

E

184

G3R75

<http://stores.ebay.com/Ancestry-Found>

Rosengarten, J. J.
German archives as
sources of German-Ame-
rican history.

1907



Class E184

Book .G3R75

PRESENTED BY

<http://stores.ebay.com/Ancestry-Found>

German Archives
as Sources of
German-American History

By J. G. ROSENGARTEN

II

REPRINTED FROM

German American Annals

VOLUME V

1907

E 184
93 595

Cite
Author
(Person)
Date



GERMAN ARCHIVES AS SOURCES OF GERMAN-AMERICAN HISTORY.

Paper read before the Pennsylvania German Society, October, 1907, by J. G. Rosengarten.

There yet remain many sources of information unexhausted as to details of the part played by Germans in American history. In the archives at Marburg, still made practically inaccessible by the want of interest of the keeper in American history, there must be much of value and interest. Every German officer was required to make full reports for the home authorities and to keep journals for inspection—few of these have been printed. It would be well for the Pennsylvania German Society to invite co-operation of similar bodies in asking the U. S. Government to secure from the German Government access to the Marburg and other collections, and to make calendars with a descriptive account of the most interesting papers. The Library of Congress is having such calendars made in the State Paper Office and other record depositories in England, of papers relating to American history, particularly that of the Revolution. In a recent volume of the invaluable publication, the Report of the English Historical Commission, there are detailed descriptions of various matters relating to the German soldiers serving with the British in this country. There are curious and interesting descriptions of the efforts made by the American authorities to secure recruits from the German soldiers who were prisoners of war—both men and officers reported quite fully on this subject, and clearly there must have been many successful conversions of the German soldiers into good Americans, for substantial inducements and rewards were held out. We hear from time to time of good American citizens claiming descent from Hessian soldiers who remained and settled in this country, and particularly in Pennsylvania,

Maryland and Virginia, where many of them found homes with their fellow countrymen, old settlers, sometimes with relations, often with old friends and neighbors in the Fatherland. The late Rev. Dr. Morris, of Baltimore, himself an active worker in the history of Germans in Maryland, was very proud that he was the son of a Hessian who had left the British forces at York, Pa., joined the American army and served with credit, and became an honored citizen of York.

It would be interesting to gather the particulars of such cases, which must have been very numerous in the aggregate. Then, too, the royal masters who had sold their men to Great Britain, encouraged them to take leave of their old flag and settle in America, for thus all questions of pension compensation at home were solved. It would be interesting to know how many did so and how many brought family and friends and neighbors from the Fatherland to settle in America, and thus started that stream of immigration which flowed so strongly and enriched the United States with so large a part of one of its most valuable elements, our German American citizens. Then again, it has often been asked, "What colors did the German troops serving with the British army carry and what became of them?" It is recorded in the interesting *Berufsreise* of Madam Riedesel, that she saved the colors of her husband's regiment, when it surrendered with Burgoyne at Saratoga, by sewing them up in her petticoats, and thus carried them home. Unluckily, a fire destroyed them, together with many of the records of the Brunswick troops, in the city of Brunswick. Mr. Gherardi Davis, of New York, has devoted much time and attention to the study of the flags carried in the Revolution by both American and foreign troops. He has recently printed a book of great interest and value on the subject. Here in the collection of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, are preserved the almost faded and perishing colors of the Anspach regiment, and at West Point and in the New York Historical Society there are others. The Rev. Dr. Edward

Everett Hale, an indefatigable octogenarian, remembers having seen staffs with German colors, captured at the Battle of Bennington, where Baum's Heavy Brunswick Dragoons were routed by Stark's Militia Sharp Shooters. The colors have long since disappeared, so that they cannot be identified, but the flagstaffs are still piously preserved in the Old North Church, of Boston. Thanks to the kindly interposition of His Excellency, the Hon. Charlemagne Tower, American Ambassador to Germany, the effort is now being made in Berlin to secure a collection of reproductions of all the flags carried by German troops serving in America, and if it is only approximately complete, it will be an interesting addition to and illustration of Mr. Davis' work.

At West Point there are also some German flags captured by the Americans, and these will no doubt be identified by comparison with the German reproductions. There are some huge German Dragoon boots and some arms preserved in Bennington, as relics of that victory which so clearly established the superiority of the American sharpshooter over the trained German soldier, for warfare in our mountain country. What trophies did the Germans carry home, other than the colored drummers taken by Riedesel to Brunswick, where tradition and the writers of historical novels have preserved their memory and perhaps exaggerated it?

A valuable addition to our better knowledge of the actual life and surroundings of the German soldiers here, is derived from their journals and diaries. To the growing number of these personal records, Prof. Learned has added the *Waldeck Diary*, kept by a chaplain of that name and of the Waldeck regiment. He has enriched the value and interest of the text by notes supplied by his own intimate knowledge of the subject, and by special research in foreign archives. After all, however, when it is remembered that every officer must and many soldiers did keep diaries and journals, what we have of them in print is a very small proportion of those still in uncatalogued archives.

and in private hands. Not long since, one such journal, Captain Dernberg's, was printed on the anniversary of a great public school in Germany as a tribute to one of its former pupils. It is to be hoped that many more will yet see the light, for every such diary brings us in close touch with the men and the deeds and the events of that heroic time, the war for American Independence; and as much can be learned from the statements made in all good faith of those who tried to prevent it, as from its most ardent supporters. In the latest and one of the best works on the subject, that of Sir George Trevelyan, it is interesting to note the extent to which he has drawn from such sources, mostly hitherto unused by the solemn historian of the old school, but in the hands of so great a master as Sir George Trevelyan, adding entirely new light to the picture he draws of the great struggle for American independence. It must be recognized, too, that the Declaration of Independence was almost as much one for constitutional liberty of England as of America. From the peace of Paris, the power of the Crown diminished and that of Parliament increased. What influence American example and experience had on the Germans who served in this country, is nowhere distinctly stated, yet there can be little doubt that the American War of Independence was a large factor in the struggle against Napoleon and the final establishment of Germany as an independent power, and later on of its logical outgrowth, the German Empire of to-day. Almost every American pamphlet or book or record of its Congress, was translated and published in Germany. Many of these and other contemporary publications have historical interest to-day, as showing the trend of political sympathy and opinion of Germany of that day, its close and watchful interest in America, and the difference between the Hanoverians and particularly the Göttingen Professors, naturally sympathizing with their elector the King of England, on one side, and the rest of intellectual Germany on the other.

We all remember gratefully Schiller's eloquent diatribes against the petty sovereigns who sold their subjects to fight in America, against freedom, and in a cause with which they had no concern and certainly no reason for hostility. It would be interesting to know how many of these German "hirelings" remained in or returned to this country, and how many other sturdy Germans were led to come here as settlers by the favorable report of the people and the country in which they had gained so little honor, but so much knowledge and experience. The large accession of Germans, with all the thrift and perseverance and other virtues of the race, may be due, in a large part, to the German soldiers sent here without their own consent, to help maintain British control. At all events, it would be well to secure and preserve all official and personal narratives of their enforced visit to America and all the stories of America told by them and others on their return. To the patient and persevering researches of Dr. Sachse, this Society and the public that reads its published volumes, may well make acknowledgment for the light he has thrown on the early history of the sects that came to this country of freedom of religious opinion, on the help that Germans gave Pennsylvania in the successful founding of this great Commonwealth, and on some of its leaders of thought and action.

Other workers in other fields of historical research have added to our knowledge of the early settlers of Pennsylvania. Will not this Society now lend its help to procuring copies, if not original papers, from the German archives and from both private and public collections, and add them to the historical material now being slowly gathered in the Library of Congress, in that of the venerable German Society of Pennsylvania, and in the Library of the University of Pennsylvania and in that of the Historical Society—all gradually growing in importance. What Seidensticker and Pennypacker have done for early Pennsylvania history; what Rattermann, of Cincinnati, has done for the history of Germans and German literature in America; what this Society

has done and is still doing for a better knowledge of Pennsylvania Germans, their history, their religion, their customs and their ancestry; what Learned has done for their literature and its steady growth and development, all of these and kindred contributions may well be an inspiration to continued and renewed effort to collect from all quarters all records of the Germans who have so greatly helped to make this nation and much of its history.

There is a large harvest to be gathered of printed books, historical and geographical descriptions, biographies and autobiographies, novels and poetry, written by Germans in and on America, during the long period from the first settlement of Germans in this country down to our own day. Hessian and Swabian local authors, and others of much wider fame, have written about their countrymen in this country, both in war and in peace. Individual collectors have gathered much of this material, but the Pennsylvania German Society might well enter this field and secure copies of all that throws light on the German settlers of Pennsylvania, from the first comers to our own day.

With the recent development of close and friendly relations between the German Empire and the United States, it ought to be possible to have access to German archives with their wealth of material relating to our own history, national and local. In war matters, Kapp and Lowell have given us much in print, but they and others have left much still in manuscript. Mr. Bancroft's collection of material for his *History of the United States*, largely collected for him by Kapp, is now accessible in the Lenox Library, in New York. Mr. Lowell's admirable book, *The Hessian Troops in the American Revolution*, by no means exhausted the wealth of original documents procured by him during a long stay in Germany. His representatives would no doubt give permission to this Society, through a properly accredited representative, to make a selection of material to print for the use of students. The English Historical Commission Reports, Doniol's ex-

haustive work on France and the United States, are examples of the kind of material that can be found in hitherto hidden archives and in collections belonging to individuals. An industrious Swedish-American, Mr. Amandus Johnson, of the University of Pennsylvania, has found in Sweden new material for the better knowledge of the history of its early settlements on the Delaware. Surely our German students can do as much for us at home and abroad.

An American author, Mr. Henry Charles Lea, has won great and deserved reputation, even greater in Europe than in this country, by his monumental historical writings; his mastery of the subjects he has made his special field of research, is based on his large collection of original, mainly manuscript material, gathered in Spain and in the countries that were formerly Spanish colonies, in Mexico and in Peru, as well as in Germany, where the great university libraries have furnished much hitherto unused material for this greatest of American historians. True, it is his ability to know how to use it that has made him so widely honored wherever his works are known, but first he had to collect his sources from afar.

Is there not a wide field of research and collection open to the Pennsylvania German Society and to kindred bodies, a field in which new discoveries of old material still remain for the diligent student? Cannot this Society enlist the co-operation of kindred bodies in obtaining copies from the German archives, of all documents throwing new light on the history of Germans in this and other States? Will not such a task be an inspiration to all who are looking for subjects on which to obtain and disseminate a larger knowledge of our past history, and thus show them that patriotism which is the highest honor of American citizenship, and make known what Germans and Germany have done for this country?

How invaluable would be a diary, even crudely written, by a resident of Hesse or any of the small German States, during

the war of the American Revolution, telling the story of the raising of troops for service in America, of the departure of individual soldiers and organizations, of the reports and rumors received at home from the distant soldiers, and of their return and welcome home. We have a few diaries and journals kept by the soldiers, and even by the officers, and there must be many more still in manuscript. Sir George Trevellyan's recent volumes of history of the American Revolution show, almost for the first time, the state of public opinion in England towards the Americans, and there must be material for some similar view of the feeling of the German families towards the country to which the sons had been sent to subdue a rebellion that found so many warm supporters among the Germans in both Germany and America. Apart from military records and reports, we want to know what was the general drift of sentiment; of public opinion there was little or none in those days of German separate and bad governments. What was the result of the return of several thousand soldiers from a country where, in spite of war, there was prosperity for every industrious family, to poor Germany, ground down by taxes and hopeless of either political or social future?

Were not the returned soldiers the best advocates for that emigration which benefited both countries? A recent German historical novel, dealing with a Hessian soldier, makes him find a brother, long before settled in Pennsylvania, who contrasted his comfort and prospects with those of the family left in Germany. Was not this the condition of many families, who gladly joined their friends and relatives across the ocean and thus helped to swell the tide of emigration? What the *Hallesche Nachrichten* do for a better knowledge of the religious life of the Germans in America, the letters and diaries and journals of German soldiers here during the Revolution will do for a more intimate view of actual life in this country.

Professor Learned and Mr. Myers have made an interesting

exhibit at Jamestown of charts showing the gradual spread of German and other migrations from the North to the South and West in Colonial days, and after the Revolution and the Constitution had opened the whole Union to newcomers. They have also gathered many interesting relics of those early days, showing the implements of trade in farming and other pursuits. Why not try to collect the printed and manuscript material that will show how Germany learned to know the boundless resources of America, and how this country became a prosperous home for the thousands of Germans whose descendants still honor their ancestry in this and other States.

Much in the way of research and collection still remains, and this Society, proud of its stately volumes of papers on the local history and achievements of Pennsylvania Germans, may well find a new field of activity in inviting the co-operation of similar societies. United effort cannot fail to open archives hitherto closed, and to obtain from public and private sources, much of value and interest for a better knowledge of our German settlers and emigrants, and their homes and ancestors and local surroundings. Professor Learned has been a diligent laborer in this field; his study of the family of Pastorius shows what a harvest of facts, hitherto unknown, he has garnered by intelligent pursuit of inquiries in Germany. What he has done single handed, may well be continued and increased in result by the united effort of a body as powerful as the Pennsylvania German Society.

A member of a well known family of Philadelphia, Mr. John Frederick Lewis, has gathered material for the genealogy and history of his ancestors, Ludwig was the old German name, and his research has been amply rewarded by showing how well that name deserved honor and won it alike in the Fatherland and in the new home in America. Such examples are well worth bearing in mind as illustrations of what can be done by the Pennsylvania German Society.

Let me urge this Society to use its influence, due to its activity and the value of its publications, to secure a complete catalogue of all the papers preserved in German archives, and in private collections, relating to America in its Colonial days, in the Revolutionary War, and in the time of that German immigration which has been so large a factor in American prosperity. The time is ripe for thus harvesting in our national library at Washington, all that can be garnered abroad and at home. The Pennsylvania Society would thus broaden its field of activity, would enlist the co-operation of kindred societies, and would make its work national.

Let me present the contents of a letter from Prof. Charles M. Andrews, of Johns Hopkins University, giving a summary of the work he is doing to add manuscript sources from English archives to the material for history of the United States.

Prof. Andrews is preparing a Guide to the English Archives and is having transcripts from them made for the Library of Congress. He has described the first part of the work in a report printed not long since. The work of 1903-4 covered the principal collections of English records, in 1905 it was devoted to the Colonial Office papers, *i. e.*, the Board of Trade and America and West Indies, and included also commercial and colonial correspondence. In 1906 it covered many of the minor repositories, including the Guildhall Library, the Royal Society, Dr. Williams' Library, Lion College, Devonshire House, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, etc. In 1907 he completed his survey of the Public Record Office, the Audit Office, Commissariat and Customs Offices, the Treasury, Solicitor, with a re-examination of the War Office, Foreign Office, and Home Office collections, the records of the Corporation of London in the Guildhall, the Bodleian and the British Museum Libraries. The work was originally projected in two volumes, with the title, "Guide to the Materials for the History of the United States to 1783, in London Archives, in the British Museum, and in the Manuscript

Collections of Oxford and Cambridge." The first volume is waiting for the re-arrangement of the records now in progress in England, and is thus postponed for an uncertain time. The second volume will appear probably this winter and under an independent title. Work for the Library of Congress will provide in the neighborhood of one hundred volumes of transcripts, of which a list was given in the Report of the Librarian for 1906, pp. 137-9, but many additions have been made since. It includes documents from the Bodleian and British Museum Libraries, from the Admiralty, Colonial and Treasury papers in the Record Office. It also includes papers relating to the Hessian and other German allied soldiers serving in this country, from the Treasury, Colonial and Audit and Foreign Offices and the British Museum. The material is so scattered and much of it so little known, that a calendar of it would be very useful to anyone writing the history of the German auxiliary troops in America. It includes letters, agreements, rosters, descriptions often in minute detail, accounts, statistics of losses, killed, wounded and captured, of individual losses in battles, as at Trenton, regarding which some very important information came to light in a volume found this summer in the Audit Office, labeled "Acct. of the extraordinary Disbursements, to be made good by the Crown of Great Britain, for the losses of the Hessian troops from 1776-1784." These accounts are often itemized in great detail, items for sickness, hospital charges, repairs to guns, traveling expenses, postage, etc. The lists of personal effects, money, jewelry, baggage, lost at Trenton, are most interesting. These documents are all in English, but many of the others are in German and French. Two volumes on "America and West Indies," contain some correspondence with Brig.-General Campbell, on the subject of embarkation, and among the Foreign Office papers "Prussia," are many letters which relate to the attitude of Frederick II. on the subject of allowing hired German troops to pass through Prussian or rather Hohenzollern territory. What Prof. Andrews is thus doing in

English archives may well be followed in those in Germany. There are 180 volumes compiled by the late B. F. Stevens, now in the Library of Congress, forming an exhaustive catalogue index of manuscripts in the archives of England, France, Holland and Spain, relating to America; from 1763-1783, described as "the sole key to the American Revolutionary documents in European archives," yet none of those in Germany are included. Prof. Andrews, too, limits his "Guide to Material in British Collections" to be issued by the Carnegie Institution, of Washington, to collections in England. Even there he has found material for a calendar of papers relating to the German troops in the American Revolution, described by the Librarian of the Congressional Library as "interesting in itself and serving to complete such calendars now in the Library," although as yet it is limited to only a portion of the German troops serving here. It is described by Prof. Andrews as "three bundles of papers containing the accounts of the Hessian troops engaged during the war, 1775-1779, with tables giving the exact names, ranks and numbers of Brandenburg and Anspach forces in America, forming altogether one of the most complete rosters of the Hessians that we have. The documents are in French, German and English." In the vast mass of uncatalogued papers in the British Museum are papers relating to the Palatines, in the Lansdowne manuscripts; in the New Castle papers there are 17 volumes of Bouquet papers, and 231 volumes of Haldimand papers, listed in Brymner's *Canadian Archives*; in the War Office records there are "Hessian letters with rosters." Prof. Andrews points to the untouched records of the Foreign Office, for reports from British diplomatic and military agents in Germany, particularly in Brunswick, Hesse and the other states that furnished, as well as those that refused to sell troops to Great Britain. What wealth of material must there be as yet untouched or only partly known, in the archives of these countries, from which much information yet remains to be gathered.

As an illustration of how much more of ignorance there is than of information on German Americans, let me point to a paragraph in a recent English book, "Society in the Country House," by T. H. S. Escott, formerly editor of a leading English magazine, and a voluminous author. This book bears the imprint of Geo. W. Jacobs & Co., Philadelphia. In it (on page 356) he speaks of Sunday Schools "acclimated at Ephratah, in Pennsylvania, by the descendants of those who had sailed to New England in the Mayflower." Is not such a statement the strongest argument in support of my plea for a plan for calendars or descriptive catalogues of the records preserved in German archives touching American history and the share of Germans in it?



<http://stores.ebay.com/Ancestry-Found>

<http://stores.ebay.com/Ancestry-Found>

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 011 640 242 7

