

The literature on European emigration of the eighteenth Century is filled with horror stories of sufferings and death. The lack of cleanliness and hygiene adversely affected mass travel, though on the whole, the total German and Swiss migration to North America during that Century reveals a rather successful operation in which more than one hundred thousand souls reached America. This was in spite of the fact that many of them did not have sufficient funds to pay for the ocean passage.

The more spectacular instances of loss of life were related to prolonged waiting periods in temporary quarters on land and on board ships detained in ports. Three projects of governments or officially sponsored colonization companies were notable examples. The halfhearted attempt of the English authorities to deal with the unexpected arrival of upwards of twelve thousand Germans in 1709 is the best known example. Crammed into hastily chartered ships, the people spent months waiting for a departure which was delayed by the war conditions. An epidemic swept over the passengers that did not abate until after the first weeks in America. Perhaps some 3,700 of the sturdiest emigrants were settled in New York and North Carolina. Most were returned to Germany though a fraction were sent to Ireland. (My Mother's German Müller ancestors were part of the Irish relocation-Ken **J Engle**) The Mississippi settlement scheme of 1720, involving the Company of the West and the French government, recruited more than 4,000 people in southwest Germany, Alsace, and Switzerland with results equally bad for the immigrants. An even higher percentage of loss of life occurred in the Cayenne project of the French government in 1763 when almost all the emigrants perished from fevers at sea and after arrival.

The blame for these calamities could be laid on authorities inexperienced in handling such large numbers of individuals and families who were already weakened from spending weeks of traveling toward the ports of embarkation.

The situation in 1738 was quite different and earned the reputation as the Year of the Destroying Angels. The reference was to Psalm 78, verse 49, "He let loose on them his fierce anger, wrath, indignation, and distress, a company of destroying angels." Events were so horrible that the fatalist mind needed a response.

The six thousand plus emigrants for North America during that year were generally not part of a colonization scheme of any government or proprietor. The would-be emigrants were following a pattern that had evolved since 1717 which had become the typical way of reaching English colonies in America. The emigrants banded together in family and often in village groups and set out for Rotterdam or Amsterdam where they expected to find British ships to take them on to America. Every year a number of British ships, returning with colonial staples, were available for such transport on their way back to America. Passengers were taken aboard after merely signing a contract to pay their fares within a designated time after arrival. This redemptioner system had proven satisfactory for all. Payment could be made by the passengers themselves in cash, from the proceeds of the sale of goods brought along for that purpose, or by relatives and friends already in America, or, what was becoming increasingly common, by parties to whom they indentured themselves to work off the cost of passage.

Preparation for the 1738 emigration season by the shippers was made in the preceding fall and winter months. Germans and Swiss returning for home visits or for purchasing goods needed in the new settlements were approached by shipping firms and individual captains to serve as recruiters. Handsome head premiums and the promise of free return passage for themselves and their goods turned many an incidental traveler into an emissary for shippers and land speculators. These people soon became known as "newlanders."

The colonial destinations for which the shippers could schedule their transports included Georgia, Virginia, and New York. In the latter state, Governor George Clarke had leaflets circulated in Germany which solicited emigrants by the promise of free land. But the Rotterdam shippers turned their attention for the 1738 season to the surest of all markets, Pennsylvania. Despite the transports to other colonies, there had been a steady rise of the number of Germans arriving in Philadelphia as shown by 268

immigrants in 1735, 736 in 1736, and 1,528 in 1737. Due to the increased solicitation, a higher figure for 1738 was anticipated by the shipping merchants. All expectations were shattered by the timing and number as groups of emigrants gathered for departure earlier than in previous years and came in larger numbers. Some emigrants set out in March and the first contingents reached the Rotterdam area before ships were ready for loading and, indeed, before some of the regular English emigrant vessels had even arrived in port.

Pastors and other chroniclers recorded the departure dates of several batches. According to the Freudenberg parish register in Nassau-Siegen, fifty-three men, women, and children left on March 13th. In Canton Basel the authorities processed numerous departure petitions in March. While some of these groups were well organized and financially able to defray their travel costs, many emigrants, who began to arrive in the Netherlands in April, were unable to pay for their ocean transportation.

The transit of thousands of "Palatines and Switzers" through the Netherlands had become a major problem for the Dutch authorities ever since the mass migration of 1709 and the ensuing return of thousands from England which lasted into late 1711. The main issue was destitute and sick people and orphans who had to stay behind and thereby became wards of the state.

When the first waves of Palatines reached Dutch territory in April 1738, they had to go to a holding area in the vicinity of the ruins of St. Elbrecht's chapel below Kralingen. By law, the Palatines could not enter the city of Rotterdam. No preparations had been made for the temporary sojourn and subsequent embarkation of these early arrivals. On May 13th the bailiff and court of Kralingen petitioned the States of Holland to have the Palatines either sent back or speedily embarked for America. While "these are already a great burden," the petition hinted at more ominous trouble, namely the outbreak of an epidemic when "in the case of the death of parents the children will be left behind." The Kralingers also had been informed that "shortly a thousand or more such impecunious persons from the same land are to follow."

As the clusters proceeded toward the Dutch border, the British shipping merchants of Rotterdam made their preparations, summoning ships from English ports to augment the regular fleet of emigrant ships. The major shipping firm of Hope readied eight ships, some from their fleet, some chartered. Once the ships became available, they had to be hastily fitted with additional bedsteads.

"Everywhere there were double bedsteads built, or even three on top of one another. Many passengers had their chests broken up and stored their belongings wherever they could (because captains and newlanders themselves had so many chests and goods and there were simply too many people) or they had to leave them behind to be sent later by other ships so that many a garment and linen cloth became rotten or moth-eaten."

According to the Rotterdamse Courant, five of the ships operated for the firm of the Hopes were ready on June 22nd. They were the Queen Elizabeth, Thistle, Oliver, Winter, and Glasgow. The fleet proceeded to English ports for the customs clearance required by the Navigation Acts. The captains of the Queen Elizabeth and the Winter Galley headed for Deal, and the others sailed for Cowes on the Isle of Wight. A violent storm played havoc with the heavily loaded ships. They spent three to five weeks before reaching port in England. Captain William Walker of the Oliver felt that his vessel was overloaded. Rather than continue the voyage, he returned to Hellevoetsluis and resigned his command. Captain William Wright was assigned as the new commander by the owners. The Oliver left again early in July and crossed in two days over to Cowes where she spent almost six weeks, *"Partly to have our ship inspected and found solid and seaworthy, partly to unload and load anew, and to await favorable winds in order to continue our voyage to Virginia."* Soon after leaving Cowes, the vessels incurred such heavy seas that the Thistle and the Oliver took refuge in the harbor at Plymouth.

In Rotterdam, additional merchant ships were fitted for the overflow of emigrants. Even the departures of John Stedman's St. Andrew and Charles Stedman's Charming Nancy were delayed by these transformations. Passengers said the two Stedmans had deliberately picked the healthiest and sturdiest people. On July 19th, the 200 ton, thirteen year old brigantine St. Andrew, a Veteran in the Palatine business since 1725 (previously known as the Pennsylvania Merchant), was still in Rotterdam. The emigrants, many of them sickly by that time, were at the mercy of the shippers, even as to the final destination. Some Palatine redemptioners intending to go to Philadelphia were assigned to fill up the Virginia-bound Oliver which was chartered by the Helvetian Society. In turn, some 200 passengers were

loaded on the small ship Adventure. Toward the end of June, the Adventure stopped at s'Gravendeel and then went to London where the people were disembarked. They were again loaded on the 150 ton, North Carolina-built Two Brothers, Captain William Thomson, The Princess Augusta, Captain George Long, left Rotterdam with near 350 passengers in August. This load was not much more than the 330 persons the same vessel had landed safely in Philadelphia in September 1736.

The Winter Galley arrived first in Philadelphia on September 5. Captain Edward Paynter submitted his account of 252 passengers. If the news of the dismal Situation in Kralingen had not yet reached Philadelphia, the emigrants themselves now spread the story. As usual during the arrival season. Germans, some even from remote settlements, crowded the harbor to greet relatives, friends, or just people from their old home place to hear news and maybe find mail.

Four days later, the ship Glasgow and the snow Two Sisters arrived. The recently installed new governor, George Thomas, attended the oath swearing ceremonies to acquaint himself with the Situation. He also was present when the next three vessels arrived with Palatines, the Robert de Alice, the Queen Elizabeth. and the Thistle. Captain Walter Goodman of the Robert & Alice sent a letter back to Germany on October 19th. Excerpts were published in the Rotterdamse Courant. two months later:

"On the 4th of July last I sailed out of Dover in England and arrived here on this river on the 9th of September with crew and passengers in good health but on the way I had many sick people, yet, since not more than 18 died, we lost by far the least of all the ships arrived to-date. We were the third ship to arrive. I sailed in Company with four of the skippers who together had 425 deaths, one had 140, one 115, one 90, and one 80. The two captains Stednian have not yet arrived and I do not doubt that I shall be cleared for departure before they arrive since I begin loading tomorrow. I have disposed of all my passengers except for 20 families."

Another letter, dated October 18th, was sent by Christoph Sauer of Germantown to friends in Wittgenstein who were eagerly awaiting news of several emigrants from Eisoff. Sauer wrote:

"The Elsoffers have not yet arrived. Everybody wonders where their ship is, and besides that vessel, 3 to 4 ships with people are still expected. According to all reports, they have been at sea now for a quarter of a year."

As to the vessels that had come in, Sauer remarked:

"The throngs of people who let themselves be seduced this year to come into the country are raising much lament here. Besides, äs so many hundreds died from sickness aboard ships at sea, the survivors, if there is any left of a family, must pay or go into Service which causes so much indigence and privation among a people which is hard to describe.

"This ship lost near 160 persons, and another one that arrived the day before, more than 150, and on one that came in the following day, only 13 healthy people are said to remain. Still another one arrived meanwhile on which out of 300 freights only 50 are left. Most of them died from dysentery, head sickness and violent fever, also some captains and many seamen. Altogether of 15 passenger ships only 2 seem to have arrived with the people tolerably healthy and well."

The author estimated about 1,600 people had died on the fifteen ships which had arrived so far. On November 20th another letter from the people in Germantown to the people in Wittgenstein was sent. The letter concludes with an upward assessment of the total number of victims: "There has been a cruel, destroying angel among the travelers this year for the number of those who died so far on the voyage and here has reached about 2000."

Fifteen leading men of various religious backgrounds from Philadelphia, Germantown and nearby communities agreed to band together for whatever help they could render and to compile a comprehensive account of the recent events. But, they were also concerned about the general Situation for colonists in Pennsylvania, the solicitations by newlanders, and the pitfalls which must be considered during travel to the seaport and during the voyage. The arrival of Palatine ships throughout the autumn of 1738 pervades every part of their Send-Schreiben. And, the reader is assured that their description of the events was carefully gathered from accounts of nearly 100 eyewitnesses. Their comments were intended to be published äs a guide and a warning to prospective emigrants.

The content of this collective missive, dealing with the Situation in and around Rotterdam and at sea,

has been used in the material here. In the personal recollections of the signers it was the first time that emigrant transports of an entire season were affected by disease. They recalled the singular case of the Love and Unity four years earlier when two-thirds of the Palatine passengers died of starvation during a voyage of nine months in which a lively trade in rats and mice among survivors marked the last stage of the trip. They also recalled a ship with English passengers that was wrecked on the New England coast with more than one hundred people drowned. For the current year, 1738, a special name was needed, the Year of the Destroying Angels.

"However, this year the sea has held quite a different harvest, because by moderate reckoning, more than 1800 died on the 14 ships arrived till now. While there are still two missing, we have reasons to assume them lost for they have been at sea for more than 24 weeks."

The Send-Schreiben noted the bad Situation on the shore, off the ships:

"Although several houses outside the city were rented by captains for the care of the sick by order of the authorities, as it happens, it is easy to see that the burden falls mostly on those Germans who still have some love left for their countrymen. There have been frequent collections taken, and the charity was then distributed to these starving, miserable human beings but it is shocking to witness the envy, the jealousy, and the malice among the survivors."

The writers of the letter relate how some ships were prevented from disembarking their human cargoes and ordered to sail back below the city for fear of spreading contagion:

"Those in town and in the country, who look people into their homes, contracted the same disease and several have suddenly died. It looks as if the sickness will spread throughout the land. The stench alone is so horrible on the ships, and with the people who came from them, that anyone who is easily disgusted will feel sick right away. That has made the inhabitants shy away from the diseased people."

The Pennsylvania Gazette, which usually reported the arrival of emigrant ships, did not refer to any untoward conditions until late in October. On September 7th it carried the news of the landing of 360 passengers of the

Winter Galley (Captain Paynter reported only 252 men, women and children on September 5th). The issue of September 14th registered the Two Sisters, Glasgow, and Robert & Alice with 1,003 people aboard (618 according to the Statements of the three captains). There is no ready explanation for the discrepancies in numbers because the discharge of some 500 passengers along the river or at the wharves would hardly have remained unnoticed. There was, however, a tax of 40 Shillings levied on every reported Palatine passenger entering the province which might possibly explain the under reporting by captains.

The authorities became aware of the health hazard at an early stage. Dr. Thomas Graeme, official health inspector of incoming ships for two decades, alerted the governor after having examined passengers on four Palatine vessels. Governor Thomas, in submitting Dr. Graeme's reports to the board on September 14th, singled out the particularly grave Situation on the Nancy, Captain William Wallace, and the Friendship, Captain Henry Beech. Both commanders had already permitted passengers to go ashore. The governor further announced

"...as it might prove dangerous to the health of the Inhabitants of this Province and City, It is Ordered that the Masters of said Ships be taken into Custody for their Contempt of the Governor's Order, signified to them by Thos. Glenworth, pursuant to a Law of this Province to remove to the Distance of one Mile from this City and that they shall remain in Custody till they shall give security in the sum of Five Hundred Pounds each, to obey the said Order, and not to land any of their Passengers, Baggage, or Goods, till the Passengers shall have been viewed and Examined, and until they shall receive Licence from the Governor for doing."

Surprisingly, only six days later eighty-seven men of the Friendship and forty-eight of the Nancy were marched to the courthouse for the oath-taking ceremony.

The snow Fox, Captain Charles Ware, arrived from Rotterdam and Plymouth in the second October week. According to the Gazette she carried 153 Palatines but the captain listed only 47 men, 23 women and 6 children. A mere thirty-one of the men took the oath at the courthouse in the governor's presence.

Three Palatine transports are known to have left from Amsterdam. The pink Amsterdam, Captain Joseph Willson, arrived safely in New York on October 12th with "upwards of 300 Palatines," many of whom

were actually from Württemberg. One day later Captain Christopher Ratsey came in with his Andrew Galley. There is no indication of any unusual health problems in the terse newspaper reports. Willson had carried on regulär runs to New York since 1734, Ratsey had brought 173 German passengers in 1737. In view of the assertion voiced by several contemporary writers that the epidemic had its origin in the camp sites at Kralingen, it is surprising that one of the hardest hit vessels was to have come from Amsterdam. The sickness might well have existed already on the Rhine boats.

The ship Davy qualified in the port of Philadelphia on October 25th. The next day the Gazette revealed the horrible stoy of this voyage. The captain, both mates and 160 passengers died at sea. It was the ship's carpenter, William Patton, who brought the ravaged vessel up the Delaware. Patton listed 74 men, 47 women and no children äs the remaining passengers but only 40 of the men were well enough to come to the courthouse. In this context, the Gazette commented for the first time on the general Situation, "Most of the Ships which bring Dutch Passengers this Year have been visited with a Sickness that has carried off great numbers."

Next appeared the long overdue St. Andrew, commanded by the favorite ship captain of the Germans, John Stedman. Several letters of passengers on some of his previous five runs between Rotterdam and Philadelphia were füll of praise for him. This time, on a voyage that lasted twelve weeks, almost 120 passengers had died before reaching port on October 29th. The same day, Lloyd Zachary and Thomas Bond, two physicians recruited by the authorities to tighten the inspection of the incoming Palatine ships, presented this report to the colonial council:

"We have caretully examined the State of Health of the Mariners and Passengers on board the Ship St. Andrew, Captain Steadman, from Rotterdam, and found a great number labouring under a malignant, eruptive fever, and are of the opinion. they cannot, for some time, be landed in town without the danger of infecting the inhabitants."

It was the last emigrant transport that John Stedman ever commanded. After his return to Europa, he settled down in Rotterdam in the shipping business. There was disbelief in the German Community that such fate could have befallen a ship led by a Stedman. The Send-Schreiben expressed the reaction äs follows:

"The two Stedmans, who had so far been renowned for the transfer of Germans and wanted to keep this reputation, also had to suffer the pliglit this time, one of them lost near 120 before landfall, although he had a party of the Hope's roughest and sturdiest folks, who had to succumb to sickness and fear of death. And the other one lost probably five-sixths, of 300 hardly 60 were left. His mates and some of his sailors he lost and he himself lay near death."

This article is derived from the same material used in a longer article, "The Emigration Season of 1738 D Year of the Destroying Angels," which appeared in The Report, A Journal of German-American History, volume 40, published by the Society of the History of the Germans in Maryland, 1986. The ninety-six references in that article are not given here.