

The Influence of German Immigrants

By Jeannette Holland Austin



colonial fireside

Wherever you look in the American past, the Germans have left a good influence. From the earliest immigration days, they worked hard on their farms and lived frugally. After suffering in the old country with poor soil, the search was on for good fertile land to plow. The Germans knew that a heavy forest growth produced rich soil and chopped their homesteads out of dense woods. And while the American farmer, in his haste to live well, mined the fertility out of the soil, the German conserved it by rotating crops and feeding live stock. In caring for his domestic animals, he set an example.

This successful method was learned at local county agricultural fairs. Actually, the capacious red barns of the middle West trace their ancestry back to the big barn in which the Pennsylvania "Dutchman" provided at a time when most farmers left allowed their stock to run unsheltered. And, while good German music spread across the plain, the Germans helped to influence a conservative approach to agriculture.