

# Pennsylvania-German or Pennsylvania-Dutch.

As these two designations are frequently used indiscriminately, and often lead to unpleasant disagreements among those who are related to the people so designated, or interested in their history and literature, it may perhaps be proper to devote a paper to a discussion of the appellation in the Historical Society of a county whose population is so largely composed of persons so designated. The first word in the compound needs no special attention, except to say that its use is, of course, to designate a kind of German or Dutch peculiar to Pennsylvania, that is, a modified, an impure, German or Dutch, due to influences exerted upon the original language in this Commonwealth.

The word German has come down to us in the pages of Julius Caesar, into whose Roman soldiers, the Germans, by their prodigious stature, their invincible courage and great skill and exercise in arms, nay, by their very looks, which for fierceness could not be endured, injected such fear that not only did many find it convenient to discover or invent all kinds of excuses or pretexts for returning to Rome, but those who for very shame remained with the army passed the night in their tents, bewailing their prospective fate, and making and sealing their last wills and testaments, as if about to meet certain death on the morrow.

By the Romans "Germanus was used as the designation of persons belong-

ing to a group of related peoples inhabiting Central and Northern Europe and speaking dialects from which the 'Germanic' or 'Teutonic' languages have been developed. The name does not appear to have been given to these peoples by themselves or to be explicable from Teutonic sources."<sup>1</sup> In this respect the process was similar to that which took place in our own country, where the aborigines were called Indians, not by themselves, but by the Spaniards, because they regarded the lands discovered by themselves as the most eastern coast of India or Asia.

"A view widely held is that it (*viz.* German) was the name given by the ancient Gauls to their neighbors; the Keltic derivations suggested are from Oir gair, neighbor (Zeuss) and from Irish gairm, battle-cry (Wachter-Grimm). According to Muellenhoff, Germani was originally the name of a group of Keltic peoples in North-eastern Gaul, was transferred from these to their Teutonic conquerors, and afterwards extended to all the Teutonic peoples."<sup>1</sup>

"In English use, the word does not occur until the sixteenth century, the substantive appearing earlier than the adjective. The older designations were Almain and Dutch (Dutchman); the latter, however, was wider in meaning."<sup>1</sup>

"The precise signification (of the adjective German) depends on the varying extension given to the name Germany."<sup>1</sup>

It seems, therefore, that upon the boundary assigned to Germany depends the signification of the adjective, and upon this also the decision of the question whether Pennsylvania-German or Pennsylvania-Dutch is proper

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<sup>1</sup>Murray's English Dictionary. (The Oxford English Dictionary.)

and why. Now, Germany's boundaries are a variable quantity. Even in the days of Tacitus they are said (on one side, at least) to consist of mutual fear between them and their neighbors, and this condition of affairs has continued down to this year of grace, 1906. Two recent geographical changes, the one, 1866, contracting, and, 1870-71, expanding, the area of Germany, illustrate the change necessary to be made in the meaning.

Our inquiry may, however, confine itself to the western boundary, and here we are on the firm foundation laid by Tacitus, who names tribes of Germans on the North Sea, as well as all along the Meuse, the Ems, the Weser and the Rhine. It would thus seem to admit of little doubt that the Frisians, the Anglo-Saxons, and the present-day Dutch are one and all Germanic in origin when this word is taken in its most comprehensive historic sense, and that the expression Pennsylvania-German is, therefore, historically and genetically fully justified and vindicated.

“The word Dutch OHG *diutisc*, OS *thiudisc*, means popular, vulgar, and is equivalent to ‘Hollandisch,’ or, in a wider sense, ‘Netherlandish’ and even ‘German’—*deutsch*.<sup>1</sup> In Germany the adjective was used (in the ninth century) as a rendering of Latin *vulgaris*, to distinguish the ‘vulgar tongue’ from the Latin of the church and the learned.” The same thing took place here that had taken place when St. Jerome’s translation of the Bible into Latin was called the “vulgate,” namely the then popular Latin, to adapt it to common use, and when what we now know as common fractions were called “vulgar” fractions, which I remember very well. In the

<sup>1</sup>Murray’s English Dictionary. (The Oxford English Dictionary.)

Allemanic dialect there is an expression "ska dutsch," which means it can express itself plainly so as to be easily understood, bluntly, like our expression, "he talked like a Dutch uncle."

Hence it gradually came to be the current denomination of the vernacular, applicable alike to any particular dialect and generically to German as a whole.<sup>2</sup> In this respect it followed a course similar to the Greek "Barbarian" and the German "Welsh," meaning an unknown, a foreign tongue, and, therefore, unintelligible talking is called "Welschen," to jabber, meaning to talk gibberish, and sometimes "kauterwelsch."

"From the language it was naturally extended to those who spoke it (cf. English), and thus grew to be an ethnic or national adjective, whence, also, in the twelfth or thirteenth century, arose the name of the country, Diutishlant, now Deutschland, meaning Germany. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Dutch was used in England in the general sense in which we now use German, and in this sense it included the language and people of the Netherlands as part of the Low Dutch or Low German domain. After the united provinces became an independent State, using the 'Nederduytsch' or Low German of Holland as the national language, the term Dutch was gradually restricted in England to the Netherlanders, as being the particular division of the Dutch or Germans with whom the English came in contact in the seventeenth century; while in Holland itself dutsch, and in Germany 'deutsch' are in their ordinary use restricted to the language and dialects of the German empire and of adjacent regions exclusive of the Netherlands and Friesland;

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<sup>2</sup>The Oxford Dictionary.

though in a wider sense 'deutsch' includes these also, and may even be used as widely as 'Germanic' or 'Teutonic.' Thus the English use of the word 'Dutch' has diverged from the German and Netherlandish use since 1600 A. D." So far, then, as the historical or ethnical use of the words in question is concerned, we may conclude that either designation is equally allowable, and we shall, therefore, have to look elsewhere for aid in the final determination of the question. In doing so, we must bear in mind that English scholars at Oxford still use the terms Low-Dutch and High-Dutch, where we are disposed to use Low-German and High-German in speaking of these languages, thus including what we call Hollandish and German under the one designation, Dutch. If we examine into the nature of the language called Pennsylvania-German or Dutch as regards pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar, and compare it in these respects with the Dutch properly, so-called, that is, with the language spoken in Holland, we shall find that it has very few points of contact with it, far fewer than with the German properly so called, especially with the dialect of it known as the Pflzisch, namely, the language spoken by the people dwelling in the Palatinate.

Here are two specimen stanzas from "D'r Vetter aus d'r Palz," which show the close similarity, almost identity, of Pennsylvania-German as we know it and hear it, and of the Pflzisch dialect of High-German:

"No-sag ich—du hockscht alls d'rheem,  
 Unns's blue schunn, schier alle Baam  
 Unn kricke Blatter, 's war e Pracht,  
 's hot alles eem norr angelacht."

In zwee, drei Dag, do wett ich druff,  
 Sinn schun die Marzeveilcher uff.—  
 Wass hawwe daun die Kinner do?  
 Die sinn so wuss'—lig unn so froh!

If, now, we compare this, word for word, with Dutch and German properly so-called, to-day, we find:

Palatine and Penn. German	German.	Dutch.
sag	sag	zeg
ich	ich	ik
du	du	du (?)
d'r heem	da-heim	heim
Unn	und	en
blüe	blühen	bloemen
Schier	schier	schier
alle	alle	allen-al
Bääm	bäume	boom
Blätter	blätter	bladen
's	es	het
war	war	was
e	eine	een-eene
Pracht	Pracht	Pronken
hot	hat	heeft
alles	alles	alles
eem	einem	en
angelacht	angelacht	angelacht

A very interesting word is hockscht, which seems to be related to English hug, meaning to squat, crouch, cower, and to German huredich, related to huche, meaning to cower, also—and Swiss dialect, hocke, meaning to sit, hockedich, meaning take a seat, for which the Pennsylvania German says hock dich anne. Another is kricke, which is found in Low-German and Netherlandisch in the sense of get, obtain, in which sense it is also used in High-German, though rather dialectically.

Author: Buehrle, Robert K.

Title: Pennsylvania-German or Pennsylvania-Dutch / by R. K. Buehrle, Ph.D.

Primary Material: Book

Subject(s): Pennsylvania Dutch--Language.  
English language--Dialects--Pennsylvania.

Publisher: Lancaster, Pa. : Lancaster County Historical Society,  
1905/1906

Description: 216-221 p. ; 23 cm.

Series: Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society ; v. 10,  
no. 6

Call Number: 974.9 L245 v.10

Location: LCHSJL -- Journal Article (reading room)

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