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Myths, Evidence and Logic

The True Story of Fort Germanna, New German Town and Spotswood's Second Colony Settlers

By Michael L. Oddenino

Owing to thin historical research on Germanna, myths arise to fill the gaps much as weeds fill an unattended garden. Weeds of historical inaccuracy abound in the garden of Germanna history. A thick patch of weeds is found in the myths of the Germanna settlers known as the Second Colony and where they first lived after arriving in Virginia as indentured servants working for Lt. Governor Alexander Spotswood. An oft repeated myth is that the Second Colony settlers lived inside Fort Germanna with the already present First Colony settlers. Weeds, so many weeds. This piece will clear the garden of those weeds and establish that the Second Colony settlers set up shop in New German Town in what is now Culpeper County, never having lived at Fort Germanna.

My experience as a lawyer teaches me that evidence is critical in accurately determining what happened in the past. Every court case is an exercise in teaching a judge or jury the history of the case. The stronger the evidence presented, the greater likelihood of a favorable outcome for the party able to marshal the most convincing evidence. This article examines the evidence which tells the story of where a certain group of German immigrants lived in colonial Virginia in the early 1700s. History often gets shrouded in myth with myth taking on the characteristics of how we, today, wish the events of the past might have happened. Evidence can shatter myths and allow us to embrace the truth.

What does the evidence reveal as to where the German immigrants known as the Second Colony of Germanna resided when they first put down stakes in colonial Virginia? Tradition says they lived initially in Fort Germanna joining the existing German population there known as the First Colony. Evidence demonstrates this tradition is myth, that the Second Colony never lived in Fort Germanna. Let's examine the evidence together.

Also See:

Who Were the Members of the First Germanna Colony?

By Suzanne Collins Matson, p. 11

The Voyage of the Ship Oliver, by Klaus Wust and John Blankenbaker, p. 22

Spotswood designated as “Germanna” the geographic area by the Rapidan River in what is today Orange County, Virginia on Route 3, midway between Culpeper and Fredericksburg, reflecting both the German immigrants he placed there and the British Queen, Anne, who reigned in England when the First Colony arrived in Virginia. Queen Anne died a few months after the Germans arrived in Virginia, though Anne’s name lives on in various forms yet today, for example, Germanna and the Rapidan (think Rapid Anne) River.



Queen Anne with the order of Saint George, 1702, by Edmund Lilly (1680-1716). She reigned between 1702 and 1714. Her husband, Prince Christian of Denmark, was Lutheran, and she was succeeded by George I, of Hanover, who descended from Elizabeth Stuart, daughter of James I.

How did it come to be that Alexander Spotswood placed these early German immigrants at Germanna? Spotswood viewed his position as Lt. Governor of the British Colony of Virginia¹ as his opportunity for riches and prestige. Spotswood told his cousin, John Spotswood, that restoration of the family name to a high position was important to him. His cousin encouraged Spotswood in that effort.² When presented with the unexpected “gift” of thirty-three German immigrants in 1714,³ now known as the Germanna First Colony, Spotswood saw the opportunity to push the frontier of his colony without risking much in British resources.

The exact number of First Colony settlers is debated, though the strength of the evidence is that the reliable number is thirty-three based on documentary evidence.⁴ Confusion as to the actual number arises from a reference by Christoph von Graffenried about approximately forty Germans in London waiting to be transported. Graffenried was a Swiss adventurer who attempted to make his fortune in the New World with his partners Frantz Ludwig Michel, John Lawson, Johann Rudolf Ochs and others in a business transporting Swiss and German emigrants to the British-American colonies.⁵

Colonel Blakiston, the agent for Virginia in London, wrote Spotswood at least three times about the Germans who were in London prepared to travel to Virginia. The letter advising Spotswood of their impending arrival was received by Spotswood in March 1713/1714. Spotswood THEN advised the Executive Council of Virginia on April 28, 1714 that the Germans he was told about had arrived in Virginia:

“The Governor acquainting the Council that sundry Germans to the number of forty two men women & children who were invited hither by the Baron de Graffenried are now arrived....”⁶

No actual record confirms that the number of Germans in London all left for Virginia or made it to Virginia. The number forty-two referred to by Spotswood is the approximate number Spotswood was told would be coming and likely the number for which he paid part of their passage. No evidence exists that Spotswood met and counted these new arrivals to his colony.

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- ¹ Spotswood served as Lt. Governor of Virginia in which role he actually lived in Virginia and performed executive duties. The Royal Governor of Virginia during Spotswood’s service as Lt. Governor was George Douglas-Hamilton, 1st Earl of Orkney, who never came to Virginia. The position of Royal Governor was essentially a sinecure while the heavy lifting of the job was performed by the Lt. Governor.
 - ² John Spotswood, *Letter to Alexander Spotswood, 1705 January 30*, MS48.02: Alexander Spotswood Papers, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA (<http://research.history.org>): accessed 20 January 2006.
 - ³ Suzanne Collins Matson, “Achtung! Hier Kommen die Deutschen! Who Were the Members of the First Germanna Colony?,” *Germanna First Colony* (<http://germannafirstcolony.org> : accessed 1 August 2012).
 - ⁴ *Ibid.*
 - ⁵ Lawson arrived with one group in North Carolina 1709 and Graffenried arrived in 1710 with a second group of Swiss settlers. See, Andreas Mielke and Sandra Yelton, Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage, *Michel’s Mysterious Mines*, Volume 34, Number 2 April 2011.
 - ⁶ H.R. McIlwaine, ed., *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia*, Volume III, (May 1, 1705-October 23, 1721) (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1928, repr. 1976), 371-372.

What is often overlooked is that some individuals often decided not to make the arduous 18th century transatlantic crossing or they never survived the journey. Documentary evidence is irrefutable as to thirty-three First Colony settlers who arrived in Virginia in 1714. While it is possible that there were more than thirty-three members of the First Colony, certainly there were no more than forty-two, however. A larger number of First Colony settlers at Germanna only serves to strengthen the case that the Second Colony settlers never lived in the already cramped quarters known as Fort Germanna, as we shall see.

Spotswood turned his considerable energy towards profiting from these German immigrants. Rumors of silver mines danced in Spotswood's ears as recounted by Christoph von Graffenried whom Spotswood met in Williamsburg. He dreamed of exploiting silver mines he believed to be in the region now known as Germanna.

Graffenried's North Carolina venture proved a financial disaster, though he counted his blessings after narrowly escaping death when captured and later released by the Tuscarora Indians.⁷ Spotswood not only became captivated with dreams of silver, but also by stories of Indian horrors on the frontier. The First Colony German immigrants could provide a frontier barrier to the Indians, could extend the settled part of his colony, and they could help him exploit this silver opportunity. Only one problem – there were no silver mines.

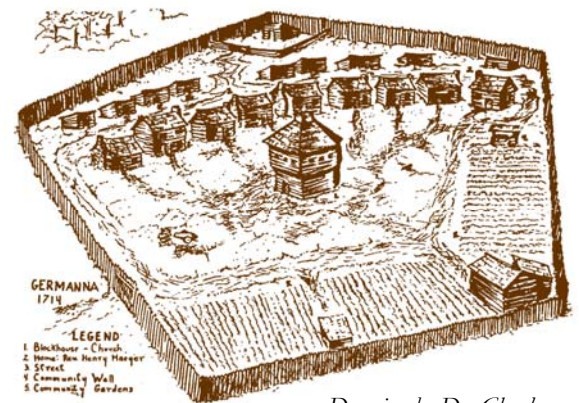
The First Colony immigrants were the first group of settlers in the general region of Germanna and Spotswood can claim credit for establishing the first organized community in the area. Spotswood took efforts to insure the relative safety of his investment in the Germans by causing a fort to be built for them, which we now call Fort Germanna.

The First Colony and Fort Germanna

Fort Germanna unquestionably served as the home for these First Colony German immigrants. The pentagon structure of Fort Germanna was an early example of establishing a pentagon in Virginia for defensive purposes, something the United States government has done successfully in modern times. Fort Germanna allowed Spotswood's new constituents to enjoy a modicum of safety, addressing concerns about possible Indian attacks on the then frontier.

Spotswood secured funds for the fort's construction and for cannon and ammunition from the Governor's Council, which, during Spotswood's time, served as a type of upper House of the General Assembly of Virginia. The Council advised the Lt. Governor on all executive matters while also constituting the General Court. The Council members were usually Crown appointees serving lifetime tenures. A seat on the Council could be obtained based on recommendations from Spotswood, Lord Orkney, and even Micajah Perry, an influential and wealthy merchant.

The council was not known easily to allocate funds. Its approval of funds to build Fort Germanna suggests that Spotswood's vision for an expanding colony was shared by others of high rank in colonial Virginia. It does not follow, though, that the Council would have spent more on a fort than was absolutely necessary. The larger the structure the greater the cost, so it logically follows that the size of the structure was based on the known number of the German immigrants which Spotswood knew prior to having the fort constructed. Neither Spotswood nor the Council would be spending more than was necessary. Fort Germanna's size reflected the number of German immigrants in the First Colony – likely thirty-three but no more than forty-two.

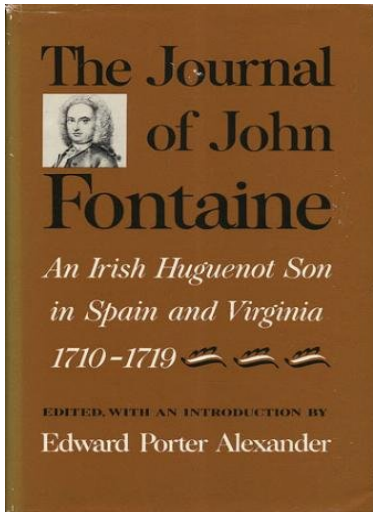


Drawing by Dr. Charles Herbert Huffman, based on John Fontaine's account of his visit to Fort Germanna.

⁷ Vincent H. Todd, ed., and Julius Goebel, translator, *Christoph von Graffenried's Account of the Founding of New Bern, Edited With An Historical Introduction and An English Translation* (Raleigh, NC: The North Carolina Historical Commission, Edwards & Broughton Printing Co., State Printers, 1920); (<http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/graffenried/graffenried.html>). This work is the property of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. It may be used freely by individuals for research, teaching and personal use as long as this statement of availability is included in the text.

What evidence is there of the physical layout of Fort Germanna? An early visitor to Fort Germanna on November 21, 1715, John Fontaine, reported in his diary about the conditions there:

“... There is but nine families and they have nine houses built all in a line, and before every house about 20 feet from the house they have small sheds built for their hogs and hens, so that the hog stys and houses make a street. This place that is paled in is a pentagon, very regularly laid out with five sides, and in the very centre there is a blockhouse made with five sides which answers to the five sides of pales or great inclosure. There is loop holes through it, from which you may see all the inside of the inclosure. This was intended for a retreat for the people in case they were not able to defend the pallisades if attacked by the Indians. . . . The Germans live very miserably. . . .”⁸



Fontaine gives us a window to peer back in time to see inside the walls of Fort Germanna in 1715 and appreciate that these were not luxurious nor were they spacious accommodations for the thirty-three Germans. No other group was sent by Spotswood to live in the fort or the area during 1714-1718; no records indicate Spotswood contemplated sending anyone else to the fort when it was constructed. The fort was built for the thirty-three First Colony settlers and no one else. It is logical to conclude the First Colony residents were using every bit of space inside the fort during the years 1714-1718, as they were also known to be clearing land for use outside the fort and experiencing addition by childbirth. There exists not a shred of evidence that Fort Germanna was anything more than a structure to provide shelter and protection from possible Indian attack.

Another key piece of evidence is that Fontaine, in 1715, refers to Fort Germanna as “German Town.” This reference to the original Germanna area as “German Town” in 1715 is significant as it occurs prior to the First Colony settlers relocating to what is now Fauquier County, Virginia and establishing the Germantown of Fauquier County in 1718/19.

These First Colony Germans were from Nassau-Siegen and worked approximately four years for Spotswood as part of an indenture related to Spotswood covering some costs of the Germans’ passage. The religion they practiced was German Reformed, not Lutheran. Religious practices at the time carried great weight in personal and social interactions. Before this First Colony group departed Fort Germanna in early 1719 (relocating to what is now Fauquier County, Virginia) they witnessed the arrival of a new group of German immigrants to their area, whom we know as the Second Colony, who were practicing Lutherans. This religious difference is another piece of evidence shedding light on the interactions between the First Colony and the Second Colony; further explored below.

The Second Colony

The German immigrants comprising the Second Colony were approximately double the number of the First Colony group. Emigrating from Wuerttemberg, Baden, and the Palatinate area of Germany, they first went to London and arranged with Captain Tarbett, of the ship *Scott*, to be taken to Pennsylvania to join the German population there. Tarbett ignored the agreement and instead took the Germans to Virginia where Tarbett arranged for Spotswood to pay their passage and the Second Colony became indentured to Spotswood.

Not just because he already established a German community at Germanna, but also because Spotswood harbored ambitions of owning land in and developing the Germanna area, he determined to place his new batch of Germans in the Germanna area. We cannot give the exact number of individuals who arrived in 1717/18 as the Second Colony, but we can come close. Records reflect that not all individuals on the Gemmingen departure list (the official record in Germany of the individuals who left Germany with connections to the Second Colony group) left for Virginia.

John Blankenbaker, Germanna historian, estimates the number of Second Colony arrivals to be in the neighborhood of 80. More sleuthing is required to fix a precise number to the Second Col-

⁸ Edward Porter Alexander, ed., *The Journal of John Fontaine, An Irish Huguenot Son in Spain and Virginia 1710-1719* (Williamsburg, VA: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1972): 88.

ony arrivals in 1717/18, but it was a much larger group than the First Colony. So, what can we conclude about where Spotswood placed his new arrivals? The evidence is unmistakable.

The Second Colony And Fort Germanna

What does the evidence tell us about where the Second Colony arrivals lived? Did they join the First Colony and live inside Fort Germanna? The evidence and logic combine to pronounce a resounding “no” as to the Second Colony ever living inside Fort Germanna. The Second Colony arrivals did not live inside Fort Germanna. Myths to the contrary notwithstanding, in this article we are relying on the available evidence and sound logic. If someone has other evidence, we will be happy to consider it in reevaluating the views expressed herein.

What is the evidence? What is the logic? Does it even seem plausible that a new group of arrivals, twice or more larger than the First Colony residents of Fort Germanna, would have found it appealing to make their living space inside the Fort? Does it seem plausible that the First Colony residents would have felt compelled or even capable of accommodating such a large group to live inside the walls of the fort where they had lived for several years?

Spotswood had known of the Indian troubles that Graffenried earlier experienced in North Carolina and was thus inspired to build a defensive fort for his new German immigrants on the then frontier of Virginia. However, since 1714 when the First Colony took up residence at Fort Germanna, there are no reports whatsoever that the Germans had experienced hostilities with the local Indians who proved peaceable. By 1717/18 the area around Germanna must have been considered safe from Indian attack. There were English settlers in the general area not living inside a fort and Spotswood himself planned to build the Enchanted Castle without a palisade. There was no need to live inside a fort in the Germanna area by 1717/18, even if reason existed in 1714.

Although the Second Colony spoke German like the First Colony, Germany did not exist as a country at that time. The Second Colony settlers were from a different region and, significantly, their religion was Lutheran, not the German Reformed of the First Colony settlers. The Palatinate regions of present day Germany was under the control of the Bavarian royalty; the Nassau-Siegen area was under the control of the House of Nassau of the Netherlands. The two groups would not have seen themselves as being from the same country as we might today. The religious and geographic differences illustrate that speaking the same language does not allow us to assume the First Colony and Second Colony were naturally so compatible as to be living practically on top of one another —as would have been the case if both groups were living in Fort Germanna.

The religious differences of the First Colony German Reformed group and the Second Colony Lutheran group cannot be ignored because of our present disregard for such differences. Religious attitudes were strong in 1717/18 and one’s religious beliefs served to greatly influence geographic and social actions.⁹ With an understanding of the sharp contrasts and strong feelings of those of different religious beliefs, which might seem trivial to us, we conclude that speaking the same language and being from the same country is not enough for us to assume that the First Colony and Second Colony groups would enthusiastically embrace each other.

Space considerations, religion, numbers and logic all point to the Second Colony living someplace other than in Fort Germanna. Where then? The answer is logically deduced from the evidence.

New German Town - The True Location of Second Colony Settlement

The Second Colony of German settlers brought to the Germanna area by Spotswood arrived in 1717/18, not at Fort Germanna, but at “*New German Town*,” becoming the first settlers in what is now Culpeper County. An early reference to New German Town can read at p. 105, W.A. Crozier, Virginia County Records, Spotsylvania County 1721-1800:

"December 17, 1728. The Honorable Alexander Spotswood, Esqr., by John Grame, Gentl., his attorney, to Thomas Byrn and Martha, his wife, for certain considerations of tobacco each

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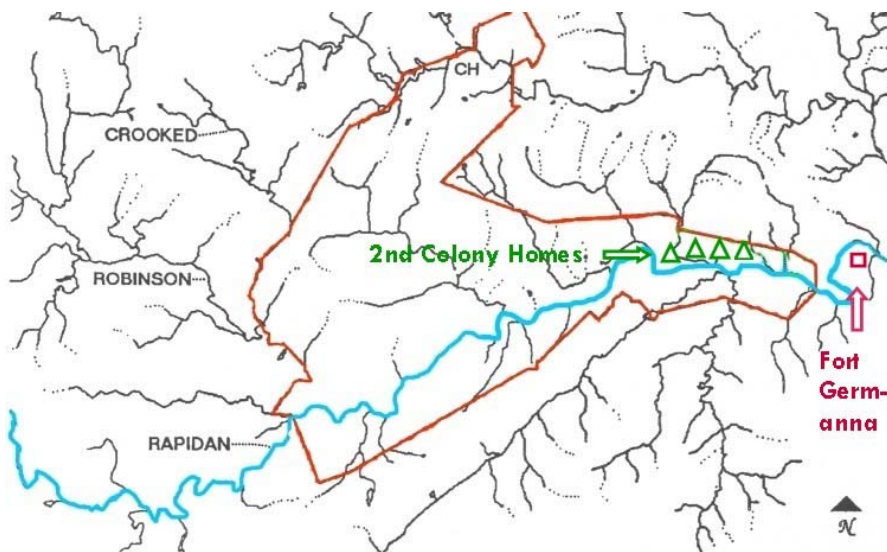
⁹ Suzanne Collins Matson, “German Reformed or Lutheran? It Did Really Matter,” *Germanna Research Group Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 1, April 2012.

year, etc., a lease for two adjoining plantations in the fork of the Rappa. River in St. Geo. Par., Spts. Co. -- part of that land known as **New German Town**, Nos. 18 and 19, with 200 acres adjoining the sd. plantations. Witnesses: Henry Collins, Elliott Benger, Robt. Macculloch. Rec. Feby. 4, 1728/9." (*Emphasis added*). See also: John V. Blankenbaker, "Where Did the Colony of 1717 First Settle?," *Beyond Germanna*, CDRom, Version C, Volume 2, No. 6, 115.

References in the record to New German Town, as discussed herein, logically distinguish it from Germanna which was the earlier German settlement in Virginia. This is not to be confused with the Germantown later established by the First Colony settlers in what is now Fauquier County, Virginia after they departed Germanna. When the First Colony settlers established Germantown, it was in Stafford County. In 1731 that area became part of the newly formed Prince William County formed out of Stafford County. Fauquier County did not exist until 1759 when it was formed from Prince William County.

New German Town was originally in Essex County, though by the time the Second Colony left for the Robinson River Valley in present day Madison County, Virginia, the area of New German Town was then part of Spotsylvania County and today it falls within Culpeper County. Though it is near Germanna, it is most definitely not at Germanna and certainly not the site of Fort Germanna.

As to exactly where the Second Colony's New German Town settlement was located, John Blankenbaker discovered clues in the words of Alexander Spotswood and Spotswood's land transactions which establish that Spotswood owned the land in what was then called *New German Town* in the Great Fork, a few miles to the west of Fort Germanna.¹⁰ The Great Fork is defined as the land between the Rapidan and the Rappahannock Rivers which includes the modern counties of Culpeper, Madison, and Rappahannock. The location of New German Town (the actual first place of the Second Colony settlement in 1717/18) is the land area described by John Blankenbaker as follows:



Map showing Rapidan River and location of Fort Germanna and Second Colony homes drawn by John Blankenbaker.

"As one drives west from the Germanna area along Virginia Route 3 (the Germanna Highway) the Rapidan River comes up immediately. From here, Field's Run, formerly Fleshman's Run, is about 1.6 miles farther to the northwest. One mile south, German Run enters Field's Run. German Run flows from the north by northwest and its headwaters originate almost exactly at Route 3 at a point about 1.0 mi. northwest of Field's Run. Within this triangle of 1.0 mi. by 1.0 mi. by 1.8 mi., containing

about one square mile of land, is my estimate of New German Town. The odds favor the town being adjacent to Route 3 which follows, probably, a course close to the original road. The original road surely passed close to New German Town as the settlement would have been the original motivation for extending the road from Germanna."¹¹

¹⁰ John V. Blankenbaker, "Where Did the Colony of 1717 First Settle?" *Beyond Germanna*, Vol. 2, No. 6 (1990)

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Subsequently, John Blankenbaker revised this calculation commenting, “My first estimate of the size of New German Town was wrong since I was misled by Spotswood's statement that the Germans were *closely settled*. The illustration in the article on page 562 [of *Beyond Germanna*] shows that New German Town stretched several miles up the Rapidan. The Germans were about one-half mile apart, apparently in two rows, one near the river and one inland.”¹²

New German Town, and not Fort Germanna, was the original Virginia home for the Second Colony.

The designation New German Town referenced the Second Colony settlement area in present day Culpeper County but this should not mislead the reader into thinking of a “town” in the sense we think



Present day Rapidan River. Photo by Michael L. Oddenino.

of it today. New German Town was the collection of the Second Colony German families living near one another rather than a more formalized town image we have today. As the first settlers in the area we recognize as Culpeper County today, the Second Colony settlement represented more of a town than previously existed in the region except for Fort Germanna where the First Colony resided. It is logical that the Second Colony residential area was called New German Town. And more evidence compels the same conclusion.

Colonial Virginia law exempted from parish levies (taxes) the German settlers at Germanna and any other German Protestants settling within five miles of Germanna. The Second Colony settlers were indentured to Spotswood which means Spotswood would be responsible for those parish levies. The New German Town area (now part of Culpeper County) falls within the tax exempt area, meaning Spotswood did not have to pay taxes for the Second Colony settlers residing in the Great Fork area.

Understanding Spotswood's desire to expand his holdings coupled with his ownership interest in the Fort Germanna site and the New German Town site, he had every motivation to locate the Second Colony at the New German Town site wholly apart from the practical difficulties of attempting to crush such a large number of new immigrants into an old, fully inhabited fort. Spotswood's ambitions and financial interests propelled the creation of a new site for the Second Colony which dovetailed with his interest in occupying the Fort Germana site himself.

Spotswood and The Enchanted Castle at Fort Germanna

Archeologist Kerri Barile has done extensive work at the Fort Germanna site, which became the homestead of Spotswood almost immediately after the First Colony settlers moved to Fauquier County. Spotswood built his famous “Enchanted Castle”¹³ home on the vacated Fort Germanna site. Kerri Barile asserts it was impossible for the Second Colony settlers to be living at Fort Germanna owing to the timing of constructing Spotswood's Enchanted Castle. The Second Colony settlers had not yet relocated to the Robinson River Valley when Spotswood started building his

¹² Email correspondence from John Blankenbaker to Michael L. Oddenino, August 3, 2012.

¹³ William Byrd II, in his journals, described Spotswood's home at Germanna after visiting it in 1732 as the “Enchanted Castle” though that name was never used by Spotswood himself.

Enchanted Castle on the site of the old Fort Germanna, likely torn down by Spotswood as part of the Enchanted Castle project.

Is it logical to think Spotswood is building the Enchanted Castle while the relatively large Second Colony group is living on top of his project? No. Spotswood continued to enjoy the fruits of his indenture agreement with the Second Colony settlers who were a short distance away at the Great Fork site.

Kerri Barile opines that Second Colony settlers may have helped build the Enchanted Castle due to the very different building techniques she observed as compared to other construction at that time in Virginia. It is logical that Spotswood directed some Second Colony settlers, still under indenture to him, to come from the Great Fork to work on constructing the Enchanted Castle at Germanna.

Kerri Barile estimates that Spotswood commenced construction of his Enchanted Castle in 1718/1719 when the First Colony settlers removed to present day Fauquier County. Evidence establishes Spotswood as living at Germanna at least by 1723 when a lease states: *Honorable Alexander Spotswood of Germanna*.¹⁴ According to Barile, the Enchanted Castle was larger than “Corotoman,” the home built later by Robert “King” Carter, the richest man in Virginia at that time. The house and the four outbuildings represented a huge construction project and one that would consume the entire tract of land on which Fort Germanna had rested. It is logical that the Second Colony provided at least a part of the labor force to build it, and they wouldn’t be living on that site if they were building a home for Spotswood on the same site. Logically, though, the Second Colony lived near Germanna, at New German Town, not at Germanna.

Spotswood’s Lawsuits

Further evidence that the Second Colony settlers did not live at Fort Germanna is found in the records of the lawsuits that Spotswood famously brought against some Second Colony settlers. From the Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia at a Council meeting held in Williamsburg on April 23, 1724 the following record exists:

On reading at this Board a Petition of Zeriechias Flishman [Zacharias Fleshman], and George Ouds [Utz] in behalf of themselves and fourteen other high-Germans, now residing in Spotsylvania County *near Germanna* complaining that Col. Spotswood hath unjustly sued them in the Court of the said County, for nonperformance of a certain Agreement pretended to be made by them in Consideration, . . .¹⁵ (Emphasis added)

The key language is “**near** Germanna.” It does not say “at Germanna” and this piece of evidence strengthens the case that the Second Colony was living in the Great Fork region. By 1724 the Second Colony was not living at the fort. Not a shred of documentary evidence exists indicating the Second Colony ever lived at Fort Germanna.

Romance and Myth Yield To The Truth

Romantic notions of two disparate groups coming from a foreign land only to find themselves sharing quarters on the frontier of colonial Virginia is a tempting story to embrace and perpetuate. The desire to mold history into a shape we find pleasing often collides with the truth. First Colony settlers and Second Colony settlers happily living together inside the safe walls of Fort Germanna, overcoming together the challenges of the New World frontier, seduces us into idyllic imaginings of a noble combination of forces. It just never happened that way. Evidence and logic combine to compel the conclusion that Fort Germanna was never the residence of the Second Colony settlers.

The Second Colony settlers, under indenture to Alexander Spotswood, were placed by Spotswood on land in the Great Fork owned by Spotswood and which is near Germanna but not at

The Second Colony settlers, under indenture to Alexander Spotswood, were placed by Spotswood on land in the Great Fork owned by Spotswood and which is near Germanna but not at Germanna.

¹⁴ Spotsylvania County, Virginia, Deed Book A: 91, Ann Barrow, widow of Edward Barrow, to Honorable Alexander Spotswood, lease, 3 September 1723; Office of the Clerk of Circuit Court, Spotsylvania.

¹⁵ H. R. McIlwaine, ed., *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia*, Volume IV (October 25, 1721-October 28, 1739) (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1930, repr. 1978), 64-65.

Germanna. Undoubtedly there were interactions between the First Colony and Second Colony settlers, but they did not live together in Fort Germanna. Unshackling ourselves from the chains of myth and romance will allow us to uncover more real truths of history.

Let's review the evidence:

- ◆ Spotswood built Fort Germanna at the Germanna site in present day Orange County, Virginia for the Germans who arrived in Virginia in 1714.
- ◆ Spotswood and the colonial Virginia Executive Council were frugal and would logically build a fort designed for the number of Germans, and not any larger.
- ◆ There are only documents establishing thirty-three Germans in the 1714 First Colony, even though Spotswood refers to there being forty-two Germans in London. Evidence of over thirty-three Germans would suggest even more crowded quarters in Fort Germanna.
- ◆ Spotswood built the fort for the Germans in 1714 because of a concern about Indians driven by known stories of what the Indians did to Graffenried and others in North Carolina a short while before the 1714 arrival of the First Colony Germans.
- ◆ The First Colony Germans experienced no difficulties with the local Indians in the Germanna area and there is no evidence of any Indian difficulty in the Germanna area between 1714 and 1717/18.
- ◆ It is the normal tendency of human beings to expand holdings to fill available space. The First Colony Germans were human beings. It is logical to assert all available space in Fort Germanna was being utilized by the First Colony residents by 1717/18.
- ◆ John Fontaine's diary of 1715 reflecting his personal observations of inside Fort Germanna revealed a miserable living condition for the First Colony residents.
- ◆ John Fontaine refers to Fort Germanna as German Town in 1715.
- ◆ The Second Colony Germans arrived in 1717/18 and were double in number of the First Colony Germans living at Fort Germanna.
- ◆ It is preposterous to suggest that the Second Colony Germans would pile into an already crowded Fort Germanna in 1717/18 and there is not a shred of evidence that suggests that the Second Colony Germans ever lived inside Fort Germanna. Not a single letter, not a single reference, not a single scintilla of evidence.
- ◆ When the Second Colony Germans arrived in 1717/18 there was no serious threat of Indian attack and no need to live inside a fort, much less a fort already a miserable living condition filled to capacity by the First Colony Germans.
- ◆ The First Colony Germans and the Second Colony Germans were from different regions in Germany and the two groups practiced different religions, Reformed and Lutheran respectively, which was a much more significant difference in those days than it is today.
- ◆ Spotswood harbored ambitions to own lots of land in and around Germanna and it suited his plans to have the Second Colony Germans living in an area that would enhance the value of his land and to have the Second Colony Germans available for rendering service under their indenture to Spotswood.
- ◆ There is historical reference to the area where the Second Colony lives as being "near Germanna" not at Germanna. Why would the reference be to "near Germanna" if they were living at Fort Germanna. It is only logical that the Second Colony was not at Fort Germanna but "near Germanna."
- ◆ There is historical reference to the Second Colony Germans as living at *New* German Town. Why would the area the Second Colony lived at be called New German Town if they were living in Fort Germanna? *New* German Town distinguishes it from the original German Town as described by John Fontaine in 1715.
- ◆ It is logical that *New* German Town, in the geographical area on the Rapidan River, as described by John Blankenbaker, is the area "near Germanna" in present day Culpeper County, Virginia.
- ◆ Archeologist Kerri Barile determined that construction on Spotswood's Enchanted Castle home began in 1718/19 when the First Colony Germans departed Fort Germanna for present day Fauquier County. Archeology suggests the Enchanted Castle was built in the same area as the old Fort Germanna. It is not logical to think the Second Colony Germans were living in Fort



Wildlife over the Rapidan. Photo by Michael L. Oddenino.

Germanna only to be uprooted by Spotswood. And there is not a single shred of evidence indicating the Second Colony Germans ever moved from one location to another until they relocated to the Robinson River Valley in 1725 in present day Madison County .

Myths and traditions must give way to the compelling weight of evidence.

The overwhelming weight of the evidence establishes that the Second Colony Germans resided in New German Town, and never lived at Fort Germanna.

I rest my case.

Copyright Michael Oddenino.

The author acknowledges the invaluable input received from John Blankenbaker and Suzanne Collins Matson in the drafting of this article. Michael L. Oddenino is a practicing lawyer in Los Angeles, California, an avid history buff and a Germanna descendant.

(Comments and questions about this article are welcome on the Germanna Research Group message board at this link: <http://germannacolony.org/messageboard> GRG members may post comments and questions. Membership is free, just sign up at this link: http://germannacolony.org/contact_us)

Who Were the Members of the First Germanna Colony?

By Suzanne Collins Matson

One of Alexander Spotswood's accomplishments as Lt. Governor of colonial Virginia was pushing the settled boundaries of his colony farther west. A group of German immigrants were placed by Spotswood in an area he called Germanna in honor of his Queen Anne and the Germans he intended to place in that frontier region. The Germanna area is now part of Orange County, Virginia, with few people today recognizing the role played by Spotswood or the Germans in first settling the area. Who were these early settlers on the Virginia frontier? How did Spotswood accomplish this frontier expansion? What can be learned from this colonial experience?

The German immigrants who arrived in Virginia in April 1714 came to be known as the First Colony¹ of Germanna as Spotswood directed a second group of German immigrants to the frontier of Virginia in 1717/18. This first group of Germans continues to provoke discussion and disputes over their number, their identity, and sometimes even their origin. This article examines issues relative to these early German immigrants by reviewing records in Germany, documents in London, and documents in Virginia. Almost three hundred years after their arrival many unanswered questions remain about this First Colony.

Over the last one hundred plus years, historians, scholars, and researchers have attempted to force the evidence to match the assumptions. Christoph von Graffenried was a Swiss adventurer who had joined with other Swiss to export Swiss and German Anabaptists to the North Carolina colony under a contract with the City of Bern. Having failed in this initial venture, he and his Swiss partners determined to mine silver based on the reports of one of the partners, Frantz Ludwig Michel. Michel hired Johann Justus Albrecht, a miner, to travel to Siegen to have tools made and to recruit miners to travel to America. Not being successful hiring real miners, Albrecht recruited anyone willing to leave.

In the fall of 1713 when Graffenried met Johann Justus Albrecht and the Germans in London, he was returning to Europe penniless and in debt in the colonies. Graffenried mentioned there were about forty German miners with Albrecht when he met them in London, and Lt. Governor Spotswood reported that forty-two German men, women, and children came into the Virginia colony. Before Graffenried had left Virginia, he had met with Lt. Governor Spotswood and told him the story of silver mines in Virginia which had apparently been shared with him by Frantz Ludwig Michel.

Assuming that Graffenried had counted approximately forty Germans in London prepared to travel to Virginia, such a statement does not indicate that the full contingent either made the trip or arrived in Virginia.

Spotswood stated that he paid part of the passage money for forty-two Germans, but there is no proof that forty-two Germans arrived in Virginia.² The evidence in Virginia only supports the documented presence of thirty-three German immigrants in the First Colony. **Only thirty-three individuals, not forty-two, left any record at all of their presence in Virginia. Where are the other nine? Were there even nine others who arrived in Virginia?**



Christof Von Graffenreid

¹ The name "First Colony" is a twentieth century designation for this 1714 group who settled initially at the Germanna Fort. These Germans never referred to themselves as the "First Colony."

² H. R. McIlwaine, ed., *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia*, Vol. III (May 1, 1705-October 23, 1721), (Richmond: The Virginia State Library, 1928, repr. 1976), 371-372.

Absence of records precludes a precise determination of departure dates as to when the German immigrants known as the First Colony of Germanna left their homes and villages. What the records do reflect is that different members of the group departed at different times; it was not a single wagon train of immigrants. Upon discovering that Rev. Johann Henrich Häger and his family had left during the night, Rev. Georg Friedrich Knabeschuh, Rev. Häger's successor,⁴ wrote to his supervisor, Rev. Johann Daniel Eberhardi, "...has moved from here, according to his word to settle in the Land Berg, of which departure he never thought or said a word, but it is presumed by everyone as if [he] intends to travel to his son..."⁵ Land Berg was a nearby duchy with a different ruler.

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- ³ The word Germany is used here for simplicity of writing. It is well known that the series of principalities, duchies, land bergs, etc., were individual and in no way united to form what is thought of as Germany today.
- ⁴ Andreas Mielke, "The Decision of Henrich Häger to Emigrate," *Beyond Germanna*, Volume 15, as read on Version C of *Beyond Germanna* CD, 899-901. Due to poor health, Henrich Häger had retired as a minister in Oberfischbach in 1711 receiving free residence, the meadow growth necessary for a cow and the firewood necessary for his household for life.
- ⁵ Andreas Mielke, "The Decision of Henrich Häger to Emigrate," 899-901, citing a letter written to Rev. Eberhardi by Rev. Knabeschuh.

Why All the Talk About Graffenried?

Leaving a Journal explaining events from his perspective, often a self-serving perspective and omitting the true main characters, Graffenried often receives the credit for the efforts of others. Who were the main players with Christoph von Graffenried?

Johann Rudolff Ochs – Ochs, a Swiss engraver, was not mentioned at all by Graffenried, yet Ochs, Michel, Lawson, and Graffenried signed a contract to transport 600 Palatines to the Carolina colony. Ochs served as a coin engraver for both King George I and King George II.

Georg Ritter – Ritter, a Swiss drug and spice merchant, desirous of settling Swiss in America, was corresponding with Michel in 1703 and 1704 about settling Swiss immigrants in Pennsylvania or Virginia. Ritter and Michel had presented plans to the Board of Trade and Plantations in London although no action taken. Ritter subsequently contacted Graffenried in 1707 to ask his assistance in presenting his plan in London to the Board of Trade and Plantations. Michel, Ochs, and Ritter ultimately formed a company together in 1710.

Frantz Ludwig Michel – a Swiss adventurer, sailed to the British colonies in 1701 and again in 1704 traveling extensively throughout Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. Michel wrote to Ochs about the opportunities he envisioned in the colonies. After his return to England, Michel met Graffenried in Holland in 1710 and hired him to represent their business interests with the Board of Trade and Plantations in London.

John Lawson – a British adventurer, sailed for the colonies in 1700, landing in Charleston, South Carolina, traveled through the Carolina backcountry finally settling near Pamlico Sound. He became a private surveyor and was appointed deputy surveyor for the Lords Proprietors and then surveyor-general. Lawson represented the Carolina colony in London (still just one colony at this point as North Carolina and South Carolina weren't divided officially until 1729) in a boundary dispute with Virginia. Lawson wrote *A New Voyage to Carolina* sharing his observations of the Carolina colony for which he returned to England to oversee its publication. With a group of Swiss and German immigrants Lawson returned to North Carolina in 1709 only to be murdered by the Tuscarora Indians in 1711.

Johann Justus Albrecht – Albrecht, a miner, was hired by Michel to have tools made and to locate miners in Siegen for relocation to America. Michel was familiar with Siegen having traveled through the area in 1702. Albrecht experienced difficulty recruiting miners to join his emigrant party and quickly reached out to other occupations to secure a sufficient number of emigrants.

Ritter, Michel, and Ochs were initially primarily interested in transporting Swiss to Pennsylvania or Virginia, not North Carolina. Lawson's encounter with Graffenried may have changed their focus, but not until after two other immigrant groups had been settled at New Bern, North Carolina. Lawson traveled with one group and Graffenried following about a year later with the other. Lawson was already established in North Carolina having been surveyor general for the Lords Proprietors.



Trupbach

Rev. Knabeschuh reported also that he had spoken that morning [July 12, 1713] with Hans Jacob Holtzklaus who stated he was also willing to travel away if he could receive the “permission of the Just Government.”⁶ At this time, a letter granting permission to leave was required from the local ruler. The practical effect of such permission was the implication that the emigrant owed no further allegiance [money] to the ruler. This permission should not be construed to mean freedom from slavery or serfdom. The use of words such as *chattel* or *manumission* in connection with this permission is grossly misleading and inaccurate. Those desiring to leave were not the chattel property of the local ruler nor were they bound to the land as serfs.

Rev. Knabeschuh’s letter to Rev. Eberhardi indicated Rev. Häger left on July 12, 1713, while Holtzklaus remained in Oberfischbach. Hans Jacob Hollsklaus [Holtzklaus] was granted permission to leave July 17, 1713, upon the payment of ten Pfennig.⁷ While Hans Jacob Holtzklaus’s permission to leave was granted on July 17, 1713, the date of his departure with his family isn’t known. Since Rev. Häger and his family departed five days before Hans Jacob Holtzklaus’s was recorded, it is certain that these two families did not leave Oberfischbach at the same time.

Further, three known members of the First Colony left without permission. Dr. Hans Kruse, Director of the State Museum at Siegen in the 1930s, quoted by William J. Hinke in an article, stated “three of the emigrants, who came from Müsen, John Kemper, John Jost Merden and Melchior Brombach, because they left their homes without permission, were punished by the City Council of Siegen, by having their property confiscated, which would have come to them upon the deaths of their parents.”⁸

These documentary records firmly establish that not all members of the First Colony group left Germany at the same time. Travel records dispel the notion that the First Colony traveled as some type of united “wagon train” of emigrants. That all members of the First Colony ultimately arrived in London is undisputed.

London

The information available to us about the First Colony in London is found in a journal kept by Christoph von Graffenried. The reader must keep in mind that Graffenried wrote always presenting himself in the best light. Some sections of this journal are best read with a skeptical mind.

In his journal, Christoph von Graffenried reported when he returned to London on his way

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Dekretenprotokolle, Fürstentum Siegen, Landesarchiv 11 Nr. 28a, Bd.2, Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen, Staatsarchiv Münster, Münster, Germany.

⁸ William J. Hinke, “The 1714 Colony of Germanna, Virginia,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Volume 40, no. 4 (October 1932), 323.

home to Bern, Switzerland, in the fall of 1713, he was “shocked to learn that Mr. J. Justus Albrecht with some forty miners had arrived.”⁹ A forthcoming article will address Graffenried’s reference to the Germans as forty miners, but as a preview, there were not forty miners in this group of Germans. Graffenried stated he had written to them several times from America telling them they should not come without his orders because of the disturbances in Carolina and the Indian Wars.

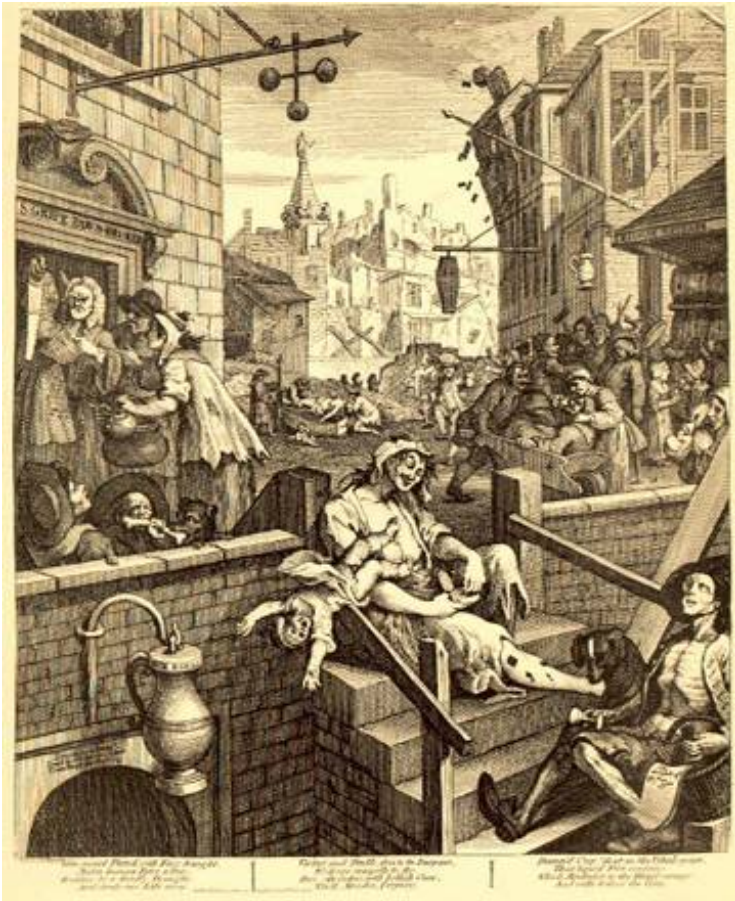
According to Graffenried, the First Colony settlers were expecting him to look out for them and to have everything they needed for their support and travel to America on account of the treaty. It is currently unknown what treaty is referenced. Perhaps Graffenried meant the Indian treaty negotiated by Lt. Governor Spotswood or possibly some, as yet unknown, written agreement between the First Colony settlers and Albrecht. Graffenried proceeded to explain his dilemma:

“What was now to be done? I knew nothing better than to direct these people back home again, but this seemed so hard for them they preferred to hire themselves out

for four years as servants in America than to return. In the meantime no ship was ready to sail to America, and they had to stay through the whole winter till spring in London. But what were they to live on? This question caused me much trouble. Finally I ran to one great man and another in order to procure work and bread for them. For some I found places, for others not. Meantime I was pressed to go home. At last I found two merchants of Virginia to whom I represented the matter as best I could, and recommended myself to Colonel Blankistore [Blakiston] and was advised by him.

I had been recommended to him by the Governor of Virginia with reference to the mines in order that his officers should help me at the court. The result was that these people were to put their money together and keep account according to the proportion of it. The rest of it certain above mentioned merchants advanced to make up the transportation and living charges of these people. At their landing the Governor was to accept them and look out for paying the ship captain, who should pay back then, to the merchants of that country, the money they had advanced. For this purpose I wrote a circumstantial letter to Governor Spotswood to whom I represented one thing and another as well as I could, telling him that the little colony should be appointed to the land which we had together in Virginia

not far from the place where minerals were found and, as supposed, the traces of the mine, where they could settle themselves according to the wise arrangements and under



William Hogarth, *Gin Lane*, etching and engraving, 1 February 1751.
© Trustees of the British Museum.

⁹ Vincent H. Todd, ed., and Julius Goebel, translator, *Christoph von Graffenried's Account of the Founding of New Bern, Edited With An Historical Introduction and An English Translation* (Raleigh, NC: The North Carolina Historical Commission, Edwards & Broughton Printing Co., State Printers, 1920); (<http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/graffenried/graffenried.html>). This work is the property of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. It may be used freely by individuals for research, teaching and personal use as long as this statement of availability is included in the text.

the helpful supervision of the Governor.

Meantime if there were not sufficient indications for a silver mine they were to look elsewhere, and because in Virginia there were, at any rate, neither iron nor copper smelters but yet plenty of such minerals they could begin on these. And for these we needed no royal patents as we did for the silver mines. In the hopes that they would succeed, I commended these good miners to the protection of the Most High, and so they departed at the beginning of the year 1714.”^{10,11}

Arrival in Virginia

The First Colony landed in Virginia in April 1714, although the exact location is unknown.¹² There has been much discussion and speculation about the landing location of this group. Some have said that one of Spotswood's grandsons was told by Spotswood himself that the First Colony landed at Tappahannock. When Spotswood died in 1740 in Annapolis, Maryland, his eldest child was then only about 15 years old. The life of Spotswood and the lives of his grandchildren did not overlap, thus it was impossible for such information to have passed from grandfather Spotswood to his grandson.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ The beginning of the year mentioned in Graffenried's statement refers to January 1, 1714. The home of Graffenried was Bern, Switzerland and Bern had changed from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar on December 31, 1700.

¹² H. R. McIlwaine, ed., *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia*, Vol. III (May 1, 1705-October 23, 1721), (Richmond: The Virginia State Library, 1928, repr. 1976), 371-372.

Just Who Was Colonel Nathaniel Blakiston?

A former Governor of Maryland, Lieutenant Governor of Montserrat in the Lesser Antilles, with temporary title of Colonel, a member of Parliament, agent for Maryland and for Virginia in London? Well, actually all of the above-

While serving as Lieutenant Governor in Virginia, Alexander Spotswood often wrote to Col. Nathaniel Blakiston in London. So just who was he? Spotswood viewed Blakiston as the man best able to keep Spotswood informed about events occurring in the Parliament and the Board of Trade and Plantations. Spotswood employed Blakiston as an advocate in London for the colony of Virginia in the matters affecting it in London.

Nathaniel Blakiston was a member of a prominent English family with strong ties to the colonial bureaucracy. He was born about 1663 in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, the eldest son of John Blakiston, barrister and judge of the Admiralty Court. A very old city dating from Roman times, Newcastle-upon-Tyne is part of Northumberland and is located in northeast England on the River Tyne. Very little is known about his childhood and education.

From 1689-1695, Blakiston served as the Lt. Governor of Montserrat with the temporary rank of Colonel. At some point after 1693, he married Thomasine, the widow of Sir Timothy Thornhill who was First Baronet of Barbados from 1682 until his death in 1693. Thomasine died in 1697 and Blakiston subsequently married a woman named Mary. No further information has been located about his second wife.

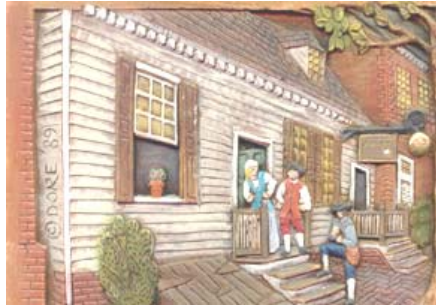
In 1699, Blakiston was named Royal Governor of Maryland for an annual salary of £1700 plus £30 for rent. Residing at Annapolis, Maryland, he remained as governor until either 1701 or 1702, the available records reflecting contradictory information. He retired as Royal Governor on grounds of poor health and returned to England to live.

Blakiston was named as agent for Maryland for the years 1702-1709 and again 1713-1721. For many of these years he also served as agent for Virginia, being named agent for Virginia 1706-1722. It is interesting that he served as agent for two colonies whose individual best interests were sometimes at odds.

While serving as agent for both Maryland and Virginia, Blakiston was elected to Parliament from Mitchell, Cornwall, serving from 1715 until his death in 1722. He probably died in February 1722 since his will was presented for probate March 5, 1722.

References to Blakiston in the history of Germanna and Spotswood will be to this individual sketched above.

The usual initial landing location for Williamsburg, Virginia, in the early 1700's was at Kecoughtan [present day Hampton] where travelers often transferred to a smaller ship for travel up the James River to Jamestown. If the traveler wished to meet with Lt. Governor Alexander Spotswood, he continued his trip by land from Jamestown to Williamsburg. In his official letters, Lt. Governor Alexander Spotswood spoke of landing first at Kecoughtan upon his arrival in the Virginia colony on June 20, 1710, before proceeding the next day to Jamestown and on to Williamsburg.



Since Col. Nathaniel Blakiston, agent for the Virginia colony, had committed Lt. Governor Alexander Spotswood to pay the remaining portion of the passage cost of the 1714 group, it is logical that the ship's captain would have landed as near Williamsburg as possible in order to collect the money owed. The ship's captain had the responsibility to return to London with the money to reimburse the two merchants who had advanced the money for the group.

Germanna

On April 28, 1714, Spotswood met with the Colonial Council in Williamsburg advising them that a group of Germans comprising forty-two men, women, and children had arrived and that he wished to settle them about the falls on the Rappahannock River to serve as a barrier against attacks by the Indians. In consideration of their usefulness for this purpose, the Lt. Governor wished to build them a fort, clear a road to the settlement, and carry two cannons and ammunition to the site all at the public expense. The Council agreed and thought it would be useful to make the German settlers Rangers to exempt them from any public levies [taxes].¹³

Soon after their arrival, this group of Germans made their way to their new home that came to be called Germanna.¹⁴ How did the Germans get to Germanna? Did this group set out overland to their new home? Or did they travel by water on a smaller vessel better suited for travel on the local rivers? It is possible they traveled by water and by land. No contemporaneous documents giving their mode of travel to Fort Germanna have been located. In Spotswood's travel journal on May 17, 1714, he recorded that he went on "a Fortnights Expedition to Reconnoitre the Norward Frontiers & to fortify a place for Settling a Body of Germans above the Falls of Rappahannock."¹⁵ Spotswood wrote in a letter dated July 21, 1714, to the Lords Commissioners of Trade in London stating that he had "placed here a number of Protestant Germans, built them a Fort, and finish'd it with 2 pieces of cannon and some Ammunition...."¹⁶

John Fontaine, an adventurer who traveled with Spotswood, mentioned in his journal that he visited Germanna in 1715 and again in 1716. For this article, the interest lies with the first visit in 1715. Fontaine wrote he and his party went directly to the minister's house upon their arrival November 20, 1715. This is the first reference made to Rev. Johann Henrich Häger [Rev. Henry Hager] in Virginia, although not by name. The reference to Rev. Häger by John Fontaine is quite important since it places him at Germanna by 1715 at the latest. Fontaine's meeting with Rev. Häger is critical to proving his presence at Germanna as there have been no documents found such as headrights or naturalization records that would help place him in Virginia at that time.

Germanna to Germantown

At some point late in the year 1718 or very early in 1719 N. S., the individuals who made up the First Colony moved to the tract of land that became known as Germantown located at that time in Stafford County, now in Fauquier County. Several documents support this timeframe for the

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ The community was named Germanna in honor of Queen Anne and the Germans who settled there.

¹⁵ Alexander Spotswood, "Journal of the Lieut. Governor's Travels and Expeditions Undertaken for the Public Service of Virginia," *William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine*, 2nd Ser., Vol. 3, No. 1 (January, 1923), 40-45. Accessed online through JSTOR, an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals: 8 July 2009.

¹⁶ Alexander Spotswood, *The Official Letters of Alexander Spotswood, Lieutenant-Governor of the Colony of Virginia, 1710-1722*, Volume II (Richmond: Virginia Historical Society, 1885) Digital images (books.google.com) downloaded 26 May 2009, 70.



A survey of the northern neck of Virginia, being the lands belonging to the Rt. Honourable Thomas Lord Fairfax Baron Cameron, bounded by & within the Bay of Chesapoyocke and between the rivers Rappahannock and Potowmack: With the courses of the rivers Rappahannock and Potowmack, in Virginia, as surveyed according to order in the years 1736 & 1737. Warner, John, fl. 1727-1741. Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C. 20540-4650 USA dcu.

First Colony's move to Germantown. A document recorded in Essex County, Virginia, states that eleven German men worked beginning March 1715/17 at mining or quarrying and continued there until December 1718.¹⁷

The survey for the tract of land called Germantown was made by Captain Thomas Hopper [Hooper?] but was plotted by Thomas Barber, Surveyor for Richmond County.¹⁸ In May 1719 Captain Hooper was appointed sheriff of Stafford County and held that post for at least two years. It seems unlikely that he would have continued as a surveyor while serving as sheriff. This may explain why the land was surveyed by one person and plotted by another. No date was given on the survey and no warrant was filed with the survey.

¹⁷ Deed Book No.16, Essex County, Virginia, p. 180. The document was recorded 17 May 1720 and signed by John Justice Albright [Johann Justus Albrecht] and H. Jacob Holtclare [Hans Jacob Holtzclaw].

¹⁸ Northern Neck Surveys, Stafford County, Virginia, survey for 1805 acres 108 perches, no date, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia, microfilm reel 35¹⁹ A warrant as used in the headright system was simply a write authorizing a particular action; in this case, the warrant authorized the county surveyor to survey the land for the person claiming the headright(s).

Usually the warrant for a tract of land was filed with the corresponding survey. A search of the records at the Library of Virginia has been made for this warrant; however, it has yet to be located. H. C. Groome in *Fauquier During the Proprietorship* mentioned a warrant¹⁹ issued to some of the 1714 colonists in 1718, but he did not provide a source for his information. Groome named Jacob Holtzclaw, John Hoffman, John Fishback, Peter Hitt, Harman Fishback, Tilman Weaver, John Spilman, **and other Germans** giving as his source the warrant yet to be located.²⁰

Headrights

The Virginia Land Office, Research Note No. 20, prepared by Minor T. Weisiger for the Library of Virginia gives an overview of the process for obtaining land in colonial Virginia. One method of obtaining land was by using headrights—a system whereby a person was entitled to fifty acres of land for each person he imported into the colony at his own expense, including himself and

his family. The first step in this process was to assert to the county court that a certain number of people had been imported into the colony and that he had paid for their transportation. The people claimed were specifically named.

The court then issued a certificate of importation. These headrights were often sold several times to other people. The final owner who wished to obtain land by claiming the headrights would then present the certificate to the secretary of the colony in Williamsburg, who then issued a warrant for survey of the property to be patented. The warrant for survey was presented to the county surveyor and the land surveyed. After the survey all the papers were returned to the secretary. If all the papers were in order, then a patent to the land was issued by the governor. The land patent was the way in which the colonial government conveyed public land to a private individual.

The members of the First Colony claimed their headrights as described above; however, they could not use their headrights in the Northern Neck Proprietary.²¹ The Northern Neck Proprietary was a privately owned vast swath of land between the Rappahannock and the Potomac Rivers stretching westward. The Proprietary did not use the headright system; however, anyone who lived there could claim his or her headright(s), but only for obtaining land outside the boundaries of the Proprietary. A brief diversion to the Northern Neck will provide some background to our story.

The unsettled region that came to be called the Northern Neck Proprietary was granted by King Charles II in 1649 to seven of his supporters including John Culpeper. Since his father Charles I had just been executed and Cromwell was then in charge, Charles II arguably had no authority to grant the land (at least according to Cromwell), but it didn't change the fact that Charles II did it. Nothing was done with the tract of land until 1660 when Charles II was restored to the throne. His supporters were issued a new charter for the Northern Neck Proprietary in 1669, effective 25 years.

The first land grants in the Northern Neck were issued in 1690. Any land granted or patented in Virginia before that time will be found in the Crown patent records. The Northern Neck encompassed the area between the Rappahannock and Potomac River and extended to their headwaters. By 1681 Lord Culpeper had acquired all rights to the land and in 1688 it was confirmed to him by patent. It passed to his daughter, Catherine, who married Thomas, Fifth Lord Fairfax. Their rights were confirmed in 1694 and the Proprietary continued under their control for ninety years. Catherine died in 1719 and the Northern Neck Proprietary passed to her son, Thomas, Sixth Lord Fairfax. The Fairfax family ceded their rights to the land in 1793 to a syndicate headed by none other than John Marshall, famous Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court.



Charles II in exile, 1653. Artist: Philip of Champaigne (1602-1674). This work is in the Public Domain of the United States, and those countries with a copyright term of life of the author plus 100 years or less.

¹⁹ A warrant as used in the headright system was simply a writ authorizing a particular action; in this case, the warrant authorized the county surveyor to survey the land for the person claiming the headright(s).

²⁰ H. C. Groome, *Fauquier During the Proprietorship* (Richmond, Virginia: Old Dominion Press, 1927), 122. It is most unusual that all of the names of the Germans were not given in the warrant; if in fact, Mr. Groome consulted the warrant itself.

²¹ Lt. Governor Spotswood paid approximately half the cost of the passage for these Germans but no documents have been found to suggest that he used their headrights to obtain land.

The First Colony people were eligible for fifty acres of land for each person who had arrived in Virginia. A person could apply for the headrights on those persons who had died after arrival. On April 7, 1724, Jacob Holtzrow [Holtzclaw], John Camper [Kemper], and Johannes Martin of the First Colony applied for their certificates to take up land otherwise known as headrights.²² A transcription of Jacob Holtzclaw's certificate to take up land follows:

“Jacob Holtzrow [sic] in order to prove his right to take up land according to the Royal Charter, made oath that he came into this country in the month of April 1714 and that he brought with him Margaret his wife and John & Henry his two sons, and this is the first time of proving their said importation whereupon certificate is ordered to be granted them of rights to take up two hundred acres of land.”²³

John Kemper and John Martin also stated they arrived in April 1714. John Kemper brought with him his wife Alice Catherine and was granted a certificate for the right to take up one hundred acres of land. John Martin likewise stated he brought his wife Maria Catherine with him and was granted a certificate to take up one hundred acres of land.

On June 2, 1724, the following people took out headrights for one hundred acres of land:

John Spillman who brought with him his wife Mary
Harmon Fitschback [sic] and his wife Katherina
John Huffman and his wife Catherina
John Fitchback [sic] and his wife Agnis
Milchert [Melchior] Brumback and his wife Elizabeth
Dilman [Tilman] Weaver and Anna Weaver his mother
Peter Hitt and his wife Elizabeth²⁴

Additionally, on June 2, 1724, Joseph Cuntz appeared in court to prove his right to take up land based on his family including “Katherin his wife, John his son, Annalis and Kathirina his daughters.”²⁵ Likewise, Jacob Rickart [Rector] who stated he arrived with his wife Elizabeth and his son John appeared in court to prove his right to take up land the same day. The certificates to take up land were finally issued May 30, 1729, approximately five years after they made application.

This document is found on the website of the Library of Virginia at (<http://beta.lva.virginia.gov/chancery/default.asp#res>):

When the names of those listed in the headrights are examined, only 30 people are listed. Was this an oversight by those obtaining headrights? If these people were savvy enough to take advantage of the headrights system even though they could not use the headrights in the Northern Neck Proprietary, why didn't they use all the headrights to which they were entitled? Or did they? **Perhaps the First Colony people did use all the headrights to which they were entitled.**

Some of the First Colonists sold their headrights and these actions are inferred from patents

²² Will Book A, Spotsylvania County, Virginia, LVA Reel 26, 69.

²³ Jacob Holtzclaw certificate to take up land, Will Book A, Spotsylvania County, Virginia, LVA Reel 26, 9, April 7, 1724.

²⁴ Will Book A, Spotsylvania County, Virginia, LVA Reel 26, 73-74.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

Several authors assert that the First Colony needed headrights in order to obtain the land grant later known as Germantown, located in present day Fauquier County, Virginia. This is a completely erroneous statement!

issued by the Crown. In Patent Book No. 14, William Hallaway was granted 250 acres on September 28, 1732, using the headrights of Johannes Martin, Margaret Halscrow [Holtzclaw], Henry Halscrow, John Halscrow, and Maria Katharina Martin.²⁶ In the same Patent Book on the same date, Laus Crest was granted two hundred acres using the headrights of Katherine Cuntz, John Cuntz, Peter Hill and Eliza Hill [Peter Hitt and wife Elizabeth?].²⁷ In Patent Book No. 15, Richard Tutt used the headrights of Joseph Cuntz and Jacob Halscrow among others to patent 800 acres.²⁸ There may be other members of Germanna who sold their headrights but they have yet to be located in the records.

Several authors assert that the First Colony needed headrights in order to obtain the land grant later known as Germantown, located in present day Fauquier County, Virginia. This is a completely erroneous statement! Headrights were issued by Royal Charter from the Crown. The land grants in the Northern Neck Proprietary were issued by Thomas Lord Fairfax or his agent acting for Lord Fairfax. A number of authors state that the headrights had little monetary value. That may or may not be true, but in this article, the reason for looking at headrights is to determine the names of those who came in 1714, not the monetary value of headrights.

Spilman versus Gent

The Spilman versus Gent lawsuit filed in Fauquier County, Virginia, provides a glimpse into the business arrangements of the First Colony as they settled on to their land at Germantown in those early years. This chancery suit was filed in 1759 but tells something about the early history of those who settled at Germantown. Jacob Spilman sued his mother, Mary Gent, to prevent her from giving the land granted to his father, John Spilman, at Germantown to her Gent children. Jacob Spilman died before he learned the court's decision. The lawsuit was continued by his widow, Elizabeth Spilman, and his son, John Spilman who, being a minor, was represented by his next friend Alice Cackley.

John Blackwell and Thomas Marshall [father of John Marshall, future Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court] were issued a commission to take the depositions of Tilman Weaver, Harman Fishback, and Peter Hitt regarding the land in dispute between Mary Gent and Jacob Spilman.²⁹

The depositions given by Tilman Weaver, Harman Fishback, and Peter Hitt³⁰ provide additional information about the members of the First Colony. The disputed land was part of the tract of land granted by Thomas Lord Fairfax or his agent to Jacob Holtzclaw, John Fishback, and John Hoffman at Germantown. They were the only ones of the First Colony who were naturalized citizens at the time of issuing the grant. According to the complaint, the land was divided about thirty-one years prior to filing the lawsuit [c.1728].

According to the complaint, John Spilman [1714 immigrant] paid his share for the land and that he "lived on & held the said Lot as his property during his Life but Dying before the said Lot of Land was acknowledg'd, the right of the same was Pass'd to Mary Gent, Defendt, who was then Widow to the said John Spilman & Mother to the Plt."³¹ One other tract of land of fifty acres more or less fell by lot to John Spilman [1714 immigrant] the right of which never passed to John Spilman or Mary Gent because she sold her right to Jacob Rector.

²⁶ William Hallaway patent, Patent Book No. 14, 28 September 1732, 521, as abstracted by Nell Marion Nugent in *Cavaliers and Pioneers, Abstracts of Virginia Land Patents*, Volume III: 1695-1732, 425.

²⁷ Laus Crest patent, Patent Book No. 14, 28 September 1732, 521.

²⁸ Richard Tutt patent, Patent Book No. 15, 1 August 1734, 266, as abstracted by Nell Marion Nugent in *Cavaliers and Pioneers, Abstracts of Virginia Land Patents*, Volume IV, 46.

²⁹ Jacob Spilman vs. Mary Gent, County Court of Chancery, Fauquier County, Virginia, filed 27 September 1759 (<http://beta.lva.virginia.gov/chancery/default.asp#res>): accessed 17 May 2009.

³⁰ The signatures of Tillman Weber, Hermanus Fischbach and Peter Hitt are found affixed to the deposition. Within the body of the deposition their names are spelled Tillman Weaver, Harman Fishback, and Peter Hitt. While there is no difference in the spelling of Peter Hitt's name, some letters are in German script. The signatures of Tillman Weber and Hermanus Fischbach are in German: however, the script varied between English and German. The original signatures cannot be seen in the partial copy of this chancery suit found in the Miscellaneous Records, Fauquier County, Virginia, 1759-1807, FHL 0031610, Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

³¹ Jacob Spilman vs. Mary Gent, filed 27 September 1759.

In the complaint of John Spilman [grandson] he named his father Jacob Spilman, Jacob Holtzclaw, John Hoffman, John Fishback, Peter Hitt, Harman Fishback, Tilman Weaver and his grandfather John Spilman and **several other Germans** as those who made entry for the tract of land called Germantown. John Spilman does not give the names of the other Germans. (The alert reader will notice that the exact same name sequence and words were used by H. C. Groome in his book *Fauquier During the Proprietorship*. It seems Mr. Groome was quoting from a copy of the complaint found in the Miscellaneous Records and not from the actual warrant, which would have contained the names of each defendant, and which has not been found. For some unknown reason, Mr. Groome did not consult the complete chancery suit found in the Fauquier County Court of Chancery.)

There are several documents found in the original chancery file not found in the court copy file in Fauquier County Miscellaneous Records, 1759-1807. The original chancery file is much easier to read than the copy, shows original signatures, and includes the original complaint filed by Jacob Spilman., which is not found in the Fauquier County Miscellaneous Records. Jacob Spilman stated in his complaint that he was a natural born citizen of the colony and an infant of tender years when the lease for ninety-nine years was made to his mother, Mary Gent. John Spilman [grandson] stated in his complaint that his father, Jacob Spilman, came with the others into the colony. This is a discrepancy which has not been resolved.

Conclusion

Much has been made of Lt. Governor Spotswood's statement of forty-two men, women and children coming into the colony for which he paid part of the passage. Also, Christoph de Graffenried's writing in his journal about forty German miners in London led researchers to assume his number was an accurate count of the First Colony settlers. These two statements do give an idea of the number who were in London and possibly left London but not the number who arrived in Virginia. Spotswood had been obligated by Col. Nathaniel Blakiston in London to pay part of the passage money for this group. He would have paid the passage based on the number who left London and not on the number of people who arrived. Passage money was paid in advance and there was no refund if a passenger had the misfortune to die at sea. It did not matter to the two merchants who provided the remaining money as a loan to Spotswood if the passengers arrived in Virginia. The merchants were due their money from the Lt. Governor regardless.

The certificates to take up land provide a list of 30 people who arrived in 1714 and who in 1724 proved their importation to take up land under the headrights system. This list has been largely ignored as a source of names of those who arrived including wives and children. There has been much discussion concerning whether some First Colony people were married when they arrived in Virginia to the spouse named on the headright. The intent of this article is not to play matchmaker attempting to decide who married whom and when. Other documents must be examined to make that determination. The marriage questions are better left to another time using other primary documents as sources.

The heads of household named in the headrights match exactly the names of those who settled at Germantown. The Essex County record signed by Albrecht and Holtzclaw place Albrecht at Germanna which adds one more person to the total, meaning thirty-one confirmed members of the First Colony. In his journal, John Fontaine mentioned the minister at Germanna as present in 1715 when he first visited there. Add to the number two more people, pastor Johann Henrich Häger and his wife Anna Catharina Friesenhagen. **The final tally is thirty-three people**, not forty plus as stated by de Graffenried, not forty-two or forty-four as is often expressed. If there were more than thirty-three, they were phantom immigrants who left no evidence of their arrival in 1714.

The final tally is thirty-three people, not forty plus as stated by de Graffenried, not forty-two or forty-four as is often expressed.

Suzanne Collins Matson is a Germanna descendant and a noted Germanna researcher. Specializing in genealogical and historical research with a particular expertise on the upstate area of South Carolina, she works with clients who are researching their roots there or other areas of colonial America. She continues to serve as a Genealogy Consultant for the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution and as such helps with solutions to some of the thornier problems relating to "proving the line" for prospective members. She attends several genealogical conferences every year to stay current with the latest information presented. She is a founding member of the Germanna Research Group and a frequent contributor of articles on history and genealogy. Suzanne is a member of the [Association of Professional Genealogists](#).

“...two in three lost their lives...”

The Last Voyage of the Ship Oliver

By Klaus Wust and John Blankenbaker

The literature on European emigration of the eighteenth century is filled with horror stories of sufferings and death. Still, the total German and Swiss migration during the eighteenth century reveals a rather successful operation in which over one hundred thousand souls reached America. This was although many of them did not have sufficient funds to pay for the ocean passage.

Always there were horror stories of sufferings and death. The lack of cleanliness and hygiene did adversely affected mass travel. One year, 1738, was extreme in its devastating efforts and earned the reputation as the Year of the Destroying Angels (see Psalm 78, verse 49). The events of 1738 were so horrible that the fatalist mind needed a response.

A contributing factor to the negative results of 1738 was the growth in the passenger traffic from previous years especially from Rotterdam and Amsterdam. There were not enough ships that were prepared for the approximately 6,000 passengers, which was more than quadruple the number of the previous year. While waiting for ships, the passengers lived under poor conditions in crowded camps which weakened them.

Most of the ships were destined for Philadelphia where the majority of the passengers wished to go. There was one ship, the *Oliver*, which had been chartered to take many Swiss to Virginia to settle on lands that William Byrd wished to develop. There was another group of about fifty Germans from the vicinity of Freudenberg in Nassau-Siegen who wished to go Virginia. These people were acquainted with the First Colony of Germanna settlers who were recruiting people. The greed of the operators of the *Oliver* and the need of the Freudenberg people resulted in the *Oliver* taking on the additional people even though the ship was overloaded before adding the Freudenbergs. This bad decision contributed to the deaths of about two of every three people who boarded the *Oliver* in Rotterdam.

The *Oliver* was a bilander (“by land”), a name which described its usual sailing courses in the coastal waters. Bilanders were usually less than one hundred tons displacement. Sometimes, this type of ship was used in trans-oceanic traffic. In 1738, the *Oliver* was overloaded and unable to carry enough food and water for the people. Delays in the passage exhausted the supplies and induced sickness.

On June 22, five ships including the *Oliver*, set sail from Rotterdam. At sea, the captain of the *Oliver* felt the ship was overloaded and he returned to port. The owners assigned a new captain and the *Oliver* left in early July and crossed quickly to Cowes, on the Isle of Wight, where it spent almost six weeks. Soon after leaving Cowes, heavy seas forced the *Oliver* to take refuge in Plymouth harbor.

After another long delay at Plymouth, the *Oliver* set its course for Virginia in early September. Another ship which had met the *Oliver* at sea reported “they had

lost the Captain, Mate, and 50 or 60 passengers, most of them children, who dy'd; and that they were in great Distress for want of Provisions, occasion'd by the Tedi-ousness of their Voyage." By winter, with no further news from the *Oliver*, it was feared the ship had been lost but it reached the coast early in January. At the mouth of the James River, the *Oliver* anchored in Lynnhaven Bay waiting for favorable winds and tides. The passengers, nearly crazed from hunger and thirst, forced the captain with sev-
 eral of the crew members and some passengers in a small boat to seek water and food from an island. No relief could be found on the island. While the search was underway, a storm came up making it impossible for the seamen to return to the *Oliver*.

The *Oliver* dragged its anchor and leaks devel-oped when it scraped along the bottom. Many of the passengers were trapped below deck and drowned. The weather had also turned very cold which resulted in additional deaths by freezing. The party on the island could not return because the wa-ters were

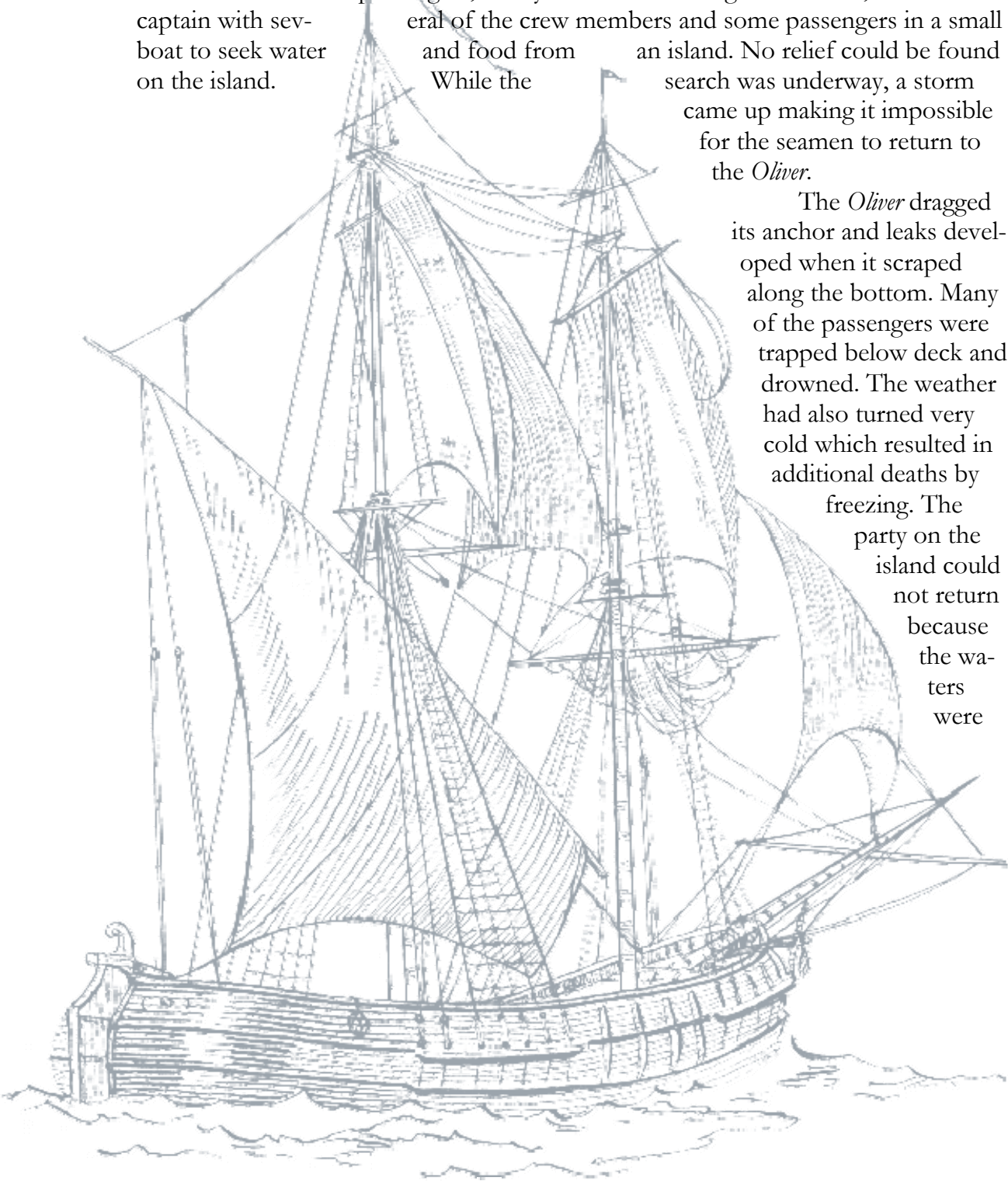


Illustration of a bilander: Donated by Pearson Scott Foresman to the Wikimedia Foundation.

too rough. Some other ships which were anchored near the *Oliver* tried to rescue the passengers but they could do little.

From sickness, lack of food and water, drowning, and freezing, two thirds of the passengers who had set out from Rotterdam died.

The people who had left from the Freudenberg area were recorded in the church book there. While we can not be sure that all of these boarded the *Oliver*, we can take the list as a good approximation. These fifty-odd people were:

From Freudenberg:

Tillmanus Seelbach, his wife Anna Beata, son-in-law, and daughter,
Gerlach Waffenschmidt, his wife Anna Maria with four children,
Henrich Emstorf, his wife Anna Catharin and three children,
*Her[mann] Bach and his wife Anna Margreth with one child,
*Joh[ann] Fredrich Müller and his wife Anna Maria with one child,
*Hymenäus Creutz and his wife Elisabeth, [became Crites/Critz in Virginia]
*George Weidman, single, [became Wayman in Virginia]
Tillmanus Steinseiffer, single,
*Johannes Hoffman from Dirlenbach, single,
Johann Henrich Schmidt, single,
Johannes Klappert, single,
Tillmany Gudelius, single,
*Hermanaus Müller, single,

From Plittershagen:

Johannes Halm, his wife Anna Cath[a]rin with two children,

From Boeschen:

*(?)Johann Henrich Schneider, his wife wife Maria Catharin, and two children,
Johann Georg Hirnschal, his wife Anna Catharin, with one child, and his father,

From Anstoss:

Henrich Schneider, his wife Anna Margreth, with two children,
Hanna Schneider, her son Johannes, and Johanne's wife and four children.

The men above, preceded by asterisks, have left a record in Virginia. The wives are uncertain since the original wife might have died during the passage and the husband might have remarried a woman of the same given name in Virginia. This

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illustrates, even though there are written marriage records in Germany, that this is not proof that the wife named in the record is the mother of the children born in Virginia. This conclusion is easily understood in this extreme case but it true whether the documentation of marriage is sketchy. Genealogy is a matter of probabilities and we can not be certain of many statements.

There is no proof that the Freudenbergs people booked passage on the *Oliver* but there is very strong circumstantial evidence they did. The destination of the ship was correct. There were no other ships for Virginia that year. There is no record of the Freudenbergs people in any colony other than Virginia. The fact so many of the people are missing is consistent and explainable by the fatality rate on the *Oliver*. Perhaps one of the most pieces of evidence is the testimony recorded by the Moravian missionaries, Schell and Hussey in 1743, when they visited the Germantown area in Virginia in 1743. One man reported to them, "he had had a dangerous sea voyage, for 150 of the passengers were drowned at one time." Allowing for confusion between drowning, starvation, and sickness, this could hardly refer to anything but the voyage of the *Oliver*.

Klaus Wust estimates that two thousand people died in port and on board the ships in 1738. Only four thousand arrived in America. In the year 1738, the loss of life on all ships was one in three. Of those who took passage on the *Oliver*, two in three lost their lives. In 1738 these factors contributed: bad weather, lack of preparation for the large numbers of people, and the early arrival of the emigrants at the departure ports. Also, in all years, contributing factors were the greed of the ship owners and overcrowding on the ships.

From sickness, lack of food and water, drowning, and freezing, two thirds of the passengers who had set out from Rotterdam died.

The lead author on this story was Klaus Wust with John Blankenbaker skillfully using the research of Klaus Wust to share with us this fascinating story. Several articles pertaining to events in the year 1738 appeared in several issues of volume 10 of Beyond Germanna. All of the issues of Beyond Germanna are available on a CD from John Blankenbaker at www.germanna.com.

John Blankenbaker of Chadds Ford, PA, has been a Germanna researcher and writer for more than 25 years. His transcriptions and analyses of the baptismal and confirmation records of the Hebron Lutheran Church are available from his website, www.germanna.com, as well as his publication regarding the Culpeper Classes. His historical and genealogy notes, published on-line for many years, are available on www.germannacolony.org and <http://homepages.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~george/searchthesenotes.html>.

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Editorial Goal: To disseminate knowledge about our ancestors of the First and Second Germanna Colonies of Virginia, and Alexander Spotswood. Contact vrnuta@verizon.net if you wish to submit.

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