

BOOK REVIEWS

Acta Germanopolis: Records of the Corporation of Germantown, Pennsylvania, 1691–1707. Edited with an introduction by J. M. DUFFIN, with a foreword by DON YODER (Philadelphia: Colonial Society of Pennsylvania, 2008. 700 pp., Illustrations, appendices, index. \$75.)

In 1904, the Colonial Society of Pennsylvania published *Records of the Court of New Castle on Delaware, 1676–1681*, followed in 1910 by *Record of the Courts of Chester County, Pennsylvania, 1681–1697*, in 1935 by volume 2 of the *Records of the Court of New Castle, Delaware* (1681–1699), and in 1943 by *Records of the Courts of Quarter Sessions and Common Pleas of Bucks County Pennsylvania, 1684–1700*. Eighty-eight years after that first publication, the Colonial Society (in collaboration with the Welcome Society of Pennsylvania) underwrote publication of the two-volume *Records of the Courts of Sussex County, Delaware, 1677–1710*. Now, more than a century after that first publication, the Colonial Society (in partnership with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania) has produced an edition of the public records of the corporation of Germantown, covering the period from 1691 to 1707.

J. M. Duffin, senior archivist at the University of Pennsylvania, ably assisted by Don Yoder, University of Pennsylvania professor emeritus in folklore and folk-life, has provided a complete transcription of the original German, Dutch, Latin, and English records of the corporation and a complete English translation of those first three languages, based in part on previous translations by Marion D. Learned and Samuel W. Pennypacker.

In the foreword, Don Yoder examines the historiography of Germantown and finds that various researchers disagreed on the ethnic and religious makeup of those original settlers; there was also no consensus on whether Germantown was the first “German” settlement in British North America. After reviewing the evidence, however, Yoder concludes that Germantown was, indeed, the first such settlement and one with historical significance for both Pennsylvania and America.

Duffin follows with a lengthy, detailed introduction that looks at the region from which the settlers migrated, the circumstances surrounding the creation of the corporation, the rapid establishment of its linen and papermaking industries, the uniqueness of its political and legal institutions, and the reasons for the revoking of its charter in 1707. Perhaps most importantly, Duffin outlines the carefully crafted methodology he used for the transcription and the translations, the most important and difficult tasks facing editors of scholarly publications of

original manuscripts.

When William Penn founded Pennsylvania, he realized that he needed more than English Quaker immigrants in order to create a prosperous and, hopefully, profitable colony. He advertised widely and in particular hoped to entice the industrious Germans to migrate to his new colony. In fact, he succeeded, albeit initially on a small scale, when thirteen families arrived at Philadelphia on the *Concord* on October 6, 1683, and settled about six miles northwest of the center of Philadelphia. By 1690, there were forty-four families in Germantown Township, which the following year was formally granted by charter the right of self government, one of only three such charters William Penn issued during his lifetime.

This edition covers the official records of the corporation from 1691, when the charter went into effect, to 1707, when it was revoked, and it includes all the corporation ordinances, the proceedings of the General Court and of the Court of Record, the property register or deed book, the 1691 document naturalizing 62 Germantowners as English citizens, and the 1707 petition for naturalization signed by 155 German immigrants. Duffin has also added an appendix with "a comprehensive and codified account of landownership in Germantown over the first three decades of its existence," (493) which he took from the court records of the corporation, from the Philadelphia County deed books, and from other surviving deeds.

Most of the records were in High German with some entries in Low German, Dutch, Latin, and English. However, while the Germantown court ordered that births, marriages, and deaths be recorded in English, those records, if they ever existed, are no longer extant.

Researchers are often surprised at the breadth of colonial legal and official proceedings, which are also on view here. These include: passage of ordinances; appointments of officers; recording of deeds; settling of estates; surveying and laying out of roads; branding of horses; trimming of cows' horns; supervision of fences; collection of taxes; authorization of apprenticeships; support of the aged, the poor, needy widows, and orphans; inspection of chimneys; and oversight and prosecution of scandalous, inappropriate, and criminal behavior.

Preparing a scholarly edition of manuscripts is extremely difficult, as it requires painstaking attention to detail, an understanding of the handwriting, punctuation, spelling, and conventions of the period, editorial skills, and, above all, the good fortune to find a publisher willing to undertake the financial burden necessary to bring the project to fruition.

Fortunately, with J. M. Duffin, Don Yoder, and the Colonial Society of Pennsylvania, all of those elements came together to create this magisterial volume that will long stand the test of time.

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