

THE FRANCIS DILLER FAMILY

By J. S. Diller, Geological Survey, Washington, D. C. The descendants of Francis Diller in America have good reason to heartily congratulate themselves in the possession of the original passport which he brought with him to this country. It contains the earliest authentic and the only definite information we have, thus far, concerning his life in his native land.

The following translation of the passport was made by Robert Stein:

THE PASSPORT

We Charles Tissot, Mayor of Chaux-deFonds, in the county of Neuchatel and Valangin in Switzerland, in the name and on the part of His Majesty the King of Prussia, our Sovereign Prince and Lord, make known that Francois-Louis-Esaie- ? -Jean Tueller of Biglen bailiwick of Siguenau (Signau), in the lands of their Excellencies (LL, EE.) of Bern, having sojourned at the said Chaux-de-Fonds during the space of about eleven consecutive years, holding by lease a considerable estate, belonging to one and the same private individual, and desiring to go and establish himself elsewhere in foreign lands, he has asked us for a passport, with a certificate, to show what has been his conduct all the time he has been among us. Accordingly we certify that yhe said Tueller has always conducted himself as a man of good character and honor, having lived in peace with everyone and that he has never committed, either himself or his family, anything that might be reprehensible, which we declare above, so far as it is wihin our knowledge; also that the design he has formed of establishing himself elsewhere is due to his own impulse and not to any necessity ti leave this place, whereupon, desiring to favor him so far as it may depend on us, we pray and request all Lords. Governors, Magistrates, Officers and all those that are to be requested, both ecclesiastics and civilians and military men, that they may be pleased to grant to said Tueller and to his family all the succor, aid, counsel and assistance which he may need, without subjecting or allowing them to be subjected to any hindrance: with offer made by us, to render the reciprocal treatment to those who may have concourse to us, provided with such certificates and passports. In witness whereof we have here placed the seal of our Arms and have ordered the Registrar of this Jurisdiction to sign it with his ordinary Signature. At the said Chaux-de-Fonds, Wednesday the tenth day of April, one thousand, seven hundred and fifty four. by order P. SANDOS: (Signature and scroll)

THE NAME OF FRANCIS DILLER

Francis - Louis - Esaie Heu Jean Tueller is the name of our great ancestor as it appears in the passport and it seems unusually long, but considering the time and place it is said to have been in accord with common usage.

Her, the part of the name omitted by Mr. Stein in his translation, probably represents what the Frenchman who wrote this passport intended for Uriah. Louis and Esaie have never been used again as Christian names in the family. Uriah occurs a number of times later. John (Jean) and Francis are most frequently used.

HISTORY AND TRANSLATION OF PASSPORT

The passport is beautifully written in French upon vellum. It passed in succession by inheritance from Franceis (1) to Francis (2) Francis (6) and Samuel (26). my father, who had it translated by Miss Matilda P. Watts, a sister of Judge Watts in Carlisle, Pa.

The original passport was given to the Historical Society of Buffalo, N.Y., at the request of my uncle John Dill (28) of that city "for safe keeping and convenient reference of the Dillers about Buffalo," but it

was soon lost among the papers of the Historical Society and remained so for forty years until recently through the influence of the Carnegie Institution it has been sought for, found, and in exchange for a price restored to the Diller archives.

Robert Stein, an official translator for the government, made a careful translation of the passport and discovered that the native town of our progenitor is not Cigle, as noted by Miss Watts, but Biglen, which is situated among the foothills of the Alps (Bernese Oberland) about 13 1/2 kilometers or 5 1/2 miles east of the city of Bern.

In reading the passport one should ever bear in mind that it was written by a Frenchman who recorded what he was told by Francis Tuller in German. Owing to a fold in the passport the final letter in the name of the ancestral town is blurred. The bailiwick of Signau is certain and there is scarcely a doubt that Piglen (?) represents the Frenchman's interpretation of the German pronunciation of Biglen. At any rate there is no other name excepting Biglen in the vicinity of Signau to suggest identity and I have complete confidence in Mr. Stein's determinations.

BIGLEN

Biglen, the native place of Francis Diller (1), nestles among the rolling hills of the lake region in the very heart of northwestern Switzerland. It is drained by the Aar, one of the tributaries of the historic Rhine, and has an elevation of about 2500 feet above the sea. Forty miles away to the northwest about Chaux-de-Fonds rise the regular ridges of the Jura Mountains, while to the southeast in plain view forming a magnificent panorama are the snow capped peaks of the Bernese Alps which afford some of the finest scenery of the world and are annually visited by many thousands of tourists from all parts of the globe. The immediate vicinity of Biglen is given over chiefly to agriculture and horticulture, supplying a dense population and large number of travelers.

PERSECUTION OF THE MENNONITES IN SWITZERLAND

The history of Switzerland is preeminently one of conflict, civil and religious, and her people may well find gratification in the scars their families have borne in the cause of righteousness.

It is evident that Francis Diller (1) spent the early years of his life up to 1743 when he reached manhood, in the canton of Bern, Switzerland, where the moral struggle was most intense, and it is important that we should appreciate as fully as possible the circumstances of his youth. He was a Mennonite, and in those days it required peculiarly strong courage and devotion to join such a cause. The hostility of the established church, which was the chief source of trouble, is so well stated by Prof. C. Henry Smith in his account of the Mennonites of America that I quote his words as follows: "The cause of this hostility on the part of the established church was largely the attitude of the Mennonites toward a state church and their non-participation in civil government. They taught that state and church must be independent of each other, and refused to bear arms, take the oath, and hold office. Misunderstood on these questions they were considered dangerous questions they were considered dangerous by both the state and church and were hounded to death by both. At first they hunted like wild beasts, burned at the stake, drowned in the rivers, or left to rot in filthy prisons. As the spirit of the times became more humane during the seventeenth century they were exiled from the country, sent to the galleys and their property confiscated. In the eighteenth century they were punished with a money fine and denied many of the rights of citizenship." The persecutions were most intense and long continued in Bern, and it is probable that Francis Diller (1) was among those exiled from his native land for we find him at La Chaux-de-Fonds during the last 11 years of his sojourn in Europe under the King of Prussia, who had invited the exiled Bernese to settle in his own territory.

FRANCIS DILLER IN SWITZERLAND

The passport informs us definitely concerning Francis Diller (1) that the place of his nativity is Biglen, that he leased a considerable estate at

Chaux-de-Fonds where he resided continuously for 11 years, and that he was a man of good character and had a family.

It seems evident that he was a farmer and settled at Chaux-de-Fonds in 1743. That he remained there 11 years is to his credit, for the farmers of that region have a reputation. Baededecker, an excellent authority, says that this remote and sterile Alpine valley lying nearly as high as the top of Snowden (3590 feet) and imperfectly supplied with water has a population of over 22,000 inhabitants, whose skill and industry enables them to defy the rigors of a climate where corn only ripens in warm summers.

As his eldest son was born about 1743, tho possibly as early as 1731 if gravestones can be relied on, Francis Diller (1) was most likely married at Biglen before removing to Chaus-de-Fonds, and it is probable that the other three children were all born during this sojourn of the family at Chaux-de-Fonds.

THE IMMIGRATION OF FRANCIS DILLER (1)

The passport was obtained April 10 1754, and it is more than likely that he started at once on his journey down the Rhine, which has ever been the great natural out for the northwestern portion of Switzerland. On the way he passed through the border land of Alsace and the Palatinate, but there is no evidence to show that he stopped there or in Holland for any considerable time before sailing for America.

Of his journey thither no record has yet been found, but there is a family tradition fairly well preserved to the effect that on the ocean voyage his household goods were lost at sea, and the family, so the story runs, was thus reduced to extreme poverty. As out of accord with the traditional view apparently it may be noted that J. S. Burkhart, of Dickinson, Pa., has a peculiar German bookcase which is said to have been brought over by the family. Furthermore, it seems improbable that the family arrived very poor from the fact that a few years later Francis Diller (1) bought a farm paying over \$2,000 cash besides assuming a mortgage on the property.

FRANCIS DILLER (1) IN AMERICA

April 10, 1760, exactly six years from the date of his passport in Chaux-de-Fonds, Francis Diller (1) (Francis Teylor) purchased a farm of 147 acres on a branch of Muddy Creek in Cocalico, now Brecknock township, Lancaster county, Pa., for 415 oounds cash besides assuming a mortgage of 84 pounds. The land is part of that nown owned by Joseph Horning, 1 3/4 miles directly north of Bowmansville. His deed is among Mr. Horning's papers. In the early years of his residence as mentioned in history Francis

Diller (1) erected the first mill in Lancaster county. He operated it during the Revolutionary War and doubtless supplied his share of "the spirit of 1776". The site of the distillery was pointed out to me in 1904 by Tobias Bowman.

It is near a spring a short distance south of the house of John Frees, on the land of Mr. Joseph Horning.

The farm was enlarged. Ellis and Evans History of Lancaster county gives a list of the 59 principal land owners of Brecknock township about the close of the Revolutionary War and mentions Abraham

Diller (4), the youngest son of Francis (1), as having 300 acres. There were at that time only two larger farms in the township. one with 327 and the other 328 acres.

The Mennonites being non-resistant in belief were strongly opposed to the war and would not join the army though they willingly paid all taxes imposed by the government for the purpose of the war. What a seemingly strange belief that permitted them to make and sell intoxicating liquors and yet prevented them from taking arms in defense of their country. In the land from which they came, especially among the Germans, the limited but not excessive use of alcoholic beverages was general in their day and even yet is much more common than in America. We must judge our ancestors not by the searchlight of the present but by the less discriminating light of their own time.

Francis Diller (1) made his will November 12, 1782, naming his son Peter as executor. The will is the first document in which the modern spelling of the family name, Diller, has yet been found, and Peter Diller (3) was the earliest of the family to write his own signature.

The will of Francis Diller (1) is a model of its day in the care shown in providing for the surviving widow.

Francis Diller (1) died soon after his will was made and he was buried probably at the Mennonite Meetinghouse in Bowmansville. The late Tobias Bowman and I searched for the grave but failed to identify it.

THE FRANCE DILLER (1) BIBLE

The great book of the Francis Diller (1) kinship is the Bible which has been transmitted with the passport to Samuel Diller (26). In memory of a devout ancestry this Bible has been presented to the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C., where it is catalogued not only as the Diller, Francis, Bible but also under Bible-German-1744.

The book is big enough to affirm its own antiquity. It is 14 1/2 inches long, 10 1/2 inches wide and 4 inches thick, with wooden lids bound in pigskin leather surmounted by brass corners, clasps and center plates, and weighs 13 pounds. The front center plate bears the impressed letters V

B and the back center plate has the number 1754, the date of migration from la Chaux-de-Fonds.

The letters V B are supposed by C. Mertel and other authorities in the Library of Congress to be the initials of the original owner when it was bound in Europe in 1754. If this be true this great book may have belonged originally to the Bowmans or the Boehms.

It is a rather remarkable fact that Wendel Bowman, who immigrated in 1709 and settled in Pequea Valley, is my great-great-great grandfather thru both my father and my mother along two lines of descent for the most part entirely distinct. It is equally remarkable that the initials V B are essentially those of Wendel Bowman, but no definite connecting trace has as yet been found.

The Bible contains no family record but it has been kept with the passport, according to tradition, ever since Francis Diller (1) came over in 1754.

It is a Froschauer Bible, being a reprint at Strassburg in 1744 of the edition issued by Christoffel Froschauer at Zurich in 1536. Daniel Rupp, in his history of Lancaster county, calls attention to the existence of a number of similar Bibles among the Mennonites, and I will think anyone very much for information, thru this magazine or directly, as to where any such Bibles may be seen.

The family came to Philadelphia in America from Rotterdam aboard the Phoenix in 1754 with the family listed under the name of Frans Tieler

