

THE GERMAN PEOPLE

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PART ONE

In speaking of the Germans as part of the new Canadian Nation we first should look back to where they originated. In the heart of Europe we find people who speak one common language, even though they call themselves many different names such as Prussians, Bavarians, Hessians, Saxons, Friesians, etc. Each area was a kingdom of its own. To speak of Germany we have to think of Bismarck who united them only as late as 1871 into one country. Because this land was in the middle, it served as a crossroad between west and east. Students from everywhere attended German universities, for their standards were high and names such as Heidelberg and Jena were well known and their degrees carried great value. In poetry, philosophy and music the people of Middle Europe have contributed a good deal to the general culture of the West. Names like Goethe, Schiller, Kant, Nietzsche, Beethoven, Schubert, etc. are appreciated all over the world.

In our modern age, Germans have played a prominent part in engineering and science development and progress throughout the world. Many wars that were fought in Europe have interrupted all things, brought hardship and many sad years.

In compiling the following historical references, we have tried to outline the past as simply as possible to show the beginnings of German settlements in Canada. To do this we must delve even deeper into the history of Canada as well as that of the young American colonies.

PART TWO

Background of first Upper Canada Settlers (German)

When looking into the history of Upper Canada we find that the first German settlers can be traced back as far as 1776. In order to appreciate this fact we must go back even further; as far back in fact as another 100 years to the time when the British colony of Pennsylvania was founded under William Penn.

In 1681 William Penn was appointed the first Governor of Pennsylvania by Charles II of England. To develop his colony, he and his associate and friend, the Duke of York, published and distributed glowing advertisements and pamphlets in Germany and Holland praising the abundance of the fish, game, fruit and the fertility of the soil.

According to historian Dr. C. Henry Smith, the first German community was founded in Germantown, Pa. in 1683. In 1719 this community was increased by 59 German families led by Peter Becker

from Krefeld and the lower Rhine. Later, in 1724 Christoph Sauer arrived, bringing with him the first German printer's outfit. His publications included the German Almanac and spelling books, and in 1743 he printed in one large volume the first German Bible in the new colony.

The main reason for the migration to Pennsylvania was to seek freedom of religious beliefs. Germantown thus accumulated the only German Quaker congregation in America as well as the first German Dunkard, Reformed, Lutheran, Moravian and Mennonite congregations.

To mention only a few of the hardships these first immigrants went through, we quote Mr. Abbot Emerson Smith: "It was written that out of the 15 ships arriving in 1738 at Philadelphia only two had come with those on board relatively well, while 1600 had died. Sauer estimated that 2,000 Germans had died at sea in 1749, which was the heaviest year of immigration. On one ship in 1752 only 19 out of 200 survived, on another in 1755 50 out of 400." These then were the statistics. One of these first Germans to have migrated to the New World was Casper Schwenkfeld. He came to Pennsylvania in the year 1733. Descendants of his immediate family later emigrated to Waterloo County in Upper Canada.

During the War of Independence 1776 - 1783, Britain, needing more soldiers to retain the American colonies, hired 22,000 of them from the German Prince of Hessen-Cassel. After their term of service expired, many of these soldiers stayed on, for they liked this new land. According to their rank, many received crown land in Upper Canada. This period brought great disturbance to the settlers in Pennsylvania. Most of them just wanted to stay out of the fighting. One part took sides with those who wanted independence. Others stayed loyal to the crown. The latter group just packed their belongings after the war ended in British defeat, and moved north.

We find two classes of immigrants: firstly, soldiers and settlers who had lost everything in the American colonies and who had to be financed for three years because they brought no assets with them, and secondly, the Pennsylvania Germans and Quakers who brought money, livestock and equipment. There were many, however, who went north because of the promise of cheap land and because they were impelled by the spirit of adventure.

German emigration from Europe to Upper Canada (Lincoln, Welland, Haldimand and Waterloo Counties) began in the thirties of the past century, approximately at the same time that emigration from the British Isles assumed considerable volume. At the com-



Home of the German Canadian Association of Brantford
"SONNENHOF" (HOUSE OF SUNSHINE)
194 Henry Street, was completed in 1963



LADIES AUXILIARY REPRESENTATIVES congratulate the captain and top players of the GERMAN SOCCER TEAM to their winning of the SOUTHERN ONTARIO LEAGUE CUP. From left to right: Mrs. Karl Kurtz, Mrs. Klaus Jockwig, Mrs. Harold Offenhammer, Mr. Harry Jedig, Mr. John Seifert, Mr. Hans Papenfus.

mencement, this German emigration was purely the result of chance. One or two came and found this a goodly land, and others followed. F. L. Beck and his brother, for instance, came over because of what they had heard from friends in Lincoln County. The first of the Schneiders, on returning home to Germany after being in this same Haldimand County, told the young men he met that in the three years they expected to spend in the German army they could earn the price of a farm in Canada.

Schneider narrowly escaped a German prison for saying this, but as a result of his statement Nicolas Schneider and half a hundred others from the old country came to Canada in the thirties. The collapse of the democratic uprising in Europe, which occurred in 1848, gave a still further impetus to the movement. These emigrants from the continent, like those from the British Isles, came here hoping to find a land in which they might escape the grinding burdens due to old wars and the danger of new ones and where each might hope to enjoy in peace the fruit of his own toil.

Though it proved to no avail, these same immigrants were to find themselves involved in yet another war — the American Civil War. During this war, labour in Canada was cheap, says the aforementioned Mr. Beck, for the country was (as ironically it is now) full of bounty jumpers (draft dodgers) who had run away to escape the draft for the Northern Armies. There was no trouble in procuring one of these men for \$10 per month. Some ingenious and occasionally humorous methods were devised to get these runaways across the border. One woman, for example, brought her husband over in a box, which according to the shipping bill, contained a breeding hog.

Shortly before the turn of the last century many more Germans arrived in Ontario (formerly Upper Canada) and left their mark on the country, as is shown in such place names as Kitchener (formerly called Berlin), Dresden, Hanover, New Hamburg, Baden and others. In the vicinity of Brantford a number settled on the Lynden Road between Brantford and Dundas. Here you can still read the anglicised German names of Misener (Meissner), Adam, Snider (Schneider) and Smith (Schmidt) on their respective mail boxes when you go along that road.

PART THREE

From 1900 -1945

The settlement of people of German origin remained, however, rather thin in the Brantford area. In 1904 the Rev. Julius Badke moved to this city and organized the first Lutheran congregation. For 3 years the service was conducted in German for a small group of people. When he resigned in 1907 to serve in another location, the Rev. Milton Bieber journeyed to Brantford, reorganized the church, and continued the service in English.

The German element was comparatively small in Brantford and hardly appeared on the surface. They did not form any mutual societies to preserve their language, etc. They had no common religious belief to unite them as a group. Therefore, they did not feel the impact of the first world war as drastically as predominantly German communities like Kitchener. There strong feelings were aroused and, to dissociate the citizens from the deeds of the "Kaiser Reich", the municipal council in 1917 changed the name of the city from Berlin to Kitchener. Church services in German were discontinued and English became the only language until the storm subsided. After the first world war, with misery, hunger and inflation running rampant in Europe, another wave of immigrants came to Canada. The new arrivals wanted to get away from it all, to find peace and a new life in a young and promising country.

Canada was rather selective at this point and farm labour was all she wanted. There were several channels of immigration such as government agencies and church or private sponsors. Some people were able to pay their own way. Most, if not all had to sign a contract to work at least one year on a farm. However, the mainstream of German immigrants by-passed Brantford and settled in other areas where they had fewer difficulties with the language; areas like Kitchener-Waterloo where German was widely spoken. Among these adventurers was Mr. K. L. Reinhardt who came with his fiancée from East Prussia in 1924. After moving around for some years and getting married to his homeland sweetheart, he finally settled in Mount Pleasant in 1931. There he opened his own butcher shop and became successful and respected. He donated generously to his Lutheran Church when it was built. He also acquired a 200-acre farm in that area. Today his children carry on his work.

During the depression year immigration came almost to a standstill. After this period began to pass the next and greatest catastrophe in this century struck our globe.

PART FOUR

Second World War to Present

The second World War again brought hardships to the German population here and in their homeland. The Canadian government interned all those it feared might be security risks. Others, officially Canadian citizens, did not dare to speak their old native tongue. They were caught in a dilemma between their allegiance to Canada and the King and their ties to their friends and relatives in the Old Country. Many, however, followed the call to the colours of their new homeland in the strong belief that democracy and freedom had to be defended and that the danger of a dictatorship must be put down. Some names on the Brantford War Memorial indicate that these fallen soldiers had their ancestors in Germany. The immeasurable tragedy and world catastrophe proved to be a bonanza for the Canadian immigration authorities. Germany was utterly devastated, factories destroyed or dismantled. The remaining population was swelled by the 9 million people as results of dislocation of war.

Most of these people had to leave all their possessions behind. It was a forced movement of people unequalled in modern history. Some 9 million people were without home, uprooted and eager to build a new future in a seemingly hopeless world. As soon as Canadian immigration authorities set up offices in the starving, destroyed and overpopulated country, they were swamped with applications. They were able to pick and choose only the best and most suitable for immigration. In 1951 Canada finally opened the door to people of German origin. Many of the new-comers were selected for their special skills to help Canada in her struggle to become an industrial nation. Most of them were tradesmen or professional people who had no trouble finding jobs in industry and commerce. Their educational background enabled them to learn the language faster and integrate into Canadian society without great difficulty. Many of them went to night school and have fond memories of Miss Emma Moffit, as their first English teacher. Another person who helped many in this area with warmth and understanding is Miss Laura van Every. In the Employment Office she was available at any time to help settle a newcomer in a job and provide food and shelter for the time being. There were also a number who settled in the tobacco belt or on other farms to fill a need in this area. One should not forget to mention many churches which did a selfless job to help new arrivals. Most German immigrants were surprised at the generosity, lack of hate and the many helping hands extended to them in welcome.

During these years since 1951 approximately 500 German immigrants with their families settled in this area. They worked hard to show their appreciation to Canada and to build a solid future for their loved ones.

Today most call themselves proud Canadians, live in well kept homes and are busy in factories and on farms. Some entered even the field of manufacturing and other business enterprises, thus creating jobs for others and helping a continuously expanding Canadian economy.

The latest figures from the Government Census of 1961 give us the following information: in Brant County, 4,189 persons claimed to be of German origin; in Brantford the figure is 2,673 of which 586 were born in the old country. This represents 4.84% of the total population in this community.

With the growing number of German immigrants in this area the desire was also mounting to form a club to preserve some of the old traditions and the language.

In 1953 about seventy Germans met and formed a German Club. The first president was Mr. Heinz Ehret, his Vice being Mr. Waldecker. Only gradually did this German Club of Brantford get off the ground, but slowly and with increased immigration the club grew and expanded. Chess and skat groups were formed, dances held and in 1959, after much planning, a soccer team was organized. Today this group is one of the most successful in Southern Ontario. Under the leadership of Mr. K. Kurtz the team has won the Brantford City Soccer Cup twice out of a possible three times. In 1966 it also won the Southern Ontario League Cup Championship and was second in the final League standing.

In 1961 the long dream to have a German school was finally realized. Now the German children in Brantford are able to learn to read and write the language of their forefathers.

Under the guidance of Mrs. F. Simmt and Mrs. A. Zukur the school has made steady progress.

At social functions of the club the children have entertained their parents by reciting well known poems. Their clear and happy voices have often brought a tear to the eyes of their parents when they filled the hall with an old tune from back home.

Today the school counts 30 children and 6 adults eager to learn the German tongue.

The German Club itself prospered slowly and in 1962 the greatest project was started, the building of its own club home. The President at that time was Mr. Karl Kaufmann, and the Vice Mr. Gerd Schoenfeld. A great workload was also carried by Mr. Walter Schneider. Many others, too numerous to mention, have contributed and worked hard to make this undertaking a success. Seemingly unsurmountable difficulties, especially of financial nature, were overcome and early in 1963 the "Sonnenhof" (House of Sunshine) was finished. The entire exterior as well as the huge wall picture by Mr. Louis Raeppele, the exposed wooden beams, etc. convey the atmosphere of bavarian country living in a modern setting. On March 4, 1963 the club celebrated the grand opening, a joyous occasion to signify the end of that period of sweat and toil. Guest speakers were His Worship Mayor R. Beckett, the German Consul G. von Waldheim and last, but not least, the Hon. Senator W. Ross Macdonald.

With the completion of this wonderful meeting place the club activities increased, the membership rose and old country traditions were kept up in a gratifying way. A women's auxiliary was instituted, where "bei Kaffeeklatsch" and fun, new projects are discussed and ways and means investigated to promote the betterment of the club. Fashion shows, bake sales, "Gemuetlichkeit" at the fire place, etc. are some of the activities of that always busy group. The centennial year sees Mr. Hans Hartel as president of the Club. A beautification program of the club's facilities and participation in all the centennial affairs of the citizenship council are planned. A float will be entered in the huge centennial parade on July 1st with a German-Bavarian theme and the Sonnenhof beauty queen on top of it. This fall a centennial banquet is being planned to celebrate the 100 years of Canada's nationhood.

In closing it may be said that the German immigrants in the Brantford area deeply appreciate the abundant freedom and opportunities in this great country. We are thankful for the kindness, the understanding and the help offered to us upon our arrival in Canada. May this wonderful country further prosper and remain a good and free nation to live in for us, our children and generations to come.