

# Introduction

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*The Max Kade German-American Research  
Institute of the Pennsylvania State University*

Founded with a generous grant from the Max Kade Foundation in 1993, the Max Kade German-American Research Institute at Penn State-University Park devotes its resources to promoting research and publication on the German-speaking diaspora in the early modern Atlantic World, broadly defined. From the failed ventures of the Welsers in Venezuela in the sixteenth century to the presence of an identifiable "Pennsylvania German" language and culture in Pennsylvania by the 1830s, German-speakers have played both marginal and seminal roles in defining the exchanges of cultures and peoples that marked Europe's contacts with the Americas. The Kade Institute aims to provide a context within a Research I University for scholars from the United States and other countries to explore the history, language and culture of the disparate German-speakers of this "early modern" era. At Penn State itself, the Institute also seeks to support the interdisciplinary efforts of the Committee on Early Modern Studies (CEMS), which is one of a series of Humanities Consortia supported by the College of the Liberal Arts.

The Institute organizes small research conferences (most recently "Jews and Pietists in Dialogue in Enlightenment America" in 1999); participates in research projects (a projected two-volume edition of the Papers of Jacob Leisler being prepared with teams of researchers at New York University and the Universities of Göttingen and Freiburg, 1999-2004); and has co-sponsored post-doctoral fellows in cooperation with the Alexander von Humboldt's Lynen Fellows program for young German scholars wishing to engage in extended research projects abroad under the sponsorship of former Humboldt Fellows (in History 1999-2000; Communication, 2000-2001; and most likely, History of Science, 2001-2002).

The Institute has subvented this issue of *Pennsylvania History* in an effort to showcase both synthetic overviews and more detailed case studies representing the labors of both established and younger scholars from both sides of the Atlantic. The Co-Directors (from the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures and History, respectively), wish to thank both the Editor and the Pennsylvania Historical Association for the opportunity provided by the journal to publish the results of recent research on early modern German-speakers, and to acquaint a broader audience with the objectives and current projects in which the Max Kade Institute at Penn State is engaged.

Although the presence of German-speakers in North America has never really been ignored, until fairly recently the treatment of the highly diverse populations who settled in this hemisphere tended to remain the province of specialists alone. Historians and theologians interested in radical or "church" pietism, folklorists intrigued by material culture, linguists fascinated by the relationship between "high German" and both written and spoken forms of vernacular German have written for more than two hundred years about the variegated aspects of "German" presences in the Americas. The present essays build upon those disparate fields of endeavor, to be sure. But until recently, we possessed no account (for example) of the centrally important role pharmaceuticals played in the scientific and religious world of early modern German-speakers. We are only just now beginning to see studies on the intersection of gender roles, religious belief, and the complex interplay between "public" and "private" spheres of everyday life. Nor can we assume that we understand yet the full range of exchanges between speakers of German and the Native American, as well as other European peoples in the Atlantic World. The present essays provide both overview perspectives on familiar topics and insight into topics that reveal the riches of a vast and still under-explored field worthy of interdisciplinary inquiry. We hope that the readership of *Pennsylvania History* will be impressed, as we are, with the quality of both research and interpretation offered by the contributors to this issue.

The Institute's webpage is

<http://www3.la.psu.edu/histrist/maxkade/mission.htm>