

Merry Christmas, Happy New Year and Germantown?

Hi KKC Extended Family,

OK, so I literally just threw them all together, but they do have a commonality: a new beginning! For the Germans, after the many wars, famine, persecution, Germantown was a new place to live, work and worship in freedom in America near Philadelphia.

So, what do you know about Germantown? Isn't that where General George and his revolutionaries thought they had the British playbook figured out, but still got whooped by the Brits, then retreated northwest into Montgomery County in 1777?

Well yes, but 100 years before that, William Penn visited Germany in 1677, trying to convince many to seek religious freedom in his Pennsylvania. A group of Mennonites, Pietists and Quakers got together in Frankfurt, including Penn's cousin, Abraham op deb Graeff, to purchase land there, asking Francis Daniel Pastorius to go and be their agent. He agreed, first traveling to London in the spring of 1683, purchasing 15,000 acres, then sailing on to Phila., arriving on 20 August 1683. About the same time, individuals from the village of Crefeld, near the Dutch-German border, also purchased 18,000 acres. Unfortunately, the Frankfurters never came, but the Crefelders did. Penn combined the two claims and created a township about 6 miles northwest of the city called 'Germantown', with Pastorius becoming their leader.

Joseph Illick wrote in his book Colonial Philadelphia, "Of the small villages surrounding Philadelphia, Germantown was the most notable....Pastorius, its founder, pointed out that 'by virtue of the franchise obtained by Penn, this town has its own court, burgomaster and council, together with the necessary officials, and well-regulated town laws, council regulations, and town seal.'...its inhabitants being (in Pastorius' words) 'for the most part tradespeople....and linen weavers, tailors, shoemakers, locksmiths and carpenters' who were farmers and husbandmen on the side." Germantown became known throughout the colonies for their fine linen manufacture.

Sounds like a well-organized community! Gee, wasn't Dielman Kolb, of Wolfsheim, a weaver?!

Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Jack Oberholtzer (jeoberho@comcast.net) 215-534-0194

Secretary, Kolb, Kulp, Culp Family Association <https://kolb-kulp-culp.org>

Sources:

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