

Female Writers, Women's Networks, and the Preservation of Culture: The Schwenkfelder Women of Eighteenth-Century Pennsylvania

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"We do hope very much that you shall return, maybe because the King will call for you so that without any further troubles you may peacefully live in either countryside or cities, where you will follow your trades."¹ So wrote Barbara Wiener on April 20, 1742, trying to lure her sister Maria Drescher back to Prussian Silesia from her Pennsylvanian exile, where Maria had fled in 1734 in order to escape increasing religious persecution. Unfortunately, Maria's answer has been lost. Historical records indicate, however, that neither she nor any of the other 206

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1. Barbara Wiener, Silesia to Maria Drescher, Pennsylvania [hereafter cited as "PA"], April 20, 1742, in: Rosina Hoffman's letterbook [hereafter cited as "RHL"; see note No. 39]. Unless noted otherwise, the source materials are kept in the Schwenkfelder Library, Pennsburg, Montgomery County, PA (hereafter cited as "PPeSchw"). The originals are in the German language; all translations are my own.

original Schwenkfelder emigrants (including 107 women and girls),² who eventually made it to America, accepted this invitation. Even more interesting is that Barbara Wiener's letter, which is one of a large collection, affords insights into a historical field that has received very little attention: the role and experience of German-speaking immigrant women in early America. Maria Drescher and her fellow female Schwenkfelders enjoyed an unusually high level of education; they exchanged numerous letters with female relatives and friends on both sides of the Atlantic, thereby forming important women's networks. By doing so, they played a significant part in forming and preserving long-lasting transatlantic bonds between fellow-believers.

The purpose of this essay is to show some of the gendered differences in the migration and assimilation experiences among this small sectarian group, that have hitherto been unknown. These differences reveal new insights into the lives of German-speaking women immigrants in general. What attitudes did these Schwenkfelder women develop during the dramatic changes brought about by emigration and resettlement? What can be discerned of their daily life routines? And where was the line drawn between the spheres of wives and husbands in their community? Handwriting, grammar, spelling, style, eloquence, and the conveyance of dialect into script provide hints of the correspondents' level of education. Moreover, the letters reveal to what degree, and how exactly Schwenkfelder women came in touch with members of other ethnic groups, and how they adapted to new patterns of work and cultural codes. One indicator of assimilation is the use of anglicized words in a German language context – or the absence thereof. Through a close reading of these letters, I hope to demonstrate how the domestic role of Schwenkfelder women and their contacts with women in Europe created opportunities for them to do something ordinary men were unable to do in this immigrant society (or at least not in this degree): that is, act as agents for preserving Old World culture and values.

The migration of German-speaking people to eighteenth-century Pennsylvania has been labeled a prototype of the later mass migrations

2. For a complete listing of Schwenkfelder immigrants to Pennsylvania see Samuel Kriebel Brecht, ed., *The Genealogical Record of the Schwenkfelder Families: Seekers of Religious Liberty who Fled from Silesia to Saxony and thence to Pennsylvania in the Years 1731 to 1737* (New York, Chicago: Rand McNally & Co, 1923), 34-44.

to America.³ Scholars have undertaken considerable research on these people, who formed the largest white, non-British group of immigrants at that time.⁴ Due to the substantial amount of family migration among this particular ethnic group, a significant number, that is more than one third of the immigrants, were women.⁵ Nevertheless, migration historians generally have not addressed women's roles in the New World in great detail.⁶ Nor have historians working in the field of eighteenth-century gender studies provided much information.⁷ The term "women"

3. Marianne S. Wokeck, "German Immigration to Colonial America: Prototype of a Transatlantic Mass Migration," in: Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh, eds., *America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred Year History, vol. I: Immigration, Language, Ethnicity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 3.

4. Prominent recent titles are: Hermann Wellenreuther, "Image and Counterimage, Tradition and Expectation. The German Immigrants in English Colonial Society in Pennsylvania, 1700-1765," in: Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh, eds., *America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred-Year History, vol. I: Immigration, Language, Ethnicity* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1985), 85-105; Andreas Brinck, *Die deutsche Auswanderungswelle in die britischen Kolonien Nordamerikas um die Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1993); Mark Hæberlein, *Vom Oberrhein zum Susquehanna: Studien zur badischen Auswanderung nach Pennsylvania im 18. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1993); A.G. Roeber, *Palatines, Liberty, and Property: German Lutherans in Colonial British America* (Baltimore, London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Walter G. Røedel, "'Die in die Landschaft Pennsylvania endofene Leuthe': Deutsche Amerika-Auswanderung im 18. Jahrhundert," in: Winfried Herget, ed., *Amerika: Entdeckung, Eroberung, Erfindung* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1995), 121-135; Aaron Spencer Fogleman, *Hopeful Journeys: German Immigration, Settlement, and Political Culture in Colonial America, 1717-1775* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996); Marianne S. Wokeck, *Trade in Strangers. The Beginnings of Mass Migrations to North America* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999); Hartmut Lehman, Hermann Wellenreuther, and Renate Wilson, eds., *In Search of Peace and Prosperity: New German Settlements in Eighteenth-Century Europe and America* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).

5. According to Farley Grubb, German female servants comprised about 31 to 44 percent of all German-speaking immigrant servants in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania. In comparison, the quota for English women was considerably lower, comprising only 11 to 14 percent of all English-speaking immigrant servants; see "Servant Auction Records and Immigration into the Delaware Valley, 1745-1831: The Proportion of Females Among Immigrant Servants," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 133 (1989), 163; see also Table 2, 164.

6. In an early study, Martha Kaarsberg Wallach pointed out the lack of historical studies on German immigrant women in early America, see "German Immigrant Women," *Journal of German-American Studies* 13,4 (1978) 99-106. In 1990, Mary Beth Norton called for a new approach to women's history that takes ethnic diversification into account, see "Reflections on Women in the Age of the American Revolution," in: Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, eds., *Women in the Age of the American Revolution* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 492.

Amongst the more recent studies on migration to colonial North America (compare note No. 4) Brinck, Hæberlein, Roeber, Fogleman and Wokeck do address some aspects of immigrant women's lives. Otherwise German-speaking females have been dealt with in the context of a number of folk-life studies, for instance Martha B. Kriebel, "Women, Servants and Family Life in Early America," *Pennsylvania Folklife* 28,1 (1978) 2-9. Important studies that focus on religious orientation are: Barbara Cunningham, "An Eighteenth-Century View of Femininity as Seen through the Journals of

here implicitly means "women of Anglo-Saxon descent." In this context, studies that are interested in aspects of ethnic diversity are rare.⁸ Much remains to be told of the story of German-speaking women in early America.

- Henry Melchior Muhlenberg," *Pennsylvania History* 43,3 (1976) 197-212; Wendy Everham, "The Recovery of the Feminine in an Early American Pietist Community: The Interpretative Challenge of the Theology of Conrad Beissel," *Pennsylvania Folklife* 39,2 (1989/90) 50-87; Katharine M. Faull, *Moravian Women's Memoirs: Their Related Lives, 1750-1820* (Syracuse: University Press 1997); Aaron S[pencer] Fogleman, "Women on the Trail in Colonial America: A Travel Journal of German Moravians Migrating from Pennsylvania to North Carolina in 1766," *Pennsylvania History* 61,2 (1994) 206-234; Beverly Prior Smaby, "Forming the Single Sister's Choir in Bethlehem," *Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society* 28 (1994) 1-14 and "Female Piety among Eighteenth-Century Moravians," *Pennsylvania History, Special Supplemental Issue*, 64 (1997) 151-167.
7. The following are a few of the most important works in women's history which have revolutionized our understanding of early America, none of which deal extensively with non-English immigrant women: Joan Hoff Wilson, "The Illusion of Change: Women and the American Revolution," in: Alfred F. Young, ed., *The American Revolution. Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Press, 1976), 383-445; Mary Maples Dunn, "Saints and Sisters: Congregational and Quaker Women in the Early Colonial Period," *American Quarterly* 30 (1978) 582-601; Carol R. Berkin and Mary Beth Norton, eds., *Women of America: A History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979); Nancy F. Cott and Elizabeth H. Pleck, eds., *A Heritage of Her Own: Toward a New Social History of American Women* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979); Carol R. Berkin and Clara M. Lovett, eds., *Women, War, and Revolution* (New York, London: Holmes & Meier, 1980); Carl Degler, *At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1980); Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982); Joy Day Buel and Richard Buel Jr., *The Way of Duty: A Woman and Her Family in Revolutionary America* (New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984); Marylynn Salmon, *Women and the Law of Property in Early America* (Chapel Hill, London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986); Lois Green Carr, "Inheritance in the Colonial Chesapeake," in: Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, eds., *Women in the Age of the American Revolution* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 155-208; Carole Shammas, "Early American Women and Control over Capital," in: Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, eds., *Women in the Age of the American Revolution* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 134-154.
8. Notable exceptions are a few studies in legal history. For an excellent discussion of conflicting concepts of property ownership and inheritance practices prevalent in the village culture of southwestern German principalities as opposed to English law in eighteenth-century North America see A.G. Roeber, "The Origins and Transfer of German-American Concepts of Property and Inheritance," *Perspectives in American History* 3 (1987) 115-171 and his book *Palatines, Liberty, and Property* (see note No. 4). Other studies that are interested in women's legal status with regards to ethnic diversity are Miriam Pitchon, "Widows' Wills for Philadelphia County 1750-1784: A Study of Pennsylvania German Folklife," *Pennsylvania Folklife* 26,1 (1976) 19-26; David E. Narrett, "Men's Wills and Women's Property Rights in Colonial New York," in: Ronald E. Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, eds., *Women in the Age of the American Revolution* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 91-133.

The Schwenkfelders' Migration to Pennsylvania

First- and second-generation German-speaking female immigrants were exposed to the conflicting alternatives of assimilation and cultural persistence.⁹ These pressures had a crucial impact on the development of their roles, attitudes, and actions. Important determining factors for the actual living conditions of these women arose from the peculiar settlement patterns of their group. Depending on whether they formed exclusive religious communities consisting primarily of members of their own ethnicity, or whether they had to adjust themselves to more mixed social environments, they were exposed to different levels of ethnic autonomy. Thus, substantial variations in the female settler's status arose from the religious denomination to which she belonged.

In the case of the Schwenkfelders, these patterns are signified by the group migration of a religious minority, that came from a small number of neighboring villages in Silesia. When they arrived in Pennsylvania in the early 1730s, they were not able to acquire a larger tract of land that would allow them to establish the separate community for which they had originally hoped. However, they formed a number of small settlements relatively close to one another within an already populated region some 50 miles northwest of Philadelphia.¹⁰

The Schwenkfelder movement goes back to sixteenth-century reformer Caspar Schwenckfeld von Ossig, who was a contemporary and former admirer of Martin Luther.¹¹ Schwenckfeld believed that the original Apostolic Christianity did not know formal doctrine, ritual, or physical church structure. According to him, the true church was spiritual and invisible, it did not need an organization or special church buildings, nor had the sacraments anything to do with salvation. Therefore, he refused and denied them. After a personal conflict and irrepara-

9. For a comprehensive discussion of the development and possible implications of a "Pennsylvania-German" identity see Don Yoder, "The Pennsylvania Germans: Three Centuries of Identity Crisis," in: Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh, eds., *America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred-Year History*, vol. I: Immigration, Language, Ethnicity (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1985), 41-65.

10. Today, this area belongs to the counties of Montgomery, Bucks, Berks, and Lehigh.

11. Lee C. Hopple, "Germanic European Origins and Geographical History of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Schwenkfelders," *Pennsylvania Folklife* 32,2 (1982/83), 73, 77, 78. Major works on Schwenckfeld and the Schwenkfelders are: Selina G[erhard] Schultz, "The Schwenkfelders of Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania History* 24 (1957) 293-320; Selina Gerhard Schultz, *Caspar Schwenckfeld von Ossig (1489-1561)* (Pennsburg: Board of Publication of the Schwenkfelder Church, 1977); Horst Weigelt, *The Schwenkfelders in Silesia* (Pennsburg: Schwenkfelder Library, 1985); Peter C. Erb, *Schwenkfelders in America: Papers presented at the Colloquium on Schwenckfeld and the Schwenkfelders, Pennsburg, PA September 17-22, 1984* (Pennsburg: Schwenkfelder Library, 1987).

ble split with Luther, Schwenckfeld established his own creed, which evolved separately from mainstream Protestantism. One of its strongholds was located in the region of Silesia.

As Schwenkfeldianism was not one of the three denominations tolerated by the Treaty of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years War in 1648, its future was marked by suppression and persecution. While in the 1580s there were up to 4,500 Silesian Schwenkfelders, by the 1720s their numbers had dwindled down to around 500.¹² After they had endured a long history of oppression by the Lutheran Church, their predicament became even more severe in 1719. By order of the (Holy Roman) Emperor Charles VI, a Jesuit mission was set up in Harpersdorf, one of their main villages.¹³ These Jesuit priests had authority to inflict severe punishments, such as forcefully baptizing and taking away the children of those unwilling to conform and convert. After almost two centuries of perpetual persecution the sectarians were now facing the prospect of total obliteration. Between January and May 1726, some 400 of the remaining Schwenkfelders secretly left their Silesian homesteads and fled in small groups of families to eastern Saxony. The fifty-mile journey was covered by foot, and a major part of the Schwenkfelders' luggage was comprised of religious books and manuscripts. Until they traveled on to America, they were given temporary asylum in the Moravian community in Berthelsdorf and in the area around Goerlitz.¹⁴

Their stay here seems merely to have been a stop-over on the way to the Schwenkfelders' final destination, North America. But the undertaking of such an ambitious plan demanded proper preparation and substantial financial resources. Unfortunately, due to the secrecy of their flight from Silesia, the Schwenkfelders had been unable to sell their properties, so that they arrived in Saxony with little money and few possessions.

Even at this early stage of their journey the Schwenkfelders were informed and very concerned about the possible effects of the American institution of indentured servitude on the cohesion of their little group. In a letter to Count Zinzendorf, the leader of the Moravians and tem-

12. See Hopple, *Germanic European Origins*, 88.

13. On the Schwenkfelders' persecution by Jesuit priests compare Weigelt, *The Schwenkfelders in Silesia*, 122-132.

14. Hopple, *Germanic European Origins*, 88; see also Schultz, *The Schwenkfelders of Pennsylvania*, 302.

porarily the Schwenkfelders' protector, they wrote "we do not wish to enter the country in some sort of slavery, which would cause us to be scattered."¹⁵ Eventually, members of the German and Dutch Mennonite Church generously sponsored the Schwenkfelders, so that they did not have to hire themselves out under the bonds of indenture in order to pay for their passage.¹⁶ And when on April 4, 1733, the Schwenkfelders were given one year to depart, 219 of them choose to move westward, while the rest stayed behind and eventually returned to Silesia.¹⁷

The Schwenkfelder migration to Pennsylvania represents a classic case of a group migration motivated by religious persecution, for which extended-family networks were critical. An indicator for the close family ties can be found in the repetitious occurrence of surnames - only 23 last names can be found for the total of 206 successful immigrants.¹⁸ Ten of the forty-nine families were headed by females, that is widows traveling with their children; one, Anna Krauss, lost her husband during the journey.¹⁹ All of these women were traveling in the company of relatives bearing the same last name, and often brothers or brother-in-laws were at the head of the extended family group. In comparison, only two widows with children were among the migrants. Because this was, above all, a family migration, more than half of the 206 Schwenkfelders, that is 107, were women or girls.

Schwenkfelder Women Letter-Writers

Immigrant letters provide information on the living conditions of the

15. Members of the Schwenkfelders to Count Zinzendorf, [after October 23,] 1733, as copied in "Historical Notes on Schwenkfelders," VK 2394-2397; original in Herrnhuter Unitätsarchiv, Herrnhut, Germany.

16. The Mennonites not only provided food and shelter while the impoverished refugees stayed in Hamburg and Rotterdam, but they also covered the expenses of their transatlantic passage and donated the founding stock of a charity fund for Pennsylvania. See Horst Weigelt, "Die Emigration der Schwenkfelder aus Schlesien nach Pennsylvania: Gruende, Verlauf und Bedeutung," *Jahrbuch fuer schlesische Kirchengeschichte* 65 (1985) 124-125. On the importance of seventeenth-century religious communication channels as a foundation for the secular transportation system of the eighteenth-century see Rosalind J. Beiler, "Distributing Aid to Believers in Need: The Religious Foundations of Transatlantic Migration," *Pennsylvania History, Special Supplemental Issue*, 64 (1997) 73-87.

17. Schultz, *The Schwenkfelders of Pennsylvania*, 303. For a numerical breakdown of the six "Schwenkfelder migrations" compare Fogleman, *Hopeful Journeys*, 104-105, Table 4.2.

18. These typical Schwenkfelder names are: Anders, Beyer, Drescher, Hatranft, Heydrick, Hoffman, Huebner, John, Krauss, Kriebel, Mentzel, Meschter, Neuman, Reinwald, Scholtz, Schultz, Seipt, Schubert, Wagner, Warmer, Weiss, Wiegner, Yeakel; see Brecht, *Genealogical Record*, 43.

19. Brecht, *Genealogical Record*, 42-43.

Schwenkfelder women.²⁰ A considerable number of single letters, which probably were part of larger exchanges of epistles, have survived in the original, in transcription, or in abstracted references drawn up by Schwenkfelder historians.²¹ Evidence shows that Anna Anders,²² Barbara Heebner,²³ Maria Heebner,²⁴ Rosina Hoffman,²⁵ Esther Kriebel,²⁶ Barbara Krauss Urffer,²⁷ and Susanna Wiegner²⁸ were among the female correspondents in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania. On the other side of the Atlantic, women like Susanna Beyer,²⁹ Anna Maria Fliegner,³⁰ Ursula Fliegner,³¹ Anna Rosina Gerlach,³² Helene Heydrich,³³ Eva Libtz,³⁴

20. For a discussion of the value of letters home as a historical source see: Hannsmartin Schwarzmair, "Auswandererbriefe aus Nordamerika: Quellen im Grenzbereich von Geschichtlicher Landeskunde, Wanderungsforschung und Literatursoziologie," *Zeitschrift fuer die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 126 (1978) 303-369; Peter Mesenhöller, "Der Auswandererbrief: Bedingungen und Typik schriftlicher Kommunikation im Auswanderungsprozess," in: Peter Assion, ed., *Der grosse Aufbruch. Studien zur Amerikaauswanderung* (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 1985); Thomas A. Bartolosh, "Auswandererbriefe als Quellen fuer den Assimilationsprozess deutscher Amerikaauswanderer," *Nassauische Annalen* 100 (1989) 197-212.

Important collections of German-American "letters home" from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are: Leo Schelbert and Hedwig Rappolt, eds., *Alles ist ganz anders hier: Auswandererschicksale in Briefen aus zwei Jahrhunderten* (Olten und Freiburg: Walter Verlag, 1977); Wolfgang Helbich, ed., "Amerika ist ein freies Land...": *Auswanderer schreiben nach Deutschland* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand Verlag, 1985); Wolfgang Helbich, Walter D. Kamphoefner, Ulrike Sommer, eds., *Briefe aus Amerika: Deutsche Auswanderer schreiben aus der Neuen Welt 1830-1930* (Muenchen: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1988).

21. In their extensive efforts to collect any material of relevance for this religious community, Schwenkfelder historians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century gained access to a large number of private documents, which were made available for transcription. Afterwards some were sent back to their private owners. In these cases, the manuscripts' location often is no longer known, and only "Historical Notes" (shelf mark "VK") provide information about the author, addressee, date, and sometimes the content.

22. Anna Anders apparently was illiterate as she was only able to sign her letter of June 1763 to Joseph Spangenberg with her mark; copy in VK 3338-3341, PPeSchw; original in Herrnhuter Unitätsarchiv.

23. Author of two letters, VK 3899-3906; VK 4553. Another frequent spelling of this family name is "Huebner".

24. Author of one letter, VK 3509-3511.

25. Author of nineteen letters, two of which are no longer existent, all in RHL (see note No. 39).

26. Author of two letters, VK 3877, VK 3879.

27. Author of one letter, VK 4239.

28. Author of three letters, VK 3864, VK 3867, VK 3868.

29. Author of one letter, in: RHL.

30. Author of five letters, all in: RHL.

31. Author of one letter, VK 3744-3746.

32. Author of two letters, all in: RHL.

33. Author of nine letters, VK 3810-3811, VK 4147, VK 4150, VK 4207; five are in: CHL (see endnote No. 39).

34. Author of nine letters, VK 2487-2488, VK 2489, VK 2541, VK 2556-2561, VK 2580-2586, VK 2688-2694, VK 2698, VK 2736, VK 3197.

Rosina Scharffenberger,³⁵ and Barbara Wiener³⁶ wrote letters from Silesia and Saxony. It is highly likely, that these women were not the only female correspondents among the Schwenkfelders.

Of particular interest is the existence of letters written in German script by Rosina Drescher Hoffman who had come to Pennsylvania in 1734, when she was probably ten years of age.³⁷ In 1753, Rosina married Christopher Hoffman, a hymnologist, bookbinder and farmer, who was three years her junior.³⁸ Like herself, her husband had been born in the old world and had come to America as a child with the 1734 migration. The couple lived some four miles distant from the Drescher family home in Skippack, where Christopher Hoffman had built a new house one year prior to the marriage.

In 1775, Rosina gathered a "Collection of letters written by friends in Silesia to their friends in Pennsylvania and those from Pennsylvania to Silesia."³⁹ In two separate booklets, she not only copied her own let-

35. Author of fifteen letters, VK 2638-2641, VK 2772-2774, VK 2803-2806, VK 2787-2790, VK 2791-2794, VK 2795-2798, VK 2807, VK 2808-2810, VK 2811-2815, VK 2816-2820, VK 3420, VK 3568, VK 3586, VK 3762, VK 3912-3917.

36. Author of seven letters, all in: RHL.

37. There is some inconsistency in ascertaining her exact year of birth. The standard genealogical work of the Schwenkfelders claims that she was born on December 14, 1714, but puts a question mark in brackets behind this date, see Brecht, *Genealogical Record*, 1183. Her tombstone inscription is cited as giving the date of her death as July 3, 1794 at the age of "70 years and 9 months." It is very probable that she was born in 1724.

Rosina's parents, Georg and Maria Drescher were part of the third and main migration of Schwenkfelders to Pennsylvania. Together with three children and one aunt, the Dreschers left Berthelsdorf shortly after April 20, 1734 and embarked in Altona on the ship St. Andrew on June 21. After a sea journey of three months, they arrived at Philadelphia on September 22. (See Brecht, *Genealogical Record*, 36-39.) The captain's list names 261 "Palatines", 167 Schwenkfelder men, women, and children among them. (See Ralph Beaver Strassburger, William John Hinke, eds., *Pennsylvania German Pioneers: A Publication of the Original Lists of Arrival In the Port of Philadelphia From 1727-1808* (Norristown: Pennsylvania German Society, 1934), vol. I, 136-141.) An additional nine passengers from Silesia had died during the journey: one woman after childbirth, one elderly widow, and six children; see Brecht, *Genealogical Record*, 40. This brought the transatlantic death rate for this particular group of Schwenkfelders to a high figure of 5.4 percent. Farley Grubb establishes a passage mortality of eighteenth-century German immigrants to Pennsylvania for the total number of passengers at 3.83 percent. (Farley Grubb, "Morbidity and Mortality on the North Atlantic Passage: Eighteenth-Century German Immigration," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 17,3 (1987), 571.

38. Brecht, *Genealogical Record*, 1180.

39. Titlepage of the booklet that contained Rosina Hoffman's correspondence: "Sammlung der Briefe Welche von den Freunden in Schlesien geschrieben worden, an ihre Freunde in Pennsilvanien, und wiederum von Pennsilvanien in Schlesien [...] Zusammen geschrieben von mir Rosina Hoffmannin im Jahr 1775," (hereafter cited as "RHL"; the other booklet that contained Christopher Hoffman's letters is cited as "CHL"). I would like to thank the Schwenkfelder Library for providing me with a recent transcription of the two letterbooks.

ters and the answers she received, but did the same for her husband's correspondence. Eighty letters, covering a time period from 1740 to 1790 have been preserved. Judging from the frequent references to the dating and receipt of previous letters, the collection appears to be almost complete. The historical value of these letters is considerably enhanced by their series-character. In comparison to single letters or fragments of a larger exchange, they allow insights into personal, social and cultural developments over a long period of time. Putting together various pieces of biographical information renders a more detailed characterization of the letter writers. Also, the letters reveal the correspondents' relationship to each other and possible changes over time.

Rosina Hoffman's letterbook contains thirty-four letters, seventeen of which she wrote herself. It begins with six letters from Silesia, written by Barbara Wiener to her sister (and Rosina's mother) Maria Drescher. Unfortunately, the replies from Pennsylvania are missing. In 1754, when they had been living in America for twenty years, the task of keeping in touch fell to Rosina Hoffman. She claimed that her mother was no longer "willing to write" - probably because Maria Drescher's eye-sight faded, or her hand was no longer firm -and therefore Rosina complied and continued the correspondence.⁴⁰ In a conscious attempt to ensure the continuation of this precious bond, Rosina Hoffman sent her greetings to Barbara Wiener's daughter and wrote: "we ask you, dear cousin, that if your mother has died in the meantime, you would please write to us."⁴¹ And so it happened, after Barbara Wiener's death in 1768 her daughter Anna Rosina Gerlach took over. Although the new correspondence was less frequent, they never broke contact. Similar incidents of Schwenkfelder daughters filling in the part of their mothers when old age, infirmity, or death prevented them from carrying on the correspondence themselves can be found in other letters.⁴²

More vivid than the exchanges with Anna Rosina Gerlach are letters between Rosina Hoffman and Anna Maria Fliegner, another cousin in Silesia. In addition to these, Rosina wrote to a number of other members of the Drescher family. Interestingly, her correspondence is almost exclusively addressed to the females of her own family. With the exception of one letter to Johann Christoph Beyer, all addressees are either

40 Rosina Hoffman, PA to Barbara Wiener, Silesia, May 21, 1754, in: RHL.

41 Rosina Hoffman, PA to Barbara Wiener, Silesia, June 12, 1767, in: RHL.

42 For instance Ursula Fliegner, Silesia to Anna Andersin, PA, [undated; before 1772], VK 3744-3746.

women, or men and women together. In comparison, other Schwenkfelder women's correspondence was less defined by gender; their letters went to male and female addressees alike. But with regards to scope and focus, Rosina Hoffman's letter collection appears to be truly unique. Taken together, the existence of these letters strongly suggests that Rosina and other Schwenkfelder women like her were part of an extended network of women writers. In some cases, these bonds were maintained for decades.

In comparison to Rosina's letters, the collection of her husband, Christopher Hoffman, is more comprehensive. He was the author of twenty-six of the forty-six letters preserved, the first one dating from 1763. Except for one letter, all copied writings from Silesia are addressed to him rather than to members of the older generation of his family. His correspondents were male friends and relatives plus their wives in Silesia, with the exception of his rather intensive exchange with Helene Heidrich, a woman he did not know personally.⁴³

Both sets of correspondence appear to be exclusive with regard to the persons involved; an exchange of addressees does not occur. Hence, Rosina Hoffman was able to establish a correspondence with female members of her own family that was independent of that of her husband. Frequently, however, she sent greetings to the respective husband, and likewise Christopher Hoffman did the same to his correspondent's wife. Quite a number of letters by Rosina and Christopher Hoffman bear the same date, or the dates of following days. They probably undertook the act of letterwriting together, but still kept their correspondence separate. The simultaneous writing of separate letters, which can also be identified in some letters from Silesia, may have resulted from opportunities to have the letters transported.⁴⁴

Preservation of Tradition and Educational Opportunities

The awareness of the Schwenkfelders' exceptional religious status and their relief at finally inhabiting a country that allowed freedom of worship, is openly expressed in both letterbooks. The experience of being a select group, unique, small in numbers, and persecuted, eventually led to excellent record-keeping and careful preservation; a phenomenon which can also be found among other sectarians. By passing on their his-

43. Helene Heidrich corresponded with at least three other Schwenkfelder men in Pennsylvania; see note No. 33.

44. See notes No. 62 + 63.

tory and beliefs to subsequent generations, they developed a special relationship to their past. This ensured their survival as a group. The Schwenkfelders made great efforts to secure their religious tracts and whatever other manuscript seemed relevant to them. Since the number of copies they needed was small, printing would have been highly expensive. Therefore, they started copying important manuscripts by hand. The process not only served as a means of preservation but also included contemplative, religious elements.⁴⁵

The eighteenth century marks the peak of transcribing Schwenkfelder books and treatises. Interestingly, eleven of the fifty-two copyists identified were women, some of whom started at an early age.⁴⁶ Only two of the names of female copyists correspond with those of the female letterwriters; one of them was Rosina Hoffman. Between 1750 (that is three years prior to her marriage) and 1775, she copied no less than eight volumes - just as many as her husband.⁴⁷ Two of these manuscripts, which were completed during her courtship with Christopher Hoffman, show evidence of their growing relationship.⁴⁸ In the earlier volume, a hymn book of 1752, Rosina originally put the initials of her maiden name ("RD") in the upper corners of the booklet's title page. After her marriage she hid those letters in ornamental decorations - and added her new monogram ("RH") to the bottom corners.⁴⁹ Likewise telling is one of the decorative tailpieces, where Rosina noted that the booklet had been "finished the 10th of March 1754, by Rosina

45. Peter C. Erb and W. Kyrle Meschter, "Schwenkfelders and the Preservation of Tradition," in: Peter C. Erb, ed., *Schwenkfelders in America* (Pennsburg: Schwenkfelder Library, 1987), 190.

46. These women were Susanna Heebner, Rosina Hoffman, Barbara Krauss, Maria Kriebel, Susanna Kriebel, Rosina Kriebel, Anna Schultz, Susanna Schultz, Maria Weiss, Maria Yeakel; in one case, the piece was copied by David Schultz "and his wife;" see Manuscript Catalog, PPeSchw; see also Erb, *Schwenkfelders and the Preservation of Tradition*, 191.

47. Manuscripts copied by Rosina Hoffman: 1750: Part I Vom Gebet; Part II: Edliche nuetzliche Fragen vom heiligen Abendmahl; 1752: Gebet ueber alle Evangelia. Gebets Betrachtungen ueber die Episteln; 1752: Vorrede des Antonius. Part II. [Copyist's name given on the inside of the front cover: "Rosina Drescherin Anno 1752"]; 1752: Gesänge ueber alle erklarte Evangelia. 1753/54: Tägliche Gesangbuechlein, Das ist Morgen- Tisch- und Abend-Lieder [for proof of Rosina Hoffman as copyist see initials on the titlepage]; 1771: Postilla - Michael Hiller. Der dritte Theil. Geistreiche und Lehrhafte Predigten; 1775: Sammlung der Briefe [to and by Rosina Hoffman 1775 - 1790]; 1775: Sammlung der Briefe [to and from Silesia]; Undated: Meditationes. Folgen noch einige Psalmen. Folgen noch mehr andere Lieder. [Book gives as signatures: Rosina Hoffmannin and Anthony Kriebel]; compare Manuscript Catalogue, PPeSchw; see also Erb, *Schwenkfelders and the Preservation of Tradition*, 191.

48. Dennis K. Moyer, *Fraktur Writings and Folk Art Drawings of the Schwenkfelder Library Collection* (Kutztown, The Pennsylvania German Society, Vol. 31, 1997), 36-37.

49. For a photographic reproduction of the volumes' title page see Moyer, *Fraktur Writings*, 37, Figure 4-10.

Drescher, also Hoffman". The second volume in question, a daily hymn book of 1753, apparently was jointly produced by the newly-wed couple, as the initials of both spouses appear in the title pages' four corners.⁵⁰ In "signing" her works Rosina Hoffman was no exception; other Schwenkfelder women copyists followed the same path. By adding their initials to the title page of a book or the ornamental elements of some fraktur-piece, they (probably unintentionally) stepped out of the obscurity of anonymity.⁵¹

The Schwenkfelder women's close connection with manuscripts and books is further illustrated by the existence of numerous religious texts and bookplates, that explicitly mention the names of their female possessors.⁵² Additional information is provided by a mid-eighteenth-century list of book-owners.⁵³ Even though at that time the fourteen Schwenkfelder men by far outnumbered their four female book-owning companions, the fact that Barbara Heebner called twenty precious books her property (only five men owned more), and Anna Kriebel Drescher, Rosina Hoffman and Rosina Kriebel each owned one, is remarkable. Unfortunately, the list does not provide any information on the title and content of the respective books. At least two of these women, Rosina Hoffman and Barbara Heebner, were the wives of prominent Schwenkfelder leaders, who themselves were actively engaged in copying and letterwriting.

The existence of the two letterbooks has to be viewed in the context of this strong urge for preservation. As Rosina stated in a letter to a Silesian cousin one year before she started the actual copying process, she purposefully undertook the project of assembling the collection.⁵⁴ In doing so, she acted in accordance with a general Schwenkfelder tradition - as there are a number of books in the holdings of the Schwenkfelder Library that contain parts of extended correspondences. One of them

50. For a photographic reproduction of the volumes' title page see Moyer, *Fraktur Writings*, 36, Figure 4-9.

51. For instance, Susanna Heebner, VC 3-10. On Susanna Heebner see also Moyer, *Fraktur Writings*, 74-95.

52. See Christopher Hoffman's text made for Christina Kriebel, 1784, in: Moyer, *Fraktur Writings*, 33, Figure 4-6; Vorschrift made for Anna Anders, 1778, in: Ibid, 42-43, Figure 4-14, 4-15. Examples of bookplates dedicated to 18th century Schwenkfelder women are: Bookplate with birth record made by David Kriebel for Sarah Kriebel, 1791, in: Ibid, 119, Figure 4-86; bookplate made by Abraham Schultz for Barbara Krauss, July 28, 1766, in: Ibid, 174, Figure 5-10.

53. Sammelband, copied in 1749, Catalogus, 1-98.

54. Rosina Hoffman, PA to Anna Maria Fliegner, Silesia, November 24, 1774: "Ich hebe die Brueflein alle auf, welche ihr mir sendet und ich Euch," in: RHL.

might even be considered a direct predecessor to Rosina's undertaking, even though it was less focused on a particular family. In 1765 (ten years prior to Rosina) Christopher Kriebel started a "Collection of Letters which our friends in Silesia wrote to us and we in turn wrote to them, written in part to certain private persons also in part to the whole body of the people."⁵⁵ Furthermore, Rosina might also have acted in accordance with a particular female family tradition. Her husband's sister Anna had busied herself at a similar enterprise in 1728, leaving her initials on the respective booklet's title page. At the age of sixteen, she had endeavored to put together Balthasar Hoffman's (her father) predominantly spiritual correspondence with his wife, mother, father, and brother, which he wrote while he was a petitioner (for religious toleration) to the court of Vienna.⁵⁶

Both women were benefiting from the custom that Schwenkfelder children were taught to read and write at an early age. There is evidence, that even during the transatlantic journey of the 1734 migration, the group's unofficial minister Georg Weiss saw to the children's education.⁵⁷ A set of regulations adopted at this time illustrates the emphasis on education. Accordingly, it was highly advisable to teach children how to read and write at a young age. After this instruction, they were to be taught the Catechism. Once they reached the age of fifteen, they were accepted into the religious community.⁵⁸ Until 1764, teaching was primarily a private task that fell to the parents. That year, the Schwenkfelders founded their first school, which was open for children of all religious denominations - boys and girls alike.⁵⁹ This emphasis on literacy for religion's sake is beautifully reflected in Rosina Hoffman's clear and regular handwriting.⁶⁰ Her proper use of high-German and the com-

55. Christopher Kriebel, *Schriften Sammlung*, VC 3-7.

56. "Etlche zusammengetragene lehrhaften Briefe und Schrifften [...] zusammen getragen von A.H. Im Jahre Christi MDCCXXVIII," VA 4-10. See Elmer S. Gerhard, "Balthasar Hoffman (1687-1775): Scholar, Minister, Writer, Diplomat," *Schwenckfeldiana* (Early Schwenkfelder Ministers in Pennsylvania Issue) (1941) 43; L. Allen Viehmeyer, "Eighteenth-Century Schwenkfelder Hymnology," in: Peter C. Erb, ed., *Schwenkfelders in America* (Pennsburg: Schwenkfelder Library, 1987), 208.

57. Elizabeth R. Gamon, "Schwenkfelder Textiles," in: Peter C. Erb, ed., *Schwenkfelders in America* (Pennsburg: Schwenkfelder Library, 1987), 245.

58. Religious Life Before 1782, VS 4-16.

59. The Schwenkfelders of Philadelphia County discussed the idea of organizing schools as early as 1759. See Monika Pieper, "A Tribute to Tradition and Necessity: The Schwenkfelder Schools in America," *Pennsylvania Folklife* 38,2 (1988/89), 84.

60. For a positive evaluation of Rosina Hoffman's handwriting compare also Moyer, *Fraktur Writings*, 40.

plete absence of dialect, which probably resulted from the practice in copying, is not very likely to be found among other settlers of a similar humble economic background.

Transatlantic Bonds

A fascinating feature to be found in the Schwenkfelder-letters is the extraordinarily strong bond between the immigrants in the "New World" and their fellow-believers in the "old country." In general, immigrants were more likely to write frequently during the first years after their arrival, whereas after a while their correspondence tends to dry up.⁶¹ During this time, the issue of who wrote and when largely depended on opportunities to have the letters transported. Here, a crucial factor was access to one of the existing communication networks.⁶² The Schwenkfelders were lucky in that they could make use of the well established channels of the Moravian community.⁶³ Thereby, they managed to sustain a correspondence, that continued beyond the immigrant generation to the American-born Schwenkfelders. Even decades after the original migration took place a strong urge to be well informed about recent family news can be detected. Again and again Schwenkfelders inquired about their relatives' marital state, children, health, occupation, and place of residence. Even shifts in the old community's localities were followed in great detail, like who moved into which house and who might be his or her new neighbors.⁶⁴ Such a focus on mundane matters is a phenomenon frequently found in the genre of letters home.⁶⁵ What is extraordinary about the Schwenkfelders is that in their

61. For the occurrence of this phenomenon in a nineteenth-century context compare Wolfgang Helbig, "The Letters They Sent Home: The Subjective Perspective of German Immigrants in the Nineteenth Century," *Yearbook of German American Studies* 22 (1987), 1.

62. On networks that were crucial for the transportation of letters compare Roeber, *Palatines, Liberty, and Property*, 64, 88-94, 96, 175. Examples of published advice on how to send letters from Pennsylvania to Europe in Christopher Sauer's Hoch-Deutsch Pennsylvanische Geschicht-Schreiber, May 16, 1747 and July 9, 1757.

63. Compare copy in "Historical Notes on Schwenkfelders," VK 3774: "Wir haben bald darauf den 20. Februar 1772 31 Numerirte Briefe [...] durch die Mährischen Brueder uebersandt." Compare also letter by Hans Christoph Heebner, PA to Christoph Groh, Silesia, April 10, 1772: "Wir hoeren es gehen disz Fruehjahr 2. von Bethl. hinaus u. wenn wir etwas mitte schicken wollen, so soll es biesz Ostern droben in Bethl. seyn. Sie wollen uns dienen, versprechen alles richtig zu ueberlieffern, wenn sie nicht beraubt werden," VK 3785.

64. See for instance Susanna Beyer, Silesia to Rosina Hoffman, PA, 1776, in: RHL.

65. David A. Gerber, "You See I Speak Wery Well Englisch': Literacy and the Transformed Self as Reflected in Immigrant Personal Correspondence," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 12,2 (1993), 58; compare also Roeber, *Palatines, Liberty, and Property*, 23.

case, the bond transcended to the new generation. Due to the many years gone by, quite a few of the correspondents neither knew each other nor any of the people mentioned. Anna Rosina Gerlach alluded to this constellation when she wrote to Rosina Hoffman: "as we do not know each other from face to face (*"von Angesicht"*), we have to be content to talk by employing the feather once in a while. If only we could reach out and hold each other's hand, how much more and better would we talk."⁶⁶ The frequently expressed wish to see each other someday was transposed to the hope of meeting in "another world."⁶⁷

Letters like these often were meant to be shared with other members of the community. Both Rosina and Christopher Hoffman occasionally referred some cousin to a letter written to another relative, or asked the recipient of a message to pass on a particular piece of information to another friend, thereby avoiding the constant repetition of detailed family news.⁶⁸ This economy of shared letters becomes evident when Rosina informed Johann Christoph Beyer "I had thought it wasn't really necessary to write to you as well, but if you wish, you can make yourself a copy of it, we are doing this too."⁶⁹ Apparently, the Pennsylvania Schwenkfelders presumed that their fellow-believers in the Old Country were still in touch with one another. They took for granted that like themselves, their Silesian counterparts kept their religious community alive and that they still shared a common interest in the emigrants' fate abroad.

Gendered Spheres

An investigation into the nature of information contained in the Schwenkfelders' letters reveals a number of gendered attitudes. One of them is related to the dealing with money. It becomes apparent in an attempt to help Silesian counterparts in need. In a letter to Anna Maria Fliegner, Rosina Hoffman expressed her utter concern that her mother's brother, "cousin Christoph Beer," would "recognize the spiritual poverty" of his situation and "turn with all his heart to our Lord and savior Jesus Christ" and spend at least his remaining days in the honor of God.⁷⁰ In an attempt to help his brother-in-law, Georg Drescher

66. Anna Rosina Gerlach, Silesia to Rosina Hoffman, PA, February 11, 1770, in: RHL.

67. For instance: Rosina Hoffman, PA to Anna Maria Fliegner, Silesia, November 24, 1774, in: RHL.

68. For instance: Rosina Hoffman, PA to Anna Maria Fliegner and Anna Rosina Gerlach, Silesia, June 6, 1787, in: RHL.

69. Rosina Hoffman, PA to Johann Christoph Beyer, Silesia [undated], in: RHL.

70. Rosina Hoffman, PA to Anna Maria Fliegner, Silesia, March 11, 1773, in: RHL.

(Rosina's father) offered four Reichstaler for his relief. As Rosina was well aware of her uncle's disorderly life, she arranged for the money to be sent to Anna Rosina and Gottlob Gerlach, so that they would see to its proper use.⁷¹ Interestingly enough, Rosina Hoffman rarely addressed her letters to husband and wife. That Gottlob Gerlach was included in this particular letter may very well be due to the fact that the handling of money was involved. Such an interpretation is further supported by Anna Rosina Gerlach's response to the generous offer of help. After she had listed in detail what kind of objects had been purchased for the benefit of Christoph Beer, her writing was suddenly interrupted by her husband, who confirmed her previous account: "For all this I do state as your brother-in-law Gottlob Garlach that everything has been handled properly."⁷²

A similar attitude can be found in another incident related to an act of charity by Pennsylvanian Schwenkfelders. In a letter Barbara Heebner sent to her Silesian cousin Christoph Groh in 1773, she mainly addressed him directly, using the pronoun "I." This changed when she informed him that in order to ease the "expensive times and bad circumstances" in Silesia, "I and my husband want in particular to send you 2 Reichsthaler." Apparently, this required the responsibility of her spouse.⁷³ Statements like these indicate something about where the Schwenkfelders drew a line between the spheres of men and women. The handling of money, clearly beyond the common activities of Schwenkfelder women, required male authority.

Another gendered attitude involves the realms of the public and private sphere. Rosina Hoffman hardly ever verbalized the "otherness" of her new country. Not only did she fail to report any peculiarities as to climate, neighbors of different ethnicity, native inhabitants, and unfamiliar customs coming with these, her respective correspondents never asked for any details of this kind. Compared to her, Christopher Hoffman's references to local peculiarities were more frequent. Also, he often alluded to the local climate and fertility of the country. A specific "American" piece of information was that in December 1764, they had not yet faced any Indian attacks - whereas they had heard of other set-

71. Rosina Hoffman, PA to Anna Rosina and Gottlob Gerlach, Silesia, March 4, 1769, in: RHL: "Weil ihm [Georg Drescher] aber Christophs unordentliches Leben wol bekant ist, und er besorget Chr. möchte es nicht zu seiner Nothdurfft anwenden, so hat er das Zutrauen zu Dir und Deinem Manne Gottlob."

72. Anna Rosina Gerlach, Silesia to Rosina Hoffman, PA, February 11, 1770, in: RHL.

73. Barbara Heebner, PA to Christoph Groh, Silesia, March 6, 1773, VK 3899-3906.

tlers who had suffered considerably.⁷⁴ Christopher Hoffman frequently mentioned recent political events or their particular economic situation, whereas Rosina Hoffman seemed almost exclusively concerned with family news like marriages, births, illnesses, and deaths. She only referred to political events when they touched her immediate private sphere. In October 1777, for example, when the entire neighborhood was flooded with American soldiers, Rosina informed a Silesian cousin that she could “not say anything of good times [...as] The General Polaski, who is the head of the infantry, together with his personal guards, took his quarters in our house for nine successive days.”⁷⁵ Exhausted, she added that the soldiers had been everywhere. They had also stayed with her brother-in-law, Christopher Kriebel, and her cousin Anna, and even the “remotest grounds or fields were packed with men, cattle, and wagons.” Such an interruption of their normal routine, remarked Rosina, was worsened by an inflationary wartime economy.⁷⁶ In the context of the whole letter collection, however, Rosina’s statements about public affairs are the exceptions. This is contrasted by her husband’s letters from the same period, which provide a much more detailed account of the same events. The only incident that could indicate some kind of sensitivity to political issues on Rosina’s part is her awareness and appreciation of the religious freedom offered in the Pennsylvania. Again, to her this meant something concrete.

Other Schwenkfelder women were not quite as removed from the world of economics and politics. The widowed Barbara Krauss Urffer, for instance, provided quite accurate information on the economic situation of her family farm. She knew in some detail about its size and the difficulties of borrowing money and struggling with interest rates.⁷⁷ But then, out of necessity, widows tended to be better informed about family finances.⁷⁸ So the different attitudes, perceptions, and priorities

74. Christopher Hoffman, PA to “Vettern und Muhmen in Silesia,” December 13, 1764, in: CHL.

75. Rosina Hoffman, PA to Susanna Beyer, Silesia, June 24, 1779, in: RHL.

76. Rosina Hoffman, PA to Anna Maria Fliegner, Silesia, June 24, 1779, in: RHL: “Wir haben vor jetzo noch keine Noth, es sind viel Abgaben und Mitteleinahme. Alles ist sehr theuer was man kaufen mus, und was man verkaufft hat auch wol einen hohen Preiss.”

77. Barbara Krauss Urffer, PA to relatives of George Urffer, 1794 [?], VK 4239.

78. Norton and Ulrich regard widowed women as an interesting but minor deviation from the norm. On the limited amount of women’s knowledge on financial family affairs compare Mary Beth Norton, “Eighteenth-Century American Women in Peace and War. The Case of the Loyalists,” in: Nancy F. Cott and Elizabeth H. Pleck, eds., *A Heritage of Her Own: Toward a New Social History of American Women* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 136-161. For a conflicting view that stresses mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth century women’s involvement in family business see Lisa Wilson Wacziarg, “A ‘Man of Business’: The Widow of Means in Southeastern Pennsylvania, 1750-1850,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series 44,1 (1987) 40-64.

emerging from Rosina and Christopher Hoffman's letters betray at least to some extent that they were living in gendered, separate spheres.

When it comes to the Schwenkfelder women's daily routines, the Hoffman-letterbooks reveal comparably little. Throughout her correspondence, Rosina constantly complained of her bad state of health. But as she wrote to Anna Maria Fliegner in 1771, she still managed to fulfill her daily chores: "As far as I am concerned," she wrote, "I am frequently indisposed. But as we are running just a small place, I am still able to see to everything properly."⁷⁹ It remains unclear whether these chores included household work only, or in what respects they were influenced by Schwenkfelder, Silesian or German customs, or whether she also helped her husband in the fields, like other German-speaking immigrant women - an activity that astonished contemporary travelers.⁸⁰ Most certainly, Rosina had to look after a number of other dependents. First of all, there were her elderly mother- and father-in-law. When Christopher Hoffman first laid out the new home, he had built an extra room, or *Stueblein*, where his parents lived with the newly-weds.⁸¹ Both Balthasar and Ursula Hoffman spent their old-age spinning, an occupation that had a long professional tradition among the Schwenkfelders. Perhaps their work freed Rosina from this time-consuming task, but the infirmities of old age also demanded an extra amount of attention. In addition to caring for her in-laws, Rosina had to look after a semi-orphaned Schwenkfelder girl the childless couple had taken in when she was three years old.⁸² Strangely, even though Rosina went to great lengths to list the names of the children of her brother and sister, who they married, and what children they eventually had, she never mentioned her foster-

79. Rosina Hoffman, PA to Anna Maria Fliegner, Silesia, March 8, 1771, in: RHL.

80. I explore this issue in more detail in my forthcoming article "A Paradise for Women, a Purgatory for Men?: Conflicting Perceptions of Gender Roles and Work Ethos in an Eighteenth-Century Society" in: *Bridging Worlds: New Views on Migration Research*, ed. by Claudia Schnurmann. This article summarizes chapters 4 and 6 of my dissertation "Foreign and Female: Assimilation and Cultural Persistence of German Immigrant Women in Eighteenth-Century Pennsylvania" (University of Mainz 2001).

81. Christopher Hoffman, PA to Georg Jæckel, Silesia, June 13, 1763, in: CHL.

82. Rosina Hoffman, PA to Susanna Beyer, Silesia, June 24, 1779, in: RHL. According to Kriebel, the practice of placing children from larger families into the homes of childless couples was a common feature within the Schwenkfelder community, see Kriebel, *Women, Servants and Family Life*, 4.

daughter's name nor spoke of her with any affection. The first time she ever referred to her was when the young woman married a nephew of the family.⁸³

Another striking omission betrays yet another value concept, that seems to be influenced by gender. Throughout the entire Hoffman-correspondence there is not a single reference to Rosina's work as a copyist and illustrator for the books her husband produced. Neither she nor her husband ever mentioned her considerable contribution to the Schwenkfelder's heritage. The silence here is made even more pronounced by her husband's audible pride in his high reputation and flourishing business as a bookbinder.⁸⁴ Similarly, other Schwenkfelder women showed reluctance or even negative self-assertions when they referred to their own letter writing. Susanna Wiegner ended a long and elaborate letter to Johann Georg Guenther in Harpersdorf with an apology: "Dearest Cousin, please be content with this short and simple writing, consider that I am a saddened and unlearned widow, and do not know to write in the current style."⁸⁵ Anna Rosina Gerlach described a letter to Rosina Hoffman as being "short, bad, and simpleminded."⁸⁶ Helene Heidrich informed Christopher Hoffman: "I am a really terrible letter writer, as I have neither learned how to spell nor write. I can only hope that you will be able to understand."⁸⁷ Even though her spelling was far from perfect, this apologetic stance was entirely unjustified. But Christopher Hoffman merely responded "your handwriting may be as it is, I can still read it."⁸⁸ Judging from this example, men did not do too much to correct these attitudes.

Such deferential bearing seems to have run rather frequently among Schwenkfelder women on both sides of the Atlantic. Even though 'humility' before God and other human beings was a common demeanor among female as well as male settlers in the eighteenth-century, the extent to which Schwenkfelder women belittled their own accomplishments strikes as being rather extreme. A modern reader of these sources might easily be led to equate these expressions of deference

83. Rosina Hoffman, PA to Anna Maria Fliegner, Silesia, June 24, 1779, in: RHL.

84. Christopher Hoffman, PA to "Vettern und Muhmen in Silesia," December 13, 1764; Christopher Hoffman, PA to Melchior Teichmann, Silesia, 1769; Christopher Hoffman, PA to Melchior Teichmann, Silesia, April 22, 1785, all in: CHL.

85. Susanna Wiegner, PA to Johann Georg Guenther, Silesia, 1785, VK 3864.

86. Anna Rosina Gerlach, Silesia to Rosina Hoffman, PA, February 11, 1770, in: RHL.

87. Helene Heidrich, Silesia to Christopher Hoffman, PA, February 1770, in: CHL.

88. Christopher Hoffman, PA to Helene Heidrich, Silesia, March 8, 1771, in: CHL.

with what we call "lack of self-esteem." Such an interpretation would miss that it was precisely humility and modesty what these women strove for. They were trying to become good Christians and model Schwenkfelder wives and mothers. Their unwillingness to publicly acknowledge their own role in maintaining the community, their lack of pride, even the denigrating attitudes were symptoms and proof that they were being model Christian women. Being aware of this might have given them a rather positive sense of themselves and their role within the Schwenkfelder community.⁸⁹

Wedlock

When Rosina married Christopher Hoffman at the age of 29 years, even by European standards this was comparably late in life.⁹⁰ Patterns from the old country still had a strong impact on Schwenkfelder marriages up to 1741, when men and women took vows at the average ages of 29.3 and 24.4 years respectively.⁹¹ By the time Rosina became Christopher Hoffman's wife, the mean age at first marriage had dropped to 22.8 for brides and 26.5 for grooms, thereby rapidly adjusting to colonial marriage customs. Unfortunately, the letter collection does not provide any hint at an explanation for Rosina's late marriage. But when the Hoffmans' foster-daughter got married in 1778 at an age of 25 years, she too was well above the mean age of 22.1 for brides prevalent then.⁹²

89. I am indebted to Rosalind Beiler for helping me with my reading.

90. The union of the Hoffmans remained childless, which was probably caused by one of the spouses' infertility. The bride's relative high age would only account for a smaller number of children, it does not serve as an explanation for the total absence of children. As the mean age at first marriage lowered during the course of the eighteenth century, and as the quality of living conditions improved over time, Schwenkfelder mothers tended to bear more children. According to Rodger C. Henderson, "Eighteenth-Century Schwenkfelders: A Demographic Interpretation," in: Peter C. Erb, ed., *Schwenkfelders in America* (Pennsburg, PA: Schwenkfelder Library, 1987), 31, the average births per marriage increased from 5.5 to 6.0 between 1741 to 1770. These findings correspond reasonably well with Rosina's reports of her brother's and her sister's offspring. Both marriages resulted in five children.

91. For the demographic data presented see Henderson, "Eighteenth-Century Schwenkfelders," 25-40.

92. The foster-daughter's approximate age at marriage can be established by putting various pieces of information together: Christopher Hoffman states that the foster-daughter's father died in 1766, Christopher Hoffman, PA to Georg Jäckel, Silesia, June 12, 1767, in: CHL; Rosina Hoffman mentions that the girl was three years and a half when they took her in, Rosina Hoffman, PA to Susanna Beyer, Silesia, June 24, 1779; the year of the foster-daughter's marriage is given as 1778, Rosina Hoffman, PA to Anna Maria Fliegner, Silesia, June 24, 1779, all in: RHL.

While the general shift of the mean age at first marriage might serve as an indicator of the Schwenkfelders' initial assimilation to colonial customs, the Hoffmans did not follow this pattern.

Rosina and Christopher Hoffman's marriage lasted from 1753 until Rosina's death in 1794. Even by Schwenkfelder standards, where divorce, separation, and abandonment were unheard of, the length of 41 years was far above the average of 29.5 years.⁹³ But as Rosina Hoffman did not have any children, she was never exposed to the life-threatening situation of child-birth, thereby improving her chances of growing old.⁹⁴ Even though Rosina Hoffman had throughout her life constantly suffered from bad health, she reached an age of 70 years and 9 months.⁹⁵

The Schwenkfelders' notion of the relationship between husband and wife becomes evident from an eighteenth-century Schwenkfelder wedding ceremony preserved in a booklet called "Forms for starting a marriage," that probably belonged to Christopher Hoffman.⁹⁶ The ceremony's opening section argues that the married state is an honorable state, which God highly approves of and blesses. Its main objectives were that the spouses help and support each other in all things, that they have children, raise them in good faith and honor of God, and that they be prevented from adultery and indecent behavior. Afterwards, the ceremony offers an outline of the order within the household: "First of all you, the man, shall know that God has made you your wife's lord, so that you will lead and instruct her in sensible ways, that you comfort and protect her." Further it was demanded that the husband love his "housewife" as his own body, just as Christ loved the church. The foundation for this role allocation was seen in the postulation that the wife was "the weaker vessel" and in need of her husband's "good sense." Accordingly, the wife was further instructed that she should "love, honor and fear her husband" and "obey him in all sensible things, as her

93. See Henderson, "Eighteenth-Century Schwenkfelders," 29. In case of widowhood, chances for remarriage were low. Eighteenth-century Schwenkfelder men were more likely than women to search out another spouse. And they showed a preference for never-wedded brides so that only very few widowed women could expect to remarry; see Henderson, *Eighteenth-Century Schwenkfelders*, 30.

94. The average Schwenkfelder woman who had lived to the age of 20 could expect to live another 43.4 years; see Henderson, *"Eighteenth-Century Schwenkfelders,"* 32.

95. Rosina Drescher Hoffman was buried in Salford Schwenkfelder Cemetery.

96. "Form der Ehe-Einleitung;" on the first blank page, there is a note written in pencil suggesting that "Rev. Christopher Hoffman" used to be the booklet's owner. The main part is written with ink and in a different handwriting, using Latin letters; PPeSchw.

Lord." Explicitly, it was stated that "you shall not rule over your husband, but remain silent." The reasons for this restriction were biblical: "As Adam was made first, afterwards Eve, in order to be Adam's help. And after the Fall of Man God spoke to her person, and in that to the entire female sex: your will shall be subdued by your husband's and he shall be your lord. This is an order you shall not oppose." The woman's actual role was described as "to be of help to your husband in all good things, [...] to have a good eye on them [the children] and the entire household," and to "walk in all modesty and honor, without worldly pomp."⁹⁷

Comparable patterns of hierarchy were articulated in a letter of advice Balthasar Hofmann sent in 1762 to his newly-married granddaughter Susanna Seipt. Here he reminded her not only to "remain humble and be plain in dress and behavior" and not indulge and amuse herself "with much of temporal possessions," but also to "be submissive to your husband, obedient and subject to him." Most important, she was to "strive for peace and harmony" at home and in case "anything turns up at any time that is displeasing," he demanded, "if you cannot change it peaceably, compose yourself in patience, with behavior and resignation."⁹⁸ Taking into account that Balthasar Hoffman was actually living with Rosina and Christopher, it is most likely that their household was laid out in a similar manner.

Regarded from a twenty-first century point of view, such a household structure looks rather restrictive. Women appear as totally submissive to all-powerful husbands. A different perspective emerges from a more nuanced interpretation, that takes Otto Brunner's concept of "Das Ganze Haus" into account.⁹⁹ Here, the "household" is seen as a large functional

97. Compared to the forms of a wedding ceremony as suggested in Martin Luther's "Traubuechlein," this outline of a Schwenkfelder marriage is far more detailed and concrete. But even though the wording employed is different, the proposed hierarchy is very similar. Luther, too, claimed that "the wives shall be obedient to their husbands," that they should "bend" to them, and respect them as their lords. Again, with a reminder to the Fall of Man, the husband is warned, not to obey his wife's orders. A main difference arises from Luther's line of argument when it came to pregnancy and childbirth. According to him, God wanted women to suffer pains during childbirth, as this was the cross this sex had to bear. The Schwenkfelders did not address anything similar. See *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1964-71; reprint of the Weimar Edition: Hermann Boehlau, 1883-1939), vol. XXX, 43-80, "Ein Traubuechlein fuer die einfeltigen Pfarrer [1529]."

98. Gerhard, *Balthasar Hoffman*, 44.

unit, that encompassed all social and economic aspects. In this context, the woman had the responsibility to be a manager of the household under her husband's supervision. If this submission was tied to the condition that the husband loved his wife without constraints (as Christ loved his church), this may have left the woman with a significant amount of control within that very household.

Group Cohesion

As the Schwenkfelders' major aim in coming to Pennsylvania was the survival of their religious community, the preservation of identity was of great concern. One way to strengthen their unity as a group could have been through their outward appearance. Here, evidence can be drawn from a paper Georg Weiss, the group's unofficial minister, wrote on the occasion of a Schwenkfelder meeting on April 13, 1734, in Berthelsdorf, Saxony.¹⁰⁰ Just prior to their departure for Pennsylvania, he laid out rules for the future conduct of their lives. An important aspect was the code of dress. First addressing the clothing proper for men, he suggested that shirts be made of "homespun linen" while the color for coats should be "either black, gray or blue" as "other colors would no longer be plain." As to trousers, he stated that they had to be cut "roomy and not made as though they were sewed to the limb." Turning his attention to his female flock, he found that the matter was more complicated as "here one has a more difficult task since style and pride play a more important role than for men." Gladly, help could be found in the Bible, respectively in epistles written by Paul and Peter. Therefore, Schwenkfelder women should wear their hair "in braids, but not wound around the head," and they should refrain from "red ribbons" and "silk" using knitted caps instead. Finally, he recommended gray stockings for the elderly.

The extent to which Schwenkfelder women actually adhered to these instructions and how long lasting this impact might have been is not known. At least in the early days of their settlement in Pennsylvania they appear to have devoted some effort to following this advice. August Gottlieb Spangenberg reported to his fellow Moravians in November

99. Otto Brunner, "Das 'ganze Haus' und die alteuropäische 'Oekonomik'," in: Otto Brunner, ed., *Neue Wege der Verfassungs- und Sozialgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 3rd. ed., 1980), 103-127. For an overview of recent criticism on Brunner's concept see Valentin Groebner, "Ausser Haus. Otto Brunner und die 'alteuropäische Oekonomik,'" in: *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 46 (1995) 69-80.

100. Cited after Andrew S. Berkly, "Buckskin or Sackcloth: A Glance at the Clothing Once Worn by the Schwenkfelders of Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania Dutchman* 9,1 (1958) 50-52.

1737, that "the Schwenkfelders are sticking closer and closer together, they are following strict rules, but those only affect outward matters, like clothing and holidays."¹⁰¹ According to Spangenberg, the leading force in this struggle for purity was Georg Weiss. But Weiss' influence was limited, as his tenure was brief (he died in 1740), and he was severely criticized by some of the families. Also, the dispersed nature of the Schwenkfelder settlements made the development of a distinct garb highly unlikely.

Another issue that could have an impact on the cohesion of the Schwenkfelder community were their interactions with members of other ethnic groups or religions. A close look at Rosina Hoffman's social activities betrays, how much they were focused on and confined to family and friends of her own creed. Again and again, she sent greetings from other relatives to Silesia, almost taking over the role of an intermediary for those either unwilling or unable to write. The news she reported to the Schwenkfelders back home dealt exclusively with people of her own family, or those who were related to the respective correspondents. Persons other than Schwenkfelders were never mentioned. They did not seem to play an important role in her daily life. Likewise, living close to her family meant a lot to Rosina Hoffman. After she had married, she informed her Silesian cousins that the distance to her parents' house was now "four English miles," whereas her sister was living very close to her new home.¹⁰² On another occasion, she wrote that she had just visited her father's sister in order to show her a letter.¹⁰³ Events like these formed the core of her social life, whereas contacts with settlers of different descent were less important. This is further stressed by the fact that Rosina never hinted at the possibility that languages other than German were spoken. She never used an English word or anglicized phrase in her letters. Therefore, the degree to which she mixed with her non-Schwenkfelder neighborhood and thereby might have become assimilated was probably fairly low. We can only guess if this was true for other Schwenkfelder women as well. Rosina Hoffman may not have been entirely representative, as she was living with, and therefore was probably influenced by a father-in-law who had a reputation for being strictly conservative.¹⁰⁴

101. Gottlieb August Spangenberg, PA to David Nitschmann, November 8, 1737, Herrnhuter Unitätsarchiv, R 14 A No. 18,1. I would like to thank Aaron Fogleman for sharing this letter with me.

102. Rosina Hoffman, PA to Barbara Wiener, Silesia, May 21, 1754, in: RHL.

103. Rosina Hoffman, PA to Anna Maria Fliegner, Silesia, November 24, 1774, in: RHL.

Yet in comparison, Schwenkfelder men engaged in more active intercourse with neighbors from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. These contacts were facilitated by the scattered nature of their settlements. In a letter from 1768 to the Schwenkfelders in Silesia, Christopher Schultze clearly illustrates this animated interaction: "You can hardly imagine," he wrote, "how many denominations you will find here when you are attending a big gathering like that at Abram Heydrich's or Abraham Jaeckel's funeral," both of whom were Schwenkfelders.¹⁰⁵ Stressing the extraordinary religious tolerance, he carried on: "we are all going to and fro like fish in water but always at peace with each other; anybody of whom it would be known that he hates somebody else because of his religion would immediately be considered a fool." Nevertheless, this "unlimited freedom" also had less desirable effects. While the prior oppression and persecution in Silesia and Saxony had knit the Schwenkfelder community together, the newly-acquired freedom challenged their very cohesion as a group. Christopher Schultze warned emphatically that "you will understand in what great dangers we are concerning our children."

In fact, some of these interchanges eventually led to mixed marriages. There were, for instance, a number of unions with Quaker men and women, with whom the Schwenkfelders shared their pacifism and plain outward appearances.¹⁰⁶ In some cases, like that of David Wagner, who married Quaker Rebecca Supplee, intermarriage resulted in Schwenkfelders leaving their church. Not only did Wagner join the Society of Friends, his two sisters and one brother converted too.¹⁰⁷ Yet in general, the Pennsylvania Schwenkfelders tended to marry within their own group.¹⁰⁸ Frequently, the letter writers identified the new wife or husband of a son or daughter by referring to the connection and kinship

104. On Balthasar Hoffman's rather conservative teaching and preaching see Viehmeyer, *Schwenkfelder Hymnology*, 208 and Gerhard, *Balthasar Hoffmann*, 39.

105. Christopher Schultze, PA to Schwenkfelders in Silesia, 1768; quoted after Dietmar Rothermund, *The Layman's Progress: Religious and Political Experience in Colonial Pennsylvania, 1740-1770* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961), 190-191.

106. Don Yoder, "The Schwenkfelder-Quaker Connection: Two Centuries of Interdenominational Friendship," in: Peter C. Erb, ed., *Schwenkfelders in America* (Pennsburg, PA: Schwenkfelder Library, 1987), 113-162.

107. Yoder, *The Schwenkfelder-Quaker Connection*, 122-123.

108. Among the original Schwenkfelder immigrants, 68.5 percent married within their group. In the next generation, this ratio dropped to 56.9, then rose again to 59.3 percent in the third generation. Of those great-grandchildren reaching marriageable age until 1799 only 36.4 percent searched for spouses amongst fellow-Schwenkfelders. This data refers to a 1971 Columbia University Ph.D. thesis by Norman Dollin, "The Schwenckfelders in Eighteenth Century America" as cited by Kriebel, *Women, Servants and Family Life*, 5.

with other Schwenkfelder immigrants. Moreover, the young couple often set up their new home in the immediate vicinity of one of the spouses' parents.

This tendency - and the entirely different development in the old country - is further illustrated by another set of letters by members of the Huebner family.¹⁰⁹ Christoph and Maria Huebner had come to Pennsylvania in 1737, together with their son Hans Christoph, as part of the "sixth Schwenkfelder migration."¹¹⁰ From 1736 until 1773, they exchanged letters with their married daughter, Rosina Scharffenberger, who had stayed behind in Silesia. The reason why Rosina did not accompany them with her husband and children may very well be hidden in her married name, which is not a typical Schwenkfelder name. It is highly probable that she had married someone belonging to the Lutheran Church, thereby stepping out of the Schwenkfelder community. If so, there was no need for her to flee from Silesia. This also happened to Eva Libtz and Maria Nicolai, the daughters of Melchior Heebner. Both found husbands during the Schwenkfelders' stay in Goerlitz. They joined the local Lutheran Church and stayed behind when their parents set out for Pennsylvania.¹¹¹ That such marriages could lead to rifts in kinship relations can be seen from Christopher Hoffman's reaction to the news of a Silesian cousin's recent marriage. "I can not help but tell you," he wrote, "that it has affected me rather deeply to hear that my cousin Georg J.[æckel] has become a Lutheran." Particularly distressing was the occasion for this sudden change of mind, that it had been "so unimportant and light a cause, that is to take a wife." Bluntly Hoffman stated that "he should not have done that, becoming a Lutheran."¹¹² Leaving one's church was one thing, doing this because of a wife quite another.

While temptations were numerous in this diverse New World, many Schwenkfelders followed the example of the Huebner family, who stayed within the Schwenkfelder community and maintained close ties with

109. The location of the original letters is no longer known. The Schwenkfelder Library only keeps handwritten copies, that were probably made earlier in the twentieth century; compare note No. 21.

110. Brecht, *Genealogical Record*, 39.

111. Andrew S. Berkly, *Practitioner in Physick: A Biography of Abraham Wagner 1717-1763* (Pennsburg: Schwenkfelder Library, 1754), 17.

112. Christopher Hoffman, PA to Georg Fliegner, Silesia, March 4, 1769, in: CHL.

113. Hans Christoph Huebner, PA to Rosina Scharffenberger, Silesia, March 6, 1773, VK 3910-3912.

kin. In 1773, Hans Christoph Huebner informed his sister, Rosina Scharffenberger, of his oldest daughter's marriage to the son of another Schwenkfelder immigrant, noting that they had set up their new home "a strong half German mile" from his own place.¹¹³ Similarly, another member of this extended family, David Heebner, wrote to a Silesian friend that he had recently moved and was now living "in between two of our children," the daughter a mile "below" and the son a mile "above;" both of the spouses were referred to as children of other Schwenkfelders.¹¹⁴

Findings like these explain the subsequent fate of Schwenkfeldianism on both sides of the Atlantic. While in Silesia those who kept in touch with the Pennsylvania émigrés were increasingly the elderly, the widowed or the unmarried, their younger generation rapidly shifted towards Lutheranism.¹¹⁵ Almost precisely 100 years after the first refugees had secretly escaped to Saxony, the last remaining Schwenkfelder in Silesia died in 1826. That the Pennsylvania-Schwenkfelders searched for new spouses primarily within their own community contributed considerably to their longevity as a group.

Finally, another peculiar feature of the Schwenkfelder women's correspondence should be mentioned: Never was there any encouragement from the female Pennsylvanian correspondents for further emigration to the New World, nor was there any demand for this kind of information from their Silesian counterparts. This finding stands in striking contrast to general discoveries on "letters-home," where the decisive role of letters in the decision-making process, their importance as a "pull factor" is strongly emphasized.¹¹⁶ In the case of the Schwenkfelders, it almost went the other way round: Schwenkfelder women in the Old World alluded to a scheme to lure the Pennsylvania émigrés back home. These reports have to be read against the background of a changing political landscape. In 1740, Frederick II ("The Great"), King of Prussia, had occupied Silesia.¹¹⁷ His mercantile concerns favored a policy that would help to populate his country, and the persecution of religious minorities did not fit into this concept. Therefore, he circulated decrees promising

114. David Heebner, PA to Christoph Groh, Silesia, February 21, 1769, VK 3509-3511.

115. On the decline of Schwenkfeldianism in Silesia see Weigelt, *The Schwenkfelders in Silesia*, 136-139.

116. See for instance Helbich, *The Letters They Sent Home*, 4.

117. See Weigelt, *Friedrich II. von Preussen*, 232.

a wide-ranging toleration of various denominations. In his attempts to raise the number of his subjects he even went so far as to present a generous re-emigration offer to the Schwenkfelders in America.¹¹⁸ An allusion to this offer is found in Barbara Wiener's above cited letter of 1742, where she tried to convince Maria Drescher to return.¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, none of the Pennsylvania imigris followed this call.¹²⁰ Perhaps they were quite aware of the pragmatic nature of the religious tolerance offered. It was not real religious freedom, such as they enjoyed in Pennsylvania, but a more feeble form of toleration, that would eventually incorporate them into the Lutheran Church. Also, being dedicated pacifists, perhaps they were afraid of being pressed into Frederick's ever growing army. And finally, since coming to America, the Schwenkfelders had struggled hard at building the foundation for a new life and they were not willing to give this up easily.

Conclusion

What is most unusual about the women of the Schwenkfelders are their letter-writing and copying activities. Both were not standard for most German immigrant women at that time. As the Schwenkfelder women's letter-writing was oriented towards family and towards religious community, it caused them to cross some of the more traditional boundaries. While other colonial immigrant women might have written to their families in Europe, these female Schwenkfelders participated in a more formalized series of correspondence. They, too, were writing to family members (traditionally part of the private sphere), but they were doing so to preserve religious transatlantic bonds. In this, they took over a function that is at least in some respects comparable to the letters of clergymen from mainstream denominations. Thus, their sense of place within their religious community led the women of the Schwenkfelders to play a significant part in the formation and upholding of long lasting transatlantic bonds among their fellow-believers.

Extreme domesticity, seclusion, and lack of assimilation on the part of the females of this particular group of German-speaking immigrants transformed them into crucial agents for preserving Old World culture.

118. See Weigelt, *Friedrich II. von Preussen*, 238.

119. Compare note No. 1.

120. Weigelt, *Friedrich II. von Preussen*, 239

This raises the issue whether this concept of women being especially responsible for the protection of ethnic cultural heritage also holds true for other German-speaking immigrants in eighteenth century Pennsylvania - and whether the Schwenkfelder's extreme piety just made them an extreme form of a general trend. These women's separateness clearly is contrasted by the more active social interaction of their male counterparts. But when it came to marriage, both, men and women of this creed, tended to search for a spouse within their own group. This extraordinary cohesiveness, even though small in numbers then and now, eventually enabled the Schwenkfelders to maintain their identity to the present day.

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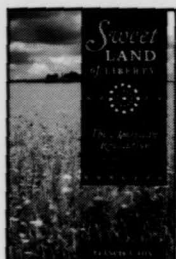
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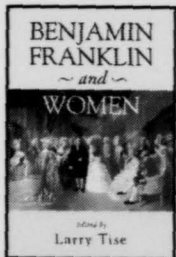
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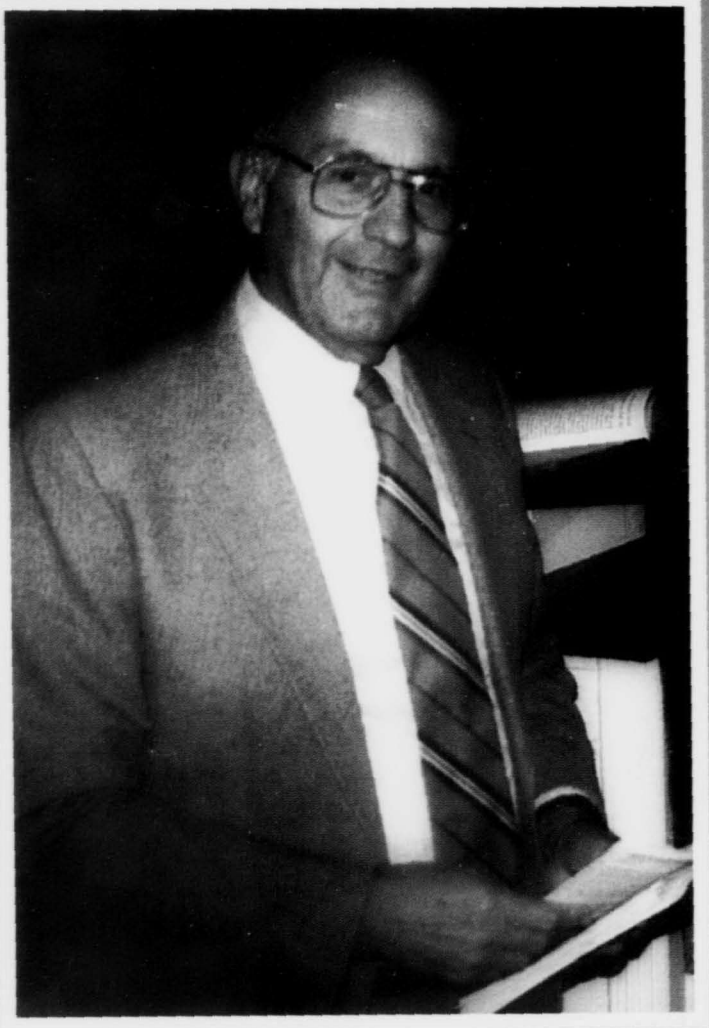
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