

By 1750, an estimated 90,000 Germans lived in Pennsylvania, and a third of them had German Reformed ties. Many had come to the New World to escape religious persecution. William Penn offered good terms for settlers.

Pastors and churches were few; some communities might see a minister only once or twice a year. Letters crossed the ocean, pleading for ministers. William Otterbein, a college professor in Germany, saw one such letter. Seeds were planted.

The Dutch Reformed Church of Holland, with more resources than its sister church in Germany, began sending money and missionaries. In 1746 they sent Swiss pastor Michael Schlatter with instructions to visit the settlements, organize Reformed members into churches, baptize children, administer communion, keep church records, and whatever else was needed — all while pastoring a congregation in Philadelphia.

After five hectic years, Schlatter returned to Holland to plead for help. They sent him to Germany to recruit six ministers. He went straight to Herborn Academy, where he interviewed prospects. On February 25, 1752, Schlatter presented a list of the six men he wanted to take to America.

The list included one member of the Herborn faculty, a young, 26-year-old pot-stirrer named William Otterbein.

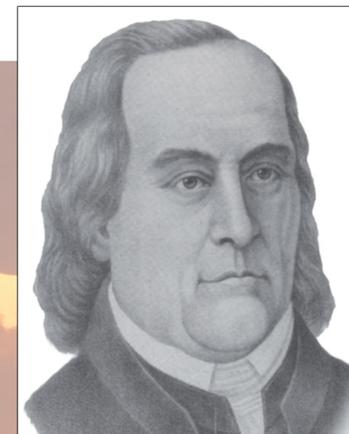
The six missionaries accompanied Schlatter to Holland, where church officials thoroughly examined their Christian character and theological orthodoxy, and required them to subscribe to the Heidelberg Catechism. One of the original six backed out, but somebody else took his place.

They boarded a ship in March and, four months later, arrived in New York City on July 28. The ministers then traveled on to Philadelphia, where calls went out for the services of these fresh ministers from the Old Country.

Otterbein agreed to pastor a church in Lancaster which had been without a pastor for over a year. He started in August. Lancaster, with about 2000 people, was the most important settlement in Pennsylvania after Philadelphia.

During the next 22 years, Otterbein pastored three other churches in Pennsylvania and Maryland. Then, in 1774, he became pastor of what was basically a new church — the result of a nasty division — in Baltimore. He remained there for the next 39 years, until his death in 1813.

**MANY IMMIGRANTS, TO FUND THEIR PASSAGE TO AMERICA, SOLD THEMSELVES AND THEIR CHILDREN AS INDENTURED SERVANTS. AFTER SEVERAL YEARS OF WORKING OFF THE DEBT, THEY WERE AS POOR AS WHEN THEY STEPPED OFF THE SHIP. BUT THEY WERE IN THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY.**



PHILIP WILLIAM OTTERBEIN

# WILLIAM OTTERBEIN: MISSIONARY TO AMERICA

