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Jaan Pennar, Tonu Parming and P. Peter Rebane, Compl., Eds., *The Estonians in America: 1627-1975, A Chronology and Fact Book*. Dobbs Ferry: Oceana Publications, Inc. (Dobbs Ferry, New York), 1975. x-150;p. 6.00 HC (Ethnic Chronology Series Number 17).

One of the more unnoticed ethnic groups in the United States is the Estonians. Relatively small in numbers as compared to, for instance, the Polish - Americans and the Italian - Americans and undifferentiated by the census from the Russian immigration until 1922, the Estonian - Americans have had little public exposure. It is therefore the hope of the compilers of this work that it act as a spur to further and far more intensive investigations into the Estonian - American experience. The recent grant by the United States Office of Education to the Estonian Learned Society of New York for the development of an Estonian American Ethnic Heritage Studies Program should also aid in the exploration of Estonian immigration to the United States.

Pennar's work is one of a series of ethnic chronology volumes, each devoted to a particular ethnic group. As such it shares some of the basic shortcomings inherent in the format of the series, especially in the often awkward effort to correlate subject matter to a strict chronological framework. But Pennar does the best he can within the existent limitations and his work should be consulted by students of the ethnic experience.

The compiler estimates that there may be as many as 400,000 Estonian - Americans resident in the United States today, if the most generous of population figures quoted is reliable. At any rate there are certainly several hundred thousand persons of at least partial Estonian ancestry, mainly located along the Atlantic seaboard and on the west coast. Pennar's division of his chronology into periods up to 1922, the years from 1922 to 1945 and the era since 1945 indicates an ethnic group that began arriving in the United States in meaningful numbers towards the end of the nineteenth century, with substantial additions following the failure of the 1905 revolution in Russia and of course making its greatest impact on American public opinion in the immediate aftermath of World War II.

As in the case of other immigrant groups, the Estonians tended to settle amongst their own in the United States, whether on farms in central Wisconsin or more substantially in the heavily Estonian settlement of Lakewood, New Jersey. Once established, enterprising Estonians began the creation of a media communications network with their fellows in the country, publishing newspapers and magazines; many of them oriented towards a particular political ideology. Estonian clubs, sports groups and literary societies were founded, sometimes floundered, but often endured.

The most dramatic episode in Estonian - American history occurred in the months following World War II when Estonians in Sweden, threatened with deportation to the Soviet Union that they had fled, organized "Viking ship" expeditions to America, sailing the Atlantic in small fishing schooners under the most horrendous conditions.

There is little doubt but that the example of these intrepid part-time mariners had a most favorable impact on American public opinion and aided materially in the passage of special Displaced Persons immigration legislation by the American Congress.

Pennar's chronology and attached series of documents and statistical appendices contain a wealth of suggestive paths for future investigation of the Estonians in America. His book belongs on the shelves of anyone interested in the American life-history of a vigorous, hard-working addition to the body politic.

Norman Lederer,
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