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MORE ABOUT THE BRETHREN

PART 3

When immigrants come to America, one of the first things they must do is find a place to live. In modern times, many immigrants find temporary or permanent housing with relatives. Also, there are agencies to help them such as Church World Service and other organizations. There are rental properties available as well as houses for sale.

In the early 18th century, finding a place to live was much more complicated. For the first shipload of Brethren to arrive in 1719, perhaps some did have friends or relatives who could help them temporarily. For the most part, however, it meant trying to secure land on which to farm and to build a log house. This procedure takes time.

During the next couple of years, their main job was basic survival. They were still inspired by their decision to come to Pennsylvania where

William Penn had promised that they could live in religious freedom.

In Frank Eshleman's book¹ we find this entry under 1719:

"Dunkards in Pequea, or Conestoga"

"...twenty of those families came and settled in Germantown - on the Skippack, in Montgomery County - at Oley, in Berks County, and on the Conestoga in Lancaster County."

So not only were these early Brethren pre-occupied with finding land and shelter, they were scattered over a large area. In 1722, a small group of them organized a sort of missionary journey to the areas where some of the Brethren had settled. This trip was led by Peter Becker who had come to Pennsylvania with the first group of Brethren in 1719.

The men departed from Germantown, where some of them had settled, and which was the location of the first congregation in Pennsylvania. The mother church is still there. They traveled through the regions of Skippack, Oley, and Falckner's Swamp toward Pottstown to a place called Coventry. This became the second

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¹ Eshelman, H. Frank, Swiss and German Pioneer Settlers of Southeastern Pennsylvania, Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., Baltimore, Maryland, reprint 1991.