From London to Philadelphia, 1742

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FROM LONDON TO PHILADELPHIA, 1742.

The following account of the experiences which befell the first Moravian colony sent from London to settle on the estates of that church in Pennsylvania has been compiled from the journal (in German) of John Philip Meurer, one of the colonists, who was born near Buchsweiler, Alsace, March 25, 1708. He was ordained by Zinzendorf December 9, 1742, at Tulpehocken, and served first there as teacher and then as minister, and later at Donegal, Lebanon, Swatara, York, Macungy, Oley and Allemaengel. His wife, Christiana Kraft, born January 6, 1718, died March 17, 1756, after which he returned to Bethlehem, where he died April 15, 1760.

The "Catherine" in build was a skow, and was purchased by Bishop A. G. Spangenberg, in the Spring of 1742, for £600., and placed in command of Captain Thomas Gladman. After the colonists were disembarked at Philadelphia, her ship-stores were disposed of and finally the vessel sold for £400.

The first Moravian colony for Pennsylvania, left London in March, and arrived at Philadelphia in June 1742. Count Zinzendorf had preceded them about six months before, and partly some preliminary arrangements for their reception had been made, and their arrival was anxiously looked for.

The responsible task of fitting out and organizing the colony had been intrusted to Bishop Spangenberg, then residing in London, and the selection could not have fallen upon a more suitable individual, for to his other qualifications he joined that of personal experience. Seven years before he had fitted out the first Moravian colony which went to Georgia, had himself accompanied it across the Atlantic, had spent four years in Georgia,

Pennsylvania and the West Indies, and had made several voyages between those colonies, some of which were attended with more than ordinary privations and dangers. He was now, after Zinzendorf's departure for America, at the head of the affairs of the church in England, but applied himself to his new duty with his accustomed devotedness, alacrity, foresight and attention to details.

The majority of the colonists consisted of Germans, many of whom had been refused admission by the government of Denmark, and now proceeded to America.

The party arrived in London, February 24th, 1742, and met with the kindest reception on the part of the English Moravians. Lodgings had been provided for them in three different houses in Wild street. The following two days were spent in receiving visits from their English friends, who omitted nothing that might impress the strangers with the feeling that they were sincerely welcome.

On the 27th of February the party was formally organized as a colony. For this purpose they met in the chapel in Fetter Lane, where they were joined by some three hundred members of the London congregation. After the services and Bishop Spangenberg had addressed the meeting, the appointments to the various offices were made.

On March 8th, the single men left their lodgings and proceeded on board the ship "Catharine," Capt. Gladman, which was to transport them to America; and the Rev. Peter Boehler, their chaplain, entered upon his duties.

March 15th, the married couples and the English colonists went on board, and next evening the ship dropped down the river Thames, and proceeded slowly to Gravesend. Spangenberg and his wife were on board, helping to make final arrangements.

Total number of members was 56, and the crew consisted of the captain, two mates and six sailors. At Gravesend anchor was cast, and a lively intercourse with the shore continued for more than a day, for thither many of the London friends had repaired to bid a last adieu. Once more called on deck by Spangenberg, on the morning of March 19th, he commended them to the protection of the Lord in a fervent prayer, and then bade them farewell. As soon as he had left the ship, anchor was weighed, the sails were spread, and the wind being very favorable, the ship soon entered the British Channel.

Navigation at that time was hazardous in the extreme for an unprotected British vessel, on account of the war between England and Spain, assisted by France, in addition to the dangers of the deep, the risk of meeting with French or Spanish men-of-war, or privateers, which were infesting the sea, was to be feared.

The passage down the British Channel presented no difficulties. Soon after leaving Deal, where they had touched, the Captain took a southwest course, and they lost sight of land, March 23d. But the mountain-waves of the Bay of Biscay caught their little bark, and tossed it up and down, like a nutshell, and at the same time, nearly all of them were prostrated by sea sickness. When they encountered a dreadful storm, the rudder had to be secured by ropes, the vessel drifted before the wind, and the waves dashed upon and into the vessel, completely drenching everything. On one occasion, when a sudden squall struck the ship, and the sails and the tackling became entangled, those colonists who could stand on deck, rendered valuable service, by assisting the sailors at the ropes. The captain repeatedly declared himself surprised at, and gratified with the equanimity and courage of his passengers.

Twelve days after the coast of England had disappeared from view, the mountains of the island of

Madeira hove in sight, and about the same time a vessel under press of sails was discovered standing directly towards the ship—but, before approaching near enough to become a subject of uneasiness, her progress was checked, and both vessels found themselves becalmed, and unable to move. Next morning the two ships had lost sight of one another. On this day, April 7th, all hands having recovered from sea sickness, they entered the port of Funchal. Scarcely had they done so, when they were boarded by two English ship captains, who informed them that the vessel which had approached them the day before, was a Spanish privateer. The port of Funchal presented a lively aspect. There was a great display of national ensigns, the flag of Portugal on the ramparts, that of Great Britain on more than ten men-of-war, and a captured Spanish crusier, besides those of merchant vessels of different nations.

The empty water casks were here replenished, and a live ox was taken on board. Some of the colonists improved the opportunity to make a short excursion on shore. They were delighted to find vineyards in a most advanced state, and barley fields ripening at this season of the year. For the first time in their lives they saw orange, and lemon, and palm trees in the open air, and near to them fields of rice and sugar cane, whilst the air was soft and balmy, resembling in temperature that of the summer evenings in Germany.

On the 10th of April, towards evening, the appearance of two strange sails created much excitement in port. There was firing of cannons, hailing with trumpets, beating of drums, and a diversity of noises. Amid this general turmoil, the ship Catharine glided gently out of port, and henceforth kept her head steadily northwest towards her final destination. The wind was favorable, and the boisterous commencement of the voyage was now succeeded by halcyon days, only

the more enjoyable from the contrast they formed to their first experience of the sea.

On April the 18th, toward evening, the monotony of these blissful days was interrupted by the sickness of one of the Sisters, who had a stroke of paralysis, the attack proved to be of only a slight character. April 23d, was the anniversary of David Wahnert's birth day, and, feeling under many obligations to him as their ever faithful and reliable attendant during the hours of sickness, they each composed some congratulatory lines expressive of the gratitude they felt.

This placid course of life was interrupted toward the end of the month by a boisterous sea, in consequence of which some passengers suffered from a second attack of sea-sickness. Hitherto, not a glimpse had been had of the dreaded Spanish privateers; in fact, no ships at all had been encountered, till now, when two vessels were seen sailing in company. This unexpected meeting (April 14th) caused at first considerable alarm on both sides, each party suspecting the other to be Spaniards. Afterwards, when the mystery had been cleared away, an interchange of civilities and presents took place. The vessels being English, and coming from St. Kitts, sent some West India produce, which was responded to by a sack of peas, and an English cheese.

Again, on the first day of May, before morning prayers, a sail was discovered ahead of our voyagers, directly in the ship's course. She soon attracted attention, and created suspicion by strange movements to the right and to the left, without pursuing any definite course. After a while the stranger was noticed to crowd all sail, and coming up directly toward the ship. This dispelled all doubt as to what she was. The captain and crew at once recognized a Spanish privateer of the most formidable class. What a prospect was now before the colonists,—capture, spoliation, personal

abuse, suffering, perhaps death in some dreadful shape. Although from the outset they were in a manner prepared in their minds for such an event, yet now, when the evil was upon them, they did not yield to despair. The captain had no choice as to the course he should pursue. Escape was out of the question, the Catharine, in comparison with the rakish Spaniard, being a dull and heavy sailer. Defence was also out of the question, since there were no arms on board. All that remained was to keep on the ship's course with as much apparent unconcern as possible. Accordingly, neither sails nor helm were shifted and when the vessels had approached so near that everything that was taking place on the one could be plainly seen from the other, the captain ordered all the male passengers up on the deck, with their hats on, thus presenting a spectacle of forty-nine hats on as many heads, unshaken by fear. It was conjectured that a sight which had unnecessarily alarmed the two British vessels a few weeks ago, would have some effect upon the Spaniards. At the same time these men were disposed around the masts in such a manner that all the sails, at a given signal, could be lowered in an instant. The idea was to surrender upon receiving the first shot from the privateer, as it would have been worse than useless to provoke the animosity of the Spaniards by a different course. Slowly the moments of suspense wore away, whilst the most profound silence was observed on deck. The men stood at their posts showing no sign of trepidation. The Spaniards did not move, nor did they fire a single shot. Now the culminating point of danger seemed to be reached, and now, after some moments of agonizing suspense, to be past. The distance between the two vessels was apparently increasing. At length they ventured to breathe freely, and to realize the fact that they were out of danger.

Fervent thanks were offered up to Him who had saved them, when safety appeared an impossibility! The scenes of the morning seemed now like a horrible nightmare, which had happily vanished, but the events of that first day of May, 1742, remained indelibly fixed in the memory of those who had been on board the Catharine. The experiences of this day produced one practical effect in common upon all, namely, that henceforth they held all dangers that might seem to threaten them, of little moment. Nor were opportunities wanting to test the strength of this sentiment, for, during the remainder of the voyage, many severe storms were experienced, some of them accompanied by awful thunder and lightning, and on the 17th of May a strange sail, supposed to be another privateer, hove in sight and gave chase. But after a while, the deck of the Catharine having once more been crowded by all the men on board, the stranger desisted from pursuit, and turned back. This happened when the ship was already in soundings, for on casting the lead, bottom was found at the depth of 35 and 30 fathoms.

The following day, May 18th, early in the morning, land was seen, and in the evening the houses and churches of Long Island were plainly distinguished. The passage from Madeira to within sight of land had lasted thirty-eight days. On the same day a mess of 250 large and palatable fish were caught.

May 19th, was a cold day; a thick fog covered the sea, and prevented communication with a vessel coming from shore, by which the precise direction of New London might have been learned, of which the captain was ignorant. In the evening a violent gale drove the fog away, and the ship out to sea. It was not before the morning of May 23d that a sloop was met, the mate of which was willing to pilot the ship into port. About noon on that day, New London was reached, being the fifth day after the first sight of land had been obtained.

During the late gales the ship had suffered considerably, hence a stay at this place was found necessary, in order to make some repairs before proceeding further.

Not long after the arrival of the vessel, the skipper of the sloop made his appearance on board. He proved to be a native of Germany, had been seventeen years in America, and expressed his surprise at the healthy appearance of the passengers and crew after such a long passage, and gave an account of the miseries often endured on board of emigrant ships, especially when ship-fever broke out on them. He also mentioned, that not long before, Spanish privateers had captured fifteen English vessels, in the neighborhood of the place where the Catharine had had its last sight of one of them.

Next day, about sunrise, the remains of a child, born on board, were buried on shore directly opposite the ship. To mark the little grave, a stone was placed over it. In the afternoon, and on the following day, companies of colonists visited the town. They were kindly received, and Chaplain Boehler preached twice to numerous audiences. Among the hearers was the clergyman of the place. Their visits on shore were reciprocated by a number of the people of the town, with their minister.

Meanwhile the ship's repairs did not advance as rapidly as might have been wished; and the prospect of still further delay was increased by three of the sailors leaving the ship, and taking up their quarters in the taverns of the town. Under these circumstances, the skipper made an offer to take part of the passengers on board his sloop and carry them to New York in advance of the ship. This offer was accepted by twenty-six men. The sloop started the same day (May 26), but meeting with adverse winds and calms, did not reach New Haven before the 28th. "When the people on shore," Meurer writes, "discovered so many men on

deck of the sloop, they became alarmed, thinking we were Spaniards, come to sack the town; but perceiving their error after we had landed, a concourse of all manner of persons gathered around us in the streets, requesting us to preach to them. There is a small University at this place, the students of which came to us with the same request. We discoursed with them as well as we could. Afterwards some of them, together with many other persons, came on board and crowded the deck of the sloop. Those of our company who could speak English, had each of them around him a knot of eager listeners and interrogators, who put their heads together. The students were not satisfied until they had induced some of us to accompany them to the College building.

On the 29th, early in the morning, the sloop resumed her voyage and proceeded as far as New Greenwich. Here the New Haven scenes were enacted over again, with even more intensity of feeling. The first demonstration was alarm, then so deep a distrust that the people would not even sell us bread and milk.

The next morning seven of the English brethren left the company to travel on foot the rest of the way to New York. On the first day of the voyage, during the passage from London to Gravesend, one of the ship's crew had been seized and carried on board a man-of-war, to be impressed into the King's service. His release had speedily followed, yet the men, remembering the occurrence, preferred to avoid the British man-of-war, stationed near the port of New York. The sloop set her sails, and after having safely passed the dangers of Long Island Sound, and of the guard-ship, reached the harbor of New York. What was the astonishment of all to discover here amongst the shipping their own vessel, the Catharine, which four days before they had left at New London. The joy at meeting again was great on both sides; and the passengers of the sloop

lost no time in returning to their former quarters and their old friends. These had made the passage from New London to New York in twenty-four hours, whilst the sloop had spent four days on the same route.

Still the passengers of the sloop did not regret the part which had fallen to their lot. Their accommodations had been rather inferior to those of the ship, but they had proved by experience that a man, healthy as to body, can sleep in the open air, or on the bare ground as well as under more comfortable circumstances; and, besides, they had gained more knowledge of the new country than they could have done if they had remained all that time in one spot.

Those who had remained on board of the Catharine (May 26,) had made frequent visits on shore, and were received with kindness and invited into houses. Captain Gladman, meanwhile, with what assistance he could get, continued the work at the ship with great energy, and on the 28th finished the repairs so far that she was in a condition to proceed on her voyage. When this was discovered by the three sailors who had deserted, and who had imagined the repairs would take a long time, they sent a letter of apology to the captain begging his permission to return on board. The captain, being a very kind-hearted man, agreed to receive them again, and paid their bill at the tavern. He also granted their request to be put on shore before coming in sight of the man-of-war, that they might escape being impressed into the King's service. Humble and penitent they now stepped up to the captain, one by one, and asked his forgiveness.

Everything being arranged, the ship left New London, May 29th, and arrived at New York, as just stated, on May 30th, where they were soon visited by friends.

Some of the late sloop party now went to meet the seven English men, who had left them near New Green-

wich, and conducted them on board. Their arrival completed the reunion of the whole original party.

It might be supposed that with the arrival of the colony at New York, their navigation of the sea had come to a close, but for some unknown reason, this was not the case. On the 31st of May the sails were once more spread to the wind, and the ship left New York for Philadelphia. The passage of the ship was in the highest degree tedious and dangerous, because the captain hugged the shore as closely as possible, probably for fear of privateers. On the fifth day of the passage (June 4th) the ship entered Delaware Bay, and received a pilot on board, but was greeted by the Delaware with a tremendous thunder storm. In the following night great danger awaited the ship. One of the night-watch had separated from the rest, and, with the intention of pursuing his meditations undisturbed, had seated himself on the windlass of the anchor cable. About midnight he arose to seek another place, better protected from the wind, and in rising he accidently disarranged the machinery of the windlass. The consequence was, that the cable began to unwind, finally snapped, and the ship drifted at an increasing rate towards the unseen lee-shore. As soon as the alarm had brought the captain on deck, he had a second anchor cast overboard, but, the windlass being now entirely out of order, it was with the greatest difficulty that the crew, assisted by many of the colonists, succeeded in securing and fastening the cable in a proper manner. Next day, June 6th, many hours were spent in searching for and recovering the lost anchor and cable.

This was their last trouble. The following morning they were agreeably surprised at the arrival on board of some former German friends residing in Pennsylvania, who had heard of their arrival in Delaware Bay, and had taken a boat at Philadelphia to meet them. At ten o'clock on the morning of Thursday, June 7th, the

colony landed at Philadelphia, having left Gravesend on March 19th, 1742.

According to the old style of reckoning, this was May 27th, and Ascension Day. Count Zinzendorf had just closed a service in the Lutheran church; Christian Henry Rauch, Missionary at Shekomeko, and Gottlob Buettner, minister at Tulpehocken, were the first to make their way from the church to the ship. Great was the joy on both sides to meet and to embrace one another. Meanwhile a crowd of persons was seen gathering on shore, in expectation that the newly arrived immigrants were to be exposed for redemption-sale, according to the usage of the times, in the same manner in which the ship's company of an Irish vessel, lying alongside of the Catharine, had but a short time before been disposed of.

Next day, June 8th, (n. s.) all the members of the colony repaired to the court house, Captain Gladman leading the way. Meurer describes the scene as follows: "When we entered the court house, we found the government already assembled. We were told that this country belongs to the King of England, that we were required, in the first place, to take an oath of allegiance to the King and his successors, meaning that we would conduct ourselves as good and faithful subjects, not revolt aginst his Majesty, nor settle on lands not our own. In the second place, we were required to abjure all allegiance to the Pope. One of the members declared in the name of all, that we were ready to promise all this, but would take no oath. Thereupon the members of the government talked a little to one another. At length one of them said, that the oath would be dispensed with, but that he was now going to read something, which we must all repeat after him with a loud voice. To this we had no objection, and we repeated his words with a will, since all our life time we have been good subjects, and intend to be so in future, and, as to

the Pope, we cared as little about him as he cared about us. Finally we had to sign our names to two different papers, one of which belongs to the King of England, and the other to the Government of Pennsylvania. This done, they wished us good success, and dismissed us."

The married colonists were provided with lodgings in town and left the ship. Some Indians strolling through the streets, the first of their nation seen, impressed them with feelings of compassion; but next day (June 9th) Zinzendorf brought Tschoop, the first Indian convert, on board, who had been baptized by C. Henry Rauch. He spoke German and Dutch, as many New York Indians do.

On Sunday, June 10th, the colonists attended service in the morning in the Lutheran church at Philadelphia, in the afternoon at Germantown. On both occasions Zinzendorf preached farewell sermons, previous to setting out on his travels into the interior of the state, and the Indian country.

On Tuesday, June 12th, the seventh Synod of the attempted union of all denominations of German Protestants, was opened at the house of Mr. Evans on Race street. The arrival of the colony was officially reported by the Syndic, and its members were introduced to the assembly. The Synod extended a hearty welcome to all, and accepted an invitation to visit the ship; more than one hundred and twenty attended.

In the course of this and the following week, its former members left Philadelphia in small parties, taking an affectionate farewell of Captain Gladman.

As they reached the banks of the Lehigh, they found themselves opposite a forest-clad hill, on which, overhung by shady trees and concealed by the thick undergrowth, were standing the few log houses, called Bethlehem. Once more they intrusted themselves to a frail craft, such as navigated the Lehigh in those times, ascended the hill, and received a hearty welcome amongst the people who formed the infant settlement.