

Origins Of The Pilgermission in America

GERMAN AND SWISS MISSION HOUSES

A number of German mission societies played an important role in the organization and early years of the Wisconsin Synod. In the 1820's and 1830's societies of Christians who loved and wanted to support mission work abroad were organized in various German cities. Some of these societies trained missionaries; others booked and paid for the passages of the missionaries to the foreign fields. Some provided financial support for the mission fields begun overseas.

Of the five men who organized the Wisconsin Synod in 1850, Muehlaeuser, Weinmann, Wrede, Meiss, and Pluess, all but Wrede received their theological training at Barmen. Muehlaeuser, Weinmann, and Wrede were sent to America at the expense of and through the arrangements of the Langenberg Society, which sent seventeen men in all to the Wisconsin Synod. The mission societies at Barmen and Berlin supported the Wisconsin Synod with financial grants until 1867.

The Michigan and Minnesota Synods received men and support especially from the mission societies in Basel and St. Chrischona. (see footnote)

Elberfeld Mission Society: founded in second day of Pentecost in **1799** in Elberfeld, (North Rhine-Westphalia) Germany. The towns of Barmen and Elberfeld lay on opposite sides of the Wupper River, (today they have been combined in the city of Wuppertal, Germany). It was an ecumenical society right from its very beginnings - pastors and laymen from both the Reformed and Lutheran churches cooperated within the society. There were also close connections to the London and Dutch Missionary Societies.

Basel Christian Society (formerly called The German Missionary Society): founded in **1815** in Basel, Stuttgart, Switzerland, by Christian Friedrich Spittler. The Basel Mission had an overtly pietistic ethos having been deeply influenced (besides the pious Basel urban aristocracy) by South German Pietists from the state of Wuerttemberg that produced a good number of the Mission's recruits.

Basel Mission House (from the **Basel Bible Study of 1804**): a training school had been founded at Basel, Stuttgart, Switzerland on August 26, **1816**, largely due to the efforts of Christian Friedrich Spittler, who had conceived the idea of the Pilgermission. The institute prepared students for mission work mostly among the heathen in Africa and later among German emigrants to North and South America. Basel had a six semester course of study that concentrated on Bible study, in the 'Reformed Lutheran' tradition, and practical courses. Its graduates were sent out by Basel Missionary Society.

Barmen Missionary Society: founded September 8, **1818** in Barmen, Wuerttemberg, Germany by the Preacher Wilhelm Leipoldt.

Barmen Mission House: A training school had been founded at Barmen, Württemberg, Germany (present-day Wuppertal) in **1822**. Württemberg (often spelled Wuerttemberg in English) refers to an area and a former state in Swabia, a region in south-western Germany. Initially the Barmen group sent its applicant missionaries to Basel after they had completed a preparatory course in Barmen. But from 1825 onward, the preparatory program was extended to a fully fledged seminary because the Basle Mission was no longer able to deal with the flood of applicants from Barmen. The institute prepared students for mission work among the heathen and among German emigrants to North America. Barmen had a course of study that concentrated on the Bible, in the 'Reformed Lutheran' tradition, and practical application. Its graduates were later sent out by the Langenberg Misson Society.

Berlin Missionary Society: founded February 29, **1824**, in Berlin, Germany by a group of pious laymen "for the advancement of protestant missions among the heathens". This was not the first Missionary Society in Berlin. Pastor Jänicke (the pastor of the Bohemian-Lutheran congregation in Berlin) had been training missionaries since 1800 and had sent them out into the world to work for other missionary societies (e.g. the London and the Basel Missionary Societies).

Berlin Seminary: run by Pastor Jänicke, the Berlin Missionary Society started training its first three missionaries in **1829**.

Rhenish (Rhine) Mission Society: formed in September 23, **1828** by the combining of the missionary groups from Elberfeld, Barmen, Cologne (Köln), and Wesel. It had close contacts with the London Missionary Society.

Langenberg Mission Society: founded on July 27, **1837**, as a branch of the Rhine Mission Society, it was established at Langenberg, near Elberfeld, Wuppertal, Germany. Its constitution originally indicated that this organization would provide missionaries for work among the heathen only. Very quickly, however, it became the "Evangelical Lutheran Association for the Protestant Germans in North America." and was the most successful among all the mission societies. John Muehlaeuser is the first missionary sent out by the Langenberg Mission Society.

St Chrischona Pilgrims Mission: founded in **1840**, in Bettingen, (near Basel) Switzerland, by Christian Friedrich Spittler, in the former pilgrims church of St Chrischona.

Hermannsburg Missionary Society: founded in **1849**, Hermannsburg, Hannover, Germany, by Louis Harms, who spearheaded a Christian revival in large areas of Northern Germany. Part of his message was the need for missionaries to be sent out into the world, to teach the heathens about God and his son Jesus Christ.

Hermannsburg Mission House: a training school had been founded at Hermannsburg in **1850**, largely due to the efforts of Louis Harms. The institute prepared students for mission work "to teach the heathens about God and his son Jesus Christ", specifically in Africa and among German emigrants to North America. Hermannsburg had a four year course of study that concentrated on Bible study, in the 'Confessional Lutheran' tradition, and practical courses. Its graduates were also sent out by the Langenburg Missionary Society.

St. Chrischona Mission School: founded in **1868**, in an unused chapel called St. Chrischona, near Basel, Switzerland, on a promontory across the Rhine from the Basel Mission Society, by Christian Friedrich Spittler as the first school primarily to train laymen for missionary work: colporteurs, city missionaries, evangelists, deacons, house-fathers, teachers, preachers, especially in America.

The introduction to this article was taken from the article:

“Historical Time Line from 1850 to Today”

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