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Afro-German Diasporic Studies: A Proposal

In his 1937 assessment of *Research Possibilities in the German-American Field* Heinz Kloss recommended an interesting relationship for further study:¹

The Germans and the Negroes

In treating this subject, we must avoid any overlapping with research work on the German-Americans in the wars of the U.S. (Civil War) and on the German-Americans in American politics (slavery question).

Besides the German-American influence in abolitionism and the Civil War, there are many aspects requiring further examination.

The German-American attitude toward the Negro as a human being. Again and again it has been emphasized that the German-Americans did not like slavery. Perhaps it could be added that they did not like the Negro either. The reason why they had few slaves was partly their moral character, but they most likely did not want to have the Negro in their immediate neighborhood either. During the Civil War there was much resentment among the Pennsylvania Germans against abolition (cf. Hoover, *Enemies in the Rear*). But this is an opinion which I submit not for approval, but for critical discussion.

Negro missions were established in the South by several German-American church bodies, notably the Missouri synod. The writings of a number of authors of German descent deserve special treatment. Faust mentions F. L. Hoffman (born in Germany in 1865) as the author of one of the most authoritative books on the American negro (2:651-52). H. R. Helper (1829-1909) published, in 1857, an anti-slavery book *The Impending Crisis* which is said to have created a sensation far greater than *Uncle Tom's Cabin* produced (*Deutsche Allgemeine Biographie* 8, 517-8). In 1859 a fund was raised to print 100,000 copies of it for free distribution, but the same man wrote, after the Civil War, several books wherein he warned his countrymen against over-rating the Negro's mental abilities. To me he seems to have reacted in a typical Teutonic way (his grandfather Helfer had immigrated to North Carolina in 1752).

The economic competition between German-Americans and Negroes in the South; German-American cotton growers and their colored rivals.

Kloss's assessment of German-African interaction is surprisingly frank and lacking the

filopietism and ethnocentricity often found in accounts of the German encounter with Africans. The various themes which he identified are indeed a useful frame of reference to examine the intersection of ethnicity and race. Lacking in Kloss's model is reciprocity. What did the people of African descent think of Germans? Were their reactions as ambivalent as those of the Germans with whom they interacted? An answer can be found using a broader interpretative model that I term "Afro-German Diasporic Studies."

The term "Diaspora" or "diasporic" traditionally denotes the involuntary dispersal of Jews throughout the Mediterranean world following the destruction of the Temple. It connotes not only coerced displacement but also the vagaries of life in exile. For Jews, diasporic existence has meant both productive interactions with host cultures as well as discrimination, persecution, and genocide. The application of the term to the involuntary displacement of indigenous African populations is not meant to diminish or denigrate the Jewish experience. It is, rather, a useful interpretative framework that facilitates the analysis of the multi-faceted experiences of peoples of African descent beyond the shores of Africa.

"Afro-German," on the other hand, is a much more diffuse concept that in its complexity reflects the diversity of experiences in the African Diaspora. Although research on the African presence in Europe has steadily increased in volume over the years, research on Africans in Germany is of relatively recent vintage. Using archival records it is possible to date an African presence in German-speaking Europe from at least the sixteenth century. As exotic subjects these displaced Africans were not only part of the households of their masters but often entered into legal and extramarital liaisons that produced children. Evidence of such liaisons can be found in the records for Castle Ahrenburg, the residence of Carl Friedrich Schimmelmann near Hamburg, where individual slaves were trained for work on one of Schimmelmann's large plantations in the Virgin Islands.² Also the records of the Kassel garrison document the fate of African loyalists who were brought from the New World by the returning "Hessians."³ The offspring of these eighteenth-century liaisons might properly be termed "Afro-Germans."

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries created new complications in the term "Afro-German." German involvement in the colonization and exploitation of Africa after 1884 brought individuals from modern day Togo, Cameroon, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, and Namibia to the German Reich to be educated and/or trained for colonial duty. With the outbreak of World War I, a process was begun that ended in Germany's loss of its colonies but not its physical presence in Africa. Mpundo Akwa, son of King Akwa of Duala (Cameroon), was a voice of protest in Germany against atrocities and malfeasance in Africa before World War I. In an interview with a Berlin newspaper he referred to himself and his countrymen as "wir schwarze Deutsche" in an attempt to secure fair treatment and even equal rights for Africans under German rule.

During the early Weimar period, when the young republic found itself unable and also unwilling to meet the reparation demands of the victorious allies, North African and Senegalese troops were stationed in the Rhineland with the result that in excess of 400 children were born. These mixed heritage children were identified by the Weimar government as "Rhineland bastards" probably analogous to the "Rehoboth bastards" examined by Eugen Fischer in the infamous study of the mixed race population in

German Southwest Africa born as a result of the German occupation. When the Nazis came to power a program was designed that resulted in 1937 and 1938 in the forced sterilization of each of the children.⁴

Since World War II the number of mixed heritage Germans has grown almost exponentially. During the years in which allied troops occupied large sections of Germany, fraternization between the foreign troops and German women was unavoidable. The children were variously termed "Besatzungskinder" or "Mischlinge" by governmental agencies who were alarmed by the growth of this segment of the population. After 1960 with expanding educational, cultural, and economic ties with Africa, the number of mixed children continued to grow. In 1984 a group of young women who had gathered to hear the feminist scholar Audre Lorde analyze Afro-American and Women's literature spontaneously decided to call themselves "Afro-Germans." By so doing they initiated a movement which is still active in almost all major German cities promoting a cultural awareness program for "Schwarze Deutsche" or "Afro-Deutsche."⁵

Given the various groups of Germans of African or African-American descent in Germany and the individuals of German descent in Africa, the concept of "Afro-German" is quite complex. Adding to that complexity is German and African interaction in the New World. Using Kloss's categories for interaction augmented by an African perspective it is possible to construct a more differentiated perspective on Afro-German interaction in the New World, and specifically in Pennsylvania.

The general category of "attitude towards" as outlined by Kloss centered on the slavery question. A cherished truism for German-Americans is their ingrained opposition to slavery. The Germantown "Protest against African Slavery" (1688) is usually cited by German Americans and Quakers alike as proof of their early commitment to the cause of abolition. Elsewhere I have emphasized the economic motives that played a major role in German objections to slavery because of its potential for creating unfair economic competition. Generally overlooked is the fact that the protest was directed at the Quakers who controlled the flow of slaves into the colony and were the principal slaveholders in Southeastern Pennsylvania.

Furthermore, the Germantown "Protest" was never made public until the nineteenth century after Quakers had already moved into the vanguard of the abolition movement. As late as 1762, however, Quaker merchants were actively involved in expanding the slave trade as documented by an editorial by Christopher Saur II that warned Pennsylvania Germans not to get involved in the slave trade. Philadelphia merchants were reducing the costs of importing slaves by bringing them directly from Africa instead of sending them first to the West Indies for "seasoning." The motivation behind the Germantown "Protest" and Saur's editorial speaks directly to the ambivalence which Kloss discerned in Pennsylvania German attitudes towards Africans.

Saur was concerned that an influx of Africans into the colony would replicate the situation in the Carolinas where there was allegedly four slaves for every white person. That situation was so intolerable because the colonists were afraid to sleep at night for fear of slave revolts. Thus, Saur was concerned about slavery's impact on his community and not so much about its effect on the enslaved, a selfish but understandable motive.

Opposition to slavery does not necessarily translate into sympathy for its

vicitims. The Germantown "Protest" has traditionally been interpreted as a statement of humanitarian concern for the enslaved African's plight. Unexamined still is the extent to which Pennsylvania Germans shared in the common prejudices of the day against Africans. In the text of the "Protest" itself the signatories posed a statement that illustrates their awareness of racial prejudice and a conscious effort to overcome it. In protesting the enslavement of Africans the Germantowners noted:⁶

Now tho' they are black, we cannot conceive there is more liberty to have them slaves, as it is to have other white ones. There is a saying that we shall doe to all men, liche as we will be done our selves; macking no difference of what generation, descent, or Colour they are.

Another perspective on German ambivalence is found in the journals of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, the patriarch of the Lutheran Church in America. Upon his arrival in South Carolina Muhlenberg recorded his consternation over the refusal of slaveholders to educate their slaves and thus deny them access to the Scriptures.⁷ Muhlenberg was impressed with the depth of religious feeling which the Africans displayed but he has no comment on his son's (Rev. Peter Muhlenberg) and Rev. Caspar Stoever's use of slaves to clear land to build churches.⁸

Reading between the lines it seems likely that Muhlenberg's attitude towards slavery was that it was of the world and thus ordained by God. It was the peculiar lot of the African to be a servant (Ham's or more specifically Caanan's curse). As a consequence the African must have access to the means of salvation (via literacy) to prepare himself or the afterworld.

A similar attitude can be found among another German group, the Moravians or *Unitas fratrum*, in the eighteenth century. While initiating world-wide missions that converted indigenous populations in the Americas, Africa, and Asia the Moravians felt compelled to respond to criticism that their efforts were fomenting rebellion among the enslaved Africans. Contributing to the criticism was certainly the fact that other Christian sects resented the intrusion of Moravians in communities which they felt were their own domain. A special point of contention was the action of Matthes Freundlich, a Moravian missionary to the Virgin Islands who sought to gain respect among the enslaved Africans there by marrying Rebecca, a mulatto exhorter who worked in the Moravian community.

This marriage violated Danish law which in the Islands strictly forbade legalized miscegenation. Extra-marital miscegenation was not tabu. Both husband and wife were consequently condemned to death; only, to be rescued by Count Zinzendorf who was visiting the Virgin Islands and was able to convince the authorities to commute the death sentence into one of exile. On the return to Europe Matthes died and his widow was later married to Jakob Prottén, an Afro-European. Together the couple was then sent on a mission to Africa, to Jakob's home, today's Ghana.⁹

With that background and the obvious sectarian rivalry between the Moravians and other Christian groups who tacitly supported the institution of slavery, it is not surprising that the Moravians would answer the charge of spreading rebellion by stating that their work transformed the African into a better servant. Physical emancipation was not a stated goal of the work among the enslaved.¹⁰

Further evidence of Moravian ambivalence towards Africans is found in the

Moravian Diary, a protocol of the group meetings in which communal business was conducted. After discussing the proposition of replacing arrogant and insolent white employees with Africans purchased on St. Thomas who would then be wage earners in the settlement, the protocol notes that such an action would “[...] show Pennsylvania and a conscientious author, who in his writing has opposed slavekeeping how one could treat *even Negroes*” (emphasis mine).¹¹ The sarcasm in that remark reflects a generally pessimistic view of the African’s character:¹²

We would always simply deceive ourselves should we have dealings with such people with the laudable intention of converting them.

No one becomes converted in a state of servitude; such folk seek their own advantage and harbor false designs.

If one should wish to help people pay off their debts, one should do so out of pity and as an act of mercy, and then let them go their way again.

This pessimistic assessment had little or no impact on Moravian missions among the African populations of North and Central America.

Clearly, the attitude of German church groups towards Africans deserves in depth and case by case investigation. Despite the reservations expressed in the documents reviewed it is undeniable that Africans were congregants in many German churches where they were baptized, married, or received the last rites. Jerome Woods has also found evidence that African children attended church school. This proximity and interaction is especially evident in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania.¹³ African voices on the relationship to German religious communities are absent – if one excludes the *Lebensläufe*, curricula vitae, that detailed how the author found salvation.¹⁴ Afro-German relations in eighteenth century Pennsylvania and the other colonies is a much needed research project.

The nineteenth century brought momentous changes in racial relations. The growth of the African and especially free African population was the catalyst for numerous tensions with both the majority and ethnic communities. It was also the initial phase of a fruitful and also well documented interaction of Africans with Germans and Germany that extends into the twentieth century. African-American intellectuals such as James W. C. Pennington, Frederick Douglass, W. E. B. DuBois, Ernest Just, Carter G. Woodson, R. R. Wright, Jr., and Alaine Leroy Locke – to name just a few—felt an affinity to Germany and its culture. Pennington was given an honorary doctorate in theology from the University of Heidelberg, Douglass had his autobiography translated into German in effort to recruit the fourty-eighers to the abolition campaign, and DuBois, Woodson, Wright, and Locke pursued studies in Germany. The African-American affinity for German culture found expression in simple acts such as learning the language or immersion into German musical and theatre culture. The colleges established for the Freedmen after the Civil War did not neglect German culture.

DuBois who studied at Fiske University probably was exposed to German there before entering Harvard and then departing for two years study at Berlin University (today's Humboldt University). After completing his studies it is known that he taught German for a time at Wilberforce before creating his own field of study that combined elements of economics and sociology. Ira Aldridge, one of the greatest

African-American actors of the nineteenth century, played before full houses in Europe where he was received by kings, queens, dukes, and the czar. His theatrical career began in New York in the African Grove Theater where he apparently got his first experience in the role of Rollo in August von Kotzebue's *Pizarro*.¹⁵

African-American reception of German culture was not uncritical. Frederick Douglass, who had a special relationship to German culture because of his friendship to Otilie Assing,¹⁶ divided German-Americans into two distinct groups.¹⁷ The first group was comprised of the early immigrants who had arrived before the Revolutionary War and were conservative and not favorable to abolition, i.e., the Pennsylvania Germans as assessed by Kloss. The second group consisted of fugitives from the political upheavals in Europe after 1848. From among them Douglass hoped to recruit supporters for his anti-slavery crusade. Because of her familial connections Otilie Assing obviously belonged to the politically liberal forty-eighters such as Carl Schurz who contributed significantly to various American reform movements in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Afro-German relations are uncharted terrain in the Post-Civil War Era. After the end of slavery and the advent of the Industrial Revolution, the world of work changed radically for Americans. The creation of labor unions designed to articulate and agitate for more humane and just working conditions heightened the economic competition between racial and ethnic groups that had existed prior to 1860. Kloss does not mention one facet of that early competition: urban riots. Outbreaks of violence against African-Americans erupted frequently during the Antebellum Era. The perpetrators, but not always the instigators, were the Irish and Germans who sought through violence to eliminate what they perceived or were led to perceive was a threat to their economic well-being.¹⁸

With abolition and the start of the Great Migration that brought thousands of former plantation and tenant farming African-Americans to the urban centers of the North, new possibilities for negative and positive interaction with ethnic groups were created. Exclusion from labor unions and also violence were two strategies utilized to eliminate African-Americans as potential economic competitors. German-American participation in or resistance to these actions constitutes a valuable research project. The economic arena is, of course, not the only framework in which Afro-German relations can be studied.

The social sphere offers many opportunities for productive study. Although many German-Americans rejected slavery and African-Americans as well, some owned slaves, lived in close proximity to Blacks or even married an African-American man or woman. Slave holding was an important status symbol in Colonial America because it was an outward sign of affluence. Conscientious slaveholders such as Thomas Jefferson recognized the evils of slavery but were unable to manumit their slaves because it would have jeopardized the lifestyle they relished. Likewise, the presence of German slaveholders in a core area of early German settlement (South Central Pennsylvania and North Central Maryland) around 1800 was likely a sign of the owner's desire for assimilation into the dominant class.

In those same rural areas of Pennsylvania and Maryland African-Americans not only lived and worked in close proximity to Germans but also frequently adopted German cultural traits such as language and food. This proximity also occasionally resulted in tensions and conflicts. One can contrast the newspaper advertisement

in which an enslaved mother expressed the desire to find a new German master for herself and her child¹⁹ with the violence that erupted in the so-called "Negro Plot" in York, Pennsylvania, in 1803 or Lancaster County's "Manheim Tragedy" of 1858.

In York slaves and free Blacks allegedly set fire to property belonging to prominent German-American residents of the borough. Their reputed motive was revenge for the draconian punishment dealt to a servant who was found guilty of trying to poison her German employer and daughter. The acts of arson resulted not only in the capture and prosecution of the conspirators but also the imposition of a control system that forced all Blacks entering or leaving York to carry a pass.

The reaction to the Manheim Tragedy was even more severe. Two Black itinerant workers, Alexander Anderson and Henry Richards, had robbed and brutally murdered two German women in the Neffsville area of Lancaster County (Manheim Township). The German-American residents of the area were so incensed by the brutality of the crime and also the identity of the culprits that they petitioned the authorities for the right to burn the two culprits alive.²⁰ That being refused, it was asked that there be a public execution. Since such displays had been banned by the state years before, residents contented themselves with climbing trees, sitting on eaves, removing third-floor windows, and renting perches on a scaffold that was being used to build a structure near the site of execution, the county jail. Thus curiosity seekers were able to watch the spectacle over the prison walls.

The interesting aspect of this event is the action taken by the two convicted murderers. Following a long tradition, they allowed their confessions to be recorded and offered for sale to the public. The proceeds were to be given to their widows and children. The confessions were published in English and German. Not surprisingly we learn in the confession that the chief culprit, Alexander Anderson, could speak German—a skill that he had acquired living and working in close proximity with German-Americans. Tensions ran so high after the trial that no Black congregation was willing to accept the corpses of the accused. Indeed, after the execution a ruse was necessary to prevent onlookers from desecrating the bodies on their way to Potter's Field. This negative episode in Afro-German interaction needs further study.

A more positive aspect of Afro-German interaction began just before the Civil War and culminated in a remarkable event during Reconstruction. In August 1852 a German citizen named Richard Barthelmess, M.D. emigrated to Brooklyn, New York. There he joined Pythagoras Lodge No. 1 which had only recently switched affiliations from the Grand Lodge of New York (as Pythagoras Lodge No. 88) to the Grand Lodge of Hamburg, Germany. This transplanted German freemason was to play a significant role in Afro-German relations after the Civil War. His actions have remained controversial into the recent past as documented by biographical article published about him in 1970.²¹

Barthelmess's achievements are summarized by the author in the following manner:²²

The history of Richard Barthelmess, a devoted and talented German freemason, shows some problems and tendencies in Masonry that continue up to our present time. Fully recognized and accepted are his demands for a careful selection of candidates, for Masonic education and research, the

encouragement of Masonic libraries, a simplification of the ritual, and the increase of intellectual and cultural activities of the Brotherhood.

Masonry, the art of bringing men together on the same level, however, was probably insufficiently taught and practiced by him. Learning from his example all well-meaning brothers should ask themselves: How far may we go in criticizing fellow brothers, institutions or neighbors without disturbing irreparably the harmony of the whole, without making enemies and possibly attaining the opposite of our Masonic plan – brotherly love?

In the author's judgment, Barthelmess made significant contributions but he also was a source of disharmony. Granted that Barthelmess was relentless in his crusade to promote a more perfect form of masonry in the U.S. and in so doing he did not hesitate to chastise or excoriate the Masonic shortcomings of his contemporaries, but could there be more involved in this somewhat lukewarm assessment?

Two items in the article demand interpretation. In listing Barthelmess's Masonic affiliations, the author states that, among others, Barthelmess was an honorary member of the Grand Lodge of Hamburg and the Prince Hall Grand Lodge, Boston.²³ However, under the rubric "Recognition of Colored Masons" the author wrote:²⁴

Concerning the recognition of lodges of colored men, he [Barthelmess] agreed with his and other European Grand Lodges to accept regular members of 'just duly constituted' colored lodges as visitors but 'owing to the exposed position of Pythagoras Lodge and the low intellectual levels of Negroes in New York – they could not be admitted as members.'

This passage presents a paradox. How could Barthelmess become an honorary member of the preeminent African-American grand lodge (Boston) and yet think that African-Americans were incapable of membership in his lodge? Might not the truth behind Barthelmess' relations to the African lodges be a significant source of the disharmony that he allegedly generated?

After his arrival in New York, Barthelmess did the unthinkable. In December 1852, according to his own account, he visited Boyer Grand Lodge, the Prince Hall-affiliated grand lodge in New York City. Contact between African-American and white freemasons was strictly forbidden by the white grand lodges. As early as the 1790s the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania not only expressly banned such contacts but also threatened violators with expulsion. It is, however, a truism that that which is not done, does not have to be outlawed. The laws against miscegenation that existed in the U.S. up to the early 1960s were not enacted because the races were not mixing. They were and racial purists were alarmed. Likewise, unofficial Masonic contact across racial lines has probably always occurred. There are also isolated examples of integrated white lodges. Noted theologian Theodore S. Wright, the first Black graduate of Princeton's Theological Seminary was identified along with his father as a member of the Caucasian lodge in Schenectady, New York.²⁵

It is uncertain whether Barthelmess came to America with the express purpose of opening a dialogue with African-American lodges but he did so. From the 1850s in Brooklyn and then after his departure for Germany after the Civil War, he repeatedly wrote on the issue of the legitimacy of African-American freemasonry.

The articles appeared in the German-American newspaper *Triangel* as well as the preeminent German masonic newspaper *Bauhütte* edited by J. G. Findel, the noted masonic historian. Together the two men were instrumental in getting the German and many of the other European grand lodges to recognize Prince Hall freemasonry officially.²⁶

In gratitude for their efforts to promote the legitimacy of Prince Hall Freemasonry, Lewis Hayden, Grandmaster of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, made both Barthelmess and Findel honorary grandmasters. To date little or no research has been done on the consequences of this act or its background. How did the African-Americans communicate with their European brothers? Did they exchange visitors? How did the German-American freemasons in this country react to their homeland's stance on the race question? Finally, what factors led to the withdrawal of this recognition early in the twentieth century? Visitors to Bayreuth's *Freimaurermuseum* can view what remains of the gifts given to Barthelmess and Findel but the background of their relationship to African-American freemasonry is unknown to today's German freemasons.

A final area for the study of Afro-German relations in a specific Pennsylvania context is folk medicine. Powwowing is an integral part of the folklife of South Central Pennsylvania. The origins of the practice are shrouded in history but Don Yoder has suggested that the practice originated in the border area between Maryland and Pennsylvania where the healing traditions of Native Americans, Africans, and Europeans converge.²⁷ Relatively undocumented is the involvement of African-Americans in this Pennsylvania German healing tradition.

In at least two counties (Lancaster and Lebanon) we find African-American powowers. In Lancaster County Harriet Sweeney (ca. 1813-86) achieved a reputation that lived on in the memories of Conestoga Township's oldest residents. Her exploits occurred primarily after the Civil War. Prior to that date there is no evidence that she had any healing skills. Talking to residents one learns that she had cured area cattle from a curse placed on them by a nearby evil witch—possibly an African-American woman who lived there in Tucquan Hollow. Also she reportedly had cast a spell on her property that would immobilize trespassers that would only release them when they decided to retreat.

Acquisition of property and the philanthropic use of it were probably her greatest achievements from the period of her activity as a powwow doctor. She donated the property on which a refurbished A.M.E. Church was built and also rented several properties to African-Americans living in Conestoga (then known as Conestoga Centre). In that capacity she came into contact with the family of my mother. The powwowing tradition dictates that only a man can teach a woman or vice-versa. My mother's great uncle, Jacob B. Warner, son of John and Susan Seachrist Warner, two of the founders of the Conestoga A.M.E. Church in 1837, resided with Harriet Sweeney both in Conestoga and in Lancaster City. She not only taught him powwowing but also bequeathed to him in her will the traditional "a room and a bed" in her house. Warner later married Bathesheba Fisher and allegedly taught her the art also.

Perhaps another disciple of Harriet Sweeney was my grandfather, Edward H. Peaco (1867-1937). He married Jacob B. Warner's niece (Elnora Stumpf) in 1890 and rented a home that formerly belonged to Harriet Sweeney in Conestoga where his wife bore him thirteen children. Only eight lived to adulthood and in 1913 when

the thirteenth child, my mother (Mary Ella Peaco Hopkins) was just over a year of age, the entire Peaco clan moved into Lancaster City. Although my grandfather died five years before my birth, I recall my mother telling me how he could still bleed and how she placed his copy of Hohmann's *The Long Lost Friend* in his vest pocket when he was buried.

An interesting aspect of Harriet Sweeney's life is her conflict with the local medical establishment. In 1880 the Lancaster County Medical Association filed suit against her and a certain John Campbell, a "worm doctor," for practicing medicine without formal training or licensure. A true bill was not found against Harriet Sweeney but Campbell was brought to trial. His exoneration by the jury led local newspapers to crow with *Schadenfreude* that the Medical Association had gotten a case of worms—the Association had to assume court costs.

What was the source of Harriet Sweeney's powwowing skills? Living along the eastern bank of the Susquehanna River, what sort of interactions did she have? Native Americans had lived there and among the early settlers there were many Germans. What knowledge or skills did those groups share with her? How did African-Americans perceive her healing arts? These are just a few questions requiring further study. A similar situation can be found in Lebanon County.

In the Lebanon County Historical Society one finds the article "Stories of old Stumptown" in which two African-American residents of Fredericksburg (the modern designation for Stumptown) are introduced. The first is Billy Downey who is described as being in the service of Levi Bickel, a merchant near the east end of Stumptown and who "worked in John Light's tannery and made himself useful to farmers."²⁸ In "the service of" can perhaps be interpreted as an indication that Downey was an indentured servant as were many Black Pennsylvanians before 1830. In the 1840 federal census a "William Downey" was a resident of Swatara Township. It is unclear, however, whether he is the same William Downey recalled by the author in Stumptown. That Downey was known for his healing skills.

In explaining Downey's healing expertise, the author echoes superstitions about Africans that held wide currency during the Colonial Period:²⁹

As Sampson's strength lay in his long hair, so Billy's occult powers were supposed to be inherent in the blackness of his African complexion. There was no surer cure for the whooping cough than Bill Downey's kiss implanted full on the mouth of the little sufferer.

The belief that Africans because of their skin color were immune to fever and disease was a factor in the decision to seek the aid of Black Philadelphians in the Yellow Fever epidemic that swept that city in the 1790s. What other cures or treatments Downey mastered are not related but a humorous anecdote about his religiosity gives some insight into Afro-German relations in Lebanon County.

Downey's piety was characterized as being of "the emotional variety and he was very fond of making loud and long prayers of an evening in the religious gatherings of the time."³⁰ To underscore Downey's loquacity we find a semi-humorous confrontation between Downey and Adam Petry, a resident also known for being long-winded when praying. Downey was praying and seeing that his own chance for

public display was dwindling, Petry took his son by the hand and announced loudly: "Kom on, George, un lass der shwartz Downey die gans nacht blobbera."³¹

This anecdote raises questions about the interaction of Africans and Germans in Lebanon County. The church service alluded to was obviously interracial—but what extent? One can only speculate if Downey understood Petry's German but Africans and Germans clearly had some church services together. Also the Pennsylvania Dutch country, and beyond, is replete with anecdotal evidence of African-Americans who had acquired a more than passing proficiency in both German and Pennsylvania German. Assessing the extent to which African-Americans became proficient in German is a huge but not impossible task. It is only necessary to move beyond the mere anecdotal and collect biographical information on African-Americans who have interacted with Germans in areas as disparate as Pennsylvania, Maryland, Ohio, Canada, etc.

Another interesting figure from Lebanon County is Henry Dollum who is described as a self-made veterinary surgeon. In assessing Dollum's career the narrator displays a good deal of cant:³²

What he [Dollum] pretended to know of therapeutics and of the occult was quite considerable; and what with pow-wowning for equine ailments, "stilling the blood" in hemorrhages of wounded bovines, and prescribing "laud'num and sweet nitre" for all patients, irrespective of the nature of their condition, he, for some years had quite a practice as a horse and cattle doctor.

Dollum's skills may have been a matter of pretense but one cannot argue with customer satisfaction. If he had not delivered a service, then Dollum would most probably not have had any longevity in his chosen profession. More important, however, is how did he acquire those skills and what did his clients think of him, besides the fact that they obviously used him repeatedly?

This essay was not intended as an overview or a comprehensive list of what is a very complex and multi-faceted topic. Germans and Africans have and continue to interact in the New World, Africa, and Europe. While focusing primarily on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and addressing Afro-German interaction in a geographically restricted area, it is hoped that this essay will not only suggest topics but also encourage research into those topics. By moving beyond an analysis of German attitudes towards Africans in the context of slavery and abolition to the exploration of other social, economic, and cultural contexts in which Afro-German contact occurred, it is possible to gain new perspectives on the current interplay of ethnicity and race and perhaps develop better strategies for coexisting in an increasingly multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-racial world.

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Notes

¹ Heinz Kloss, *Research Possibilities in the German-American Field*, ed. with introduction and bibliography by LaVern J. Ripley (Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 1980), 222f.

² Cf. Christian Degn, *Die Schimmelmanns im Atlantischen Dreieckshandel: Gewinn und Gewissen* (Neumünster: Karl Wachholtz Verlag, 1984).

³ Cf. George Fenwick Jones, "The Black Hessians: Negroes Recruited by the Hessians in South Carolina and other Colonies," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* (October 1982): 287-302.

⁴ Cf. Rainer Pommerin, *Die Sterilisierung der Rheinlandbastarde: Das Schicksal einer farbigen Minderheit 1918-1937* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1979).

⁵ Cf. May Opitz, Katharaina Oguntoye, and Dagmar Schultz, eds., *Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out*, trans. Anne V. Adams (U. Massachusetts, 1992).

⁶ Louis M. Waddell, ed., *Unity from Diversity: Extracts from Selected Pennsylvania Colonial Document, 1681 to 1780, in Commemoration of the Tercentenary of the Commonwealth* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1982), 37.

⁷ Theodore G. Tappert and John W. Doberstein, trans., *Journals of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg in Three Volumes* (Philadelphia: Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania and Adjacent States and the Muhlenberg Press, 1942), 1:58.

⁸ Ibid., 2:362.

⁹ Cf. Jon F. Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Harvard U. Press, 2005).

¹⁰ Cf. open letter by Friderich van Watteville, "Declaration vor die Mährischen Brüder, die sich auf dieser Insul befinden...", in Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, *Ergänzungsbände zu den Hauptschriften*, vol. 8, *Büdingsche Sammlung*, 2:196-215.

¹¹ Kenneth G. Hamilton, trans., ed., *The Bethlehem Diary*, vol. 1, 1742-44 (Bethlehem: The Archives of the Moravian Church, 1971), 105f.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Cf. also my article "The Darker Brother: African and Pennsylvania German Interaction in Colonial Pennsylvania" in *U.S.A. Beiträge zur Landeskunde*, ed. Gerhard Bergmann, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg. Wissenschaftliche Beiträge 1991/12 (A 126) (Halle [Saale]), 1991), 80-100.

¹⁴ Katharine Faull Eze, "Self-Encounters: Two Eighteenth Century African Memoirs from Moravian Bethlehem," in *Crosscurrents: African-Americans, Africa, and Germany in the Modern World*, David McBride, Leroy Hopkins, and C. Aisha Blackshire-Belay, eds. (Camden House, 1998), 29-52.

¹⁵ Herbert Marshall and Mildred Stock, *Ira Aldridge: The Negro Tragedian*

(Southern Illinois University Press, Feffer & Simmons, Inc., and Arcturus Books, April 1968), 30.

¹⁶ See Maria Diedrich, *Love Across Color Lines: Otilie Assing & Frederick Douglass* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999).

¹⁷ See *Douglass' Monthly*, August 1859.

¹⁸ See *Men of Standing*.

¹⁹ in "Neue Partheyische Lancastersche Zeitung," November 26, 1788.

²⁰ H. A. Rockafield, ed., *Das Manheimer Trauerspiel: Das Leben und Verhör, Bekennniß und Hinrichtung Anderson und Richards, Gehängt zu Lancaster, PA, April 9, 1858* (Druckerei des Volkfreunds und Beobachters, 1858), 13.

²¹ Karl F. Hoffmann, "Richard Barthelmess, M.D., Freemason and Critic of Freemasonry," *Transactions: The American Lodge of Research. Free and Accepted Masons* 11, 2 (January 29, 1970 – December 28, 1970): 281-86.

²² Ibid., 286.

²³ Ibid., 283.

²⁴ Ibid., 286.

²⁵ Membership Roster of St. George's Lodge No. 6, F & AM at Schenectady, New York. Warranted September 14, 1774. 175th Anniversary (1774-1949). Membership Roster Committee. Listed are Richard P. G. Wright and Theodore S. Wright as members in 1844.

²⁶ Official recognition entailed appointing a representative at each grand lodge who would represent the interests of the other grand lodge, e.g., Justin Holland, an African-American freemason of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Ohio, represented the Grand Lodge of Hamburg. It is unclear whether these representatives visited the German grand lodge. Barthelmess hints at such visits in one of his articles.

²⁷ Don Yoder.

²⁸ Dr. E. Grumbine, "Stories from Stumptown," *Lebanon County Historical Society Publications* 5 (1910): 251.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 252.

³² Ibid.

