THE EARLIEST HISTORY OF GERMANTOWN

An Unknown Pastorius Manuscript

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OF ALL the numerous manuscripts that have come down to us from the founder of the first German settlement on American soil, the most important, from the historical point of view, is the old land record of Germantown, entitled “Grund- und Lager-Buch aller und jeden unbeweglichen Gueter, geklaert- und ungeklaerten Landes, in der gantzen German Township.” Inasmuch as this record is addressed to the first German inhabitants of America and to their descendants, it is also the most national book indited by Francis Daniel Pastorius. Its Latin dedication has been translated into English by the Quaker poet, John Greenleaf Whittier, and the “Address to Posterity” (“Ansprach an die Nachkoemmlingsschaft, und Alle, die dieses Lager-Buch continuiren oder fortsetzen”) was the chief source for Whittier’s “Pennsylvania Pilgrim.”

A three-page manuscript in the Abraham H. Cassel collection at Juniata College, Huntingdon, Pa., bears a very close relation to Germantown’s “Grund- und Lager-Buch.” The well-preserved document referred to was written by Pastorius in the year 1691, and careful investigation has revealed that, for the most part, it is an almost literal translation into English of excerpts from the “Ansprach an die Nachkoemmlingsschaft,” recording the beginnings of the Dutch-German immigration to America—from the year 1681, when William Penn was granted the province of Pennsylvania, to the laying-out of Germantown in 1684. For the last third of the historical outline, which covers the period from the foundation of Germantown to its actual incorporation in 1691, no direct basis has been discovered in the Old Land Record. Although the German original is much longer and detailed, the English counterpart is more specific in giving dates and the names of those persons in Germany and Holland who had purchased land from William Penn.
Whether or not the hitherto unknown English version was prepared by Pastorius for some special purpose, remains an unsolved problem. The title “Some Memorandums Concerning the Dutch Purchasers And the laying out of Germantownship in Pensilvania” was probably chosen without taking into consideration the latter part of the manuscript. An entry on the back of the second leaf (presumably in the handwriting of Christian Lehman, surveyor of Germantown before the Revolutionary War) which designates the document as a “List of Dutch Purchasers of German Town,” seems likewise inadequate. However, as a firsthand account of the earliest Pennsylvania German settlement, the Pastorius record published here for the first time is interesting and significant. It is written on two sheets of Klaus Rittenhouse paper, measuring 19 x 30.5 cm. each, and having as watermarks a trifoliated clover-leaf and the initials KR.

**THE MANUSCRIPT:**

Some Memorandums Concerning the Dutch Purchasers And the laying out of Germantownship in Pensilvania. Taken out of a High-Dutch Manuscript, Written by Francis Daniel Pastorius In the year 1691.

Whereas Soon after King Charles the Second Did Grant the Province of Pensilvania to William Penn Esquire that he Should be Proprietor & Governour of the Same; Several persons in Germany & Holland (To wit Jacob Van Den Wallen, Johan Jacob Shutz, Daniel Behagel, Caspar Merian, John Wm. Uberfelt, George Straus, Johana Eleonora Merlau, Abraham Hasevoet, Gerhart Van Mastrich, Thomas Van Willich, Johannes Lebrun, John Laurens, Balthasar Jawert, Johannes Kemler, Jacob Telner, Dirk Sipman, Jacob Isaacs, Lenart Arets, John Strepers & Gerit Remkis:) Did purchase of the sd William Penn 43000 acres of Land By assistance of Benjamen ffurly when Agent of the sd William Penn at Rotterdam; whereupon In the year 1683 the 20th of August the abovesd F. D. Pastorius attorney for the sd German Purchasers arived at Philada. in the sd Province, And the Same year on the 6th day of october arived at Philada. aforesd, Dirk op den Graef, Herman op den Graef, Abraham op den Graef, Lenart Arets, Tunes Cunrads, Renier Tysen, William Streper, John Lensen, Peter Keurlin, John Simons, Johannes Bleickers, Abraham
Tunes and John Lucken in behalf of the Low Dutch purchasers / And then they all together went to the sd William Penn & Desired of him that all the land purchased by the High- & Low-Dutch purchasers Should be laid out & Survey'd in one tract And that by Navigable Water as it was promised to the above sd first purchasers beyond the Sea. But because the sd William Penn would not pleasure us in the Same, but in the Meantime untiill the Arival of more Dutch families; Did profer us a township, not far from the City Liberties about two miles above the falls of Sculkill; Which tract of land we went to See on the 16th & Several following days of the sd October but by reason of the hills we Dislik'd the Same, and on the 20th of the Same Month we Reported to the sd William Penn, that we would rather go to the Woodward on an Even tract of ground which proposal he liked well & on the 22nd Ditto went with us to View the Same tract where Germantown now is laid out, And then in the year 1684. the 20th and following days of february Germantownship was laid out by Thomas ffairman according to the Tenor of the Warrant we had Received of the sd William Penn, And then at the Begining of our Setling in Germantown Did Request the Proprietor to grant Certain priveledges to our Dutch Nation who according to his honourable Mildness Did grant our Request and promised to gratifie us with profitable priveledges; But in the mean time and before the sd priveledges were Executed we were under the Jurisdiction of the Courts at Philadelphia. / Lastly in the year 1691 the 18th of february Arived here (.Inclosed in a Letter to the sd francis Daniel Pastorius.) by the way of New york a Charter for the Germantown Corporation, Dated at London the 12th day of August 1689. By which (:after having the great Seal of this Province affixed thereunto:) our former way of Officiating Ceased, And we from the 2d day of June in the Same year did begin in our General Court & Court of Record Did officiate for the Germantown Corporation.