

the congregation at Germantown had no Bishop, and, according to the discipline of the Church, no one to ordain him, consequently a letter was sent from Germantown to the congregation at Altona, Hamburg, for advice, requesting one of the Bishops to come over to install a Bishop at Germantown. The Bishops and ministers of the Altona congregation took the matter under earnest consideration, and as no one seemed willing at that time to undertake so tedious and dangerous a voyage across the sea to install a Bishop at Germantown, they wrote a letter to the Germantown congregation authorizing one of the brethren to perform that duty. This letter was signed by four ministers of the Hamburg, Altona congregation, viz.: Bishop Gerritt Roosen, at the age of ninety years; Pieter van Helle, Jacob van Kampen, and Jean de Lanoi. In consequence of the above instructions, Willem Rittenhouse was installed as Bishop of the first Mennonite church in America, at Germantown, about 1701. Willem Rittenhouse, as stated above, was the first preacher in the Germantown Mennonite congregation, afterwards elected and ordained as Bishop, the first in America in said Church.

In 1694 Willem Rittenhouse took upon himself the duty as a committee, with Jan Doeden, to raise money and to have a little house built on a lot which was set apart for an old blind man and his wife, who came to Germantown in a miserable condition after many years wandering on these wild shores, who was at one time the leader of a community of Mennonites who had settled at Hoornkill, in Delaware, and were driven away and robbed by a band of armed soldiers under the command of Captain Robert Carr. His name was Cornelis Plockhoy.

Willem Rittenhouse emigrated to Germantown in 1688. He had two sons, Klaus (or Nicholas) and Garrett (or Gerhard), and a daughter, Elizabeth. He died in 1708, aged 64 years, and his bones lie away in the Mennonite Churchyard at Germantown, Pa., above Herman Street.