

July 5, 2014
Ash Reunion, Minnesota

As very little is being added to our Ash genealogy, I will concentrate on our immigrant ancestor Johan Henrich Esch, tracing his movements through southern Pennsylvania and get an impression of how events may have affected our ancestors. Most references to the Pennsylvanian Germans are from “The Pennsylvania German in the French and Indian War, a Historical Sketch” (1905) by Henry Melchior Muhlenberg Richards. (Mr. Richards is a descendant of a German Lutheran pastor Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, sent to North America as a missionary, requested by Pennsylvania colonists and founded the first Lutheran church body in North America.)

Most Germans came by way of Philadelphia. They were primarily Lutheran and Reformed church members. Many were Palatine province immigrants who fled to England and then to America.

Henrich arrived in Philadelphia October 21, **1754** and took the required oath of Allegiance. He may have served an indenture as he was serving with a printer in Germantown, Pennsylvania in April, 1755. Germantown was primarily made up of Mennonites, Quakers and Dunkards.

Henry was naturalized September 10, **1765** at All Hallows Parish (Church of England) in Anne Arundel County, Maryland (whose county seat is Annapolis.)

Later, in September **1774**, Henry is shown several times as a witness to baptisms in Salem Reformed Church in Hagerstown, Washington County, Pennsylvania.

He took the Patriot’s Oath of Fidelity and Support in Salem Reformed Church, Hagerstown, Washington County, MD in **1778** during the American Revolution.

He owned property along with his sons in Bedford, Pennsylvania at the time of his death in **1801**.

Once in America, Germans sought the quiet of the outer edge of a settlement, and having found a place where they might worship, unmolested in their own way, they were not going to be driven away.

In the French and Indian War, the early German settlers in Pennsylvania did not do

all the fighting, but they did most of it; of the homes destroyed, theirs were of a greater number. Lives were lost and others carried away into captivity. They treated the Indian with justice and they usually approached the Indian with Bible in hand, not a musket or a bottle of rum.

Before discussing the French and Indian War, I want to discuss the Indian population in America. Many people think the Indians were living happily until the white man encroached upon their lands. In fact, there were frequent wars, savagely fought, among the many tribes living in America.

The Indians probably originated in Siberia and made their way East across a land bridge and gradually made their way across the continent. The original people were called the Lenai Lenapi, later known as the Delawares. The Lenapi were originally a mighty nation of about 40 tribes. As they migrated East to the Mississippi, they ran into the Iroquois and Allequa (Allegheny) Indians. The Allequa were large and mighty and refused to let them settle around the Mississippi and massacred many of them. The Lenape and Iroquois joined forces and drove the Allequa out of the area after many years of war and devastation.

The Lenape eventually reached the Atlantic coast. The Shawnees settled around the Ohio River. There was war between the Mengwe and Lenape with plundering and slaughtering. Then there was war between Cherokees and the Delaware. The smaller tribes formed a union of Six Nations - Mohawk, Oneida, Onodagas, Cayuga, Seneca, and later the Tuscaroras.

Extension of white boundaries, through treaties, did impinge upon the Indians. The rum trade to Indians also caused dissension and Indian leaders wanted the sale of rum to Indians be prohibited.

Although William Penn treated Indians fairly, they were often cheated by traders and abused by settlers who took advantage of them. However, the Pennsylvania-German settlers on the border land were friends of the Indians, but when the War broke out, vengeance fell upon the heads of the Germans.

The French and Indian War (1756-1763)

During the late 1740s, William Trent, an Englishman engaged in the fur trade with Ohio Country Indians, and built a trading post at the headwaters of the Ohio River (modern-day Pittsburgh). Trent and the other English traders quickly prospered. They could easily trade with Ohio Country natives and others in northwestern Pennsylvania via the two rivers - the Allegheny and the Monongahela – that came together to form the Ohio River.

In the early 1750s, **the French** attempted to deny England access to the Ohio Country. France occupied Canada, Louisiana and the Mississippi River. England occupied the middle Atlantic Coast.

In 1754, a French military force captured Trent's outpost and began to construct Fort Duquesne. The French also captured several other English settlements in western Pennsylvania. France's seizure of land that the English and their colonists claimed would eventually lead to the French and Indian War (1756-1763).

The Shawnees and Delawares aligned with the French. The Mohawk tribe of the Six Nations aligned with the English. Indians were valuable to both sides as France and England could not provide sufficient troops to engage in the war. The French paid Indians a bounty for scalps.

Even as the French and Indian War ended, the following year an Ottawa Indian leader, Pontiac, led Pontiac's War, Pontiac's Conspiracy, or Pontiac's Rebellion. It was launched in 1763 by a loose confederation of elements of Native American tribes primarily from the Great Lakes region, the Illinois Country, and Ohio Country who were dissatisfied with British postwar policies in the Great Lakes region. Warriors from numerous tribes joined the uprising in an effort to drive British soldiers and settlers out of the region.

The war began in May 1763 when Native Americans, offended by the policies of British General Jeffrey Amherst, attacked a number of British forts and settlements. Amherst was rumored to have spread smallpox to Indians by giving them contaminated blankets. Eight forts were destroyed, and hundreds of colonists were killed or captured, with many more fleeing the region. It ended in a treaty in about 1765.

Stories of atrocities

In October of 1755, the Delawares along the Susquehanna killed or drove away all inhabitants of North Cumberland County. Twenty-five people, men, women and children were killed, scalped,

or carried away. Another 13 men and elderly women and one child was killed, and young women and children were carried away.

Roads were filled with fleeing persons. Stockades were built to provide refuge. Indians burned houses and destroyed crops. Indians took prisoners of children and young women, and killed very small children and adults. Prisoners were taken to provide slaves to the Indians, to be adopted by Indians who may have lost a child, and, if a girl was attractive, was made a bride of a Chief.

Another incident occurred where Indians took prisoners and scalped them. Three children lay scalped but left alive. A dead woman lay with a male child at her side, both killed and scalped. A live baby was found beneath the woman.

Another family, a man, wife and 8 children suffered also. The Indians shot the father and knocked the woman down. She then sat on a stump, nursing her baby. Indians struck a hatchet in her head and she fell with the baby under her. The Indians trod on her neck and tore off her scalp. The children ran - 4 were scalped but lived, and the other 4 escaped.

Another famous story involves the kidnaping of German Lutheran sisters Regina and Barbara Hartman (or perhaps Leininger) in February 1765 about 100 miles west of Philadelphia. While their mother and a brother were gone to a mill, Indians attacked their home and killed their father and a brother and took the two girls, aged 2 and 9, with them. They joined other children, the older children having to carry the smaller ones. Some children's feet were worn to the bones and tendons as they traveled over 400 miles. Their clothes were torn to shreds and they had no blankets to keep warm in the February and March weather. Children were given to squaws to serve as slaves or as adopted children. Regina and her sister were separated and Regina was given to a mean squaw who made her forage for food and take care of other children. She even had to help dry and stretch scalps.

She was captive for 9 years. Her religion sustained her and she sang her 2 favorite hymns "Jesus, Evermore I Love" and "Alone, Yet Not Alone Am I". She was among a large number of captives released at Fort Pitt after the defeat of the Indians. Families of lost children came to claim them, but as the children had grown older, spoke only the Indian language and behaved as Indians, many could not be identified. Regina was 18 and not recognized by her mother. She said her daughter frequently sang hymns, at which point Regina came forward and said the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and sang the hymns. The mother and daughter were thus reunited.

Ash captives. One list of captives included Ash names - In 1781, captured in Kentucky and living among the Indians were *Sylvester* Ash who later became a noted interpreter among the Wyandots; *Abraham* Ash, who later became a Shawnee interpreter. His signature is as a "sworn interpreter" on the Treaty at Vincennes in 1809 with the Delawares, Potawatimies, Miamis by William Henry Harrison; and *George* Ash, who had previously been captured by Shawnees in the spring of 1780 and then adopted. His brick home still exists in Vevay, Indiana. Also captured in March, 1781, was *Reuben* Ash whose age was 17 as given on the British prisoner list. These Ashes were thought to be of Welsh descent.