

IBC #4 Patriotic Instruction – July 2018 – **A Historiography Link from the War of Independence to Modern Times – How legal immigration has helped our country.** by Patriotic Instructor Ross H. Schwalm

On July 2, 1776, the Continental Congress approved “The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America” which was signed on July 4, 1776. One of the many grievances against King George III of Great Britain was as follows:

He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.<sup>i</sup>

These “Mercenaries” were paid professional soldiers from the various Landgraves in Germany. North German principalities such as Hessen-Kassel became notorious for the "soldier trade" (Soldatenhandel), in which their professional armies were formally hired out to states such as Britain for service in the British Isles and North America.<sup>ii</sup> My three times Great Grandfather Johannes Schwalm was one of the approximately 19000 soldiers “hired” by Great Britain. Approximately 6000 of these soldiers, including Johannes, stayed in America by deserting at various times throughout the war. Some deserters signed loyalty oaths to the United States during the war and served in military units against their former British and Hessian comrades.

As the French Revolution began along with the wars of conquest that followed, many more Germans immigrated to America to get out of the way of the destruction and to seek a new life. The grandsons of the original 6000 Hessians and the sons of the German immigrants ended up in large numbers in both the Union and Confederate Armies during the Civil War. Johannes had two grandsons, Samuel Schwalm 50<sup>th</sup> PA and Frederick Schwalm, 171<sup>st</sup> PA, along with the husband of his granddaughter, Israel Klinger, 173<sup>rd</sup> PA, all serve during the war. In my duties of genealogy certification to validate a person’s lineage to a Hessian soldier, I often find Union and Confederate veterans of German descent in a person’s family tree.

While conducting research on Jewish soldiers of the Civil War, I found additional information that German immigrants were the largest immigrant group in the Union Army, making up 20 percent of the soldiers. The Irish were second<sup>iii</sup>. A Jewish soldier named Ellis Strauss was a German immigrant and served in 57<sup>th</sup> PA working his way up from Private to Captain in command a company at the end of the war. In the Confederate Army, the Irish were first, and the Germans were second among all immigrant groups<sup>iv</sup>. George Schwalm was a first generation American and his parents immigrated to Virginia from Prussia. George served first in the 40<sup>th</sup> VA cavalry in 1863 as well as with two other cavalry units that were pieced together as the war moved to conclusion. He moved to Richmond after the war and opened a butcher shop, likely a skill he learned in the cavalry.

The sons and grandsons of these Civil War veterans served in WW I, WW II and through the modern wars. A search of 1950 Pension Act Records uncovered four pages of “Schwalm” veterans who served during WW II. My researcher Stan Yelito concluded: “Look! The Schwalms single handedly won WW II for us.” As a direct descendant of a Hessian prisoner of war from Battle of Trenton, I had the

responsibility to handle Iraqi POWs during Desert Storm. My life came full circle from my earliest beginnings to my fate in Desert Storm.

Ancestry.com data shows how the Germans and their descendants moved from before the American Revolution from New York and New Jersey initially to a swath of land west through PA, MD, VA, KY, OH, IN, IL, MI, IA, WI, MN, SD, ND and through the South including TN, NC, GA, AL, MS, AK and TX. Over 46 million Americans claim German ancestry in 2013 according to Census Bureau data, and this is still the largest immigrant group today in America<sup>v</sup>. The map below shows the German ancestry across the country.



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From an initial grievance to loyal Americans, embracing legal German immigrants from the American Revolution to modern times has served us well.

<sup>i</sup><https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>, accessed on July 18, 2018

<sup>ii</sup><http://ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/alliances-and-wars/warfare-1450-1789>, accessed on July 18, 2018 which is footnoted to Wilson, Peter: The German 'Soldier-Trade' of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: A Reassessment, in: The International History Review 18,4 (1996), pp. 757–792.

<sup>iii</sup><https://www.civilwar.org/learn/articles/who-fought>, accessed on August 7, 2017

<sup>iv</sup> Civil War.org

<sup>v</sup><https://www.economist.com/united-states/2015/02/05/the-silent-minority>, accessed on July 23, 2018.

<sup>vi</sup> The Silent Minority