

S.J. Bronner and J.R. Brown, eds., *Pennsylvania Germans: An Interpretive Encyclopedia*. Young Center Books in Anabaptist and Pietist Studies. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017. Pp. xv + 554. Hardcover, \$80 (USD).

If the common thread connecting Groundhog Day, ethnic diversity in education, and Hershey's chocolate is not immediately clear, then one would be well-advised to spend some time with the new and comprehensive reference work, *Pennsylvania Germans: An Interpretive Encyclopedia*, edited by Simon J. Bronner and Joshua R. Brown. This collection of essays on wide-ranging topics related to Pennsylvania German studies will serve both researchers familiar with the field and those with little previous knowledge of the topic. The nineteen chapters of the book are divided into two sections: "History and Geography" (three chapters) and "Culture and Society" (16 chapters) plus a preface, acknowledgements and introduction by the editors, as well as a bibliographical reference section, extensive index and color plates illustrating examples of the visual and material culture discussed in the book. In addition, black and white photos and illustrations accompany many of the articles. The editors set out four goals for this volume: to make this study of Pennsylvania Germans broader in geography and in its comparison of various groups within Pennsylvania German cultures than previous works; to move

beyond the eighteenth-century as the traditional time-period usually covered and bring studies of Pennsylvania German cultures up to the present day; to look at aspects of the Pennsylvania German cultures beyond language and literature such as material culture, food, medicine, and folklore, to name a few; and finally, to study the intersection of Pennsylvania Germans with popular culture. The many contributors to this book have together created a reference work for Pennsylvania German studies that, while grounded in theory, gives one a thorough picture of Pennsylvania German history, traditions and culture.

The editors, in explaining how they chose the topics presented, emphasize their desire to present the reader with thorough discussions of the “major dimensions of Pennsylvania German studies” (xiii) instead of following a traditional encyclopedic format which would offer a more traditional alphabetical listing of topics and which might favour breadth over depth. The choice was a good one, since readers, upon finishing this book, can say they have learned much and are curious to learn more about the many aspects of Pennsylvania German culture. Because each article offers a thoughtful analysis of its topic, with imbedded references for further information, as well as ideas for taking the research further and in new directions, it is an excellent reference work for researchers the field of Pennsylvania German Studies, including Mennonite Studies and Amish Studies. In addition, the book is easily accessible for readers with no expertise in the field who are curious to learn more about the history, geography, culture and society of the Pennsylvania Germans. As noted in the preface, “this volume suggests the centrality of Pennsylvania German experiences in the formation of ideas in an American context about the practice of ethnic-linguistic differences” (ix). While the geographical point of reference is the United States, readers with an interest in the Canadian experience can find several mentions of Amish and Mennonites north of U.S. border, especially in Ontario.

Bronner and Brown’s introduction looks at Pennsylvania German studies from its inception to the present-day. It offers a comprehensive overview of the contents of the book and gives the reader a preview of the topics covered in the book. They begin with a description of the experience of the immigrants from the Rhineland and the Palatinate regions of Europe who settled in the Pennsylvania colony in the eighteenth century and their struggles to maintain their traditions, language and cultural identity. Finding they could not identify with either the established English society or the newcomer European Germans, the “American”-Germans

moved towards establishing their own identity as Pennsylvania Germans, or as preferred by the early immigrants themselves, as Pennsylvania Dutch. Further, Bronner and Brown explain their goal of discussing the whole experience of the communities contained within Pennsylvania German Studies, including the settlement of the Pennsylvania area and beyond, what the authors refer to as “the Pennsylvania diaspora” (17), as well the linguistic, social, artistic, cultural, educational, folkloric, food-related, medicinal, and touristic aspects of the lives of Pennsylvania Germans.

All that might sound like an overwhelming task, but this volume meets these goals in an enjoyable and accessible way. The accessibility of the book means also that it can read in part, as a reference work, or in whole, as a way of learning about the entirety of the history, traditions and cultural practices of Pennsylvania Germans. Overall, this volume is a valuable and welcome addition to Pennsylvania German studies.

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