

THE ANVIL SERIES

Louis L. Snyder

General Editor



IMMIGRATION

The American Mosaic

KRAUS



IMMIGRATION, THE AMERICAN MOSAIC:

From Pilgrims to Modern Refugees

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THE ANVIL SERIES

under the general editorship of
LOUIS L. SNYDER



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May They Remember
The Trials and Courage
Of Their Forbears

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PREFACE

"Mosaic" may be no more accurate an image than the old phrase, "melting pot," but so far as I am aware no better word has been used to suggest the creation of a new society out of the intermingling of varied people making their home in the New World.

The immigration of millions of people into the United States is one of the greatest of all folk wanderings. Much of America's history is bound up with that story. The Americans in their Revolutionary address to the world listed the mother country's interference with immigration as one of the grievances which prompted them to seek independence. The lands from which these people came are also part of that narrative. As told in this volume there is interplay between those who left and those who stayed. Remittances from America were a powerful incentive for leaving and a boon to those who remained. The legend of a "rich uncle" in America entered into the folklore of emigrant peoples.

The expectant faces of immigrants passing through Ellis Island are a moving reminder of the power of America's promise. The anxiety on those faces is a reflection of a heartfelt question: would that promise be redeemed? The memories most immigrants shared to the end of their days were the joy in sighting the Statue of Liberty and then the fear of possible rejection by the immigration inspectors.

I wish to thank Professor Louis L. Snyder for helpful suggestions. I am, as always, especially indebted to my wife, Vera Edelstadt, for sound, critical comment.

M.K.

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Part I

IMMIGRATION, THE AMERICAN MOSAIC

*Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me:
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.*

—EMMA LAZARUS: Inscription on the Statue of Liberty

— 1 —

BACKGROUND: BEGINNING THE WORLD AGAIN

William Bradford and his fellow Pilgrims sadly counted up the many difficulties besetting them in Holland. Rather than face the certainty of a bleak future they were willing to risk their lives on a gamble that a scarcely known land might yield surcease. "The place they had thoughts on was some of those vast and unpeopled countries of America . . . wher ther are only salvage & brutish men . . . This proposition being made publike and coming to ye scanning of all, it raised many variable opinions amongst men, and caused many fears & doubts amongst themselves . . . it was answered, that all great & honourable actions are accompanied with great difficulties, and must be both enterprised and overcome with answerable courages. It was granted ye dangers were great, but not desperate; the difficulties were many, but not invincible. . . ."

At different times and in different tongues in the next three centuries men wrestled with the question: Should we emigrate? And for most of them, as for Bradford, "the place they had thoughts on" was America. Some seventy million Europeans ultimately followed the Pilgrims to distant lands, America claiming nearly two-thirds of them. America's history is largely the result of this vast folk migration: the society created by the intermingling of migrants, and what the country did to them. "Settled by the people of all nations, all nations may

claim her for their own. You can not spill a drop of American blood," said Herman Melville, "without spilling the blood of the whole world. . . . We are not a nation, so much as a world. . . . We are the heirs of all time and with all nations we divide our inheritance." (See Reading No. 1.)

Immigration from Britain. It was from the British Isles that America drew the largest number of its immigrants in its first two centuries. In the England of the sixteenth century people were uprooted when sheep were pastured where once crops grew. The wool trade, already England's mainstay, became even more important as merchant adventurers drew plans for overseas settlements whose residents would be clothed in products of the homeland. The religious revolution which severed the English from Rome gave rise to Puritanism, which ultimately sought refuge in a new England. Rivalry with Spain swelled the nation's pride to seek fulfillment on a stage larger than even England could offer.

Before the Pilgrims made their decision, fellow Englishmen had planted a foothold in Bermuda and Virginia. The narrow limits of the Bermudas fixed the numbers who could be sustained there. Much larger numbers eventually found a home in the colony that owed so much to Captain John Smith. The hardships that his group endured were to be the lot of many who debarked from their own "Susan Constants" and "Mayflowers" in the years that followed.

After the early period of decimation, when four out of five of the first arrivals died, Virginia's population grew rapidly. The early planters were drawn from England's yeomanry or merchant families and, to a lesser degree, from its squirearchy. Farmers and skilled workers seem to have outnumbered laborers among English emigrants in the seventeenth century. Tradesmen, too, seeing a clouded future sought brighter skies overseas.

Generally, it was those who felt themselves "the disinherited, the dispossessed" who filled the passenger lists. Lacking funds, many outward bound had their passage paid for by agreeing to remain as indentured servants to a planter for periods of from four to seven years. In addition to the servant's labor, the planter gained also

the fifty acres set aside for him under the headright arrangement?

It has been estimated that more than half of the immigrants came to the colonies as bound labor. Most servants were in their late teens or early twenties. Emigrants in large numbers left from the West Country of England. The New World was not remote to boys whose brothers and fathers manned the ships that sailed to America from Plymouth and Bristol. Workers in the region had already experienced considerable mobility and the move to America appealed to their spirit of adventure.

Forced Emigration. Not all who went to the colonies left of their own free will. Convicts, vagrants, Scots and Irish defeated by Cromwell, adults and children kidnapped by labor "brokers"—these were shipped to America. Insatiable demand for labor brought to Virginia twenty Negro slaves (1619), but the role of slave labor in Virginia's economy was not of major importance until the eighteenth century.

In some twenty years after 1642, Virginia's population had grown from 10,000 to 38,000, immigration and natural increase responsible, perhaps, in equal proportions. The gold originally sought in mythical mines did appear above ground in the sere tobacco leaf.

Virginia's stability had already been assured when the "great migration" of the Puritans began. After 1629 England's eastern and midland counties experienced an emigration fever that did not abate until 1640. Religious oppression, poor harvests in East Anglia and a depressed cloth trade stirred thoughts of emigration. Puritan leaders in Massachusetts were certain that their people, unlike other colonists who came as temporary residents "chiefly for matter of profit," had come "to plant the gospel and people the country."

The "Great Migration." From eighteen to twenty thousand people left their ancestral shores. Cotton Mather, recounting this hegira, said it was accomplished in about 200 crossings, and because of God's watchfulness over Puritans only one ship was lost. On English streets hawkers sang the ballad "Summons to New England." Former talk of overpopulation in the Old World was now succeeded by fear of depopulation. Lower mid-

dle class people, moving in family and community groups, comprised most of the migrants. For those staying at home who "missed the Mayflower," a letter from overseas was "Venerated as a Sacred Script, or as the writing of some Holy Prophet."

With the success of the Puritan Revolution in England the summons to New England became less insistent; in fact a reverse movement occurred. For decades thereafter immigration played but a small part in adding to New England's population. Before the seventeenth century had closed, her natives were spoken of as "very home-bred people" and "exceeding wedded to their own way."

German, Swedish, Finnish and Dutch Immigrants.

New England's population remained fairly homogeneous for over another century, as did Virginia's. In Virginia, infusions of Germans in the back country added a new element to the dominant British. To the region between New England and the Chesapeake Bay area, Dutch and Swedish settlements gave a flavor different from that which marked the English colonies. Some 500 Swedes and Finns were on the Delaware, too small a group to withstand the pressure of the Dutch. The latter, in New Netherland, in turn were overcome by the English in 1664.

For more than a century and a half thereafter, though outnumbered by the English, the Dutch notably influenced the politics, religion, culture and commerce of the Hudson Valley. The region's folk lore is mainly Dutch-inspired. Even before its defeat, the Dutch colony, numbering 7000, now called New York, included many transplanted New Englanders. Numerous Negroes, plus a small group of Jews as well as other peoples, added to the colony's diversity. The stamp of cosmopolitanism which New York wears is its heritage from its earliest years.

Elsewhere along the seacoast, in the Carolinas, immigrants from the homeland and Barbados, directing the labor of Negro slaves, laid the foundations for the prosperity of the region near Charleston. By the end of the seventeenth century South Carolina had a population of 7000, evenly divided between whites and blacks.

Penn's "Holy Experiment." No colony since the founding of Massachusetts Bay drew to itself such ardent and numerous immigrants as did Pennsylvania from the 1680's to the American Revolution. William Penn's "holy experiment," promising civil and religious liberty, and widely advertised in Europe, was a Utopia which supplied refuge for Quakers, Mennonites, Dunkers, Schwenkfelders and other sectarians. From the first, the Germans, skilled farmers, made the land flourish with rich plenty. Quakers from all over the British Isles gave to Penn's colony, and to its chief town, Philadelphia, a special distinction in advancing humanitarian reforms.

French Huguenots. In the seventeenth century, after the first rush of immigrants was over, entry to most of the colonies was not easy. Discrimination on religious and ethnic grounds was common. One group which found only slight hostility among its new neighbors was made up of French Huguenots. In the second half of the seventeenth century these people, unwanted in their native land, wandered to England and Germany, and finally found a permanent home in America. Their Protestantism made for easier acceptance, while their skills in commerce and raising grapes promised a lift for the local economy. But even the people of this gifted group was suspect, especially during the wars with France. Their most restful haven was South Carolina where their economic power and cultural contribution won them proper recognition. All told, perhaps 15,000 Huguenots came to America, but from this small group came such notable Americans as John Jay and Paul Revere.

Those Who Came in Chains. The demand for labor, the need of speculators to fill up their lands with new arrivals who would guard the frontier, caused colonial leaders to seek additional recruits in the eighteenth century. Dependence on Negro slaves was already the fixed pattern in much of the South, and even in northern colonies, especially New York, the labor force counted many Negroes. By the middle of the eighteenth century, 250,000 of them were in the colonies. Another estimate gives a figure of half a million on the eve of the Revolution, nine-tenths of them in southern colonies.

In the decades after the Peace of Utrecht (1713),

when immigration from Germany attained large proportions, newcomers usually arrived as redemptioners. Their costs of ocean passage were assumed by a purchaser who then had claims upon the immigrant's labor for a period of four years or more. Thereafter his status might be that of a paid laborer or the owner of some land, granted by his employer or paid for out of savings.

The original English stock predominated everywhere in early eighteenth century America. Though emigration from England had slowed by then, a steady, small flow of merchants, professional men, skilled craftsmen, and younger sons of prosperous landowners continued from the mother country. Cheap land and high wages were the magnets for English farmers and mechanics. Free labor in America was earning two or three times the English rate of a shilling a day.

The Scotch-Irish Arrive. England's share in the emigrant tide was now less than that contributed by the Scotch-Irish and Germans. The former had originally been transplanted from the lowlands of Scotland to Ulster in the seventeenth century. In Ireland their pioneering was in the nature of an apprenticeship for the rugged life of America's frontier. In the fifty years before the Revolution some 250,000 of these staunch Presbyterians left northern Ireland for the New World to break ground "on bare creation."

The exodus was hurried by religious discrimination practiced by Anglicans, but more significantly, by anger against absentee landlords and high rents when leases expired. Crop failures in 1716-1717 prodded the hesitant. Jonathan Swift described the gloom in Ireland, where the old and sick lay "dying and rotting, by cold and famine . . . And as to the younger labourers they cannot get work and consequently pine away from want of nourishment . . . if at any time they are accidentally hired to common labour, they have not the strength to perform it." These Ulster Scots carried with them to America a deep hostility to England which was inbred in succeeding generations. It was the Scotch-Irishman who won the reputation of being the model frontiersman, "the long-limbed pioneer with the long knife, the long gun, and the long memory."

All the colonies became home to the Scotch-Irish. Like others before and after, those who prospered sent back word of their good fortune. Success stories, said a British official, "raised a spirit of Emigration amongst others of the like station in this Country next to Madnes." Fifty-four vessels from Ireland docked in New England in the six-year period 1714-1720, and even more entered harbors to the south. Western Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine soon had Scotch-Irish settlements. New York's Ulster and Orange counties still reflect the origins of these settlers.

Pennsylvania became the objective of thousands of these immigrants. "It looks as if Ireland is to send all its inhabitants hither," wrote a hostile colonial (1729); "last week not less than six ships arrived, and every day, two or three arrive also. The common fear is that if they continue to come, they will make themselves proprietors of the province." Ships to Ireland carrying flaxseed from Philadelphia and from Newcastle, Delaware, brought back emigrants. From Irish ports, in the five-year period to 1774, came 152 ships, loaded with 44,000 passengers, most of them in their twenties.

While Pennsylvania got the largest share, New Jersey and Maryland began to seem equally inviting. Like the Germans, many Scotch-Irish trekked down the valleys from Pennsylvania settling in the back portions of southern colonies, beginning the world again.

Also the Highland Scots. From Scotland itself, in the eighteenth century, came Highlanders, many of whom had been defeated as rebels against the Crown. Added to political discontent were grievances at grasping landlords, and despair at crop failures and diseased cattle. The ease of acquiring land that lay to the west had strong appeal. When asked why they were leaving many answered "for Poverty and to get Bread."

In the dozen years before the Revolution some 25,000 Scots migrated in ~~family groups~~ to the colonies. The roads in Scotland were filled with young and old bound for the western sea. Thirty families agreed to meet at Killin in Perthshire in May, 1775. After a night of restless sleep in barns, they came to attention at the sound of bagpipes in the morning. "Dressed in their best attire and some of

them armed in the Highland fashion in spite of the law, they settled the order of march, bade farewell to their friends and relatives and set off down the road." It led to the ships at Greenock. In another group of 200 was an old lady of eighty-three marching behind her son playing "Tullochgorum" on his bagpipes. Infants, in baskets slung on their fathers' backs, were in the emigrant throng. They found homes in upper New York and in North Carolina.

Germans go to Pennsylvania. To the non-English stock in the colonies were added a large number of Germans, mainly from the Palatinate. Fifty thousand set sail for America in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, to be followed by more thousands. At the half way point in that century 100,000 were in the colonies, Pennsylvania housing seventy per cent of them. On the eve of the Revolution one-third of that colony's people were German.

Germany had been desolated by long stretches of war. Catholic princes persecuted Protestant sects. The harshest winter in a hundred years, starting early in October, 1708, turned rushing rivers to ice, froze wine and felled birds. Flight from the stricken region brought thousands to overcrowded London. Thinking to relieve England of the burden of refugees, officials shipped the Palatines to New York (1709) to produce supplies for the Royal Navy and to help guard the frontier against the French. Resentful at mistreatment in New York (where they could not gain title to the land won by their sweat and skill), most of them left for a more hospitable neighbor, Pennsylvania.

The attractions of Penn's colony were depicted in the extravagant language of real estate promoters. In Germany, recruiting agents ("Newlanders") had willing listeners. (*See Reading No. 2.*) The Rhine saw a steady procession of boats heading for North Sea ports, Rotterdam in particular was flooded with Germans waiting to board ship. At times 1000 a week poured into the busy city. Envious onlookers eagerly questioned the emigrants about America.

Travelers were told by Penn's agents that fare for an adult was five pounds, fifty shillings for a child, "Sucking