ENGLISHMEN AND GERMANS:
NATIONAL-GROUP CONTACT IN
COLONIAL PENNSYLVANIA,
1700–1755.

It is a commonplace of colonial history that large scale German immigration into eighteenth century Pennsylvania contributed to the formation of a volatile political environment in that colony. The Germans created a "problem" because they formed discernable communities that could easily mobilize political support and, hence, promote their collective interests in the annual provincial elections. Moreover, because of their cultural retentiveness, the Germans did have particular interests to protect. These facts, historians have known for some time. What we do not know with any precision, however, is how members of the established political elite reacted to the German presence in Pennsylvania. What follows is an attempt to detail this reaction from approximately 1700 to 1755.

German settlement began early in Pennsylvania. In 1683 the man who was to become well-known in Pennsylvania, Francis Daniel Pastorius, led a highly organized immigrant group of Quakers and Mennonites from Kreigsheim to Germantown, Pennsylvania. In the 1690s another group of German sectarians located on the Wissahickon River. Between 1710 and 1718 large numbers of German-Swiss Mennonites settled on the Lancaster plain in Conestoga. In 1723 a group of Reformed and Lutheran Germans who had originally settled in New York moved to Tulpehocken in the Lebanon

All of these settlements predated the more general and less specifically focused immigration of church Germans that began in the late 1720s and by-and-large their establishment elicited no widespread apprehension on the part of the English speaking settlers who composed Pennsylvania's political elite. In 1709-10, provincial politician David Lloyd became embroiled in a dispute between two contending groups of Philadelphia County Germans and in the summer of 1717, coincidental with the arrival of a large number of German-Swiss, the newly appointed Governor Keith apparently voiced the opinion that such immigration, if sustained, might swamp the English. But, that was all—an isolated incident of contention and a general observation or two about the long range implications of continued German immigration.

It was not until the late 1720s when a sizable annual German migration to Pennsylvania began that the German problem first prompted serious and sustained discussion. At that time, William Penn's widow, Hannah Callowhill Penn, and his grandson by an earlier marriage, Springett Penn, exercised the proprietary authority in Pennsylvania. An important part of the proprietary family's power over Pennsylvania affairs was the right to appoint and dismiss the chief executive officer for the colony. In 1726, the two Penns exercised that power by discharging Governor William Keith who they felt had shown disloyalty in the execution of his responsibilities. On being dismissed, Keith entered the lists as a popular politician hoping to be elected to the Assembly, which in Pennsylvania was the sole source of legislative authority. He wanted to capture the speakership of that body, and thereby pursue his anti-proprietary policies in local politics.

During his nine years as governor, Keith had carefully courted Pennsylvania's German residents, and in 1727 he included in his political entourage Lodwick Christian Sprogle, a German who proposed to recruit other Germans to settle on a 22,000 acre tract on the Schuylkill River not far from Philadelphia. James Logan, the chief Pennsylvania spokesman for the Penn family interests, and others who supported the proprietary-executive position, saw the Germans as a monolithic group which might be manipulated to produce a

large block of votes for the Keithians. They registered alarm at Sprogle's plan and at the heavy German immigration which, coincidental with this political battle, had reached a high point for the decade of the 1720s. The resourceful Logan managed to sabotage Sprogle's plan by laying out a proprietary manor on the land Sprogle had proposed to settle, and a number of political allies sent a memorial to the Board of Trade asking that the importation of Germans be discouraged. That, however, was the extent of the fuss. Within a year and a half the rate of German immigration had dropped off without any interference from London, a discredited Keith had left Pennsylvania, Sprogle was dead, and the tempers of the other partisans had cooled. Despite the short duration of this dispute, however, one can sense the unspoken fears of a few of Pennsylvania's English speaking elite. A large German element would almost certainly disrupt settled patterns of provincial social organization and in the context of the eighteenth century rivalry between France and England the Germans were obviously suspect. Strange customs, no matter how inconsequential, were easily construed as popish practices and knowledge of the French language, which some Germans naturally enough possessed, was unimpeachable evidence of their true loyalties. But these were no more than hints in a controversy that was basically political.4

Once the immigration of German church folk had begun in the late 1720s the flow continued at a fairly regular rate throughout the 1730s. But despite the influx of perhaps 14,000 Germans between 1729 and 1739, members of the English speaking community seemed unapprehensive. Those German newcomers who settled in Philadelphia and Bucks counties segregated themselves to some degree

4. James Logan to John Penn, 22 October 1727, Logan Papers, James Logan Letter Book, 1716-1743; Patrick Gordon to Proprietaries, 28 June 1728, Penn Papers, Official Correspondence, II, hereafter cited as PPOC; Thomas Wendel, "The Keith-Lloyd Alliance: Factional and Coalition Politics in Colonial Pennsylvania," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, 92 (1968): 297-298, hereafter cited as PMHB; John Penn to James Logan, 9 October 1728, Penn Papers, Domestic and Miscellaneous Letters, 1682-1794; Memorial from Pennsylvania against the Palatines, 6 December 1727, Patrick Gordon to the Lords of Trade, 8 December 1727, Pennsylvania Miscellaneous Papers, Penn versus Baltimore, 1725-1739, hereafter cited as PvB. In his letter to the Board of Trade, Gordon suggested that all foreigners be required to gain naturalization in Britain. This requirement, he thought, would impede German immigration yet would prevent the Germans from qualifying for the vote. Unless otherwise stated all manuscripts cited are in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

5. Approximately 40,000 Germans arrived in Philadelphia between 1726 and 1755. For further statistics and comments on the rates of arrival see James T. Lemon, The
and insofar as they became politically active, did so only in a supportive manner. They simply attached themselves to existing interest networks and worked within the established parameters of political behavior. Moreover, these were quiet years when few election contests took place and when there was no clear cut polarization between candidates which might have forced a "German vote" into public prominence.6

Out in Lancaster County, the interests of German immigrants proved to be much the same as those of other national groups. The most intense fighting over the Pennsylvania-Maryland boundary took place during the 1730s and those Germans who accepted the Penn claims to the disputed areas worked with others to protect their rights. Although some German settlers defected to the Maryland side, most settled under some form of Pennsylvania title and worked to protect them by settling on the west side of the Susquehanna River, by resisting the Marylanders7's display of force, and by cooperating with the Scotch-Irish and English-Quakers in choosing both effective local leaders and those who would present a united front in the Pennsylvania Assembly at Philadelphia. On the frontier, English speaking Pennsylvanians had little reason to criticize the Germans.7

Given the nature of political affairs in the 1730s, it is not surprising that twelve years were to elapse before provincials again articulated their concern over the German problem. This time political conflict arose over preparations for war. Despite the outbreak of hostilities between England and Spain in 1739, the Pennsylvania Assembly failed to appropriate money for provincial fortifications and to pass a militia law. This refusal and that of Governor Thomas to stop royally commissioned army officers from enlisting indentured servants in Pennsylvania for a British-led expedition against the Spanish West Indies, led to an impass between assembly and governor. On 1 Octo-

7. Ibid., Chapter I
HENRY MELCHIOR MUHLENBERG. Courtesy of Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
ber 1740, approximately 400 Germans who normally did not vote, allegedly appeared at the Philadelphia County election in support of the incumbent assemblymen. Those who backed Thomas in his demand for military measures questioned the role of the German voter in dark, post-election mutterings. But the issue was never openly debated or canvassed at any time during the crisis, for the executive supporters chose not to contest the 1741 Philadelphia election. Moreover, when they did choose to fight the election the following year, the proprietary-executive supporters apparently made their own quiet but largely unsuccessful pitch to spokesmen for the German communities. This rebuff led to little, however, in the way of recriminations. The proprietary-executive men were too concerned with their implication in the riot that took place on election day in Philadelphia and with their subsequent destruction as an effective presence in popular politics.  

But the importance of the 1740-42 crisis became obvious when the German question was revived again in 1749, this time for an extended debate that lasted through the next six years. It was during the early 1740s that members of the German minority had first made clear their allegiance to the popularly elected Quakers who dominated the provincial legislature. During the 1730s the county politicians had built up considerable credit among the Germans whose land titles were threatened by Maryland's claims to southern Pennsylvania and who, as property owners, resented paying purchase money and annual quitrents to the Penn family. But it remained for the contention of the early 1740s to bring this alliance into the open. Christopher Saur, who between 1738 and 1758 operated a printing shop in Germantown, and who during that time was the bellwether of German political behavior, left no doubt where he felt German political support should lie. His strong humanitarian feelings on the question of Indian policy and German immigration, his determined pacifism, and his condemnation of litigation, oath-taking, and other secular practices, predisposed him to look with favor on Quaker officeholders. He and other German spokesmen believed that the Governor and his supporters in demanding a militia, military

8. Ibid., Chapter V. In 1741 the election was contested in Lancaster County but there the debate over how Germans should vote took place between two German spokesmen, Conrad Weiser and Christopher Saur. See Conrad Weiser, “Two Addresses of Conrad Weiser to the German Voters of Pennsylvania,” *PMHB*, 23 (1899): 516-521; and “Answer to Conrad Weiser's Published Letter to the Germans,” 29 September 1741, PPOC, III. Coincidental with the dispute was another peak in the waves of German immigration.
appropriations, the curtailment of legislative power, and in defending depredations in the form of servant enlistments on the freeman’s property, posed a serious threat to citizens’ rights. Militia laws meant forced labor on fortifications, military appropriations meant burdensome provincial taxes, and curtailment of legislative power meant executive tyranny—all of which seemed to be reminiscent of their European experiences. On the other hand, Pennsylvania Quakers and their political allies had proven their dedication to liberty, prosperity, and peace. As Saur rhetorically replied to Conrad Weiser’s charge that “the major part” of the Assemblymen were Quakers—“Was it not so from the beginning? What hurt had we received from this? Don’t they appear to be good and peaceable as neighbors and make us partakers of such religious affairs...?” By articulating the assumptions which had underlain political behavior in the 1730s, statements like this brought to Pennsylvania Germans a heightened awareness of where their political allegiance lay and underlined the importance of actively supporting the popularly elected Quaker leaders. In an English colony, where the prerequisites of political office were the products of an English colonial culture and where insufficient time had passed to allow widespread acculturation, the political role of the German population was best confined simply to voting for those most likely to protect their interests.

Although the type of contested elections that took place in Philadelphia County in 1740 and 1742 did not reoccur until the mid-1750s, the Germans showed a marked propensity to accept the Quaker view of political affairs and to support the Quaker leaders in elections. In addition, few seemed willing to make any effort to defend the province during times of apparent danger. When, in 1747-48, Benjamin Franklin undertook to organize the Voluntary Association to protect the exposed Delaware River shoreline from French raiding parties, he made a direct pitch for the support of Pennsylvania’s Germans. Despite the fact that by this date relatively few were consci-

entious objectors, Franklin attracted but one regiment of Germans.\(^{11}\)

It was no wonder then, that Governor James Hamilton, Provincial Secretary Richard Peters, merchant William Allen, and a few other leading proprietary-executive supporters viewed the rapid increase in German immigration that took place between 1749 and 1754 with great alarm.\(^ {12}\) Already they felt beleaguered on account of the popular prejudice against proprietary and executive appointees, the failure of the 1747–48 crisis visibly to weaken the Quaker Assemblymen, and the unwillingness of old friends to forget their differences and to organize politically on the executive's behalf. As they watched the hordes of German immigrants, totalling over 11,000 people in 1749–50, swarm up the Delaware into Philadelphia, that feeling grew more acute.\(^ {13}\) The 1740 Act of Parliament which allowed foreign-born Quakers and oath-taking Protestants to become naturalized in the colonies after a seven-year residence and which was confirmed and extended by the assembly to cover all who would not take the oath, meant that the number of voters the Quaker assemblymen could conceivably mobilize among the German minority would rise dramatically during the next few years.\(^ {14}\) If they continued their almost total allegiance to the popular Quaker leaders, the proprietary-executive supporters could never hope to gain influence in the assembly, especially if their ability to attract English-speaking voters did not improve.


Even in the late 1740s and early 1750s when the German church leaders had become more influential in Pennsylvania, they did not challenge Saur's conception of the proper role of Germans in public affairs, nor his conclusions as to whom German voters should support. Henry M. Muhlenberg, *The Journals of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg*, trans. and ed. by Theodore G. Tappert and John W. Doberstein (Philadelphia, 1942), 1: 212.

12. James Hamilton, the son of noted Pennsylvania politician Andrew Hamilton, held the position of Governor from 1748 to 1754. Richard Peters succeeded James Logan as chief proprietary spokesman in the colony. He served as Secretary of the Provincial Land Office from 1737 to 1760 and as Clerk of the Council and secretary to the Governor from 1743 to 1762. William Allen was active in provincial and city politics throughout the second and third quarters of the eighteenth century. From 1750–1774 he held a commission as chief justice of the Supreme Court.

13. See footnote 5.

In the mid-1750s the issue of who was to wield political power became of utmost importance in Pennsylvania. The French were advancing south from Lake Ontario into western Pennsylvania and it was clear that the hostilities that were to open the French and Indian War in 1754 were not far off. By 1753–54 proprietary-executive supporters were worried about the future security of their lives and property, for most believed that the Quakers would refuse to defend the province even if the crisis grew. According to these men, the Germans, culpable enough in peacetime for supporting the anti-proprietary Quakers, were doubly so in times of danger when common sense indicated the need for warlike preparations. Nor did the defence advocates stop there; they went on to brand the Germans as papists and francophiles—potential traitors to the British cause.¹⁵

This wild misrepresentation of German opinion revealed that anti-German sentiment was not simply founded on dissatisfaction with the role the German minority had played, and threatened to play, in local politics. It also had roots in a deep seated fear among some members of the provincial elite that the sheer size of the German population would eventually lead to a significant de-Anglicization of Pennsylvania culture and politics. Governor James Hamilton made this fear explicit when he objected to German participation in public life on the grounds of their inability to understand "our laws and our language."¹⁶ Benjamin Franklin, one of the most articulate of the Philadelphia anglophiles, elaborated on the insidious nature of the German presence:

"Few of their children in the county learn English; they import many books from Germany; and of the six printing houses in the province, two are entirely German, two half-German half-English and but two entirely English; they have one German newspaper and one half-German. Advertisements intended to be intended to be general are now printed in Dutch and English; the signs in our streets have inscriptions in both languages, and in some places only German. They begin of late to make all their bonds and other legal Writings in their own language which are allowed good in our Courts. . . ."¹⁷

¹⁶. James Hamilton to Thomas Penn, 24 September 1750, PPOC, V.
¹⁷. Benjamin Franklin to Peter Collinson, 9 May 1753, Franklin Papers, 4: 484.
As if this were not enough, there was the prospect that "in a few years" they might use their power as a political block to elect Germans to the assembly and to take over other political offices at the county level. Because institutions, offices, and laws were the chief agencies through which a cultural group gave formal expression to its values and customs, any such political gains by the Germans meant a corresponding loss for the English-speaking peoples.

Nor was this fear limited to non-Quakers. Although no Friend spoke out openly against the Germans, Franklin's anti-German remarks illustrate how the problem cut across lines of political division. Franklin, an influential member of the Assembly from 1750 through 1755, was a Quaker ally on most questions. Moreover, it was a Quaker dominated Assembly that in 1752 passed an act which implemented a plan that Governor James Hamilton, Thomas Penn, and some of their confidantes had promoted. This legislation cut off the back parts of Philadelphia and Bucks County where most of the German residents of these counties lived, set them up as two separate counties—Berks and Northampton—and awarded each the grand total of one legislative representative.

This obvious example of gerrymandering raises a number of important questions. If the Germans were the rabble-rousing, politically conscious, tightly unified group that Peters, Franklin, Hamilton, and others feared, why were they not visibly upset by their under-representation? Why did they not protest such proceedings? Why in Berks, Northampton, and Lancaster counties, where they had a clear majority, did they not elect members of their own nationality rather than the English Quakers and one English Moravian that they sent to Philadelphia to represent them? If the Quakers and their Anglican and Presbyterian allies were so dependent on activist German voters in the past, why did they take the chance of losing such

18. Ibid.
19. Thomas Graeme to Thomas Penn, 6 November 1750, PPOC, III; Statutes at Large, 5: 133-147.
20. James Hamilton to Thomas Penn, 24 September 1750, 18 March 1752, PPOC, V; Benjamin Franklin to Peter Collinson, 9 May 1753, Franklin Papers, 4: 483-484; Richard Peters to Proprietaries, 26 October 1749, RPLB; Thomas Graeme to Thomas Penn, 6 November 1750, PPOC, III.
22. As Richard Peters reported in his letter to Thomas Penn, 26 October 1749, RPLB. See also Benjamin Franklin to Peter Collinson, 9 May 1753, Franklin Papers, 4: 484.
support in the old counties as well as in the new, by perpetrating a blatant inequity?

The answer to these questions is an obvious one. The Germans did not appear upset because in large measure they were not upset. They were essentially apolitical. Throughout the second quarter of the eighteenth century the Pennsylvania Germans accepted the established framework of election procedures and showed marked deference to those non-Germans who had provided sound legislative leadership in the past. Although those who were eligible came to the polls when the popular Quaker leaders needed support, voting statistics indicate that Germans, like their English counterparts, were somewhat apathetic to politics. Nor could the German minority, even if they rushed to the polls as soon as they were eligible, have played the part Philadelphians attributed to them. The Germans could not have carried elections in the counties, for since 1742 no outspoken proprietary-executive supporter had been able to gain even a sprinkling of English or Scotch-Irish votes, and the seven years residence requirement meant that the great body of Germans who immigrated after 1748 could not vote until after the 1756 election. Ineligible voters could not be effectively mobilized for a protest through the ballot box. Underrepresentation, too, was not the sore point that later voters and historians felt it to be, for by 1752 it was an established practice. Although those freeholders who voted in Philadelphia and Bucks County elections had been accustomed to choosing eight representatives, the Assembly had granted fewer seats to each new county. In 1729 Lancaster received four, in 1749 and 1750 York and Cumberland had received two each. From this perspective, the measure of discrimination was considerably less, and residents were confident that the old representatives from other counties would support their own in protecting their rights and privileges. Moreover, provincial representation was not the foremost concern of the backcountry inhabitants. Far more important in their minds were the benefits that came with county organization—easier access to courthouse, justice of the peace, and sheriff, and the increased accountability to local residents of those officials responsible for internal improvements. Thus, most residents of the area considered it a beneficial act, even if they were somewhat disappointed with their one-member representation in the provincial Assembly.
Although the legislation that set up Berks and Northampton failed to spark widespread public debate, it apparently did not draw wholehearted support from all members of the provincial elite. Thomas Graeme, a contemporary observer who was intimately acquainted with many of Philadelphia's leading politicians, pinpointed the source of the anti-German sentiment when he remarked that the members of the Assembly who were city rather than country based were determined to underrepresent Berks and Northampton and that county members compromised on this, an issue which did not affect their vital interests. Fear of the Germans was thus a product not of the rural, but of the urban mind.

One of the conditions that prompted the hostile reactions of prominent city leaders to German immigration was the scale of immigration and the vivid, negative impressions produced by the newcomers. Because aliens had to take the oath of allegiance at Philadelphia, all of the immigrant ships bearing Germans had to funnel into that port. To Philadelphia residents, it seemed as though a new mass of immigrants—sick, tired, vile-smelling, and utterly alien—floated in with every tide. When members of Philadelphia's elite looked westward they saw not the hard-working apolitical German farmer that their county counterparts saw the immigrant become, but the unpropertied, strange, and unassimilated refugee from the Rhineland who had just stepped off the boat. Of course, some of the more recent immigrants remained in Philadelphia to pursue their trades in the capital, and provincial city leaders did have dealings with the German residents. But the nature of their contacts was very different from those provided by neighborhood activities in rural areas where representatives of different national groups freely mingled. The greater degree of social differentiation, the greater opportunity for selective discrimination in the choice of associates, and the constantly widening gap between rich and poor that characterized the urban environment reduced the level of meaningful social intercourse—and the possibilities for genuine integration—between the English speaking elite and the German members of the community.

But the circumstances of exposure to German immigrants alone could not explain the divergent attitudes of city residents and countrymen. The most important determinant of the urban leaders' feel-

23. Thomas Graeme to Thomas Penn, March 18, 1752, PPOC, V.
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ings towards the Germans was their growing awareness during the 1740s and 1750s of the seemingly great potentialities of Pennsylvania society. As part of a self-conscious social, political, and economic elite which presided over an increasingly sophisticated provincial society, they had become aware not only of their own political, economic, and cultural strength, but also of the extraordinary promise of Pennsylvania's record of growth. Projections included surpassing England in wealth, population, and virtue and perhaps even attendant alterations in the more formal aspects of the colony's relationship with the mother country. But self-conscious and quiet enthrallment with future prospects had a reverse side. Whatever appeared to threaten those visions attracted deep-seated emnity and the prospect of a hinterland honeycombed with closed, German enclaves struck at the very heart of those projections. The growing number of back-country Germans, to whom the immigrant stereotype clung, represented a loss of control by the metropolis over the surrounding area and thus threatened the ability of the existing elite to guide Pennsylvania to her proper destiny. The prospect of sharing power with German spokesmen was even more offensive for it implied a complete restructuring of provincial society. The issue was not just who should direct Pennsylvania in the next few years but whether the existing English culture with all of its peculiarly English practices and institutions, a culture within which English speaking people were accustomed to pursuing their own purposes and goals, would continue to exist in its familiar form or would face major alterations.

Undoubtedly many Philadelphians were somewhat aware of the cultural threat posed by the Germans. With the single exception of Benjamin Franklin, however, whose uncommon concern for the vitality of Philadelphia's English provincial culture inspired his cutting remarks about the Germans, individual reactions depended

25. "The first drudgery of settling new colonies, which confines the people to mere necessaries, is now pretty well over; and there are many in every province in circumstances that set them at ease, and afford leisure to cultivate the finer arts and improve the common stock of knowledge." Benjamin Franklin, "A Proposal for Promoting Useful Knowledge among the British Plantations in America" (1743), Franklin Papers, 2: 380.


27. Benjamin Franklin, "Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind," Franklin Papers, 4: 233. For a matter-of-fact consideration of the possibility of colonial independence see Lewis Evans, A Brief Account of Pennsylvania (1753).
to a large extent on political ties and sympathies. The worried Quakers and their political friends took the most effective action by creating Berks and Northampton Counties and, in typical fashion, said not a word about the implications of their action. Out of their concern for social harmony, stability, and political power, the Quakers constantly tried to avoid statements that might give offense to other religious or national groups and because in this case they were dealing with residents who had always given them and their allies strong support against the proprietor and chief executive, it was doubly important that they say and do as little as possible to offend the Germans. It is likely, too, that because of their close contact with county Quakers, city leaders realized that the German threat was not all that the Philadelphians might suppose it to be. County-based members of the provincial elite undoubtedly assured them that the Germans had made no effort to break into county and provincial offices and that they maintained a customary deference to established leaders. Even more to the point was the observation that, far from consciously desiring to Germanize other national groups, many wanted to learn English in order to enjoy the commercial, political, and social benefits that would thereby accrue.

With the notable exception of Benjamin Franklin, the group which was most outspoken against the Germans was composed of a small number of men—Governor James Hamilton, Provincial Secretary Richard Peters, Chief Justice William Allen, educator William Smith—who were the chief political spokesmen for the executive branch of government and the proprietary interest. Unlike the

28. Although Franklin’s harsh words against the Germans may have owed something to his failure in the German printing business and his inability to enlist German support in the Voluntary Association, it seems unlikely that personal pique, alone, would have inspired such sentiments. Rather, it appears that because of his deep involvement in intellectual and cultural pursuits, his awareness of Philadelphia’s potential in an Anglo-American world, his belief that the English cultural heritage provided the best possible framework for the attainment of liberty, and his obvious attachment, as a self-made man, to the society that had provided such opportunity, he was an extreme cultural chauvinist, extraordinarily sensitive to obstacles that might impede the natural growth of the English provincial culture. For Franklin’s anti-German sentiment see Franklin Papers, 4: 120–121, 234, 483–485; 5: 158–160. For other views on Franklin see Weaver, “Benjamin Franklin and the Pennsylvania Germans,” pp. 536–539, and Bell, “Benjamin Franklin and the German Charity Schools,” pp. 381–387.

29. On Hamilton, Peters, and Allen see note 12. William Smith had come to New York from the British Isles in 1751 and quickly became involved in a movement to establish a college in that city. He made the acquaintance of a number of leading Philadelphia residents in 1753, moved to that city in 1754, and became provost of the College of Philadelphia in 1755.
Quakers, these men found themselves in a position of extreme political weakness, a circumstance which intensified rather than ameliorated their hostility to the Germans. Beleaguered, frustrated, unwilling to examine the circumstances of their weakness, and incapable of analyzing their situation objectively, the executive and proprietary supporters made the German voters a scapegoat for their many political failures. Because they accepted the simple notion that the Germans were the major source of their problems they soon became involved in an educational plan that was also an alchemist’s project. Free schools for the German youth was the catalyst that would transform the German voters’ antipathy into admiration.

The German charity school movement was born in Europe out of the interest Pennsylvania’s leading German Reformed minister, Michael Schlatter, evoked when, in 1751, he travelled to Holland to plead the educational needs of the province’s illiterate and unchurched Germans. The Reformed Church Synod in Holland, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and a number of influential Englishmen whose interests included colonial affairs and the English charity school movement, were prepared to help finance schools for the children of poor Germans in Pennsylvania. To that end they formed the “Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge among the Germans in Pennsylvania.” According to the public utterances of the English benefactors and of the Philadelphia trustees who managed the charity school project for them, the chief reason for setting up these schools was to promote “industry and Godliness,” by instructing the pupils in basic educational skills and in sound religious principles. Privately, however, they emphasized different ends. The schools should be used to teach Germans the English language and to instruct them in their civic responsibilities. What these responsibilities were was obvious to the trustees who with one or two exceptions, including Benjamin Franklin, were Pennsylvania’s leading proprietary-executive politicians: to accord proper respect to the proprietary family and their interests, to support men who called for a stronger executive authority in the colony, and to back those politicians who favored military fortifications and a militia law. In short, the trustees hoped to use the schools to convert

30. Tully, William Penn’s Legacy, Chapters II, VI and VIII.
31. William Smith, A Brief History of the Rise and Progress of the Charitable Scheme, for the Relief and Instruction of Poor Germans and their Descendants Settled in Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, 1755).
what they saw as their greatest political liability—the hostility of the German voters—into a positive political advantage.\textsuperscript{32}

Despite financial backing from England and Holland, and despite the initial favorable response of local German spokesmen when the schools were organized in 1754–55, the project was never as successful as the trustees had hoped. Christopher Saur saw through the purposes of the scheme from the moment of its inception, and he used his influential press to discourage participation. In 1755 evidence of the trustees' angry prejudices against the Germans, which up to that point had been lacking, appeared with the publication of two widely read pamphlets. In his \textit{Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind}, Benjamin Franklin warned anglophiles against the “Palatine Boors” who had been “suffered to swarm” into the country, and William Smith's \textit{Brief State of Pennsylvania} charged the British government to disqualify the francophile and popish Germans until his educational reforms, among others, had produced a marked Anglicization.\textsuperscript{33} Of course, Saur made good use of this ammunition. As soon as these pamphlets became known in Pennsylvania, the schools lost the backing of many former supporters and although a few schools continued in existence throughout most of the 1760s, the project quickly lost the momentum it originally had.\textsuperscript{34}

The chief significance of the charity school movement for the understanding of pre-1755 Pennsylvania society lay not so much in its failure as its exposure of the faulty reasoning of its advocates. On the question of cultural identity, the involvement of Michael Schlatter, the favorable response of other influential Germans including German Lutheran minister Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, and the petitions of various German communities for a school


\textsuperscript{33} Franklin Papers, 5: 205.

indicated that the Germans were not as self-consciously defensive about their language as the Philadelphians had assumed. There were practical advantages to learning the English tongue. Many Germans were well aware of those benefits, and despite the high rate of German immigration, assimilation and acculturation was proceeding apace. The concerned city leaders quite clearly underestimated the vitality of their own English provincial culture.\textsuperscript{35}

Nor were their political calculations any more sound than their assessment of cultural affairs. The emphasis that the proprietary supporters placed on the Germans as a crucial factor in the elections was clearly ill-founded. After the recent gerrymandering, the votes of the entire German community would produce no more than a toehold in the assembly. Only if the project was successful in the long run—when the children had grown up, become freeholders and met franchise requirements—could it produce tangible results.\textsuperscript{36} The other assumption that the trustees shared, that exposure to bi-lingual school teachers and the ability to understand English writings, speeches, and conversations would guarantee political support, was equally absurd. Pennsylvania was filled with English speaking residents who could easily comprehend what the proprietary-executive supporters represented and for that very reason gave their trust to the Quakers. What on the one hand was a scapegoat, on the other, was no more than a mirage.

By the end of 1755 the writing was on the wall. Fears that were engendered by the injection of such a large minority group into Pennsylvania were likely to produce some degree of political disension at some point in the future. Prior to that time, however, there had been no such certainty. Despite their numbers the Germans had not involved themselves directly in political affairs to the same extent as the Scotch-Irish or Welsh. The explanation for this relative exclusion was that, because the prerequisites of political position were the products of an English colonial culture, officeholding demanded a relatively high level of acculturation for members of a


\textsuperscript{36} Something Smith and others had come to realize by 1755. See William Smith to Thomas Penn, 1 May 1755, William Allen to John Paris, 25 October 1755, PPOC, VII.
different linguistic group.\textsuperscript{37} Of course, acculturation was taking place, particularly in neighborhoods where German settlers were inter-spered with other national groups,\textsuperscript{38} and in Lancaster county a few products of the process—justices of the peace Emmanuel Carpenter, Simon Adam Kuhn, Conrad Weiser, and Edward Smout, and county commissioner Martin Mylin—testified to their ability to thrive in a predominately English political world by being appointed or elected to their respective county offices. But these men shared characteristics that the vast majority of German settlers in Lancaster and backcounty Philadelphia and Bucks did not enjoy—long residence in the colony (the same qualification that allowed Dutch families like the Vanhornes and Vansants to become an integral part of the Bucks county elite) or some individual advantage such as education, wealth, or reputation that gave them a peculiar status among English speaking residents.\textsuperscript{39}

37. There is evidence of assimilation, both English to German and German to English but insufficient time had elapsed since the period of greatest German immigration for extensive intermarriage and the attendant integrative process to take place. For examples of intermarriage among the families of the politically prominent see H. F. Eshleman, "Sketch of Judge Thomas Edwards," \textit{Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society}, 13 (1909): 111-27; William H. Egle, ed., \textit{Notes and Queries}, 4th ser., 2: 193.


39. Emmanuel Carpenter served Lancaster County as a justice of the peace after moving westward from Germantown in the early 1730s. Apparently he had been influenced by the type of attitude Daniel Pastorius displayed when he advised young Germans to "remember that your father was naturalized . . . (and that) each of you (are) Anglus Natus and Englishmen by birth," (Quoted in Harry M. and Margaret B. Tinkcom, \textit{Historic Germantown. From the Founding to the Early Part of the Nineteenth Century} (Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1955), pp. 17-18), for Carpenter changed his name from the German Zimmerman to the English equivalent. On Carpenter see \textit{Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society}, 24 (1920): 138-68.

Conrad Weiser and Edward Smout also were justices of the peace. Both had lived in the province for some time, both were well-to-do, and both had performed peculiar services for the province—Weiser in Indian affairs and Smout during the Maryland boundary dispute. On Weiser see Paul A. Wallace, \textit{Conrad Weiser, 1696-1760: Friend of Colonist & Mohawk} (Philadelphia, 1945). The best measure of the Anglican Smout is his will, Lancaster County Will Book A, p. 196. Lancaster County Court House. See also, Thomas Penn to Richard Peters, March 1/45, Gratz Collection, Governors of Pennsylvania, Case 2, Box 33a. A fourth German justice of the peace was Simon Adam Kuhn, a prominent German Lutheran physician who moved to Lancaster from Germantown in 1740, served for some time as Chief Burgess of Lancaster Borough, and co-operated closely with members of the English establishment. On Kuhn see Alexander Harris, \textit{A Biographical History of Lancaster County} (Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1872), pp. 355-56 and more fully Jerome Wood, Jr., "Connestoga Crossroads: The Rise of Lancaster, Pennsylvania 1730-89" (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 1969), pp. 45-46.

Martin Mylin, elected county commissioner in 1749, was one of the German-Swiss Mennonites who first settled in Lancaster County. The most revealing thing about
The atypical background of these few German officeholders were an indication of the weakness of the German voters, for the great bulk of this group did not operate at election time as a unified cultural minority determined to gain their full share of political office. The German speaking populace had no strong political leader because even the most prominent among them saw themselves as playing only a supporting role on an English stage. Christopher Saur, the influential Germantown printer, was one of these prominent men. He urged his readers to use their votes to put good men in office, but he counselled them to keep themselves free of worldly pursuits, personal ambitions, and strong vanities that would distract from the pursuit of personal virtue. German behavior at election time was certainly in accord with these sentiments. In Philadelphia, Lancaster, and Bucks Counties, there was no indication that any German was ever proposed as an Assembly representative, and despite the blatant underrepresentation of Berks and Northampton in 1752 when these counties were formed out of the predominately German backparts of Philadelphia and Bucks, residents elected Moses Starr, Francis Parvin, James Burnside, William Edwards, and William Parsons, none of whom were German. Local county offices were also dominated by non-Germans.

Mylin was that in 1740-41 he built a large, showy home on his farm in Lampeter Township which became a local landmark known as "the palace." Mylin died a rich man, with personal assets alone totalling nearly £1800. Daniel Rupp, History of Lancaster County (Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1914), pp. 286–87; Lancaster County Inventories, 1751, Lancaster County Court House. The only personal possessions that these men had that set them off from their English or Scotch-Irish counterparts were German books. See for example J. B. Nolan, ed., "Conrad Weiser's Inventory," PMHB, 56 (1932): 265–69.

40. Conrad Weiser, "Two Addresses of Conrad Weiser to the German Voters of Pennsylvania," PMHB, 23 (1899): 516–21. Dietmar Rothermund makes the point that the German minority did not produce any "prominent" political leaders until the Revolution, Layman's Progress, pp. 67, 120–21. After Lodwick Christian Sprogle's brief public career in the late 1720s no German sat in the Assembly until 1764.


42. Apparently, some Germans were perturbed when Berks and Northampton received only one assembly seat each, but there is no evidence to show that this became a burning political issue. On the German anger see Rothermund, Layman's Progress, p. 166. Much more relevant are Raymond W. Ford's observations in his "Germans and other Foreign Stock: Their Part in the Evolution of Reading, Pennsylvania" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1963). Ford points out that the individuals who constantly cropped up as county leaders in the 1750s were members of Quaker families—the Boones, Webbs, Lightfoots, Parvins, Starks, and others. The great majority
Despite the low profile that Germans assumed in political affairs, the lack of conflict between them and other national groups, and the economic benefits such a thriving population brought to the province, they did form a highly visible minority which grew with great rapidity during the second quarter of the eighteenth century. Because of the linguistic barrier, differences in customs and manners, the potential political power of a German "block," and both the insecurities and anglophilia of a number of the province's political and social elite, Pennsylvania was to have an increasingly complex German problem in the third quarter of the eighteenth century.

of Germans were Lutheran and Reformed and they "constituted a remarkably homogeneous group of simple living and hard working German Protestant farmers of either the first or the second generation of their families in America. Relatively insulated by their common tongue and common way of living, they had, by mid-eighteenth century, taken little part in the affairs of the colony and had been remarkably little interfered with," pp. 7-8, 10-11.