

GERMANS IN NOVA SCOTIA

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WE have quite a good knowledge of the circumstances leading to the first German settlements in Nova Scotia in the fifties of the eighteenth century. That is due to the fact that German immigration was invited for political reasons from the side of the British Government. The settlements were organized, and for a couple of years financially assisted, by succeeding British Governors, and therefore public documents had to be issued about the military and civil administration of the new communities and of the public expenditure involved. A good many of these documents have been preserved.

When I spoke of an invitation of German settlers, I was not quite correct. The British Government was less concerned with the nationality than with the religious status of the settlers. It wanted to attract Protestants, no matter whence they came. To understand that attitude, we have to take into consideration the peculiar situation the British Government was in at that time.

The Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, concluded between Great Britain and France in 1748, had established once more British power over Nova Scotia. Halifax had been founded in 1749, and made the capital of the province instead of Annapolis. But there were very few British settlers outside these two places. The country was nearly exclusively inhabited by the French "Acadians" who, though *de jure* British subjects, had proclaimed themselves to be "neutrals" during the English-French war and afterwards, and who were deeply distrusted by the Government. Their allegiance to France was kept alive by their Roman Catholic priests—among them the famous La Loutre—whom the Governors in Halifax suspected of acting on the direction of the French Governors in Quebec. In order to counterbalance the numerous and very prolific Acadians, it seemed a good policy to bring Protestant settlers into the country, who owing to the difference in religion would not join the French party in cases of emergency. British settlers would have been best liked, of course. But from Great Britain there was little emigration at that time, and attempts to attract immigrants from the New England states also failed at that early period owing to the strained English-French relations which made further warfare

likely in the province. Therefore the British Government decided to attract Protestant settlers from Germany, France and Switzerland.

Publications were distributed in Germany extending, on behalf of the British Government, an invitation to settle in Nova Scotia, and explaining the facilities the immigrants would enjoy. Agents were appointed to solicit settlers, and to provide for their transportation. Evidently the contracts made with these agents had not been drafted with sufficient care; for when the ships containing the settlers arrived at Halifax, it was found that some of the immigrants were old and sickly and entirely unfit for settlement. (Besides, the unscrupulous agents, in order to make the best use of the space on the ships, had persuaded the poor people to leave all their property behind, including even their bedding.) But the rest proved to be very capable for their purpose, and the Governor in his letters to the Lords of Plantation and Trade—the board presided over by Lord Halifax which had organized the soliciting of the immigrants—speaks highly of their qualities. Between 1750 and 1753 about 2300 immigrants were brought in that way to Halifax. The new immigrants were generally referred to as Germans, or Dutch. But “Dutch” was simply a deformation of the German word “Deutsch”, and thus by no means indicated that the settlers came from Holland. The word “Dutch” still remains in the name “Dutch Village”, applied to the place where the immigrants were housed in barracks after their arrival, and in the old Dutch Church on Brunswick Street, Halifax, erected in 1755.

Evidently Germans formed the great majority of the immigrants, and therefore gave the name to the whole group of newcomers. Official records speak more correctly of “Germans and other foreigners.” As a matter of fact, there were quite a number of French and some Swiss families among them. The French came chiefly from Montbéliard, a small district in the west of France not far from the border of Lorraine, which under the German name of Mömpelgard had been part of the German duchy of Württemberg up to the French Revolution. It was known as a stronghold of Reformation. The Germans came mostly from the electorate of Hanover, which at that time was under the English Crown, and some also from the Palatinate and the upper Rhine.

The original plan of Hopson, then Governor of Nova Scotia, was to settle the new immigrants among the Acadians, giving to the Government reliable supporters in these districts. But this plan proved to be impracticable, owing to the open hostility of the Acadians, who threatened to leave the country. Evidently the

idea of the expulsion which took place in 1755 had not yet been conceived. Finally, Governor Hopson decided to send the settlers down to a place on the south shore that was known for its excellent harbour and fertile land. 1453 of the newcomers were brought there in 1753, and given grants of land. The place was called Lunenburg, the name being taken from Lueneburg, a beautiful old town in Hannover.

While the history of the foundation of Lunenburg, and its numerous adventures during the Seven Years War which had broken out only two years after its founding, have often been expounded, very little is known about the development of community life in that early period. It should prove a story of great interest, for we have to realize that Lunenburg was by no means a homogeneous settlement. Its members differed in language, nationality and religion. That does not mean much to-day, where the large settlements in the prairies have been formed from immigrants from all parts of the world. But in those times a scarcity of means and the need of defence against Indians and other enemies required close cooperation among all members of the community. It would certainly take some time and require many sacrifices before the settlers, showing so large differences among themselves, became a real community. Some documents kept in the Provincial Archives of Nova Scotia and, as far as I can judge, unknown to DesBrisay, the historian of Lunenburg*, throw an interesting light on these developments. It is a sort of chronicle of the Lutheran community in the years between 1753 and 1772, in which latter year a minister was appointed and a regular parish established. The tale of the chronicle is confirmed and supplemented by other documents kept in the Provincial Archives.

Among the early settlers the majority seems to have consisted of German Lutherans from Hannover. It was evidently on account of them that the town was named Lunenburg, to commemorate their old home. The chronicler says that in 1754 there were 250 German families in Lunenburg, while the French did not count more than 50 families. The rest of the community must have been very small at this time. Even as late as 1767 there were in Lunenburg only 13 English, 4 Scots and 25 Americans, compared with 1497 "Germans and other foreigners".

As far as the religious state was concerned, the Germans and Swiss were Lutherans and Reformed, while we may assume that the majority of the French were Reformed. But there was another

*Part of them has been used in D. L. Roth's book, *Acadia and the Acadians*. 3rd ed. Utica, N. Y. 1891.

very interesting, small, religious group among the settlers: in a letter of the first Anglican rector of St. John's Church, dated 1754, mention is made of "Anabaptists" in Lunenburg.¹ The sect of "Anabaptists", which has very little connection with the Baptist Church, played a very important part in the struggle following the establishment of Reformation in Germany. They were a social as well as a religious movement, and their leaders developed a rather extravagant programme that brought them into conflict with Catholics as well as Protestants. The capture of Munster in Westfalia in 1534, where Anabaptists had established a sort of theocracy, gave their cause a deadly blow in Germany. The members of the sect, as far as they were not wiped out by persecution or had not emigrated, went back to Roman Catholicism during the Counter-Reformation. By what means could a group of them come to Lunenburg? The problem is solved when we study the history of Montbéliard. One discovers that at the end of the sixteenth century, attracted by the tolerance of the dukes of Wurttemberg, a group of Anabaptists went from Frisia on the German north seacoast to Montbéliard, where they still form a small community up to the present day. Evidently some of these Anabaptists came to Lunenburg. There they were able to assume the habits of life of their ancestors in Frisia, a seashore noted for its efficient sailors and fishermen.

When in 1753 the settlers left Halifax for Lunenburg, Governor Hopson had promised them that he would instantly request His Royal Majesty to grant a salary for a German minister. It seems that steps had been taken in that direction by patrons of Lunenburg in 1754. Unfortunately, in the summer of that year the so-called "Rebellion of Lunenburg" took place, a movement the cause of which has not yet been investigated thoroughly. Historians are generally inclined to condemn the Germans for their behaviour, but Murdoch says in their defence: "From the general industry and uprightness they have always evinced, we may fairly conclude that the German settlers had just cause of complaint, although their conduct may have been rash."² Our chronicler declares that Germans were not to blame for the said events. But guilty or not, they were suspected by the Government. They were confounded with the French Acadians, and fears were expressed that they might also try to become neutrals in future conflicts. Events have proved that this fear was unjustified.

The chronicler may be right when he thinks that the events of

1 DesBrisay, M. B.: *History of the County of Lunenburg*. Jorost. 2nd edition, 1895, p. 81

2 Murdoch: *History of Nova Scotia*; vol. 2, p. 227

the rebellion contributed to frustrate the wishes for a German minister. Instead there was sent to them in 1754 Reverend Jean Baptiste Morreau as a minister of the Church of England, who founded St. John's Church, erected at the expense of the Government. Morreau was French, and had been formerly a Roman Catholic priest and rector of St. Matthew's Church in Brest before he became ordained by the Church of England. The chronicler thinks that he was appointed to serve the French among the settlers. But we know from other sources that he had been sent to Lunenburg by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel as a missionary chiefly among the Germans. It was his task to form a parish of the Church of England for all the Protestant settlers of Lunenburg. In that he was not successful. According to DesBrisay,¹ he had in the beginning 56 families in his parish; and as there were 300 altogether, we can see that the majority of the settlers did not join it. The Germans in many letters to the Governor reminded him of the promises given to them in Halifax. They complained that boys and girls grew up like heathen, lacking proper instruction. Some new vague promises were given in answer, but nothing was done. So in 1760 the Germans decided to appoint their own schoolmaster at their expense. But they had to encounter all sorts of difficulties from opposing people. Things seemed to improve when in 1762 a second minister was appointed to St. John's Anglican Church, Reverend Robert Vincent. He seems to have been more diplomatic than Mr. Morreau. He even agreed to employ the German schoolmaster, and to give him a salary of 5 pounds. But soon it became apparent, says the chronicler, what Vincent really had in mind. German teaching was entirely forbidden in the school. Children had to learn English, or were not admitted at all.

Now the parents, most of whom did not understand English, asked that the children should be taught first the Christian Doctrine in German, and that they should learn English afterwards. The attendance of the school decreased rapidly, and the Reverend Robert Vincent accepted a compromise. English was taught in the morning, German in the afternoon. The children were not admitted to the German course if they did not take also the English class. However, the Germans had lost confidence, and the attendance at the school was not what it had been before. Vincent died in 1762. After his death Reverend Paulus Bryzelius, a Swede and former Lutheran minister, was ordained by the Bishop of London "in charge of the German mission in Lunenburg." According to DesBrisay, he was very successful. He held three services every

1 *Ibid.*

Sunday in English, French and German respectively. Prayer-Books in German were sent out from home for the congregation, and he translated Lewis's catechism. But here difficulties set in, for Bryzelius, like his predecessor, tried again to induce the Germans to join the Church of England. After his arrival he administered to them Holy Communion according to the Lutheran rite; but when he had invited the children of Lutherans and Reformed to prepare themselves, he administered to them the Sacrament according to the rite of the Church of England. After that had happened, a new separation took place in the community. The German Lutherans resumed their custom of coming together for prayer in the home of one of their members—chiefly in the house of Casper Bromm in the northwest range. There hymns were sung, and sermons read.

At one of these meetings at Easter, 1768, it was decided to send a deputation to the authorities in order to request again a German minister. It is not known whether this deputation was sent to Halifax or to the local authorities in Lunenburg. The latter seems more likely. The deputation explained that the German community had been without a minister for fifteen years. Children had grown up who had not been confirmed and had never attended Holy Communion. It seemed intolerable, the deputation explained, that children should be brought up like heathen savages. Therefore the community was prepared to appoint a minister at their own expense, but it wished to be helped by the proper authorities. The deputation met with a very bad reception. Obstacles of all sorts were put in their way, and they were asked how they could dare to appoint a minister. Later a dispute arose about the Lutheran interpretation of Holy Communion, and the head authority tried to convince the Lutherans that their view was wrong. Finally the deputation was refused any kind of assistance.

But the German community was not discouraged. In 1770 they started to build a church, which was finished May 22nd of that year. Then a meeting was held, and 39 members of the parish present resolved to take up connection with Reverend H. M. Muhlenberg in Philadelphia, Chairman of the Lutheran Synod for Pennsylvania, and one of the outstanding clergymen of that province. He was urgently requested to send a German preacher to Lunenburg. Several letters were sent to him, but his answers were intercepted and never reached the hands of the Lutheran community. Warned by that experience, the community chose the way of direct communication. One of them, Mr. Unstaett, travelled to New York at that time, and was asked to act there on behalf of the community. He went to see Reverend J. L. Gerock, minister of the German Lutheran parish in

New York, and explained to him the difficulties the Lunenburg settlers were in. He asked for a Lutheran minister to be sent to Lunenburg, and made on behalf of the community the following offer.

The minister was to receive a salary of 50 pounds "Nova Scotian lawful money", the pound equivalent of 4 Spanish thalers. He should also receive 40 bushels of grain, half corn, half barley. He should be given a sufficiently large vicarage, and 20 cords of firewood to be brought to the vicarage. He should have the use of 30 acres of cultivated land. The use of this land should be left to the widow and orphans, and an additional small pension should be given to them by the thankful parish. Finally, the expenses of journey and moving should be paid. In case the minister should not be satisfied with his salary and other income for him and his family, or by war and other misfortunes, sent by God, living should become more expensive, a thankful Christian parish promised to raise his income according to Christian equity so that its chaplain and leader should not suffer from want while living in the community.

The conditions were confirmed in a letter to Reverend J. L. Gerock dated May 7, 1717, and signed by 12 prominent members of the community. The justices of the peace were informed about all the measures taken, and asked to certify the truth of the statements made in the letter. They refused to do so, however, and again tried to put obstacles in the way of the community.

In April of 1771 the Lutherans received a letter from Mr. Unstaett, requesting on behalf of Mr. Gerock a bill of exchange for 10 or 12 pounds. It proved to be impossible to get a bill of exchange in Lunenburg, so 10 pounds in gold were sent to Mr. Henry Kuhn in Halifax that he might forward it to New York. Mr. Kuhn found no opportunity to do so in a sufficiently safe manner, so the gold remained with him. The parish did not get any further notice, the chronicler thinks because the money had not arrived. So they sent out another messenger, Mr. Lawrence Conradt, this time to see Reverend H. M. Muhlenberg in Philadelphia. To him the case was presented by Conradt, together with Unstaett who meanwhile had proceeded to that city. They also saw a young Lutheran minister, and tried in vain to persuade him to go to Lunenburg. Mr. Conradt was asked to wait for the Lutheran Synod, but, unable to do so, he returned to Lunenburg. So Mr. Unstaett had to present the case to the Synod, which expressed its sympathy with the request of the Lunenburg community, and resolved it would do its best to find a suitable minister for them. However, the matter was delayed in Philadelphia, so the Lunenburg people started writing again to Reverend H. M. Muhlenberg. We do not know exactly the

contents of their letters, but we may suppose that they complained about the treatment given to the whole question by the Church of England and the public authorities in Nova Scotia. Muhlenberg's answer is a long, carefully styled letter. It is the most interesting document of the chronicle, and gives valuable information about the relations of the various churches of that time. It seemed worth while to translate part of it literally. It runs as follows:

I am now thirty years in the American desert, but I did not come at my own instance, but was properly sent to gather and keep together the scattered Lutherans in Pennsylvania. We have seventy large and small Protestant parishes in Pennsylvania who keep more or less together. We are surrounded by many sects and parties who would rather see the ruin than the establishment of our parishes. Our next and best friends are the honest and pious preachers, elders and parishioners of the English Established Church. They like, estimate and assist us as much as they can, and we do them favours as is in our power. They allow us complete freedom to live upon God's Word and upon the doctrine of our creed, and we do not grudge them the privilege of having a mother church. The doctrines of the English Church are more similar to that of our Protestant Church than any other in the whole world. Therefore we have always striven to live with them in peace and friendship. They have asked the Swedish ministers, as the eldest Lutherans, and also me to preach in their churches, and we have invited them to preach in ours.

Turning now to the case of the Lunenburg people, the letter goes on:

Our gracious King, the English constitution and the laws in Lunenburg do not compel anybody to join the established mother church, but they allow and grant to us Lutherans, as well as to all other Protestants, full freedom to build our own churches and to appoint our own ministers. Now since as you say one hundred families have parted from the English mother or high church, and have built their own church, and wish to have a proper Lutheran preacher from our Lutheran Synod, surely the worldly authorities which we have to honour according to God's Word will not do anything against it, provided the case is brought decently before them. We agree to send you a minister next spring, but you must not for that reason be opposed to the English mother and high church, and you must keep in estimation their preachers and missionaries. You must not criticize them, but behave humbly and devotedly towards them. . . . Besides, nothing must be done in secret as if you were to establish a new sect. If you want us to assist you, it must be done in public and with the knowledge of the authorities. My dear friends in Lunenburg do not wish that a respectable and properly ordained minister should not be allowed to communicate honestly as a clergyman and neighbor with other proper ministers.

The cleverness and diplomacy of this letter is admirable. Mr. Muhlenberg writes in a way that must satisfy at the same time the people in Lunenburg, the public authorities in Nova Scotia and the Church of England. He emphasizes the importance of harmonious relations between the Church of England and the Lutheran Church. He requests the Lutherans of Lunenburg to be obedient to the authorities, and on the other hand he states clearly that the public authorities have no right to prevent the Lutherans from separating from the Church of England and from having their own minister. It seems that he had written the same way to a committee or board of correspondents of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, formed at Halifax in 1769.¹ That committee thanked him for his attitude towards his friends in Lunenburg, and emphasized at the same time that no measure should be taken to disturb or prevent the Calvinists or Lutherans in the full exercise of their religious principles and mode of divine worship.²

In a reply to Mr. Muhlenberg the Lunenburg people justified their attitude. They emphasized their loyalty towards the public authorities. Before them they had repeatedly brought their requests for a minister, but always in vain. They had asked, so they wrote, for a place to build their church upon, but had never received an answer. Later they had informed the authorities they would start building at a place bought by the community, and had asked them to be present at the starting celebration, but nobody appeared. They met with obstacles when they held services in the church later. When after the receipt of Muhlenberg's letter they had asked the authorities to give them a letter of recommendation to be enclosed in their reply to Muhlenberg, they were refused. The chief magistrate of Lunenburg, a Swiss—we may assume it was Mr. Zouberbneher—told them he had not given a recommendation to the Reformed community, and he therefore could not give one to the Lutherans either, but he assured them that according to the English law they were at liberty to do what they liked.

Now the community was hoping to get a minister very soon, but they were disappointed once more. It seems that new intrigues started from those opposed to the plan, and these opponents sent letters to Philadelphia warning Muhlenberg not to comply with the wishes of the community. But there came unexpected help from the side of a member of the Reformed parish, Mr. Kaulbach. The chronicler does not give his first name, but we are justified in believing it was Mr. Martin Kaulbach, one of the most prominent

¹ *Report of the Nova Scotia Historical Society*. vol. 1 (1878), p. 48.

² Des Brisay p. 84.

among the German settlers who had taken a leading part in the establishment of the Reformed parish in 1770. Mr. Kaulbach went to Philadelphia for business purposes at the end of 1771, and discussed the cause of the Lutherans there with Mr. Muhlenberg. He also went to see a Lutheran clergyman from New Hanover, Wildbahn by name, who had been chosen by the Lutheran Synod to go to Lunenburg. But the 9 German settlements in his province of which he was in charge would not let him go finally, and Mr. Kaulbach had to report that misfortune home. When the news, says the chronicler, reached Lunenburg, there was great sorrow and lamentation among old and young in the community, and rejoicing among their enemies. New letters were sent to Muhlenberg and Gerock, and also to Mr. Kaulbach, who still acted on behalf of the community. It was he who proved successful at last. On his way home he stopped in New York and called on Gerock. The latter recommended a Lutheran minister, Reverend Friedrich Schulz of Wurttemberg in the province of New York. Schulz went to New York, saw Gerock and Kaulbach, and agreed to come to Lunenburg for a trial. Kaulbach took him with him, and both arrived safely in Lunenburg. At the first of November 1772 Rev. Fried. Schulz preached his first sermon in the church which he consecrated and gave the name of Zion's Church. His connections with his parishioners do not seem to have been harmonious all the time. He left Lunenburg in 1782, and was succeeded by Reverend J. G. Schmelzer, who came over from Germany. The Lutheran parish in Lunenburg was now firmly established, and did not meet with any further opposition.