



Historic Background and Annals of the Swiss and German Pioneer Settlers of Southeastern Eastern Pennsylvania, and of Their Remote Ancestors, From the ... War: An Authentic History, From Original S

H. Frank Eshleman

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Excerpt from Historic Background and Annals of the Swiss and German Pioneer Settlers of Southeastern Eastern Pennsylvania, and of Their Remote Ancestors, From the Middle of the Dark Ages, Down to the Time of the Revolutionary War: An Authentic History, From Original Sources, of Their Suffering During Several Centuries Before and Especially During the Two Centuries Following the Protestant Reformation, and of Their Slow Migration, Moved by Those Causes, During the Last Mentioned Two

Southeastern Pennsylvania, during our colonial period was the prolific hive from which the swarms of Swiss and German settlers of America almost exclusively came, who, during the latter years of that period and during the first several decades of our national existence, migrated westward and planted the seed of the Teutonic element of our population in the middle west, the southwest, the northwest and the far west, and whose descendants in our later decades have sprung from them by millions and have largely moulded the character of that vast empire, down to this day.

The valleys of the Susquehanna and Schuylkill Rivers being thus, the mother-land of so powerful and populous an influence, in our state and national existence, it was deemed by the compiler a matter of sufficient importance, to gather up the historical events in chronological order, leading up to the German-Swiss settlement here, from the time of remote ages. It was also thought equally important to set out in like chronological form, the first six decades or more of the growth and development of those same peoples here after their initial settlement about the beginning of the eighteenth century and to show their wonderful growth in power, in numbers, and their vigor in pushing the frontier line of our wealth and settlement westward.

These Annals record the outlines of a history of religious fervor and of tenacity of noble purpose stretching across a thousand years, as glorious as anything else that ever happened in the history of the world. As early as the year 900, strong men began to stand out as champions of religious liberty and the simple Gospel, against the great Romish Church, the only Christian Church of note then on the earth. They held fast to the faith, through fire and against sword. About the year 1150, Peter Waldo renounced the Romish Church and led the Evangelical Christians; and by hundreds of thousands they adhered to him. They held the faith nearly four hundred years more and went like lambs to slaughter. Then came the Reformation. Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and Menno Simon, led the movement in the heart of Europe.

Menno held to the Waldenseon beliefs (and especially to the doctrine of non-resistance) and his followers became the prey of the militant faiths both Romish and Reformed. But neither fire, nor sword, nor drowning, nor prison, nor the galleys could turn them from their conviction; and while Zurich and Berne and other cities exterminated, imprisoned and deported them, they multiplied; and they were found by thousands everywhere. They obtained governmental favor in Holland by the year 1575 and thus they beheld that golden

glow in the west and gravitated there at the close of nearly 200 years of suffering, holding on to their faith in all its simple purity.

Then they learned of America and in the next half century not less than fifty thousand embarked to reach the glorious land of Penn. Nearly twenty thousand who thus embarked died at sea; the remainder reached their happy goal.

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