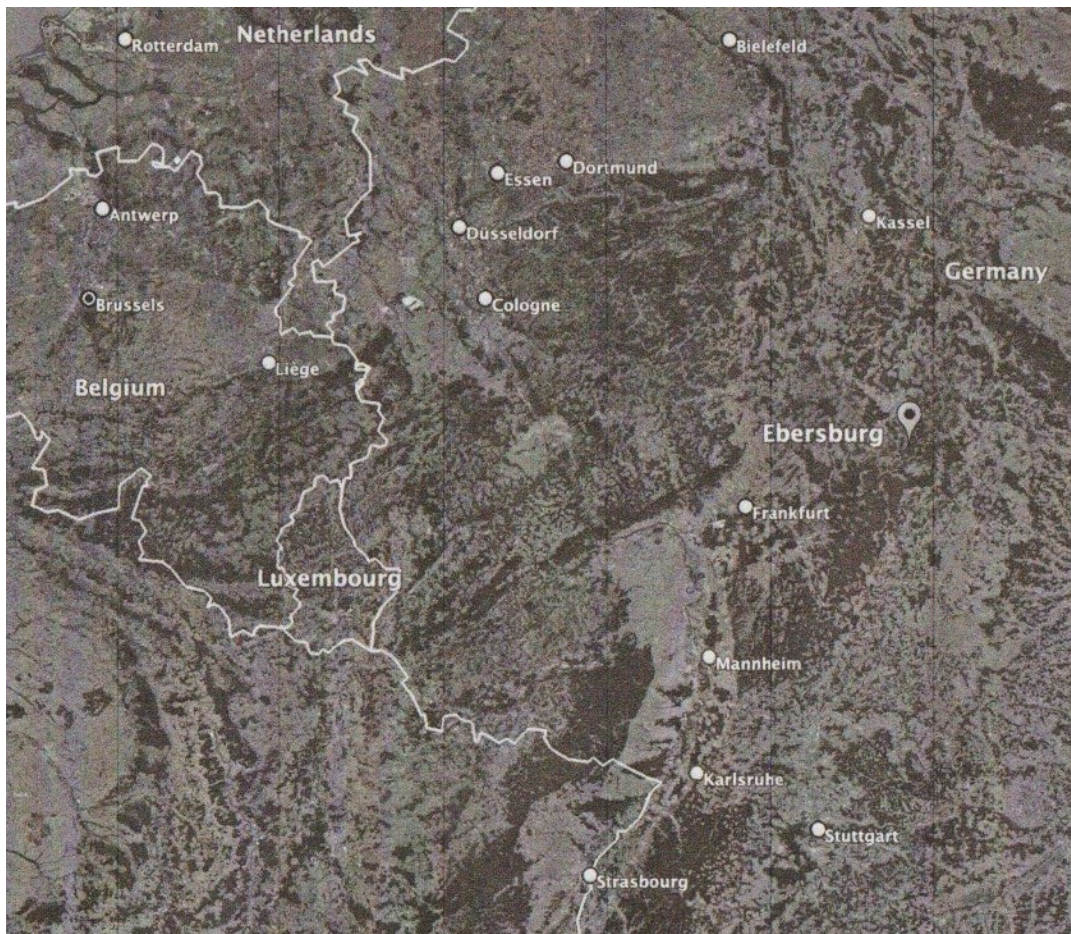


## THE IN DEPTH HISTORY OF THE SLEMP FOUNDATION

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The history of the Slemple Foundation is both the history of a single family, and that of the Midatlantic United States. The family originated in the Lower (Northern) Palatinate in the Rhine River Valley, as did most of the German immigrant population that settled in Pennsylvania and down the Great Valley of Virginia. The circumstances of this history were carried with them into the Turkey Cove section of Lee County, Virginia, and adjoining Wise Co. It will be informative to summarize the culture of the Lower Palatinate (die Pfalz in German).



THE HOME  
TERRITORY OF THE  
SLEMP FAMILY IN  
GERMANY – IT IS A  
PORTION OF THE  
RHINE RIVER  
VALLEY AND  
EXTENDING UP  
THE MAIN RIVER  
TO THE WEST OF  
FRANKFORT TO  
THE NW – SANKT  
(SAINT) SEBASTIAN  
IS TO  
THE WEST

The Palatinate is located in the center of Europe. It is a major cosmopolitan center of commerce up and down the Rhine River. It is also innately prosperous in its own right, being a site of rich soil, manufacturing, wine making, the brandy making center of the world, and unfortunately the site of economic, political, religious, and military conflicts. It has been

repeatedly carved up, coveted, recombined with other principalities, and ransacked through the ages. During its hay day, it was ruled over by a series of Electors named 'Frederich'. Its religion was Calvinist, but refugees of several faiths lived here. Its society was even more class ridden than that of the British. Its serfs were little more than slaves of their Elector. Membership in the ruling class was usually designated by the prefix 'von', which functioned more or less like the appellation of 'Sir' or 'Lord' in English. This uneasy peace came to an end when France renewed its efforts to annex the region, and thousands of Palatines immigrated to Pennsylvania in the half a century before the American Revolution.<sup>(1, 2, 3, 10)</sup>

The surname had several spelling variations even in Germany, which had not yet standardized its spellings of surnames. Indeed, the language was not the German of today's world, but that of "Mittel Hoch Deutsch", or in English "Middle High German". In today's world it is represented as "Pennsylvania Dutch", the dialect of several conservative Christian religious groups in the United States, but of German origin, and in Yedish. In America the surname underwent further variations, not only in spelling, but in the sequence of the common names. In German of that era the first name was required to be the saint's name on whose birthday the boy was born. The second name was the 'calling name', or the name of election bestowed by a doting family, who either chose a beloved relative's name, or that of an admired citizen. In English the first name was 'the calling name'. We commonly do not know what the German American's calling name was, as the German naming order gradually through the generations gave way to the English. The American court clerks caused endless confusion in their records, which bedevil us to this day. Also the immigrant German usually dropped the 'von' upon landing in America.

There are several clues to the Slep family that suggest that they were fundamentally different from the typical German immigrant to Virginia, the first being the 'von' used by Johan Friedrich. The next is that the short time interval between their leaving Germany and their showing up in Rye Valley, now Smyth Co. Virginia. Johan the First (was his calling name Johan or Friedrich ?) was born in Germany in 1737, but died in 1826 in Smyth Co. His father, George, died in Germany. Therefore Johan 1<sup>st</sup> emigrated as an adult, presumably about age 20. Most German immigrants to SWVA came as indentures and were confined to the Atlantic Coast for a period varying from about 10-20 years before they could take off for the frontier.<sup>(11)</sup> Using that math (birth at 1737, age 20 at immigration, 15 years as an indenture) the freed indenture could not start earning cash with which to buy western land until about 1772 or so. That period was typically about ten years. So, if the Sleps had been indentures, the earliest that they could have settled in Rye Valley would have been about 1782. Indeed, that is pretty close to the first recorded patent in Rye Valley, which was in 1803. The Royal Proclamation, which was the result of the Treaty of Paris that ended the French and Indian War was issued in 1763.<sup>(12)</sup> It required settlers west of the New River to vacate. Many did not do so. However, there were no land patents granted after that date until 1778. As a fact, immigration continued, but no records were kept. Among these undocumented early settlers of Rye Valley were both the Sleps and Reasors, who lived next to each other, and both of whom owned iron works of some variety (either furnaces or hammer mills).<sup>(13-14)</sup> It is known that iron works in that specific area were producing iron cannon and rifle barrels before 1775<sup>(13)</sup>. It is not specifically known where these works were located. The geologic deposits of iron ore are in the foothills of Mount Rogers.<sup>(15)</sup> Note that the accompanying



THE GENERAL LOCATION OF THE SLEMP / REASOR IRON WORKS IN RYE VALLEY  
 THE WOODED AREA TO THE SOUTHWEST IS THE MOUNT ROGERS RECREATIONAL AREA

map locates Rye Valley within the Mt. Rogers Recreational Area. Hammer milled iron was used in making rifle barrels in that era.<sup>(16)</sup> It seems that the Slemps and Reasors came to Smyth Co. from Germany not only with unusual speed, but with a considerable sum of money, with which they built their iron works, all before the Revolution. They also had a predilection for naming their children Frederick. One wonders if they were not connected someway to the Elector of die Pfalz, Frederick V of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. That would explain the 'von', the avoidance of the indenture system, and the cash to invest in significant iron works in Smyth Co. The French Revolution spilled over into the Palatinate in 1795, precipitating a mass exodus of Protestants.<sup>(12, 17, 18)</sup> It may be no coincidence that after much fighting the last Elector of the Palatinate was run off in 1803.<sup>(17)</sup>

Below is a composit linear Slemp genealogy leading directly to C. Bascom Slemp, the founder of the Slemp Foundation. It begins in the Palatinate of Germany. Do not be misled by other references to Bavaria. For a while Bavaria had conquered the southern part of the Pfalz. Modern Bavaria has nothing to do with the birth site of the Schlemps. The Reasors came from the same general place as the Slemps.

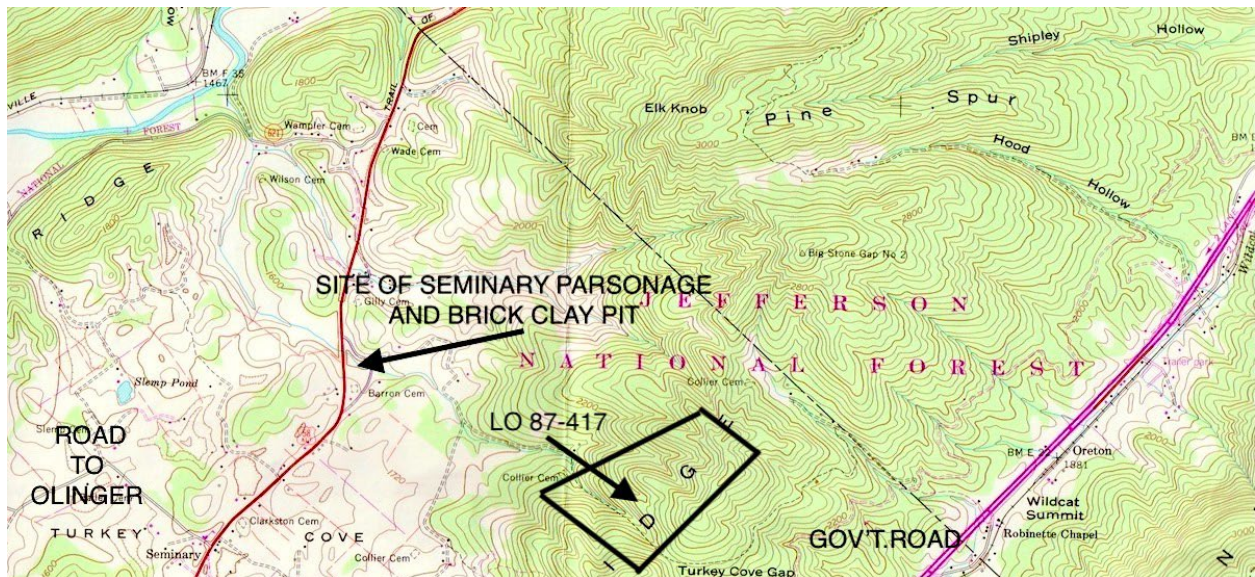
### Genealogy

George Simon Schlempens (oldest spelling in Germany) 1695-1773; the name roughly translates into Virginia Mountaineer dialect as "Backens"<sup>(21)</sup>, or the residual of the first distillation of

alcoholic beverages which is rehydrated, fortified with sugar, and refermented and then placed back in the still.<sup>(20)</sup> His wife was Anna Margaretha, who was a choir director.

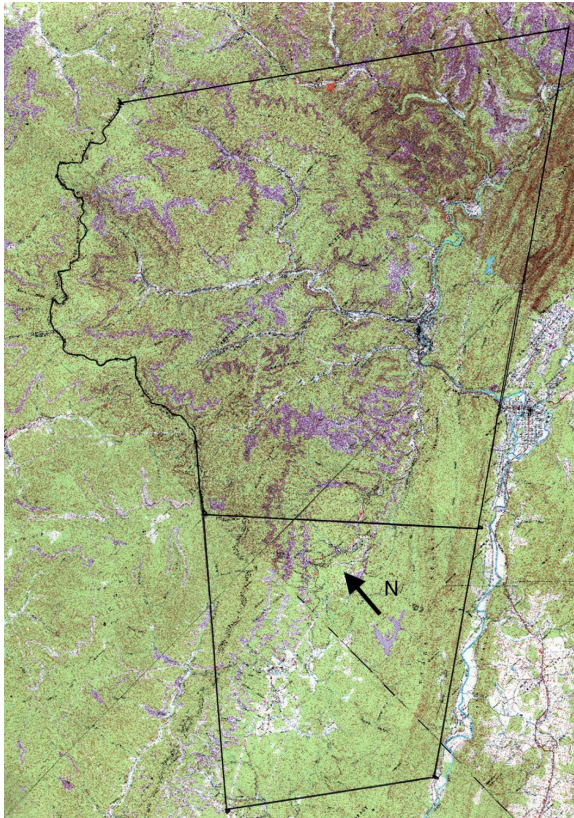
Johan Friedrich von Schlempe – 1737-1807 – born in the Palatinate - married Mary Metz (1742-1826) - lived in Rye Valley in current Smyth Co. It would appear that he resurrected the ‘von’, which his forebears had dropped before immigration. He was from Ober Candel (Upper Kandel). She also was born in Kandel (or Gersheimer) , Rhineland (just across the Rhine River from the Palatinate, and a little south of Frankfort) – today they are a common province of Germany (Rhineland-Palatinate). His calling name was Frederich. She died in Johnson Co., Tennessee.

John Frederick Slempe born in Rye Valley Smyth Co., (then Washington Co.) Va. - dates 1778 or 1781-1851 or 1858. Rye Valley runs east - west from Sugar Grove; married Alpha Smyth. The ‘Smyth’ is not what it seems. The origin is of course from Smyth Co., or more specifically from the family for which it was named. It started out as Schmidt in Germany. The name holder followed the Protestant migration to Sweden, where the name changed to Smid. He then came to Colonial Virginia, where his sons split into Smiths (the Henry Smiths of the Maiden Fork of the Clinch at Clifton Farms between Tazewell and Lebanon, Virginia.<sup>(21)</sup> ) The other son wanted to be more classical English and adopted the spelling Smyth. John Frederick is the same man as ‘John’ Slempe as he was known in Turkey Cove, Lee Co. He died in Lee County 7-4-1858. He was the first Slempe to move to Turkey Cove, Lee County, Va., as in 4-19-1828 he bought Lee Deed Bk. 6 pg. 83 from Benjamin Davis. The survey is not plotable. He lived at the same site for fifty years. He married Alpha Smith, who was viewed by her contemporaries as “a cultured woman”. John and Alpha became the first of five generations to be buried in the iconic Slempe cemetery in northern Turkey Cove. Later John bought 50 acres (LO 87-417) in 1837 of poor land in the center of



TURKEY COVE GAP, SEMINARY, AND GREATER TURKEY COVE usgs Big Stone Gap quad

Turkey Cove Gap in Oct. 1837, thus blocking convenient access to Turkey Cove. It had no other value. He obviously had a business plan, which he followed the rest of his life. They added acreage in Turkey Cove as they could afford. This story begins on Jan. 13, 1796 when the Commonwealth of Virginia sold 42,000 acres of land to a partnership of land speculators named Fields, Taylor, and Johnson, who later did not pay real estate taxes on the land. In 1836 Lee County (western Wise Co. was part of Lee Co. at that time) repossessed the tract and sold it to John C. Olinger II for the back taxes, which were \$4.92. It included Black Mountain from roughly above present Stonega in Wise Co. to the head of Preacher Creek (Derby), and then down to the southwest to roughly the village of Dryden.<sup>(14)</sup> At Olinger's death his land was divided among his children. John C. Olinger III took the eastern part which was most of Black Mountain. In 1880 John C. Olinger III sold his land to E. K. Hyndman on the advice of neighbor John Slempe's great grandson, C. Bascom Slempe, at \$0.35 an acre. Hyndman sold it to the Tinsalia Co. (ancestor of Penn-Virginia Co.), who resold it to E. K. Hyndman.<sup>(23,24, 25)</sup>



THE FILEDS, TAYLOR, AND JOHNSON TRACT. THE SOUTHWESTERN PORTION WENT TO THE SIBLINGS OF JOHN OLINGER II. JOHN KEPT THE NORTHEASTERN PART AS HIS INHERITANCE. NOTE SEBASTIAN'S SLEMP'S LO 87-417 SURVEY, WHICH LIES TO THE NORTHWEST

THIS COMPOSIT WAS DRAWN BY THE AUTHOR

John broke with the family iron business. He seems to have plenty of money later in his life, owning much land and slaves. The only plausible explanation is his inheritance from his parents. He and his wife gave the land for the Seminary Methodist Church, including its parsonage. This is the beginning of documentation of the close association of the Slempe with the Methodist Church, as did many other second and third generation German Americans. That denomination is a novel blend of the Church of England and of German Pietists, such as the Moravians. Slaves made bricks for both the church and the parsonage at a clay pit about a mile northeast of the church.<sup>(27)</sup> Obviously they were responsible for the name of their son, Sebastian.

Intelligence, education, and a sense of culture are obvious. John was responsible for the development of the Slemp Turkey Cove empire of later generations.

Sebastian Smith Slemp born 12-9-1810 in Turkey Cove, Lee Co., Va. – died 5-22-1859; married 1831 Margaret Mary Reasor, daughter of Daniel Reasor who was born in Wythe Co. (possibly that part that became part of Smyth Co.), and died in Wise Co. The first name is a surprise. There is no ‘Sebastian’ in the family tree otherwise. There are no internet entries of a significant American noteworthy by that name that reasonably could be suspected as being the source of that name.



Kandel

However, it is noted that Sebastian is a reasonably common name in Germany, and especially so in the general area of origin of most of the immigrants mentioned in this essay. Saint Sebastian was killed in Rome by Emperor Diocletian in 288 as a part of his purge of Christians. It is believed that he was empowered to heal the plague. In 934 his skull was brought to Ebersburg, Germany (see map pg. 1). An abbey was built to contain it. It was encased in silver as a drinking cup, which was used on St. Sebastian’s Day. In the plague pandemic of 1347 half the population of Germany died from it. It was very socially destructive, as all records of marriages, births, burials etc. ceased to be recorded.<sup>(33)</sup> Johan Friedrich von Schlemp married Mary Metz, both of whom were from Kandal, Germany. Kandal and the Town of Sankt (Saint) Sebastian are 120 miles apart. Sankt Sebastian and Ebersburg are 135 miles apart. In France St. Sebastian was

so popular that an opera was written about him. It would seem to be a reasonable guess that St. Sebastian was the namesake of Sebastian Slemp.<sup>(27,29)</sup> He signed his deeds just ‘S. S. Slemp’. In 1855 he and Elkanah Flanary bought 1,150 acres (LO 87-417) in Crab Orchard. The surveyor’s calls are defective, but the land lay generally from Tater Rock that sits on the top of Little Black Mountain above Keokee past the dam of Lake Keokee to the county line along ‘The Divide’, or ‘The Crest’, and on to generally about Olinger Gap, and along the spine of Stone Mountain before cutting back to the top of Little Black Mountain generally passing by Rawhide. (See map on page 5) Elkanah was married to Sebastian’s daughter, Nervesta.<sup>(3)</sup>

Col. Campbell Bascom Slemp, son of Sebastian and Margaret Mary Reasor BD 12-2-1839 – died 10-13-1907<sup>(1-9, 19)</sup> both events occurred in Turkey Cove. He married Nancey Brittain Cawood. His sister Susan became the mother of Col. Auburn Pridemore (see below). A daughter, Nancey Belle, married James P. Edmonds (see below). Col. Slemp graduated from Emory and Henry College (Methodist affiliated), and served in the Virginia House of Delegates. Later he served in the US House of Representatives. His son, C. Bascom Slemp, assumed his seat at his death. <sup>(30,31,32)</sup>



Col. C. Bascom Slemph

Neither of his first two names had previously been used in his genealogy. Neither are connected to his German heritage. Both have been used repetively in succeeding generations. It would be worthwhile to explore their likely origins. The Campbells were the most prominent family in that part of Virginia where the Slemphs lived. They were of Scottish Highlander origins. The Campbells settled at Royal Oak (now Marion) in Smyth County. Charles Campbell was with the Patton Expedition of 1758 that first explored Southwest Virginia, and 'discovered' Saltville. His son, General William Campbell, led the American forces at the Battle of Kings' Mountain, the turning point of the American Revolution in the South. The first two clerks of the Washington Co., Va. court were Campbells, and it was David Campbell, Governor of Virginia, who signed the deed of LO 87-417 to John Slemph.<sup>(35)</sup>

As for 'Bascom' its choice is less obvious. Henry Bidleman Bascom 1796-1850 was an American Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (commonly known as 'Southern Methodist') Church, and was, indeed, one of its founders. The surname is Basque. He was a 'circuit riding' preacher on the Southern frontier. He advanced to being Chaplin to the US House of Representatives. He became a founder and literary champion of the Southern Methodist Church<sup>(36)</sup>. While there is no documentation that these two gentlemen were the origins of Col. C. B. Slemph's names, there are no better candidates for this honor. Their choices tell us much about the future generations of Slemphs.<sup>(36)</sup>

With the outbreak of the Civil War C. B. Slemph rapidly organized a unit of the Confederate Army from the area of settlement of the Slemphs and Reasors. One third were from Kentucky. Initially designated as an infantry unit, it soon changed to the 64<sup>th</sup> Virginia Mounted Infantry, CSA. Units of this nature rode to battle like cavalry, but when at the battle site they dismounted and fought as infantry. This style of warfare was the regional specialty, and was the method the forces of General William Campbell had used at the Battle of Kings' Mountain. Toward the end of the war it changed to a purely cavalry unit. Its most significant battle was at Cumberland Gap, VA./KY. 8-27-63. General Frazier was in command of the Confederates, including Slemph's 64<sup>th</sup> Mounted Infantry. The Confederates commanded the gap itself, and the southeastern approach. The Union forces were in Middlesboro, Ky., and desired to force the way through the gap. There was no water up in the gap, and the Southerners had to carry it up in kegs tied to horses backs. The Union forces found a route through a gap to the west, and cut the Confederates off from their water supply. The options for the opposing armies were grim. Either the Union Army could move up the pass under cannon fire, or the Confederates could wait and be reduced by thirst and hunger. An unofficial deal was reached whereby the Confederates agreed to vacate during the night, if allowed to do so. The next morning the Union forces would cross the mountain and take the surrender of the remaining Confederates, many of whom were Union sympathizers. The stark

reality in everyone's minds was what had recently happened to the Confederate prisoners who had surrendered at Fort Donalson. Few had survived the pestilence that raged at Camp Douglas, the prisoner camp where they were taken. Slemple took about a hundred troopers out in the middle of the night up the ridge line trail of Cumberland Mountain. On the way home, Slemple met his future wife, Nancy Cawood. The rest were taken to Camp Douglas – Union sympathizers and all. Few make it home. This singular event influenced the development of the coal industry in Virginia and in Kentucky more than any other. In the 1880's Slemple became the chief purchasing agent for the corporations that were buying up mountain land with the goal of developing the coal reserves there. The veterans of the 64<sup>th</sup> believed correctly that Slemple had saved their lives, and chose to sell their land to him.<sup>(37, 38, 23, 24, 40, 41)</sup>

After the War, Col. Slemple joined the 'Readjuster Movement' in Virginia, a political faction that endorsed industrialization, and evolved to the modern Republican Party in Virginia.<sup>(42)</sup>

C. Bascom Slemple - With the death of Col. Slemple in 1907, his son C. Bascom seamlessly stepped into his father's foot prints. His upbringing consisted of attending primary school at Seminary, and of having a private tutor. At age 9 he became a page in the Virginia General Assembly. At age 16 he entered VMI. Four years later he graduated with the highest grade point average in that school's history – both past and present, and for four years received the Jackson Medal for the most distinguished student. He studied law at U. Va. for one year, and was admitted to the bar. At the same time he taught math at VMI, and then opened a law practice in Big Stone Gap, Va.



CAMPBALL  
BASCOM  
SLEMP

What followed was a blizzard of coal companies, a few of which were the Slemple Coal Co., the Blue Diamond Coal Co., and the crowning glory of it all – the Kentucky River Coal Co. All this was built on the land acquisitions in Kentucky begun by his father. It is difficult to tell which Campbell Bascom Slemple did what, as the accomplishments of the two men are so conflated that many people do not know that there were two of them. This enigma is exemplified best by the Interstate Investment Co., which seems to have been founded on Sebastian Smith Slemple's Crab Orchard land. Ballard Thruston of Kentucky and John Inman of Tennessee by way of New York likely were involved. This endeavor was ultimately acquired by the Virginia Coal and Iron Company.<sup>(8,42, 43,44)</sup> As the only Republican congressman from the South, in an era when politics at the national level were largely Republican, he controlled all federal patronage in the

South. He rose to the level of Secretary to President Coolidge, a post analogous to Chief of Staff. He resigned in 1925 due to issues with the Tea Pot Dome scandal, and patronage.<sup>(45)</sup>

After his death in 1943, as directed in his will, the Slemple Foundation was established in 1946. It stipulated that its proceeds be used to:

- Improve the health, education and welfare of Lee and Wise County Virginia residents or their descendants.
- Care, maintain and develop the Janie Slemp Newman Museum (now the Southwest Virginia Museum).
- Care and maintain the Slemp Cemetery and the Seminary Methodist Church in Lee County, Virginia<sup>(46)</sup>

Having no children, the Slemp Foundation was first administered by his nephew, Campbell Edmonds, then by Edmonds' daughter Nancey Edmonds Smith, and then by her son Jim Smith.

To this author's mind this history documents several significant elements. They are A) A rare example of how a well to do European family successfully transferred not only its wealth, but also its social position to America B) the social evolution of the acculturation of Virginia's German Immigrants C) the effects the Civil War had on the post war national industrialization D) a remarkable story of the accumulation of wealth by the process of one generation building on the efforts of the preceding ones. D) how this process ended in the perpetuation of that wealth for the good of the people of the region from which it was created.

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