Lutherans in Maine - Part II
– by Roger Rotvig

Records show that Henry Melchior Muhlenberg and Tobias Wagner were never fully in agreement on some issues of the church in Pennsylvania. Evidently their German educational and ministerial backgrounds, Halle for Muhlenberg and Tuebingen for Wagner, kept them at a distance in spite of the important work that they each accomplished. One source, “A History of the Lutheran Church in Pennsylvania”, records on pages 522-526, that there was open conflict between Muhlenberg and Wagner. Whatever the facts were in that supposed dispute, Tobias Wagner left Pennsylvania after 16 years of successful ministries and moved back to Wurttemberg, Germany in 1759 and died there April 1, 1764. There is no record of his wife accompanying him back to Germany. A number of children, identified in their individual histories as children of Tobias and Mary Christine went on to become people of stature in local commerce and government. Wagner cannot be considered to be unlettered and he certainly was regularly ordained.

Second Pastor at Waldoboro: Phillip Gottfried Kask: 1742-1743

The Wilson Family History adds some details that are helpful but maybe not precisely accurate. It records: “The first group of German settlers arrived in the Broad Bay, later Waldoborough (sic) area in 1742 as a result of Waldo blandishments in Germany. More than 200 Palatinate and Wurttemburg residents, mostly middle-class Lutherans, had signed on to settle on Waldo’s grant. The group included a theologian, a physician, and engineer/surveyor, and also a schoolmaster named John Ulmer…” Ulmer is the ancestor of the Wilson family that undertook this genealogical research. We know from another source the pastor’s name to be Rev. Phillip Gottfried Kask, Doktor der Theologie. Stahl's History of Old Broad Bay and Waldoboro writes about the 4 “professionals” in the 1742 arrival: “the engineer had died the first winter, the doctor and the minister abandoned the settlement the following spring, and only the schoolmaster stood by his brethren in their darkest hour.”

It is not clear if increasing Indian raids were “their darkest hour”, or whether the following factor caused Kask’s early abandonment: Stahl writes “It may be inferred from later developments that Doctor Kask had collaborated with Zuberbuhler in recruiting the colony, and for his services had received a per capita commission, and that he had taken Zuberbuhler’s note in payment, since at the time of their arrival at Broad Bay the latter owed him a considerable sum of money which was to become the subject of later litigation.” Kask was not unlettered, probably colorful and certainly regularly ordained.

continued on page 2
make one a certified curmudgeon. Too often the stories are the same as Waldoboro- but without the isolation that the Waldoboro congregation suffered. Often we see magnificent urban buildings that are still surrounded by unchurched neighbors, but the funds were used up and no one stepped up to the plate to keep the ministry alive. Occasionally there is a rural congregation where people just moved away. And we see some that just got spiritually sick. They did not want to do ministry. They never gave sacrificially. They worshipped sporadically. They did not want the responsibility of the Great Commission. They acted like a club of the like-minded rather than a Spirit infused community with a message of healing, redemption and renewal.

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New Sweden at 375

It is exactly 375 years since the founding of the New Sweden colony at what is now Wilmington, DE. In 1638 two ships, the Kalmar Nyckel and the Fogel Grip landed at “The Rocks” and established Ft. Christina. While the colony soon spread out to Pennsylvania and New Jersey, it was captured first by the Dutch (1655) and then by the English (1664). Yet the people remained, two congregations continued Sunday services and the Church of Sweden renewed its work in the Delaware Valley in 1697 sending more than 40 pastors to the area until the Revolution. The eight continuing Old Swedes churches in the Delaware Valley testify to the centrality of the gospel in their lives. It is estimated that descendants of the original settlers now number between 10 million and 20 million in the United States.

The festivities will be held in Wilmington on May 10-11. On Friday a Book Launch at the Doubletree Hotel will feature a picture book of historic sites in New Sweden, sponsored by the Swedish Colonial Society. A festal banquet at the Chase Center on Saturday in the presence of King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Sylvia is being sponsored by all of the local Swedish and Finnish groups. More information is to be found at the web site of the Swedish Colonial Society: ColonialSwedees.org.

Augustana Institute

The Augustana Room and Museum is now known as the Augustana Institute and Museum. The name change was made to indicate that the Board of Directors sees a two-pronged task. On the one hand to maintain an archives and museum of the Augustana Lutheran Church in the Northeast but also to reflect on that ministry in the light of present opportunities for ministry here and in Sweden. To that end we are looking forward to inviting a prominent Swedish Lutheran theologian to come to Philadelphia next fall as the inaugural lecturer for the Augustana Institute.

We are also seeking a Naming Gift for the Museum that will be located on the 3rd floor of the Brossman Center. For more information contact Pastor John Puotinen at: jpuotinen@ltsp.edu

Lutherans in Maine (continued from page 1)

Third “Pastor” at Waldoboro: 1743 ff - Mr. John Ulmer.

John Ulmer was clearly the schoolmaster that Stahl lists among the 4 professionals that arrived with the 1742 group. Most references to his work relate not to his schoolmaster status but to his “lay” leadership of the Lutheran community from the time of the movement of Rev. Kask until the next “engaged” clergyman in 1751. Stahl writes: “After the destruction of the ‘Dutch Church’ in 1746, no other building was built for about fifteen years. During this time worship was led by the schoolmaster, John Ulmer...This worship, while devout, was decidedly informal, being held in the houses, in the fields and in the garrisons.” Most other references to Ulmer continue to praise him for his work to meet the colony’s religious needs in this early part of their history. Ulmer was not colorful or unlettered, except his credentials were not in theology.

Writer’s note: The above reference recounts the destruction of the “Dutch Church” in 1746. No effort in this study will go to following the construction, destruction and movement of the colony’s various Lutheran church buildings. There could have been as many as 4 before the present “National Historic Site” church was built. Following them is more complex than following the work of the various clergy, as we are attempting to do.

Between the third and fourth Pastors of the Waldoboro church, another event should be recorded. The general problems of the Waldoboro Lutheran history as Stahl saw them, clearly come through in this record: “… a candidate in Theology, Stolzner by name, was induced to accept the Broad Bay mission...and in 1751 he accompanied the first migration under Crell (Waldo’s first organizer) as far as Holland.” Stolzner quarreled with Crell over human rights and theological issues, so he “abandoned him and joined a migration to the Carolinas. As a consequence of this unfortunate disaffection the Broad Bay settlement was left for the next forty years largely to the religious ministrations of laymen and quacks”

In 1751 and 1752, new migrations to Broad Bay brought some German Moravians, especially schoolmaster Hans George Hahn and his wife
Barbara. Their work began to cut into the Lutheran community until: “In the last of the four major migrations, that of 1753, came Hahn’s arch religious enemy, the Lutheran Charles Christopher Godfrey Leissner, a former student at the university of Jena and a lawyer from Dietz. As a man appointed by his Prince to protect the interests of his migrating subjects and as Waldo’s agent, Leissner gradually assumed both civic and religious leadership in the colony.” The Moravian group in Broad Bay, hampered by Leissner, eventually migrated to the Wachovia section of North Carolina in 1770.

Two other resources give us substantiating history and some new insights into the history of the Waldoboro congregation. The first is “History of Waldoboro” by Samuel L. Miller. He tells of German Moravian Brethren arriving in Waldoboro in 1760. They had their own clergy and a small meeting house by 1762. The tensions between the two German groups, each with their own building and clergy, was unsettling enough so that the Moravians eventually moved their entire membership to North Carolina in 1770.

**Fourth Pastor at Waldoboro: Doctor Johannes Martin Schaeffer 1762-1790**

Stahl writes: “In the spring of 1762, a number of Broad Bayers while in Boston, listened to the eloquent preaching of Johannes Martin Schaeffer and invited him to pay a visit to Broad Bay.” He came in June and they promptly hired him. He moved to Broad Bay in Nov, of 1762. “The people of Broad Bay, however, were not particularly fortunate in their choice of Doctor Schaeffer, nor, in fact, of any of their early preachers. This was in no sense strange since there were few genuine Lutheran clergymen anywhere in New England.” “…he, Schaeffer, was neither a Doctor of Theology nor of Medicine, but he preached the one and practiced the other.”

“The ministry, however, was for him merely one of several avenues to money-getting. Tradition records that he had a fixed fee, payable in advance for every funeral, marriage and baptism. This was unenvied exploitation, for any German in Broad Bay at this time would sooner have done without food and clothing than to have dispensed with any one of these essential sacraments.” “As a physician Schaeffer enjoyed high repute…but it was a repute based largely upon a studied appeal to the credulity and superstition of his clientele.”

It is clear that after 1770 Schaeffer was tolerated as the parish head only because no one could be secured to replace him.

“In the summer of 1772, during one of the interregnums of Pastor Schaeffer, the decision was made to build a new church.” “But above all other reasons the idea of a new church represented a split in the congregation and the withdrawal of the Reformed group for doctrinal reasons and because they were no longer willing to tolerate Schaeffer in the pulpit.” This 1772 building is most likely the one that is preserved to the present day as a National Historic Site. Also in the summer of 1772 the Bachelor of Arts Candidate in Theology, Christopher Nicholas Homeyer was in the colony in some clerical capacity, probably being evaluated as a future replacement for Schaeffer. His name is on a document for a Broad Bayer moving to North Carolina. No other record of his presence is found.

“Among old documents at Hartwick Seminary, there is a call dated May 28, 1774 and addressed to the Reverend John Christopher Hartwick…it informed him that he had been unanimously elected as Pastor of the church at Waldoboro, and if unable to accept he was authorized to send a substitute and the parish would accept unanimously anyone of his decision.”

The Doctor’s (and Pastor’s) career(s) in Waldoboro came to an end in 1790 when he moved to Warren (about 7 miles SE). There he practiced medicine in his own house, lived high, drank heavily, went out little and enjoyed a reputation of great wealth…In 1793 while on a trip to Boston…the house was broken into by four masked men…the Doctors chests broken open and his gold and silver stolen. In rage and despair, Schaeffer plunged deeper into intemperance and died on April 20, 1794.” Doctor Schaeffer was unlettered, very colorful and not ordained.

**Fifth Pastor at Waldoboro: Dr. Ernst Friederich Philip Theobald, 1778-1781**

On October 17, 1777 in the Revolutionary War, “Burgoyne surrendered at Saratoga and the captive British and Hessians were moved
overland to a Boston Prison Camp. Among the latter was Dr. Ernst Friederich Philip Theobold” who in 1772 received his degree in Medicine and Theology in Germany and within a few years had come to America as a Chaplain in Burgoyne’s army. He was among several Hessians paroled to German communities in Maine, first in Dresden and then in Waldoboro. “In all this one may either suspect Providence, or the hand of the East side Reformed group, desperately in want of a preacher. In either case, in 1778, the Doctor was installed as a minister in the new church.” The coming of Theobald, while not marking the end of doctrinal schism in the congregation, did bring an end to Schaeffer’s ministry...” “The ministry of Doctor Theobald seems to have extended to the year 1781 when he apparently was drawn back to Dresden, Maine through his love for Sally Rittal, whom he married on February 22 of that year. The balance of his life was passed in Dresden where he died in 1809.” Dr. Theobald was not unlettered, was not colorful and was regularly ordained.

The sixth Pastor at Waldoboro was Mr. John Kanzar 1783-1784

Town taxes had been used for the German Lutheran Church ministry for years. ‘On April 1, 1782, the step was taken …to get a minister that can preach English and Dutch.” “...the man produced was Mr. John Kanzar (Canzer). On July 29, 1783, it was voted to hire him ‘for the arms (sic) of nine months on tryal (sic).’ Next to nothing is known of Mr. Kanzar, or his background, or of his qualifications for ministry. At the least it can be said of him that he was tolerated, for at the end of his trial period his pastorate was extended for another year, which for some reason he did not complete.” It is unknown if he was unlettered, colorful or ordained.

The seventh pastor at Waldoboro was Rev Friedrich Gruhner 1785-1788

“The successor to Mr. Kanzar was the Rev. Friedrick Gruhner, who, it is believed, was recommended by Doctor Theobald. In that case it is not improbable that Kroner had served in some capacity among Burgoyne’s Hessians. ...By training he was a teacher and, like many of his kind, was licensed to preach the gospel.” Early in his ministry, little was said about him other than he was graceful and eloquent in the pulpit and apparently religiously orthodox.

This all changed on March 20, 1786 when Rev. Croner was ordered to appear before the Justices of ye Quarter Sessions to answer charges that he had fathered a child that would be born out of wedlock. The scandal subsided with the marriage of the wayward pastor to the maid, but of course it was not forgotten. Before long Croner continued to disgrace himself in a variety of ways. In April of 1788 a town meeting voted: “To choose a committee of five to ‘traw articles(sic) that the Reverend Mr. Gruner is to go by and behave himself accordingly, and by breaking said articles to be dismissed from his office.’ (Note four spellings of his name.) Within the month he preached a sermon on John 7:34, “Ye shall seek me and shall not find me: and wither I am, thither ye cannot come.” The next day he was gone, abandoning his family and leaving behind much debt. This man was very colorful! The rest is unknown...

The eighth pastor at Waldoboro was Reverend Frederich Ritz 1794 – 1811

“The Gruner episode, while not a knockout blow, left the parish dispirited and groggy and the voters skeptical. ‘Tow n appropriations for ministerial purposes ceased for a few years.” By 1793, the question of getting German services was answered with the suggestion to see if Mr. Theobald would come from Dresden, but nothing happened.

Finally, in 1794, “the committee previously appointed engaged a pastor, this time a genuine one, though a German who knew no English, or at least was not qualified to preach in that language. This gentleman, and such he was, was the Reverend Friedrich Augustus Rodolphus Benedictus Ritz, who was born in Germany in 1752 ...Mr. Ritz had come to America in 1784 and had been ordained in Pennsylvania in 1793. The following year, probably through the New York Synod, he had received his call to Waldoborough, which was to be his first and only pastorate, for he remained here until his death, February 22, 1811. During these years his preaching was entirely in German.” It should be stated that the records show that, apart from the dual linguistic attempt in the employment of Mr. John Kanzar, 1781-1782, no language but German had been allowed for the Lutheran service.

“The Reverend Ritz was a kindly, able, and dignified gentleman, and a fervent Christian who was well equipped in all ways to satisfy the soul so deeply felt by his parish.” From the advent of Mr. Ritz to the end of the century, harmony and peace seem to have been the prevalent tone in the religious life of the town. “By the turn of the century, it may be said that Lutheranism in Waldoborough had reached its peak. It remained, nevertheless, true that the process of decay even at this time had started its work.”

“By the turn of the century the Lutheran congregation found itself definitely handicapped...by reason of the fact that they had no corporate or legal standing.” That changed on Feb. 28, 1800, “when an act passed the General Court to incorporate a Religious Society by the name of the German Protestant Society in the Town of Waldoborough in the County of Lincoln.” Writers note: When the Rev, Dr, Henry N. Pohlman writes about witnessing an October 1850 “Congregational Meeting” where the remaining members of the Church voted to disband and seek a spiritual home in a neighboring church, they did not disband their corporate legal entity. That lives on to this day as “the German Protestant Society” caring for the cemetery and the beautiful church building that is now a National Historic Site. In a certain sense, the congregation still lives on to this day, The Rev. Mr. Ritz had made a real congregation out of the church. He understood that English speaking Germans were the future, but he had trouble himself with mastering the English language. We will never know what he may have accomplished if he had not died at the rather early age of 59 years. He definitely was lettered, regularly ordained and not colorful.
The ninth Pastor at Waldoboro was Reverend Johannes Wilhelm Starman – 1812-1850

On March 30, 1812, it was voted “that the Deakins (sic) or elders be empowered to write the Revrent (sic) Mr. Starman and that they are empowered to sign a call accepting to his last request’. On Sept. 18, 1812, Mr. Starman arrived and presented a bill for traveling expenses ‘from New York to this place, $32.29.’ It is fitting that his ministry should begin with the micro managing of a paltry sum for travel. Hard times had come to the church and keeping up agreed upon wages for the Pastor would become an issue to cloud an otherwise caring, long term pastorate.

“The old generation of Germans had triumphed, but the issue was not to be settled by the mere installation of a new German pastor in their church. The old generation was dying off…The spiritual needs of an increasing English population…had not been met by the coming of Mr. Starman…By 1815 the Society was in arrears in payment of its pastor’s salary, owing Mr. Starman $581.80.” (on an annual salary of $400). The ministry of Rev. Starman continued in such a manner for the next 35 years. The minister was exceedingly faithful but the congregation and its ability to continue, withered away.

Stahl continues: “after Mr. Starman had been incapacitated by age, weakness and disease, the remaining handful appealed to the New York Synod to send them another preacher.” The New York Synod’s response to this request resulted in a detailed, well documented and extremely important report on what had happened to the Lutherans in Waldoboro.

“The German colony and Lutheran Church in Maine”, is an address delivered at the 1869 meeting of the Historical Society of the Lutheran Church in Maine” by Rev. Henry N. Pohlm an. He tells of taking a three-days-in-route journey in 1850 from his home in Albany, NY to Waldoboro, ME to help the congregation in their “default” pastoral vacancy. He describes the congregation as having “been in connection with the Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of New York for nearly half a century”. His 20 page address covers almost all of the history of the congregation at Waldoboro, confirming most facts already set down and adding a few that are quite important to our understanding of the life and death of the church.

“The most important part of Pohlm an’s record relates to Waldoboro’s then current pastor, John William Starman, with whom he conferred during his 1850 visit. Pastor Starman had arrived in 1812, which means he had been their pastor for about 38 years. Pohlm an found him in extremely poor health and unable to conduct public services, able only to minister to individuals in private settings. The climax of the Pohlm an visit and his reason for the Washington address to the Lutheran Historical Society is recorded in his final 2 pages.

The Congregation, including Pastor Starman, asked his help in finding them a new pastor. Pohlm an said the New York Ministerium would send a new pastor if they could guarantee a $150 annual income for him. A few days later the congregation gathered once again with Pohlm an in an official congregational meeting to determine if they could go forward and call a new pastor. They reported they could only guarantee between fifty and sixty dollars annually. At the news of that fact, “they came to the unanimous conclusion to disband their organization, and seek a spiritual home in the neighboring Congregational Church.” Pohlm an then writes: “I could not but acquiesce in their decision.” Pohlm an concludes his 1869 Washington address as follows” Gentlemen and Brethren of the Historical Society! This painful history, will not have been presented to you in vain, if we will only learn the important lessons which it teaches: How utterly futile is the attempt to build up a little Germany in America. How surely an isolated church, using exclusively the German language, surrounded by an English speaking population, must die out in the course of three or four generations”. This first-hand account by such a prominent churchman as Pohlm an, should make his observations very trustworthy. Pohlm an was elected President of the General Synod on three different occasions. He also served as President of the New York Ministerium. Pastor Starman, the final pastor of the congregation was lettered, not colorful and was properly ordained.

To be continued
President’s Letter

Dear Friends,

I was in Ireland the last days of February into the early days of March for the reburial of an 18 year old young man who was murdered at Duffy’s Cut, a mass grave of Irish railroad workers that is located 20 miles west of Philadelphia. The young man whose mortal remains we took back to Ireland for burial represented all of the 57 men and one woman who died at Duffy’s Cut from both cholera and murder in August of 1832. The man who we buried back in his homeland had come to America in the summer of 1832 to help build one of America’s earliest railroads, but was killed by locals afraid of the cholera disease that was spreading across the eastern seaboard. This young man’s memory was all but wiped out by what happened to him in August of 1832. But through historical and archaeological research this man has been recovered and his story is remembered, while he now lays at rest in the town of Ardara in County Donegal.

The burial ceremony was a very moving event that was attended by scores of folks from Donegal and throughout Ireland, as well as some (including us) who had traveled from as far away as America. This man’s story has come full circle, as he was buried on March 2, 2013, with the proper burial liturgy that had been denied him 181 years ago.

This burial was made possible because of an archival record that had been preserved here in America. Archives made it possible to tell the truth about that man’s life and death, and archives enabled his body to both be discovered and properly buried back in his homeland.

We at the Lutheran Archives Center at Philadelphia celebrate the intrinsic value of archival records, and we know that archives can do what happened with the story of Duffy’s Cut – they can illuminate the hidden depths of the human story. They can help tell the truth about the world in which we live and minister in God’s name. Contained within our repository are the stories of churches and institutions that served the Triune God’s purposes and that bred faith within the hearts of men, women, and children throughout the northeast. Our purpose is to help the larger church remember this story of the Lutheran witness in our region. We thank you for supporting this important work with your prayers and financial gifts.

Thank you for your continued partnership!

Sincerely in Christ,

J. Francis Watson
President, LACAP Board of Directors