GERMANS ON THE MARYLAND FRONTIER: A SOCIAL HISTORY OF FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND, 1730-1800. (VOLUMES I AND II)

Abstract
Frederick County, Maryland, in the early eighteenth century had three qualities which made it highly attractive to German, Huguenot, and Scotch-Irish settlers in Pennsylvania who acutely felt the rising costs of land in that colony. The abundance of unoccupied land which was at once cheap and fertile, a legal system which offered a large measure of civil and religious liberties, and the guarantee that property rights would be protected and secure were strong magnets for those seeking better opportunity for themselves and their families. By 1790 Germans formed fully fifty percent of the county's population. Case studies of selected German settlers and their descendants who acquired land between 1738 and 1767 in the region which constitutes today's Frederick County form the basis of this study. The skills and abilities, as well as the timely arrival, of these settlers enabled them to participate in the development of this prosperous inland county and to take full advantage of its special opportunities. Official records--land, probate, tax, court, military, and church documents--provide considerable detail about this generation of Germans in the various aspects of their lives: cultural, social, economic, and political. The underlying theme of this dissertation is the subtle balance between cultural persistence and accommodation that these settlers achieved. In Frederick County the process of integration was complex and uneven. Even though Germans came at a time when they were welcomed and held many values and characteristics in common with the English, they still spoke a different language, observed different religious practices, and had a different cultural heritage. The eighteenth century was a period in which toleration was only beginning; Germans, who were trying to preserve elements of their cultural identity while participating in the new society, encountered both prejudice and formal barriers to the acquisition of full legal and social status. In time the normative effect of the legal and economic structures influenced and modified German behavior. Yet in the process Maryland society was also affected, so that following the American Revolution, which most Germans of this study supported, there was greater toleration of diverse groups. The heterogeneity of our society, long recognized as a hallmark of American cultural life in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, actually had its origins in the Middle and Southern Colonies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Keyword
American history

Citation
1. Frederick County Several famous people in Maryland history came from Frederick County, including Thomas Johnson, the state's first elected governor, and John Hanson, America's first president under the Articles of Confederation. Francis Scott Key, author of “The Star-Spangled Banner,” was born in Frederick and shared a law practice with his brother-in-law, Roger Brooke Taney. Taney later became Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The cannon on the hill overlooking the Inner Harbor is a reminder of the Civil War, when federal troops seized the railroads and occupied Baltimore and Annapolis to keep Maryland in the Union and to prevent Washington, D.C., from being surrounded by Confederate states. Frederick County, Maryland, in the early eighteenth century had three qualities which made it highly attractive to German, Huguenot, and Scotch-Irish settlers in Pennsylvania who acutely felt the rising costs of land in that colony. By 1790 Germans formed fully fifty percent of the county's population. Case studies of selected German settlers and their descendants who acquired land between 1738 and 1767 in the region which constitutes today's Frederick County form the basis of this study. The skills and abilities, as well as the timely arrival, of these settlers enabled them to participate in the development of this prosperous inland county and to take full advantage of its special opportunities.