Transnational Networks: German Migrants in the British Empire, 1670-1914

John R. Davis, Stefan Manz, Margrit Schulte Beerbühl
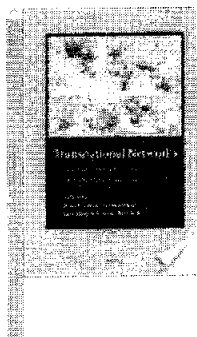
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edited by John R. Davis, Stefan Manz, Margrit Schulte Beerbühl

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Non-British migrants and their communities were an integral part of the multifaceted and multicultural nature of the British Empire. Their history, however, goes beyond a clearly delineated narrative of the Empire and includes transnational and truly global dimensions. German migrants and their transnational network creation within the structures of the British Empire, pursued over more than two centuries in a multitude of geographical settings, is the constitutive framework of the present More »

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MIGRATION AND BUSINESS VENTURES: GERMAN-SPEAKING MIGRANTS AND COMMERCIAL NETWORKS IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH ATLANTIC WORLD

Mark Häberlein

Scoundrels or Entrepreneurs? Changing Views of the 'Newlander'

In September 1744, the saddler Philipp Schütz, a native of Neckarbischofsheim in the Kraichgau who had immigrated to Pennsylvania in 1732 and taken up residence in the town of Lancaster, placed advertisements in two Pennsylvania newspapers, informing readers that his wife had run away with one Jacob Frederick Kurtz.[1] By mid-century Kurtz, who meanwhile called himself 'Curteus', had established himself as a merchant in Lancaster – he purchased a house and half lot in the town for £230 in January 1751[2] – and engaged in the business of transporting German migrants to Pennsylvania. In the early 1750s, at least two immigrant ships carrying 930 passengers were consigned to him. In May 1751 Curteus signed a contract with John Stedman and Hope & Company of Rotterdam that historian Marianne Wokeck has characterised as a "most ambitious and elaborate arrangement". In the partnership agreement that extended from 1752 to 1754, "the Rotterdam merchants agreed with Curteus that he would procure emigrants – in return for a share of 400 passengers for his own ships, one-eighth of the profits, and one-third of the commission in Philadelphia – while Stedman and Isaac Hope would obtain and pay for 'the needful Dutch and Prussian passes for the passengers.'"[3] Wokeck's assumption that this partnership "was short-lived and not very

The case of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, a regionally important commercial and administrative centre in the hinterland of Philadelphia, illustrates the extent and character of transatlantic business ties between central Europe and colonial America. Lancaster had some 3,000 inhabitants on the eve of American independence, and about two thirds of them were German-speaking immigrants or their descendents.[29] At least ten German-speaking traders, innkeepers and artisans who were residents of Lancaster travelled back to their native regions in southwest Germany and Switzerland between 1736 and 1769 in order to collect inheritances and purchase trade goods. Thus Sebastian Graff, a native of Offenheim in the principality of Brandenburg-Ansbach, first came to America in 1730 but returned to Germany in 1733, carrying an order for merchandise from

[26] Wokeck, *Trade in Strangers*, 32.

[27] Roeber, *Palatines*, 118.

[28] Brinck, *Auswanderungswelle*, 40, 91, 102, 123.

[29] See Jerome H. Wood, Jr., *Conestoga Crossroads: Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1730–1790* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1979); Mark Häberlein, "The Integration of German Immigrants in 18th-Century North America: The Case of Lancaster, Pennsylvania", in *Atlantic Migrations: Regions and Movements in Germany and North America/USA during the 18th and 19th Century*, eds. Sabine Heerwart und Claudia Schnurmann (Münster: LIT, 2007): 135–164.

the above-mentioned Caspar Wistar to his partner in Neckargemünd. After marrying in Germany, Graff crossed the ocean once more and settled in Lancaster in 1736.[30] Heinrich Basler, a linen weaver from Elsenz, a village near the town of Heilbronn in the Kraichgau who had come to Pennsylvania in 1732 and became an early leader of the Reformed congregation in Lancaster, made a journey to Germany in 1747 and moved to Philadelphia after his return.[31] In 1749, the trader and Lutheran church elder Ludwig Stein, who had just come back from Germany, presented the Lutheran congregation in Lancaster with a silver chalice, silver plate and fine altar cloth out of gratefulness for his safe return.[32] At least six residents of Lancaster made the journey back to Europe during the 1760s, and Johann Hegetschwiler, an immigrant from the Zurich canton of Knonau, crossed the ocean at least three times between 1764 and 1769. Like Caspar Wistar, these men imported goods which could not be obtained from Great Britain in comparable quality or which were in particular demand among German-speaking settlers: rifles, iron tools, silks, linens, fustians, books, Rhine wine as well as specialised items like glasses, watches, mirrors and musical instruments.[33]
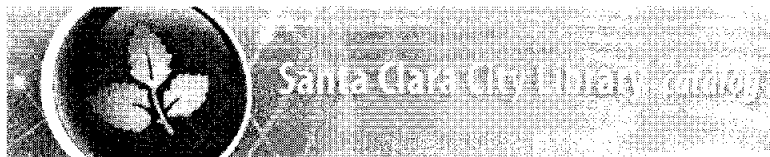
[30] Beiler, "Smuggling Goods", 19f.; Häberlein, "Transatlantische Beziehungen", 45f.

[31] Burgert, *Northern Kraichgau*, 42; Häberlein, "Transatlantische Beziehungen", 52f.

[32] Debra D. Smith and Frederick S. Weiser, eds. and transl., *Trinity Lutheran Church Records, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Vol. 1: 1730–1767* (Apollo, Pa.: Closson Press, 1989): 10, 14; Häberlein, *The Practice of Pluralism*, 70.

[33] Häberlein, "Transatlantische Beziehungen", 53–58.

[34] On the importance of these newspapers for the German-speaking immigrant community in Pennsylvania and neighbouring colonies, see Willi Paul Adams, "The Colonial German-language Press and the American Revolution", in *The Press and the American Revolution*, eds. Bernard Bailyn and John B. Hench (Worcester, Mass., 1980): 151–228; Donald F. Durnbaugh, "The Sauer Family: An American Printing Dynasty", in *Yearbook of German-American Studies* 23 (1988): 31–40; Roeber, *Palatines*, 175–196; Ralph Frasca, "'To Rescue the Germans Out of Sauer's Hands': Benjamin Franklin's German-Language Printing Partnerships", in *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 121 (1997): 329–350; Winfried B. Lerg, ed., *Deutschsprachige Kolonialpublizistik am Vorabend der Amerikanischen Revolution. Fünf Beiträge zur Funktion deutscher Drucker und ihrer Periodika* (Münster: LIT, 1999).

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