

Central European Time Line

T P Miller Revised 9 Feb 2005

1400-1464

Gutenberg type setting process was developed leading to the publication of several versions of the Bible. This provided the opportunity for many educated people to have access to what was, up until this time, reserved for the church priests and scholars. This allowed the members of the congregation to question some of the "rules" of the church.

1348-1665

The Bubonic plague or "Black Death" threatens all of Europe. Over 25 million Europeans died in periodic outbreaks. This led to the church holding vast amounts of property due to the theocratic form of government prevalent at the time. There was a general disenchantment with the church due to the failure of the clergy to stop the spread and the devastation brought about by the plague. The wealth of the church provided the motivation for the ruling class to exploit the opportunity to enrich themselves by supporting the religious rebellion leaders and movements.

1419-1436

The Hussite wars took place in Bohemia. John Huss was the leader of the reform movement. He was burned to death in 1415 causing his followers to demand more freedom.

1517

Martin Luther posted his theses disputing the traditional religious doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. This was the beginning of what is referred to as the Protestant Reformation or Revolution. The printing press created an awareness of his work which otherwise would have been considered of little interest to other than academics and theologians. The wealth of the church brought secular support from those seeking to profit from the downfall of the current theocratic arrangement. However, the concept of approved state religions persisted. This, in turn, led to persecution of many of what was referred to

as the "nonconformists" by both the Catholic and Protestant Churches.

1518-1523

Ulrich Zwingli began the Reformation in Switzerland, which led to the formation of the Reformed [Calvinist] Church.

1524-1525

The Peasant's war was crushed. This mass uprising against secular authorities was inspired but repudiated Martin Luther.

1530

The Lutherans adopted the Augsburg Confession [creed].

1530-1648

Non-Catholics were subjected to extreme persecution during this period. This included forcible conversion, expulsion and death in some areas.

1555

The Peace of Augsburg between Catholics and Lutherans only stipulated that subjects must adopt the religion of their local ruler. This resulted in Northern Germany becoming mostly Lutheran and Southern Germany being mostly Catholic.

1562

The first attempt at establishing a settlement in America was in 1562 when Alsatian and Hessian Protestants settled in what is now North Carolina. The settlement lasted only until 1566 when it was destroyed by the Spanish Menendez. The first permanent German settlement did not come until 1683 when a group of pietists from the German Palatinate area came to America on the ship Concord and settled in Germantown Pennsylvania.

1563

The Catholic Counter Reformation began in Bavaria.

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1568

The start of a particularly notorious persecution of the Protestants in the Spanish Netherlands including Belgium by the Duke of Alva. This started a large-scale flight of Walloon Calvinists, especially to the Palatinate, Hesse and Brandenburg, and Dutch-Flemish-Frisian Mennonites to the Danzig area of Germany which was under the Polish crown at the time. The religious flight started in about 1530.

1582-1585

Pope Gregory XIII proposes calendar reform. Most Catholic countries of Europe adopt the Gregorian calendar. Prussia adopts it in 1612, by most Protestant countries in 1700, by Great Britain in 1752 and by Russia in 1917. This can lead to confusion regarding birth, death and marriage dates of your ancestors. Further confusion was introduced when the German Lutherans initially refused to follow the Catholic practice. Thus, there was a period of time when people in the same town used two different calendars.

1617

John Calvin's works were published.

1618-1648

The period of the Thirty-Year's War. Many German areas were devastated and the population dropped from 15 million to 10 million. The Peace of Westphalia granted the Calvinists equal rights and gave subordinate German rulers more independence. Substantial migration occurred, especially the Swiss to the Palatinate to repopulate the more ravaged areas. Restrictive emigration laws made it difficult and expensive to leave certain areas such as Wurttemberg.

1622

January 1 was declared to be the beginning of the year in Germany. Previously it was March 25.

1671-1677

William Penn made missionary trips through Southern Germany.

1683

The start of the German group immigration to North America.

1683

First settlement in Germantown Pennsylvania is established with Germans who came mostly from the Pfalz.

1685

King Louis XIV of France revokes the Edit of Nantes, which granted freedom of religion. Persecution and forcible conversion of the French Protestant Huguenots caused hundreds of thousands to flee to Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands, Great Britain and North America. Frederick Wilhelm, the Great Elector, helps many immigrate to Brandenburg.

1689-1697

The war of the League of Augsburg resulted in the French burning down many towns in the Palatinate and mass flight of the population.

1701-1714

The Palatinate suffered great destruction from French raids.

1710-1711

The first relatively large-scale immigration of Swiss and Palatines to the American colonies took place.

1731-1738

The expulsion of Salzburg Protestants from the Austrian Empire began. Some went to America; most went to East Prussia and other European areas. The Schwenkfelders and Moravian Brethren also came to America in 1733-1741.

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1740

Freedom of worship was decreed in Prussia.

nonconformist religions, which included the Mennonites.

1744-1772

There was a large-scale migration of the people from western Germanic areas, especially Lorraine, to the lower Danube region under Maria Theresa, the Austrian empress.

1786

The start of the immigration of the German Mennonites from Pennsylvania to Ontario began. It became quite heavy after 1807.

1750

The first group immigration of Germans to Canada.

1789-1824

The heaviest German immigration to the Black Sea region of Russia [the Ukraine] took place.

1763

Catherine the Great manifesto invites Germans to settle in Russia granting them incentives including free land, freedom from military service, and many special privileges.

1817

The Lutheran and Reformed Churches are ordered to merge into the Evangelical Church in Prussia and elsewhere at about the same time. Religious groups are ordered to maintain vital records in what is now Rumania.

1764-1767

The heavy immigration of Germans to the Volga River region of Russia.

1838-1854

The main wave of emigration of "Old Lutherans", who rejected the Evangelical merger, to New York, Wisconsin, Missouri and Texas took place.

1772-1795

The partition of Poland by Russia, Prussia, and Austria, took place in three stages in 1772, 1793, and 1795. Poland no longer exists until 1918 after World War I.

1846-1857

The first large wave of German emigrants came to the United States peaking in the 1854. Many came after the crop failures of 1846-1847, which affected most of Europe. Famine and cholera epidemics were common during this time. Others escaped after the 1848-1849 revolutions were crushed throughout Germany and other European countries. This coincided with the American boom.

1775-1783

The American Revolutionary War took place with independence declared in 1776. Thirty thousand Hessian and other German mercenaries fight for Great Britain. Thousands remain in the United States and Canada after the War.

1861-1875

The heaviest immigration of Germans mostly from Poland to Volhynia took place.

1781

The Patent of Tolerance is issued that guarantees freedom of religion in Austria. This opened up the opportunity for Protestant immigration.

1864-1875

The second wave of German emigrants to the United States took place peaking in 1873. Many people left to avoid military service. Others emigrate because the Industrial Revolution destroyed the cottage industries.

1782-1787

Heavy German immigration to the Danube region of southern Hungary, Galicia and Bucovina. These were regions acquired by Austria under Emperor Joseph II. Special privileges were extended to the

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1871

The special privileges of Germans are revoked in Russia causing emigration to North and South America. Many Mennonite families from Galicia Austria and Russia emigrated to the U.S.

1874-1914

Many Germans from Eastern Europe immigrated to the Great Plains states and the Canadian provinces.

1880-1893

The third wave of German emigrants to the United States took place with the all-time peak in 1882. This coincided with the American economic boom that was briefly interrupted by the depression of 1884.

1890-1914

A heavy migration of Russian Germans into Siberia took place.

1892

Ellis Island was opened as an immigration-receiving center in New York. Immigrants were previously processed at Castle Garden.

1893-1896

There was an economic crisis in the United States. This caused many German immigrants to relocate further west.

1917

Severe discrimination is directed against German-Americans when America entered into World War I. Many people change their German names. Street names and town names were altered to more acceptable names throughout the country.

1918-1928

Many central European people move out side of Europe. Many people relocate to the US due to the severe economic hardship brought about by the unreasonable reparations demanded of Germany after World War I.

1937-1939

The Fascist regime persecution of minorities caused the relocation of many Germans to countries outside of central Europe including the United States and South America.

1938

German families, responding to anti German sentiments, changed the spelling of their surnames to an Americanized version of the original or, in some cases, an entirely different surname. Given names were also affected.

1945-1950

There was a large influx of displaced peoples to the States from Europe. [DP's]