PENNSYLVANIA GERMANS MOVE TO KANSAS

BY GEORGE R. BEYER*

The distinctive role which the Pennsylvania Germans have played within the Keystone State since their arrival in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is well known. As a group, of course, these people have never forsaken their original American homeland, and yet individuals among them were long conspicuous in the movement of settlers to other parts of the country. This migration out of Pennsylvania began well before the American Revolution, with Germans moving into Maryland as early as 1729 and into Virginia and the Carolinas in succeeding decades. Before the end of the eighteenth century, scattered settlements were planted in other parts of the East. As the years passed, Pennsylvania Germans also contributed notably to the peopling of the Middle and Far West. Considerable numbers of them made their way into northern Ohio following the Revolutionary War, with some continuing on into Indiana. These states as well as Illinois received particularly large numbers of Pennsylvania German immigrants during the early part of the nineteenth century, as did Iowa and Kansas in the several decades prior to 1890. Two other states, Oklahoma and California, attracted later settlers.1

Although the immigration of Pennsylvania Germans did not occur as early in Kansas as it did in some states to the east, the story of the Kansas immigration is an extremely interesting one.

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This would have been true even if the thousands who made the move to the Sunflower State during the quarter-century after the Civil War had not included members of the family into which Dwight D. Eisenhower would later be born. It was in this post-Civil War period that Kansas experienced its most spectacular growth. Population, which had been only 107,206 in 1860, reached 364,399 ten years later. Between 1865 and 1873, two railroads were built across the state, with several others being constructed in eastern Kansas, and this was one of the leading factors behind the population increase. Although growth was temporarily checked by a combination of factors in 1873 and 1874 (depression, drought, and a plague of grasshoppers being chief among them), population once again rose substantially during the five-year period ending in 1880, and the census of that year recorded the state as having 996,096 inhabitants. Expansion continued into the next decade, with settlement now spreading into western Kansas, where rainfall was scant. It was not until 1887 that drought, followed by widespread crop failure, finally brought an end to the population boom. Although prosperity would gradually return to the state after 1895, the period of mass immigration to Kansas—with the spectacular rate of development that accompanied it—was over.

The new residents that Kansas acquired during its years of most rapid growth were recruited from many sources, but the majority were native Americans. Other than Kansas itself, the American state in which the greatest number of Kansans in 1880 had been born—106,992—was Illinois, while Ohio, Indiana, and Missouri followed in that order. However, the fifth largest number of Kansas residents in that year from any state outside Kansas—59,236—were provided by Pennsylvania. This was over sixteen thousand more than had been born in any other Eastern state. The extent of Pennsylvania’s contribution to the Kansas population is further suggested by the fact that, in 1880, Kansas was topped by only three states outside Pennsylvania—Ohio, Illinois, and...

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2 The Pennsylvania background of the Eisenhowers, who moved to Kansas as part of a Brethren in Christ colony in 1878, is described in Martin H. Brackbill, “The Eisenhowers in Pennsylvania,” Pennsylvania History, XX (January, 1953), 78-89.

3 An excellent description of the rapid growth which Kansas underwent after the Civil War is found in William Frank Zornow, Kansas: A History of the Jayhawk State (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), 161-173.
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and Iowa—in the number of natives of the Keystone State that it contained.¹

Research into the detailed population schedules for the 1880 census and also into various Kansas county and state histories indicates that a substantial portion of the Pennsylvanians who moved to Kansas up to 1887 were Pennsylvania German. This includes both those who immigrated directly to Kansas from Pennsylvania—and with whom this article is primarily concerned—and those who lived in other states for varying periods before moving on to Kansas.⁵ A recognizable relationship exists between the course of Pennsylvania German immigration into Kansas directly from Pennsylvania following the Civil War and the course of total immigration into the state during this same period. Although there was a degree of settlement by Pennsylvania Germans before 1870, such settlement did not get under way on a large scale until the seventies. It was during that decade that a number of colonies from Pennsylvania, in addition to great numbers of individuals and families, moved into central Kansas. (Several of these colonies, which were to have an important part in the development of their respective localities, will be referred to below.) By 1878 and 1879 the movement of Pennsylvania Germans into Kansas reached particularly impressive proportions. This movement continued into the eighties; although the immigration now was, on the whole, not so noteworthy as that of the preceding decade, distinctive settlements were established in at least three counties by representatives of the "plain people."⁶ By 1890, however, the Pennsylvania Ger-

¹ The information in this paragraph is based on the official 1880 census report: Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), 490-496.

² Copies of the 1880 population schedules, on which the federal census of that year was based, are available on microfilm from the National Archives. Washington, D. C. Kansas histories found to contain particularly valuable information on Pennsylvanians who moved to Kansas include William E. Connelley, A Standard History of Kansas and Kansans (5 vols., Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1918); History of the State of Kansas (Chicago: A. T. Andreas, 1883); Kansas: The First Century (4 vols., New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1956); and county histories for Allen, Atchison, Butler, Cloud, Dickinson, Douglas, Franklin, Gove, Leavenworth, McPherson, Marion, Nemaha, Ness, Reno, Saline, Shawnee, Sumner, Woodson, and Wyandotte counties.

⁵ Settlements in these counties (Lyon, Washington, and Harvey) are discussed in John Umble, “Mennonites in Lyon County, Kansas,” The Mennonite Quarterly Review, XXVI (July, 1952), 232-253; Elmer LeRoy Craik, A History of the Church of the Brethren in Kansas (McPherson, Kan.:
man immigration of the type and extent that had been characteristic of the seventies and eighties had come to an end.

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The most important decade for the migration to Kansas of Pennsylvania Germans from the Keystone State was undoubtedly that of the 1870's. It is the opening and closing portions of this decade that stand out particularly prominently and will receive special attention in this article.

Sizable and well-organized colonies in which Pennsylvania Germans formed the dominant element moved into two areas of central Kansas during the early seventies: northeastern Osborne County and the area around Wilson in Ellsworth and Russell counties. In 1870, according to the census figures for that year, Osborne County had a population of exactly thirty-three. Yet the very next year a colony of thirty-five men from Lancaster and Berks counties in Pennsylvania, whose leader and many of whose members were Pennsylvania Germans, founded what was soon to become the county's principal town and its county seat. Colonel William L. Bear of Lancaster served as president of the Pennsylvania Colony (as the body of men who settled Osborne City was known) and was its dominant figure. It was decided that the members of this colony would start west on the Pennsylvania Railroad, on the condition that the railroad would furnish a first-class car exclusively for the group's use as far as St. Louis, allow the members one hundred pounds baggage each, and give them the privilege of carrying their guns in the cars—all for seventeen dollars a person.

At eleven o'clock in the evening on April 10, 1871—as a member of the colony, F. R. Gruger, described it twenty-five years later—"a party numbering about sixty souls, including one woman and baby, boarded a special car [at Lancaster], in charge of a special messenger of the Pennsylvania railroad, bound for 'Sunny

Daily Republican Press, 1922), 257-258; and Emma King Risser, History of the Pennsylvania Mennonite Church in Kansas (Scottdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1958), passim.

*Statistics of the Population . . . at the Tenth Census, 61.

Osborne County Farmer-Journal, August 15, 1946; History of the State of Kansas, 934.

F. R. Gruger, "The Pennsylvania Colony" (a paper read before the Old Settlers' Reunion in Osborne, Kan., May 27, 1896), no pagination. A copy of the paper was given to his writer by the owner of the original, Mrs. W. B. Van Wormer of Osborne, daughter of F. R. Gruger.
When they reached St. Louis, the members of the colony switched to a Missouri Pacific train, which they rode as far as Atchison, Kansas. People along the route had some interesting reactions to the colony as it passed through their communities:

Shortly after leaving St. Louis [Mr. Gruger related] we learned that we were not unexpected at the various stations along the way; we learned that we were known as the Pennsylvania Dutch Colony, and as we progressed our numbers and great wealth, apparently increased, until at last we amounted to a full regiment and every man armed with a musket; and the money we carried with us was something enormous. At one station we were met by a crowd numbering, perhaps, 150 people, headed by a jolly fiddler, who gave us specimens of his skill—all anxious to see what a Dutchman looked like. At another town, also in Missouri, we were met by a delegation of citizens who offered to get each of us a good farm if we would consent to locate among them.

About May 1 this group, by now reduced to thirty-five men, one woman, and two children and traveling on nothing more powerful than mules, reached what was to become Osborne County. Here the men selected the location for their colony, established claims, and laid out the townsite for Osborne City. On September 14 of that year, the families of the colonists arrived from Pennsylvania and were conducted to their new homes. Two days earlier Governor James M. Harvey of Kansas had declared Osborne County organized. Then, on November 7, Osborne City was chosen as the county seat and members of the Pennsylvania Colony were elected to the posts of county surveyor and representative to the state legislature.

Osborne County grew rapidly in the years after 1871. In May of 1872, Colonel Bear wrote that all but two of those who had belonged to the Pennsylvania Colony were still living on their claims and that the population of the county exceeded two thousand. By 1880 Osborne County numbered 12,517 inhabitants,
while the county seat had a population of 719.\textsuperscript{12} Eight of those who had arrived with the Pennsylvania Colony were said to be still living in Osborne County in 1896.\textsuperscript{14} The last surviving member of the original colony in that county passed away just fifty years later, but many descendants of the first colonists remained in the area.\textsuperscript{15}

The first colony of Pennsylvania Germans to move to the Ellsworth-Russell county area around Wilson in central Kansas was organized in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, in 1871. Members of the German Baptist Brethren Church (today known as the Church of the Brethren) had an important part in the arrangements for the migration, although not all of those who went were of this faith. In 1871 several of those associated with the colony went west to look over the land, and a number of persons made their homes in the area that fall. However, most of those planning to move waited until the following year.\textsuperscript{16}

The journey to Kansas by the principal group in this colony took place in April, 1872. A few weeks before, announcements of property sales such as these were being published in the Cumberland County newspaper, the \textit{Carlisle Herald}:

By Samuel Coover, in Penn township, one and one-half miles south of Centreville, on the State road, on Saturday, March 2, one mare, cow, household and kitchen furniture, &c.\textsuperscript{17}

By John A. Dellinger, in Dickinson township, one mile south of the Stone Tavern, on Friday, March 8, valuable real estate and personal property. Intends removing West.\textsuperscript{18}

By George Himes, in Penn township, one half mile south-east of Centreville, on Thursday, March 21, cow, sleigh, platform scales, spring wagon, household and kitchen furniture.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Statistics of the Population... at the Tenth Census}, 61, 180.
\textsuperscript{14} Gruger, "Pennsylvania Colony."
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Osborne County Farmer-Journal}, August 15, 1946.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Carlisle Herald}, February 29, 1872.
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid.}, March 7, 1872.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid.}
By William B. Himes, 1 mile east of Milltown and one mile south of the Stone Tavern, horse, cow, hogs, farming implements, household and kitchen furniture, on Thursday, March 28.20

Less than a month after the last of these announcements had appeared, every one of the men named in them was in Kansas.21 Contemporary newspaper accounts indicate that the main group bound for Kansas that year left on April 4. In its issue of the week following the party's embarkation, the Carlisle Herald published the following report:

The Penn and Dickinson Colony, under the charge of Mr. Samuel Coover, took their departure for Bunker Hill, Kansas, in the 6:30 train last Thursday morning. Many of our citizens assembled at the depot to witness their departure. At Mechanicsburg their number was still further augmented by the addition of several families. The colony originally numbered about 130 families. A number of them had already left at different times, and others were not prepared to leave, so that there were about 75 families went on the morning in question. They were not detained at Harrisburg, but soon after their arrival left on the way Passenger. It was expected, that should no unforeseen accident or delay detain them, their destination would be reached in about three days.22

Jacob Sackman, one of the members of the group that went west at that time, wrote of the journey in the Wilson World forty-two years later. When he arrived at Carlisle on the morning of departure, Mr. Sackman recalled, he found Samuel Coover, the leader of the colony, directing the loading of trunks into the baggage cars of the train. Following the departure from Carlisle, a stop was made at Harrisburg, where there was a rush for tickets. Other cars of prospective emigrants from Pennsylvania joined the train at this point and in a short time, as Mr. Sackman put it, "we westward headed for the Land of Kansas." After their arrival at Pittsburgh, the travelers were taken to an upper story of the

20 Ibid., March 21, 1872. (The Carlisle Herald for February 15, 1872, had announced that William B. Himes had already sold thirty acres of land that he had owned, known as Chambers's Mill, for seven thousand dollars.)
21 Sackman, "First Pennsylvania Colony"; Craik, Church of the Brethren in Kansas, 132.
22 Carlisle Herald, April 11, 1872.
depot or some other building; there, in cold and uncomfortable quarters, they spent the night. Then the party journeyed on, past Chicago and across the Mississippi. In Missouri the train divided into two sections, with the group with which we are concerned proceeding to Kansas City. There the emigrants unloaded their baggage and reloaded it into cars of the Kansas Pacific Railway, which was to carry them on the remainder of their journey. Finally, on the morning of April 8, they arrived at Bosland Station (soon to be renamed “Wilson”) in Ellsworth County. The train, now consisting of three coaches and two baggage cars, pulled up onto a siding, and here the settlers lived until their homes were put up.23

Apparently most of the immigrants from Pennsylvania who arrived at what is now Wilson in 1872 settled a few miles west of that town in eastern Russell County, although at least a few did remain in Ellsworth County.24 Among these newcomers were several persons who were to become prominent in the early development of the area, including the first clerk of Russell County, its first elected sheriff, and a leading lumber and grain merchant of Wilson, as well as most if not all of the area’s early German Baptist Brethren, who settled at a place near Wilson that was called “Pennsylvania.”25

The movement of Pennsylvania Germans from Pennsylvania to Kansas was less notable during the several years after 1872 than it had been during the very early part of the decade. By 1878, however, this immigration had more than recovered its former strength. Impressive evidence of this development is to be found in the files of leading southeastern Pennsylvania newspapers for this and the following year, which are remarkable for the frequency of references to Kansas as a place in which to make one’s home and to the excursion trains that were leaving every few days with their loads of Pennsylvanians—many of them Pennsylvania Germans—bound for that Western state.

As early as March 2 in 1878, the Harrisburg Independent was reporting that a colony from Pennsylvania’s Union and Snyder

23 Sackman, “First Pennsylvania Colony.”
24 History of the State of Kansas, 1281, 1284.
25 J. C. Ruppenthal, “Pennsylvania-Germans in Central Kansas,” The Penn-Geranjoia, III (September, 1914), 34; History of the State of Kansas, 1281; Craik, Church of the Brethren in Kansas, 132.
counties had left that day by train for Kansas, in charge of W. D. Blackburn of Mechanicsburg, General Agent of the National Immigration Bureau at Philadelphia. The preceding day this advertisement had appeared in the same newspaper:

**EXCURSION TO KINSLEY AND SOUTHWEST KANSAS**, and all points in Kansas and the West, on March 12 and 26. The very lowest rates of fare given; best accommodations; first-class passage. Tickets furnished from all points in Pennsylvania. For further information in regard to everything pertaining to emigration, tickets, rates of fare [sic], dates of excursions, etc., address R. J. Shapley, Agent, A.T.&S.F.R.R. [Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad], 23 N. George street, York, Pa.

Under headlines reading “OFF TO THE WEST: Big Excursion Party to Kansas,” the Independent of March 12 announced that R. J. Shapley’s excursion party for that state had left Harrisburg in the second section of the fast line west at 3:45 that afternoon. “In the party,” the paper continued, “are a number of citizens of York, Cumberland and Lebanon, and other surrounding counties, some of whom go to remain and others to locate land for future occupancy. They are all well-to-do people, whose pluck, energy and perseverance are well calculated to develop the resources of a new country, and make the land blossom as the rose.” (Further comment on the degree of prosperity of the emigrants will be quoted below.)

Other newspapers also gave frequent attention to the emigration for Kansas. The following item appeared in the *Daily New Era* of Lancaster for March 19, 1878:

The next excursions for Kansas will leave Lancaster and all points on the Pennsylvania railroad on March 26 and April 2 and 9. The rate of fare to Kansas city is $20.05. All first-class tickets to any point in Kansas are furnished at low rates, and all information can be obtained free by addressing W. J. Kafroth, agent, West Earl P.O., this county.

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Harrisburg Independent, March 2, 1878.
Ibid., March 1, 1878.
Ibid., March 12, 1878.
Lancaster Daily New Era, March 19, 1878.
The following month, in its issue for April 3, the *Harrisburg Daily Patriot* reported that nine coaches of emigrants for Kansas had gone west on the second section of the Pennsylvania Railroad's fast line the preceding afternoon. The passengers, most of whom were from points along the Cumberland Valley Railroad, went in coaches selected from among the best stock on the "popular Pennsylvania."\(^{30}\) (In another item, published the following day, the *Patriot* commented that "the Pennsylvania railroad seems to be the popular choice of those seeking transportation westward, and in its facilities, rates and accommodations cannot be excelled."\(^{31}\) On April 10 it was reported by the same newspaper that thirteen coaches and two baggage cars, containing emigrants principally bound for Kansas, had started west the previous afternoon, again on the second section of the Pennsylvania's fast line; a large number of these people were from the borough of York and vicinity.\(^{32}\)

Lancaster's *Daily New Era* from time to time printed front-page articles from correspondents in various parts of Kansas, thus giving readers a clearer idea of the attractions of this rapidly growing state. On April 4, 1878, the paper published a dispatch from Rice County signed "A.G.L.," portions of which follow:

STERLING, Kan., March 28, 1878.

Since my last letter our little city has been overflowed [sic]. . . . On the 9th inst., a whole passenger coach full came in from Montgomery and Chester counties, Pennsylvania. All the hotels and boarding houses were full. They were compelled to remain in the car over night. On the following night they were lodged in the First Congregational church. These have all settled closely together, about eight miles from this city.

The most of these people are English, and a few Pennsylvania German. The Germans (Penna.) are beginning to figure quite prominently in our county. A few years ago they were quite scarce, while now it is as common to hear German spoken on the streets of Sterling as it is in Lancaster.

There is a party here at present from Reading, Pa., with a view of looking up a point for a colony. Quite a colony will leave Reading on the 3d and 9th of next

\(^{30}\) *Harrisburg Daily Patriot*, April 3, 1878.


\(^{32}\) *Ibid.*, April 10, 1878.
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month, ticketed and checked through to this place; some have been here before and bought land. . . .

I never saw people so excited as those passengers when we got into the Arkansas valley, over the "lay of the land." They lamented their past lives, or rather, that they spent so much of it among the hills and rocks of the Eastern States, while here there is such an immense amount of superior land awaiting the plowman, where the land needs to be but "tickled" to produce a crop. . . .

We have still another accession to our Lancaster boys—Hohein boys.

Should any more of Lancaster's sons or daughters wend their way toward the Arkansas valley, we wish to have them remember that our "latch-string" hangs out for any of them.23

The editorial writer of the Daily New Era appeared to be at somewhat of a loss to explain the tremendous enthusiasm being manifested for new Western homes. In an editorial published on April 2, 1878, he commented on the scope of emigration to Kansas and other Western territory and bewailed the relative lack of interest in Georgia which, he said, "presents many natural advantages which no Western country can equal."24 (Despite the New Era's plea, there were to be exactly one thousand natives of Pennsylvania recorded as living in Georgia in 1880, as compared with over fifty-nine times that number in Kansas!)25

As a matter of fact, 1878 was the second big year for immigration from Pennsylvania into the area of Wilson, which was to attain a population of 458 two years later.26 On the morning of April 5, 1878, a large colony from Penn Township, Cumberland County, arrived at the town. One member of this colony, writing under the name "Bosland," sent back to the Carlisle Herald a report on the journey dated April 8. This account, published ten days later, is interesting not only for its description of the trip westward and the reception accorded the colonists by the people of Wilson but also for its comments on the railroad accommodations that were provided.

... The day we left Cumberland Valley [Tuesday, April 2] was one of nature's fairest—warm and pleasant.

23 Lancaster Daily New Era, April 4, 1878.
24 Ibid., April 2, 1878.
25 Statistics of the Population . . . at the Tenth Census, 482.
26 Ibid., 185.
Which gave us happy omen to start out with. At Harrisburg we gathered up a few members of the colony from Lancaster county. Some considerable bustle resulted from the fact that some parties had not been ticketed nor the baggage checked. Everything though was properly done under the systematic arrangement of the efficient and genial officers of the Penna. R.R.—J. K. Shoemaker, General Passenger Agent, and James Timmens, Traveling Agent of the same road. Promptly at 4 p.m. our train of eleven coaches . . . comfortably full of happy faced people, steamed out en route for Kansas, fifteen minutes after the regular train. . . .

. . . Suffice it to say that we ran through from Harrisburg to Kansas City without change of cars, arriving in Kansas City only two hours behind the regular through train. This, too, without any mishap of any kind. The cars given us were first-class in every respect, and when vacated by us at the latter city, were in better condition—cleaner—than the cars we entered on the Kansas Pacific.

Just here I wish to thank (in behalf of the Penn Township Colony,) the Penna. Railroad Company for their courtesy and uniform kindness to us. They have done all they agreed to do, and we advise all our friends in Pennsylvania who contemplate coming West to come by the Penna. R.R. They carry you quicker, safer, more comfortably than any other route, and always at as low fare as you can secure elsewhere. . . .

. . . We dined sumptuously [on the journey] on ham, chicken, bread, butter, coffee, fruit, etc. . . .

When we got here on Friday [April 5] the citizens fired a salute. Flags were in the breeze from almost every house top. Our quarters here consist of a building 175 feet long by 32 feet wide; this is partitioned off to suit families. We are comfortable and everybody is cheerful and happy. . . . Saturday night the citizens gave us a reception in the fine stone two-story School House here, where speeches were made. The special correspondent of the Kansas City Daily Times has been here writing us up for that paper. Many old (six year old) citizens of this vicinity, and formerly citizens of Cumberland County, have been in to see us. In fact we have created some "buzz" in the community. . . .

The building referred to in the final paragraph above was called

37 Carlisle Herald, April 18, 1878.
the "barracks" and had been built of rough lumber about twenty rods west of town and north of the Kansas Pacific railroad tracks. Here the newcomers were quartered until they could find permanent homes. Many of these immigrants made their homes in and around Wilson, which was growing at a rapid rate, while others settled on farms in Russell County and a few went north into Lincoln County. By 1914 the settlers of 1878 and their descendants were said to number several hundred in Ellsworth, Russell, and Lincoln counties.

Either a part of this group of Pennsylvanians or closely associated with it was the second Brethren colony from the Keystone State to move into Russell County. This colony also arrived early in April, 1878, from Cumberland County, Pennsylvania. One passenger car and two freight cars had carried these Brethren to Kansas, and they proceeded to establish farms on railroad land which they had purchased.

In the year 1879, the following advertisement began appearing in the *Harrisburg Daily Patriot* on February 11 and continued to appear in that paper for nearly three months thereafter:

**KANSAS FARMS AND FREE HOMES.**

HOW TO GET THEM in the best part of the state. 6,000,000 acres for sale. For free copy of "Kansas Pacific Homestead," address Land Commissioner, Salina, Kansas.

The volume of migration from Pennsylvania to Kansas appears to have been even more remarkable in 1879 than in the previous year. By March 11, 1879, the *Daily New Era* of Lancaster was already saying that "immigration into Kansas, which was remarkably heavy last year, promises this spring to succeed [sic] that

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*Craik, Church of the Brethren in Kansas, 132-133.*

*Harrisburg Daily Patriot, February 11-May 5, 1879.*
of any previous season." Four days earlier the paper had published the following dispatch:

At 3:15 on Wednesday afternoon, a colony of about 125 persons from Chambersburg and vicinity, occupying four cars, arrived in Harrisburg over the Cumberland Valley railroad. They were joined in that city by a party of about 200 from Lebanon, Lancaster and Dauphin counties, and at four o'clock they left in the second section of the fast line West, over the Pennsylvania railroad, their destination being Central Kansas. The train consisted of nine passenger cars and two cars containing their baggage, an extra car being attached to take on board about twenty-five persons at Tyrone, bound for the same country.

On March 20, 1879, the York Daily was quoted as saying that thirty-eight residents of York and vicinity had left for Kansas that week and had had possession of one entire car. These emigrants may have been part of a larger group, for it had been reported just the day before that thirteen cars filled with excursionists to Kansas had left Harrisburg that afternoon; the next excursion from that city was to leave on April 1. About March 25, however, a party of thirty or forty persons set out from Lancaster County's Mount Joy, also bound for Kansas:

They were nearly all Mennonites [Lancaster's New Era reported], wearing plain clothes, and most of them were farmers. Some of them had sold farms in the Donegals and Rapho township, while others had rented their farms, intending to see how they would like their homes in the West before disposing of their homes here. There were some sad partings, but the emigrants generally looked cheerful, and were full of bright anticipations at the prospect of finding new and comfortable homes in the far [sic] West. The emigrants were from some of our best families, and the localities that receive them will be very fortunate in securing such good citizens.

Emigration for Kansas continued into the month of April. The

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42 Lancaster Daily New Era, March 11, 1879.
43 Ibid., March 7, 1879.
44 Harrisburg Daily Patriot, March 20, 1879 (quotation from York Daily).
45 Lancaster Daily New Era, March 19, 1879.
46 Ibid., March 26, 1879.
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Harrisburg Daily Patriot announced on April 8 that "Mr. James Clark, the live agent of the Cumberland Valley railroad at this city, sent up the valley yesterday five coaches, intended for the accommodation of a colony for Kansas, consisting of persons from various portions of the valley; from Hagerstown, Md., down as far as our neighboring town of Mechanicsburg. The colonists will arrive at 3:20 p.m. to-day, and will leave on the fast line of the Pennsylvania railroad at 3:45." Two days later the Patriot noted the fact that there had been three sections of the fast line west on April 8 and that two of these had been made up at Harrisburg for the accommodation of Kansas emigrants. Toward the end of the month, on April 30, this same newspaper reported that a large number of emigrants had passed through Harrisburg on their way to the West the day before; the destination for most of them was central Kansas.

The stream of emigration to Kansas drew the attention of, among others, the Reverend H. V. Givler, who lectured in the Duke Street Methodist Episcopal Church in Lancaster early in March, 1879. Mr. Givler had recently returned from a visit to Kansas but, according to the reporter who covered the talk, he did not give as glowing an account of the state as some others had done. Although he admitted that Kansas had certain advantages for persons with capital, he advised that no man should go there unless he had at least two thousand dollars with which to buy and stock a farm. In Mr. Givler's opinion, Kansas was no "Garden of Eden" for those who lacked sufficient means.

The widespread interest in Kansas did not seem to be seriously dampened by admonitions such as Mr. Givler's. On March 20 the Lancaster paper that had printed his comments observed that "the emigration fever has long since made its appearance in this part of the county. Some have decided to locate their homes in Iowa and Nebraska, but the majority prefer Kansas." The Harrisburg Daily Patriot reported on March 19 that emigrants for Kansas and other parts of the West were daily passing through the city on their way to new homes where lands were rich and cheap.

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"Harrisburg Daily Patriot, April 8, 1879.
"Ibid., April 10, 1879.
"Ibid., April 30, 1879.
"Lancaster Daily New Era, March 7, 1879.
"Ibid., March 20, 1879.
"Harrisburg Daily Patriot, March 19, 1879."
On April 1 this paper announced that among the passengers for the West the previous evening were some of the best families in Dauphin County, *en route* for Kansas.⁵³ Six days later it commented that “Kansas emigrants still continue to go west over the great Pennsylvania route from this point.”⁵⁴ Much the same picture of heavy migration to Kansas was conveyed by the *Harrisburg Telegraph*. This newspaper stated on April 10 that the bulk of the emigration westward from Pennsylvania’s southeastern counties was to Kansas, and eleven days later the paper announced simply: “The rush for Kansas continues.”⁵⁵

Prominent among those who demonstrated their preference for Kansas by migrating there were large numbers of River Brethren — members of the Brethren in Christ Church, a small denomination with a mode of worship and customs of dress similar to those of the German Baptist Brethren Church.⁵⁶ The movement of these people to the Sunflower State, which reached massive proportions in 1879, had had its origin two years earlier. At that time a number of members from southeastern Pennsylvania went to Kansas to look the country over. As it happened, there was a bountiful wheat crop that year, and the group returned with a favorable report.⁵⁷ In addition, several other Brethren in Christ also went to Kansas around this time and decided to settle down in Dickinson County.⁵⁸

A number of families of River Brethren moved to this same county in 1878, including that of the Reverend Jacob Eisenhower, a fifty-one-year-old farmer and Brethren in Christ minister from Dauphin County, Pennsylvania; with him were his wife and four children, including fourteen-year-old David Eisenhower, who was later to be the father of the thirty-fourth President of the United States. It was apparently on April 12, 1878, that the group to

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⁵⁵ *Harrisburg Telegraph*, April 10 and 21, 1879.
⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 177; Clarence L. Gish, “Migration of ‘River Brethren’ from Penn. to Kansas” (St. George, Kan., 1959), no pagination. A copy of the latter was given to this writer by Mr. Gish, a descendant of River Brethren who moved to Kansas in 1878.
which the Eisenhowers belonged arrived by train at Abilene, the county seat of Dickinson County.59

By the late winter of 1879, the *Mount Joy Herald* in Lancaster County was to report that there were already sixteen to eighteen families from that area in the vicinity around Dickinson County, Kansas.60 Because so many members of the Brethren in Christ Church were becoming interested in Kansas, it had by now been decided that a full-fledged colony ought to be sent as an organized church body. Most of those preparing to move apparently purchased land in Dickinson County prior to making the trip westward, meanwhile selling their Pennsylvania farms at prices ranging from one hundred thirty to one hundred seventy-six dollars an acre. In addition, several families jointly purchased ground near the railroad at Abilene and had erected there a large frame building to serve as a temporary residence until homes could be built.61

On March 18, 1879, there were shipped to Kansas from Lancaster County’s Marietta station eight carloads of goods belonging to River Brethren families about to start the journey westward and consisting principally of household and kitchen furniture and farming implements. Then, on March 25, the members of the Brethren in Christ colony themselves set out for Kansas. The majority took the mail train west at Marietta station shortly past noon on that day; at Harrisburg the remaining members of the group apparently were picked up.62 By the time that the train left Harrisburg, it was carrying around three hundred people bound for the Sunflower State, although not all of these actually belonged to the Brethren in Christ Church.63

This group, which traveled on the Pennsylvania Railroad during the early part of the journey, was on the Kansas Pacific after reaching Kansas City, Missouri. The party arrived at Abilene in two sections, the first reaching the town in the afternoon of March 27 and the other arriving the following morning.64 One of those

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60 Lancaster *Daily New Era*, March 1, 1879 (quotation from *Mount Joy Herald*).


63 Climenhaga, *Brethren in Christ Church*, 175.

64 Ibid.; Lancaster *Daily New Era*, April 4, 1879.
who made the trip lost little time in sending back a report of the completed journey to Lancaster's *Daily New Era*. Under a March 29 dateline, the April 4 issue of that paper carried the news of the River Brethren’s arrival in Kansas:

Our trip was a pleasant one; had nothing to complain of; our wants were fully provided for; all had ample room to be seated; when night came beds were secured for the weary. The pleasantness of our trip is due to J. Timmons, agent of the Pennsylvania railroad. . . .

Mr. Timmons, our agent, has been with us and kindly cared for us from the time we started until we reached our place of destination. . . .

We reached Abilene City, Kansas, on Friday morning, March 28, at 5 o’clock a.m. We had a few hundred yards to walk until we reached the reception house . . . where we were received by John Musser and family, who had breakfast ready for us. After all had partaken of something to eat, preparations were made to haul our furniture and goods into the reception house, which hauling was finished last evening. It is now stored in that building, amounting to eight car loads. . . .

Our colony consisted of about 300 in all, including children. Our train had nine coaches and two baggage cars. . . .

We have splendid weather since we are here, and a good Kansas breeze all the time. There has been no rain here for five months. The grain looks better in Kansas than it did East.65

This Brethren in Christ colony was described by observers in Kansas as one of the most complete and perfectly organized of any that had entered a new country and as far exceeding in numbers and equipment anything that had preceded it in Dickinson County. The group was estimated as having taken along from Pennsylvania between three and five hundred thousand dollars, and newspapers of the day spoke of the removal of a complete church, including a bishop, to Kansas.66 A Brethren in Christ church was, in fact, established in Dickinson County in the year of this colony’s arrival; the first overseer (or bishop) was a descendant of Jacob Engle, who had been the chief founder of

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the River Brethren denomination in America approximately a
century earlier, and Jacob Eisenhower was one of the first min-
sters in this Kansas church.67

During the years that followed, the River Brethren of Dickinson
County became well-known for their high level of prosperity. In
1909 an article printed in The Pennsylvania-German magazine
reported that the River Brethren were then the richest class of
residents in central Kansas and enjoyed fine farms and abundant
crops.68 In letters to this writer, three leading residents of Abilene
commented on their unusual degree of prosperity and above-
average improvements.69 Nevertheless, the total number of Brethren
in Christ Church members in the county has gradually fallen;
from 456 members in 1892, the number had dropped by 1959 to
around two hundred.70

As the preceding pages indicate, the decade that closed with
the year 1879 was one of intense interest in Kansas settlement
among Pennsylvanians, inducing a tremendous flow of migration
toward that Western state. This is graphically demonstrated by
the rise during that decade in the number of natives of the Key-
stone State living in Kansas—from 19,287 in 1870 to 59,236 in
1880. By contrast, this figure was up only another three thousand
—to 62,064—in 1890, by which time the period of large-scale im-
migration to Kansas had ended.71

Some contemporary writers, commenting on the movement out
of Pennsylvania that was taking place, showed their concern over
its character and scope and sought to determine the factors respon-
sible. One such writer, in an article signed “GUTTENBURG”
and appearing in the Harrisburg Daily Patriot for April 10, 1879,
noted that another colony bound for the West had left Newville
in Cumberland County two days before. “The colony leaving this

67 Climenhaga, Brethren in Christ Church, 26, 173, 206, 329.
68 “River Brethren in Kansas,” The Pennsylvania-German, X (July, 1909),
347.
69 Harold Bolton to G. R. Beyer, Abilene, Kan., July 23, 1959; M. E.
Rohrer to G. R. Beyer, Abilene, Kan., May 1, 1960; Philip D. Schwarz
(County Office Manager, Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Com-
70 Eighth Biennial Report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture
Topeka, Kan.: Hamilton Printing Company, 1893), 54; George E. Whisler
(former pastor, Abilene Brethren in Christ Church) to G. R. Beyer, Abilene,
71 Daniel W. Wilder, “Where Kansans Were Born,” Transactions of the
Kansas State Historical Society, IX (1905-1906), 507.
point was larger than usual,” he commented, “and nearly five hundred persons assembled at the depot—some to bid farewell to friends, but a large majority to see what the effects of ‘Going to Kansas’ were upon those leaving.” All this was significant, the writer continued:

It signifies that the depression has been working in its inevitable consequences. Necessity is driving four-fifths of these people from home, friends and life long associations. They would not go if they could stay. From personal knowledge I can say that many struggled hard to maintain their business, but found it utterly impossible until they saw exhausted and irreparable their last and every resource. Fully one thousand will leave this [Cumberland] county before the 1st of June next. Whether it will have an appreciable effect on business, or on the farming interests, it is hard to say. Certainly the majority of these people—at least those that have sufficient “sand” in their craws—will be vastly benefited in a few years, whereas, had they stayed here, plebeians they would be and plebeians they would stay. All I have to say is God speed them as they seek new homes on the illimitable plains of Kansas. . . .

This emigration from the area had been commented upon from a somewhat different viewpoint just the year before in the editorial columns of the Carlisle Herald. The writer first quoted statistics, provided by Superintendent J. F. Boyd of the Cumberland Valley Railroad, to the effect that 661 emigrant tickets had been sold by stations in Cumberland County between February 1 and April 19, 1878. He went on to say that reports received by that newspaper from different sections of the county showed that many more than that number of persons had actually left; it was noted that some probably had traveled with tickets not classified as “emigrant” or had found their transportation accommodations at Harrisburg.

We believe [the editorial continued] that over 1,000 souls have left Cumberland county within the last two months, with the intention of settling permanently in Western homes. But coupled with this information there invariably is the assurance that “they will not be missed.”

Harrisburg Daily Patriot, April 10, 1879.
The alarm that this exodus would otherwise create is prevented by the knowledge in every community that the farm heretofore worked by the emigrant has secured a new tenant, and that every laboring emigrant’s place has been promptly filled. More than this—these parties are not only not missed, in an economic sense we mean, but the process of weeding out is still continued and encouraged. “We would spare as many more.” “There are plenty of unemployed and idle men who ought to go.” These appear to be common expressions, and indicate an overpopulated condition of our Valley we did not suppose existed. But since it does exist, we hail with joy the relief which emigration naturally and easily affords us.

The editorial writer quickly made it clear that the views he had just presented were not his own:

Very many of those who have left their native places and inherited acres represent the very best class of our farming community. Judging from the success they have met with here, they would be the last we would expect to separate themselves from friends and kindred to tempt a better fortune. These and the sturdy laborers they have attached to them will be missed from their communities, in every social sense; and it remains to be seen whether their successors can as well fill the places they have vacated in practical, severe [?] and economic ways.

We can only hope that our lately neighbors may find in a new country a greater reward for their enterprise, skill and labor than our contracted bounds in Mother Cumberland allowed.72

* * *

Looking at this migration from Pennsylvania to Kansas from our vantage point in the mid-twentieth century, what can we say were the factors that motivated it? In part, they were the same as the factors behind earlier migrations to other Middle Western states. For one thing, the growing population of southeastern Pennsylvania was making it difficult for many members of the younger generation to establish homes of their own in that state. As a result of this overcrowding, the Pennsylvania Germans were able to contribute a large portion of their number to the westward movement, even though they had already taken over some of

72 Carlisle Herald, April 25, 1878.
Pennsylvania's best limestone land from the Scotch-Irish and were continuing to hold it.\textsuperscript{44} Another factor in the movement to Kansas, not entirely separate from the first, was the desire to obtain good land without the necessity of paying a high price for it. This was much easier in the partially developed West than in the thickly settled Eastern states like Pennsylvania. Indeed, the quest for cheap, relatively fertile land was quite possibly the leading incentive behind the general influx of settlers into Kansas.\textsuperscript{75} In the case of immigrants from Pennsylvania, the high value of land in that state often made it possible for persons owning farms there to sell their farms and buy high-quality Western land in quantities far larger than what they had held in the East. Thus, in the late 1870's, the family of Jacob and Daniel Bert, members of the Brethren in Christ Church, bought three quarter-sections of land in Dickinson County at seven dollars per acre; this was about a year before there moved into the county a large number of families of the same faith, whose farms in Pennsylvania (as was noted above) had been sold at prices ranging upward from one hundred thirty dollars an acre.\textsuperscript{76} In addition, some immigrants from Pennsylvania availed themselves of free government land under the Homestead Act,\textsuperscript{77} although only about twenty-four per cent of the total land in Kansas was taken under final entries—by settlers from Pennsylvania or elsewhere—in accordance with its provisions.\textsuperscript{78}

Important also in attracting Pennsylvania Germans to Kansas were appeals for settlement, glowing word-pictures of life in Kansas, and special inducements designed to facilitate immigration. (The quotations from Pennsylvania newspapers elsewhere in this article should give an idea of the part played by such media in publicizing the attractions of “sunny Kansas.”) The development of the railroads, the colonization projects, and the extensive publicity for “cheap land” in the state—these occupied an impor-
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At the same time, prospective settlers certainly were influenced by the presence in Kansas of relatives and former neighbors, especially when—as sometimes happened—they wrote interesting letters home. At the same time, prospective settlers certainly were influenced by the presence in Kansas of relatives and former neighbors, especially when—as sometimes happened—they wrote interesting letters home.

The role of the railroads in the migration to Kansas deserves mention, for the railroads not only were active in propagandizing Kansas settlement but also constituted by far the most important means for the transportation of immigrants to that state after 1870; this seems to have been particularly true with colonies bound for Kansas. The Eastern line most active in transporting Pennsylvanians westward during this time seems definitely to have been the Pennsylvania Railroad, which was referred to repeatedly in writings of the period such as those quoted above. A Western railroad that had a major part in carrying Pennsylvania Germans to new Kansas homes was the Kansas Pacific. This road, which traversed the Kansas and Smoky Hill valleys, passed through or near some of the localities in Kansas where Pennsylvania German settlement was most prominent.

The Pennsylvania German settlers discussed in this article—those who moved directly from Pennsylvania to Kansas in the late nineteenth century—have, together with their descendants, formed only a small minority of the total population of Kansas. One could easily be surprised, therefore, at the number of individuals from among these people who have risen over the years to positions of prominence—both in affairs of their state and, in some instances, in affairs far transcending that state’s boundaries. Among the individuals in this category would certainly be William L. Bear, leader of the 1871 Pennsylvania Colony that established the county seat of Osborne County, as well as Dwight D. and Milton S. Eisenhower, who grew up with their three brothers among the River


See Howard Ruede, Sod-House Days: Letters from a Kansas Homesteader, 1877-78, ed. by John Ise (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937). This consists partially of letters written to his family in Pennsylvania by a young man who had recently settled in central Kansas.

Gruger, “Pennsylvania Colony”; Sackman, “First Pennsylvania Colony”; Climenhaga, Brethren in Christ Church, 175; and the quotations from Carlisle, Lancaster, and Harrisburg newspapers cited in this article.

Brethren in Abilene. Also worthy of inclusion are a number of men not referred to elsewhere in this article, among them Martin Mohler, secretary of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture for several years late in the nineteenth century, and his son, Jacob C. Mohler, who held the same position for thirty-five years until 1950; J. H. Engle, secretary of the Kansas State Sunday School Association for two and a half decades beginning shortly before the turn of the century, and Paul Erb, executive secretary of the Mennonite General Conference from 1954 to 1961 and the present editor of the *Gospel Herald*, the national publication of the Mennonite Church.

Nevertheless, even though the greatest tangible contribution of these Pennsylvania Germans in Kansas may lie in the achievements of a few individuals, their principal attraction for this writer does not stem from that. It stems, rather, from the story surrounding the actual migration out of Pennsylvania in the nineteenth century—the story, recounted in part in this article, of the movement of a portion of one of America's most distinctive population elements into a new environment hundreds of miles from the one which these people had known. And this is a story that takes on added meaning when it is viewed not as an isolated phenomenon in American history but as part of something far larger that was unfolding throughout this period on the national scene. It was, in reality, one small chapter—and yet a chapter that was in many ways both dramatic and inspiring—in the long epic of America's westward expansion.

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83 The story of the family of Eisenhowers to which these brothers belonged is told in Kornitzer, *Great American Heritage*.

