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

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

Palatine Mennonites in Schleswig-Holstein, 1693-1698

by Sem C. Sutter

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

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

Trials of the Palatinate

The last two decades of the seventeenth century proved to be trying years for the Palatine Mennonites,¹ most of whom had recently emigrated from Switzerland or Transylvania. In 1685 control of the territory passed from the Protestant Simmern line to the Catholic house of Zweibrücken-Neuburg. The new Elector, Philipp Wilhelm (1685-90), renewed the Mennonite concession of limited toleration, but his son and successor, Johann Wilhelm (1690-1716), delayed renewal from 1690 to 1698 and demanded higher protection fees.

The physical and economic disruption of war compounded this insecurity. The French troops of Louis XIV invaded the Palatinate in 1688 in what is variously known, depending on the observer's viewpoint, as the Nine Years War (1688-97), King William's War, and the War of the League of Augsburg. French land and sea forces fought on multiple fronts against a Grand Alliance, which eventually included the Holy Roman Empire, the German princes, the Netherlands, England, Spain, Sweden, and Savoy.² After their initial invasion of the Palatinate in the summer of 1688, the French concentrated their efforts against the Dutch and Spanish in the Low Countries.

Unable to maintain active operations along the entire front, they conceived a strategy for releasing their troops from the Palatinate without allowing German forces to reoccupy the positions they were evacuating. In the winter of 1688-89 they began the systematic devastation of the territory by burning towns and villages, pillaging, and destroying supplies they could not take with them. Damage was severe and widespread. They destroyed the capital of Heidelberg and the bishopric cities of Trier, Worms, and Speyer. Scores of villages lay in ashes. Even rural districts suffered crippling and destructive blows to their grain fields, vineyards, forests, and wildlife and confiscation of their livestock and grain. In some areas farmers were unable to plant crops as a result of nearly constant disruption.³

¹*Mennonite Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Palatinate," by Gerhard Hein.

²George Clark, "The Nine Years War, 1688-1697," *New Cambridge Modern History*, 14 vols. (Cambridge: University Press, 1970), vol. 6: *The Rise of Great Britain and Russia, 1688-1715/25*, J. S. Bromley, ed., pp. 223-253.

³Kurt von Raumer, *Die Zerstörung der Pfalz von 1689* (Munich and Berlin: R. Oldenbourg, 1930), pp. 181-190.



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



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

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

recrimination to continue with the return of the French.

We can thus understand that some Mennonites in the Palatinate began to consider migration to a more peaceful location. They turned first to the Dutch Mennonites who had collected money for their relief from earlier hardships. The Dutch sent shiploads of grain and clothing up the Rhine and aided some refugees in settling in the Netherlands.⁴

Probably through the Dutch Mennonites the congregation at Ibersheim in the Palatinate learned about Friedrichstadt,⁵ a port town in Schleswig-Holstein founded in northern Germany in 1621 by Mennonites and Remonstrants from the Netherlands and embodying religious toleration in its charter. By the late seventeenth century the religious bodies in the town included Lutherans, Catholics, Remonstrants, Quakers, Jews, and Mennonites.

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

In 1693 Christian Plien,⁶ a minister at Heppenheim in the Palatinate, wrote to the ministers of the Flemish congregation in Friedrichstadt regarding the possibility of refugees' settling there. A letter of inquiry dated July 27 (New Style) survives which, according to internal evidence, was at least the second such letter. Plien described sufferings at the hands of both the French and the Germans, who stole livestock and extorted large sums of money by physical torture. He reported that a number of families were prepared to migrate to Friedrichstadt if farms could be found for them to rent. They intended to leave as soon as they could liquidate

⁴W. J. Kühler, "Dutch Mennonite Relief Work in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 17 (April 1943): 88-89.

⁵*Mennonite Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Friedrichstadt," by Christian Neff.

⁶*Mennonite Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Phlein, Christian," by N. van der Zijpp. This is probably the same man. He also figures in the letters of the Amish division. See Milton Gascho, "The Amish Division of 1693-1697 in Switzerland and Alsace," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 11 (October 1937): 239-240.

their household property and livestock. With aid from Mennonites in Holland and Hamburg they would perhaps be able to afford renting one farm for every two families. He asked for more information regarding farm rental, currency, and other particulars.⁷

Another source, however, reveals that Plien himself had already been to Friedrichstadt, probably to survey firsthand the potential for resettlement. The membership book of the Flemish congregation records that he baptized six local persons into membership on May 10, 1693.⁸ No evidence exists that Plien ever returned to Friedrichstadt.

Palatinate Refugees

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

Hanss Jacob Hestand, minister, with wife and child

Hans Lüttweiller, deacon, single

Hanss Gochenauwer with wife and siblings

Hanss Jacob Bropacher with wife and child

Hanss Strickler with wife

Hanss Weber with wife and children

Christian Eicher with wife and children

Christian Kensinger with wife

Benedickt Kiner's widow with her daughter Anna

Hanss Cunratt Egle

Hanss Cunrad Strickler

Jacob Strickler

Jacob Muller

Josep Gochenauwer

Hanss Jacob Forer

Hanss Heindrich Hestand

Maria Hestands

Maria Gochenauwer

Feronicka Gochenauwer

Barbera Mallinger

Jonas Melinger, brother of former, not yet a member of congregation

The October 26 group follows:

Hanss Heinderich Kauffman, just ordained deacon, with wife and two children

Ullrich Maÿer, just ordained deacon, with wife

Hanss Huber with wife

Dauitt Hiniger with wife and one child

Osswolt Sigfritt with wife and two children

Benedickt Jose with wife

Hanss Jau, widower with one child

Jost Millematter with wife and one child

Jacob Pletzscher with wife and two children

Anna Rüttschne, widow with two children

Single persons:

Casper Moseman

Anna Wenger

Barbera Wenger

Elisabeth Oberholtzer

Anna Schneider

Barbera Wenger

Christina Stöckeler

Young people not yet members:

Petter Hodell, a tailor

Margreta, Mattellena, and Barbera Wänger, three orphans

Christian Gunden

Michell Mosseman

Hanss Gritter

Petter Kässler

Hanss Gunden

Christian Guth

Michell von Zotzenhausen

Postscript:

Mardien Maÿle, widower with five children

Samuel Baÿer with wife and six children⁹

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

Vital Statistics Records

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

November 18 (bans) and December 3, 1693 marriage of Hans Conradt Eglÿ and Froinca [sic] Gognourÿ

December 30, 1693 (bans) and January 14, 1694

⁷"Brieven aan die Gemeente van 1623-1782," Mennonite Archives, Friedrichstadt, West Germany.

⁸"Ledemaatenboek, 1632-1704," No. B5, folio 57-58, Mennonite Archives.

⁹"Attestatie van Lidmaat-schaap," No. 31, Mennonite Archives.

¹⁰Ibid.

marriage of Marten Melÿ and Antie Rutgen
May 3, 1694 baptism of Leendert Backer "uit de Pals" (from the Palatinate)

April 29, 1694 marriage of Hans Jacobs Hestandt, widower with child, and Antie Beyers

November 11 (bans) and November 25, 1694 marriage of Hendrick Heistandt and Barbra Mellingers

December 10, 1694 death of Fronica Gognourÿ Eglÿ

July 11, 1695 baptisms of Anna Heistants and Catrÿna Gognouwers

April 11 (bans) and April 25, 1697 marriage of Hans Conradt Eglÿ and Maertie Gerrdts

May 30, 1697 burial of Hans Jacobs Brobach

February 6 (bans) and February 20, 1698 marriage of Hans Hendrich Hestands and Maria Gognouwers

August 25, 1698 baptism of Abraham Eicher. He left Friedrichstadt in 1698.

August 25, 1698 baptism of Samuel Beÿer, son of Samuel Beÿer from the Palatinate. He returned to the Palatinate with a church letter of May 7, 1700.¹¹

In August 1698, when the Frisian congregation merged with the Flemish-High German one, three Palatine refugees were listed among the members of the more conservative Frisian group:

Hans Hendrick Koopman (Kauffman)

Grietie Hans Hendricks (probably his wife)

Hans Conradt Stricler¹²

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

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

November 13, 1693—child from the Palatinate

November 29, 1693—child of Hans Hendricks Koopman from the Palatinate

January 18, 1694—child of Christiaen Akker from the Palatinate

June 29, 1694—child of Hans Wever

November 25, 1694—child of Hans Hendricks Koopman

December 16, 1694—wife of Hans Konraed [Egli]

January 6, 1695—Christina Marja Koopmans

February 12, 1695—child of Christian Eiger

April 5, 1696—child of Christiaen Kinsinger

June 7, 1696—child of Hans Jacobs [Brubacher] Palser

November 29, 1696—child of Hans Jacobs Palser

March 25, 1697—wife of Hans Strickler

May 30, 1697—Hans Jacobs [Brubacher]

June 20, 1697—child of Hans Strigler¹³

Of particular interest to the Pennsylvania reader is the notarized statement in the Remonstrant records that on November 29, 1694, the heirs of Jacob van der Schagen had sold to Marten Melÿ a parcel of land called "Tamkenbalÿ," located in Stapelholm, the rural district just east of Friedrichstadt.¹⁴ Might this be the Martin Meylin of Pennsylvania rifle tradition, a relative, or merely a coincidence of names?

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

Hans Jakob Heÿstandt and his wife

Hans Ludtweÿler

Henderich Heÿstandt and his wife

Hans Henderik Heÿstandt and his wife

Samuel Beÿher and his wife

Hans Weffer and his wife

Josep Kognauwer and his sisters, Leÿsbet and Katrÿna

Hans Strechler and his wife, Antie

Hans Haubert and his wife

Olderich Haubert and his wife¹⁵

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

Does this episode have any relevance for early Pennsylvania Mennonite history? I believe it does in at least two ways. It enhances our sketchy knowledge of the Mennonite experience in the Palatinate in the generation preceding migration to Pennsylvania. The trials of the war years were among the factors which accumulated over many years to cause dissatisfaction. We can better understand the psychology of migration: people accustomed to frequent moves in response to religious or economic pressures were likely to find attractive the potential opportunity an ocean away in Penn's woods. A cursory examination of the names involved in the Friedrichstadt migration strongly suggests that some of these persons or their descendants eventually settled in Pennsylvania. Genealogists and local historians should test this thesis with American evidence for corroboration or refutation and share their findings.

¹¹"Ledemaatenboek," passim.

¹²Ibid.

¹³"Kerckenboek van Anno 1678-1728," Doos 9, No. B17, Remonstrant Archives, Friedrichstadt, West Germany.

¹⁴Doos 17, Remonstrant Archives.

¹⁵"Attestatie van Lidmaat-schaap," No. 31, Mennonite Archives.