

FEBRUARY 10, 1969BOOTH SHEPARD

The pervading quiet of the valley is only infrequently broken by a whistle of the Pennsylvania's locomotive operating upon the leased roadbed of the Little Miami Railroad or the quick barking of a dog. To one in a hurry or preoccupied, the present habitation would seem remote and a somewhat unpromising place. Nevertheless, my interest has continued over a period of years in tracing there the establishment of a community known as "Little Germany", later to become the village of Camp Dennison, Ohio.

On State Route #126 Bypass #50, passing north from Milford, near the county line, entry into Little Germany is marked by the beautifully proportioned house built by Christian Waldschmidt and occupied by him in the year 1804. Now the property of the Daughters of the American Revolution and by this organization opened to the public during the months of April to September, on Saturdays and Sundays, when visitors may see the house and historical collections without any admission charge, although an opportunity is accorded to make a tax deductible contribution. The five-room field-stone building is in the easily recognizable Pennsylvania Dutch style and was completely restored in the year 1952. Adjacent are smaller dwellings, a frame and a stone one and one-half story house. The latter may have been the home of Matthias Kugler, who was a son-in-law of Waldschmidt and the person for whom Kugler Mill Road is named. These buildings are today among the oldest structures extant in Hamilton County.

Although not widely known as a historical figure Christian Waldschmidt, a man of varied talents and great energy, unmistakably left his mark on the community of which he more than any other was the founder.

In the year 1785 a party consisting of more than twenty families left the central Rhine District of Germany, in the prospering community of Gengenbach on the Kinzig, where the Waldschmidt family owned and operated a paper mill, and in the

parish Niedar-Schopfheim. Besides Waldschmidt, the other family names in the party were:

Ludwig Freiburger	Kaspar Spath
George Harner	Samuel Ruthi
Johannes Kugler	Hans Rodecker
Andreas Preis	Valentin Weigantz
Wilhelm Landen	Hans Maddern
Joseph Bohne	Daniel Prisch
Jacob Lefeber	Samuel Bockenheim
Hans Leckie	Andreas Orth
Me inrad Apger	Johannes Montag
Christian Ogg	Friedrich Beckenbach

The departure was brought about, it has been said, for the reason that the established Lutheran Church then enjoyed tax support, which was not acceptable to a group of dissenters known as Pietists. Pietists, supported their church but continued, none the less, to be taxed for the established church (Note-a) The sect is described in the Encyclopedia Britannica as:

"*** a movement in the Lutheran Church, which arose toward the end of the seventeenth and continued during the first half of the following century. The name of Pietists was given to the adherents of the movement as a term of ridicule like that of 'Methodists' somewhat later in England.*

"The direct originator of the movement for the revival of a practical and devout Christianity was Philipp Jacob Spener, who combined the Lutheran emphasis on Biblical doctrine with the reformed tendency to vigorous Christian life.** In 1675 Spener published his Pia desideria, or Earnest desires for a Reform of the true Evangelical Church. In this publication he made six proposals as the best means of restoring the life of the church; (1) the earnest and thorough study of the Bible in private meetings; (2) the Christian priesthood being universal, the laity should share in the spiritual government of the church; (3) a knowledge of Christianity must be attended by the practice of it as its indispensable sign and supplement; (4) instead of merely didactic, and often bitter, attacks on the heterodox and unbelievers, a sympa-

thetic and kindly treatment of them; (5) a reorganization of the theological training of the universities, giving more prominence to the devotional life, and (6) a different style of preaching, namely, in the place of pleasing rhetoric, the implanting of Christianity in the inner or new man, the soul of which is faith, and its effects the fruits of life. This work produced a great impression throughout Germany, and although large numbers of the orthodox Lutheran theologians and pastors were deeply offended by Spener's book, its complaints and its demands were both too well justified to admit of their being point blank denied" (Note-b).

Embarking for the new world on the Dutch ship "Het Gulden Horn", the company of German families sailed from Rotterdam and via an English port reached Philadelphia after a seven week voyage. At Rotterdam the party had been joined by an additional family, that of Antoni DeGoyler.

An account of their first years in the western world has been given by Dr. H. A. Ratterman, editor of the German Pioneer, and a former member and trustee of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio (Note-c). He stated in the Pioneer of December, 1878, that he consulted with persons at that time living in the community who recalled an acquaintance with the first families to arrive.

"From Philadelphia the 'Society' went to Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, in the neighborhood of M_nrrristown, where Waldschmidt with Prisch built a paper mill in which the others, with the exception of Bockenheim who stayed in Philadelphia, found work."

"In the fall of 1794, Waldschmidt,** (and several of the company) set out on a journey as representatives of the colony to find out the true information on the (Little) Miami area. They rode horseback over the hills up to the mouth of the Beaver Creek in Pennsylvania. From there they traveled in a barge to Columbia, then a small village in the neighborhood of the Little Miami. They arrived in Columbia in October and took up their lodgings in the tavern of Kasper Schultz.

"At that time Columbia was a place of about a dozen houses, a small log church, a tavern and a Justice of the Peace".

Referring to a determined effort of the residents and proprietors of Columbia to attract and develop industry more readily than Cincinnati, and thus ultimately to dominate the area, Dr. Ratterman recorded:

"But the people of Columbia would not give up. They continuously pointed out the confining position of Cincinnati and the barren land surrounding it, at the same time praising the fertility of the lowland of the Little Miami, formerly the granary of the Indian tribes. They were right in this respect. On the arrival of the first white man the latter had found at the mouth of the Little Miami a field planted with corn by the Indians. The field was named 'Turkey Bottom' because of the many wild turkeys in the neighborhood.

"The six men investigated the surrounding land. They also went to the valley described above. The old Indian path at that time led through the forest from the mouth of the Little Miami to the Indian villages at Scioto, the present Chillicothe. At the northern end of the valley was a ford across the river. The excellent plain was covered with thick birch and a maple tree forest. Trees of unusual diameter were reaching towards the skies giving evidence of the great fertility of the soil. The men liked the place, especially for its two ways of transportation. The Indian path could be transformed with little effort into a driving road. The river connected the settlements of the Ohio River, Columbia and Cincinnati. It was navigable in terms of that time for canoes and small barges. The river arm forming the island was of specific importance for the practical Waldschmidt. It was excellent for building a mill. His immediate estimate told him sufficient water power could be obtained here with relatively little effort for half a dozen mills. He decided that he must become the owner of that place.

"After the men had made their decision to settle here, they went to Cincinnati to negotiate about land purchases with the owner of the place, Judge Symmes, who resided in Cincinnati at the time. Soon an agreement was reached with Symmes who did his best to get good settlers for the area. Waldschmidt and Prisch returned to Pennsylvania to make preparations for the resettlement of the colony, while the others stayed behind to clear the land from trees so building of the necessary dwellings could be started in Spring."

The only known description of the final departure for the Ohio country is contained in a letter of Thomas Pitzwater, an early settler of Clermont County, Ohio (Note-d).

"C. Waldsmith, our own family, and four other families started for this State on or near the first of May, 1796. I have but little recollection of the journey to Juniata; but I recollect that place. The next place I recollect seeing was Bedford Springs; then nothing more until we came to Redstone. Here we were detained near three weeks waiting for our flat-boats. At Pittsburgh we met General Wayne's regular army. I have a distinct recollection of seeing the soldiers firing the cannon; then the drum would beat and the fife would play a short time. The army was then going to Erie. General Wayne died the next October. A day or two after leaving Pittsburgh, Christian Waldsmith was walking on a sand-bar, when he picked up a fife which looked very ancient. The brass on the ends was black and somewhat corroded, and it was full of sand. It was supposed it had been in the river since Braddock's defeat - nearly forty-one years. I saw the fife hundreds of times in after years. They lent it to an old revolutionary fifer, and never recovered it again.

"It was about the middle of July when we landed at Columbia. In fifteen or eighteen days, after the Miami got low, we arrived at our journey's end. Waldsmith went vigorously to work building a mill. Some time in the summer of 1797 I saw the frame of his grist-mill put up. That same fall he started one run of stones, and also two copper

stills for making whiskey. This year (1797) Matthias Kugler came to the territory. I have heard him laughingly tell about his losing his hat in the river, and shoes he had none on when he started. He was landed at Columbia in a skiff; when he arrived within reach of shore he jumped as far as he could, but lighted in soft, black mud, where it was so deep he got mired. After some floundering about, he got to solid ground. He then had ten miles to travel, without shoes or hat, and his legs well plastered with mud. He arrived at his stepfather's the same night. Soon after he commenced working for Waldsmith, and in September, 1798, he married his daughter."

Indian attack, undoubtedly, was a constant concern of the settlers in the period. Not far to the north of the community, along the banks of the Little Miami, three men while hunting small game, were beset by an Indian band of superior force. The three were Enoch Buckingham, Fletcher and Covalt. The latter was of the family which settled Covalt's Station, now Terrace Park. To escape their pursuers they decided to separate - Buckingham to the hilltop behind them, Fletcher doubling back the way they had come, and Covalt apparently sought refuge in a ravine, overgrown with grapevine, hoping to avoid notice. However, when he emerged, he was discovered, was killed and scalped. Buckingham and Fletcher were able to return safely to their homes. Fortunately, for the most part the Indian attacks resulted only in minor casualties.

Within a few short years after arriving in the Little Miami Valley, Waldschmidt constructed the stone and frame houses still standing, and built and operated sawmills, a grist mill, distillery, cooperage, and smithy, warehouses, stables and stockyards, a fulling mill (for finishing of cloth), a tavern and general store, and finally a mill to manufacture paper which was in very short supply, in the growing Cincinnati community. He served Little Germany as preacher, when the regularly assigned minister failed to appear, as the schoolmaster if no other instructor could be found, and as its banker and only source for obtaining

credit.

Throughout the year of 1810 there appeared advertisements in the Western Spy and Liberty Hall, for purchase of rags at the paper mill, usually for the price of 30 per pound. On January 26, 1811, the Spy announced:

"Our impression appears for the first time on paper manufactured at Mr. Waldsmith's new paper mill in Sycamore Township. Much praise is due to Mr. W. for his unremitting exertions to furnish the neighboring printers with an early and constant supply. Nothing appears to be wanting to render the establishment of the greatest utility excepting the care of the industrious housewife in saving her rags.

The ladies in the community are to be informed that we shall hereafter give three cents a pound for rags in cash, or four cents in books and stationery."

Writing on the history of the paper mill Miss Marie Dickore, a well known local historian, states that the first commercial use of the paper of the Waldschmidt mill was for printing the newspaper, the Western Spy (Note-e). Waldschmidt, in any event, had distinguished himself by becoming Ohio's first papermaker.

Advertisements for apprentices also appeared in these newspapers such as:

PAPER MILL

WANTED, five or six boys and girls about 14 years of age, as apprentices to the Paper making business, at the subscriber's paper mill on the Little Miami, to whom good encouragement will be given.

He will give Paper or Store Goods for any quantity of RAGS delivered at his mill.

February 6, 1811. C. Waldsmith.

Several months later appeared the following:

C. WALDSMITH
WILL engage SIX or EIGHT BOYS
As Apprentices to the
PAPER-MAKING BUSINESS

Prom 15 to 16 years of age - of good moral character. He will give ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS in cash, and a suit of clothes worth 25 dollars when free, and nine months night schooling in the time. RAGS will be received as formerly.

April 17, 1811.

The residents of Little Germany by now had "anglicized" their names in many cases. Waldschmidt had become Waldsmith, Prisch was changed to Price, Bechenbach to Peckinpaugh, Bohne became Boone which, perhaps, was the family of Daniel Boone whose brother lived in later years on Shawnee Run Road, in the present Indian Hill, and Bockenheim, the name of one of those directly responsible for the settlement of Little Germany, appeared in the land records of the county as Buckingham.

Providence allotted to Waldschmidt only a few years in which he might build his community and see his various enterprises succeed. His death and also that of one of his children, occurred in a flu epidemic in the year 1814. His estate, which was substantial in those times, was administered in the Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas, a predecessor court to our present Probate Court. The court granted letters of administration to John Keller and Peter Bell on the 5th day of April, 1814 and received their bond in the amount of \$70,000.00 to faithfully discharge, according to law, their duties as administrators.

Matthias Kugler, Waldschmidt's son-in-law, seized the opportunity to acquire the mills and enterprises through court proceedings in partition of the Waldschmidt lands in which his wife was interested as an heir. The statutes, then as now, permitted an interested person who was a party to

the proceeding, to elect to purchase the land sought to be partitioned at its appraised value. Kugler was said to have a reputation as a speculator and, upon his wife so electing, it was not long afterward that the county sheriff conveyed the Waldschmidt Mills and they became known as Mat Kugler's Mills.

In recent times Dard Hunter, author of the autobiographical "My Life With Paper" and widely known for his writings on the history and art of paper making, was the discoverer of an unpublished manuscript attributed to one Ebenezer Hiram Stedman and bearing a title, "Bluegrass Craftsman, Papermaker 1808-1885". Because of its historical interest and picture of the times, Hunter urged among his contemporaries that they undertake the editing of the work. Before Hunter's recent death at Chillicothe, this hope was gratified through the efforts of two members, Dugan and Bull, of the history department at the University of Kentucky.

In Stedman's book are two chapters devoted to his experience as a boy employed at the paper mill in Little Germany. He relates how he happened to leave home at Georgetown, Kentucky with his father, a papermaker.

"In the summer of 1822 the papermill Stopt for Watter. Father Concluded to take me & go to Ohio to work. If Ever a Boy Regretted to leave home i did. To leave home, & Mother, & Brothers, & sisters. It was two much. How i Beged & Cride But twas no use. I had to Go. Old Couglar had sent His waggon to Georgetown to move a papermaker by the name of Webb & his Family to work in His papermill on the Little Miami River 22 miles above Cincinnati & sent word that he woold give imployment to all the Papermakers that woold Come. It was said That i was Best lay Boy that Could be Found. So i had to Bundle up & Start with The Waggon. Never Can i forget my Grief in Partin from the loved ones at home. With what Sorrow did I take from the Hill the other Side of town, the last look of home, sweet Home. I had never Before Left home & now I Fully Believed that i never Should Se home again.

"At that day there were But Few Settlements Between Geotown and Cincinnati. The Country was a Wilderness, Piled with all Kinds of Game. We were Three days Goin to Cincinnati from Geotown. Covington was a small village with but few houses. (The place had been laid out for a town, in 1815 March the 1.) In Looking Across the River the most prominent Building Was a large Stone Mill that (stood) up on the Bank where the present publick wharf is now. I dont think Cincinnati at that day was larger than Frankfort is now. We arrived at old Couglars Mill in the evening of the 4 day from home. I was amongst Strangers. But Wasn't sick, home sick! I Could not Eat nor Sleep for a week. But i had to go work the next day. Father was imployed as Finisher In the Mill. This old Couglar that i went to work for, was a Dutchman.** He was Boss and Proprietor of the Whole property. He had no Education. Could not Read or write His Name. But he had the talent to Drive all this large business & watch the Corners. He was a self Made Man & when he came to the place was an Ignorant green Jerman. He worked for Eight dollars per month For the man that was afterwards His Father in Law. He was sent to the Barn to Frail out Grain with the imployers Daughter & they got mixt up amongst the Grain & Couglar Had to Marry her was the way he commenced.

"(Papermakers in those Days Did Not Ride on Rail Roads, for there were none. They all trawled on foot. They never wanted more Money than would Carry them From one Mill to another & Seldom would they work Longer at one place Than to acquire the money for that purpose. They were all fond of whiskey. I never Saw But one papermaker in that Day, out of thousands, But what would Drink).

"As i have before said, a man By the Name S Smith was Boss of the Papermill. He was a verry Religious Man & was a Methodist preacher. There was a Methodist Camp Meeting held not far From the mill about three miles. Smith purswaded all hands to go to Camp Meeting. All hands went. Father & Smith were warm Friends & as (we) all Walked, Smith preached to him all the way to the Meeting. How Plain i Can Se him Spreading out His hands as he

talked on the way. There was an immense Congregation of People when we got there. We listened till one Man was Don preaching and then Commenced Singing and Shouting. One young Girl that stood near where I stood Commenced Shouting. She jumped on a Stump & Shouted (and) Clapped her hands. Then another fell on the ground & to all appearance fainted. I Brought out of the Crowd & told Father we had Best go to the Mill. All the people were going Crazy. So they appeared to me. Soon all the papermakers got Dry and as There was no Whiskey permitted on the Ground, they Left for the Mill" (Note-f).

Only a few descendants of the pioneer German families and of the work force of the colorful papermakers remain today residents of the valley. But there is some evidence that the influence of the founders of Little Germany persists to the present day. Not long ago the writer prepared the following few lines for publication in a country journal, under the title "Church Building - they did it themselves:

"In keeping with a tradition of resourcefulness started in the year 1796 when Christian Waldschmidt and other pietists settled the Little Miami Valley at Camp Dennison, Ohio, members of the Methodist Church in the historic village have recently completed erection of a Christian education building. These early settlers would be proud of the neat and useful brick structure, surrounded by residences and mature shade trees, and providing generously for Sunday School classes, meetings and church gatherings. They founded the church in 1806. The one-story building is fully equipped and contains 28,000 interior cubic feet, divided into six rooms on the ground level, with a full basement in which a large part of the entire congregation of 100 can be seated for dinner.

"Except for plumbing and bricklaying, the work was contributed entirely by a group of eight to ten men who were cheerfully assisted and fed on the job, by their wives and children. The chairman of the building committee was Frank L. Tingley, Jr., a 39-year-old public service employee whose enthusiasm for the project assured its success. Ages of

the participating builders ranged from 15 to 65, and none of them is experienced in the construction field. The completed structure, brought to a professional finish, has been appraised at \$30,000.

"For years to come this building, while it continues to serve the community, will commemorate the village pride and spirit of these men."

If my news item failed to rally the faithful to rededicate themselves, nevertheless, it gave deserved credit to the builders.

While disruption and a purpose to destroy appear today to be universal, the successors of the Pietists of Little Germany have chosen to build and join in common cause. Their community of approximately three hundred intermingled white and black families living without racial disturbance, shows itself to be forward looking and not altogether disassociated from the past.

References

- Note (a) Ratterraan, H. A., The German Pioneer, December, 1878, pages 5-6.
- Note (b) Encyclopedia Britannica, edition of 1959.
- Note (c) German Pioneer, December, 1878.
- Note (d) Reprinted in Ford's History, 1881.
- Note (e) Bulletin Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio, March, 1947.
- Note (f) E. H. Steadman-Bluegrass Craftsman, etc. Ed. by Dugan and Bull, University of Kentucky Press, 1959.

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