

# Lancaster County and the Swedish Settlement on the Delaware

By GEORGE L. HEIGES<sup>1</sup>

When the Swedish ships, "Kalmar Nyckel" and "Fogel Grip" cast anchor at the present site of Wilmington, Delaware, on the 8th day of April in the year 1638, the formation of Lancaster County was not even being dreamed about. Ninety-one years were to elapse before Lancaster County was to come into being.

The Swedish occupancy of the Delaware Valley continued for a period of seventeen years, and during that time, various purchases of land from the Indians included at least part of present Lancaster County. This fact is stated in the History of New Sweden, which Israel Acrelius wrote in 1758. He said, "The land on the west side of the river [Delaware] which the Swedes had purchased of the heathen, first in Minuit's<sup>2</sup> time and afterward under Governor Printz, or had acquired a right to under agreement, stretched from Cape Hinlopen to the Falls of the Delaware and thence westward to the Great Falls in the Susquehanna, near the mouth of the Conewago Creek."

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<sup>1</sup> The Lancaster County Historical Society held a meeting on April 1 with a program commemorating the Three Hundredth Anniversary of the Founding of Pennsylvania by the Swedes on the Delaware. The speaker was George L. Heiges, of Manheim, Pa., member of the Marker Committee and an authority on "Baron" Stiegel and Lutheran Church history. During the course of the meeting, recitations were given in the Swedish language by Elaine Johnson, who appeared in native Swedish holiday attire. Her mother, Mrs. Hilmer Johnson, a native of Sweden, also recited, and at the close of the session served Swedish pastry and coffee cakes, which she had prepared. The thanks of the Society were extended to those who aided in making the meeting so interesting.—Ed.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Minuit—first director of the Colony of New Sweden.

While the Swedes never pioneered within present Lancaster County with a view to establishing settlements, we are told that they did come this far in their traffic with the Susquehanna Indians, whom they knew as Minquas. Acrelius wrote that the tribes of the Minquas "extended twelve Swedish miles [ninety-three English miles] into the interior of the country, on to the Conestoga and the Susquehanna, where they had a fort which was a square surrounded by palisades with some iron pieces on a hill, and some houses within it. But some of them were with the Swedes every day, who, also, once or twice a year, made a journey up into the country among the Minequesses [Minquas], with their wares for sale. The road was very difficult, over sharp gray stones, morasses, brooks, and streams, which can still be very well seen by those who travel between Christina [Wilmington] and Lancaster."

It may be supposed that since the Swedes journeyed this far into the interior to barter with the Indians, the early Swedish missionaries also came hither purposing in their hearts to Christianize the natives. According to a narrative which first appeared in Proud's History of Pennsylvania (1797) and reappeared in Rupp's History of Lancaster County (1845), a Swedish missionary was stationed at the Indian village of Conestoga about 1710.

This is the story as it appears in Proud's history: "In or about the year of our Lord, 1710, a Swedish missionary preached a sermon, at an Indian treaty, held at Conestoga in Pennsylvania; in which sermon he set forth original sin, the necessity of a mediator; and endeavoured by certain arguments to induce the Indians to embrace the Christian religion. After he had ended his discourse, one of the Indian chiefs made a speech in reply to the sermon; and the discourses, on both sides, were made known by interpreters. The missionary, upon his return to Sweden, published his sermon, and the Indian's answer. Having wrote them in Latin, he dedicated them to the University of Upsala,<sup>3</sup> and requested them to furnish him with arguments, to confute the strong reasoning of the Indians."

The close of the Indian chief's reply, translated from the Latin, is as follows, "Once more—Are the Christians more virtuous? or rather, are they not more vicious than we are? If so, how came it to pass that they are the objects of God's beneficence, while we are neglected? Does he daily confer His favors without reason, and with so much partiality? In a word: we find the Christians much more depraved in their morals than we are—and we judge from their doctrine by the badness of their lives."

Proud took this story from an earlier Pennsylvania imprint, and apparently made no effort to authenticate it. If he had gone further into the subject he might have discovered the identity of the Swedish missionary. At this day, we can only partly identify him as the Rev. Jonas Auren, who came from Sweden in 1697 and preached at Elk River in Maryland, and Raccoon in New Jersey. This one little note by Dr. Wm. M. Reynolds, translator of the his-

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<sup>3</sup> A famous university in Sweden, founded in 1477.

tory by Provost Israel Acrelius, would lead us to believe that the missionary in the story might have been Auren. It appears from his letter to his colleague, the Rev. Eric Tob. Björck, that Auren actually engaged in missionary work among the Indians at Conestoga.

Not long after the arrival of Auren in America, the death of Charles XI of Sweden occurred, and Auren then concluded to remain in this country. He became very intimate with the mystics on the Wissahickon, and with the Sabbatarians at Philadelphia and Providence, and was converted to their Seventh-Day views.

Rev. Theodore Emanuel Schmauk, in his "Lutheran Church in Pennsylvania," writes:

"In accordance with the intent of the trust funds which had brought the pastors across the sea, and with the original purpose of Gustavus Adolphus in founding the Swedish settlement, and with the object of Campanius in translating the catechism, five hundred copies of which were now in America awaiting use, it fell to Auren's lot to go into the interior and preach the gospel to the Indians. Auren gives an account of this work in Björck's "Disertatio Gradualis," de Plantatione Eccl. Sved. under date January 13, 1699-1700. He penetrated as far as the Conestoga region in Lancaster County a quarter of a century before the white men settled there, and nearly forty years before the Moravian missionaries made their appearance on the territory of the Red Men. By a strange coincidence he is said to have preached and impressed his Seventh-Day teachings on the Indians in the neighborhood of Ephrata. This was years before the Ephrata Seventh-Day community was founded. In 1700 Auren published his reasons for becoming a Sabbatarian in Leed's Almanac, under the title, 'Noah's Dove.'"

"This publication by Auren stirred up much trouble in the Lutheran congregations on the Delaware, and Björck answered it by publishing another pamphlet, also in English, entitled, 'A Little Olive Branch, put in the mouth of the so-called Noah's Dove. Printed and sold by William Bradford at the sign of the Bible in New York, 1704.' (It was a small quarto, and the only copy known to exist was on exhibition at the Bradford exhibit by the Grolier Club in New York in 1893.) The year after Auren's arrival, and two years before the publication of his erratic views, Auren laid the corner stone of the old Swedes Church of Wilmington (Holy Trinity of Christiana) on the 7th day, Saturday, May 28, 1698. Auren was also present as assistant at the consecration of Gloria Dei Church, July 2, 1700, but he does not seem to have been present at the ordination of Justus Falckner in Gloria Dei, November 24, 1703. He was called as pastor to the Raccoon Church in New Jersey and, as he there preached his Sabbatarian doctrine, Björck cited him to appear before the governor of New York. The governor permitted him to return to Raccoon Church as pastor, with the understanding that he was to preach the orthodox Lutheran doctrine to his congregation on Sunday, while he and his family were at liberty to keep the seventh day. In November, 1710, when

Auren was living near the Susquehanna River, he was married by Rev. Björck to Lydia, daughter of Hans Giostason. He died at the Raccoon Church, February 16, 1713. He was buried there by Lidenius and Sandel."

Any further light on the subject of a Swedish missionary in Lancaster County, as early as 1700, is lacking.<sup>4</sup> Definitely, it is known that a Swedish Lutheran pastor came to Lancaster in 1739, not however to preach to the Indians, but to minister to the German Lutherans. Indeed, it is only through Swedish pastors who, in the course of their ministerial work or of their travels, came this way, that any connections can be established between the Swedish colony on the Delaware and Lancaster County.

The first house of worship within the present boundaries of Pennsylvania was built by the Swedes on Tincum Island in the Delaware River in 1646. In the steeple of the church was placed an eighty-one pound bell which had been brought from Sweden for the very purpose for which it was used. That bell pealed out many an invitation to divine worship during the years that Tincum Island was first the capital of the colony, and later when it had lost that status but was still an important Swedish community.

Even though the Colony of New Sweden came to an end in 1655, the Swedish population continued to thrive and grow in numbers under the rule first of the Dutch and then of the English. Correspondingly, the Swedish Church prospered and it is remarkable that the nation of Sweden, having lost her colony in the New World, nevertheless continued to send pastors who faithfully served their countrymen in the Delaware Valley for almost two centuries.

By the year 1700, Tincum Island had lost its importance, and in that particular year a new church, named Gloria Dei (Glory to God) was built at the rising Swedish community of Wicaco (now in Philadelphia). In the steeple of the new church was hung the old bell that had pealed out its message from the steeple of the Tincum Island church since 1646. Old Gloria Dei is still standing, and is in an excellent state of preservation—the oldest church building in Pennsylvania and still regularly used Sunday after Sunday.

With the coming of the Germans to Pennsylvania and their subsequent efforts to organize German Lutheran Congregations, the Swedish Lutheran pastors, when called upon to render service, gladly cooperated. In 1739-1740, Rev. John Dylander, pastor of Gloria Dei came to Lancaster and ministered to the Lutherans, who up to that time were without a regular pastor. He was an able man and could preach equally well in Swedish, German and English, and from a contemporary report gave entire satisfaction.

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<sup>4</sup> John Abr. Lidenius, Jr., a Swedish preacher, labored at Little Conestoga about 1752, but "found only a faint greeting, a weary body, and small pay.

Thomas Chalkley, Quaker preacher, paid a religious visit to the Indians at Conestoga in 1705.

In fact, Rev. Dylander made such a very good impression that "the German Lutherans in Lancaster had sent a petition to His Majesty, Frederick I, begging that in view of the confidence which they had in the Swedish clergy, as well as the great edification they had already experienced from their ministrations, His Majesty would be pleased to gratify them by sending a Teacher to their congregation. The matter was referred to the Archbishop and Consistory of Upsala, who thereupon provided and called two clergymen to be sent to America, Mr. Gabriel Naesman of Gestrícia for the Swedish congregation in Philadelphia, and Mr. Hedstrand of East Gothland for the German Lutheran congregation in Lancaster. Both were ordained for this purpose in the Cathedral of Upsala, in the month of May, 1742. But when the question arose in regard to the expenses of the journey for Mr. Hedstrand, nothing could be drawn therefore from the Royal Treasury; neither had the congregation of Lancaster sent such a positive obligation for it, that full confidence could be given to it; nor was there any plan for receiving an advance of one thousand dollars silver for this object, even supposing payment to be made at the minister's arrival. For these reasons, Mr. Hedstrand relinquished the call." Mr. Naesman, who was ordained with Mr. Hedstrand, accepted his call and took up the work at Gloria Dei as successor to the deceased Rev. Dylander. During the years 1745-1747, Rev. Naesman from time to time ministered to the Lancaster Lutherans.

However, after the death of Rev. Dylander, the Swedish Church authorities in Philadelphia had sent Lorentz T. Nyberg, another of their preachers, to the congregation of Trinity Lutheran Church in Lancaster. He came in 1744 and made his home here, thereby becoming the first resident pastor of Trinity Church. Rev. Nyberg immediately became popular, but soon lost that popularity when he threw his congregation into a ferment. Shortly after his arrival, it was learned that he was sympathetic to the teachings of Count Zinzendorf, and as there was very definite antagonism between Lutherans and Zinzendorfiens in that far-off day, it may well be imagined that Nyberg's sympathies made him a suspicious character. Before his first year as pastor was over, he had declared openly in favor of Zinzendorf and the Moravian Church, and gained some followers for his avowed leader. The Lutherans then informed the Governor of the Commonwealth that they were compelled to hear a doctrine which they did not approve or they must resign their church. The Governor kindly informed them that he could not interfere. The church was next closed to Rev. Nyberg, and an unpleasant situation continued for some time. At the height of the excitement, the mighty Henry Melchoir Muhlenberg came to Lancaster and by his good offices brought peace to the congregation. Finally, Nyberg left the Lutheran Church and organized the first Moravian Church of Lancaster. He served as the first pastor of this congregation, and directed the building of their first church edifice on Orange Street in 1746.

Rev. Nyberg's activities extended to the town of Lititz, where he first preached to Lutherans, Reformed, Mennonites and Moravians in the year 1744. The log church in which he preached stood near the road to Lancaster

and was known as St. James Church, having been dedicated by Nyberg on the festival of St. James, July 25, 1744. Here he preached stately once a month for two years, until he left the ministry of the Lutheran Church, when he was then able to hold preaching services in Lititz every Sunday. In the history of the Lititz Moravian Church, the Swedish preacher Nyberg is considered as the third pastor of the congregation. During his pastorate, he laid the corner stone of the first Gemeinhaus (School and Meeting House).

During the years that Nyberg preached at Lititz, various itinerant Moravian ministers visited this section, and for all of them Rev. Nyberg opened his pulpit. Among them was a Swede by the name of Abraham Reinke. Acrelius mentions this man in his history, and from that book as well as other sources, we get the following information about "Abraham Reinke the Herrenhutter."

Abraham Reinke, the son of Peter Reinke, merchant, was born in Stockholm, Sweden, on the 17th of April, 1712. Coming from a devout Lutheran family, he was expected to enter the Lutheran ministry. Instead, early in his young manhood, he cast his lot with the Moravians, and becoming one of their preachers, did missionary work for them in Russia, in England, and at various places throughout Europe. In company with Bishop Spangenberg, he came to America in 1744 and went directly to Bethlehem in Pennsylvania. Leaving there, he itinerated in West Jersey among the descendants of the early Swedish settlers, to whom he preached in their native Swedish tongue. Later, he preached in Lancaster, Lititz, Philadelphia and Nazareth. He is considered as the fourth pastor of the Lancaster Moravian Church and the ninth pastor of the Moravian Congregation at Lititz.

Abraham Reinke had two children, one of whom was Abraham, Jr. Following in his father's footsteps, he became a Moravian preacher, and during a long life, ministered to Moravians at Heidelberg, Hebron, York, Lancaster, Hope and Nazareth. At various times from 1783 to 1833, he served as pastor at Lititz. Abraham Reinke, Jr., was the father of six children, one of whom was Johanna Augusta. She became the wife of John Beck, the illustrious educator of Lititz. His son, Abraham Beck, who was also a well-known educator and churchman, was the father of Dr. Herbert H. Beck, president of the Lancaster County Historical Society. Thus, Lancaster County's connection with the Colony of New Sweden is brought to our very hearth.

There were other Swedes who came to America prior to the Revolutionary War who deserve some little place in Lancaster County annals. One of these was Peter Kalm, eminent Swedish botanist, and associate of Karl Linnaeus. He came to America to collect seeds and plants which might with advantage be transferred to Sweden. Every phase of natural history, and in fact everything and everybody—he even preached for a while at Raccoon, N. J.—interested him, and the many notes which he made during 1749-1751 were the basis of his book, "Travels," which was published in Sweden on his return, and reprinted in the United States in 1937.

In June, 1750, he visited Lancaster County. Concerning the city of Lancaster, he made this one observation, "The Town Hall is located in the center of the town and round about is the market place, almost the same as in Fredricksham [Finland]." He went to Ephrata, and wrote this after his visit: "The doors in the Ephrata Protestant Convent, about thirteen or fourteen miles from Lancaster, are so narrow that only one person can pass through at a time, and if he is fat he cannot get in at all. Our Royal Councillor (Count Cedercreutz) would therefore have to stay out. The doors are made of a single board of *Liriodendron tulipifera* or tulip tree."

Another famous Swede, who visited Ephrata in 1753, was Rev. Israel Acrelius, whose very complete "History of New Sweden" has been referred to several times. Acrelius's History was published in Stockholm, 1758, and ranks as one of the first, if not the first, historical writings relating to the United States, and written by one who lived here. For seven years, from 1749 to 1756 he was pastor of Holy Trinity Swedish Lutheran Church at Wilmington, Delaware, and provost over all the Swedish congregations in Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey and Maryland. Acrelius visited the Ephrata Community in 1753 and has left us in his history, perhaps the best account of life at the Cloisters. That account in full appears at the end of this essay.

Rev. Acrelius arrived in America one year after the German Lutheran preachers, under the leadership of Rev. H. M. Muhlenberg, organized a Synod to which the Swedish pastors were invited. While Acrelius did not attend many of the joint synodical meetings, he became an admirer and friend of Muhlenberg.

Muhlenberg, however, was more closely associated with Rev. Carolus Magnus Wrangel, who was provost of the Swedish churches and pastor of Gloria Dei from 1759 to 1768. Wrangel and Muhlenberg were energetic, earnest men, and their friendship was based on mutual respect for each others talents, education and spiritual insight. It is said that Wrangel never missed a meeting of the joint Synod of the Swedish and German churches. He was in Lancaster at the Synodical meeting of 1761, and took an active part in the proceedings. Synod was held in Lancaster that year, so that all of the ministers could be present at the laying of the corner stone of Trinity Lutheran Church. On the morning of May 18, the members of Synod gathered in the old church building of Trinity congregation, and listened to a discourse by Dr. H. M. Muhlenberg. After the service, they went outside and gathered at the corner where the stone was to be laid. The stone being laid in place, Swedish Provost Wrangel stepped forward and with a mallet struck the stone three times, uttering these words, "In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." Every member of Synod, as well as every church officer, then approached the stone and struck it three times with the mallet. In such manner was the corner stone of the present Trinity Church edifice laid.

In September, 1772, the Synod again came to Lancaster for its annual meeting, and on the night of September 29, Swedish pastor Goeransson of

Gloria Dei preached in English on Luke 5: 1-11. Rev. Goeransson was pastor during the turbulent days of the Revolutionary War, when churches feared that the bells would be taken from their steeples to be made into cannon balls. The bell of Gloria Dei, which was the same bell that had been brought from Sweden in 1644, was therefore taken from the steeple and hidden. Just where it was hidden is still vague, but it has been said that it was taken to Lancaster by ox-team, and buried in the ground until after the war.

The last pastor to be sent to the Swedish churches on the Delaware was Rev. Nicholas Collin. He arrived at Philadelphia in 1770, and began a remarkable career of ministerial labor and scientific investigation. He frequently came to Lancaster to lecture, and to hunt botanical specimens. In 1786, Rev. Collin succeeded to the rectorship of Gloria Dei parish, and continued there until shortly before his death in 1831.

Years before his end, it was tacitly understood that he would be the last of the Swedish pastors. Nothing was changed until after his death, and then the three Swedish Lutheran Churches in Pennsylvania left the fold of their mother church and became a part of the Episcopalian Diocese of Pennsylvania.<sup>5</sup>

The colony of New Sweden came to an end in 1655, the Swedish Church in Pennsylvania lost its identity in 1831, but the contributions made by the original Swedish settlers before 1700, and by their descendants since 1700, to the religious, cultural and scientific life of Pennsylvania will ever be an important chapter in the history of our Commonwealth.

We suggest  
placing here  
the "Swedish"  
commemorative  
stamp issued  
June 27, 1938.

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<sup>5</sup> Many years before this, the German Lutherans and Swedish Lutherans severed their relations.