



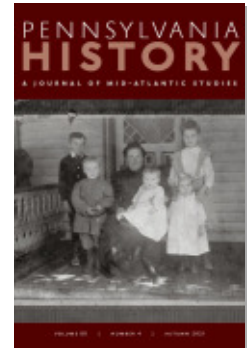
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Pennsylvania Dutch: The Story of an American Language by
Mark Loudon (review)

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BOOK REVIEWS

Native Americans in Pennsylvania (Harrisburg: The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 2015).

2. See various contributions to Carr et al., *Archaeology of Native Americans*.
3. See, for instance, for eastern Pennsylvania, Jay F. Custer, *Classification Guide for Arrowheads and Spearpoints of Eastern Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg: The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 2001).

Mark Loudon. *Pennsylvania Dutch: The Story of an American Language*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016. Pp. 504. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Paper, \$29.95.

Should it be called Pennsylvania German or Pennsylvania Dutch? Is it a language or a dialect? Mark Loudon addresses these questions in the first chapter of his book, though he has already given away his conclusions in the title: *Pennsylvania Dutch: The Story of an American Language*.

Loudon argues that the term “Pennsylvania Dutch” is more accurate because it emphasizes the difference between the descendants of the German-speaking people who settled in Pennsylvania in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the German immigrants who came in great waves in the nineteenth century. The earlier immigrants had come from feudal, pre-industrial Europe, and their descendants had gone on to develop their own culture in America. The later immigrants came from a post-enlightenment homeland that had seen vastly different cultural and economic changes since the time that the earlier groups had left. On the question of language and dialect, Loudon concludes that the scholarly definitions of the two have “no objective criteria” (10), but that people generally view “dialect” as something that is substandard. He convincingly argues that Pennsylvania Dutch is a language with a culture of its own, separate from European German, and not secondary to it. The rest of the book does not get bogged down in semantic arguments, but presents a comprehensive and lively history of not only the language, but also of the people who have spoken it, the literature they have produced, and how the rest of the world has viewed them.

The dialect spoken in the Palatinate (the area on both sides of the middle Rhine River) shares the most similarities with today’s Pennsylvania Dutch, and most early German immigrants to Pennsylvania came from this region. The language has changed primarily in vocabulary since then, but there has been relatively little change in structure. Loudon takes issue with critics who

view Pennsylvania Dutch as a substandard form of German that has been simplified and watered down with English. He points out that most English words imported into today's Pennsylvania Dutch refer to items and concepts that did not exist in eighteenth-century German. Moreover, while some structures have simplified over time, in other ways complexities have been added. Like the dialect spoken in the Palatinate, Pennsylvania Dutch originally had three cases (nominative, accusative, dative), but eventually dropped the dative, using only two cases today. Pennsylvania Dutch has also added a verb structure, the progressive, which does not exist in German.

The vast majority of the people who speak PA Dutch today belong to the most conservative Anabaptist groups, the Old Order Amish and Old Order Mennonites. Before the twentieth century that was not the case, as the Amish and Mennonites made up only a small portion of German immigrants to Pennsylvania. Many of these German immigrants settled in rural areas and had limited contact with non-German speakers. Industrialization and urbanization during the nineteenth century enticed many young people away from the rural German-speaking areas and made it necessary to conduct all business in English. The more conservative Mennonite and Amish communities continued to use Pennsylvania Dutch in daily life and a form of High German in their church services, and most of their young people stayed in farming.

Today Pennsylvania Dutch is primarily an oral language but Loudon has unearthed surprisingly many examples of it in written form. German Americans could read numerous German-language newspapers and journals during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and these publications sometimes included anecdotes, comical stories, poems, and political articles in Pennsylvania Dutch. During the 1828 presidential election, for example, the Pennsylvania newspaper *Der Bauern Freund* printed a dialog in Pennsylvania Dutch in which the honest Pennsylvania farmer supports the populist Jackson, while the smooth-talking lawyer from town supports Adams. By the end of the nineteenth century, a few educated scholars who had grown up speaking Pennsylvania Dutch sought to cultivate and maintain the use of the language. Many of their poems and texts have a sentimental quality, yearning for the simpler, better times in the past. Ironically, the authors have this sentimental yearning precisely because they had left rural areas to seek education and advancement in the English-speaking world.

How Europeans and other Americans have viewed Pennsylvania Dutch is also part of Loudon's "story" of the language. He observes that in the

popular press of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the presentation of Pennsylvania Dutch was “rarely neutral” (241). Authors either wanted to show that it was a serious language, or they mocked its speakers as country bumpkins. Helen Reimensnyder Martin wrote novels in the beginning of the twentieth century in which she showed Amish and Mennonite characters speaking a silly form of “Dutchified” English in a demeaning manner (42). During World War I anti-German sentiment led some newspaper editorials to argue that people should use English in public, but a 1918 letter to the editor in an Allentown newspaper argued that speakers of Pennsylvania Dutch were patriotic Americans.

This exhaustively researched book brings together the story of how German people and language adapted to life in America. While this text is full of many minute details, Loudon weaves them together into an eminently readable narrative. He combines history and linguistics to create a text that will be of interest to those studying the history of Pennsylvania, of immigration and integration, of the Amish and Mennonites, and of the German language.

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Matt Loede. *Game of My Life Pittsburgh Steelers: Memorable Stories of Steelers Football*. New York: Sports Publishing, 2019. Pp. 210. Illustrations. Cloth, \$24.99.

Richard Peterson and Stephen Peterson. *The Slide: Leyland, Bonds, and the Star-Crossed Pittsburgh Pirates*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017. Pp. 236. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$24.95.

Ed Gruver and Jim Campbell. *Hell with the Lid Off: Inside the Fierce Rivalry between the 1970s Oakland Raiders and Pittsburgh Steelers*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019. Pp. 379. Illustrations. Cloth, \$29.95.

Emerging eastbound from the Fort Pitt Tunnel, a motorist bursts into a Pittsburgh of attractive rivers and stately skyscrapers. Savor those majestic two seconds before the misery of merging traffic and honking horns resumes. Passengers might marvel at the picturesque scene unfolding before them, but drivers have to get to work. After all, if you're heading for the North Shore, where the city's professional football and baseball teams play, you have