

Curieuse Nachricht  
Von  
**PENNSYLVANIA**  
in  
**Norden = America**

Welche /  
Auf Begehren guter Freunde /  
Über vorgelegte 103. Fra-  
gen / bey seiner Abreise aus Teutsch-  
land nach obigem Lande Anno 1700.  
ertheilet / und nun Anno 1702 in den Druck  
gegeben worden.

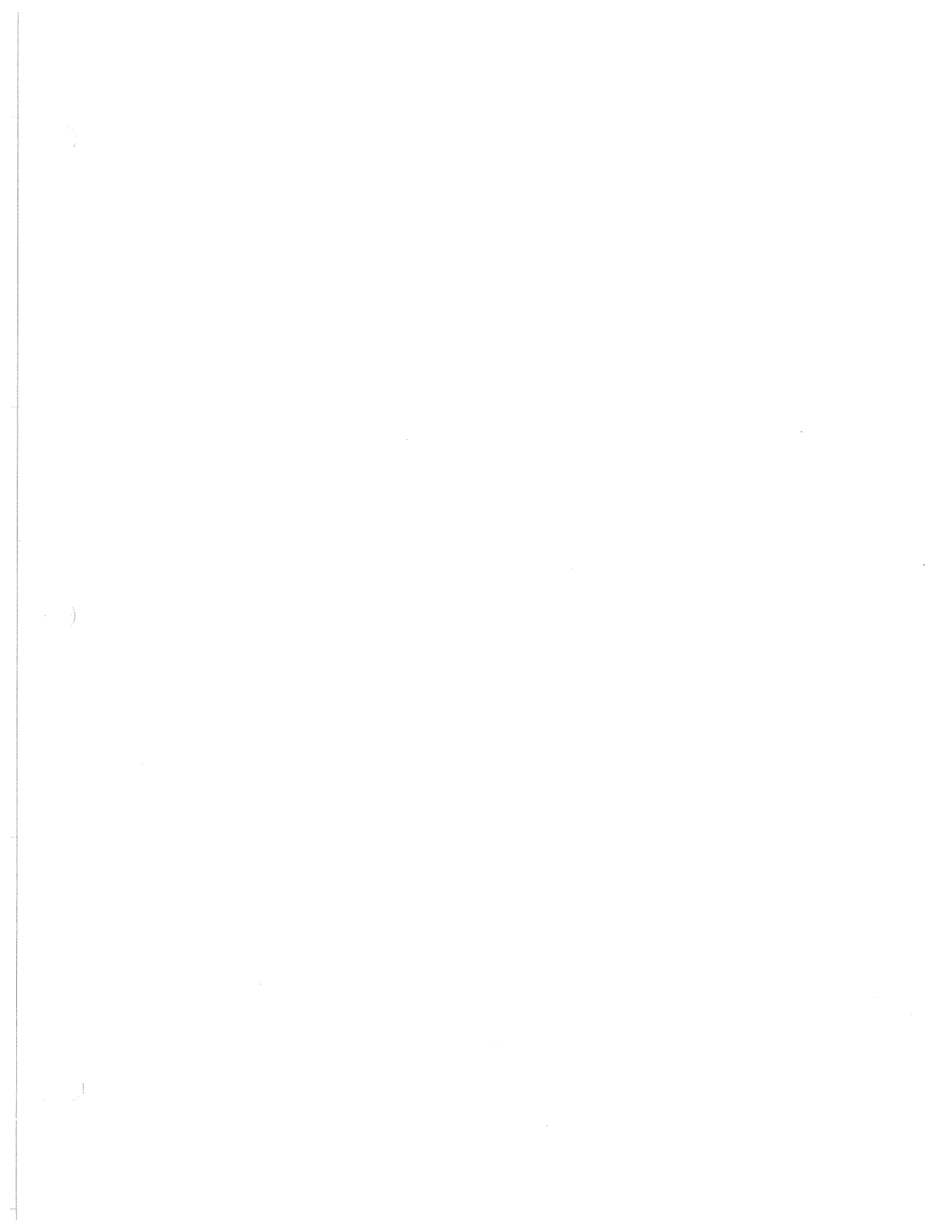
Von  
**Daniel Falkner / Professore,**  
**Burgern und Pilgrim allda.**

Frankfurt und Leipzig /  
Zu finden bey Andreas Otto / Buchhändler.  
Im Jahr Schrift 1702.

Leroy Dux

Commentary on  
Falkner's Curieuse  
Nachricht of 1700

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library  
11831 W. Seminari Drive. 65W  
Mequon, Wisconsin



Man's relentless march through time has led him past many milestones. As he tramples through time he litters the pathway with the debris of his failures always rushing on in the hope of better days yet to come. The record of man in God's world is like foot prints in the sand that are quickly washed away with the pounding waves of yet another era. These footprints are soon lost and forgotten. A new generation proceeds along the same path heedless of the treacherous footing ahead. They too fall, where man had fallen before. Yet this is all avoidable. Reading a road map called history, man could avoid wrong turns and dead ends. In his own perverse way man seems to delight in ignoring history and ensuring failure for his future.

God's history book of the world, the Bible, records man's driving desire to be ignorant of the past. No one pays attention to what the past would say to the future. Even within his own lifetime Abraham ignored his past and fell into that temptation of lying about Sarah's relationship to him. Church history is not filled with a variety of new heresies, but old heresies resurfacing because the old warning signs had been torn down.

Our synod's history curriculum provides ample opportunity to study man in general and the errors of the church in specific. This curriculum is designed to meet practical needs for future pastors. It provides the his-

torical framework into which God's Word penetrated and effected the salvation of souls. Thus equipped the pastor more thoroughly can interpret and expound Scripture. This curriculum unveils man's attitudes played out through his actions. The pastor can then see the Scriptural truths of anthropology working themselves out in man's relationships. In dealing with the needs and problems of his people, the pastor will avoid dictatorial legalism or naive idealism. As a theologian, the pastor too benefits from the history of the church and the sad story of her error story. Too often error arose when one tried to explain doctrine under the light of reason. Inaccurate doctrinal overstatements and the hypocrisy of ambiguous formulae have been the Scylla and Charybdis between which the church must be guided. Writing makes an exact man, but history tells him why he must be exact. In a very real sense the future of the WELS is determined by her history, how she studies and appreciates what history has to offer.

The field of history itself can be further defined. History in the broad sense is the study of the old in a new era. However, history is comprised of preserving the past, in written and physical form. It includes critical comments directed toward a past age. It also can limit itself to applying history to the future. No one man could complete an exhaustive study of each phase of history. It is the first phase of history, that of

preserving the past that has recently been revived here in America. Renaissance fairs and settlers' squares have become increasingly popular with the public. Not only are artifacts from the past being preserved, but history itself comes alive in the vivid hues of the present. People seem interested in at least preserving history.

It is for this reason that the topic of Daniel Falckner's Curieuse Nachricht von Pensylvania was chosen for this paper. One sentence from The Lutherans in North America piqued my interest, "Especially impressive must have been the glorification of the colonies..."<sup>1</sup> Nelson obviously was not certain what Falckner's book said about America. So then curiosity forged ahead. Prof. Westerhaus courteously complied by securing a copy of the rare book which is under examination. The English text was photo copied for future use at the Sem and for the author's reference. What could soon become almost inaccessible has now been made a permanent part of the Sem library. The brief commentary is added to give information on Falckner, his book and comments on the questions.

#### Literature of the times

Falckner's book was by no means the first book of German authorship to describe the New World. The first book was written by Sebastian Brant in 1494. Narrenschiff made reference to the discovery of the New World.<sup>2</sup>

The Sixteenth Century also saw many other pamphlets hit the market place. Hans Staden's book, Warhaftige Historia und Beschreibung Einer Landtschafft der Wilden, Nacketen, Grimmigen Menschfresser and Theodor de Bry's Great Voyages supplied Germans with colorful descriptions of the Americas.<sup>3</sup>

These books offered the German people hope in the face of religious and political turmoil. As travel became more successful, more writers appeared on the scene with accurate accounts of the New World. Francis Daniel Pastorius, leader of the Mennonite expedition in 1683, issued a letter to his parents dated March 7, 1684.<sup>4</sup> This letter along with his report to the Frankfurt Company were later combined and published in various forms. Pastorius' reports were but a small part of the literature reaching the Germans. Nor was it only German authors who stung their German audience with Wanderlust.

William Penn had obtained property rights to a sizeable tract of New World land. His Quaker faith was easily coupled with the pietism of Mennonites, Moravians, Dunkers and Herrnhuters. The likely victims of his media blitz were the Germans. With the cooperation of Benjamin Furley of Rotterdam, Penn's works were translated into German and distributed among the people.<sup>5</sup> Interesting to note is the fact that several of these works appeared before his trip to Pennsylvania in 1682.

These writings were the result of Penn's three visits to Germany, the last of which was in 1677. Through these visits he established contact with the principals of the various sects. Offering them the guarantee of safety, peace and prosperity in his colony, the Germans were eager to read about the "promised land" in the Americas.<sup>6</sup> (In his various visits to Germany, Spener and Penn, never met; in fact it seems Spener avoided him.<sup>7</sup>) The influence of Penn upon the early German immigrations (1709, 1764) should not be minimized. Had Penn been loyal to the church of England it is quite likely that the history of the Germans in America would be entirely different.

The writings of both Penn and Pastorius left a deep impression on the troubled Germans. It was into this context that Falckner's Curieuse Nachricht was born. The following is a chronological list of writings contemporary to Falckner.

- 1681--Froberg of Nurnberg issues German edition of Du Val's Universal Geog-raphy
- 1681--Some Accounts of the Province of Pennsylvania in America (W. Penn)
- 1682--Information and Directions to Such Persons are Inclined to America (W. Penn)
- ca1686--Brief Account of the Province of Pennsylvania (W. Penn)
- 1690--Vier Kleine doch ungemeyne und Sehr Nützliche Tractatelein (Pastorius)
- 1692--Kurtze geographische Beschreibung
- 1700--Umständige geographische Beschreibung

1700--Curieuse Nachricht (Falckner)

1704--Continuatio der Bescheibung der  
Landschafft Pennsylvania (Cur-  
ieuse and Umstandige in one vol-  
ume<sup>8)</sup>)

### Brief Biography of Daniel Falckner<sup>9</sup>

Falckner was born on November 25, 1666 in Langen-Reinsdorf (Saxony) to Rev. and Mrs. Daniel Falckner. Coming from a long line of Lutheran ministers, Falckner was able to use his father's ample library. His poor health dictated that he spend more time in the library than outside. His studies eventually led him to Halle where he became acquainted with Franke and Spener.

Prior to his trip to America Falckner had visions and fell under the power of so-called "prophetesses" of the Pietist movement. In February 1694 he was sent with Magister Kelpius and Heinrich Köster (by Francke and Spener) to the New World. During this trip aboard the Sara Maria, Köster seems to have rid Falckner of his wildest pietistic notions. However, throughout his life he remained a pietist.

During his first stay in America Falckner gained a great deal of information about his new environs. In 1698/99 he returned to Germany to recruit more settlers. Francke, who was extremely interested in this new land, arranged for a meeting with Falckner. The basis of this meeting was a list of 73 questions he desired Falckner to answer. These 73 questions and an additional 21 became the core of Falckner's Curieuse Nachricht. In



the final draft Falckner included a lengthy preface to prove his orthodoxy. Sachse was able to find this 200 year old manuscript in Halle, and used it as the primary source for his book.

Falckner returned to Germany also for business purposes. He was appointed as attorney for the Frankfurt Company. This later caused a rift between him and Pastorius. ~~af~~After his return to America Benjamin Furley appointed Falckner to replace Pastorius as agent of the Frankfurt Co. Evidently Pastorius had not been completely faithful in his duties.<sup>10</sup> Falckner's leadership resulted in the loss of several thousands of acres of land to a cheat by the name of Sprögel.<sup>11</sup> It is perhaps to Falckner's discredit that his church property was called Falckner's Swamp.

A greater accusation was made by the bitter Pastorius against Falckner. Contrary to Falckner's preface in Curieuse Nachricht, Pastorius accused Falckner of being a spendthrift and a drunkard. This raises questions that history perhaps will never answer. Did Falckner fall to temptations to which a pietist would not admit? Was the Mennonite Pastorius so bitter against Falckner that he would libel him? Time has drawn a shroud around the person of Daniel Falckner. No exact date is even given for his death. Suffice it to say he lived at least until 1741 in New Germantown, where he retired after a forced resignation from his pastorate.<sup>12</sup>

Falckner's life and writing reveal an interesting

period of history in Germany and America. The world was in the midst of change; European culture was being planted and adapted in an awesome new frontier. German Lutherans were playing roles in this dynamic revolution. The church itself was imbued with a sense of curiosity and responsibility. While some of Francke's questions may seem naive, remember that they were approaching a situation entirely out of their ken. In the recent history of the WELS some of our questions regarding foreign mission fields reflect that same naivete. Then, by reading through his Nachricht we can gain a sense of our past and appreciation for what the future offers for our church work abroad.

#### Commentary on the Questions

In general the questions are very practical. Francke intended to strengthen his ties to America by sending more of his men there. If that goal were to be achieved, he needed good, solid answers to basic questions. How do you get there? What do you need? Are there laws we must be mindful of? How should we act. These were, and still are, questions asked by those about to be sent out into God's world. The answers in turn are intended for the novice, the first time traveler. Falckner comes to the point quickly and clearly. He is practical and sincere. When no specific answer can be given, he gives a general guideline and leaves the application open. If he doesn't know the answer, he admits it. These questions reveal that things change little in the course

of time, and man changes not at all. The questions themselves will show this.

Question 1 (p. 83) Falckner mentions the possibility of founding a new colony. Perhaps Francke had prefaced his questions with a remark that in cooperation with the Frankfort Company they were planning to establish their own purely pietistic colony somewhere in the Americas. No other mention of this is given in the history books. Note also his practical advice to avoid duties on linen taken through England.

Question 3 (p. 83f) He demonstrates an adequate knowledge of the human body, urging some sort of physical activity for even the lame. Surprisingly he doesn't mention the study of God's Word during the voyage; this could be understood as a natural activity that doesn't need mentioning.

Question 5 (p. 89f) It is reasonable that the sailors would try to use their saltiest language around the religious folk that happened to be their cargo.

Question 6 (p. 91) Spener's inner light is reflected in Falckner's answer to be careful around the crew "unless the Lord has made a special enlightenment in one...of them". He offers good advice to guard ones possessions and avoid too close relations with the crew.

Question 7 (p. 93) Falckner encourages the use of brandy

to ward off sea-sickness!

Question 9 (p. 95) Getting advice from the locals is typical of Falckner's common sense.

Question 12 (p. 99) He again urges the use of brandy, and mentions the drinking of strong, English beer and apple beverages. We will note such references because of Pastorius' accusations against Falckner. Question 76 simply mentions the trade of liquor without encouragement of its use.

Question 17 (p. 107) Falckner takes careful notes of the fact that European illnesses affected the Indians severely. He offers many such sound, scientific bits of information.

Question 17-44 These questions deal specifically with the Indians, their culture and conversion. Francke and Spener were extremely interested in mission work as were the majority of pietists. Their questions do not spring from idle curiosity, their intent is to understand Indian life in order to gain avenues for evangelism. Falckner offers some suggestions that are still in use today. First of all, he is aware that the greatest possible success with the Indians would come about only if the white man learned the Indian language. WELS practice in the world mission field still operates on that same premise. The second major point Falckner makes is that the spread of the gospel could be done among the young. While this

this does not work among every cultures, we find more grade schools functioning as mission arms especially in inner city areas. The Taiwan field concentrates the bulk of its efforts on youngsters from the middle ages to junior college levels.

Question 33 (p. 125) This question again is evidence that Falckner was well versed in current scholarly theories. Although his notion is not completely correct, it has been proven that Northern Europeans did reach portions of the New World long before Columbus touched the shores of the West Indies.

Questions 49, 50, 53, 69, 88 These questions deal specifically with the value craftsmen in America. It must be remembered that in Germany apprentices and journeymen in the trades were often used as traveling evangelists among the pietists and other sects. Evidently, the leaders in Germany had already toyed with applying the same idea here in America. (later - in 19th cent.)

Question 66 (p. 173) Falckner here mentions that some illicitly sell liquor to the Indians. Already in the 1700's it was recognized that Indians have a certain weakness for alcohol. Ongoing studies generally support this idea as being a physiological tendency, among Indians. The government recognized the symptoms if not the cause already in Falkner's time made provision for it. (Prof. Schuetze in Senior pastoral theology mentioned that early in his ministry a congregational member was

found guilty of selling liquor to the Indians in South Dakota. How little times change!)

Question 69 (p. 179f) Falckner offers himself as an example to the fact that though sickly in his youth, exercise in America had made him strong. His childhood sickness had been mentioned in his biography; here he states that he had overcome even this difficulty in Pennsylvania.

Question 70,71 (p. 183f) Already in Question one the idea of a new colony is mentioned. Here Francke becomes more specific in this matter. Falckner is not entirely enthused with idea stating that "they might still remain with the old colonies." Later in question 81, Falckner offers an ambitious plan for establishing a self-supporting commune or plantation.

Question 81 (p. 203f) His plantation concept is more fully outlined on pp. 231-237. His plans involve the establishment of a farm with servants, which would become the hub of a community of independent craftsmen. His purpose is to provide for teachers and a preacher cost free to that community. The government would be conducted in a Presbyterian manner with all being treated with equality. ~~He particularly stresses~~ that the preacher not lord it over the people but conduct himself as a humble servant. (One wonders what later caused his forced resignation from his congregation in New Jersey.)

Question 98 (p. 223) Falckner too lived in an era when

millennialism was rampant. It seems however that he had not fallen into this error.

p. 241ff. It is amusing to note that Falckner's list of household goods gives specific directions to hide iron implements in a barrel of clothes and bedding to avoid customs duties. Fortunately, the WELS has not reflected this advice of Falckner. As promised earlier, we note again (p. 245) that he recommends a couple distillers accompany groups of settlers. He carefully states "as is customary there."

Daniel Falckner was far from perfect, but he did serve the Lord as pastor and trail blazer to this great new land. The impact his book made on Germans is difficult to estimate. Suffice it to say that he too was another sail in the ship bringing thousands of Lutherans to a land of promise. The man, Falckner, was talented and energetic, with an eye to the practical. We noted the several references to strong drink, perhaps Pastorius' accusations did grow from a seed of truth. Future historians will have the opportunity to amuse themselves over that question for generations to come.

## ENDNOTES

1. Clifford Nelson, ed., The Lutherans in North America (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 23.
2. La Vern Rippley, The German Americans (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1976), p. 22.
3. Ibid., p. 23
4. Julius Sachse, Falckner's Authentic Account of Pennsylvania in the Year 1700 (Lancaster, PA: New Era Printing Co., 1905), p. 17.
5. Ibid., p. 23
6. L. F. Bittinger, The Germans in Colonial Times (New York: Russell and Russell, 1901), p. 22.
7. Ibid.
8. Sachse, p. 8-21.
9. Ibid., p. 22-41.
10. Bittinger, p. 55
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.



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- Bittinger, L.F. The Germans in Colonial Times. New York: Russell and Russell, 1901.
- Nelson, Clifford, ed. The Lutherans in North America. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975.
- Ripley, LaVern. The German Americans. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1976.
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