

A German Immigrant Writes to Home ^[1]

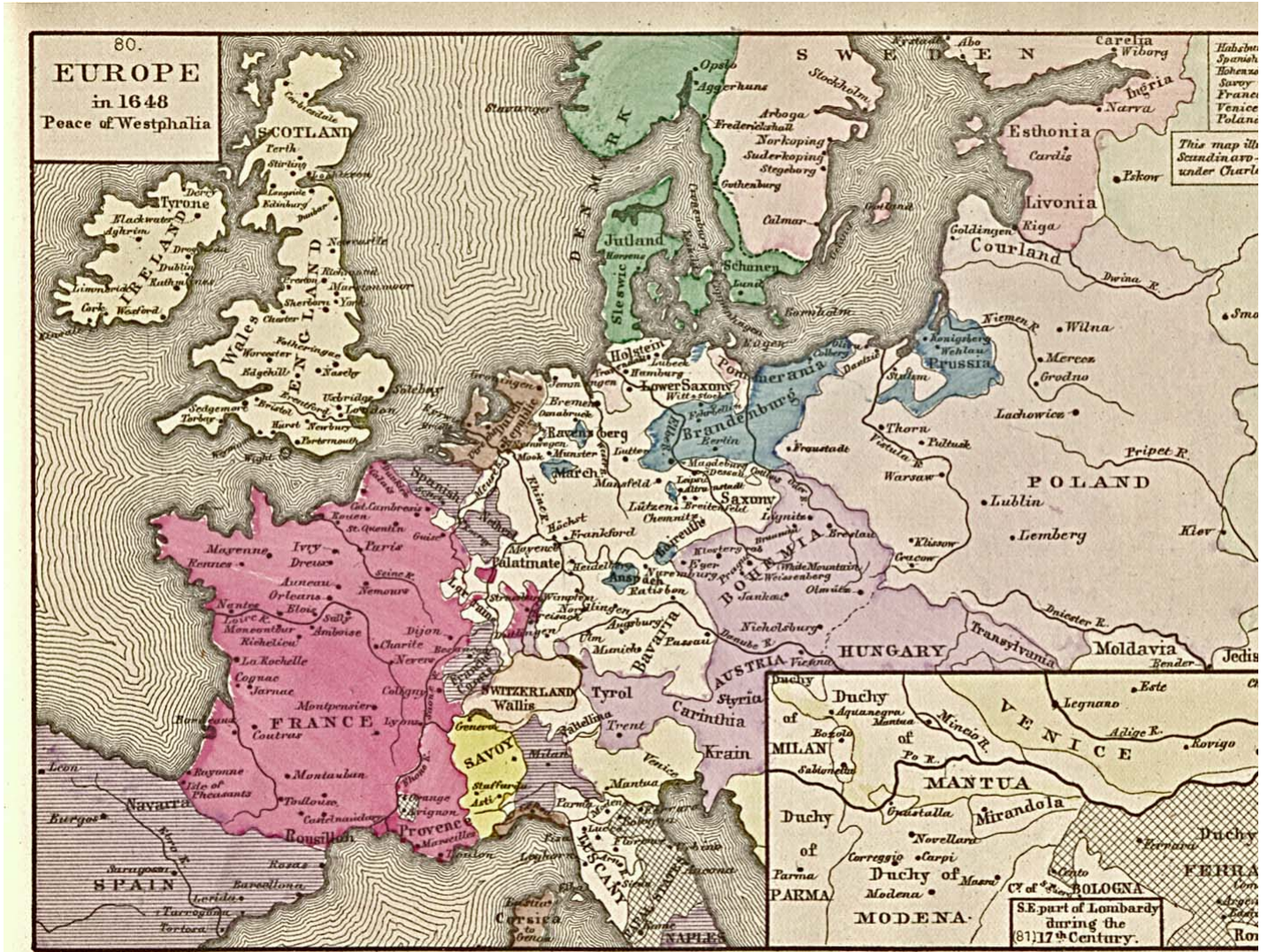
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A letter written in April 1711 by Christen Janzen, a German immigrant to Carolina, to his brother in Germany. In this letter he recounts his journey to Carolina, and his life since arrival and settlement in New Bern. He encourages others to make the journey and also details items that will prove advantageous to the journey or settling in the new land. He also discusses the native people – likely the Tuscarora, whom he describes as helpful and interested in trading with settlers -- and tells that many people have died either during the voyage or after arriving to the colony. He also laments that there is a shortage of women, drink, and religious leaders in the colony.

God greet you most beloved souls, father, mother, related friends, and neighbors, always with our thousandfold greetings and obedient service. I wish you at this time to learn of my health, and to know that I must make my writing as short as I can compose it. I hope that you have the letters that I wrote [from Holland and England](#). The most essential contents are that we came the 10th of June to New Castle in England, but the 6th I became a very sad widower.

In New Castle we lay five weeks. The 17th of July went aboard the ship and lay eight days at anchor. After that we sailed, under the all-powerful protection of God, safely to land in Virginia. Also did not lose a person. A young son was born on the sea. His father's name is Benedict Kupferschmid. He worked a year for our dear brother, Christian Bürki. After that we went about a hundred hours by water and land, yet always guided and fed, and the people everywhere have done us much kindness and there is in this country no innkeeper. All go from one place to another for nothing and consider it an insult if one should wish to ask the price.



German-speaking people from both Switzerland and the Palatinate settled in New Bern. The Palatinate had been repeatedly overrun by French armies in the 1600s, and thousands of Palatines came to religious freedom and economic opportunity.

^[2]

Brought here hale and hearty, the shoemaker Moritz did not die till he was on his farm. He was well on the whole journey. No one else of [Siebentaler](#) people has died, but of the others though, three Palatines. Of the people among whom we live, however, a good many have died.

Regarding the land in general. It is almost wholly forest, with indescribably beautiful cedar wood, poplars, oaks, beech, walnut and chestnut trees. But the walnuts are very hard and full of indentations and the chestnuts very small but good. There is sassafras also, and so many other fragrant trees that I cannot describe the hundredth part. Cedar is red like the most beautiful veined cherry and smells better than the finest juniper. They are, commonly, as well as the other trees, fifty to sixty feet below the limbs.

The land in general is almost everywhere black dirt and rich soil, and everyone can get as much as he will. There are five free years. After that one is to give for an acre, which is much greater than a [Juchart](#) with us, two pennies. Otherwise it is entirely free, one's own to use and to leave to his heirs as he wishes. But this place has been entirely uninhabited, for we have not seen any signs nor heard that anything else ever was here except the so-called wild and naked Indians. **But they are not wild, for they come to us often and like to get clothes of us.** This is done when they pay with wild meat and leather, bacon, beans, corn, which the women plant and the men hunt; and when they, as most frequently happens, guide the Christians through the forest and show new ways. They have huts of cedar bark. Some also can speak English well. They have an idol and hold festivals at certain times. But I am sorry to say, of the true God they do not want to know anything.

With regard to the rearing of cattle. It costs almost nothing for the raising, [as the booklet printed at Frankfurt](#) says, for all stock pastures in the winter as well as in the summer. And I know of nothing to find fault with in the booklet mentioned regarding these two items, although it writes of South Carolina.

They butcher also no young animals, so one can conclude how quickly the number can increase. The cows give scarcely half so much as with you for the calves suck so long; until they are a year and a half old and in turn have young. We buy a cow with a calf for three pounds sterling or twelve thalers, a hog for one pound, with young or fat; a sheep also for as much. They have but few goats, but I have seen some. Squire Michel told me they wished to bring some here to us. Wild and unplanted tree-fruits are not to be found here so good as [Kocherthal](#) writes of South Carolina. I have seen no cherries yet. There are many grape-vines and many grapes on them, of which some are good to eat; and it can well be believed, if one had many together (they would do well). We are going to try to plant them for everything grows up very quickly and all fruit is of very good taste, but we do not enjoy them much yet.

We lie along a stream called Neuse. There six years ago the first (people), English, until two years ago (when) the Swiss people (came), began the cultivation. They are, as it seems to me, rather rich in cattle, all sorts of crops, the finest tree-fruit, and that, the whole year (except for) two months. From the nature of things we were behind in that regard, so that we do not have it yet; but we hope,

through God's blessings to get it. We came shortly before Christmas and we have by God's blessing, Zioria, my son-in-law Peter Reutiger, and I, and others besides, much stronger houses than the English; have also cleared land in addition, and the most have put fences around. It is to be hoped that now from the ground and the cattle we will get enough, through the grace of God who has always stretched out his hand helpfully and has brought us safely and unhindered through so many enemies, spiritual and worldly, and over the great sea. But one thing lies heavy on us which I cannot write without weeping, namely the lack of a true and [zealous](#)^[8] pastor. For we have indeed cause to complain with [Asaph](#), our sign we see no more, no prophet preaches to us any more, no teacher teaches us any more. We have, indeed, prayers in our houses every Sunday, but the zeal to cleanse away the [canker](#)^[4] of our old sins is so small that it is to be feared it will consume everything to the foundation, if the pitying God does not come to our help.

If it had pleased the good God to send some of our brethren and sisters or at least Christian Bürki as an instrument, as a physician of body and soul, I should have had good hopes that the light among us would not become an evil smelling lamp, for I do not believe there is a person here, either English, German, or French who would not have loved him heartily; I believe that his profession is especially good here and that he could have an [estate](#)^[5] according to his wish without doing work in the fields. For of good liquor and such medicine there is the greatest lack in this country, therefore I have a friendly request to make of you, dear brother; namely, as follows. I have married Christina Christeler, a widow of Sannen. I am her third husband. By the first she has four children. Two died in London. Her husband and one child upon the sea. But the eldest, a boy of thirteen, named Benedict Plösch, is at [Mörigen in the baliwick Nidauw](#), staying with his deceased father's [sclientage](#). And he was alive four years ago. Her father was named Peter Christeler. Christen Walcker, who, with his wife died here in this country and left eight children, said to her that she has a rather large inheritance from her late father, left with her brother Moritz Christeler, for he has received a hundred pounds of it. When you go to Sannen to ask about it, I hope Heinrich Perret will be able to help you; for they have been nearest neighbors. And if it is as Walcker says you can take it into your hands.

Because my wife understands brewing so well and has done it for years, and the drink is very scarce here and neither money nor brewing pots are to be obtained here, otherwise I would not think of such a thing for you to do. But [the pot must have two pipes but no worm](#) and if some reliable people should not be coming, would Mr. Ritter still be so good as to get it to me here; also four pounds worth of spice, such as ginger, pepper, safron, nutmegs, [galangale](#)^[6], cloves, each according to the proportion of the money? For here there is nothing but [taurel](#). I have seen it on trees in the forest. But if there should be nothing to be got from the inheritance, I would most kindly beg you and my father, if he is still alive, to still help me somewhat from my own, for it is very important to me and especially to the women folks, who are very scarce here.

If only more people should wish to come, I advise that they take women with them if they want to have any, for here some of the very best men find no wives, because they are not here.

The journey is easily to be made if one can supply himself properly with old cheese, dried meat, and dried fruit, vinegar, wine, beer, and casks, butter, biscuits, in fine whatever is good to eat and feasible to transport, also a pan or kettle that is narrow at the top and broad below; for when the sea is violent the ship lies over on one side so that things are spilt. Yet I have never heard that a ship has sunk upon the high sea.

Whoever could provide himself with the things named above and should make an agreement with the ship captain that he give him liberty to cook and a good place to lie the voyage would not be hard. For we had young and old people, all are hale and hearty. Whatever one brings here in the way of wares is worth at least as much again. Linen cloth and glass would be especially needed, and is to be purchased very well in Holland.

Peter Röhltiger and my two daughters greet you, for we live beside each other. Dichtli is still with me, and I am delivering the greeting of us all to our dear and faithful pastor, to the whole number of honored persons, especially Godfather Kilchmeyer Dreuthart, and Andreas Aescher, Christen Jantz.

I would have much to write. I must break off. Have patience with my bad writing, for whoever sees my hand and labor will believe that I have not written and studied much. Greet for us Christen Bürki and I should be glad if he could hear the contents of this letter.

I remain your well affectioned servant, and my parents' obedient son until death.

Greet for us Anna Drus, item Speismann's people, and your sister and relatives, also my father's sister, and first of all the school-master.

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