

indication that the emigrant ancestor was a preacher or ever lived in Pastwa.

Der Berg: Sippenzeitung der Familien van Bergen concluded that there were five separate lineages of that name, with the Mennonite line stemming from Holland, but separate from the two Hamburg lines, contrary to the story about an ancestor living in Hamburg-Altona in The Baergen Heritage, which is mentioned under # 184. This might help to account for the van Baergen stories in various genealogies, which are cited here for the purpose of facilitating comparison, research and correction. But I am now convinced that most, or all, of the colorful stories relating to the ancestry of the Mennonite van Bergens stem from a mistaken assumption that various families bearing this name in Prussia were related.

A Hans van Bergen is listed in 1615 in Scharfenberg or Hochzeit. If The Baergen Heritage is right, this could not be a direct ancestor, but it could well be a relative.

Great-great-grandson Gerhard Baergen wrote in 1886, "It is ... known that there were some among our people who were from the nobility and in accordance with these properties wrote 'von.'" (Unruh and Baergen, p.3)

Alvin Bergen, in The History of the Bergen and Redekopp Families, writes: "Family legend speaks of a Count Bergen who was exiled from Norway to an island in the North Sea called Hel(i)goland in the early 1600's."

Lynell Berg reports the same, but notes that the van Bergen name is mentioned in Prussia as early as 1585.

One may compare these stories about a noble heritage with those relating to the von Eitzens and the van Riesens.

I tend to be skeptical about such stories. It is indeed true that the German prefix "von" has about the same meaning as the British "Sir." But this was not necessarily true of the Dutch/Flemish "van" -- at least not at the time of the Reformation. Moreover, there is evidence that "von" was not always limited to noble families, even though that is the usage in modern Germany. I am not sure whether the differences are between the two countries or whether they depend upon the time period in question, but I am now inclined to think that the latter may be a more likely explanation.

I suspect that the "van/von" was deliberately dropped by a number of families in the eighteenth and early nineteenth