PASTORIUS AND THE FOUNDING OF GERMANTOWN
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West Mt. Airy: Yesterday and Today
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The Concord landed in Philadelphia on October 6, 1683, a mere seven weeks after setting sail from the town of Crefeld (pronounced approximately Krayfeld) in the lower Rhine River valley of Germany. Would this little group of thirty-three persons from twelve families really initiate a revolution in the New World? Their ship’s name was prophetic: Concord is derived from the 17th century Latin motto of the Netherlands, which translates, “Concord makes small things flourish.”

THE VOYAGE ON THE CONCORD
The Concord was a wooden vessel 130 feet long and 32 feet wide. She carried 180 passengers, thirty to forty sailors, and twenty-six cannon. Captain Jeffries had sailed to America seven or eight times, and was friendly and polite. The weather was calm on the voyage. Our passengers were all from the town of Crefeld, weavers by occupation. Today’s, Krefeld is a major German industrial center noted for its steel, chemical and textile plants, and has some 235,000 inhabitants.

When the Concord landed, Pennsylvania’s Proprietor, William Penn. was on hand to greet the new colonists. Not long thereafter, they were also welcomed by Francis Pastorius, who helped them to settle in this new land. Penn had visited towns like Krefeld and Krisheim in 1671 and 1677, preaching among Mennonites, Quakers and Pietists. (Historic spelling follows J.M. Duffin.) They were some of his first converts for Penn’s new colony in Pennsylvania.

THE ORIGINAL KREFELDER FAMILIES
Who were these immigrants? Were they really Quakers? Mt. Airy scholar J.M. Duffin tells us that the Krefelders were German-speaking and originally Dutch-speaking Germans Quakers. Their settlement here in Mt. Airy and Germantown was part of a struggle for human freedom not witnessed before. They wanted to create a new community based on their individual worth and responsibility. They sought to rule themselves here in Germantown. They wanted a little country of their own where they could worship in German without fear.

The names of the heads of these thirteen families were the Op den Graff brothers, Dirk, Herman and Abraham Isaacs; Lenart Arets, Tunes Kunders, Reinert Tisen, Wilhelm Strepers, Jan Lense, Peter Keujrlis, Jan Simens, Johannes Bleikers, Abraham Tunes and Jan Luken (Hocker, 1933). Numerous interrelationships by marriage existed in the party. Unlike Pastorius, these people were not wealthy, but were skilled craftsmen who knew they would have to work hard to survive. By trade, they were carpenters, weavers, dyers, tailors and shoemakers. During the first year, they had to clear land and plant crops for food and flax for weaving.

Pastorius had sailed to Philadelphia on the ship America, arriving on August 20, 1683. The day after his arrival, Pastorius called upon William Penn, who greeted him with “great friendliness and love.” He had found in William Penn’s preaching courage for a new beginning for himself that would use his talents and intellect, and call upon his faith. He worked with Penn to secure the property that Penn had promised to Krefelders and Quakers.

Pastorius negotiated for the settlers with William Penn for the location of the German land grant. The immigrants had wanted to buy land in a flat location along a navigable stream for easy transport. But such a location was not suitable because nearby land (like today’s Manayunk and
Roxborough) was too hilly for farming. Many of the 13 families spent their first winter in the
New World in hastily constructed homes in caves on the banks of the Delaware River. They
roofed these crude cavities over with boards from nearby trees to provide protection against the
cold and snow. The location of Pastorius’ cave is today’s 502 East Front Street, part of a row of
modern brick row houses with basements, facing the Delaware.

When William Penn arrived in his personal empire, Philadelphia had about 80 houses and
cottages huddled in the thick forest along rivers and streams. A rough bridle path was the new
settlers’ only land connection with the larger world of Philadelphia. Fifty ships had landed in
Philadelphia by 1683. By 1689, Germantown was a thriving little community of 44 families,
built on the original 13 Krefelder families.

FRANCIS DANIEL PASTORIUS
The outstanding leader in this first generation Quaker colony after the birth of Philadelphia in
1681 was Francis Daniel Pastorius, the founder of Germantown in 1683. Pastorius (1651-1719)
was born in Summerhausen in Bavaria, Germany, the only child of his Lutheran parents. He
studied the classics in Latin as a child, and he learned to write and speak fluently in German,
Latin, Italian, French, Dutch, English, Spanish, and Greek. Pastorius was one of the few true
intellectuals in Pennsylvania in his time.

He studied law assiduously at many schools of law in Germany, including Altdorf, Strassburg,
Basle, and Nuremberg. His library contained a remarkable 250 books. He wrote ten bound
volumes of his collected papers. He promoted the linen textile industry that sprang up early in
Germantown cottages. While most believe that Pastorius remained a lifelong Lutheran, he was
quite sympathetic to Quaker views and practices. Germantown was the first American
community composed entirely of German settlers. For nearly a quarter century, Germantown had
its own government. At the beginning, Pastorius was the virtual ruler of Germantown. William
Penn granted Germantown its own charter in 1689 and Pastorius, with his legal acumen, made
the new government work.

He was not only the mayor but also operated the court in Germantown by serving as bailiff, rent
collector, clerk, court recorder and he kept order. Pastorius was also a prolific writer: He
published seven books, including The Bee Hive, a thousand pages of history, philosophy, poetry
and laws, his autobiography and many of Pennsylvania’s first school books. He helped build
Germantown’s first church building and was headmaster of a Friends School. He was an avid
gardener and student of nature. Pastorius married Anneke Klostermann (1658-1723) in 1688.
They produced two sons: Johann Samuel (1690-1722), a weaver; and Heinrich (1692-1726), a
shoemaker.

BUILDING GERMANTOWN
Pastorius was largely responsible for designing the street pattern of Germantown, which he
discussed thoroughly with Penn. Property was parceled out along Main Street (now Germantown
Avenue), the original Indian trail along the ridge from Philadelphia to Chestnut Hill.

During the first winter (1683-84), the thirteen families lived in Philadelphia while they struggled
to clear their land to build makeshift log houses and to prepare to plant crops. Finally, the
Krefelders and Penn’s representatives agreed to deed them ample land for a permanent
settlement. On October 24, 1683, the town site of German Township was laid out by Penn’s
surveyor. Fourteen lots were surveyed, under Pastorius’s direction. On October 25th, these tracts
of land were apportioned by lottery, one for each of the thirteen families and for Pastorius. This
date became the accepted date of the founding of Germantown. German Township originally had
four divisions or villages: Germantown, the largest, to the south; then Krisheim (now Cresheim/West Mt. Airy); then Krefeld and Summerhausen (Chestnut Hill).

Their properties were not laid out on a regular grid pattern, as was Penn’s design for Philadelphia. Rather, Pastorius laid out his village of Germantown so that all the houses could be built along Main Street for mutual protection and assistance. It was a linear village, not a cluster of dwellings around a manor house, or isolated farmsteads in the wilderness. It was a democratic layout and remains so. All properties had access to creeks as sources of water. Thus the properties were narrow but near their neighbors. For instance, the property of the Cresheim Cottage, likely built by 1700, originally stretched about two miles north and south, and was 465 feet wide. (See Article 2, November, 2012 in Yesterday and Today.)

PROTEST AGAINST SLAVERY
Pastorius, a secular lawmaker and leader and spiritual leader in his Friends Meeting in Germantown was a passionate opponent of slavery. He drafted a petition of protest against slavery in America in 1688. Three settlers joined him: Garret Hendricks, Dirck Op den Graff and Abraham Op den Graff. They met at Thones Kunders’s house on Main Street. Their petition was based on the Bible’s Golden Rule, “Do unto others what you would have them do unto you.” They urged their Quaker Meeting to abolish slavery. Slave-owning Quaker farmers contended that slavery was a normal state of affairs and was necessary for commercial success. Pastorius’s argument was that every human being possesses universal human rights that should not be violated, rights for everyone, free people and slaves.

The four men presented their petition at the local Monthly Meeting (at Abington), where the issue of slavery was deemed too difficult and consequential for them to judge. The petition was sent to the Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting, where it was decided to send it on to the London Yearly Meeting. The issue of slavery did disturb the peace of Quaker Congregations, and Germantown congregations continued to condemn slavery. In 1776, a proclamation by the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting banned the owning of slaves. An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery was passed by the Pennsylvania legislature in 1780.

The 1688 petition was forgotten until 1844, when it was rediscovered and became part of the abolitionist movement in the U.S. Then, after a further century of public exposure, the 1688 petition was lost and rediscovered yet again in 2005. It now resides jointly at Haverford College and Swarthmore College – a powerful reminder of the basis for freedom and equality for all. Pastorius’s spirit continues to call to us after 300 years!

MEET PASTORIUS IN THE PARK
Pastorius Park in Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, is a quiet 6.5 acre oasis of grass and trees that honors the founder of Germantown. It can be entered from Lincoln Drive and Abington Avenue. Pastorius Park was established in 1915, and among its assets are a pond and an amphitheater that was built in 1937 by the W.P.A. Summer concerts are performed here.
In the NE corner of Vernon Park in Germantown, Philadelphia, is a large sculpture of white Tennessee marble. According to the sculptor, Albert Jaegers (1868-1925), the commanding seated figure is the heroic representation of *Civilization*, the symbol of German-American culture, begun by Pastorius. But he is not directly portrayed on the monument. *Civilization*, holding the lamp of knowledge, presides over the destiny of human labor, war and justice. The marble panels of the monument are allegories related to Pastorius and his life work: the landing of the first German settlers in America in 1683 (their names inscribed); The Quaker protest against slavery, of 1688; Pastorius’s 1688 poem *Hail to Posterity* (1688); and German participation in America’s wars.
The sculptor was Albert Jaegers (1868-1925), himself born in Germany, but educated in the U.S. Jaegers was a prominent and successful artist in marble. This monument was completed by 1917, but U.S. opposition to Germany during World War I delayed its installation until 1922.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


COMING ATTRACTIONS: In the November column, Susan Bockius will present a new essay entitled, *The Economy of Early Germantown: How Did People Get By?* I would like to express appreciation to Paul Chase and Jaime Kehler for their organization of much material. Burt Froom