Introduction of Joe Kindig
October 25, 2014

Hello and welcome. My name is Kristin Graham. I am on the Board of the HHP and wish to welcome you today to Joe Kindig's lecture on the Domestic Environment of the Early Pennsylvania Settler.

Joe Kindig's list of accomplishments is wide-ranging in the fields of history, early American furniture, decorative objects and architecture. His diverse interests are reflected in his written works, such as The Philadelphia Chair, 1685-1785, Artistic Ingredients of The Long Rifle, The Architecture of York County, and as a contributor to Wright's Ferry Mansion: The House and The Collection, as well as his articles on topics as varied as perspective glass and upholstered Windsor chairs.

He has worked with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Winterthur, the Baltimore Museum of Art, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, among others. He has lectured for six decades at museums around the country, and has served on many boards, including the Baltimore Museum of Art, the von Hess Foundation, the Historical Society of York, and was a founding member of the American Decorative Arts Trust.

- *The Pennsylvania Governor's Distinguished Citizen Award (1981)*
- *Award of Merit from the Antiques Dealers Association of America (2008)*
- *York County Heritage Trust's Chair Award (2014)*

In 1959, walking by Mike's Peanut Shop at the corner W. Market and N. Pershing in downtown York, Joe Kindig noticed the extremely tall roof on the clapboard structure. It just looked peculiar. He got permission to go up into the attic and look around, where he saw the framework of an earlier structure hidden beneath. It soon became evident that he was looking at the earliest existing structure in York, a log and half-timber dwelling dating from 1741, now known as the Golden Plough Tavern. Thus began the multi-year restoration of the Plough Tavern, and its sister structure, the General Gates House, during which Joe served as a consultant, working with well-known restoration architect G. Edwin Brumbaugh.

He continued his involvement in architectural restoration projects with the 1738 Wright's Ferry Mansion in nearby Columbia, private homes in Wisconsin, Maryland and Pennsylvania, and for the past five years, the log house here at Historic Hellam Preserve.

The Board of HHP is honored to present to you today, Joseph K. Kindig, III

The Domestic Environment of the Early Pennsylvania Settler

Transcript of Oct. 25, 2014, slide lecture
Edited by Joseph K. Kindig, III

I'd like to talk to you this morning about the environment in which the early German settler lived. We've seen a lot of the surviving architecture, lasting monuments to the early settlers who built them, but we are generally unaware of the lifestyle of the individuals who lived in these dwellings. So my purpose this morning is, hopefully, to enlighten you, to a degree anyway, about their lifestyle.

Here in southeastern Pennsylvania, we are lucky to be surrounded by many surviving examples of early German settlers' architecture. Whether we know it consciously or not, it informs our sense of architectural style and is what visitors note as unique about our region.

Our story goes back to England in the late 1670's. William Penn received a grant from Charles II for the province of Pennsylvania. This was in payment for a debt owed to his father, Admiral Penn, by Charles the 1st. With that, Penn sent agents onto the continent of Europe to promote his real estate venture, which at the time was probably the most impressive handling of real estate that occurred in the whole 17th century throughout the western world. A huge amount of land was involved. He from the very beginning put together what he referred to as his "Holy Experiment," the purpose of which was to open land to the religious dissenters, the individuals who were oppressed in the world, and to get a working economy that would be successful, totally successful. In order to do this he invited peoples of nationalities, race, and religion to come populate his new province. There we had Swedes, we had the Dutch, we had the Scots, the Irish, the Englishmen of course, the Germans from Central Europe, the Huguenots from France. We had the Lutherans and the Methodists, we had the various religious sects arriving, the Amish, the Mennonites, and ultimately Conrad Beisel, leading his flock to the Ephrata area where they put together a community, a religious community, based on Medieval monastic qualities. And to the north of that, in the Bethlehem area, you had Count Zinzendorf from Bohemia bringing the Moravian community over to Pennsylvania, which was at that time a totally modern and completely progressive society, quite a contrast to the medieval aspect that survived at the Cloisters. So this was the group of people that had been invited. Many were extremely oppressed and consequently this whole idea of freedom of religion as well as large quantities of available land came as a marvelous blessing to people who throughout Europe at that point in time had known only a feudal way of life.

SLIDE 1

Here you see one of the original Broadsides announcing the settlement of the province of Pennsylvania. Penn's agents took these onto the continent of Europe and placed them around in public places, announcing the fact that Pennsylvania was open for settlement. With its offer of religious freedom as well as a great quantity of potentially productive farmland they received much attention.

Architecturally speaking, the background of the early German settlers who arrived here was one of living in villages, primarily very very small towns scattered throughout central Europe.

We are concerned with the area from Bohemia in the east, to Alsace in the west, to the south around Bern, Switzerland, and to the north Schleswig-Holstein. That whole vast area was made up basically of Germanic culture. The early German immigrants that came to Pennsylvania were coming out of the small rural villages throughout Germany, where the whole agrarian lifestyle was one of pure total Medievalism, almost Gothic in its qualities, as opposed to the landed aristocracy who lived in the urban areas, and who were well versed at this point in time, the end of the 17th century, in the Renaissance and Baroque art forms.

The German peasant who attended the rural medieval village church and lived in a half-timber dwelling like his grandfather and his neighbors, never saw the interior of an urban Renaissance cathedral or a merchant-class affluent household. The paths of the agrarian society and the urban society rarely crossed. Our German peasant was only familiar with Medievalism.

SLIDE 2

As you see in this village scene in the village of Württemberg, a rural village in the Palatinate, in the Rhineland, medieval half-timber dwellings were the prevailing form of architecture and had been so for several hundred years. They would continue to be so well into the 19th century.

The house on the left of the screen is not dissimilar to the Plough Tavern in downtown York. And Martin Eichelberger, who built the Tavern in the 1740's, came from the general area of Württemberg.

SLIDE 3

Here we see a typical German farmhouse plan in a village. The archway that you see between the two buildings leads you into the courtyard area. The house on the right would have been the dwelling house of the neighboring owner. The

house on the left would have been a combination of dwelling house plus the back part of it was a barn. The courtyard would have held the creamery, the buttery, the smoke house, the bake house, the brewhouse, all the various buildings essential to the operation of the farm.

You must bear in mind that the contrast between what we knew as agrarian practices in Pennsylvania and what was going on in the European farm community was enormous! The German farmer would drive his cattle, horses and sheep out in the morning from the village to his allotted farmland on the outside of the village, work all day, and come back in the evening with his herd to the village farm complex that we're looking at on the screen. He was working basically in the last vestiges of a feudal system. The farm was owned by a so-called Lord of the Manor, or landlord, and the labor was proportioned out to the various farmers in the village. They worked on a share system for the lord, receiving just a percentage of their produce or remuneration from livestock.

So, the idea of coming to America and suddenly being offered the opportunity to acquire one hundred or more acres must have seemed as if they had died and gone to heaven!

The log structures that we think of as being the prototype to our surviving dwellings today are difficult to pinpoint as far as origins in Europe go. There has been long been a scholarly effort to present the log structure as being a Sweitzer, Swiss heritage building. However, it is difficult, if not impossible, to find a recognizable Swiss prototype for the early Pennsylvania log or stone house.

SLIDE 4

Here we're looking at a group of log buildings from the area of Bohemia. Now we're talking about the eastern part of central German Europe. And in it we see all sorts of vestiges of the log house as it ultimately was constructed in Pennsylvania: extreme pitch to the roofs, chimneys being more or less in the center of the roof line, the vertical board siding in the gable ends of the buildings. The shed roofs, or what we refer to as pent roofs, as we're seeing here, are not at all unlike the pent roofs that we find in the Pennsylvania German community.

The use of the pent roof is an interesting concept. The purpose, obviously, was to shed the rain and to throw it off the mortar spaces of the logs below. Whether you're talking about half-timber or log construction you still were doing whatever you could to preserve the surfaces of the structure. The pent roof would facilitate casting the water away from the structure, thus helping to preserve it. Pent roofs were found in England, specifically the area of Gloucestershire and the west of England, and also were found in Germany. It's difficult to conclude exactly where the pent roof originated.

SLIDE 5

The half-timber construction was, in all probability, one of the more dominant house forms in large-scale buildings that were built in central Pennsylvania.

As of 1950 there were, in theory, none surviving. The one you are looking at in this photograph from 1900 was the Moravian schoolhouse in the Oley Valley, which stood until around 1950 when it collapsed and was bulldozed. It's sad that it could have survived all those years, into the time-period when our country was more conscious of the importance of preserving our architectural history, and yet this lovely little building was destroyed. As you can see, the building is typical of those we saw in the very first slide of the little village of Württemberg.

SLIDE 6

Here is a view of a watercolor of the Moravian Schoolhouse by artist Nicholas Garrison, who was brought over to the colonies by the Moravians to do illustrations of all of their various religious communities and their holdings, from Bethlehem and Nazareth, to Salem, North Carolina, to St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands. It is a view of the building in 1762 when Garrison created the illustration. We can see that it had encircling pent roofs all the way around between the first and second story – as well as circling or pent eaves. Everything else on the building remains pretty much consistent with what we saw in the early photograph, with the exception of the original gambrel roof.

SLIDE 7

As far as log structures go, the Mennonite meeting house at Landisville, in Lancaster County, is probably the gem among surviving architectural monuments in central Pennsylvania today. Although not designed as a dwelling, it's the absolute ideal of the log structure in its very earliest format, which we're going to see is not all that far removed from the Log House here at Historic Hellam Preserve.

Here we see the relatively steep roof, although not nearly as steep as the example at the Preserve. In this case there was no need for a two-story attic as it was not a dwelling. We see the vertical siding in the gable of the building. We see the log structure, and, although it's not obvious in this photograph, the dovetailed corner joints. (These are the most difficult of all structural joints to produce, certainly in log structures.) And here we have a slight sense of symmetry in terms of the placement of the windows, which is not true of most

Germanic dwellings. One of the contrasting elements between the English architecture of the period and the German architecture is the symmetry of window and door placements in English buildings and the asymmetry in German ones. The asymmetry once again stems back to medievalism as far as actual influences go.

We are very fortunate in the case of this particular building, most likely built in the very early 1740's, because it still stands in Landisville today and is there for you to view. It retains its original wooden shutters and all of its original exterior trim. Unfortunately, the interior was totally gutted at some point to make the use of it for purposes relating to the church's needs.

SLIDE 8

We have a number of views dating from the 19th century as well as the very late 18th century demonstrating the popularity of half-timber dwellings in Pennsylvania at the time.

This is an illustration from one of Lewis Miller's drawings, which are held at the Historical Society in the collection of York County Heritage Trust. Dating from about 1830, it shows a half- timber house on the outskirts Yorktown. His drawings were based on stories and episodes from an earlier time frame, from stories that were retold to him or stories from his memory. In this particular drawing, as we saw in the log house at Landisville, we see the use of wooden shutters but absolutely no hint of any windows, or sash of any nature. Lewis Miller was meticulous enough that had there been windows, he would have put them there. So here's a house that would be operating without the presence of sash or casements. Only the wooden door separated the indoors from the outdoors. Window glass was extremely expensive in the 18th century.

SLIDE 9

Another one of the half-timber houses that survived into this century and unfortunately was permitted to totally deteriorate is the Sawbuck House, located in the Landis Valley outside of Lancaster.

This photograph was taken in 1931, and the house continued to stand for another 5 or 10 years before it was permitted to totally deteriorate, collapse and disappear. It's interesting, in the case of this particular building we see examples of various construction techniques specific to half-timber dwellings. The interstices between all the timbers are infilled with, in more cases than not, what was referred to in the period as wattle and daub. I won't go into that at the moment. You'll see an illustration of it in a few minutes. Wattle and daub was the use of woven branches producing a basket-like structure which was then

covered with straw, lime and mud. The other techniques were to use brick nogging, wood slabs, or stone! Clay was one of the more common resources available in Colonial Pennsylvania. We had iron ore, copper, and limestone (for the best soil there was in the world), and we had timber galore that had to be removed before fields and pastureland could be worked.

William Penn saw the success of his holy experiment, based on the fact that he had brought the best farmers in the world, the German farmers, who had spent generations making every small plot of land as productive as possible. They cleared the forests, created the farmlands, and produced the grains, meat and poultry for the success of the city of Philadelphia's commerce.

And Philadelphia, of course, was at that point working with a prime merchant class, mostly men from Gloucestershire, Lancashire and London itself. All men who understood the systems of commerce. It was part of Penn's overall plan to make the city of Philadelphia the major center of commerce on the Eastern Atlantic seaboard.

The location of Philadelphia was of course ideal because there was easy access for shipping into the Delaware Bay and then into the Atlantic Ocean, with coastal shipping north and south, as well as to the West Indies, England, Europe and of course ultimately to the West Coast of Africa and China.

Penn brought his surveyor Thomas Holmes over to create a new plan for the city. It followed the great fire of London which occurred in 1666, and everything was being built from that point on in the Renaissance tradition. Charles II decreed that all new buildings were to be built of brick and three stories high. Philadelphia and New Haven were the first two pure Renaissance cities to be built in the colonies with open squares, open parks, broad boulevards and broad streets all laid out on an angular grid.

SLIDE 10

Lancaster was full of half-timber dwellings. Here is a lovely old photograph from the 1890's showing a street in the so-called German sector of Lancaster where we see an illustration of two half-timber dwellings, the one on the left, the one on the right. The one on the right, based on an analysis of the structural work on the first floor, suggests that it's had a new facade overlaying the old facade, for it extends beyond the second-floor facade of the building. But we can still pick up the half-timber elements in the gable end of the building as well. That's a two-story dwelling; two stories were the rarity in this early period. The average house was more or less a story-and-a-half structure. One of the writers of the period, a Dr. Schultz, wrote in his travel book in the late 18th century, that as you went through the Pennsylvania countryside you had absolutely no difficulty

in determining where a German lived versus where an English, Irish or Scotsman lived, because the German house always had a central chimney, as you see in this illustration, and the Irish and English houses always had gable end chimneys.

SLIDE 11

The earliest surviving house in Eastern Central Pennsylvania is the Hans Herr House, or more properly, the Christian Herr House of Lancaster County, which is just south of the city of Lancaster. Hans Herr was one of eight Mennonites who came to Lancaster County in 1709 with a direct grant from Penn for 10,000 acres. Their charge was to bring their congregation over and to build a thriving community.

The Herr House is an absolute gem of American architecture. It suggests very little of its Swiss Heritage. I guess another way of putting it would be if you took it up and sat it down anywhere in Europe, it would stand out, because it is not going to blend in with the regional architecture of any of the areas we know of. And although it was built only ten short years after Christian Herr's arrival in 1719, the house has taken on an architectural personality that we can say is Pennsylvania German. It embodies all the features that we are constantly talking about in Germanic dwellings. In looking at the gable end, you have a two-story attic. In other words, you have a very small window up in the peak of the gable and two windows below it. That creates three stories when combined with the cold cellar. The house as it now stands in this old photograph has sash windows, but it originally had a casement type window of a much smaller size. So these are windows that were added sometime in the 19th century.

For me it's particularly interesting in that the eight Mennonites who came over from Bern, Switzerland, to see their new land grant and make the decision as to whether it was going to work or not, included one of my forbears, Martin Kindig. Martin was sent back to Switzerland to tell those remaining behind that everything that Penn had told them was true and that they should consider moving to Pennsylvania.

SLIDE 12

One of the earliest types of log houses in a condition that is almost unbelievable, is this small example on the Conewago Creek, behind a village called Davidsburg in York County. It unfortunately is gone now. The photograph appeared in a 1957 edition of the *Gazette & Daily*, which is why it has this old sort of sepia quality and why it is so diffused. But the house survived with absolutely no changes throughout its whole history, which is not very commonplace in houses.

Houses were constantly being updated, upgraded, improved, comfort added where it could be added. This one survived. It's a typical so-called Sweitzer (Swiss) bank house with two stories on the creek side, and one story on the front.

SLIDE 13

It is not all that early, it is probably 1770 or later, but stylistically it reflects the house of a first settler. In this case the chimney is in the gable end and you would have every reason in the world to say, following what I have told you, well here is a house built by an Englishman. But it isn't true. In fact this house is just one cell deep and of extremely small size. In other words, you had just one room to a floor—they couldn't put the chimney in the middle of tiny room. So, it still is a Germanic building.

SLIDE 14

The booklet, "Architecture in York County," 29 pages in length, covers all the houses I was able to find by the 1950's in York County, reflecting all the various styles of architecture that occurred in the county. And of course, they were all surviving buildings making it possible for me to photograph them.

SLIDE 15

In the booklet I show a floor plan which is to merely acquaint you with the basic lifestyle of the Germanic household. Regardless of the size of the house, whether it was masonry, log, or half-timber, the room layouts were basically constant in the German household.

The room on the left side with the big open fireplace was the *kuche*, or the kitchen of the household and was the living center of the house. In other words, it was the one place that if you wanted any warmth at all in the winter months, you might find it from the big open fireplace, and it was the one place where a fire was constantly going. And it was the one place where everything that was essential to the house was prepared. Today we have stovetops with four or more burners. In the 18th century they had big fireplaces where small fires could be maintained to accommodate various cooking procedures.

There was always a table in the center of the room. All foods were prepared on that table. When they were all prepared it was cleared off and then everybody sat and ate at the same table. The larger room on the right side was the *stube,* which was the stove room. And there you can see, that little area there, is a pass through, where a German five-plate stove would have been attached, and it would have extended into the room proper and would have furnished some heat for the room.

The *stube* was the best room in the house. On Sunday if anyone came to visit, that's where they were received. Behind it was the *kammer*, a bed chamber, and very often it was reserved for the master and mistress of the house, or for the older generation if they were still living with the family.

SLIDE 16

One of the earliest stone houses that survives is the Martin Schultz House, located at the western end of the village of Hellam. The village of Hellam of course was nonexistent when this house was built. This house was built some time in the 1740's or 50's.

It's interesting that the Historic Hellam Preserve property, that we are concerned with today, formed the eastern boundary for the village of Hellam. Hellam grew up between the Schultz House and the Messerschmidt House here at the Preserve, with ultimately a grist mill (Sprenkle's Mill) in the center of the village, to take care of all the grain coming out of the farms in the area, and ultimately a tavern (Buttonwood Inn) on what became the main thoroughfare. And then finally the tradespeople arrived and created a village out of it.

In the Schultz House we see everything we've been seeing in the half-timber as well as the other log houses. There is the two-story attic, which in this case has windows treated with louvers in the peak of the gable, which is obviously a 19th- or 20th-century addition to the house. It would have originally been a window. In fact, all the windows in the house are replacements. They're all windows out of the 19th century rather than the 18th century. The dormers as well are replacements. But we do see the extremely steep roof and we can just see the hint of the so-called kick that occurs in these roofs. But there is a difference that occurs in the roof area. In this case, the building is just large enough so that we have two central chimneys, as opposed to just one.

SLIDE 17

Now we come to *our* house so to speak, the Messerschmidt-Dietz Log House. This is a very early view, done in the 1940's as it appeared at that time, and as it had survived for 200 years.

There was a glass tax that was imposed in Pennsylvania in 1798, which required every house to be measured, described, and the amount of windows in it listed. Glass was of course basically imported from England, although not in 1798. It was now being made in the colonies. Prior to that it had always been imported and a very high tax was always placed on glass for that reason.

In Windsor Township, which is immediately south of Hellam, the 1798 survey listed 146 log houses and 12 stone dwellings. In Lancaster during that same

survey two-thirds of the buildings standing were of log construction. In other words, we may not think of log structures as being the dominant house form that existed in the period and yet our numbers tell us otherwise.

SLIDE 18

Here is another view of the Messerschmidt-Dietz House, which has a more pastoral quality as a result of the sheep in the foreground, and which shows some of its Germanic features. There's the two-story attic, and in this case the two windows in the first story of the attic replace a single window from an earlier point in time. A very small window in the top of the gable was the second-floor attic.

In this kind of an arrangement, the first floor of the attic served as a dormitory for all the children in the family. Most of these Germanic families tended to have very large families of six to ten children. The children would have slept up there on straw pallets. Any hired hands who were permitted in the house proper would have slept up there as well.

The top attic story was purely for storage of things such as grains, that were being used continuously in the house and would have been stored up there for convenience. We see dormer windows, which again were late 19th-century additions, but it did have dormer windows originally.

It has a brick chimney, coming out of the center of the roofline, which is in its original position. It would have been stone originally. It is a so-called Sweitzer bank house with two and a half stories on the creek side, and one and a half stories on the bank side.

SLIDE 19

Here we have a picture of the house taken several months ago showing the house fully restored and returned to its original 18th-century appearance, with a two-story attic, and vertical board siding in the gable ends. (The board siding is applied vertically on the gable ends, as opposed to horizontally, which is more typical of English house forms.) There is a hint of a pent roof which is accomplished here with just a sloping board to throw the rainwater off, thereby helping to protect the logs and the mortar joints.

The dormer windows are of a medieval shed form that was fairly common in central Europe. These are placed symmetrically in this case, the door being slightly off-center. An interesting feature is the stone foundation of this building, where limestone and fieldstone were in great abundance throughout the area, but instead we see the presence of long, shale-like slabs of stone, rather than the large irregular shapes of fieldstone or quarried stone. This was likely

associated with the nearby creek. Similar stone was difficult to find for the restoration masonry work we undertook. We did find two other barns in very close proximity to this that made use of the same shale-like stone.

Henry Messerschmidt and his wife Elizabeth had arrived in the port of Philadelphia in 1732. There is no other record of them throughout the 1730's, other than the fact that they had three children during that time-period. All were baptized in the area of New Holland, in Lancaster County. So, we can place them living in the New Holland area at that time. He took out a warrant for the Hellam house in 1747, so they obviously had moved to Kreutz Creek Valley some time before. The farmland was owned by Henry but upon his death sold, in 1755, by his widow to Philip Bentz, who possibly built the log house soon after.

In 1790, Conrad Dietz, another German and a neighboring landowner, bought the property. I believe he was probably responsible for the improvements that took place in that era. The Spring House looks like a structure from the 1790's, as does the Stone Bank Barn, an almost palatial German stone barn.

The second floor of the log house, the first attic story so to speak, was framed out and partitioned around 1790, as evidenced by the quality of the woodwork that we find there, so it is likely that Dietz upgraded the house at the same time that he built the new barn and the springhouse.

SLIDE 20

The Spring House is located immediately below the log house and served two purposes. It furnished water for the house, and in its lower story had the spring passing through it, which of course cooled the dairy products and served to preserve any other products that needed it. The upper story, which is what we're seeing here, with a door and a window, was again for storage purposes.

Here we see the beautiful gable end of the Stone Bank Barn from the threshing floor side, where a sense of majesty results from the great physical mass of impressive stone masonry work.

Travelers passing through the Pennsylvania German areas of Pennsylvania in the 18th century were constantly commenting on seeing off in the distance the big "palaces," as they referred to them, of the German farmers, because they weren't accustomed to barns of this tremendous size in Central Europe.

SLIDE 21, 22, 23

The Stone Bank Barn here on the Preserve, as I already pointed out, was built in the 1790's and has survived fortunately in extremely nice condition.

This is taken from the overbay side, and again only points up the barn's marvelous structural quality. The internal view is almost mind-boggling, it seems

to me, with all the marvelous medieval timber framing. The roof itself is quite glorious—the sense of massive, framed space so typical of medieval central Europe as well as English tithe barns.

Now the interesting thing in this barn, is that the actual construction of the timber roof framing is more similar to English construction than it is Germanic construction.

The Germanic culture and traditions were held tenaciously by the early Germanic settler, and he was not one to compromise in establishing his new community. We're impressed with things like Benjamin Franklin addressing the Philadelphia Council in the year 1739, and referring to the fact, that if we don't do something about this continuous use of the German language, Pennsylvania is going to become a German colony. And he was quite serious because there were so many Germans in the area as early as 1750 that almost three-fifths of the population of Pennsylvania were reportedly Germans.

SLIDE 24

The Messerschmidt House makes use of the dovetailed log joint technique. This is the most complex of all of your log construction. It required serious talent on the part of the craftsman who was executing it.

Bear in mind that we are not dealing with a time when a house such as this was built by master builders. It was done by the homeowner and any neighbors who saw fit to help, and possibly, if they could afford it, a few hired hands. But someone had to have the understanding of the techniques necessary in creating log structures of this nature.

We have to bear in mind that when we hear "log house" we generally think of the log cabin that we associate with the mid-19th century, for example the cabin of Abraham Lincoln.

Here we're dealing with a log house suggesting a greater sense of permanence. The log cabin was a quickly thrown together shelter, to put a roof over one's head in the greatest immediacy that was possible. But its logs were as felled and unsquared. They were felled in the woods and merely notched at the corners. This was the home of the frontiersman as he opened up the West.

SLIDE 25

The kick that I referred to before is right in this area. If you draw a line down here, you see a different angle to the roof line. It is the result of the insertion of a very small rafter at the base of the major rafter to produce the kick. When you have a roof that is as steep as this, snow is not going to stay on it in the winter months, it's going to slide off. And the little bit of dip at the bottom is not going

to keep the snow from falling off. So I have no real feeling for what that's all about. But all Germanic buildings had the kick. The hand-split, tapered, white-oak shingles are another totally Germanic feature. They were laid overlapping, top-to-bottom as well as side-to-side, producing a geometric gridwork appearance to the finished roof. The English used white-cedar shingles, tapered only top-to-bottom, producing a staggered appearance.

SLIDE 26

Now I spoke to you earlier of wattle and daub, the early medieval construction technique for the interstices between your vertical and horizontal timber, and here you see an example of it intact in the first floor of the Messerschmidt house. It's made up of vertical, rough, hand-split members, wedged in the ceiling and floor, and then literally branches from trees interwoven horizontally in a basket-like design, the whole then filled and covered with straw, lime mortar and mud. And that was your basic medieval technique for the construction of framed buildings.

SLIDE 27

Typically cooking was done on the first-floor level, however in the case of the Messerschmidt house, the cooking fireplace is on the ground story. It had an internal connecting stairway between the ground level and first story, as well as an external stairway. There is a fireplace on the first floor immediately above the cooking fireplace on the ground floor. In the back of the hearth is the opening for a five-plate stove.

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Here we are in the opposite room, looking at the back side of the fireplace wall and we're seeing the opening, framed out with a brick arch, and the black area above it is literally a flue.

SLIDE 29

This drawing illustrates the walk-in kitchen fireplace: H is the flue, G is the fireplace, and E the opening to the five-plate stove, which was an iron box of five sides with one side missing. The missing side was the side against the arched opening, permitting access from the backside of the fireplace. Coals from the fireplace could then be thrown into the opening at E, into the iron box. The coal would heat the iron box thereby adding some degree of comfort to the house.

SLIDE 30

Benjamin Franklin discusses the five-plate stove in a treatise on the Franklin Stove, which he invented in the 1740's. It was an iron insert placed in a fireplace that absorbed the heat, deterring its escape up the chimney, producing additional warmth. He was greatly impressed with these German jamb or five-plate stoves. He said "the stove is like a box, one side wanting, being the opening, composed of five iron plates screwed together and fixed, so that you can put the fuel into it from another room. This invention warms the room quickly and uses very little fuel." Here we see an example of a five-plate stove. This one is in the Plough Tavern in York which is a half-timber dwelling. And that is what would have been in the Messerschmidt House originally. A fragment of a plate from a five-plate stove was found in the process of the Messerschmidt restoration.

Unfortunately, only single plates from the original stoves have survived. These are decorated with Germanic iconography, religious symbolism, and the Pennsylvania Germanic artistic vocabularies, and are cherished by collectors as art objects. So, the actual existence of a complete five-plate stove is a tremendous rarity. Hopefully someday one will show up that we can place in the Messerschmidt House.

SLIDE 31

Another singular architectural feature in the Messerschmidt House is the presence of an enclosed smokeroom on the lower attic story, against the central chimney. Eventually a smoke house would have been built outside, but expedience made this solution a workable initial means for preserving meats. So the meats could be smoked within the house rather than in an outdoor smokehouse. My own house, which is a stone Germanic house from the period of 1785, has evidence of a smoke room in the attic.

SLIDE 32

Their houses were very sparsely furnished. The early settler brought little more than their personal possessions from Europe. In most cases they were just able to pay for their family's passage, and most of these people arrived in Pennsylvania with relatively little funding of their own.

The average household in the period would have had possibly one or two chairs at the most. One chair for the master of the house, the second chair for either the mistress or grandfather or another elder. The rest of the people would have sat on benches or forms, as you see in the background in this view. The average house would have had one table, and that table would have been

relegated to the center of the *kuche*, as we spoke earlier, where all the preparation for meals and everything of the household could be accomplished, and then cleared off, and everybody sat around to have their supper. You had at best just one table generally.

The fact is there were no cabinet makers or joiners here in the early years for the settler to turn to, but many of the farmers had some limited ability or talent to be able to make simple furniture forms. And the winter months often provided the time that was necessary for them to be able to accomplish that.

What they would generally produce would be furniture of sawn plank and mortice construction, which could easily be constructed with the maximum use of a hammer, a saw and an axe, because those were three tools that the general farmer arrived with in Pennsylvania. Beyond that he didn't have a great deal.

Broad generalizations frequently get one into some degree of trouble. Generally speaking, one can say that the Germanic house, as well as their furniture, was built without the use of any nails. In contrast, the English house required nails throughout. What the Germans used of course were wooden pins. Both the English and Germans used mortise and tenon construction.

When you get to an area like the Oley Valley and Reading, you frequently encounter tile roofs, and the tiles had lugs cast into the underside, to position the tiles together over the shingle rail, so they didn't need a nail. However, if you were putting on a roof of oak-wood shingles, they had to have tediously made hand-wrought nails. So that's just an interesting point.

SLIDE 33, 34

This is an example of a ladderback chair made in Germany around 1735. In it are embodied all the characteristics of a Germanic ladderback chair, the major feature being the treatment of the rear stile. That member was turned in a lathe on a double axis—in other words, first chucked up in the lathe, and turned from the finial to the seat juncture, and then chucked up on a second axis that permitted the turning of the stile from the seat juncture to the floor, thus producing a rear slant to the ladderback, and adding a degree of comfort that normally wouldn't be there if the back were perfectly straight.

In the Delaware Valley, where this chair form was most popular among the English settlers, it was constructed with the rear stile being turned on one axis, resulting in a very stiff vertical back. This is the major difference between the German and the English ladderbacks. Another difference in the overall design is that the German chairs always had two frontal stretchers, whereas the English chairs had just a single stretcher. This example of a German chair is the frequently encountered exception to the rule. It has a single stretcher but with a

large bulbous design that never would have been acceptable to the English chairmaker. We see again that feature of the two different axes to the rear stile. The armchair would have been the most important chair in the household. The English maker would have invariably used maple, while the German would have used white oak, ash, maple or walnut.

SLIDE 35

Here are two types of *brettstuhls* or boardchairs. Either could have been produced by the actual homeowner himself. You had a squarish seat that could have been sawn and cut from a wooden plank, and four legs that were tapered and chamfered with an axe.

The solid cutout back, or splat, was morticed into the seat, and the tenon could be pegged for extra strength. Wedges were driven down into the exposed tops of the legs for additional strength. Although not of great comfort, it was possible to put a utilitarian chair together fairly quickly and without the need of a chairmaker, even though the chairmakers were probably called upon to make some of them.

SLIDE 36

In the more refined or longer established Germanic households we might have found an upholstered back and seat armchair of a greater degree of comfort, such as this example loosely based on an English Queen Anne prototype. The lines, proportions and aesthetics are purely Germanic and the chair is quite possibly of Moravian origin from Bethlehem, Lititz or one of the Moravian communities.

You have to bear in mind that as the years progressed, as we moved more toward the end of the 18th century, you had a constant interaction taking place between the English and the Germans living in close proximity of each other. You had interchange of ideas.

I would say that the English were more likely to accept ideas from the Germans than the Germans were to the English. However, the fact remains that the Englishman looked slightly down his nose at the German as not being his cultural equal, so he probably wasn't accepting much that the German had to offer. And you have this interchange of ideas, which shows up both in the furniture that survived from the period but even more so in the architecture of the period. As we move toward the end of the 18th century, we see Germans building their larger permanent masonry homes in the provincial, so-called English Georgian style. But when it comes to the building methods, hardware,

wood usage, and specific aesthetics, the houses are identifiable as the homes of Germans.

SLIDE 37

The earliest table that I'm aware of that has survived in this part of Pennsylvania is this sawn-leg table. As I've already mentioned, at the period of settlement, you didn't have any German tradesmen or craftspeople working in the area. An awful lot had to be executed on the spot.

The stretcher-base table was the dominant table form among the early Pennsylvania German settlers. In order to produce this table form you needed a turner, a person who could execute turned elements in furniture. In this case, the fact that the legs were sawn out with a coping saw tells us that there was no turner in the area, so the table maker has attempted to simulate the appearance of a turned leg through sawing it out, an improvisation that, in this case, works very well. This small, neatly scalloped skirt is an additional refinement in the table.

The flat vertical and horizontal stretchers were placed on these tables to get your feet off the floor because the air currents in these early days, particularly in the log houses, were extreme and quite tremendous, and a little elevation tended to add a certain amount of comfort.

SLIDE 38

Now we see an example of a general table, where a man has access to a lathe and he could turn legs. We still see the use of the early vertical and horizontal stretchers at the base and we still see the scalloped skirt. This is a table that could have dated anywhere from 1740 to 1800, actually with no change. Again, that was the nature of the German mind to hold on tenaciously to time-proven ideas, in this case, probably on the early side of those dates.

SLIDE 39

And here we see the construction of them, we are looking at the underside of another table, again done by a turner with a turned leg, a deeply scalloped skirt, and there small, repeated scallops. And here we see the use of a cleat on the underside of the top, which, through the use of the mortise pin, was pinned onto the table base itself, therefore making it rigid and very stationary.

Removing the pins, of course, you could lift the top off. So one of the characteristics between the Anglo mind and the shop practices of the German were the use of loose tops. The Englishman would secure top to table base permanently with pins. The German made his removable. The German made use

of wooden pins, which would have done exactly the same thing as the nail, without the labor of hand-forging each nail.

SLIDE 40

Here is a hanging wall cupboard that is associated with the Cloisters in Ephrata, where everything was extremely simplistic to follow the monastic medieval quality of their lifestyle. However, this is exactly what occurred in the average log house construction throughout the German community. Whereas this one does seem to use a lot of nails, wherever you see a nail head on this the German would put a wooden pin, doing exactly the same thing as the nail does, and saved him the job of forging nails or buying them.

SLIDE 41

The other piece of furniture that was common to many of these houses, once you became sufficiently affluent and felt there was a permanency to your household, would be the open pewter cupboards that came straight out of Germany, with not a lot of variation. They were made to hold the redware and pewterware that was essential to working of the household.

As an aside, we have the inventory of the Messerschmidt house from 1748, the year he died. It lists just one candlestick and two plates for his possessions. It doesn't tell what they are made of, and it doesn't refer to any furniture. We often hear that generally possessions that were going to be passed on to family, in this case his widow, didn't need to be enumerated in your inventory. And yet you look at the great number of household inventories, from Pennsylvania and even more out of New England, which was a much more populated area than Pennsylvania—they consistently list everything. I mean you don't have exceptions. So it's a little hard to understand how the widow got by with this appraisal.

SLIDE 42

Another very interesting characteristic of Pennsylvania German culture concerns color. Because of familiar folk art, we think of the Pennsylvania German culture as full of color, with distelfinks, tulips, hearts, stars, on pottery earthenware, on the sides of barns, on frakturs and decorated dower chests.

But their daily lives and households were not obsessed with color. Frakturs were not framed and hung on walls; they were placed in family bibles.

I've chosen this one piece of decorated furniture because of the date, 1764, and the architecture. This would be termed an architectural dower chest because of the arch-framed panels in the front. The year 1760 is the magic number in

the dating of polychromed Germanic pieces. There is nothing with polychrome decoration that shows up with a date earlier than 1760. The majority of paint-decorated pieces are from after that date, with the greatest number being very close to 1800 and into the first decade of the 19th century.

SLIDE 43

So paint decoration was not part of what one would expect to encounter in a log house such as ours. The *schrank,* or wardrobe, was probably the most important piece of furniture that would have found its way into a German household. The Messerschmidt house would never have had a *schrank* of this degree of refinement or architectural brilliance. It might very well have had a functional *schrank,* but this is one of the most glorious surviving *schranks* among all the Pennsylvania German furniture that is known today.

It is very probably the product of either the Lancaster School of cabinetmaking, or the Moravian Society of Bethlehem. It is known for its decoration. The piece is richly inlayed with baroque vocabulary, which is also present in the cyma-curved molding of the top. It is a great extravagance; it's truly a monumental piece of architectural furniture.

Inside, instead of all hanging knobs for clothing, there is shelving on one side and knobs on the other. The interesting difference between the Anglo and the German mentalities was that the Germans laid all their materials out in dower chests or, as we just saw, in *schranks*. The English layed theirs out in wardrobes made for hanging clothes, or chests of drawers. Chest of drawers were, in theory, unknown to the 18th century German.

SLIDE 44

The best clocks would have an inlaid motif, a very sophisticated design around the window. This is a clock that is in the Plough Tavern in York. It came out of the Titus Geesey collection in York, one of the most prominent collections of Pennsylvania German material that was ever assembled. The clock reflects ornamentation from 1741–1742, based on comparison to two dated examples, and again is probably from Lancaster County. So pre-1760, no painted decoration, and it's actually a great deal more sophisticated decoration than you're ever going to experience in painted work.

SLIDE 45

In 1786, George Gruber, a potter in Montgomery County, made this presentation plate for Katarina Raeder. It is probably one of the truly great examples of Pennsylvania German pottery work and, obviously, once again, was not to be

found in every log house. The beauty is in better understanding our potter. The symbol he has chosen is the double-headed imperial Hapsburg eagle symbolizing power and might, but he has translated it into a dove of love, the body being heart-shaped with tulips supporting it. You have no sense of the powerful image that the actual European Germanic prototype would suggest.

SLIDE 46

The forms here are what you would have found throughout the Pennsylvania German area as utilitarian utensils. These covered pot type containers would have been used throughout the house for all sorts of storage. They would not have been decorated. Here again you see the colorful richness that the potter is capable of introducing: the earth colors, the reds and browns and yellows and oranges and blacks that occur there.

SLIDE 47

The roof tiles, although they didn't seem to exist in the Kreutz Creek Valley area, are more frequently encountered throughout the Reading area, Berks County rather, and Montgomery County as well. We know they had them in York County, because there is some documentation for them.

In the Oley Valley area, you'll notice the potter, in making them, runs his finger down the surface, creating grooves to carry the water down to the lower part of the roof.

SLIDE 48

The pewterer was here and busy making utilitarian pieces for everyday use. John Christian Heine was probably the greatest Pennsylvania German pewterer that lived. He worked totally within central European traditions, although a Germanic pewterer. He was making pewter at a very refined level and here we see an example of a set of communion pieces made for a Lancaster church.

SLIDE 49

Again, the blacksmith was busy as well. He's working in wrought iron. In this case he's not referred to as a blacksmith, but as a whitesmith, who took blacksmithing to the next level, and made it more refined than the common horseshoe.

The two bird hinges in the center came out of houses in the Oley Valley. The houses were built in the middle of the 18th century and the deer-headed hinges are from Lancaster.

SLIDE 50, 51

Finally, you had some use of fabrics and embroidery work taking place, although most of it occurred in the 19th century. It would have found place in the most humble of log dwellings. This is a show towel. The purpose of the show towel, made by a family member, would have been to put out when guests were present in the household. And here is a geometric-designed embroidery of a tablecloth that went over a tiny little table.

In conclusion

What I would like to just suggest to you here is that it really requires days and days of exposure to understand fully what we have discussed. To do this totally properly, I would like to have been contrasting what was happening in the English world, with what was happening in the Germanic world, and the Huguenot world as well. However, that is for another lecture, another day.

What I would like to end up here with, is to suggest, the preservation of the Henry Messerschmidt House and Conrad Dietz House and Historic Hellam Preserve add one more chapter to our understanding of America's illustrious cultural heritage.

Thank you very much.

Joe Kindig, III
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