Reports of the GSP-GHI Fellows 2019

Religion and immigration are two recurring topics in the broad thematic agenda that our fellows of the "GHI-GSP Fellowship at the Horner Library" tackle during their summer stay at the Society. An early example of the importance of religion for immigrants to Pennsylvania are the practices of withdrawal from the world and ritualizing a more ascetic life that Timothy Wright brings up in his study of Conrad Beissel's Ephrata community and that of Johannes Kelpius, the Mystic of the Wissahickon. Wright found some important documents both at Horner and the Library Company in Philadelphia that will be useful for his upcoming book.

In his dissertation at the University of Wisconsin Michael Kaelin pursues a rarely debated factor in the field of immigration studies: the behavioral acculturation of the individuals that was strongly regulated by the established ethnic groups. Focusing on the second half of the nineteenth century, Kaelin analyses the interplay of the control mechanisms of the German Americans and an increasingly nationally conceptualized code of regulations that led to a national immigration policy.

The planned brown bag seminar where the fellows present their findings to members of the Society had to be cancelled this year due to scheduling problems.

- Frank Trommler

Ascetic Protestantism and Alternative Christianities in the Atlantic World, 1680-1780

In June of 2019, I conducted research on my project "Rituals of the Reborn: Ascetic Protestantism and Alternative Christianities in the Atlantic World, 1680-1780" at the Joseph Horner Memorial Library. My research focuses on the dissemination of ascetic practices and theology among radical Protestants around the Atlantic World in the years around 1700. This period saw a revival of interest among Protestants of all stripes in practices such as celibacy, solitary withdrawal, poverty, and contemplative prove, as a means to achieve greater holiness in living and communion with God. I argue that the widespread nature of the phenomenon requires us to examine how we understand Protestant settlement and civilization in the Atlantic as such ascetic impulses influenced the shape settlements took, their relations with others, as well as the role of women and authority.

Of particular interest in my research so far have been the sources in relation to the practices of two groups, that of the 'Ephrata Cloister' which flourished in the 1730s and 40s in frontier Pennsylvania, and a reclusive circle of mystical hermits led by Johannes Kelpius in the 1690s near Philadelphia. The Horner Library possesses a number of important documents from Ephrata, including treatises by its founder, Conrad Beissel. At Ephrata, the group's creation of a Protestant neo-monastic devotion replete with monastic robes, tonsuring, and communal orders is a fascinating example of how ascetic theology—adopted for its inward, spiritual promise—could also spawn outward practices borrowed from Catholicism. In numerous sources depictions of Ephrata's monastic robes can be seen and analyzed. In the chronicle kept by the order of sisters, *The Rose of Saron,* and an aid for grammar, pen and ink sketches show women clad in long flowing, white robes with hoods and veils. The chronicle describes their purpose as "muffling the mortal body" and "instruments of spiritual martyrdom." Another source contains images of the men's orders clothing which are in turn described as imitating the Catholic Capuchin order clothing. I look forward to analyzing how such monastic practices at Ephrata shaped the role of women in worship, economic activities, and their relations with the generally anti-papal nature of colonial ecclesiastical authority.

With the hermits in Philadelphia led by Kelpius, contemporary sources are more difficult to come by. With assistance from the expert and helpful Horner staff, I have found a number of fascinating sources that will hopefully shed light on the esoteric and alchemical practices of this sect. The Library Company possesses a number of works written by Kelpius on contemplative prayer (*A Short, Easy and Comprehensive Method of Prayer*), but also a number of books owned by Kelpius and his circle. One of these books, *Cherubinischer Wandersmann* was written by Angelus Silesius, a German mystic and Catholic convert who believed that mystical theology's greatest truth was self-denial and the illumination and union it brought the believer with God. Kelpius's circle strove to put such ideals into practice, holding society at a distance while they awaited the millennium.

While finishing my archival research, I am preparing a number of articles for publication. One of these includes a reflection on the early modern category of 'inward' devotion and how it should be revised based on the presence of such outward, ascetic practices among Protestants. The article will draw upon the many examples from my research trip made possible by the generous research grant facilitated by the Horner Library.

- Timothy Wright,
University of California, Berkeley

Not My Brother's Keeper: Immigrant Communities, Nativism, and the Limits of Inclusion

This past summer, I had the good fortune of spending four weeks in the beautiful Horner Library at the German Society of Pennsylvania. The Society's rare book and manuscript collections offered invaluable materials for my dissertation, which explores the interpersonal, communal, and statutory restrictions that German-American immigrants imposed upon newer German-speaking migrants' mobility and behavior in the nineteenth century. To this end, I directed my attention toward materials in which German Americans articulated a set of ideal characteristics which subsequent arrivals were encouraged to exhibit, as well as sources that suggested proscriptions against certain types of behavior. Ultimately, the records of German-American social and benevolent associations highlight a remarkable degree of consistency in the model that German immigrants crafted. My further examination of immigrant guidebooks shows that German Americans sought to disseminate information about the United States and promote these standards of behavior in a way that would shape later migration streams.

That immigrants would distinguish between the "worthy" and "unworthy" among subsequent arrivals should not be surprising. This dynamic has been lost, however, in the bulk of existing scholarship on American immigration, which sees immigration policies as guided solely by nineteenth century Anglo-Saxon priorities. In looking at the internal controls among German immigrants, I hope to recapture a fuller picture of the practical restrictions and regulations that shaped immigration. When the federal government eventually did adopt a national immigration policy in 1882, German Americans' internal control mechanisms, already reflected in state level policies, were encoded in federal law. Legal immigration restriction, then, has its roots in the community-level restrictions that German Americans articulated.

The bylaws of the *Deutsche Wohlthätigen Unterstützungs-Gesellschaft in Manayunk im Staate Pennsylvanien* offer a typical example of German Americans pressuring members of their community to conform to a particular ideal and setting limits on the society's beneficence. Applications for membership were restricted to "men of a good lifestyle," who were also able to speak German, were "citizens of the United States and of the state of Pennsylvania, free from physical disabilities that could impose upon the society," and were between the ages of twenty-one and forty-five. The members first and foremost bound together for the purpose of providing financial relief in the event of sickness or death. For practical reasons, however, the society could not afford to pay to support every member who came asking for money, particularly if their emergency was either fictitious or self-inflicted. In consequence, the group stipulated that support would be withheld if their illness was caused by "drunkenness, venereal disease, fights, brawls, horse racing, or any other immoral or illegal act." As this clause clarified, the society held that men needed to conform to their model of appropriate male behavior to remain in good standing.

These punitive measures could act to enforce proper behavior within groups, but they could also resonate in the wider community. In one case, the *Deutscher Orden der Harugari* denied benefits to a widow upon her spouse's death because she "lived apart from her husband, and did not fulfill the obligations that a wife owes to her husband." The Harugari had nearly identical moral requirements for their members as the *Deutsche Wohlthätige Unterstützungs-Gesellschaft*, but as the example above demonstrates, they could use financial support as a way to reward or punish even non-members who deviated from their standards.

These standards of proper behavior, generated and reinforced on the community level, were transmitted to potential new migrants in Europe. Immigrant guide books, such as *Nach Amerika! Handbuch für Auswanderer nach eignen Erfahrungen geschrieben* (1871) included as its first chapter fifty-three pages answering the question "Wer soll auswandern?" This book, as so many others, exhorted only those whom they considered morally upright and diligent workers to go to the United States. On a practical level, then, the demands and expectations of the existing German immigrant community were conveyed back to Europe in an effort to influence who could or could not come to the United States. Our focus on the role of the federal government and the rhetoric of nativists has obscured this important element in immigration history, but the resources at the Horner Library offer important tools to recapture this story.

- Michael Kaelin,
University of Wisconsin, Madison