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THE EARLY GERMAN HYMN BOOKS OF THE REFORMED CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES.

BY PROF. WM. J. HINKE, PH. D.

The Reformed Church in this country has always cultivated congregational singing. The earliest reference to a German Reformed service in this country takes notice of the good singing of the people. On November 21, 1715, John Fontaine with two friends visited the Reformed settlement at Germanna, in Virginia, and described it as follows in his diary:

“They make use of the block house for divine service. They go to prayers constantly once a day, and have two sermons on Sunday. We went to hear them perform their service, which was done in their own language, which we did not understand; but they seemed to be very devout and sang the Psalms very well.”¹

Most of the early immigrants brought at least three books with them to the New World: their Bible, their hymn book and their catechism. But as they came from different parts of Germany, in which different hymn books were in use, they experienced at first considerable difficulty in their singing. Rev. John Philip Boehm testifies to this when he reports in 1739 that “singing up to this time had to be

¹ Cf. JOURNAL OF THE PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY, Vol. II, p. 101.

Teste: Robt: Snead Cl Cur) Com
 Recorded Aprill ye: 21th: 1709 (Accomack
 Pr Robt: Snead Cl Cur)

A true copy from the records of Accomack Circuit Court as recorded in Will Book, &c., 1692-1715, page 483.

Teste: JOHN D. GRANT, C. C.

At a Cort: held for Accomack County by her Majty Justices of the peace for ye sd County October the 4th: 1709

Whereas Tully Robinson brought accon to this Court agst: James Kemp and Naomi his wife Executrix of of the Last Will and Testament of Francis Makemie decd. for fifty two pounds fifteen shillins and nine pence halfe penny sterling the accon being Called ye plantff and defendts appearing ye declaracon read ye defendt. pleads not guilty ye plantff proved his debt in open Cort. by a protested bill of Exchange and prayed Judgment for his debt: which was by ye Cort. ordered that the said defendts forthwith pay to ye plantff the sum of fifty two pounds fifteen shillins and nine pence halfe penny Sterling money out of ye estate of Francis Makemie decd: with cost of suit alias execucon

A true copy from the records of Accomack Circuit Court as recorded in Order Book 1703-1709, page 149.

Teste: JOHN D. GRANT, C. C.

At a Cort: held for Accomack County by her Majty Justices of the peace for ye sd County October the 4th: 1709.

This day Mrs: Naomie Kempe administratrix on ye estate of Elizabeth Makemie decd presented to this Cort. an Inventory of ye estate of Elizabeth Makemie and made oath to ye same as ye Law directs which ye Cort ordered to be put upon Record

A true copy from the records of Accomack Circuit Court as recorded in Order Book 1703-1709, page 150.

Teste: JOHN D. GRANT, C. C.

Octobr: Court 1709

The Inventory of ye: estate of Elizabeth Makemie exhibited into Court by Mrs: Naomie Kempe adminixr: of Elizabeth Makemie decd

To one hundred seventy nine pounds fifteen shillings and one penny being ye: estate belonging to ye sd Elizabeth as far as is come to ye hands of ye sd adminixt

Naomi Kemp:

Delivered into Cort: and swore to by Naomi Kemp Octobr ye 5th 1709

Test: Robt: Snead Cl: Cur)Com
Recorded Octobr: ye 22th 1709 (Accomack
Pr Robt: Snead Cl Cur)

A true copy from the records of Accomack Circuit Court as recorded in Will Book, &c., 1692-1715, page 500.

Teste: JOHN D. GRANT, C. C.

Att a Cort. held and continued for Accomack County by her Majty Justices of the peace for ye sd County Novembr ye second 1709

This day James Kemp and Naomie his wife executrix of ye Last Will and Testamt: of Mr Francis Makemie who obtained an order for the inventorying of ye estate of Mr Francis Makemie made application to this Cort yt they not returning a full Inventory and appraisement of ye estate of Mr Francis Makemie decd did pray that ye order for ye same may be continued which ye Cort ordered that ye order for the Inventorying and appraiseing of ye estate of Mr Francis Makemie be continued to ye next Cort.

A true copy from the records of Accomack Circuit Court as recorded in Order Book 1703-1709, page 155.

Teste: JOHN D. GRANT, C. C.

The Continuance of an appraisement of part of the Estate of Mr: Francis Makemie decd according to an order of Accomack Court baring date November ye 2th: 1709 appraised by us ye subscribers December ye 5th 1709

Imprm

- To 1 negro man named Harry..... 35-0-0
- To 1 old black silk Clock Camblet..... 2-0-0