

**SOURCES OF HISTORY: A PAPER
READ BEFORE THE GERMAN-
AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF NEW YORK AND THE PIONIER-
VEREIN OF PHILADELPHIA**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649266654

Sources of History: A Paper Read Before the German-American Historical Society of New York and the pionier-verein of philadelphia by J. G. Rosengarten

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

J. G. ROSENGARTEN

**SOURCES OF HISTORY: A PAPER
READ BEFORE THE GERMAN-
AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF NEW YORK AND THE PIONIER-
VEREIN OF PHILADELPHIA**

SOURCES OF HISTORY,

A PAPER READ BEFORE THE GERMAN-AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW YORK AND THE PIONIER-VEREIN OF PHILADELPHIA.

BY
Joseph
J. G. ROSENGARTEN.

PHILADELPHIA:
PRESS OF WM. P. FELL & CO.,
1226-1224 BANSOM STREET.
1892.

Sources of German-American History.

Literary labor has of late years been largely devoted to history, and no subject offers more general interest, more attractive study, more fruitful results. From general history we have now passed to special fields of research, and in our own country the monumental work of Bancroft is the foundation from which the modest work of special students in local history takes its departure. From the extent and scope of his great task, it was necessary that he should leave much for later students to glean and garner, yet all their labor and research have but confirmed the general truth and exactness of his History. The few instances in which he fell into error have been nearly all corrected in the last edition from his own unwearied and indefatigable hand, and in one or two noteworthy cases his defence and explanation fully confirmed the general impression and the accepted opinion that his History was a storehouse of exact truths, and that his one aim was to be absolutely accurate.

The military events of the war of American Independence have been frequently made matter of dispute, yet Bancroft's accounts are still the basis of most of the special studies which, with each recurring centennial celebration, have brought forth new material and given to each action of importance a ful-

ness and wealth of detail incompatible with the scope of his work. Trained in Germany at a time when few Americans had that advantage, and under the instruction of Heeren and the other founders of the modern school of German history, Bancroft was specially interested in the collection of the materials for his History that he found in the German Archives, and he gave an impulse to research in their forgotten treasures for the material that has been used by him to such good purpose. During his long life he continued to add to his collection of original material, and his official position as United States Minister in Berlin enabled him, at a late period of his career, to find much valuable additional MS.

He made good use, too, of young men specially fitted and trained for research, and Frederick Kapp was frequently employed by Bancroft to search out and secure original records or copies, now forming part of the Bancroft Library, but freely and well used by Kapp in his Lives of Steuben and Kalb and his Soldatenhandel. Later students, too, were generously allowed the use of Mr. Bancroft's MSS., and from them have been drawn most of the German journals of officers and men serving here with the German contingent in the British army, that from time to time have been printed. Thus Mr. Bancroft set the example of diligently gathering from every quarter all that could throw light on our history, and his collection shows that he brought together a vast array of original and unprinted MSS., from which he gathered here and there a salient fact or an apt illustration, although the flowing pages of his

narrative contain results rather than evidence of his diligent study and industrious research, and are essentially his own.

The treasure house of this collection, both of MSS. and printed books, was the Library in which he lived, and after his death it was with pleasure that the public learned that by his will he had offered to the Government of the United States the privilege of being the first purchaser. The time has now come when it is for Congress to decide whether or not it shall accept and make the nation the owner of the Bancroft Library. Students will all unite in urging that this be done, and at once, so that the Bancroft Library may find its final resting place in the great National Library now being built at Washington. It will be the best and most fitting monument to the greatest of American historians, who was in succession student and teacher, statesman and diplomatist, serving his country in various fields of labor, and while doing his full duty in every post always finding time to correct, revise, and complete his History, and to add to those stores of books and MSS. from which he had drawn the narrative that has made the story of America, as he tells it, world-known.

The organization of societies engaged in forwarding the study of American history is rapidly supplementing the work of individual students and collectors. The German Historical Society of New York, the Pionier-Verein of Philadelphia, the German Maryland Historical Society of Baltimore, and kindred associations testify the growing interest

in collecting and publishing the material that best illustrates the share Germans have had in making American history. The sources of the branch of history thus pursued are largely found in the work already done by Seidensticker and Rattermann, by Lowell and Kapp, by Schurz and Löher, and by other individual contributors. The names of Eeking and Schlözer, too, deserve our respect for their industry in adding to our knowledge of the great store of original material on the subject of the Germans who made part of our national history.

Mr. Bancroft labored diligently, and during his long and busy life brought together an extraordinary wealth of manuscript and books bearing on his subject, and among them were many volumes of important papers copied from German archives. His whole collection is now, under his will, offered to the Government of the United States for purchase, with a view to being made part of the Congressional Library, the National Library at Washington. A brief account of its most important material has been prepared by a bibliographical expert, Mr. Sabin, and from that as well as from the small portion which, by Mr. Bancroft's liberality, has been printed and thus made known to students, it may be of interest to give some description. Would it not be well for the Pionier-Verein, in conjunction with the German Historical Society of New York, to invite the co-operation of similar societies elsewhere, in urging on Congress the purchase of the Bancroft Library, with a view to its freer access and use by students, and as the nucleus for an exhaustive

collection of all material for the history of the United States? Harvard College Library, by the will of Jared Sparks, himself a diligent collector, is in possession of the great amount of original material gathered by him in the work of editing the Writings of Washington and of Franklin, and the diplomatic correspondence of the American Revolution. What Bancroft and Sparks did with infinite pains and trouble can now be supplemented at a comparatively small cost, if only a persistent effort be made to carry on the work and complete it. The archives of the German princes who furnished soldiers for the British army in the American Revolution have been gathered together at Marburg, ordered, and arranged. They have been used from time to time by Bancroft and Lowell, by Eelking and Kapp, and from the material thus put into print and that brought here in manuscript we can form some estimate of the extent and value of the amount which has never been copied or used. If the government buy the Bancroft Library, it will be easy to ascertain the cost of supplementing and completing it by copies from the Marburg Archives, and the German-American Historical Societies can do no better work than urge this as an undertaking well worthy the government of the United States and its Congressional Library.

To appreciate the extent and importance of the collection of German-American historical MSS. and the Bancroft Library, let us measure it by the amount used by other writers on the subject; thus, for instance, Kapp in his *Soldatenhandel* says that he used "more than fifty MSS., diaries, and letters of soldiers