programs for education, ordination, and the founding of congregations.¹⁰

The Pennsylvania Germans were a largely rural people, agriculturalists, artisans, and craftsmen from the Rhinish Palatinate, Württemberg, Alsace-Lorraine, and parts of Switzerland. They were concentrated in a relatively small area and resisted assimilation by the English. They were a populist society by virtue of socioeconomic status and the democratizing nature of their life in Pennsylvania. This society was certainly in contrast to the middle-class, aristocratic, and educated societies of other colonies. Democratization was a feature of Pennsylvania Dutch culture from the beginning.

THE QUICKENING OF DEMOCRATIZATION

In the nineteenth century the process of democratization was quickened by the urgency of republican mastery of the frontier and the birth of revivalistic evangelicalism. "In both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries," writes Daniel Walker Howe, "revivalism and democracy were interrelated phenomena. Each asserted popular claims against those of the elite, pluralism against orthodoxy, charisma against rationalism, competitiveness against authority, and innovative Americanism against European tradition."¹¹ Beginning with the American Revolution, the number of people who thought for themselves about freedom, equality, and opportunity was on the increase. Ordinary people drew themselves up to proportions of authority which had been building in the colonial wilderness. Appeals to the authority of tradition, education, and social order had less and less significance. And, as the Con-

Es alt Shul-haus an der Krick.

XVIII.

O wou sin now die Shuler all
Wo hawa do gelernt?
A deel sin weit awerk gereest,
By Fortune uf um ab gechased -
Deel hot der Dot Geernt.

XXI.

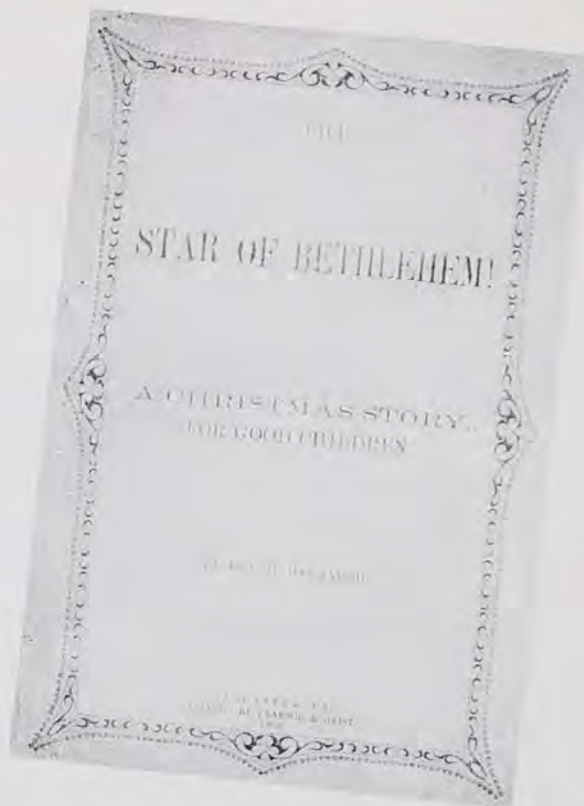
Now horecht iher Leut wo noch mir lebt,
Euch Schreit ich now des Gluck;
Ieh warn euch! - droh euch! - gebt doch acht,
Un nemmt for ever gut enaecht,
Des Shul-haus an der Krick!

Lebanon Pa }
Nov 26. 1860 }

Two stanzas of Harbaugh's "The Old Schoolhouse." Harbaugh was at heart the poet of his people and their earthy human values. He was one of the first to publish in the dialect.

stitutional period beckoned the formation of a new political society, the continent seemed to open its landscape to the upstart democratists. Americans were a people unleashed, "ever moving rapidly through space so vast that space came to take precedence over time in the formation of their most cherished ideals, chief of which has been the ideal of freedom."¹² Churches began to sacralize the landscape, and became a visible measure of movement and placement through American space. Even when these buildings served denominational strategies for investing the emergent nation with Christian values and sanctions, they became the laboratories in which the people forged their own ideas of local authority, individualism, and direct democracy. Forms of hierarchy remained in the denominational machinery, but American religion was very congregational and localist. Any posture of untoward authoritarianism fostered schism or encouraged the departure of members who sought the religious vindication of their own individualistic aspirations.

Among the Pennsylvania Germans many clergy and their congregations succumbed to the dominant revivalistic evangelicalism, which emphasized a kind of utilitarian individualism, in which the Christian message was shaped to meet the needs of the new American. The Christian gospel became a translation of the ordinary desire for self-gratification onto the screen of infinity, a



An early Christmas story by Henry Harbaugh. A student of liturgy, church history, and theology, he was the author of many books and articles. (Pennsylvania Folklife Society Archives)

utilitarian means to the salvation of *my* soul and the attainment of the desired bliss of paradise. In this manner the gospel became a heavenly utilitarianism, well-suited to the frontier mentality of an emergent America. The will of the people, left to itself, demands immediate spiritual gratification. This heavenly utilitarianism became the mainstream of American Christianity.

In the German Reformed Church, Frederick Augustus Rauch, John Williamson Nevin, Philip Schaff, and Henry Harbaugh, became the exponents of a recovery of the classical Reformation tradition of the Heidelberg Catechism and a recognition of the continuing catholicity of Christianity. This movement became known as the Mercersburg Theology, named for the little central Pennsylvania town of Mercersburg where the theological seminary of the Reformed Church was located. The Mercersburg movement sought to stem the tide of the democratization of Christianity reflected in revivalistic evangelicalism. Of course, even though Mercersburg remains a fascinating episode still championed in certain quarters of American church life, it stood little chance before the onslaught of the heavenly utilitarianism of democratic Christianity. Hatch's thesis must be extended beyond its focus upon the Christian movement, Methodists, Baptists, African Americans, and Mormons. The democratization of which he speaks was resident in the heavenly utilitarianism of revivalistic

Henry Harbaugh (1817-1867), Reformed pastor, theologian, and pioneer among dialect authors and storytellers. (Linn Harbaugh, *The Life of Rev. H. Harbaugh, D.D.*)



H Harbaugh

evangelicalism. It expressed itself in these five distinctive populist movements, but it invaded the more traditional Christianity of Lutheran and Reformed churches as well.¹³

THE PARSON AS QUINTESSENTIAL

Henry Harbaugh, Reformed pastor who served churches in Lewisburg, Lancaster, and Lebanon before being called to a professorship at the Mercersburg seminary, was the quintessential Pennsylvania Dutchman.¹⁴ A scholar in his own right (although never in the measure of Nevin and Schaff), he remained very much the Franklin County farmer, having been raised in the vicinity of Waynesboro. A student of liturgy, church history, and theology, he was the author of many books and articles. However, he was at heart the poet of his people and their earthy human values. He was a journalist and preacher who loved to demonstrate his continuing identity with the simple life. Although he was typically moralistic for his time in the second third of the nineteenth century, he assumed that ordinary folks down on the farm were the real exemplars of Christianity and its values. One of the first to publish in the Pennsylvania Dutch dialect, Harbaugh understood his writing as the preservation of the wisdom of the folk. He became the first in a long line of Pennsylvania Dutch pastors, primarily Lutheran and Reformed, who devoted their lives to storytelling and the preservation of populist virtues.

Harbaugh serves as a kind of measure of the range of *Parre Shtories*. Not too long before his death he appeared at the commencement banquet of Franklin and Marshall College in the year 1866. He was then editor of *The Mercersburg Review* and rose in response to a toast to that prestigious quarterly. Harbaugh walked "forward after the manner of an old farmer, pulling off a slouch hat with both hands, and catching a red bandanna handkerchief as it dropped from his forehead. His first sentence, '*Es gebt gar greislich gelerente Lent, und ich bin awer aner dafun*' ('There are some very

learned people, and I am one of 'em'), sent a flash of merriment through the assemblage. When he proceeded to enumerate the learned languages — '*Es gebt sieva gelehrte sproche, Englisch, und Deutsch, Lateinisch und Greichish und Hebraeisch; sell sin fünf. Die sechst haest Pennsylvania Deutsch, die sievet is German Reformed*' ('There are seven learned languages, English and German, Latin and Greek and Hebrew; these are five. The sixth is called Pennsylvania German, the seventh is German Reformed'), — there were shouts of laughter over the entire hall."¹⁵

THE PARSON IS JUST LIKE ONE OF US

Parre Shtories reflect the need of the people to make light of privilege and learning. In Henry Harbaugh, the teller of dialect stories and the subject of *Parre Shtories* come together in a self-deprecating tribute to the people. Harbaugh and his work are paradigmatic for the subsequent preservation of the folk tradition and its storyteller pastors with their *Parre Shtories*. These stories represent the democratization of Christianity by depicting the pastor as one of the people. Of course, this levelling was never absolute and it is still possible to observe a typical American moralistic deference to clergy among the Dutch. Yet during the nineteenth century it was necessary to reduce all hierarchies to the manageable status of Hector St. John Crèvecoeur's "American, this new man." Hierarchies of knowledge and of governance had to give way to this new humanity. Republicanism gave way to democracy.

Harbaugh's "manner of an old farmer" was not totally affected. He persistently celebrated the virtues of rural Pennsylvania and its simple people of the soil. By the nineteenth century the ranks of clergy of Lutheran

and Reformed churches were supplied by the farm families of the keystone state, and although they studied in colleges and seminaries like Mercersburg, Lancaster, Gettysburg, Franklin and Marshall, and Muhlenberg, they remained simple Dutchmen with their telltale accents and their humble manners. Mark Trumbore reminds us of four words dear to the hearts of Pennsylvania Germans: “*Wie gelehrter, wie verkehrter*”¹⁶ (“The more learned a person is, the more mixed up and perverse he is”). And Trumbore recorded numerous *Parre Shtories* which made this point. Some of these are too coarse to translate or to publish. I take both risks: One day when Winky was a little boy he went into the city with his parents. Because it was a nice day, his parents decided that Winky could wait outside when they went into a store. Winky found a little stick and sat down on the curb. A short time before a horse had left a fresh pile of manure and Winky sat there stirring the stuff with his stick. The parson came walking along and saw Winky sitting there playing with the horse dirt. “What’s wrong with you, young man? Why are you playing around in that dirt?” asked the pastor.

“Well, parson, I wasn’t really playing,” said Winky, “I was trying to figure out what kind of dirt it was.”

“Why you silly fool, you,” said the pastor, “Anyone can tell that it’s horse dirt (*Geilsdreck*).”

“Well, I’ll be,” said Winky, “That shows what education does for a person. I couldn’t tell whether it was horse dirt or mare’s dirt (*I hab selwert net recht gewisst, iss’s Geilsdreck adder Marredreck?*).”¹⁷

This is a tame sample of Trumbore’s collection of *Parre Shtories* which reveal the antics, buffoonery, or incompetence of clergy. They were often the most learned among the Dutch, who could not acknowledge their virtues. They were not as useful as physicians and even physicians could be a little *verhuddled*. Albert Buffington relates the story of *Parre Kraus* who, as he was on his way to Hill Church one Sunday morning, passed by Charlie Boyer’s house. He saw Charlie there in the orchard burning brush. This disturbed the *Parre* a lot, especially because Charlie was a deacon in the church. So the *Parre* tethered his horse and walked over to Charlie. “I never thought I’d see this,” said the *Parre*, “you should be in church and here you are burning brush.”

“Yes, I know that well enough,” replied Charlie, “but I didn’t believe you’d see me.”

“That wouldn’t make any difference,” said the *Parre*, “there’s one above who would’ve seen you anyhow.”

“Yes, that’s true,” answered Charlie, “but he isn’t a blabbermouth like you are (*awwer er iss ken Babelmaul wie du bischt*).”¹⁸

“Increasingly assertive common people,” writes Nathan Hatch, “wanted their leaders unpretentious, their doctrines self-evident and down-to-earth, their

music lively and singable, their churches in local hands . . . a style of religious leadership that the public had deemed ‘untutored’ and ‘irregular’ . . . became overwhelmingly successful, even normative, in the first decades of the new nation.”¹⁹ It was the age of the formation of “the preacher,” who represents a transformation of the hierarchical and traditional leadership inherited from European Christendom. The story of the emergence of “the preacher” is an untold episode in the history of religions, as well as in American religious and social history. Pennsylvania Germans witnessed the transformation of *Pfarrer* into *Prediger*, but the dialect use of *Parre* expressed it well. The *Parre* became the more churchly counterpart of those seemingly unpretentious leaders who stood at the forefront of the populist Christianity which was so successful in the Christian movement, the Methodists, Baptists, Mormons, and (to some extent) the black churches. The Pennsylvania Dutch knew how to make light of privilege and recast the clergy and the faith itself in an effective democratic mold.

NOTHING IS AS SERIOUS AS IT SEEMS

Of course, *Parre Shtories* reflect the democratic need to relieve the seriousness of things that are in fact serious. Buffington illustrates this point with an Easter story. Once upon a time there was a pastor in Lancaster County who wanted to do something special for an Easter service. He went to the custodian and said, “Harry, I want you to go over to the Boyers and ask them for the use of a white pigeon. Then, on Saturday night before Easter, bring the dove over here and take it up into the church tower. On Sunday morning when it’s time for the service, go up into the tower, get the pigeon, and when in my sermon I say: ‘And the spirit of the Lord descended like a dove’—open the little window that looks out into the church and let the dove fly.”

Well, all the arrangements were carefully made. On Sunday morning when the *Parre* started to preach and got to the words: “And the spirit of the Lord descended like a dove,” nothing happened. So he said the same words again, only louder. Again nothing happened. He shouted out the words again. Finally Harry stuck his head out of the little window and yelled down: “*Parre, die schwaz Katz hot die weiss daub gfresse letscht nacht—soll ich die Katz nunnerschmeisse* (Pastor, the black cat ate the white dove last night—shall I throw the cat down?)”²⁰ A simple story reveals the pastor’s eagerness to make his message alive for the people, and shows how all sophistication is removed from the particular situation. These stories are told because they demonstrate the rejection of all pretense and also because they relieve the seriousness with which such matters are usually fraught. The sacred meaning of existence makes its way through very humble circumstances.

BRINGING THE SACRED CLOSE TO THE EARTH

Which is another way of suggesting that democratization is to a great extent the need of the folk to have the sacred close to the earth. Hori Ichiro, in his study of Japanese folk religion, reminds us that official religions are eventually enmeshed in the superstructures of society. They are therefore always faced with the necessity of adjustment and accommodation to the whims of other aspects of official society—its governments, its philosophers. Folk religions, on the other hand, are substructural—less exposed to scrutiny or policy. The folk always have the privilege of using the trappings of official religion in their own way.²¹ In Japan, for example, the use of the mantra-prayer called *nembutsu* becomes a magical formula used by the people to ward off *goryo* (evil power). And the *yamabushi* are the “preachers,” the founders of a populist tradition which adapts the elements of many official religions to the needs of the folk. *Parre Shtories* are evidence of the fact that official Christianity had to adjust its teachings and practices to the earthy ways of the farm folk and craftsmen of Pennsylvania. The sacred is of little significance unless it is manifest not only in scholarly ways and synodical actions, but also in village life and barnyard antics. The theologian may wish to remind us that this principle lies at the heart of Christianity, in its doctrine of the Incarnation, wherein the Word became flesh in the flesh of a simple carpenter who, as a baby, had to sleep in a stinking cattle shed.

PREACHER AS FOLK HERO

Some of the *Parre Shtories* associated with Mose Dissinger portray the Parre as folk hero. Dissinger was of Lutheran extraction from the Duchy of Saarbrücken. Born in 1824, he was baptized by the Lutheran pastor of Schaefferstown, Pennsylvania. There was little opportunity for education, the family was poor and Moses was hired out to farmers to work for board and clothing. As a young man he was apparently fun-loving and a bit raucous until his conversion at a revival meeting at the age of eighteen.²² Thus began his association with the Evangelical Association founded by Jacob Albright earlier in the century. The Association was a form of Pennsylvania German “Methodism,” strongly revivalistic, pietist, and moralist in tone. Moses became the symbol of the robust piety of simple folk. Stories celebrated his wit, his physical strength, no-nonsense Christianity, and his disdain of educated people. Much of the Dissinger story is legendary, celebrating the democratization of Christianity in a figure who was the epitome of the emergent American “preacher.” Mose was a kind of spiritual Davy Crockett of the late nineteenth century. His biographer says of him: “Reverend Moses Dissinger was commonly called Mose Dissinger, rarely Moses Dissinger, or Reverence Dissinger. We have followed the common people who esteemed him so

much and always called him Mose.”²³

Parre Shtories demonstrate the democratization of Christianity by celebrating the spiritual power of common folk heroes like Mose Dissinger. However, the telling of these stories in the dialect is itself a way of preserving the wisdom of the people. It is the pastor/preacher who exemplifies populist values. He is one of the people, either by being made to conform to their way of living if he is an educated Reformed or Lutheran pastor, or by the elevation of an uneducated person like Mose Dissinger to the status of spiritual leader and hero. In a sense, Dissinger is paradigmatic of the American “preacher,” just as popular religious movements like the Evangelical Association and the United Brethren in Christ of Philip William Otterbein are evidence of a democratic effort to make American religion the servant of the common folk.

ENDNOTES

¹Albert F. Buffington, ‘S Pennsylvanisch Deutsch Eck, *The Morning Call* (Allentown, Pa.), August 5, 1961.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*

⁴Mark S. Trumbore, *A Superficial Collection of Pennsylvania German Erotic Folklore* (Pennsburg, Pa., 1978).

⁵Daniel Miller, ed., *Pennsylvania German. A Collection of Pennsylvania German Productions in Poetry and Prose* (Reading, Pa.: Daniel Miller, Publisher, 1903, 1904), pp. 182-184.

⁶Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith. Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 4.

⁷Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 3.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁹Butler, *op. cit.*, esp. Chap. 4.

¹⁰Daniel Walker Howe, “Religion and Politics in the Antebellum North,” in Mark A. Noll, ed., *Religion and American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 125-126.

¹¹Nathan O. Hatch, “The Democratization of Christianity and the Character of American Politics,” in Noll, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

¹²Sidney E. Mead, *The Lively Experiment* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), pp. 14-15.

¹³Cf. Theodore Appel, *Life and Work of John Williamson Nevin* (Philadelphia: Reformed Church Publication Board, 1889), p. 175.

¹⁴This thesis is developed in an as-yet unpublished essay of mine entitled, “Henry Harbaugh: Quintessential Pennsylvania Dutchman.”

¹⁵Nathan C. Schaeffer in Linn Harbaugh, *The Life of Rev. H. Harbaugh, D.D.* (Philadelphia: Reformed Church Publication Board, 1900), p. 6.

¹⁶Trumbore, p. 84.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹⁸Buffington in *The Morning Call*, August 5, 1961.

¹⁹Hatch in Noll, p. 95.

²⁰Albert F. Buffington, ‘S Pennsylvanisch Deutsch Eck, *The Morning Call* (Allentown, Pa.), August 12, 1961.

²¹Ichiro, Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan. Continuity and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 18.

²²Thomas R. Brendle, “Moses Dissinger. Evangelist and Patriot,” *Pennsylvania German Society*, p. 107.

²³Brendle, p. 93.

HANDCRAFTS IN LANCASTER COUNTY

by Henry J. Kauffman



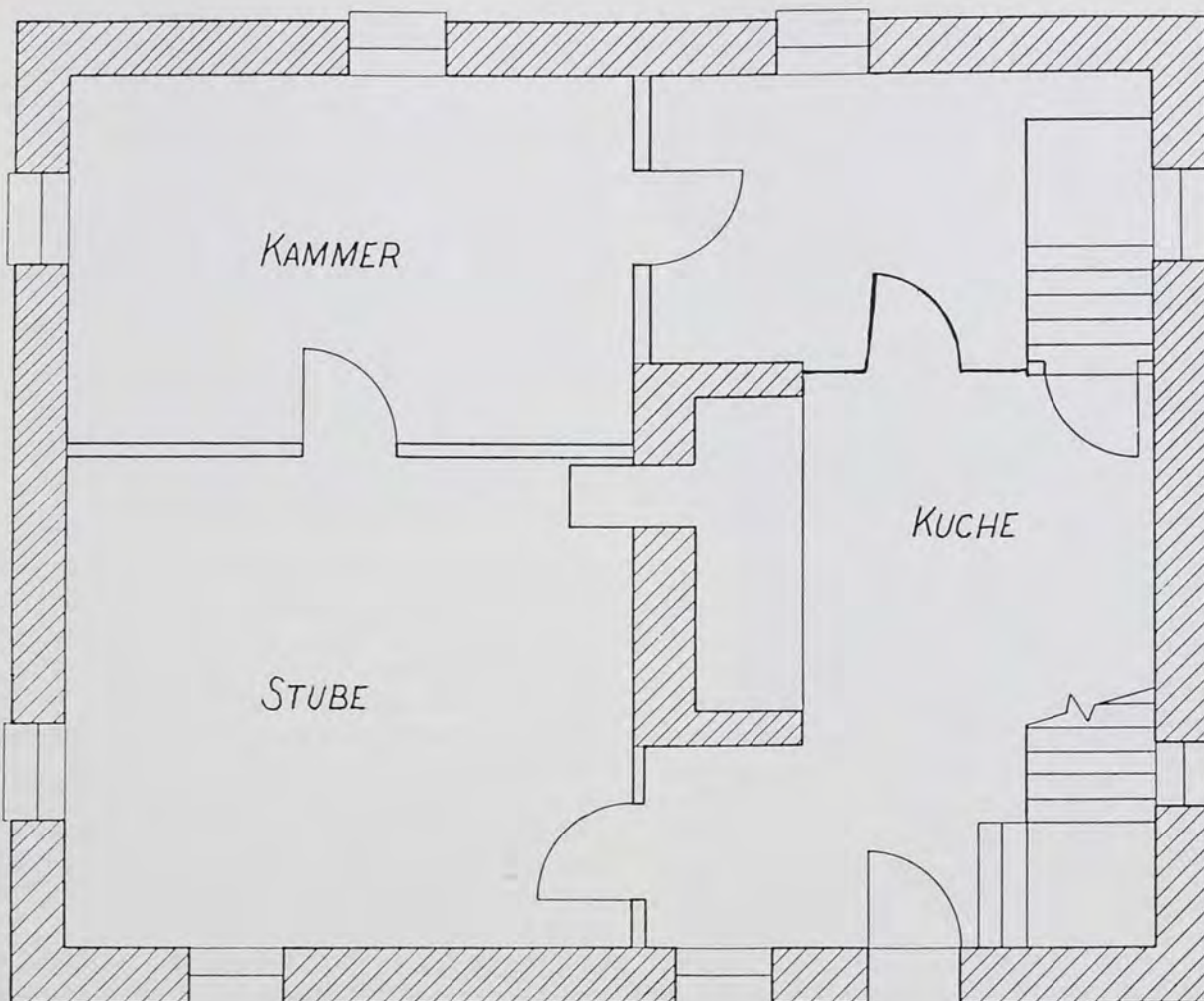
The Herr house was built in 1719 in a typically Germanic architectural style. It has a central chimney and a double attic.

The mentioning of handcrafts in the first century of Lancaster County's existence may seem like a discordant note in the wilderness, but a close examination of the facts will indicate that religion and agriculture were not the exclusive interests and pursuits of the immigrant. Much capital has been made by historians concerning the attempt of the Swiss Mennonites and others to obtain religious asylum in Pennsylvania, but little has been mentioned about the craftsmanship of the early settlers. It has been pointed out frequently that religious freedom was Penn's prime motive for obtaining that right in the New World and throwing it open to all who were oppressed in their European homelands.

Agriculture always has been an important part of the Lancaster County economy, and early settlers sent glowing letters to their homelands describing the fertile limestone soil and the luxuriant growth of walnut trees in the Susquehanna Valley. Agriculture continues to overshadow handcrafts as in the early days, but by discussing some of the crafts and craftsmen of the eighteenth century perhaps their importance can be brought into true perspective.

The significance of handcrafts often has been minimized by many writers, for many see their status as being similar to the hobby status which they frequently hold today. Nothing could be more remote from the truth than such an evaluation, for nothing was made then that was not wrought by hands. Some machine tools such as trip hammers, printing presses and lathes were available, but most of the products were highly original, an expression of the individual who made them. To many the hand method of production connotes crudeness, inefficiency and lack of aesthetic appeal, but examination of the products will reveal a pronounced superiority over subsequent production. The achievement was of such caliber that it is difficult to select examples to carry the torch for those which must be excluded for reasons of brevity and conformity to publishing limitations. A chronological continuity will be followed in dealing with the personalities and their products, although it will be obvious that some overlapping will occur.

It is reasonable to assume that the first settlers would be concerned with provision for shelter of their families,



First floor plan of the Herr house.

and one of the oldest historic shrines in Lancaster County is the Herr house. It was not one of the first homes, for they were built of logs, but it is one of the oldest and finest specimens of architecture in Pennsylvania. The central chimney was true to the region, according to Schoepf who states in his *Travels in the Confederation* that "from the exterior appearance, especially the plan of the chimneys, it could be pretty certainly guessed whether the house was that of a German or of an English family; if of one chimney, placed in the middle, the house would be a German's and furnished with stoves." Doubtless Schoepf referred to the famous five-plate jamb stove which was mounted in the wall back of a fireplace in the adjoining room, both the stove and the fireplace having a common chimney for the disposal of smoke.

Although the crafts work done in the construction of the Herr house never has been explained, it is very obvious that the workmen were mainly carpenters and masons. The big timbers used in the house were hewed square and the boards split or sawed by hand methods. The hardware was forged by skilled blacksmiths who also made the nails and other iron fittings used in the construction of the house. Little work was done on the fieldstone used to build the house, but the mortar for

the stonework and the plaster surely was mixed by human hands. The stone framework of the windows and door are outstanding examples of craftsmanship, much having survived to today with little care throughout the years.

Although Schoepf refers to one-chimney houses being occupied by German families, it is known definitely that the early group of settlers of the Pequea Valley included Christian Herr, Wendall Bowman and Martin Meylin who came from Switzerland. The discrepancy in nationality can be reconciled easily for there was much overlapping of such matters in Europe, and it is entirely possible that men of Germanic-Swiss origin would build a house influenced by German practice.

These men were farmers in the main, for their warrant consisted of 6,400 acres, but there were craftsmen among them. One of the earliest coppersmiths in Lancaster County was Wendall Bowman, whose estate inventory included "... several lots of wooden Coppersmiths Tools." In addition to Bowman were the unknown craftsmen of the Herr house and some gunmakers, although the attribution of this craft to Martin Meylin has been shown to be doubtful by recent research.

Perhaps next to a house a gun was one of the most essential possessions of the settler, used for securing



Short-handled "goose wing" axes like these were used to hew timbers for the Herr house. (Private collection)

game from nearby woods or for defense against Indians. As early as 1726 a boring mill and gun manufactory was built by Robert Baker along the Pequea Creek. At that time it is likely that gun barrels were forged and welded of imported iron, but in a few decades local furnaces and forges would be supplying adequate quantities of charcoal and iron for the market.

Great skill was required to form the barrel as well as to bore and rifle it. In addition there were locks to make and triggers to fashion. The metal worker was challenged furthermore to make the brass furniture such as butt plates and trigger guards. Late eighteenth century craftsmen shaped and engraved silver inlays which enhanced the aesthetic appeal of the rifle so that it would be a credit to the maker and a source of pride for the owner.

All the metal work was assembled on a beautifully shaped stock of maple wood, the early ones being long and simple with no patch box or silver inlays. The stock was the entire length of the gun, some of which were over five feet long. In addition to the metal work connected with gunmaking, the woodwork required an unusually high quality of workmanship. Some of those made late in the eighteenth century had stocks that were intricately carved in a manner that would challenge the workmanship of Philadelphia cabinetmakers. Few crafts made the varied demands of the mechanic as did that of gunsmithing.

While Baker was forging his gun barrels along the Pequea Creek, a schismatic group of German Baptist

Brethren (Dunkers) who observed their Sabbath on the seventh day, led by Johann Conrad Beissel, were living on the banks of the Cocalico Creek. In 1735 the Society of the Solitary was formed, and in the same year a chapel was built by the brothers and sisters of the settlement. This great Protestant monastic group grew steadily, and in 1738 the community was named Ephrata. Here the Society thrived, completely self-sustaining, and by 1745 a gristmill, a paper mill, and a printing press were in operation. The printing press, which probably was imported from Germany, was one of the earliest in the Colonies and also one of the most productive. From it came a constant stream of books, pamphlets and tracts, but the most famous of its products was the *Martyr's Mirror*, regarded by many as the most ambitious book printed in America at that time. This 1500-page story of the persecutions of the Mennonites in Europe was translated from Dutch into German by Peter Miller, who succeeded Beissel as leader at the Cloister. After three years of work in papermaking and typesetting this monumental volume was printed, finally, in 1748. The quality of the paper, the design of the typography, and the beauty of the binding attest to the quality of their craftsmanship. Little recognized until recent times, this masterpiece of printing now is regarded as one of the great books printed in eighteenth-century America. Of equal, if not greater, importance was their work in fraktur writing. Several large illuminated letters survive that show the quality of work done in this medium.



Rifles with a daisy finial on the patch box are known to have been made in 18th-century Lancaster County. (Private collection)



Iron plate from a five-plate stove made by Stiegel at Elizabeth Furnace in 1758. The vases of tulips and the heart motifs are typical of Pennsylvania German folk art, but the paired arches supported on spiral turned columns suggest a lingering Baroque sensitivity.

By the 1750s a colorful figure named Henry William Stiegel was involved in the operation of a charcoal iron furnace in northern Lancaster County. Named “Elizabeth” in honor of his first wife, this furnace produced castings for a number of industrial uses, but history has perpetuated his name partly because he cast iron stoves which bear his name. He is thought to have made an improvement on Franklin stoves, but his castings for six and ten plate stoves earned him fame.

Spurred on by his success at the iron furnace, and with a memory of glassmaking in Europe, Stiegel’s interests turned in that direction. His first work in glass was done at his Elizabeth furnace location. In 1762 Stiegel and others bought a parcel of land in northern Lancaster County, and laid out a town site which he named Manheim. In the center of the town he built a mansion that reflected his extravagant mode of living. There was a platform on the roof where musicians played for the citizenry, and to herald the arrival of “the Baron” as he was dubbed by those awed by his luxurious ways. This house was finished in 1765. On the second floor was a chapel used by Stiegel to conduct Lutheran services for his employees.

In Manheim Stiegel built his glass house and employed European craftsmen to produce his glass. It is not known whether Stiegel ever blew a bubble of glass. The first products of his glass works were bottles and window glass, commodities in much demand at the time. However, his chief fame rests on the aesthetically pleasing products of the glass house. In subsequent years he expanded his market into York, Lancaster, Philadelphia, New York and Boston. An advertisement that appeared in a New York newspaper in 1773 enumerated the following articles Stiegel offered for sale: quart, pint and half-pint decanters; carafes; enameled, mason and common wine glasses; tumblers; jelly and syllabub glasses — with and without handles; mustard



Stiegel-type flip glass. No one is certain Stiegel made such glasses, but it is likely he did. The Oxford English Dictionary defines flip as an “admixture of beer and spirits sweetened with sugar and heated with a hot iron.”

and cream pots; flint and common salts; salt linings; cruets; wide-mouthed bottles; rounds and phials for doctors; wine and water glasses; and ink and pocket bottles.

His fame in glassmaking rests primarily on the colored objects which he made such as blue flint vases, amber flint mugs, and amethyst toilet bottles. His enameled drug and cordial bottles have survived and are sought eagerly by most collectors of glass. Stiegel rode the high road of success for several years, but despite efforts to save himself from bankruptcy was thrown into debtors’ prison for his failure to meet obligations. After several years in prison he was released, and served some time as a teacher and lay worker in the Lutheran church. Today he lies in an unknown grave, but his glassware always will be prized.

The same unique and high quality hand craftsmanship was continued by Johann Christopher Heyne, Lancaster’s very famous pewterer. Heyne was born in 1715 in Saxony (Germany), and at an early age — probably 14 — was apprenticed to a journeyman pewterer as was customary then for all youths who wished to learn a trade. It is likely that he sailed for America after he had become a master craftsman. He left London in 1742 and arrived at Philadelphia on June 2 of that year. After



Communion flagon in the Germanic style by Johann Christopher Heyne. This is an outstanding example of American pewter. (Courtesy of Trinity Lutheran Church)

...serving as a schoolmaster for several years he appeared in the 1757 tax records in Lancaster where he lived and worked until his death in 1781. In his *Pewter in America*, author Leslie Laughlin rates Heyne very highly: "Many another American pewterer enjoyed a more lucrative business, and many a competitor may have attained greater prominence in his community, but none has enriched with such a significant group of unusual pewter forms. Christopher Heyne's vessels are the acme of laboratory material for the student of colonial pewter." This statement was based on the quality of his workmanship, for it never has been the writer's experience to examine a piece of Heyne pewter that was not flawlessly made. It was based also on the interesting transition of his work from that of strictly Teutonic influence, to an admixture of Teutonic and English, and finally to a completely Anglicized product.

This transition is particularly obvious in one of his ecclesiastical pieces known as a Communion flagon. All the parts were cast and dressed perfectly before they were assembled, fitted and soldered flawlessly. The flaring body, the cherubs' heads for the vessel's feet, and the sharply pointed lips are obvious remnants of his Teutonic training, while the domed lid, the decorative band on the body, and the handle and thumb piece are evidence of conformity to English standards. The bottom was a regular six-inch plate which required little adapting to its new function. All these interesting

elements give a curious and pleasing result, making it one of the most desirable objects offered to American collectors.

Lancaster always has been a humble community; there never were many fine houses furnished with oriental rugs, sterling metalware, and mahogany furniture. But by 1789 there were many craftsmen, as indicated in a survey reported by Dr. Edward Hand, the chief burgess of Lancaster, in a letter to Congress in regard to the desirability of selecting Lancaster as a site for the national capital. At that time (1789) there were:

14 hatters	38 shoemakers	4 tanners
17 saddlers	25 tailors	22 butchers
25 weavers	6 wheelwrights	3 stocking weavers
12 bakers	30 carpenters	25 blacksmiths and
11 coopers	6 plasterers	whitesmiths
6 tobacconists	4 dyers	21 bricklayers and
7 gunsmiths	5 ropemakers	masons
4 tinmen	2 brass	6 clock and watch-
3 skindressers	founders	makers
5 silversmiths	1 brickmaker	7 nailers
7 turners	3 potters	3 coppersmiths

In addition there were three breweries, three brickyards, two printing houses, and all the journeymen and apprentices which would be associated with the foregoing.

This listing indicates that there was little demand for the frivolous. There were no hairdressers, dancing masters, musicians, or copperplate engravers as were found in the more sophisticated centers of Philadelphia, New York or Baltimore. There were, however, an abundance of blacksmiths, weavers, butchers, carpenters and nailers. It is obvious that most of these craftsmen were busily engaged in meeting the demand for the simple necessities of daily life. The coppersmiths were of considerable importance; two of the three listed were William Atlee and John Frederick Steinman.

It would seem imperative to include John Frederick Steinman in this essay for he has so many intimate and important connections with it. In the first place it should be mentioned that Steinman was a stepson of the great pewterer, Johann Christopher Heyne. When Heyne died Steinman, who apparently was a journeyman coppersmith, took over the reins of the business Heyne had been operating in Lancaster. Thereafter the activity in pewter was eclipsed by the coppersmith and hardware, or "ironmongery," business which had been started in 1744, and continued as a hardware store at the same stand until 1966, thereby qualifying it as the oldest hardware store in the nation at the time of its closing. By virtue of owning the store and producing a portion of its merchandise, Steinman represented the pioneering businessman rarely found today. He was purchasing agent, salesman, manager and owner. Such versatility is found rarely in the modern business world.

Little is known about Steinman's coppersmithing work, but this is understandable for little is known



Copper tea kettle made by Frederick Steinman in the 1780s. It is a typical Pennsylvania pattern. (Private collection)

about any colonial coppersmith. The great secrecy that always surrounded a craft from the origins of the guild system until the end of the handcraft period, discouraged the recording of such details. Each apprentice was commanded to keep the secrets of his master's art — and their vows apparently were kept faithfully. The only products of Steinman's known to the writer are two fine copper teakettles, both of which bear his name in an intaglio imprint on the handles.

His newspaper advertisement, which first appeared in the *Lancaster Journal* in March 1796, listed a number of his products, including a still. Stills were a common product of coppersmiths, and they ranged in size from twenty to two hundred gallons capacity. In addition to stills, he made brass kettles of all sizes; brass and copper warming pans; copper teakettles; brass candlesticks; shovels; and tongs. Such objects were made by most contemporary coppersmiths, and to their own manufactures they added a hardware line which included pocket-knives, razors, scissors, currycombs, horse brushes, files and rasps, sheep and tailors' shears, locks, hinges, wood screws, anvils, and bickirons. The latter item, also called a bickern, was an anvil with horns, or "beaks," at both ends. Close examination will reveal that the lettering and the shape of the panel in his advertisement is identical to his mark on the handles of his teakettles.

The last craftsman in this survey is Peter Getz, one of Lancaster's famous silversmiths. Getz's first advertisement in a Lancaster newspaper appeared in the *Lancaster Zeitung* on April 28, 1790. In addition to many kinds of work in gold and silver, he listed for sale necklaces, rings, buckles, seals, etc. On May 17, 1796, he was advertising himself not only as a craftsman, but also as a merchant dealing in gold and silver watches, and ladies' and gentlemen's Morocco pocketbooks "with instruments compleat."

In addition to his silversmithing, which probably did not keep him very busy, he dabbled in building fire



Silver cream pitcher made by Peter Getz, a famous Lancaster silversmith. He is known to have made more elegant pieces than this.

engines. On December 2, 1796, Getz informed the readers of the *Lancaster Journal* that he "means to carry on the Fire Engine-making and repairing in all its branches." He had a lengthy advertisement on December 2, 1797, which described two engines he had made, telling of their performance of "throwing water to the immense height of 90 or 100 feet."

A number of Getz's silver products have survived, including a soup ladle, a creamer, a silver can, and a spectacular soup tureen in the Hammerslogh Collection, now exhibited in the Wadsworth Athenaeum. Soup tureens are in the "upper crust" of most silver collections, and the Getz product is a perfect example.

This review probably has not done justice to the subject of eighteenth century handcrafts in Lancaster County. Men such as Gorgas and Eby, the clockmakers; Henry, the gunsmith; Smith, the ironmaster; Streng, the fraktur writer; and the unknown cabinetmaker who made the famous Chippendale secretaries have been bypassed. Continued research will reveal others, but the wheels of research turn slowly. As one goes into the nineteenth century, the shadow of the Industrial Revolution slowly appears with the arrival of the Jacquard loom and the metal spinning lathe. Production today depends on the fast manufacture of identical objects with interchangeable parts. Perhaps, some day, a finer balance will be struck between the products of the machine and the hand. Until then, many who love the products of the skilled hand will have to live in the past.

JOHANN CONRAD DIEFFENBACH OF TULPEHOCKEN

by Ray J. Dieffenbach and George L. Irang



A view of the Tulpehocken Creek.

About thirteen kilometers south of Heidelberg, in a fruit and vineyard country and on a small stream called the Leimbach, lies the town of Wiesloch, Germany, now a city of about 16,000 inhabitants. Ages ago there was a settlement there, for Wiesloch celebrated its 1,000 year anniversary in 1973. Even earlier the Romans constructed a road running east and west along the left bank of the Leimbach. In medieval times, a wall almost rectangular enclosed the old city, with a fortress and a castle on the northwest side. In 1689 the castle was destroyed, but there yet remains a portion of the wall with a short chimney-like tower, built in 1360, now jestingly referred to as "the sour milk kettle." Narrow cobbled streets, half-timbered houses with red-clay "beaver-tail" tile roofs, a marketplace, and a very old fountain are reminders of the past. One of the oldest features is this fountain with its circular red-sandstone wall about four feet in diameter and three feet high. To this fountain for centuries housewives or children came daily with buckets or pitchers for the family water supply.

Wiesloch ("the light forest of Wizzo") played its part in history. In 965 Otto the Great designated Wiesloch as a meeting place for Church bodies; in 1077 it was the scene of a battle between Henry IV and his Swabian enemies. During the Thirty Years' War, General Tilly made Wiesloch his headquarters in 1622, and shortly thereafter a battle and a horrible massacre took place there. Then, in 1698, the French armies of Louis XIV practically destroyed the town. Damaged, but not destroyed by this havoc, was the Wiesloch Church, one of three buildings that survived. Its records, however, have perished.

In the year 1702 there was living in this town of Wiesloch one Johann Conrad Dieffenbach, widower,

aged forty-three, a cooper by trade, with his two children; a son Jacob and a daughter Catharina Margaretha who was four years old. Whether he was a newcomer or a native citizen who had fled the French and later returned to rebuild the town, we do not know. Likewise his father's name, his mother's maiden name, the name of his deceased wife, and other facts about his ancestry are as yet unknown. It has been suggested that he was a descendant of the Michael Dieffenbach family of Marburg, but despite some interesting coincidences of names in both families, positive proof of this connection has not been established. Neither has it been established that this was the same Conrad Dieffenbach of Berstadt on whom the Church in 1686 imposed a penance for a reprehensible liaison. Again, among his descendants there is a remarkable coincidence of names to the names of the family of Adam Dieffenbach of Graben and Bad Liebenzell who settled in Lampeter Township, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, in 1737; but lacking is any further proof of a connection. The name Dieffenbach, or Tieffenbach (meaning "deep brook"), is a fairly common one, both for individuals and for towns in Germany.

As a youth, Johann Conrad Dieffenbach had spent many years learning his trade, practicing that exact angle to bevel the sides of staves that would ensure liquid-tight barrels to contain wine, beer, or vinegar; and others for salt, sugar, and flour, and similar commodities. Likewise he learned to make vats, tubs, buckets, and many other wooden household containers or cannisters, which today are made of plastic or of metal. In addition to his trade Conrad may also have been doing some farming, for he conducted farm operations later in his life.

On Christmas Day, 1702, Johann Conrad Dieffenbach, widower, married Maria Barbara Christler, daughter of the deceased Hans Jakob Christler of Ober Siebenthal, Canton Berne, Switzerland. As they were married in the Reformed Church, it may be assumed that her family were among multitudes of Calvinists who had fled to Germany to escape atrocious religious persecution in their homeland. In the church books which recorded this wedding are recorded the births of three of their children: John Ludwig, born September 10, 1704 (who obviously died soon after birth); Maria Elizabeth, born August 7, 1705; and Anna Elizabeth, born May 8, 1708. Recorded in these books also is the marriage of a Jakob Dieffenbach to Anna Margaretha, widow of Hans George Wyn, on January 1, 1706. Possibly this Jakob was Conrad's son by his first wife. As there are no records of births or deaths in Jakob's

family, it is likely that the newlyweds soon moved elsewhere. A final record in these church books states that on May 15, 1709, "Conrad Dieffenbach and his household" left Wiesloch for America. This household included his wife, his three daughters, and his mother, Anna, then seventy-four years old. (Possibly Anna was his step-mother, if indeed she was the former Anna Elizabetha Rühl, widow of Claus Dieffenbach who died at Berstadt on March 6, 1684.)

The Dieffenbachs were not the only family leaving for America in the late spring of 1709. Multitudes of other Germans were on their way also, and the reasons for this mass exodus were many. Invading armies had for centuries swept back and forth across the Rhineland — living off the country, ravaging, looting, and destroying as they went. Grandparents, and some parents, could recall the devastation of the Thirty Years' War, the conclusion of which ignored individual conscience, allowing each ruling prince to decide the religion to which his entire dominion must conform. A change of rulers sometimes meant a change of religion or else exile. Everywhere there were scars and ruins left by the French armies of 1674 and 1698, when Louis XIV embarked on his policy of fanatical religious extermination. Twelve hundred villages were burned, their churches destroyed, axes laid to the orchards, crops plowed under, and thousands of innocent persons left to die miserably of cold and starvation. Bitter was the legacy of hatred left behind, enduring for centuries, and for which later generations of French were to pay a heavy retribution.

Yet the survivors endeavored to rebuild their way of life as best they could, inured as they were to hardship. But then it seemed that even nature was against them. Beginning on Epiphany, 1709, there descended on Europe "*ein erschrecklich grausame Kälte*" (a frightfully dreadful gruesome cold); a winter colder and more bitter than any that the oldest inhabitants could remember. Men and cattle froze to death; birds, it was said, died on the wing; millponds were locked deep in ice and no flour could be ground; fruit trees were completely frozen.

To these distressed persons in this unhappy land the New World beckoned with rays of hope. One William Penn, having himself some German ancestry, had toured Germany and, impressed by the industry and efficiency of German farmers, had decided that these were very desirable colonists for his new land of Pennsylvania. He too had suffered religious persecution, and his Quaker faith was synonymous with peace. Throughout the land he distributed handbills offering large farm lands, laws of their own making, religious toleration to all Christians, and pursuits of peace. Queen Anne of England also had relatives among German Protestant princes, and she too had distributed pamphlets promising aid and urging emigration to her American colonies. Letters from relatives who had already settled at Germantown confirmed the prospectus of Pennsylvania.

To this land of promise would these unhappy Germans go, trusting for transportation to the bounty of "Good Queen Anne." Just what route the Dieffenbachs took is not known, but probably a several days' journey by boat up the Rhine River took them to the ports of Holland, where they awaited transport ships for England. It is a matter of record that on June 11, 1709, the Dieffenbach party had arrived at St. Catherine's dock near the Tower of London. Their expectation of prompt sailing thence to Pennsylvania was only a delusion.

These "poor Palatines" arrived not in hundreds but in thousands, to the consternation of authorities, posing problems of food and shelter. Some were housed in vacant warehouses, some in tents on Blackheath, and some were even taken into private homes. Compassionate Londoners and other Englishmen elsewhere contributed toward food and supplies. By mid-July Queen Anne had to order that no more would be admitted. Several thousand of these Germans were then settled in Ireland. As for the remainder, the Board of Trade devised a plan to retrieve expenditures by transporting them to New York and employing them in extracting tar from the pine trees there, thus also providing a much-needed supply for the British navy in the current war with France. A very small settlement of Germans had been established several years before about sixty miles up the Hudson River by the Rev. Joshua Kocherthal, and Rev. Kocherthal was in London at the time.

A number of transport ships (ten according to some records) was at last assembled at Plymouth, and from December on, several thousand Germans were housed in these ships, where they waited until April, 1710, when they finally set sail for New York. In June the journey ended at Nutten Island, with almost a year spent just in reaching America. Many had died of disease and privation since December, and many others of fever on the island, but the Dieffenbach party all survived. After a long period of quarantine and other delays, early in October they were moved up the Hudson River to Livingston's Manor.

Houses and shelters of some sort were constructed, ranged in villages as in Germany, three on the east side of the Hudson and two on the west, frequently referred to as East Camp and West Camp. With food and subsistence provided, it was better than spending a winter on a wretched, crowded ship. In the spring they would set to work at the unfamiliar task of manufacturing tar.

Many, however, were exasperated. This was not the Pennsylvania of their dreams, and not the kind of life these farmers and skilled craftsmen had hoped to lead there. Instead, they found themselves practically serfs or indentured servants, toiling to repay their passage and keep, and allotted only a few sandy acres, insufficient for their needs, and with a promise of only 40 acres when their long-term servitude was fulfilled. An attempt also was made to convert them to the Church of England. A rebellion erupted, but it was quickly quelled



Johann Conrad Dieffenbach and his family, along with thousands of other "poor Palatines," left their home in Germany and arrived in London in 1709; they were subsequently transported to New York to extract tar for the British Navy. This is the First Palatines' Church at Newburg, N.Y. (Tulpehocken Settlement Historical Society, Vol. IX, No. 1)

by the calling in of troops.

Johann Conrad Dieffenbach was busied for a while in making barrels. So great was this need that the masters were required to appoint thirty-six men every Monday to aid the coopers. The Dieffenbach family was increased during this period by the birth of a son whom they named Johann Adam. As he was baptized by some itinerant Reformed minister, there is no record of either his birth or baptism.

For a while things seemed to be working well. Food was fairly good and sufficient, the cowed workers busy, and some tar was being produced. But in 1712 things fell apart. The first supervisor refused to return and his successor was not so competent. Suppliers began to cheat on the quantities of flour, and their pork was too heavily salted. Supplies were unequally and irregularly distributed. Funds were being exhausted. Reaction in England to supporting these Palatines while there were so many poor at home put an end to subsidies. Expecting appropriations from England, the governor had gone into debt on the project. On September 12, 1712, he released the Palatines, telling them they could go elsewhere and look for work, but to remain within the province to await the Queen's pleasure. Some went to Albany, some to New York, and others to Schenectady, where they received generous charity from the inhabitants. Still, many suffered sickness, misery, and starvation.

Somehow there persisted among these Germans a belief that the Indians had promised them lands on the frontier along the Schoharie. How this belief arose we do not know. It had been said that some Indian chiefs who had been taken to London for a tour there saw these Palatines and promised them lands in New York. However, these Indians and the Palatines were not there at the same time, though they might have met in New York. A reference to these Indian lands came up again in the aborted rebellion of the spring of 1711. Now several hundred determined Palatines defied the governor's orders and in October, 1712, moved down to the Indian lands on the Schoharie. Two members of this group were Jacob Kobel and Johann Conrad Dieffenbach.

Although they were not allowed to take their tools, they improvised them, and with the help of the friendly Indians established shelters or homes again in seven small villages or *dorfs* as they had in Germany, and as they had done along the Hudson previously. However it had occurred, a very friendly relationship existed between these Iroquois and the Palatines. One thing they had in common was an implacable enmity toward the French. The friendly relation was further cemented when young Conrad Weiser went to live with a chief and learn the Indian language. His high intelligence, his honesty, his stoicism in privation and near starvation at times, together with his sincere desire to learn the Indian ways and the Indian language, won him their esteem, their trust, and their lifelong friendship.

Exhibiting a remarkable cooperative effort, these Germans assisted one another, but there were incredible hardships at first on the Schoharie. Men walked sixty miles to obtain even a small supply of flour, which they carried home upon their backs. "They borrowed a horse here, a cow there," and yoked them together to plow their fields and to plant their crops. Until the crops could ripen they subsisted on nature — wild potatoes and strawberries fortunately grew there in abundance. Some food was supplied them by the generous citizens of Schenectady, and some came from the Church people of New York.

There is little of our family history recorded for Schoharie. In compliance with a new law, on January 31, 1716, Johann Conrad Dieffenbach took the oath of allegiance at Albany, though the record of his name is almost unrecognizable — "Johan Coenraet Jefbach." One Ulrich Simmendinger and his wife, bereft of their children, returned to Germany and at Rutlingen in 1717 published a "Register" of their countrymen then living in New York. Herein it is recorded that Conrad Dieffenbach and Maria Barbara and five children were then living at New Annesbury (Hartmansdorf to these Germans). Evidently Conrad's mother Anna had died previously, but whether at Schoharie or at West Camp on the Hudson we do not know. The number of his children had increased to five with the birth of a fourth

daughter, Dorothea, born July 27, 1714, and baptized by the Rev. Joshua Kocherthal on August 1, 1714. On that very day the well-intentioned Queen Anne died.

Left to themselves, in a few years these Germans at Schoharie had transformed the land and accumulated property, including tools, horses, and cattle. But their prosperity brought further tribulations. To the Indian mind, "giving" meant "lending," not permanent alienation. The Raritan Indians, it is said, sold Staten Island six times. The Mohawks, it was now learned, had ceded these Schoharie lands first to the Dutch and then to the English before donating them to the distressed Palatines.

Now the early proprietors sent agents requesting payment for these farms, regardless of any Palatine arrangements with the Mohawks. Some of these agents were very roughly handled by indignant persons, but the Germans at last decided to move elsewhere, most of them to other parts of New York. But "Pennsylvania" still sounded in the ears of some, especially since 1722 when Governor Keith, then in New York for a council, renewed the invitation to settle in Pennsylvania. An agent was sent to interview the governor, and scouts to look over the land. There remains today hardly a trace of those seven *dorfs* along the Schoharie, but another worthy ancestor has left his name upon the land — Cobelskill, the small stream where for ten years the miller Jacob Kobel had his home, and perhaps a mill too, if grinding-stones could be procured.

Once again with the aid of Indians a trail was made to Charlotte Creek where chestnut trees were felled, seasoned, and shaped into dugouts and canoes; preparations for the water route by way of the Susquehanna to Pennsylvania. In the very early spring, goods and implements were hauled on rough sleds over snows to Charlotte Creek, point of embarkation. With foresight, efficiency, and expertise born of previous experiences, they made their preparations. Food and shelter for the journey, seed for future crops, tools, weapons, kitchen utensils, and other such necessities had to be transported too. Everything unnecessary had to be abandoned — furniture, flowering plants, cherished mementos, items perhaps brought from Germany and salvaged despite previous removals, had to be left behind.

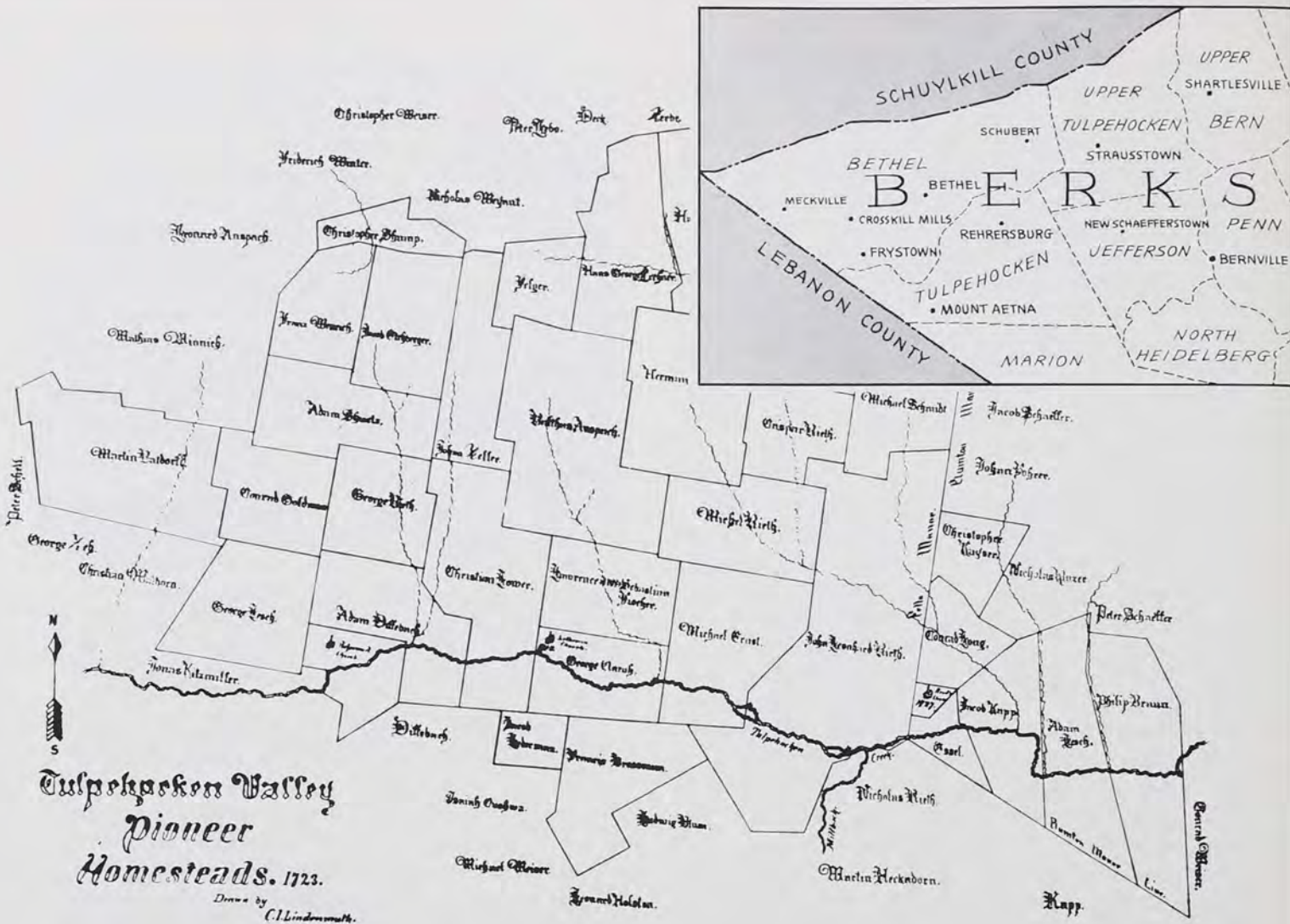
The most expedient way to transport bulky articles would be by rafts of heavy timbers, timbers which could form the sills and frames of new homes in Pennsylvania. Extremely useful were they now, those water-tight barrels of cooper Dieffenbach. Lashed down to the rafts and fenced in, they could transport seed and flour, salted meat and indispensable possessions. So would later generations of their descendants in Ohio build rafts on the Scioto to transport three-tiered barrels of produce — whiskey, grain, and flour — down the Ohio and the Mississippi, even to markets in New Orleans where the timbers proved a very valuable part of their cargo.

Early one April morning in 1723, some twenty canoes, rafts, and dugouts shoved off for a trip of ten or more days and three hundred miles down the swollen waters of the zig-zag Susquehanna. Only a few lines were ever written about this remarkable and heroic expedition. To the participants perhaps it was only one more incident of their many tribulations. Mishaps or other incidents of this journey we shall never know. Friendly Indian guides may have accompanied this party, locating overnight camping sites, and assisting in procuring fish and game for the hungry oarsmen's evening meals. Overcoming all obstacles, down the river they journeyed until they reached the Swatara, which they ascended until a portage could be made to their final destination, the Tulpehocken — the Indians' "Land of Turtles."

The eye of imagination pictures landward from Schoharie a strange safari: Indian guides for German cowboys mounted on plow horses and leading pack-horses burdened with provisions; others perhaps conveying family members or driving herds of livestock — horses, sheep, and cattle — southward to the land of Tulpehocken. On their arrival, farm work would busily begin.

How many persons came by the river and who the individuals were we do not know. Neither do we know how many came overland with the livestock. That the boatmen had arrived before May 13, 1723, is apparent from a letter with that date from James Mitchell of Donegal to Mayor Logan of Philadelphia: "I give you to know that there is fifteen familieys of Duch come from Albeny & are now setling upp Swatarra." Mitchell may have been the first to mistake these Germans of Pennsylvania for Dutch. He is not alone in this. In the annals of America the multitudes of Germans who have contributed so much to Pennsylvania have been known popularly, though erroneously, as "Pennsylvania-Dutch"; this despite the fact that their books, their wills, and their tombstones were all in German. Mitchell apparently did not know either that not all this party settled at Swatara. In 1726 Godfried Fiedler made a Deposition in which he reported that there were sixteen families, some of them making their stop on the Swatara, and the rest on the Tulpehocken.

In 1724 a petition bearing fifteen names (assumed to be Mitchell's original settlers) was sent to Governor Keith, asking that titles be cleared so that they might purchase the lands where they had settled. This petition begins: "The petition of us the subscribers, being thirty-three families in number . . ." A few lines further are these words "Your petitioners did last year leave their settlements in New York Government and came with their families to this place." (These petitioners are still *thirty-three* — not *fifteen*.) This petition is in good English, with the customary legal conventions and terminology. Obviously fifteen delegates of those thirty-three families had sought out an English lawyer



somewhere (hardly there in Tulpehocken) to prepare this petition. If the lawyer also wrote their names on it, he lapsed into his Latin in one instance (Sebastian Pisas for Sebastian Fischer), and his knowledge of German was only auricular. This petition clearly indicates that these fifteen signers, plus eighteen others they represented, all arrived in Tulpehocken in 1723.

Thus there is no documentary evidence that Johann Conrad Dieffenbach was in the original party. But there is yet another consideration. In 1904 C.I. Lindemuth published a map of the original holdings of settlers in Tulpehocken, based on land deeds and other documents. On this map it will be seen that the farm of Adam Dieffenbach (which he inherited from his father, Johann Conrad Dieffenbach) was almost in the center of and surrounded by the farms of persons whose names appeared on that 1724 petition. Would they have left this tract open for him had he not come with them? Furthermore, one of the signers was George Reith, Dieffenbach's son-in-law. His farm joined Dieffenbach's on the north. Settling as close as they could to one another would hardly have been possible had they not come

together.

However this may be, after an odyssey of almost exactly fourteen years, these Germans had at last reached the land of their hopes and dreams, the promised land of Pennsylvania. Here amid the Blue Hills, the fertile fields, and beside the quiet streams they would enjoy peace, prosperity, and religious freedom, on broad acres of their own in the plenty of Pennsylvania. Here they would spend the remainder of their lives in the comfort and contentment they had so dearly bought. And they would enrich the land of their adoption by their useful toil, their expert craftsmanship, and their superior methods of farming.

With admirable and astonishing cooperation, already remarked in Schoharie, they worked together as a most efficient unit, building one another's log cabin homes and barns, with the cabins near a spring or over one for an abundant supply of water. No longer in *dorfs*, but on scattered farms these buildings rose. When the horses and livestock arrived, fields were plowed and crops were planted. There is a story that a dozen horses escaped one night and eighteen months later returned to Schoharie.

The skeptics would be silenced by pioneers in Illinois who had a like experience. In 1851, shortly after they had arrived there, four horses disappeared one night, not by act of horse thieves as at first was thought. Many months later these same horses reappeared at their former stables in Ohio whence they had come.

Once more thrift, industry, and perseverance transformed a bit of wilderness into a prosperous, thriving farming community. Somewhere, perhaps, the spirit of William Penn smiled approvingly on that settlement at Tulpehocken. Sturdy houses on fruitful, well-tilled farmlands; weedless gardens; weedless orchards; fields of blue-flowered flax for linen; gabbling geese on every runlet to provide down for quilts when winter raged; busy, skillful hands at useful labor; these were the trademarks of his Pennsylvania Dutch. Many thousands more like them yet would come.

Still, there remained some problems at Tulpehocken; one was that of obtaining valid titles to their lands (not another Schoharie!); another was that of securing a passable road to their market at Philadelphia. The Leni-Lenape Indians complained that these settlers were on lands still possessed by them, and the petition of 1724 about this purchase could not be acted upon because of the death of William Penn and subsequent litigation. Eventually the rightful heirs were invested and then a treaty devised with the Indians to purchase this tract. In his admirable book, *The Hub of the Tulpehocken*, Earl W. Ibach gives the text of this treaty and lists the quantities of articles given in addition to fifty pounds in money as payment. Among these he lists twenty brass kettles, twelve dozen rings, four hundred tobacco pipes, and twenty-three looking-glasses, to mention only a few of the articles. But now, in 1732, the lands could be purchased, and one of the first to make payment was Johann Conrad Dieffenbach.

In September, 1727, a petition for a road eastward to link up with the Highroad to Philadelphia at Oley was sent to the Court of Quarter Sessions. It was signed by twenty-eight Germans, but two of these were living elsewhere, and the tax collector had already located sixteen others who might have signed. On this petition the seventh signature is that of Jacob Kobel, and the eighteenth is in the firm hand of Conrad Dieffenbach. Since nothing was done about this petition, the settlers themselves widened Indian trails by cutting down trees and underbrush.

As in the days of Boaz, the farmers would flail out their grain on the threshing floor. Then they stored it in grain sacks to await transportation to Philadelphia. For mutual aid and protection several farmers would form a wagon train for the ten-day trip to market. In such wagon trains as these, Conrad Dieffenbach and, later, his son Adam, would go on annual trips to Philadelphia.

Farmers near the Conestoga Hills a few miles west of



A view of Berks County, known for its prominent hills, productive fields, and prosperous towns.

Tulpehocken devised a vehicle to meet new conditions. Larger and heavier than their hay wains, it was water-tight and curved up higher at the ends, the better to ford streams where as yet there were no bridges. Higher wheels were necessary to clear the stumps left by the axmen on the trail. A canvas top gave protection to the grain from weather on this trip to Philadelphia, and to the purchases they would bring back home with them. They could not have known, these practical farmers, the impact they would have on the future of America. Out of necessity and ingenuity they had devised in their Conestoga wagon the forerunner of the prairie schooner, the covered wagon, which in later times would move in vast trains over the Forbes Road to Pittsburgh and open up Ohio, and in later days roll westward over prairies, plains, and mountains to the Pacific and the far-off, unheard-of land of Oregon.

Let us assume that Johann Conrad Dieffenbach and his Maria Barbara lived the remainder of their lives here in happiness and in comfort and contentment, surrounded by old friends and neighbors, by their children and even by some grandchildren, in the kind of life they loved. With larger acreage, more of Conrad's time and effort would be devoted to his farming; but on rainy days, after harvest, and in winter months, he would be found in his shop busy at his trade. Idleness at such times was unthinkable among these Pennsylvania Dutch, and every farm boy invariably also learned a trade. (This deeply rooted custom was still dominant a century later among descendants in Ohio.) At her huge fireplace in the kitchen Maria Barbara would be equally busy; or she would be baking bread and drying apples at her outdoor beehive oven; making soap or apple butter; hackling flax or plucking geese; spinning or weaving. In short, she would be working dawn to dusk at her never-ending household chores.

On July 22, 1737, Johann Conrad Dieffenbach devised his will. It was probated on October 11, 1738.

Thus he died sometime in the interval at the age of 78. Because it was filed at Philadelphia instead of at Lancaster, the will eluded searchers for many years. It appears in the index (probably so recorded by a Welshman) as John Cynraed Tiffebogh (although it is clearly signed as Dieffenbach): thus the information that there was no will at Philadelphia for Conrad Dieffenbach. Thanks to the publication by R.T. and M.C. Williams of their *Index of Early Wills and Administrations of Philadelphia County*, this will was located. Both the original will and the translation are on file there, the translation done by a German whose knowledge of English spelling was limited.

From his will it is evident that Conrad Dieffenbach had prospered somewhat. He had made a payment of forty pounds on the farm, which he bequeathed to his son Adam. He had already given his son Jacob (still living somewhere) and his daughter Catharina Margaretha Reith (children of his first wife) their share — another eighty pounds if they received as much as Adam did. No bequest is given to the two younger daughters, Maria Elizabeth Ernst and Anna Dorothea Hock, except their share eventually of their mother's household furnishings. It may be that they too had already been given their share. Anna Elizabeth, born in Germany in 1708, is not mentioned, but as he speaks of "my wife of my late marriage and my three children" (of that marriage) it would appear that she had died some time previously.

Very thoroughly he provided indisputable lifelong tenure for his widow in the house where they were living. Completely would she remain the mistress, owning all the household furniture and all utensils, receiving yearly one-fourth of all farm produce and a portion of the garden. To assure that these provisions were strictly carried out, he named her one of the administrators. While her only son Adam, married in 1734, was probably living in the old home and managing the farm, neither he nor the daughter-in-law, should they ever be so inclined, could disturb the even tenor of her declining years. How long Maria Barbara survived her husband to enjoy these facilities we do not know. There is no record telling when she died.

His signature in a straight line, though in a slightly shaky hand, shows that since 1727 Conrad Dieffenbach had learned some English script, for he signs in English, though a wax seal unfortunately was stamped upon the final letters of his name. The two neighbors who witnessed this will, John Martin Kitzmiller and Johannes Lebo, merely made their mark. Younger men of these three frontiers had little opportunity for a German education.

Their earthly pilgrimage completed, somewhere in the Tulpehocken area Johann Conrad Dieffenbach and his Maria Barbara were laid to rest, far from Wiesloch and from Ober Siebenthal. There is a tradition that he was buried on his farm, and that may well be true, instead of

the cemetery at Host Church, as this writer once thought. In a legal document of 1741, a boundary of Adam Dieffenbach's farm is designated as "Church Lands." If this area had at first been part of Conrad's farm, it would account for the peculiar, irregular shape of Adam's holdings. Though designated as "Church Lands," there was no church building there until 1744. John Kitzmiller was buried there in February 1745, ten months before the property was purchased from Caspar Wistar. The "Church Lands" then must have been the original cemetery of the Reformed congregation. Although the Kitzmiller tombstone is the earliest one in the cemetery, and the only one for the next twenty-five years, it cannot be assumed that Death had taken a holiday in intervals either after or before. Though there are no tombstones to mark their graves, Conrad and Maria Dieffenbach may have been buried in the first cemetery of Tulpehocken Reformed Church within sight of their homestead where they spent their declining years.

Their story told, thus we leave them, these German and Swiss ancestors of ours, to their repose in that old stone-walled churchyard in Berks County, Pennsylvania, along the Tulpehocken.

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