

SWISS BENEVOLENT SOCIETY

OF PHILADELPHIA

HISTORY, 1860-1960

William Penn's agents located some Swiss as desirable prospects for his 'Greene Countrie Towne' in Pennsylvania, which he was about to found in 1682. Further research is expected to clarify if they went along on his first or second trip.

Philadelphia was laid out on an area of two square miles, bordered by the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers, Vine and South Streets. By 1854, it covered 129.7 square miles, absorbing the suburban communities within, then established as city and county limits, as 'hub' of a fast-growing fringe of 3,420 square miles with a combined population of 460,000.

The city, at the census of 1860, counted 565,529 heads. The census of 1950 gives the city 2,071,605 inhabitants, with the Swiss absorbed among the 1,604 'miscellaneous.' The state recorded 3,015 Swiss.

The trolleys of the '5th and 6th Street Railway' made their first runs 1858. Consul Rudolf Koradi (since 1857) probably used them for his business trips as well as errands of mercy.

There were no immigration restrictions then, and many Swiss landed at this port, or came from New York or other States, sometimes with inadequate funds to continue on, or to tie them over during unemployment. Others became indigent due to illness or other misfortunes.

Consul Koradi, having discussed the problem with his compatriots for some time, called a meeting for September 14, 1860, on which occasion the Swiss Benevolent Society of Philadelphia was organized. In the pamphlet issued November 12, 1915, when the Charter of December 4, 1865, was amended and improved, the following are listed as 'founders and first members':

C. T. Amsler, Treasurer	J. J. Reutlinger
H. Ducommun	E. Richard
G. Gigon	C. Rieder
A. Herzog	C. Speiser
D. Jackson	J. Steinegger
C. Jacot	W. P. Uhlinger
H. Jacot	J. S. Vuilleumier
W. Itschner	J. Waldner
R. Koradi, President	J. Walter
J. Langenecker	J. Wild
C. Maron	P. J. Wildberger, Secretary
J. Mayer	A.H. Wirz
S. Murset	J. W. Heuberger
Myers, Claghorn & Co.	J. Wohnlich
J. Paravicini	J. Wittenberger
C. Peneveyre	M. Yauchler
A. Pequinot	J. J. Yauchler
C. Pequinot	

The four initial directors-at-large are not designated. But to each was assigned a definite task, a policy which was carried on for long years, growing steadily more laborious as the people spread into an ever-widening area.

Each of those four assumed to take care of the needy Swiss in one of four districts. Meeting places were changed when current locations became too inconvenient.

Residences of the early members, as far as they could be ascertained, were very much confined to what has become 'center city' or 'downtown.'

The cornerstone of City Hall was laid 1872. Electric street lighting made its debut 1881, when also Broad Street Station was inaugurated. The first electric trolleys (Catherine and Bainbridge) came only in