

Seven hundred souls from Switzerland and the German Palatinate, corralled into a caravan of Rhine barges, had placed their trust in neulander agent Gottlieb Mittelberger's silver-tongued promises of land and a new life in the English colonies.

The Newlanders

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The author alone, of course, is responsible and liable for the work in its entirety, but he could not have done it alone.

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Preface

*And that which history gives not to the eye,
The faded coloring of time's tapestry,
Let fancy, with her dreamed-tipped brush,
supply.*

Whittier

Americans tracing their genealogy further and further into the past must, except for Native Americans, ultimately uncover some ship's passenger list containing the names of that first generation of ancestors to set foot in the New World. In the author's case, it was the ship *Pallas*, arriving in Philadelphia on November 25, 1763. The passenger records in the Pennsylvania Archives contain facsimiles of the signatures of those who could write, and these include David Jansohn, penned in flourishing German script.

A parenthetical comment attached to the manifest concludes with, "196 ½Whole Freights. 65 Persons. Benjamin & Samuel Shoemaker."

The Shoemakers appear on many such manifests. They were in the business of importing indentured servants from Germany and Switzerland and selling them – somewhat like slaves – to local buyers. In this way, I learned of the humble beginnings of my branch of the Johnson family.

There are many extant diaries, journals, newspaper stories, and other bits of information regarding this newly flourishing business of selling people. These documents contain much drama, much pathos, much tragedy, and much adventure. These were real people who lived in an exciting era. However, to bring action into those times so long ago, so that we can

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relieve the lives of those who sold themselves into bonded servitude in order, ultimately, to participate in the American dream required the melding of many stories into one held together with light, fictional glue.

The assimilation of the Palatines into American culture was the beginning of multicultural America. These were the original boat people. All the problems, arguments and emotions that now go into the assimilation of Hispanic and Asian people and the long overdue assimilation of African Americans and Native Americans into the melting pot were first encountered and puzzled over with the Germans. These were people of the same color and religion as the English colonists, yet, even so, men such as Benjamin Franklin worried about their future political power while lesser people laughed at their strange speech and labeled them dumb Dutchmen.

German authorities called the hired agents of the people merchants soul stealers. The German word for such men was *Neulander*. The ordeal of the immigrants they recruited was long and grueling. Many schemes and frauds victimized them, yet most managed to survive in a new, strange, and foreign world. A few retain the uniqueness of their religion and culture to the present time, but most, by the second generation, weathered the trials of the metamorphosis into Americans. This is their story.

Olin Glynn Johnson,
Woodlands, Texas
February, 2001

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*Know'st thou the land where the lemon-trees bloom
Where the gold orange glows in the deep thicket's gloom,
Where the wind ever soft from the blue heaven blows,
And the groves are of laurel and myrtle and rose?*

Goethe

Prologue

Rüdesheim, Hessian Rheingau, April, 1763

All Rüdesheim was alive at the news of the *neulander* camp, its great tent pitched on the grounds of the old Brömserburg fortress. Broadsides covered the town like the leaves of autumn, and what a show they promised. All the marvels of America would be on display in the valley of the Rhine; animals never seen in Germany: turkeys, possums, porcupines, skunks, and raccoons; implements of the savages: bows, arrows, tomahawks, wampum belts, and scalps of white people; paintings from the New World: the great cataract of the Niagara, portraits of Indian chiefs, giant bones from the valley of the Ohio, the desolation of the fallen timbers, and the slave market of Charleston.

They would be staging the sports of the colonials: cock fights, bear baitings, and shooting competitions. There would be music and dancing girls, but the greatest attraction of all was the unimaginably rich and powerful man responsible for it all. Confidant and advisor to royalty, owner of plantations, banker, financier, international celebrity, and businessman, Gottlieb Mittelberger's oration would culminate the festivities.

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For the first time, this great man would divulge all his hard earned knowledge on how he became wealthy. In his generosity, he would tell all who would listen how they too could follow in his footsteps.

The gentle slopes surrounding the Brömserburg ruins teemed with peasants, vineyard workers, craftsmen, wives, children, recently discharged soldiers, and visitors from as far away as Cologne — all hungry for the story to be told. As drummers poured out from the great tent onto the small stage directly in front of its large entrance, the throng clapped heartily and whistled loudly. When uniformed trumpeters raised golden horns in unison, filling the surrounding hills with a fanfare suitable for a king, cheers arose that echoed down the Rhine Gorge as far as the Lorelei. And, when the great man himself emerged, men jumped to their feet and raised their arms in thrilled excitement.

He mounted the stage with arms aloft, raising them and lowering them time and again as he saluted the crowd — first to the right, then to the left, and then center stage where he remained with arms extended high above his head as excitement reached a fever pitch.

His dress was no more than expected of so prosperous an individual. It was all silver brocade and gold trim, with gold buttons and white lace flourishes. Silver buckles ornamented finely polished shoes, and silk hose stretched over massive calves. Above his powdered wig, clutched tightly in his raised hand, he waived a fine ebony cane with an elegantly carved silver handle and matching tip. A portly figure surmounted by a pear-shaped head, flanked by great jowls, served to display this sartorial splendor — as well it should for a man of means.

“*Meine Damen und Herren,*” he shouted, attempting to gain control. Smiling, he bowed deeply in each direction as he gave up any hope of a quick beginning to his talk. The

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drummers rolled for attention and order, and the great man held up a single hand, palm outward in a further attempt to calm the uproar.

“Friends,” he said at last, “I bring you the riches of the ages.” Again the masses roared and the speaker bowed.

“Though you be penniless, yet shall you be rich. Though you are covered with rags, you will wear the raiment of princes. Though your children go hungry, they will eat their fill — this I promise, as God is my witness.”

A smattering of critics had chirped a chorus of discontent throughout the day. The American animals were not so unique they said. Neither was the speaker as rich or as famous as boasted by his advertisements. It was rumored, they contended, that wealthy Dutch interests had financed the whole thing.

Seeing the speaker in person, the detractors savored newly discovered faults, smirking at his pudginess and winking to one another over his flashy clothes. And though he spoke in The High German *buhnsprache*, the language of the stage, they sneered, finding his words imperfect, and his accent strange — a mixture of English, Dutch, and Palatine. “Newlanders are soul stealers and cheats of the worst kind,” they howled, echoing the pronouncements of their local *herzogs*. But, as he proceeded, they grew strangely quiet. To the throng surrounding them, so desperate for hope, there was no flaw in the magnetism of his message.

“Those that have ears to hear, listen to me. Where derives the wealth of princes? You have only to look at the hills around you. Who owns these hills? Your prince? Your count? Your knight? Where then is the land for you? Ah! There is none left. Even if you had money, there is none for sale. Imagine, if you would, that there were no other people in the

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world, beyond us assembled here. Think what each of us could have — lands without end.”

“Once upon a time centuries ago, long forgotten Germans from a land far away ventured into the valley of the Rhine for the first time. In the ancient past, in the dim mists of man’s childhood, far beyond recorded memory, the vastness and mystery of the far mountains summoned the curious and the brave. Those bold enough to seek their fortunes in the uncertain distances were the first newlanders. There, beyond the horizon, was a land of their own. Without land, they were paupers; with land they were lords. Land, the matrix for life itself. Land, more precious than gold, more durable than life, yea, more honored than knowledge.”

“The saga of those remote times faded from memory long ago. Little remains but that which may be inferred from crusted artifacts or gleaned from dusty transcriptions of faded parchments. The drama of those ancient lives can only be imagined from the songs of campfires and the stories of old men.”

“Are such dreams the stuff of myth and legend, and nothing more? Might God again grant the poor such hopes — even those of the war devastated Rhine — even you ... or you?”

“Friends, I stand before you to tell you it is so.”

“Auch! You cry. Who is this peacock strutting before us — this pompous, overstuffed showoff? What do the rich know of the misery of the poor? How could this plantation owner, this advisor to lords, understand the depths of my despair or tally the sum of my sorrows? My hopes — my dreams — meager though they were, lie among the ashes of Germany, dead as those who struggle no more.”

“Friends, the Gottlieb Mittelberger before you is a ghost, a specter, a shade from the past. Once, years ago in the village

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of Durlach, there was a young boy named Gottlieb Mittelberger. Clothed in rags and hungry, orphan son of a charcoal burner, his misery and despair were the equal of any here. One day, this small boy disappeared from his little village and has not been seen since — until today. By God's grace, he managed to reach that distant shore far beyond the setting sun to claim life anew. Now he stands before his fellow countrymen again."

"Within seven years of reaching America, I owned my first plantation. Now I eat of the fat of the land. I would be there now, in the cool of my veranda, watching the river slip quietly by, were it not that I was haunted by my past."

Placing both hands to his heart and raising his face to the sky, he softened his voice slightly, straining his listener's ears as he continued. "A voice came to me in that far away place and said, 'Gottlieb, Gottlieb, the charcoal burners of the Rhine suffer yet.' The wealth I had accumulated over the years lost its value. I knew I must return to share my good fortune with all who would follow."

"Come friends, sign with me, and I will take you to America. You need only be a hard and willing worker. I will pay your way, and you can thank me later. Would the hundreds come? I will take them all. Would the thousand join? Welcome all. And when your life draws to its end, and you survey land that is yours — land in abundance — your breast can swell with pride for you will have lived a life as grand as the Graf Palatine!"

"Ah, friends, it is a land of milk and honey, a land where the lemon trees bloom. Walk through the door into my tent and sign with me. It is the doorway to the New World. Come in! The beer is cold, and the sausages, and sauerkraut, and bread are being served, and the girls are dancing. Come in, friends, come in! America awaits."

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*But Thou, exulting and abounding river!
Making thy waves a blessing as they flow
Through banks whose beauty would endure
forever,
Could man but leave thy bright creation so,*

*A thousand battles have assailed thy banks,
But these and half their fame have pass'd away,
And Slaughter heap'd on high his weltering ranks:
Their very graves are gone, and what are they?*

Cilde Harold's Pilgrimage

Chapter 1 The Palatinate of the Rhine

Dawn - August 30, 1762, Johannesburg, Electorate of Mainz

David crawled through the muddy vineyard slowly and carefully to the peak of the ridge overlooking the Rhine. It was a small effort, yet it exhausted him. He breathed heavily as his arms gave way, dropping his forehead into the mud. He needed sleep, and he knew it, but now was not the time. The sounds of horses, mules, wagons, and men replaced the soft patter of rain as the skies cleared. He forced himself forward to the crest knowing full well that the scene awaiting him would not be welcome.

His fears were justified. Units of the French army crowded the western bank of the river. Scouts from their cavalry

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mingled with an advanced guard on the eastern bank just below where he lay.

Two months had passed since David's departure from Zurich to return to Beindersheim, the home of his parents. His route had become evermore circuitous because of the war and the passing armies. He was now to the northeast of his destination, and again, his way was blocked. He verged on collapse. The thought of abandoning the struggle held the prospect of immediate relief of his misery. He gave in to it briefly and allowed his body to go limp on the muddy crest.

Somehow, however, in conjunction with the warming rays of the morning sun, the tart grapes on which he had gorged himself provided the energy and will to resume. He again reversed his path and crept away from the river to head east and north once more.

Lack of sleep caused his latest renewal of determination to be short lived. Within the hour, the exhaustion of the early morning returned. He longed for a covered place to recline. He managed to trudge forward in spite of his exhaustion.

Two hours east of the river, he found an old and dilapidated barn. It was still perilously close to the invaders, but fatigue left no other choice. The scattered remains of a hay storage were all that remained inside. They provided a luxury he did not expect. He selected the largest nest and lowered his mud-crusting carcass onto the soft shallow bed.

He had no more than closed his eyes when a strong cannon blast jolted them open once more, birds fluttering from a nest in the ceiling as straw and dirt fell about him. A full-scale artillery barrage followed. The sounds came from the river, two hours away, but, even so, each volley rattled the timbers of the old barn, dislodging more accumulated dirt and rot. In spite of the noise and danger, David Jansohn sank into a deep sleep.

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The cannon barrage continued for upward of two hours then stopped as suddenly as it had begun. Rifle fire replaced the cannons. The sounds of bugles and drums preceded the clashing of horses and men. Shouts attending charging troops filled the air, soon followed by screams of pain mixed with barking commands. With intermittent lulls separating succeeding episodes of battle throughout the day, quietness returned with dusk.

David was the lucky one, sleeping while others died or suffered. He continued to sleep even when the sounds of horses and men approached ever closer. Excited voices signaled the arrival of soldiers at the barn. With bayonets attached, forward guards burst through, scattering to search the interior, wary of hidden dangers. One of them, a nervous youth, eyes darting side-to-side, was but a step away from stumbling over David when he caught sight of the reclining human form — molded in mud. Gasping, the youth stumbled backwards, recalling stories of the sinister golem mud-man, told to him in his youth by his Bohemian mother. Two other guards, attracted by the youth's frightened recoil, spotted David and fell upon him, pinning him to the straw.

David's mud crust was no more of a surprise to the soldiers than being pinned down was to him. Reacting by instinct, he rolled to the right and then to the left, freeing himself enough to rise to his knees, the quickness of his reaction surprising his opponents. As he attempted to rise to his feet, the two guards grabbed at him again, one tackling him at the waist, causing his mud-covered breeches to tear and slide down his legs along with the man. The other grabbed his wrist pulling him sideways into the hay. The frightened young soldier who first discovered David now joined in, and soon the three guards had him fully subdued, pinned to the ground.

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Breathing heavily, David struggled to regain full use of his mental faculties. His eyes slowly brought the scene into focus. To his surprise, the soldiers atop him were not French. Their uniforms were those of the Prussians. A great dread consumed him, leaving him confused and disoriented.

"Search him," barked a sergeant, causing the three guards to jerk the mud-man to his feet. One of them used a knife to free his ankles from the torn breeches while another removed his mud coat and started poking into its pockets. The third spun him around to see what else might be found, but all that was left was a soiled linen shirt and a pair of well-worn shoes. Half-naked, without under-garments or socks, the bony legs and skeleton-like pelvis presented stark evidence of the man's desperation.

A barking command from an officer, entering the barn door with sword drawn, brought all to attention. A dozen soldiers marched in and quickly formed lines on either side of the door, snapping to attention as medics carefully carried in a bleeding man and placed him in David's recently vacated straw bed. The man's uniform and the deference paid him by the troops marked him as a person of unusually high rank. As the medical staff completed the removal of their patient from his stretcher, the sergeant motioned to the door with his head, indicating that David was to be taken away. But, as the soldiers grabbed his arms and yanked him forward, their action attracted the attention of the medics and their patient.

"One moment sergeant," interrupted the wounded commander. "What is your name, *mein Herr*?" David was quickly spun around to face the leader.

Short of breath and shaking with fright and embarrassment, he managed to force words from his mouth, "David, David Jansohn, your, your... Grace, uh, your Honor."

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The officer with the drawn sword barked at David, "You are honored by the presence of the Erbprinz of Brunswick. You may show your respect by addressing him as Your Serene Highness."

"My name is David Jansohn, Your Serene Highness," the lad replied in a quivering voice only slightly louder than a whisper.

"Well, sorry to take your bed Herr Jansohn, but it appears that I am in greater need of it than you."

The soldier poking through David's coat found a wax-paper wrapper containing a passport and a letter. Both were soaked, in spite of the wax cover, and the letter was torn as well, its state generally reflected that of its owner. These were handed first to the sergeant, then to the officer in charge who, after checking the passport, read the letter.

"Hand it here," ordered the Erbprinz, overruling the chief medic, still dressing the prince's open wound. The poor condition of the document made the reading difficult, but the Erbprinz managed to decipher its stained and smeared contents.

*Zurich, 13 June
Herr Wilhelm Jansohn
Beindersheim, Kurpfalz
Mein Herr,*

It has become my sad duty to inform you that I, today, dismissed your son from my service. I have done so only after exhausting all proper methods known to me to train an apprentice in proper manners and decorum. In spite of repeated personal warning from my wife and me, your son engaged in perfidious and secret liaisons with a member

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of our family. Divine providence alone led us to the dreadful discovery in which the culprit was caught in the very act of seduction.

You should also be informed that the family member involved is not without blame as well. The degree to which each of the two brought the other down is a matter of dispute amongst the pair. I am determined that both will regret the shortcomings of their character. I am unable to dismiss the family member in the same fashion as your son, but you may be assured that an alternative action has been found.

You may be guaranteed that I fulfilled all my obligations to you and your son until today. He has been trained in the workings of the forge and the furnace. He has mastered most of the skills required of an accomplished apprentice.

He has been schooled as well in the Hochdeutsch of the Holy Bible, which renders his behavior the more surprising.

In sadness, I recall the cold winter of '56 when I first encountered you and David near your village. David was only eleven then. The times were hard for you I know, and it was a privilege for me to help in a small way. It was my great desire to provide a rewarding apprenticeship for your son, but it was not to be. Thus, the action I have taken today brings me a special sorrow.

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*Your obedient servant,
Frederick Grob*

The Erbprinz shook his head. "Herr Jansohn, I see you have been enjoying yourself while we have been fighting the French and the other Papists." Returning the letter to the young man, the prince continued, "So, you were on your way home in disgrace. Well, you now have the opportunity to pay for your indiscretions in the service of Brunswick and in the service of His Majesty Frederick of Prussia. Sergeant, see that this lover does his duty to the Fatherland and makes amends to humanity for his undisciplined ways."

The sergeant bowed and, turning to the three soldiers holding the captive, again motioned to the door with his head, following them sternly as they shoved their prisoner outside. There, the sergeant looked him over head to toe as if assaying a piece of merchandise.

"Corporal, take charge of this man," ordered the sergeant with a wave of his hand.

"I will have him ready for tomorrow's action," responded the corporal. "He will be in the front ranks."

The sergeant grinned. "It is no more than he deserves. However, I need men I can trust. This one can perform more service as a worker. Take him to the artificers and see that he is well guarded."

The corporal directed his prisoner to a nearby cart.

"You are to ride there until we can transfer you. Check the gear. You may find suitable clothing."

As soon as David had climbed aboard, the cart lunged forward, the driver pushing the horses hard so that the wagon bounced and careened over the rough terrain. David found himself amid a collection of blooded and battered soldier's packs. He did not have to be told that the cart's dreadful

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contents were those of the dead, hastily gathered after the battle. Between the bumping and jostling of the cart's track bouncing over large rocks and sinking into deep ruts, David picked through the heap. There was one knapsack different from the rest. It contained a good quality tan blanket emblazoned with two brown stripes and a large arrow figure under which were inscribed the letters G R. There was also a white blanket coat, or capote, with a hood and light blue trim and fasteners of the same color.

Digging to the very bottom of the knapsack, David withdrew a number of golden English coins. He had never seen their like. There were twenty-two of them, golden guineas, but he knew only that they were gold and thus of high value. He quickly glanced up to the driver to see if he had been watching, but the driver's attention was focused on the horses. David slowly and carefully inserted the coins into a pocket of the capote. He then supplied himself with a shirt, a waistcoat, some tan leggings, and a hard crust of moldy bread. Sitting back against the rails of the cart, he rested as best he could while he ate and sighed and cursed his luck. The cart was taking him ever further from his parent's village. Two months before, he had lived in a large house in Zurich, proud to be an apprentice to an important man. Now he was a prisoner of the Prussians. The summer was at an end. The prospects for the winter were bitter indeed.

February, 1763. Artificer's Camp, Bergstrasse

In peacetime, the mountain road from Heidelberg to Darmstadt had provided an unusually straight and wide thoroughfare for transporting goods and passengers. It was paved and lined with trees, a monument to German industry and engineering. As the Seven Years' War drew to a close, the

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French and Austrians controlled Heidelberg and the southern portion of the road, and the Prussians occupied its northern half. In both halves, the combatants cut the trees for warmth, food, and shelter.

Prisoners of the artificer corps chopped trees for the Prussians. So, with his fellow conscripts and the ever-present guards, David suffered long days with the ax, long marches in the snow, tasteless and frugal meals, and nights with little sleep.

Though his existence was meager, David was relieved that he was not forced into battle. As the long months of conscription passed, his weapon was the ax, and his enemy the forest. He quickly lost count of the number of trees he felled and the wood he cut: fire wood, wood for cooking, and wood for supporting tents and lean-tos. He vowed never to raise an ax again if his conscription ever came to an end.

He learned to recognize the uniforms of the various soldiers and their units. Most were from Brunswick, but within the same army were Prussians and Hanoverians. There were small groups from Cleves and Lippstadt, and there was a detachment of English troops. David was especially curious about the English. He supposed that his secret cache of gold was somehow due to the English presence on the field of battle. He also noticed the changing attitudes of the Prussians toward these foreigners. At first they liked the English and bragged how the English were their natural allies. Then, they cursed them, because they had made a separate peace with France and had given away territories west of the Rhine, but the English soldiers remained and made no preparations to leave. The English seemed to attract a host of unusual visitors as well, and each visit caused the Prussians to wag their tongues in speculation.

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With the arrival of the winter months, David's patience shortened with the days, and his spirit plummeted with the bone-chilling cold. February, the sixth month of his captivity, was the worst. It was always dark, it seemed, and there was little relief from the incessant coldness. David was warmest when chopping hardest. One particularly cold and blustery day, he swung his ax with a special fury, working up a sweat, and when the tree crashed into the snow-crusting earth, he paused to wipe the perspiration from his brow. During this brief intermission, he saw two civilians, escorted by an English officer, arrive at the artificer camp. Though intervening trees and tents caused him to lose sight of them, the stir created among a passing trio of Prussian officers was greater than usual. Later, during another pause, David managed to get a brief glimpse of them in the company of the camp's commander, presenting gifts and drinking wine. David's guard traded rumors with other soldiers as they passed. Some thought they were diplomats. Others argued that they were from Berlin. David's interest rapidly vanished. The weather improved with their arrival, but other than that, the strangers meant little to him one way or the other.

The English visitors had been at the camp for several days when David saw, to his great surprise, that the two mysterious figures were clearly approaching him in the company of one of the Prussian sergeants. As they drew near, David continued to chop away at his latest target, but he surveyed them as well as he could while he worked. Finally, he stopped, as they halted in front of him.

They were a corpulent pair, especially when compared to the conscripted laborers. One of the two was well dressed and dapper, quite out of place in the camp. He carried a fine ebony cane with a silver handle. His shirt was silk, as were his hose, and a periwig nestled between his bejeweled tricorne and the

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thin, upper portion of his head. The bottom portion of his face widened with jowls that overlapped and partially eclipsed a laced flourish at his throat.

The fine gentleman's companion was a rotund fellow, redheaded and ugly. His coat, hat, wide belt, boots, and gloves were made of leather, as was the riding crop he gripped firmly in his right hand. By no means the fashion plate of his colleague, his shirt was linen, and his breeches coarse wool.

It was the handsomely dressed gentleman that spoke to David first, in a strange German dialect.

"*Guten Morgen, mein Herr.* You are Jansohn I believe? Let's see here." He consulted a piece of paper handed him by the redheaded man. "Ah, yes! In the service of his Serene Highness of Brunswick."

David looked to the guard to see if he might speak with the visitors and was pleased to see an affirmative nod.

"*Ja, mein Herr.* I am David Jansohn, a conscripted laborer from Beindersheim, near Worms, at your service."

"And a fine lad you are indeed and a hard worker, even though your circumstances do not allow you to work out of desire but out of coercion. I beg your forgiveness for this intrusion."

"I'm pleased to be afforded the opportunity to give my calluses a rest, and I thank you for that."

"I am Gottlieb Mittelberger, originally from Durlach, at your service, and this is my partner, Herr O'Connor. Please excuse my deplorable use of the German tongue. Both Herr O'Connor and I have lived in Pennsylvania and the other English colonies most of our lives, and we speak in the same untutored dialect as the natives of that distant place."

"I was born in Boston," added O'Connor in German of an equally bad quality. However, the information he imparted meant nothing to David, for he had never heard of the place.

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"We are here to try to help you. And you, in turn, can help us," Mittelberger continued.

"*Ja?* Why would you wish to help me, and how can I help you?"

"How would you like to go to America?"

David was stunned. He had been totally unprepared for such an abrupt and unexpected suggestion. He stared in disbelief. Ages seemed to pass before an answer emerged from his lips.

"I would like to go anywhere other than here, but I'm not likely to get very far with this guard watching me. Even if he would let me go, I don't even have the *gelt* to get home, which is where I really wish to go and which is considerably closer than the English islands."

"Would you now? With that letter you have in your possession? But I believe your wardens have other plans for you. All of Prussia has been destroyed except maybe Berlin and Potsdam. There will be need for conscripted laborers for years to come."

David paled at the thought. Surely the Prussians would let him go at the end of the war. But, then, when would that be? Some of the wars had lasted for longer than the span of a single generation. David slumped against the partially chopped tree.

"Perhaps you would like to hear what we have to say. We can arrange a time if you have some interest."

"Even if I am so lucky as to be dismissed by these cursed Prussians, I could hardly go to America. I, like everyone else around here, have nothing."

"We can help you. We will show you not only how to get there but also how to become a very wealthy man."

"Oh? You have the means to get me there, without money for the trip?"

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"My boy. Forget about the money. Travel now, and pay later."

Gott im Himmel! David thought. Pay later? What could this man mean? It made no sense. Pay later, indeed! Whoever heard of such a thing. David puzzled over this strange suggestion while the pair stared at him. They seemed serious. He studied them closely.

It was an interesting, if preposterous, idea, he concluded. It would never have occurred to him that he could pay later. Was this an American idea? How could they be sure he would pay them back?

Mittelberger and O'Connor were interested in David for a variety of reasons. His appearance was pleasing. He was of robust health and medium height. His boyhood blond locks had changed to a blackish-brown. He was a bit on the thin side, but he was strong and agile. They had been told that he was a hard worker who complained little. He could read and write the *schriftdeutsch*. More importantly, he had been an apprentice at an ironworks - a valuable and much needed trade in the New World.

They took charge of him and strolled with him along the wide Bergstrasse. What tales they told! In the new land, they said, everyone was a king. Those who went there became rich easily. The land was unending and could be obtained by simply clearing the trees. Every stream was full of fish, and every forest housed unnumbered deer, rabbits, and bears. There were many Germans there. No need to learn English or even mix with the English. Germans populated whole villages and towns. German churches and German schools abounded. And, since they knew the contents of the letter David had with him, they emphasized that there were many beautiful, golden-headed, blue eyed *fräuleins* ripe for the plucking and yearning for the right man. Indeed, they said, there were many more

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fräuleins in the new land than eligible men, maybe as many as ten to one.

David liked everything he heard, except for the part about clearing the trees.

"I thought this Pennsylvania was a little island. All the New World is just some little islands," protested David.

"*Nein*, my boy. It's a continent. Like Europe," assured Mittelberger.

"Well, what does it cost, and how do I pay?"

"The river trip to Rotterdam will cost forty *florins*, more or less."

"How much is that?"

"It's about the same in gulden."

"*Mein Gott!* Forty *gulden*. I'll never get it paid off."

"But of course you will, my dear boy. Pay is very high in Pennsylvania."

"Will the Count Palatine let me go? If he will, who will be my prince in America?"

"You'll need to go to Mannheim to obtain your manumission. That's your release from your Prince. Our man will meet you there. But don't worry, we know how to handle such matters. You will have no prince, except for the King of England. There are no princes in the English colonies."

David thought about the last remark. He concluded that America must be similar to Switzerland. That was good, he believed.

"How much is the rest of the cost?"

"The ship to Philadelphia costs about twenty pounds. That's a hundred and twenty *gulden*. Altogether you'll need about two hundred *florins*. Your services will be announced and purchased. It will take you about four or five years to work it off. During this time you can finish your

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apprenticeship and learn how to do business in the New World.”

David nodded his head up and down in a slow, studied manner. He looked the two straight in the eyes. “I wish to visit my family in Beindersheim before I leave.”

“No problem, my lad! Come with me!” ordered Mittelberger. “You must sign a few papers, and we can have you on your way with the spring thaw.”

“Papers? What papers are needed?” asked David.

“Oh, nothing important really,” shrugged the older man. “It’s routine paperwork. It has to do with your obligations to us and ours to you. There is a small fee involved, and there is the matter of the interest on the funds we will advance you and such as that.”

“Interest?” asked David. “What is interest?”

“It is a small token of your gratitude for our assistance, nothing more.”

“Oh, I am grateful, *mein Herr*, very grateful.”

“Of course you are, my boy.”

Mittelberger produced the documents, three of them, for David’s signature. They were quite long – and in English.

“Why are there so many things to sign?” asked David.

“I have asked myself that very question many times,” agreed the *neulander*. “Indentures, notes, passport applications. It goes on and on doesn’t it. Don’t worry your head about it. I know how these things work. So does Herr O’Connor. We are here to look after you. Here you go my boy. Sign here!”

David signed. Mittelberger quickly removed the papers. O’Connor took the boy by the arm and hustled him back to the Prussian guard.

“I have some questions,” pleaded David.

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“Later, boy. There will be plenty of time on the voyage. There are others we need to see, and time is short.”

Monday, May 9, 1763 - Mannheim, Kurpfalz (The Palatinate)

Wilhelm Jansohn accompanied his son in the early dawn as they crossed the pontoon bridge spanning the Rhine. The walk from Beindersheim, south along the western bank of the river had taken three long days. The older Jansohn was pleased with himself. His endurance and stamina had matched, if not exceeded, that of his strapping offspring. The sixteen to eighteen hour days had not worried him. The steep hills along the road had not caused him a moment's pause. The frugality of the meals had failed to sap his strength. The dangers of sleeping along side the road had filled him with no terror. Now, however, as Mannheim loomed large at the far end of the bridge, a cold sweat enveloped him. Soon, he and his son would face the stern bureaucrats of the Graf Palatine. The unwelcome fear fell on him suddenly and seemed to add to the age of his appearance.

Jansohn's forty-five year old frame contained more than its share of wrinkles and blemishes. There was a slight but noticeable hunch in his back. Already, his hands were spotted with age, and his hair was uniformly silver. His face presented an ever-present grimness, reflecting long years of meager hopes and quiet desperation.

Bridge traffic came to a halt. A large log raft approached, and the center section of the bridge swung open with the downstream current, remaining in that position for an hour, even though the raft had long since passed. The delay agitated the elder Jansohn.

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“David, there will be guards at the entrance to the city. What are we to say? What will we tell them?”

“We don’t have to enter the city proper. We should take the road going north to the wharf. There is supposed to be a green tent not far from the bridge. There will be a man there to help us.”

“All the offices are inside the city,” declared the father, with raised finger. “Several people have told me that. I don’t like this business of a tent. It doesn’t seem proper.”

“Those are the orders they gave me. Maybe they will take us into the city after we report to the tent. I am more concerned by this delay. We were supposed to be there early.”

At last the bridge was restored, allowing the harried pair to hurry to the wharf. A grim-faced guard greeted them as they approached the promised tent.

“You must be Jansohn. You are late. Go inside and be quick about it. Is this your father?”

“*Ja, mein Herr.*”

“He must wait outside with me. *Schnell!*”

The man inside rose and greeted David with a wide smile. “Ah, Jansohn, my boy. Good to see you, I was getting worried. Everyone is gathering at the wharf. Some of the boats have left already.”

“Will the passport take long?” David asked.

“We have it for you already. All you have to do is sign it and sign the payment register.”

“More papers? What does it cost?”

“It took a lot of talk, but we won’t charge you for that. We paid five *florins* above the table and an equal number below. So you must sign here for ten.”

David felt he could have worked a better deal; after all, he owned nothing. The documents were thrust in front of him,

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and he proceeded to read, but while doing so, a noise erupted outside. The guard entered and threw a strange object to the man inside. "Let's go," he cried.

David's eyes tracked the object in flight. As it landed on the table, he could see that it was a small belt made of some type of beads. White beads formed a background upon which red beads were intermixed to form the picture of a bird. This curiosity caused the tent's inhabitant to become extremely agitated. He hastily gathered his papers and retrieved those that David was reading.

"Go directly to the wharf, and report to Herr O'Connor!" he ordered hurriedly. In the next instant, he and the guard disappeared, leaving the bewildered father and son behind. David emerged from the tent to encounter his father's frightened eyes.

"David! What has happened," the father cried.

The two looked both directions along the road as uniformed guards approached with great speed and immediately seized them, preventing their departure. When a magistrate arrived minutes behind the guards, David was certain his father would faint. The older man turned white and weakened in the guard's grasp.

The magistrate questioned the two frightened Palatine peasants about the transaction in the tent and why the two men had hurried away. The magistrate also demanded to know if the man was one of the infernal *neulanders* and demanded to know his whereabouts. He then proclaimed the *neulanders* to be soul stealers, thieves, and cheaters of the worst kind and warned the Jansohns about dealing with such scoundrels. The lecture continued, increasing in intensity, until the Jansohns were destroyed and shriveled into total subservience.

"Guard!" commanded the magistrate. "Bring these two to the wharf."

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The march to the wharf was swift. The stern magistrate led with long strides, while the guards prodded the captives and crowded them on either side. Within minutes, a large fenced area filled with tents, bordering the road opposite to and near the entrance to the wharf came into view. David spied the redheaded *neulander* O'Connor near the gate to the compound and broke from the guard, heading straight for the Irishman.

"Herr O'Connor, there is trouble. This magistrate from the court has arrested us. We may all land in the dungeon *klink!*"

O'Connor smiled and refused to be upset. "Step aside, boy, and keep quiet," he whispered.

Turning to the waiting magistrate, the ruddy *neulander* assumed an air of great courtesy, and the two huddled together speaking in low whispers. Only those standing closest saw O'Connor withdraw a small pouch from his coat while pressing closely to the now cooperative official.

"Guard!" shouted the magistrate. "Place these men in the charge of this gentleman."

While the two leaders exchanged pleasantries, O'Connor's assistants led David and his father into the fenced *stalag* where they were assigned a small tent. O'Connor reappeared as David and his father sat outside pondering the events of the day. They stood up as he approached.

"Ah, my dear boy," the redhead sighed. "The lateness of your arrival created a small problem, but not to worry; it has been resolved. These matters are best handled early, before the opening of the city."

"My deepest apologizes," blurted David. "The bridge delayed us."

"There is some unfinished business due to the interruption, more documents for you to sign."

David again viewed the manumission certificate. It was quite elaborate. David's name, the manumission amount, the

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desired destination, and the date were recorded at appropriate gaps in the otherwise printed document.

“I suppose we must go back into the city for the official stamp,” commented David.

“You need not trouble yourself about such matters,” smiled O’Connor. “That is my business – to take care of you. Sign here for the certificate and here for the additional loan!”

David signed and then reflected on the morning’s events. What a strange business it was, beaded belts with secret codes, magistrates descending on pursers, pursers fleeing, and then suddenly all was well, as if nothing had happened. The *neulanders* were a crafty breed indeed!

Seven hundred souls from Switzerland and the German Palatinate, corralled into a caravan of Rhine barges, had placed their trust in neulander agent Gottlieb Mittelberger's silver-tongued promises of land and a new life in the English colonies.

The Newlanders

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