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Border Crossings:
The Making of German Identities
in the New World,
1850-1914

by

Barbara Lorenskowski

Thesis submitted to
the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
Ph.D. Degree in History

University of Ottawa / Université d'Ottawa

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0-612-72816-1

Abstract

Border Crossings: The Making of German Identities in the New World, 1850-1914

Barbara Lorenskowski
University of Ottawa, 2002

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Professor Chad Gaffield

Border crossings, in both their literal and figurative sense, are central to the experience of migration. In crossing the Atlantic to the New World, migrants in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries partook in a transnational exchange of people, goods, and ideas. Having arrived in North America, they did not restrict their lives to the confines of a nation-state but, rather, traversed the Canadian-American border with frequency and ease. Within Canada and the United States, they navigated internal boundaries of ethnicity, race, gender, and class. Variouslly defined as 'up-rooted' or 'transplanted', these migrants were, in fact, harbingers of modernity, who forged cultural identities out of the 'conversations' across borders.

This study explores the making of German identities in two localities, Berlin (Ontario) and Buffalo (New York) in the decades between 1850 and 1914. It is interested less in the construction of ethnic boundaries, and, more so, in the social acts of exchange across them. It argues that out of the conversation between 'German', 'Canadian', and 'American' identities a German public emerged. This public was a malleable entity. At times, its boundaries stretched as far as Germany itself. It also spanned Canada and the United States; for German language, culture, and festivity provided common ground for migrants on both sides of the border. Then, again, the German public seemed to splinter in two, with public conversations on German-ness acquiring a distinct Canadian or American tinge.

Although the German public bore a remarkable similarity in both Buffalo and Berlin, grounded as it was in a shared festive culture, the national sphere left its indelible print. The discourse of ethnic contributions that loomed so large in the United States never crossed the border into Canada. In Berlin, ethnic leaders instead sought to de-politicize German culture and to reinforce the idea of dual loyalties. In both countries, the idea of race minimized the distance between ‘Anglo-Saxons’ and ‘Teutons’. Yet in reconciling competing national mythologies, German Canadians highlighted the perceived closeness of the German and British Empires, whereas German Americans deftly appropriated the notion of cultural superiority.

While its contours were sketched by ethnic leaders, the German public was, by no means, a unified entity. To capture its motion and fluidity, and to minimize a dependence on cultural gatekeepers, this study turns to the colourful history of the singers’ festivals (*Sängerfeste*) – public celebrations of German music, language, and culture – and seeks to unravel the webs of meaning and experience spun around the history of German-language schooling. In so doing, it finds that, by the early twentieth century, the culture of consumption began to rival German festive culture, while the German mother tongue was refashioned into a language of modernity. The German public, in short, had transformed from a means of communication into a symbol of ethnic identity.

What makes the history of the German public so intriguing was its inherently contradictory rationale. Cloaked in the language of tradition, it was a vehicle of modernity. While upholding the image of the folk, it constituted a cultural hybrid whose transnational and transcultural outlook defied its rhetoric of authenticity and cultural purity. Not to be confined to a cultural island, it wove changes into the very fabric of mainstream society: by illustrating the ‘propriety’ of leisure culture; by championing methods of German reform pedagogy; and, most importantly, by expanding the very boundaries of public culture.

Acknowledgements

Border crossings loom large in the share of debts which I incurred since I first came upon this topic. In the years I have worked under his direction, Chad Gaffield taught me to read historical sources all over again. His insistence to think big and across disciplinary boundaries has inspired this work. Donald F. Davis, Jeff Keshen, and Mark Stolarik freely gave of their time, wit, and wisdom. Wolfgang Helbich, finally, set me on the path of history and – from a transatlantic distance – took a generous interest in my work ever since.

At the University of Ottawa, the hours of shared laughter, and the many animated discussions about the pleasures and pitfalls of history, with Lauren Jeffs, Jo-Anne McCutcheon, and Garth Williams constantly reminded me that graduate school is about so much more than ‘just writing a thesis’. In cities across Germany, Peter Busch, Bernd Ewers, Diane Foltinek, Sonja Kretzschmar, Stefan Lorenzkowski, and Petra Manzke were living proof that ties of friendship do, indeed, span the Atlantic.

In Canada and the United States, I have been fortunate to benefit from the knowledge and cheerful advice of the members of the Canadian Families Project, the Social History Group at the Institute of Canadian Studies (University of Ottawa), and the German Historical Institute in Washington. Earlier incarnations of chapters 4 and 9 were presented at the Joseph Schneider Haus in Kitchener and the Annual Meeting of the History of Education Society at New Haven.

Several generous scholarships helped the completion of this work. The Ontario Graduate Scholarship programme, the Government of Canada, the Chair of German-Canadian Studies at the University of Winnipeg, the German Historical Institute in Washington, the University of Ottawa, and the Joseph Schneider Haus in Kitchener

provided the funding that allowed me to devote my time and energy to research and writing. At the University of Ottawa, Chad Gaffield generously provided me with research contracts and employment opportunities.

My research took me into many different archives and collections. At the Waterloo County Board of Education (Kitchener), a warehouse harboured the dusty volumes of school board minutes that provided a fascinating glimpse into the past. The richness and variety of sources I was able to use was made available by the dedicated reference librarians at the Kitchener Public Library, the Doon Heritage Crossroads (Kitchener), the University of Waterloo Archives, the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, and the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library. The staff at the intra-library loan services at the University of Ottawa tirelessly hunted for secondary and primary sources.

As is customary, the greatest thanks are saved for last. The loving encouragement and never-flagging support of my parents Bärbel and Josef Lorenskowski and my grandparents Gertrud and Johann Lorenskowski made the completion of this thesis possible in the first place.

Steven High witnessed the writing of this study page by page, idea for idea. Always, he shared his good humour and invaluable suggestions. He clarified my thinking and made me laugh, whenever I began to take my journey into history all too seriously. This is for you.

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Introduction

On November 1, 1861, the six-year old Louis J. Breithaupt moved with his family from Buffalo (New York) to Berlin (Ontario). His German-born father, Liborius Breithaupt, had long conducted business in the tiny Canadian village whose population numbered barely 2,000.¹ As a young man, Liborius had visited Berlin to buy sheep skins for the family tannery in Buffalo. In 1853, he brought home his young bride, Catharina, by horse and carriage, for no railway connected the two localities. Once the Civil War began, Liborius decided to leave the United States. In Berlin, where he had established a tannery as early as in 1857 (on land obtained from his father-in-law), the Breithaupts found a new home. And despite the trials of business – twice, the tannery was destroyed by fire between 1867 and 1870 – they emerged as one of the town’s leading families, wielding their influence as mayors, school trustees, wardens, church patrons, benefactors, and members of the Provincial Legislature.²

It is the casual back-and-forth across the international border that makes the history of the Breithaupt family so intriguing, if hardly unique. In turning the pages of the diary, which Louis Breithaupt kept faithfully over decades, we encounter a border that seemed to be transcended in the networks of family and community.³ Louis, his parents and siblings regularly visited family and friends in Buffalo and Detroit. They, in turn, hosted relatives from Buffalo and Detroit for weeks at a time.⁴

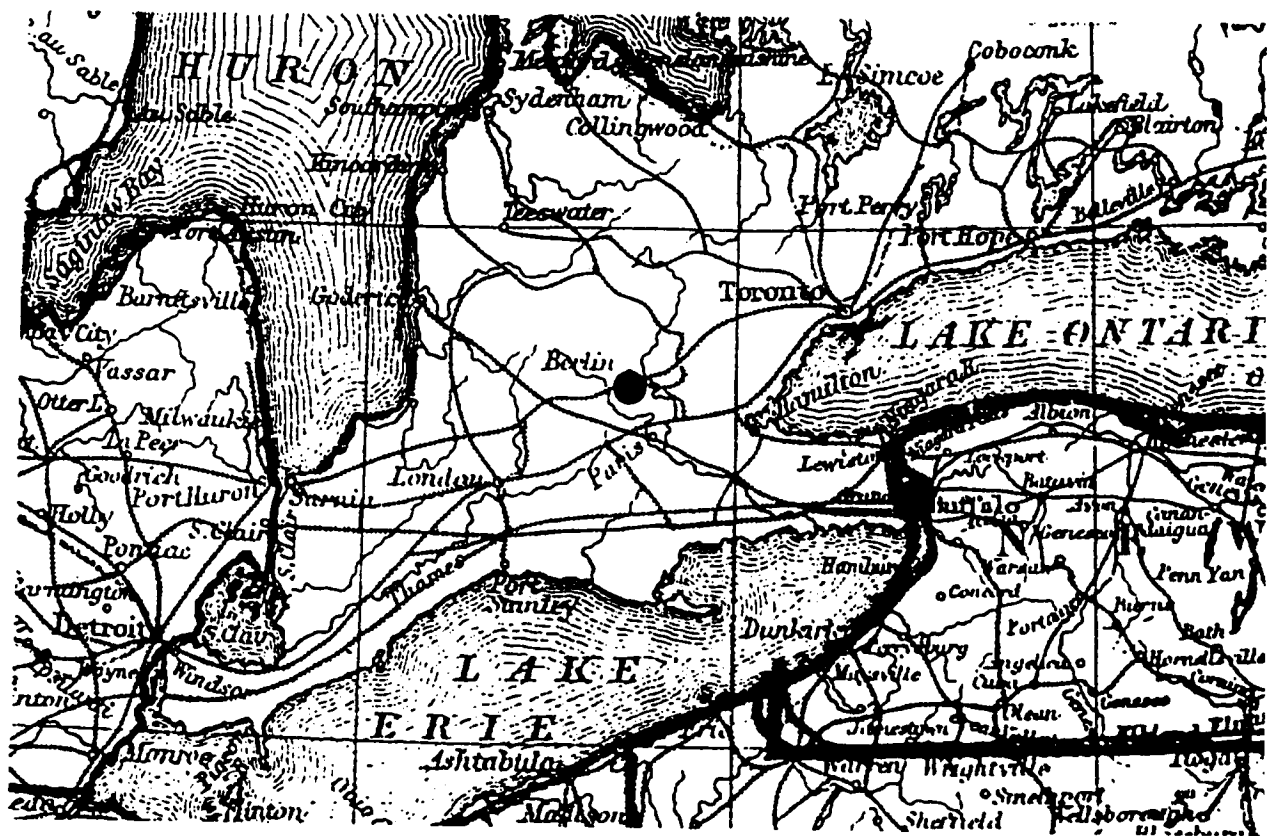
¹ *Census of Canada*, 1861.

² *University of Waterloo*, Doris Lewis Rare Book Room, *Sketch of the Life of Catherine Breithaupt, Her Family and Her Times* (Berlin: 1911), 5, 7, and 18; “Louis J. Breithaupt,” in Jesse Edgar Middleton and Fred Landon, *Province of Ontario: A History, 1615-1927*, vol. 3 (Toronto: Dominion, 1927-8), 131-2.

³ For the construction of community through social space see John C. Walsh and Steven High, “Rethinking the Concept of Community,” *Histoire sociale/Social History*, 32, 64 (November 1999), 255-73.

⁴ *University of Waterloo*, Doris Lewis Rare Book Room, Breithaupt Hewetson Clark Collection, “Diaries of Louis Jacob Breithaupt” (hereafter “Diaries of Louis Jacob Breithaupt”). See, for

Map 1: Bonds Across Borders – Buffalo (New York) and Berlin (Ontario) in 1883



Source: Alex Keith Johnston, *Handy Royal Atlas of Modern Geography* (Edinburgh: W. & A.K. Johnston, 1883).

In search of education, Louis's siblings crossed the border to study in Buffalo, Chicago and Naperville (Illinois). Business trips brought Liborius Breithaupt, and later his sons, to Buffalo, New York, Rochester, and Chicago.⁵ William Breithaupt, for one, remained in the United States for almost two decades where he worked as a civil engineer in Pittsburgh, Chicago, St. Louis, Kansas City and New York City, before returning to Berlin in 1910.⁶ In the realm of religion, the Zion Evangelical Church of Berlin – the spiritual home of the Breithaupt family – established close

instance, October 5, 1867; September 10, 1868; June 29, 1869; September 30, 1869; April 6, 1871; December 19, 1871; April 27, 1872; May 25, 1872; August 20, 1872.

⁵ *Ibid.*, August 23, 1867; October 23, 1867; April 20, 1868; October 20, 1868; April 16, 1869; September 4, 1869; June 22, 1870; August 23, 1870; April 6, 1871; October 26, 1872.

⁶ *Ibid.*, October 14, 1868 and August 31, 1888. See also "William Henry Breithaupt," in *Province of Ontario: A History, 1615-1927*, vol. 3, 133-4.

ties with the New York Conference of the Evangelical Association, frequently welcoming itinerant preachers from Buffalo.⁷

The Breithaupts, in short, lived a life in which border crossings presented the rule, not the exception. Beginning with the Atlantic migration of Liborius Breithaupt to Buffalo, and the family's subsequent secondary migration to Berlin, members of the Breithaupt family traversed the Canadian-American border with frequency and ease. Within Canada, as well, they navigated internal boundaries of ethnicity, in the process constructing a sense of 'German-ness' in an English-speaking province. Thus, both in its literal and metaphorical sense, the border represented not so much a line of division as a zone of exchange; it was, to borrow W. H. New's memorable phrase, a "territor[y] of translation."⁸ As such, it allowed for a conversation between 'German', 'Canadian', and 'American' identities.

This thesis is an account of how a German public was forged out of the conversations across borders. This German public, as we shall see, was a malleable entity. At times, its boundaries stretched as far as Germany itself, a trans-Atlantic connection representing both the region of origin and a mythical German homeland. As a "symbolic umbrella of the ethnic culture", it also spanned Canada and the United States, for German language, culture, and festivity provided common ground for migrants on both sides of the border.⁹ Then, again, the German public seemed to splinter in two, with public conversations on German-ness acquiring a distinct Canadian or American tinge. To trace the history of the German public, this elusive cultural construct, this study will explore the making of German identities in two localities, Berlin and Buffalo, between 1850 and 1914.

⁷ "Diaries of Louis Jacob Breithaupt," April 18, 1869; October 19, 1870; April 22, 1892; *Sketch of the life of Catherine Breithaupt*, 5.

⁸ W. H. New, *Borderlands: How we talk about Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), 5.

⁹ Kathleen Neils Conzen, David A. Gerber, Ewa Morawska, George E. Pozzetta, and Rudolph J. Vecoli, "The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A.," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 12, 1 (Fall 1992), 5.

What it meant to be German in North America – or, more specifically, German Canadian or German American – remained an open question for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In both Canada and the United States, German migrants engaged in an ongoing conversation on how to unite and define the ethnic group, which icons to inscribe into ethnic memory, which traditions to invent to endow New World rituals with Old World ‘authenticity’, and how to reconcile ethnic and national identities.¹⁰ The emergence of a German public was made all the more complex by the fact that Canada and the United States were themselves involved in “the process of creating a unitary sense of national belonging and allegiance.”¹¹ How, then, can we hope to capture a German public that was so intimately intertwined with emergent national identities, equally fluid and multilayered in nature?

In its classic formulation, the public has been conceived as an idealized “Olympian plane”, a gathering place, so to speak, where equals convened “to deliberate about the common good.”¹² Jürgen Habermas, then, in his seminal work, described the public as “a zone of rational discourse” that emerged during the eighteenth-century and served as a mediator between society and state, between ordinary people and the law-making powers.¹³ While historians have seized upon the

¹⁰ Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Canto, 1992 [1983]), 1-14 and Cecilia Elizabeth O’Leary, *To Die For: The Paradox of American Patriotism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 3.

¹¹ O’Leary, *To Die For*, 4. See also Suzanne Zeller, *Inventing Canada: Early Victorian Science and the Idea of a Transcontinental Nation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987); John R. Gillis, *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); John Bodnar ed., *Bonds of Affection: Americans Define Their Patriotism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Gerald Friesen, *Citizens and Nation: An Essay on History, Communication, and Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

¹² See Mary P. Ryan’s pertinent comments in *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City during the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 5 and 7.

¹³ John L. Brooke, “Reason and Passion in the Public Sphere: Habermas and the Cultural Historians,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 29, 1 (Summer 1998), 44. See also Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991 [1962]), 86-121.

idea of the public as “a powerful means of conceptualizing public life,” they have been quick to point out its limitations.¹⁴ In a public, bounded by rational discourse, there was no room for “play and pleasure as means to community”.¹⁵ Further, as feminist scholars have argued, the public, as conceived by Habermas, ignored the “voices of class, gender, and race [which] began to challenge the authority of propertied masculine white.”¹⁶ Critics have suggested to locate the public (variously defined as public life, public memory, or, simply, nationalism) in the dynamic tensions between unity and diversity, inclusion and exclusion, the ‘local’ and the ‘national’ instead.¹⁷

Although the German public was an entity in its own right – representing one of many “competing publics” – its links to the national sphere were numerous and strong.¹⁸ In fact, the very ground upon which it was constructed provided points of exchange with the national public sphere. The result was a ‘conversation’ that wove changes into both “mainstream” and “sidestream”

¹⁴ Brooke, “Reason and Passion in the Public Sphere,” 52.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 53 and 49. For feminist reformulations of the public sphere see, for instance, Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1990).

¹⁷ Imaginatively used by scholars of nationalism, the metaphor of the public can be fruitfully applied to a study of ethnic consciousness; for although ethnicity aspires to neither “state power” nor “sovereignty”, it is, like nationalism, a social concept. Both cherish a collective sense of community; both draw boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’; neither refrains from chauvinism. See Mathew Frye Jacobson, *Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish, and Jewish Immigrants in the United States* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1995), 16-18 and Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1790: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991 [1990]), 46 and 77. For sophisticated studies on the practices of informal, popular politics that see Peter Sahlin, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Pierre Nora ed., *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*, 3 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996-8 [1992]); John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fêtes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871-1918* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

¹⁸ See Nancy Fraser’s critique of Habermas’s conception of a “single, overarching public sphere”. Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” in Craig Calhoun ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: MIT Press, 1994), 122.

cultures.¹⁹ This interaction, of course, would not have been possible, had German migrants not been allowed to cross cultural boundaries that barred other ethnic groups.²⁰ As members of the 'Teutonic race' who, purportedly, shared in the glories of Anglo-Saxon civilization, Germans were permitted entry into the "social, political, and ideological center" of society.²¹

As Karl Deutsch told us half a century ago, a sense of common identity depends on the density of communication channels. "Cultural communities," he wrote, "are bounded by relative barriers to communication."²² To paraphrase Karl Deutsch: as long as German migrants had the ability "to communicate more effectively, and over a wider range of subjects" with fellow Germans than "with outsiders", they would form a community.²³

What counts is not the presence or absence of a single factor, but merely the presence of sufficient communication faculties to produce the overall result. The Swiss may speak four different languages and still act as one people, for each of them has enough learned habits, preferences, symbols, memories, patterns of landholding and social stratification, events in history, and personal associations, all of which together permit him to communicate more effectively with Swiss than with the speaker of his own language who belong to other people.²⁴

To be sure, as John Breuilly has pointed out, a greater intensity of communication may lead as often to an "increase in internal conflict as to an increase in solidarity."²⁵ Still, Deutsch's early formulation directs attention to the social acts of communication from which a German public

¹⁹ Kathleen Neils Conzen, "Mainstream and Side Channels: The Localization of Immigrant Cultures," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 11, 1 (Fall 1991), 5-20.

²⁰ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New York: Atheneum, 1963 [1955]); Kay J. Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1998).

²¹ Brent O. Peterson, *Popular Narratives and Ethnic Identity: Literature and Community in Die Abendschule* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), ix.

²² Karl W. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1966 [1953]), 38.

²³ *Ibid.*, 97 and 91.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 97.

²⁵ John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 20.

could emerge. It thus allows us to probe the emergence of a “common cultural paradigm”, without overlooking conflict, contestation, and contradiction.²⁶

As we will see, the communication between German-speaking migrants in North America intensified across time and space, unfolding on a national scale in the United States, while assuming a more localized air in Canada. Although membership in this public was, by no means, compulsory, it did offer the option to linger in the German public realm, to pay a short visit only – or to stay aloof. ‘German-ness’, in other words, was an identity that could be adopted at various moments in time, with various degrees of intensity. In this sense, the process of ethnic group formation unfolded just as “unevenly and contradictorily” as the construction of national identities.²⁷ And yet, its result was a ‘German’ identity that was perceptible to insiders and outsiders alike.²⁸

As the contours of the German public were sketched by cultural leaders (those much-maligned white, male, and middle-class elites), we have to be careful not to mistake the proclamations of ethnic gatekeepers with an expression of group identity.²⁹ To minimize this danger, this work proposes to examine the colourful history of the singers’ festivals (*Sängerfeste*)

²⁶ Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, 7-8. The bewildering diversity of German migration has led some scholars to reject the notion of a German identity altogether; by contrast, this study holds that the idea of a German public may offer glimpses onto the ways in which migrants imagined the ethnic group, and their place within it. See Stanley Nadel, *Little Germany: Ethnicity, Religion, and Class in New York City, 1845-80* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 6-7 and 14 and Dirk Hoerder, “German-speaking Immigrants – Co-Founders or Mosaic?: A Research Note on Politics and Statistics in Scholarship,” *Zeitschrift für Kanada-Studien*, 14 (1994), 53-5.

²⁷ O’Leary, *To Die For*, 7.

²⁸ The process of ethnicization – of constructing a sense of peoplehood – was, by no means, peculiar to German migrants. See, for instance, John E. Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto: Development of a National Identity, 1875-1935* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1988) and Donald Harman Akenson, “The Historiography of English-Speaking Canada and the Concept of Diaspora: A Sceptical Appreciation,” *Canadian Historical Review*, 76, 3 (September 1995), 396-7.

²⁹ Franca Iacovetta, “Manly Militants, Cohesive Communities, and Defiant Domestics: Writing about Immigrants in Canadian Historical Scholarship,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 36 (Fall 1995), 239.

– public celebrations of German music, language, and culture – and to unravel the web of meanings and experiences spun around the history of German-language schooling.

The singers' festivals, which enveloped Berlin and Buffalo in a whirlwind of German festivity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, were notable for their accessibility. Although women's role at concerts and parades was carefully circumscribed, evoking images of national purity and "culture-keeping femininity", the ensuing gatherings in beer gardens and parks "found singers and their wives, sweethearts and friends at the social tables, sweetening life with song and lager."³⁰ The *Sängerfeste*, in other words, did not only feature highly formalized rituals but also a festive exuberance that evoked "the spirit of fun, of play and games" and took its meaning "precisely from opposition to the everyday and the workaday."³¹ By visiting concert halls and street spectacles, by listening to solemn speeches and public frolic – in short, by turning to both the literary and the participatory – this thesis seeks to avoid overly reliance on cultural gatekeepers.

Schooling, as well, provided a public platform on which to negotiate meanings of German identity. But unlike the *Sängerfeste* whose orderly appearance presented a source of constant amazement for Anglo-Saxon observers (who professed themselves to be equally enchanted by the feast of music), requests for German-language instruction sparked controversy. As institutions that touched the lives of thousands of boys and girls in Buffalo and Berlin, public schools were expected to build the nation "in the minds of their peoples."³² Their mandate was, as David A.

³⁰ Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, 7 and *Toronto World*, August 12, 1886.

³¹ Rogers D. Abrahams, "An American Vocabulary of Celebrations," in Alessandro Falassi ed., *Time out of Time: Essays on the Festival* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 178 and 174.

³² Stephen L. Harp, *Learning to Be Loyal: Primary Schooling as Nation Building in Alsace and Lorraine, 1850-1914* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998), 4.

Gerber has said so succinctly, “to pass on a common culture and language to the young, and thus provide the foundations of individual integration into society, and hence of social order.”³³

As we will see, the rhetoric of nation-building did not simply translate into social practice; local societies played an active role in shaping public institutions.³⁴ Upon the insistence of ethnic leaders, the public schools of Buffalo came to offer German-language instruction. Meanwhile, ethnic spokesmen across the border institutionalized the German-language classroom in Berlin. Their achievements notwithstanding, the gatekeepers of the German public soon realized that only a minority of German-origin parents shared their devotion to language preservation and cultural purity. As expressions of German ethnicity – and markers of the German public – language and culture would remain contested terrain.

In probing the emergence of a German public, this thesis circles its topic from many directions. First, it has taken a cue from Kathleen Neil Conzen to examine “the cultural ‘stuff’ of ethnicity”.³⁵ Migration historiography, Conzen observes, has concerned itself more with the maintenance of ethnic boundaries than with the cultures that migrants created.³⁶ To complete the

³³ David A. Gerber, *The Making of an American Pluralism: Buffalo, New York, 1825-60* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 57. See also John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 189-97 and Stephen Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race: Constructing Gender, Class, and Englishness in the Elementary School, 1880-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

³⁴ See, for instance, D. A. Lawr and R. D. Gidney, “Who Ran the Schools?: Local Influence on Education Policy in Nineteenth-century Ontario,” *Ontario History*, 72, 3 (September 1980), 132.

³⁵ Conzen, “Mainstream and Side Channels,” 11.

³⁶ *Ibid.* and Kathleen Neils Conzen, *Making Their Own America: Assimilation Theory and the German Peasant Pioneer* (New York: Berg, 1990), 9. For the classic formulation of the concept of ethnic group boundaries see Fredrik Barth, “Introduction,” in Fredrik Barth ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference* (London: Little, Brown & Co., 1969), 9-38. Two outstanding studies which have used the concept of ethnic boundaries to great effects are Gerber, *An American Pluralism* and Royden K. Loewen, *Family, Church and Market: A Mennonite Community in the Old and the New Worlds, 1850-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

“ ‘cultural turn’ so evident in many other areas of our discipline”, she suggests to explore the “full process of cultural construction.”³⁷ Emphatically, Conzen rejects notions of culture as a primordial, essentialized, or homogenized “baggage” which migrants carried with them from the Old World. Instead, she understands culture “in a Geertzian sense as the socially produced structures of meanings engendered by and expressed in public behaviors, languages, images, institutions”.³⁸ At the heart of this study, then, lies the construction of meanings and mentalities – in short, the world-views through which German migrants experienced life.

My work has been equally influenced by literary and cultural studies, a body of work that has “made but a small impression on immigration historiography proper.”³⁹ While it has been customary to concentrate on questions of class, gender, religion, urbanization, community formation, and social mobility, this study is more concerned with the “cultural production of narratives and representations,” an approach exemplified in Matthew Frye Jacobson’s innovative work on the “diasporic imagination.”⁴⁰ To unravel meanings of German festivity and schooling, I have turned, in somewhat eclectic fashion, to the fields of ethno-musicology, linguistics, philosophy, nationalism, educational history, cultural studies, communication, and migration history.

It is, finally, the question of interaction that informs the present work.⁴¹ Just as a German public was forged in opposition to ‘other’ publics, so, too, was it created out of the exchange across

³⁷ Conzen, “Mainstream and Side Channels,” 9. For a discussion of the “cultural turn” see Lynn Hunt, “Introduction: History, Culture, and Text,” in Lynn Hunt ed., *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 1-22.

³⁸ Conzen, “Mainstream and Side Channels,” 12.

³⁹ Jacobsen, *Special Sorrows*, 6. Cultural studies of migration have been more prominent in the United States where they have resulted in such original and sophisticated works as Jacobsen’s *Special Sorrows* and April R. Schultz’s *Ethnicity on Parade: Inventing the Norwegian American Through Celebration* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994). Canadian scholarship, by contrast, has been written mainly from the vantage point of social history. See, for instance, the recent anthology, Franca Iacovetta ed., *A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s-1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

⁴⁰ Jacobsen, *Special Sorrows*, 7.

⁴¹ David Gerber, *An American Pluralism* and Dirk Hoerder, *Creating Societies: Immigrant Lives in Canada* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1999).

borders. In 1940, Marcus Lee Hansen's pioneering work *The Mingling of the Canadian and American Peoples* called attention to "perhaps the largest single reciprocity in international migration in history."⁴² Yet accustomed to study ethnicization (the process of ethnic group formation) within national contexts, scholars of migration have tended to eschew cross-national perspectives.⁴³ By examining the ways in which a 'German' public intersected with the 'Canadian' and 'American' publics, this thesis hopes to integrate the history of German migration "more centrally into the narrative flow of national history," to quote Kathleen Neils Conzen once more.⁴⁴

Why, out of all the possibilities, have I chosen to focus on Berlin and Buffalo? For one, these communities formed part of a larger, interacting region whose contemporaries themselves indulged in comparisons of 'Canadian' and 'American' identities.⁴⁵ Further, both communities shared in the discourse of a German public, albeit with a notable difference; while Berlin prided itself on being the "German capital of Canada", Buffalo found itself at the periphery of an emergent German America. In both Buffalo and Berlin, finally, a wealth of primary sources has allowed for the kind of "thick description" that is indispensable for a study of cultural narratives.⁴⁶

⁴² Marcus Lee Hansen, *The Mingling of the Canadian and American Peoples*, vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940), v.

⁴³ For notable exceptions see Bruno Ramirez, *On the Move: French-Canadian and Italian Migrants in the North Atlantic Economy, 1860-1914* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991); Loewen, *Family, Church and Market*; Randy William Widdis, *With Scarcely a Ripple: Anglo-Canadian Migration into the United States and Western Canada, 1880-1920* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998).

⁴⁴ Conzen, "Mainstream and Side Channels," 7.

⁴⁵ The idea of interacting regions is discussed in Celia Applegate, "A Europe of Regions: Reflections on the Historiography of Sub-National Places in Modern Times," *American Historical Review*, 104, 4 (October 1999), 1157-82. For the pleasures and pitfalls of cross-national history see Deborah Cohen, "Comparative History: Buyer Beware," *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute*, 29 (Fall 2001), 30; Donna R. Gabaccia, "Is Everywhere Nowhere?: Nomads, Nations, and the Immigrant Paradigm of United States History," *Journal of American History*, 86, 3 (December 1999), 1115-1134; George M. Fredrickson, "From Exceptionalism to Variability: Recent Developments in Cross-National Comparative History," *Journal of American History*, 82, 2 (September 1995), 587-604; Raymond Grey, "The Case for Comparing Histories," *American Historical Review*, 85, 4 (October 1980), 763-78.

⁴⁶ Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3-30.

Still, it is hard to imagine two historical settings that were more different. In the mid-1850s, when Berlin was but a tiny hamlet, Buffalo was the largest grain port in the world. Located at the terminus of the Erie Canal, “[t]hree-fourths of all grain and at least one-half of all rolling freight shipped in the United States in 1854 changed hands at Buffalo and went forward on the account of Buffalo commission and forwarding merchants.”⁴⁷ With regard to its ethnic composition, the city constituted “An American Pluralism”.⁴⁸ In 1865, German-origin migrants represented 45 per cent of the population, compared to Anglo Americans (20 per cent) and Irish Americans (18 per cent).⁴⁹ These figures, however, do not do justice to the regional diversity of Buffalo’s German population. In 1870, 22,250 (or 19 per cent) of the city’s residents had been born in Germany.⁵⁰ While migrants from Bavaria and the southwestern states of Württemberg and Baden made up the majority (46 per cent), they would soon be outnumbered by newcomers from Prussia and Mecklenburg (30 per cent) who began to wield their influence in the late 1870s. This regional split was reinforced by religious divisions between a predominantly Protestant north and an overwhelmingly Catholic south.⁵¹

No comparable statistics exist for Canada where the census lumped together migrants from various German states. Yet as we know from Hans Lehmann’s work, Waterloo County, and its county seat, Berlin, were home to several waves of migration.

⁴⁷ Gerber, *An American Pluralism*, 6. See also Mark Goldman, *High Hopes: The Rise and Decline of Buffalo, New York* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1983), 56-71.

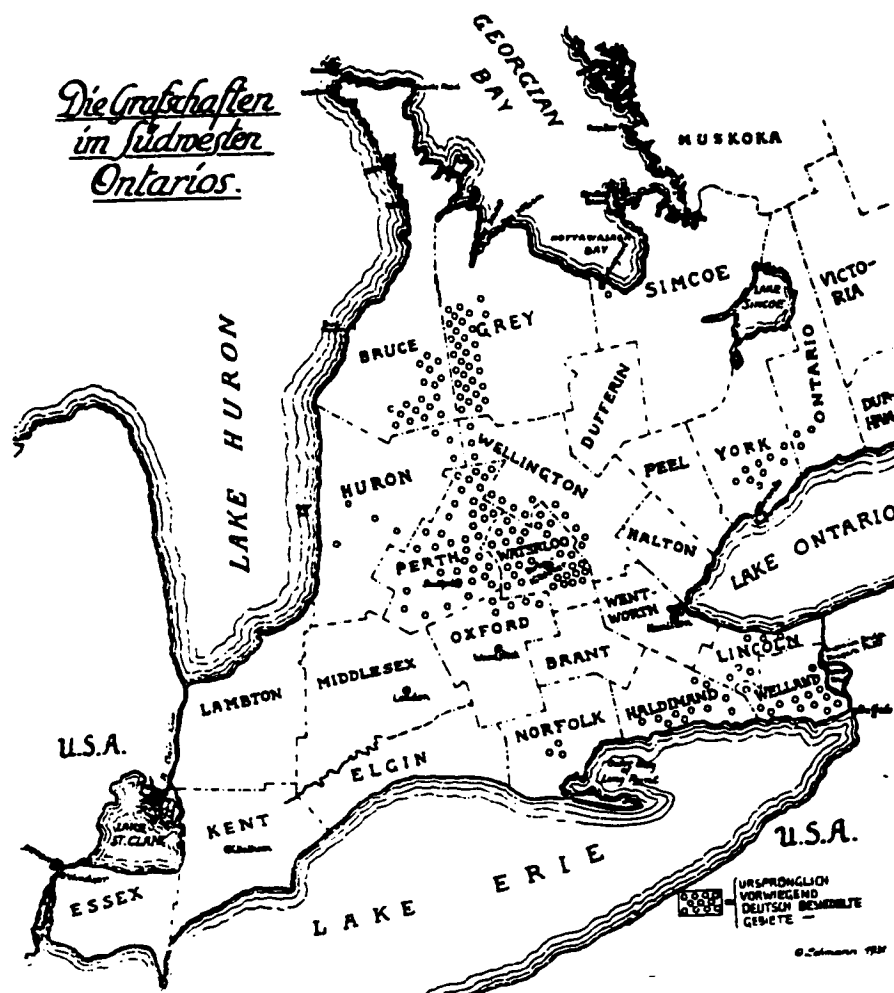
⁴⁸ See Gerber, *An American Pluralism*.

⁴⁹ These figures are estimates, based on the 1865 manuscript census schedules. As the U.S. census classified American residents according to birthplace, not ethnic origin, American-born children of German migrants were categorized as ‘Americans’, thus resulting in a massive undercalculation of the German population. Only by turning to the manuscript census is it possible to determine the approximate size of Buffalo’s “German village”. See Andrew P. Yox, “Decline of the German-American Community in Buffalo, 1855-1925,” Ph.D. History, University of Chicago, 385.

⁵⁰ *U.S. Census Reports*, 1871.

⁵¹ Yox, “Decline of the German-American Community,” 115 and 165-70.

Map 2: Areas of German Settlement in Southwestern Ontario



Source: Hans Lehmann, *The German Canadians, 1750-1937: Immigration, Settlement & Culture*, Translated, Edited & Introduced by Gerhard P. Bassler (St. John's, Newfoundland: Jespersion Press, 1986), 62.

Settled by Pennsylvania Mennonites in the early nineteenth century, the area later attracted migrants from continental Europe. Drawn to this centre of German language and culture, and swayed by the availability of land that was of a better quality than the newly opened American mid-west, Catholics from southwestern Germany and Alsace arrived in the 1820s, to work as day labourers on Mennonite farms until they could afford their own parcels of land. From the 1850s onwards, migrants from central and northern Germany constituted the largest group of

newcomers.⁵² With land becoming increasingly scarce by the mid-1850s, German migration spilled over into the adjacent counties of Perth and Huron; towards the north, into Grey and Bruce Counties, and into Renfrew County, in the Ottawa valley.⁵³

If Buffalo represented an “American pluralism”, Berlin’s local world was ‘German’, not ‘British’. In 1871, 73 per cent of Berlin’s 2,000 residents were of German origin; almost 30 per cent of the town’s population had been born in Germany. In the county at large, German migrants and their descendants dominated townships and villages, the sole exception being the ‘Scottish’ municipalities to the south.⁵⁴ Waterloo County thus presented the prime example of what Kathleen Neils Conzen has dubbed “the localization of an immigrant culture.”⁵⁵ Instead of assimilating into Canadian society (which, as Conzen quips, was “patently impossible when Germans made up the great majority of the county’s population”), they moulded “the institutions and culture of the local world itself.”⁵⁶ German culture, in other words, had become firmly embedded in the very structures of local community.

Despite their divergent trajectories, a German public emerged in both Buffalo and Berlin, as it did in North America. Evidently, the question remains how ‘German-American’ and ‘German-Canadian’ communities, separated by vast geographical distances and the international border, could construct a German identity in a North American context. The answer may be

⁵² Hans Lehmann, *The German Canadians, 1750-1937: Immigration, Settlement & Culture*. Translated, edited and introduced by Gerhard P. Bassler (St. John’s, Newfoundland: Jespersen Press, 1986), 66-79. See also W. H. Breithaupt, “The Settlement of Waterloo County,” *Ontario Historical Society: Papers and Records*, 22 (1925), 17; Theobald Spetz, *The Catholic Church in Waterloo County. Book 1: The Catholic Register and Extension* (1916), 50, 65, and 212-3; Elizabeth Bloomfield, “City-Building Processes in Berlin/Kitchener and Waterloo, 1870-1930,” Ph.D. thesis, University of Guelph, 1981, 42-50.

⁵³ Lehmann, *The German Canadians*, 71-3; Brenda Lee-Whiting, *Harvest of Stones: The German Settlement in Renfrew County* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

⁵⁴ *Census of Canada, 1871*. In 1871, 55 per cent of Waterloo County’s 40,252 residents were of German cultural origin.

⁵⁵ Conzen, “Mainstream and Side Channels,” 6.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

found in the German-language press that bridged not only the trans-Atlantic distance to Germany, but also connected German migrant communities across the continent. Both Waterloo County and Buffalo were home to a lively German newspaper scene that witnessed papers rising and falling in quick succession, and surviving competitors engaging in bitter feuds. In Waterloo County, no less than twelve newspapers were founded between 1835 and 1870, four of which were still in publication in 1871.⁵⁷ Published in the towns and villages of Berlin, Waterloo, New Hamburg, and Elmira, these journals constituted only a small segment of Ontario newspaper ventures; still, they represented the province's only foreign-language press.⁵⁸

Buffalo's German-language papers, by contrast, formed part of a greater journalistic landscape that was fundamentally altered by the arrival of the political refugees of the 1848/1849 European revolutions. The Forty-Eighters, as they became known, greatly increased the numbers of German-American newspapers and magazines, improved their quality and style, and shifted their political orientation to the left.⁵⁹ The range of political and religious affiliations, exhibited by German-language publications, was, in itself, indicative of the cultural diversity of German

⁵⁷ The four newspapers in question were the *Berliner Journal* (1859-1918), *Der Canadische Bauernfreund* (Waterloo Village, 1854-1909), *Das Canadische Volksblatt* (New Hamburg, 1859-1908), and the *Elmira Anzeiger* (1870-1882). Compiled from Herbert Karl Kalbfleisch, *The History of the Pioneer German Language Press of Ontario, 1835-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968) and Patricia McKegney, *The Kaiser's Bust: A Study of War-Time Propaganda in Berlin, Ontario, 1914-1918* (St. Jacobs, Ontario: St. Jacobs Printery Ltd., 1991), 10-11.

⁵⁸ Kalbfleisch, *The History of the Pioneer German Language Press of Ontario*, 17.

⁵⁹ Peterson, *Popular Narratives and Ethnic Identity*, 97 and Carl Wittke, *The German-language Press in America* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1973), 75. In later decades, German-language newspapers and journals flowered into the country's largest foreign-language press. Between 1880 and 1900, in the peak years of German immigration to the United States, two-thirds of all foreign-language newspapers in the country were printed in German. In 1890 alone, more than one thousand German papers were published, compared to only 278 other foreign-language publications. See Elliott Shore, Ken Fones-Wolf and James P. Danky, "Introduction," in Elliott Shore, Ken Fones-Wolf and James P. Danky eds., *The German-American Radical Press: The Shaping of a Left Political Culture, 1850-1940* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 3.

migrants. In 1871 Buffalo, four newspapers vied for the local readership: the Catholic *Aurora*; two Republican papers, the *Freie Presse* and the *Telegraph*, and the Buffalo *Demokrat*.⁶⁰

These German-language newspapers were instrumental in creating narratives of belonging that shaped their readers' sense of self.⁶¹ For one, the German-language press provided a space where migrants learned about the traditions, history, customs, and political landscape of the new societies in which they had made their home.⁶² Beyond their assimilative functions, however, these papers situated their readers into a discursive universe whose centre was the old world, not the new.⁶³ As Matthew Frey Jacobson has persuasively argued, the immigrant press "symbolically re-rooted the emigrant within a community and a tradition which the act of migration had disrupted ... by defining and addressing their readers as members of a cohesive diaspora community, evoking long, grand traditions and flattering notions of closeness."⁶⁴ By devoting front-page coverage to German events, by publishing long excerpts from German novels, and by extolling the virtues of German history, German-language papers in North America offered their readers membership in a German public whose reach extended far beyond the boundaries of the newly-created German nation-state.⁶⁵

This "imagined community" that derived its almost mythical appeal from Germany's unification in 1871 helped to forge a German public in the German-speaking communities that

⁶⁰ Karl J. R. Arndt and Mary E. Olson, *German-American Newspapers and Periodicals, 132-1955: History and Bibliography* (Heidelberg: Quelle und Meyer Publishers, 1961), 319-30. In 1865, the circulation figures of these papers were: *Aurora* (3,100); *Demokrat* (2,200); *Freie Presse* (500); and *Telegraph* (2,350). See Yox, "Decline of the German-American Community in Buffalo," 412.

⁶¹ Peterson, *Popular Narratives and Ethnic Identity*, 2.

⁶² Wittke, *The German-language Press in America*, 2-6 and Kalbfleisch, *The History of the Pioneer German Language Press of Ontario*, 108.

⁶³ Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, 62.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 58 and 56.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 62; Peterson, *Popular Narrative and Ethnic Identity*, 153-4; Kalbfleisch, *The History of the Pioneer German Language Press of Ontario*, 108.

dotted the continent.⁶⁶ Here, again, the interplay between unity and diversity was more complex than has previously been acknowledged. In his stimulating study *The Making of American Nationalism*, David Waldstreicher has located the emergence of “a national popular political culture” in the printed accounts of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries American parades.⁶⁷ It was the press, he argues, that mediated the relationship “between local street theater and the nation.”⁶⁸ Printed accounts of nationalist rituals in one community inspired national celebrations in others, which, in turn, were presented to a national audience through the medium of print. This “reciprocal dynamic of celebrations and print,” Waldstreicher writes, “foster[ed] an idea of the nation as extralocal community and ... [gave] ordinary people the opportunity for local expression of national feeling.”⁶⁹ As we shall see, ‘conversations’ in German-language newspapers similarly allowed for ‘local’ expressions of ‘national’ feeling.

We are now left to return to the story of Louis Breithaupt which, in many ways, encapsulates the changing nature of Berlin’s *Deutschthum*.⁷⁰ For the young Louis, ‘German-ness’ had been a way of life which he recorded with boyish exuberance.⁷¹ Although the teenager kept his diary in English, this language seemed to be strangely inadequate in times of despair; when his father died prematurely, on July 3, 1880, Louis captured his anguish in German. For the thirty-three year old mayor, then, German-ness represented a badge of honour. At a time when the cult of the British Empire was sweeping through Ontario, Mayor Breithaupt requested “the closing of

⁶⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, New York: Verso, 1991 [1983]).

⁶⁷ Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, 12.

⁶⁸ David Waldstreicher, “Rites of Rebellion, Rites of Assent: Celebrations, Print Culture, and the Origins of American Nationalism,” *Journal of American History*, 82, 1 (June 1995), 37.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁷⁰ If, at times, this introduction has used the terms ‘identity’ and ‘public’ interchangeably, it was an ambiguity reflected in the parlance of the day. The idea of *Deutschthum*, which we will encounter repeatedly in the following chapters, referred to both a sense of identity (‘German-ness’) and a unified German public (‘Germandom’).

⁷¹ “Diaries of Louis Jacob Breithaupt”, December 24, 1867 and February 3, 1868. The language of diary entries in the first years was German.

places of business from 10 to 12 a.m. tomorrow to enable citizens to attend Divine Services in honor of the late beloved German Kaiser.”⁷² Only upon visits to Germany in 1896 and 1909 did Louis Breithaupt self-consciously embrace his ‘Canadian-ness’. “The true spirit of religion seems to be missing,” he noted after attending church in Allendorf, Germany in August 1896.⁷³ Business in Germany was “slow” compared to the ‘English’ style; indeed, “[w]e feel that Canada is good enough.”⁷⁴ At the turn of the century, he still embraced “the splendid monument of Kaiser Wilhelm I [that] was erected by the Germans of Berlin & Canada in Victoria Park” and lent his time and energy to the local German School Association as whose president he served.⁷⁵ But already, his children spoke English amongst themselves, which, in fact, had become the language of family correspondence.⁷⁶

Rare as these personal glimpses into language and identity are, they poignantly illustrate that ‘German’ meant different things at different times. Its meanings encompassed a means of oral communication, a language of emotion, a symbol of pride, a linguistic barrier between English-speaking children and their German-speaking parents. In fact, captured in the pages of Louis’ diary is a shift from behavioural ethnic identity to symbolic ethnicity. It was a shift mirrored in the history of the German public itself.

⁷² *Ibid.*, March 14, 1888. References to the German royal family are interspersed in Breithaupt’s diary throughout the 1880s and 1890s. See, for instance, April 30, 1888; June 15, 1888; June 16, 1888; January 28, 1889; September 9, 1893; January 29, 1894; October 31, 1898; January 27, 1899; March 5, 1902.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, August 16, 1896.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, August 28, 1896 and September 17, 1909.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, August 13, 1897. See also August 14, 1897: “The Kaiser Monument cost about \$ 1,200. – It is a striking ornament to our fine new Park. It will perpetuate the German spirit of the Town – or at least is intended to do so. It has created great enthusiasm among the Germans including ‘Yours truly’.”

⁷⁶ *University of Waterloo*, Doris Lewis Rare Book Room, Breithaupt Hewetson Clark Collection, Box # 8, “Catherine Olive, née Breithaupt (1896-1977), Letter by Louis Breithaupt, September 3, 1913.

Part I

Territories of Translation

Chapter I

“Where’er Resounds the German Tongue”: Language and Identity in the Popular Press, 1860-1914

In the morning of September 17, 1879, Berlin eagerly awaited a vice-regal visitor, Canada’s Governor General, the Marquis of Lorne and his wife, the Princess Louise. When Lorne stepped onto the platform of Berlin’s train station which had been lavishly decorated for the occasion, he captured his audience’s attention by reciting a speech in the German language:

Though you receive us in so loyal a manner, and show your esteem for the Queen, you yet remain good Germans, and are proud that you can instruct your children and grandchildren in the powerful mother tongue. The love of the old Fatherland should never become extinct. It does not prevent you from making use of the English language, which is to a large extent derived from the German.

The beautiful words penned by the poet Arndt are no doubt familiar to you all and here, where you have made another land your home, we may make use of them:

“What is the German’s fatherland?
Is it Prussia’s land?
Is it Swabia’s land?
Is it on the Rhine where the vine blooms?
Is it on the Belt where the seagull moves?
Oh no! no! no!
His Fatherland greater must be!”

Can we not give these words a broader meaning? Couldn’t you, as fellow citizens and founders of a new nation, guide and strengthen it with all that is noble from the old land? ¹

¹ Quoted in the *Berliner Journal* [hereafter *BJ*], September 18, 1879, 2: “Obgleich Sie uns in so treuer Weise empfangen, und der Königin Ihre Ehrerbietung beweisen, bleiben Sie dennoch gute Deutsche, und sind darauf stolz, daß Sie Ihre Kinder und Kindeskinde in der kräftigen Muttersprache erziehen können. Die Liebe für das alte, deutsche Vaterland sollte nie aussterben; sie verhindert nicht, daß Sie auch die englische Sprache benutzen, die so viel aus der deutschen herammt. Die schönen Worte, die der Poet Arndt geschrieben hat, müssen Sie alle wohl kennen, und wir können sie hier, wo Sie ein anderes Land zu Ihrem Land gemacht haben wohl gebrauchen: “Was ist des Deutschen Vaterland? Ist’s Preußenland? Ist’s Schwabenland? Ist’s wo am Rhein die Rebe blüht? Ist’s wo am Belt die Möve zieht? Doch Nein! Nein! Nein! Sein Vaterland muß größer sein!” Kann man nicht hier diesen Worten eine weitere Deutung geben? –

Lorne's words elicited enthusiastic cheers from the crowds. In his meticulous handwriting, the town council clerk recorded them for posterity, only to add that "many favourable comments" were heard regarding Lorne's German pronunciation.²

In singing the praise of German migrants, the Governor General revealed just how closely language had become associated with identity. For one, Lorne identified language as a marker of cultural identity. German-origin migrants, he implied, were united in the use of their 'powerful mother tongue'. Then, he proceeded to establish a link between language and nationality; for although Lorne did not recite Ernst Moritz Arndt's poem "What is the German's Fatherland?" (1813) in its entirety, the familiar lines must have echoed in the minds of his audience: "Where'er resounds the German tongue, Where'er its hymns to God are sung, That it shall be, That, valiant German, call your own."³ Written under French occupation, Arndt's poem had called for a 'Fatherland' greater than the German regions, a German homeland formed out of the lands where German was spoken, a German nation united by the bonds of a common language.⁴ It was this "imagined community," defined by the boundaries of language, that Lorne singled out as the central criterion of German nationality.⁵ Finally, as the Governor General suggested, membership in a German *cultural* community was eminently compatible with belonging to the Canadian polity. The fondness that German migrants expressed for their mother tongue, he said, did in no way preclude

Können Sie nicht als Mitbürger und Gründer einer neuen Nation, diese mit allem Edlen, was von dem alten Land kommt, lenken und stärken?"

² *City of Kitchener*, Berlin Town Council Minutes, October 13, 1879.

³ "So weit die deutsche Zunge klingt, Und Gott im Himmel Lieder singt, Das soll es sein! Das, wackrer Deutscher, nenne Dein," quoted in Hans Kohn, *Prelude to Nation-States: The French and German Experience, 1789-1815* (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1967), 258.

⁴ For a discussion of the political context of German nation-building in the early nineteenth century, one may usefully turn to James J. Sheehan, "What is German History?: Reflections on the Role of the Nation in German History and Historiography," *Journal of Modern History*, 53 (March 1981), 1-23 and Thomas Nipperdey's masterful synthesis *Deutsche Geschichte, 1860-1866: Bürgerwelt und starker Staat* (München: C. H. Beck, 1998, [1983]).

⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, New York: Verso, 1991 [1983]).

them from being loyal subjects and good Canadian citizens. On the contrary, the qualities which the ‘good Germans’ brought to Canada’s shores made them uniquely qualified to join in the grand task of nation-building. Influenced, perhaps, by Victorian writers and historians who had celebrated ‘Germanic’ contributions to “world history, and ... the welfare of mankind,” the Marquis of Lorne did not hesitate to bestow on his delighted audience the honour of ‘fellow-citizens and founders of a new nation,’ thus according them a place at the very centre of the nation.⁶

It is the relationship between language and identity, which Lorne so powerfully conjured, that lies at the heart of this chapter. In singling out language as the pillar upon which German identity rested, Lorne’s speech held special meaning for German migrants who saw in language a tangible connection with their German heritage – or so the debates in the *Berliner Journal*, Canada’s foremost German-language weekly, have us believe. Between 1860 and 1914, the *Journal* published a variety of ‘language lessons’ that were aimed at generating pride in the mother tongue and stemming a language shift to English. These lessons took the form of linguistic treatises, poems, editorials, glosses, language statistics, letters to the editor, three series of articles, as well as detailed recommendations on how to prevent the dreaded ‘language loss’ in both family and community.

If newspapers have “their own map of the world”, as Paul Rutherford has suggested, this world spanned both Germany and North America for the readers of the *Berliner Journal*.⁷ Not only did the *Journal* reprint the bulk of its European news verbatim from German sources, it also filled its pages with material taken from German-American ‘exchange papers’, the so-called *Wechselblätter*. Almost half of the articles dealing with language issues were reprinted from

⁶ Maïke Oergel, “The redeeming Teuton: Nineteenth-century notions of the ‘Germanic’ in England and Germany,” in Geoffrey Cubitt ed., *Imagining Nations* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998), 78 and 85.

⁷ Paul Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority: The Daily Press in Late Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 134.

German-language papers south of the border.⁸ In borrowing liberally from their German-American colleagues, the editors of the *Berliner Journal* presented their readers with a fare that originated from German-language communities in New York State, Maryland, Ohio, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Missouri, Kentucky, Indiana, Texas and Iowa. The resulting composite strongly suggests that debates on the role and function of the German language bore a striking similarity in both Canada and the United States.

We cannot assume that the editorial choices made by a German-Canadian paper reflect the full range of opinion expressed in the German-American press. Rather, the 'language lessons' published in the *Berliner Journal* provide a privileged, if selective, glimpse of debates on language, community, and identity that resonated far beyond Waterloo County. A second note of caution is in order as well. The poems, editorials, and articles which found their way into the pages of the *Journal* presented the product of ethnic spokesmen who were hardly representative of the mass of German migrants in North America. Further, a cynical observer might hold that the *Journal's* editors, John Motz and Friedrich Rittinger, promoted the German language for purely selfish reasons. Without new generations of loyal subscribers, capable of reading German and deciphering the Gothic typeface, the *Journal* would ultimately cease to exist.⁹ Still, the popularity of a newspaper clearly presents a yardstick of its ability to connect with its readers.¹⁰

⁸ For a discussion of the so-called *Wechselblätter* in both a Canadian and American context see Herbert Karl Kalbfleisch, *The History of the Pioneer German Language Press of Ontario, 1835-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), 28-9 and 50 and Brent O. Peterson, *Popular Narratives and Ethnic Identity: Literature and Community in Die Abendschule* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 153-4.

⁹ Kalbfleisch, *The History of the Pioneer German Language Press of Ontario*, 109. For an American context see Carl Wittke, *The German-Language Press in America* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1973 [1957]), 2.

¹⁰ In this context see also Kirsten Belgum, "A Nation for the Masses: Production of German Identity in the Late-Nineteenth-Century Popular Press," in Scott Denham, Irene Kascandes, and Jonathan Petropoulos eds., *A User's Guide to German Cultural Studies* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 164 and Helen Damon-Moore, *Magazines for the Millions: Gender and Commerce in the Ladies' Home Journal and the Saturday Evening Post, 1880-1910* (Albany: State University Press, 1994), 3.

In the case of the *Berliner Journal*, its fifty-nine years of continuous publication not only make it an ideal vehicle for a longitudinal study, they also suggest that it furnished its readers with identities that were, by and large, regarded as acceptable.¹¹

As we shall see, the *Journal's* musings on language encompassed a wide variety of themes: they drew on the works of German philosophers like Johann Gottfried Herder and Johann Gottlieb Fichte, they documented language shifts in the social settings of family and community, and they carved out the contours of a collective 'German' identity. Accordingly, this chapter proposes to delve into the philosophical treatises of Herder and Fichte, to examine language use in the private realm of home and family, and to capture the drama of language change that captivated contemporary observers. What can we learn about the 'character' of the German language? How can we best describe the complex set of relationships that tied together language and identity? How, finally, did representations of language change over time? Answers to these questions can be gleaned from the pages of the *Berliner Journal* to which we now turn.

The Philosophy of Language

Echoes of the writings of Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803), the influential German philosopher, reverberated in the *Berliner Journal* throughout the nineteenth century. In 1772, Herder had published his first major philosophical work, the *Treatise upon the Origin of Language*, for which he had been awarded the coveted prize of the Berlin Academy of Science

¹¹ Issued on December 29, 1859, the first number of the *Berliner Journal* was not much to look at. It consisted of four pages, 26.5 inches high and 20 inches wide, with six columns of small and fuzzy print. Expanding to eight pages in January 1881, its size shrank to 21.5 inches high and 20 inches wide. As a result of amalgamations with the *Ontario Glocke* of Walkerton (1904) and the *Canadischer Bauernfreund* of Waterloo (1909), the number of pages was later increased to twelve and sixteen respectively. In the first three decades of publication, the number of subscribers grew steadily, from 1,000 in 1863 to 2,000 in 1893. Thereafter, the editors no longer gave circulation figures, claiming instead to have the largest number of readers among Canada's German-language press. See Kalbfleisch, *The History of the Pioneer German Language Press of Ontario*, 87.

two years earlier.¹² In it, Herder rejected prevailing views of language as the creation of God or the product of human reason and suggested that human beings were “fundamentally social and linguistic beings”.¹³ In communicating with their fellows, they did not simply clothe pre-existing thoughts in language. Rather, language and thought were so intimately intertwined that language came to constitute human consciousness. It was through language that people made sense of the world around them. It was in language that they ordered their thoughts and expressed their views.¹⁴ As a result, language shaped its speakers as much as it was shaped by them:

The bonds of the tongue and the ear ties a public together; on this path we examine thoughts and advice, we seize resolutions and share with one another instruction, song, and joy. Whoever was educated in the same language, whoever poured his heart in it and learned to express his soul in it, he belongs to the *Volk* of this language.¹⁵

Herder posed that language existed at two levels. At an individual level, it was a shared social practice that fostered a sense of community amongst its speakers. At a collective level, it embodied a nation’s soul or character, a pattern of communal life deeply embedded in history and folk traditions.¹⁶ It followed that to forego one’s language was to lose one’s identity for language and collective consciousness were inseparably joined.¹⁷

It is interesting to note that Herder located the “nation’s soul” (*Volksgeist*) not in the “high” culture of the elites but in the multitude of folk traditions.¹⁸ For him, worship and poetry,

¹² John Edwards, *Language, Society, and Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 23.

¹³ Vicki Spencer, “Herder and Nationalism: Reclaiming the Principle of Cultural Respect,” *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 43, 1 (1997), 4; Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993 [1960]), 56.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 4-5; Vicki Spencer, “Towards an Ontology of Holistic Individualism: Herder’s Theory of Identity, Culture and Community,” *History of European Ideas*, 22, 2 (1996), 250.

¹⁵ Quoted in Spencer, “Herder and Nationalism,” 5.

¹⁶ Katherine Verdery, “Whither ‘Nation’ and ‘Nationalism’?,” in Gopal Balakrishnan ed., *Mapping the Nation* (London, New York: Verso, 1996), 229; Spencer, “Towards an Ontology of Holistic Individualism,” 250.

¹⁷ F. W. Barnard, *Herder’s Social and Political Thought: From Enlightenment to Nationalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 57.

¹⁸ Nipperdey, *Bürgerwelt und starker Staat*, 301.

dances and hunts, rituals and folk-songs, myths and memories all pointed to a distinctive way of life that distinguished one society from another.¹⁹ Far from being a random collection of traits, these behaviours and beliefs exhibited a coherent pattern.²⁰ As Anthony D. Smith so succinctly said, the *Volksgeist* was taken to weld “the parts of the nation into an organic ‘whole’, which turns an aggregate of individuals and elements into a unique seamless pattern on which the parts in turn depend for their life and form.”²¹ Still, even though Herder acknowledged the role of history, religion, customs, traditions, laws, and the natural environment, he regarded language as the broadest cultural expression of the *Volksgeist*.²² In linking ancestral language and national identity, he formulated a philosophy of linguistic nationalism that was readily adopted by national movements across Europe.²³

In fact, so widely were Herder’s views on language disseminated that they became part of the popular consciousness.²⁴ As such, it is hardly surprising that they found their way into the pages of the *Berliner Journal*. In a lengthy treatise on “The German Language”, published in May 1865, the author Professor J. W. Revin described language as the key to a nation’s soul, using words that seemed to be heaved directly from Herder’s writings.

¹⁹ Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas* (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), 165; Spencer, “Herder and Nationalism,” 4.

²⁰ Raymond Geuss, “Kultur, Bildung, Geist,” *History and Theory*, 35, 2 (1996), 155. As Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny have pointed out, Herder’s thinking on cultural patterns closely corresponds to more recent anthropological concepts of culture. What Herder called *Volksgeist*, contemporary scholars might call a “‘syntax’ of everyday life”. See Ronald Grigor Suny and Geoff Eley, “Introduction: From the Moment of Social History to the Work of Cultural Representation,” in Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny eds., *Becoming National: A Reader* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 20. See also Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society* (London: Fortuna Press, 1988 [1976]), 89.

²¹ Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1983 [1971]), 16.

²² Spencer, “Herder and Nationalism,” 5-6; Berlin, *Vico and Herder*, 195.

²³ Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programmes, Myths, Reality* (Cambridge: Cantor, 1991 [1990]), 80-130.

²⁴ Barnard, *Herder’s Social and Political Thought*, 154-177; Robert Reinhold Ergang, *Herder and the Foundations of German Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University, 1931), 103.

As we have seen, each language presents a portal to a new sphere of human existence, to a world of *Geist* and life that is unmistakably its own. To acquire a knowledge of a language is as if one travelled into a foreign climate, or followed the torch of history into times long past ... Similarly, the German language presents the only key to the German *Geist*. To study it means to travel to Germany itself and will grant insights into the historical, social, moral and political *Geist* of the country that could be gained in no other way ... The *Geist* of Germany has systematic patterns that correspond in every respect to the language in which it is reflected and expressed. Like the language, it is original, strong, great and free; imbued with life, sentimental, serious and deep; ingenious in heart and soul; the true home of poetry and philosophy in their most spiritual and learned forms.²⁵

To be sure, rarely were writings on language as theoretical as this contribution. More commonly, articles simply pointed to the intimate relationship between language and community.

Celebrations of language as “the very soul of a nation” or “the first and firmest bond of national cohesion” typically added the warning that an ethnic group would dissolve once it traded its own language for another: “The language of a people is not an indifferent piece of clothing ... and, by disposing it, one runs the risk of losing the very best of this nation’s way of being without necessarily absorbing the values of the people whose language one is adopting.”²⁶ Clearly, where Herder had been concerned about the use of French by the German nobility and the use of Latin in

²⁵ *BJ*, March 3, 1865, 1: “Jede Sprache, wie wir schon gesehen haben, eröffnet uns eine neue Sphäre des menschlichen Daseins, eine Welt von Geist und Leben, welche nur sich selbst angehört. Wird man auf dem Wege der Erkenntnis in dieselbe eingeführt, so ist es ähnlich, als reise man in eine fremdes Klima, oder folge der Fackel der Geschichte in vergangene Zeiten ... So auch ist die deutsche Sprache der einzige Schlüssel zu dem deutschen Geist. Dieselbe zu studieren heißt in Deutschland selbst reisen, und man wird dadurch mit dem historischen, sozialen, moralischen und politischen Geist des Landes so bekannt, wie es durch irgend ein anderes Studium gar nicht möglich ist ... Der Geist Deutschlands hat systematische Daseins-Formen, in jeder Beziehung entsprechend der Sprache, in welcher er sich spiegelt und ausdrückt. Gleich dieser ist er originell, stark, groß und frei; bewegt von Leben, innerlich, ernst und tief; genial von Herz und Seele; die wahre Herberge von Poesie und Philosophie in ihrer geistigsten Form.”

²⁶ *BJ*, June 10, 1886, 8: “Die Sprache eines Volkes ist kein indifferentes Kleidungsstück, sie ist die eigentliche Seele eines Volkes, ist mit dessen Charakter eng verwoben, und mit ihrer Entledigung läuft man Gefahr, das Beste von dem, was das eigentliche Wesen dieses Volkes ausmacht, einzubüßen, ohne das Gute, des andern Volkes, dessen Sprache man annimmt, in sich aufzunehmen.”; *BJ*, October 27, 1870, 4: “die gemeinsame Sprache [ist] das erste und festeste Band, das die Völker zusammenhält, und daß, wo dieses fehlt oder gelockert wird, auch bald das Zusammenhalten aufhört.”

public affairs, German spokesmen in North America worried about a large-scale language shift to English.²⁷ Contemplating this possibility, their appeals became more urgent as the century drew to a close. Instead of sustaining community, language now was expected to create it, namely by welding a diversity of migrants from Swabia, Bavaria, Saxony, Westphalia, the Rhineland, Switzerland, and Austria into “Germans as Germans”.²⁸ United in language, it was hoped, “Germans” would find the strength to resist assimilative pressures.

This linguistic community was not seen merely as a community in the present; it also represented a community in the past and a community in the future.²⁹ This is vividly illustrated in a poem by the German-American poet L. Castelhouen that was published in the *Journal* in May 1895.

Tend the German language, tend the German word,
For the fathers' spirit, in them, lives on,
That gave so much great the world as a present,
That planted so much beauty right into her heart.

What a Lessing thought, what a Goethe sang,
Will forever retain its beautiful sound.
And if I think of Schiller my heart is set aglow,
Schiller to forget the world cannot allow.

Precious, my children, for us this land shall be.
Yet the ties of language link us with Germany.
Preserve the homeland's soil, Preserve it for your grace,
That the grandchildren, still, may share in it.³⁰

²⁷ Spencer, “Herder and Nationalism,” 6 and 8.

²⁸ *BJ*, March 15, 1888, 6 and *BJ*, August 21, 1890, 3.

²⁹ Etienne Balibar, “The Nation Form: History and Ideology,” in Eley and Suny eds., *Becoming National*, 141.

³⁰ *BJ*, May 28, 1895, 6: “Pflegt die deutsche Sprache / Hegt das deutsche Wort / Denn der Geist der Väter / Lebt darinnen fort. / Der so viel des Großen / Schon der Welt geschenkt / Der so viel des Schönen / Ihr in's Herz gesenkt.

Was ein Lessing dachte / Was ein Goethe sang / Ewig wird's behalten / Seinen guten Klang / Und gedenk' ich Schiller's / Wird das Herz mir warm: / Schiller zu ersetzen / Ist die Welt zu arm!

Theuer, meine Kinder / Sei uns dieses Land / Doch an Deutschland knüpft / Uns der Sprache Band. / Wahr der Heimath Erde / Wahr es Euch zum Heil: / Noch den Enkelkindern / Werd' es ganz zu Theil.”

While the literal translation cannot hope to reflect either the sound or the rhythm of the German original, the poem's message rings loud and clear. Language provides an intimate bond to past and present members of the community. It links us to the past by revealing the thoughts and feelings of our forebearers. It links us to the future by reaching out to our children and grandchildren who can share in our experiences through the medium of language.³¹ In addition, language serves as a storehouse for a nation's most valuable possessions, the work of its poets, philosophers, and visionaries. Obviously, the past captured in the poem's lines is heavily idealized. Yet even as a symbolic "repository of the national culture", to use a phrase coined by John Breuilly, language seemed to present a tangible connection with a collective heritage.³²

This heritage not only encompassed the soaring ideas of the nation's finest minds but also a more humble element; it was on the homeland's soil (*Heimath Erde*) that the German language had been nurtured. From the early nineteenth century on, *Heimat* had conveyed a strong sense of place, defined by the linguists Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm as "the country or the region in which one was born or permanently resides."³³ In subsequent decades, however, *Heimat* was endowed with a multitude of meanings that are only poorly reflected in English translation "homeland". *Heimat* came to represent a sense of place and belonging; an idyll of local communities; the enchanted world of childhood; a symbol of unity, coziness, and togetherness; notions of landscape, nature, and folk customs; and an integrative symbol of the nation.³⁴ While we can only

³¹ This discussion has been informed by Barnard, *Herder's Social and Political Thought*, 57; Spencer, "Herder and Nationalism," 5; Spencer, "Towards an Ontology of Holistic Individualism," 253.

³² John Breuilly, "Approaches to Nationalism," in Gopal Balakrishnan ed., *Mapping the Nation* (London, New York: Versos, 1996), 152; Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, 292.

³³ Quoted in Tedd Rippley, Melissa Sundell, and Suzanne Townley, "'Ein wunderbares Heute': The Evolution and Functionalization of 'Heimat' in West German *Heimat* Films of the 1950s," in Jost Hermand and James Steakley eds., *Heimat, Nation, Fatherland: The German Sense of Belonging* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 138.

³⁴ For various attempts to define *Heimat* see Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 3-4, 8-9, 240 and Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National*

speculate what *Heimat* might have meant for the readers of the *Berliner Journal*, its strong spatial connotation undoubtedly helped to transform language into a bridge across space.

Even though it is true that Herder saw the world divided into nations, based on cultural and linguistic diversity, the philosopher offered no rationale for a hierarchy of nations. In principle at least, each nation was held to be of equal value, contributing its own unique way of being to the greater development of humanity.³⁵ Similarly, while articles in the *Berliner Journal* tended to emphasize the greatness of the German mother tongue, they did not necessarily proceed to question the intrinsic value of other languages. "Each nation sharply imprints its character on its language ... This national character of languages should be held in the highest esteem," one author wrote in December 1869.³⁶ Alas, in other contributions, the principles of cultural diversity and respect came to be supplanted by claims of national superiority. "No nation in the world compares to the German one," a resident of Berlin (Ontario) wrote in June 1861.³⁷ Even earlier, in August 1860, one article had contrasted the pleasant and *heimathlich[en]* sound of the German language with the "cold, stifled, and superficial" character of the English one.³⁸ Here, the 'other' language served as a backdrop against which the virtues of German tongue shone all the brighter.³⁹

How could the alleged superiority of the German language be justified? The answer was quite simple, Professor Revin wrote in 1865. The German nation alone had conserved its primary language (*Ursprache*) and, throughout its history, resisted any attempts to adopt foreign elements

Memory, 1871-1918 (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 159, 170, 172, and 184.

³⁵ Ergang, *Herder and the Foundations of German Nationalism*, 99; Berlin, *Vico and Herder*, 182; Kedourie, *Nationalism*, 58; Geuss, "Kultur, Bildung, Geist," 155.

³⁶ *BJ*, December 23, 1869, 3: "Jede Nation prägt ihrer Sprache auf das Schärfste ihren Charakter ab ... Dieses Nationale der Sprachen mag hoch in Ehren gehalten werden."

³⁷ *BJ*, June 3, 1861, 2.

³⁸ *BJ*, August 2, 1860, 2.

³⁹ In this context see also Dieter Düding, *Organisierter gesellschaftlicher Nationalismus in Deutschland (1808-1847): Bedeutung und Funktion der Turner und Sängervereine für die deutsche Nationalbewegung* (München: R. Oldenburg Verlag, 1984), 28.

into its speech. Like the free and brave tribe from whom they descended, Germans had refused “to bend under the yoke of a foreign power”. By contrast, the French language – alongside Romance languages such as Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese – was a composite that had incorporated Latin into its speech patterns and, thus, severed the linguistic connection to the *Volksgeist*. As a result of its bastardized language, the French nation was stagnating and poor, inferior in all accounts, whereas the German nation was “original, full of life, deep, introvert, strong and free”, constantly invigorated by the national spirit that flowed freely through the *Ursprache*.⁴⁰

Again, Professor Revin could not claim intellectual ownership for his learned treatise. Where he had liberally borrowed from Herder before, he now drew upon the work of Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814). Between December 1807 and March 1808, the German philosopher had delivered his *Addresses to the German Nation* under the dome-shaped roof of the auditorium at the Berlin Academy (Germany).⁴¹ Given the political situation in French-occupied Berlin, Fichte had to advance his theory of the German *Ursprache* and the inferior character of the “neo-Latin” languages with some circumspection: “The difference ... consists in this, that the German speaks a language which has been alive ever since it first issued from the force of nature, whereas the other Teutonic races speak a language which has movement on the surface only but is dead at the root.”⁴² As John Edwards has pointed out, “from a linguistic standpoint this sentiment is absurd.”⁴³ Similarly, Fichte’s ardent denial that the French language had undergone any meaningful development since the early Middle Ages was “rather ludicrous”, as Maïke Oergel has noted.⁴⁴ Even more importantly, however, in praising the German language and deprecating

⁴⁰ *BJ*, March 23, 1865, 1; *BJ*, March 30, 1865, 1.

⁴¹ For a summary of Fichte’s addresses see Kedourie, *Nationalism*, 58-62 and Düring, *Organisierter gesellschaftlicher Nationalismus*, 24-6;

⁴² Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1979 [1922]), 68-9. See also Geuss, “Kultur, Bildung, Geist,” 156.

⁴³ Edwards, *Language, Society, and Identity*, 14.

⁴⁴ Even though Fichte’s *Addresses* have often been relegated “to the contemptible nether regions of partisan nationalist propaganda”, we should keep in mind that Fichte’s inflamed rhetoric

others, Fichte's *Addresses* left no room for Herder's cosmopolitan assertion that the world was a garden that could contain many flowers.⁴⁵

It is hardly surprising that references to the French language soon faded from the pages of the *Berliner Journal*. After all, it was the English language that German migrants daily encountered in schools, business affairs, the courts, the press and, increasingly, in their associations and even families. The English language, Professor Revin admitted freely, had been derived from the Saxon one and was most powerful when it paid tribute to its Germanic roots that led "us back to the source of our own historical being, to the cradle of our original life."⁴⁶ In later years, authors no longer displayed such easy confidence that held the German tongue *superior* to all others. Instead, they now sought to establish the German language as being *equal* to the English.

In a contribution, revealingly entitled "German and English", the *Weltbote* of Allentown (Pennsylvania) suggested that "German and English, English and German, these Germanic sisters rule the world."⁴⁷ Published in December 1869, the article amounted to nothing less than a celebration of the triumphal march of the German and English languages around the globe. While the German language remained "the guardian and prophet of science, the more abstract arts", the English language "spread its wings, like a young eagle, flying victoriously across whole continents".⁴⁸ Shaped by the forces of industrial life, English was a symbol of modernity, its

contrasted markedly with Germany's lamentable political state in the early nineteenth century. There existed no political or constitutional unity; Napoleon's threat loomed large; the French dominance in cultural affairs lingered. See Oergel, "The redeeming Teuton," 80 and 86.

⁴⁵ Berlin, *Vico and Herder*, 183.

⁴⁶ *BJ*, March 30, 1865, 1: "unsere Gerichtbarkeit und commercielle Correspondenz [wird] englisch geführt ... und die englische Sprache [gilt] als die herrschende Landessprache ..."; "Es führt uns zurück an die Quelle unseres eigenen historischen Seins, wir können sagen, an die Wiege unseres ursprünglichen Lebens."

⁴⁷ *BJ*, December 23, 1869, 3: "Deutsch und Englisch, Englisch und Deutsch, diese germanischen Schwestern beherrschen den Erdball."

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*: "die englische Sprache (breitet) die Flügel aus wie ein junger Adler, der siegreich ganze Welttheile im Fluge durchmißt ... Indeß die deutsche Sprache die Siegelbewahrerin und Verkünderin der Forschungen, der mehr abstrakten Wissenschaften wurde ...".

sounds faintly echoing “the howling of steam engines and the deafening roar of the iron hammers; the rapidly rotating spindles of weaving machines.”⁴⁹ Here, language had been transformed into an historical actor in its own right, with a soul, a mission, and a will.⁵⁰ Following the script, written by the *Volksgeist*, this actor impersonated the perceived differences between the “German” and “American” national characters. While English reflected the energetic and confident nature of a young industrializing country, bustling with business transactions and technological innovations, German represented a people of poets, thinkers and dreamers and, consequently, was an artistic, rational, and rigorous language.⁵¹

Together, the author asserted, these two languages would shape the United States, each contributing its unique character to the higher good of the nation: “Just as the descendants of the Teutons and the Anglo-Americans have united here in one great people whose characters complement each other so, too, are their languages called upon to express the throbbing life, the thoughts, and the feelings of the great nation.”⁵² This line of reasoning did not amount to a general defence of ethnic diversity but, rather, sought to establish the special rights of German migrants whose language and culture distinguished them above all others.⁵³

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*: “Das Heulen der Dampfmaschine und das betäubende Geräusch der Eisenhämmer; die mit ungeheurer Schnelligkeit sich drehende Spindeln der Spinn- und Webmaschinen ...”.

⁵⁰ Verdery, “Whither ‘Nation’ and ‘Nationalism’?,” 229.

⁵¹ In this context see also Kathleen Neils Conzen, “German-Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity,” in Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh eds., *America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred Year History, vol. 1: Immigration, Language, and Ethnicity* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1985), 139.

⁵² *Ibid.*: “Wie die Abkömmlinge der Germanen und der Anglo-Amerikaner hier zu einem großen Volk sich einen und ihre Charaktere gegenseitig ergänzen, so haben auch die beiden sich verwandten Sprachen den Beruf, das pulsierende Leben, die Gedanken und Empfindungen der großen Nation auszusprechen.”

⁵³ It was, as historian Kathleen Neils Conzen has suggested for an American context, a “Germanocentric” argument: instead of assimilating into an “American” norm, however defined, German migrants were seen to occupy their rightful place as co-founders of the United States. See Conzen, “German-Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity,” 139.

In descending from the lofty heights of linguistic theory into the realm of everyday life, the author then extolled the practical benefits of knowing both English and German. As both languages were used on a regular basis and, thus, of equal importance, parents of German-language origin were ill-advised to neglect the German language in their children's upbringing. They would also be foolish to prevent their children from learning English. "German and English" should be the motto in both family and business circles, a fact that had wisely been acknowledged by many American families hiring German mentors for their offspring. Similarly, for industrialists, merchants, entrepreneurs, and white-collar workers, mastery of both German and English was imperative in order to navigate the web of trade relations between America, Germany, and England.⁵⁴

In his wishful account of a 'perfect' world where the equality of German and English was taken for granted, the author conveniently overlooked the fact that separate speech domains were emerging for each language. As early as in 1860, one commentator had acknowledged that the "language of our courts and commercial correspondence is English, and the English language is commonly accepted as the dominant tongue of this country." This pragmatic concession did not prevent him from encouraging parents to provide their children with a bilingual education, both at home and at school: "Not only does it sharpen memory and mind, it is also advantageous for material reasons as many residents of this country are unfamiliar with the English language."⁵⁵ While readily conceding that a knowledge of English was indispensable to economic and social advancement, journalists implored their readers to preserve German as the language of hearth and

⁵⁴ *BJ*, December 23, 1869, 3.

⁵⁵ *BJ*, August 2, 1860, 4: "Es schärft nicht nur das Gedächtnis und das Urtheil, sondern ist auch in materieller Hinsicht nothwendig, da sehr viele Bewohner dieses Landes mit der englischen Sprache nicht vertraut sind."

home.⁵⁶ In making their case, they mounted an argument that was far more complex than the occasional nod to the mental and material benefits of bilingualism.⁵⁷

German in the Domestic Domain

When readers of the *Berliner Journal* were admonished for using English as the primary language of communication, they were, in fact, being accused of stepping across the boundary that separated ‘us’ from ‘them’. As one article in the *Journal* stated emphatically in 1861: “The German thinks, reads, speaks, and acts German; yet those who, since their youth, have grown accustomed to regarding English as the only language of school instruction – yes, as *the* language of knowledge and education – think, speak, and act English; indeed, they are English, even though they might be able to speak some German.”⁵⁸ Unfortunately, the author continued, thousands of German migrants in the United States were denying their language and customs: “As soon as they have sufficiently mastered the English language, they never want to speak a word in their mother tongue again, not even to fellow-Germans.”⁵⁹ In the eyes of this writer, migrants who failed to use the German language were not only negligent, their obvious disdain for their cultural heritage also marked them as deviant and, in any case, unworthy of membership in the ethnic community.

⁵⁶ *BJ*, February 2, 1875, 3; *BJ*, April 4, 1886, 3; *BJ*, April 5, 1888, 2; *BJ*, January 30, 1890, 3. In this context see also Carl Schurz, “Die deutsche Sprache in Amerika” (Reprinted from the ‘Festbericht der 50-Jahrfeier des ‘Deutschen Liederkranzes’ in New York, 1897), *German-Canadian Yearbook*, 1 (1973), 87-9 and Jürgen Eichhoff, “Deutsch als Siedlersprache in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika,” in Friedhelm Debus and Joachim Hartig eds., *Festschrift für Gerhard Cordes zum 65. Geburtstag* (Neumünster: Karl Wachholtz Verlag, 1976), 80.

⁵⁷ For assertions of the mental and material benefits of bilingualism see, among others, *BJ*, February 10, 1875, 3; *BJ*, February 4, 1886, 3; *BJ*, April 5, 1888, 2.

⁵⁸ *BJ*, June 13, 1861, 2: “Der Deutsche denkt, liest, spricht und handelt deutsch; wer aber von Jugend aus gewohnt ist, die englische Sprache als ausschliessliche Schulsprache, ja als die der Gebildeten zu betrachten, der denkt, liest, spricht und handelt englisch, ist mithin ein Engländer, wenn er auch etwas Deutsch sprechen kann.”

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*: “sobald sie nur einigermaßen der englischen Sprache mächtig sind [wollen sie] auch zu Deutschen kein Wort in der Muttersprache mehr reden.”

It was in the private realm of the home that the erosion of ethnic boundaries was felt most keenly. Accordingly, journalists turned their attention to language usage in migrant families where the generational transition from foreign-born parents to American-born children became a litmus test for language maintenance. In dissecting patterns of language change, writers soon foresook any illusions that they might have harboured. One article, entitled “The Art of Unlearning the German Language” (1869), provided a sarcastic six-step “manual” on how parents could raise monolingual children who would be “fortunate enough never to insult Americans by speaking German”:⁶⁰

1. With her first-born child, the mother speaks only German as she does not yet understand the English language very well.
2. With their second child, both mother and father speak the German language, mingled with a few English words that are, of course, poorly pronounced for now.
3. The parents and their first-born child speak German with the third child, using a few short English phrases which are quite poorly pronounced.
4. With the fourth child, the parents and their first two children speak half German, half English ...
5. The parents and the first three children speak English with the fifth child, interspersed with a few German words. ...
6. Both parents and children ... are using the English language exclusively and have thus mastered the art.⁶¹

⁶⁰ *BJ*, May 27, 1869, 4: “Die Kunst, die deutsche Sprache zu verlernen”; “genießt das Glück, die Amerikaner nicht durch’s Deutschreden zu beleidigen.”

⁶¹ *Ibid.*: “(1) Die Mutter spricht mit dem erstgeborenen Kinde bloß [sic] deutsch, weil sie die englische Sprache noch nicht ganz gut versteht. (2) Die Mutter und der Vater sprechen zum zweitgeborenen Kinde deutsch mit einigen englischen Worten vermischt, natürlich schlecht ausgesprochen einstweilen. (3) Die Eltern und das erste Kind sprechen mit dem dritten Kinde deutsch mit einigen kurzen Sätzen in English, ziemlich schlecht ausgesprochen. (4) Die Eltern und die zwei ersten Kinder sprechen mit dem vierten Kinde halb deutsch und halb englisch ... (5) Die Eltern und die drei ersten Kinder sprechen mit dem fünften Kinde englisch und mit einigen deutschen Worten vermischt ... (6) Die Eltern und alle ihre Kinder ... gebrauchen in dieser Periode bloß [sic] die englische Sprache und die Kunst ist erlernt ...”.

Evidently, this “art” was precisely what ethnic spokesmen dreaded and so bitterly fought. They seemed to sense intuitively, from a knowledge born out of experience and personal observation, what socio-linguists would conclude a century later. For children to attain mastery of the German language, the mother tongue had to be used actively in the home.⁶²

As desirable and necessary as German-language schooling was, formal education alone was insufficient, contributors to the *Berliner Journal* argued.⁶³ In 1888, one author could not help wagging his finger at protesters who rallied against the proposed demolition of German-language classes in Cincinnati. While he agreed wholeheartedly with their demands, their rhetoric struck him as hollow: “Did those gentlemen who organized these demonstrations ever ask themselves whether they supported the German language where they should do it first and foremost – we are thinking of their own family circles?”⁶⁴ As long as Germans were secretly ashamed of their mother tongue, with even teachers and priests preferring to speak English, political demonstrations were but an exercise in hypocrisy and their participants nothing but “pseudo-Germans”.⁶⁵

If only children could be persuaded to adopt the language of their parents, a large-scale language shift to English might be prevented, many an article reasoned. In painting a sentimental image of “mother’s quiet, invisible” role as the guardian of the mother tongue, one journalist compared the German language in America to a forest planted by “the German mother”.⁶⁶ Another

⁶² Robert G. Hayden, “Some Community Dynamics of Language Maintenance,” in Joshua A. Fishman ed., *Language Loyalty in the United States: The Maintenance and Perpetuation of Non-English Mother Tongues by American Ethnic and Religious Groups* (London, The Hague, Paris: Mouton & Co., 1966), 198 and Joshua A. Fishman, “Language Maintenance and Language Shift as a Field of Inquiry,” in *Language Loyalty in the United States*, 430.

⁶³ See, for instance, *BJ*, February 19, 1875, 3 and *BJ*, September 3, 1885, 7.

⁶⁴ *BJ*, March 22, 1888, 4: “Haben aber die Herren, welche diese Demonstrationen leiteten, sich wohl einmal auf’s Gewissen gefragt, ob sie selbst nach Kräften für die Erhaltung der deutschen Sprache auch dort eintreten, wo sie es vor Allem thun sollten – wir meinen im eignen Familienkreise?”

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *BJ*, February 10, 1875, 3.

writer praised the virtues of a German artisan who gathered his children after a long day's work to teach them "the sounds of the old *Heimath*".⁶⁷ Clearly, these characters were more fictional than real, intended to serve as an inspiration for parents who unwittingly slipped into English or, even worse, no longer taught their children the revered mother tongue. As such, they vividly illustrated the concerted effort to transform the family into a bastion of the German language. As John Edwards has noted, "bilingualism can be a stable condition, but only when there exist important domains of use for each language."⁶⁸ In promoting the "German home ... as the place where the German language is cultivated and preserved," a myriad of articles attempted to establish the family as the one speech domain upon which the English language would not encroach.⁶⁹

In order to become a stronghold of the German language, the domestic domain had to nurture language skills as varied as speaking, reading, and writing. Journalists were only too aware that speakers had to reach a certain level of language proficiency before they could expect to unlock the rich heritage of German literature and culture.⁷⁰ One way of honing language skills, commentators suggested not entirely selflessly, was to subscribe to a German newspaper.⁷¹ Besides familiarizing young readers with a broad range of cultural and social issues, these papers would instill love for "German traditions, the German *Geist*, and a devotion to everything that the *Stammfamilie* (core-family) held to be sacred."⁷² Displaying a confidence that stood in marked contrast to the generally defensive tone, one article boldly declared: "It is evident that the German press is the most powerful means of preserving the mother tongue. German newspapers reach

⁶⁷ *BJ*, April 5, 1888, 2: "Er ruft seine Kinder und lehrt sie die Töne der alten Heimath."

⁶⁸ Edwards, *Language, Society, and Identity*, 71.

⁶⁹ *BJ*, December 19, 1901, 7: "Und darum ist das deutsche Haus vor allen der Ort, wo die deutsche Sprache gepflegt und gehegt werden kann."

⁷⁰ *BJ*, June 13, 1861, 2.

⁷¹ *BJ*, February 1, 1872, 4; *BJ*, December 19, 1895, 4.

⁷² *BJ*, June 24, 1880, 2: "deutsche Traditionen, der deutsche Geist und die Anhänglichkeit an Alles was der Stammfamilie von jeher heilig war".

homes and families where seldom or never a German book goes astray; and they are being read ten times, while a book is read but once.”⁷³

But wooing young readers was not easy, as the editors of the *Berliner Journal* discovered in an ill-fated experiment at the turn of the century. With refreshing naiveté, they had announced a new feature, the *Kinder-Journal* (Children’s Journal), convinced that “the children only need to hear that this part of the newspaper is written for them, and they will shortly take interest in it.” In order to stimulate both reading and writing skills, the editors voiced their “delight in publishing letters from the little folks, on only one condition: the children must have written them on their own.”⁷⁴ No such letter ever arrived and, after only four editions, the *Kinder-Journal* was allowed to fade quietly into oblivion. Evidently, it required more than good will and reading materials to acquaint children with the German language. Much more, in fact, as a personal memoir vividly illustrated in April 1899.

Over the length of two newspaper columns, Reverend George von Basse from Harrisburg (Pennsylvania) recounted how he had transplanted the ideal of a “cosy German family circle” onto American soil. His cultural mission began after he married an American-born woman who, despite her German heritage, had never learned the mother tongue. “As a German, I wanted to set up a German home,” he recalled and consequently only conversed in German with his young

⁷³ *Ibid.*: “Daß nun die deutsche Presse zur Erhaltung der Muttersprache das mächtigste Mittel ist, liegt offen zu Tag. Deutsche Zeitungen dringen in Häuser und Familien, wohin sich selten oder nie ein deutsches Buch verirrt, und werden zehnmal gelesen, ehe man ein Buch einmal liest.” For a point of comparison see Jerzy J. Smolicz study of Polish migrants in Australia who, “in the face of the precarious situation of the Polish language in Australia ... attached great importance to the use of Polish at home.” See Smolicz, “Minority Languages and Core Values of Ethnic Cultures: A Study of Maintenance and Erosion of Polish, Welsh, and Chinese Languages in Australia,” in Willem Fase, Koen Jaspaert, Sjaak Kroon eds., *Maintenance and Loss of Minority Languages* (Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1992), 284.

⁷⁴ *BJ*, November 23, 1899, 4: “Die Kinder brauchen nur zu hören, daß dieser Theil der Zeitung für sie bestimmt ist, und dieselben werden in kurzer Zeit Interesse daran nehmen ... Es wird uns Vergnügen bereiten, die Zusendungen der Kleinen, unter der einzigen Bedingung, daß diesselben von den Kindern selbst geschrieben sind, zu veröffentlichen.”

wife. Soon, she was speaking German fluently and effortlessly and also learned how to bake bread (“nourishing rye bread, of course”), cook German meals, knit socks, and make her children’s clothes. In sharing his devotion to German traditions and culture, Pastor Basse recalled his memories of the “dear Fatherland”, bought German books, subscribed to German family papers, and even travelled with his wife to Germany: “I successfully tried to show her the most beautiful and pleasant aspects of German life; introduced her to dear German families where she encountered German hospitality and heartiness; took her for long walks, ...; showed her glorious German cities, museums etc. and, to my great pleasure, she was delighted by my Fatherland.” Having thus established a solid foundation, both parents raised their children exclusively in the German language: “my boy speaks only German at home, even though he has learned English wonderfully fast at school and is one of the best pupils in his class. Indeed, it is touching to see how he teaches his younger sister our language by telling her: ‘It is not ‘yes’, it is ‘ja’.” Raised on a healthy German diet, both physically and spiritually, his children would never dream of disobeying their parents and were happy and cheerful little fellows. Reverend Basse concluded confidently that “the secret of preserving the German tongue for generations to come can be found in the bosom of the family.”⁷⁵

What readers might have found particularly intriguing about this success story was the role of language in cementing family unity. Throughout the decades under investigation, a profound unease about the future of the German family permeated articles in the *Berliner Journal*. In 1869,

⁷⁵ *BJ*, April 20, 1899, 7: “ich wollte mir als Deutscher ein deutsches Heim gründen”; “nun ist ihr das Deutschsprechen zur zweiten Natur geworden”; “[ich habe mich bemüht], und zwar mit Erfolg, ihr die schönsten und angenehmsten Seiten deutschen Lebens zu zeigen, habe sie in liebe deutsche Familien eingeführt, wo sie deutsche Gastfreundschaft und Herzlichkeit kennenlernte, habe schöne Fußpartien mit ihr gemacht ..., habe ihr prächtige deutsche Städte, Museen x. gezeigt, und sie war zu meiner großen Freude entzückt von meinem Vaterland”; “mein Junge spricht nur deutsch zu Hause, trotzdem er das Englische fabelhaft schnell in der Schule gelernt hat und einer der besten Schüler in seiner Klasse ist. – Ja, es ist oft rührend, wie er sein jüngerer Schwesterchen sprachlich erzieht und ihr sagt: es heißt nicht ‘yes’, es heißt ‘ja’.”

one author described children smiling condescendingly at each other when their parents spoke broken English.⁷⁶ Imitating their English-speaking peers like “little monkeys”, children were said to speak English only and deny their parents’ cultural heritage. With children losing their respect for German traditions and values, the bonds of family began to dissolve and the cultural gap between children and parents grew ever wider.⁷⁷ In those families, one journalist wrote in 1901, the “cosy warmth of German family life” had been replaced by the “fickle spirit of the boarding house, chilling the rooms” wherein “the children commanded the mothers and, through them, the fathers.”⁷⁸ Apparently, just as families were supposed to nurture the German language, so, too, was language supposed to ward off the contaminating influences of “American” family life, namely the easy relationship between American fathers and their children and the “unwomanly” behaviour of the American mother.⁷⁹ By acquiring their parents’ mother tongue, children did not simply master abstract language skills but also assimilated cultural norms and traditions, thus becoming part of a linguistic and cultural community.⁸⁰ In his meticulous chronicle of family life, Reverend Basse suggested a way of achieving this goal.

Yet hidden beneath the optimism that his memoir exuded were traces of a language change that, ultimately, proved more powerful than any efforts of language maintenance. What was changing, slowly and almost imperceptibly, was the very meaning of the term “mother

⁷⁶ *BJ*, May 27, 1869, 4.

⁷⁷ *BJ*, February 4, 1886, 3; *BJ*, March 15, 1888, 6; *BJ*, July 22, 1897, 3. Similar worries have recently been voiced by Polish migrants in Australia. See Smolicz, “Minority Languages and Core Values of Ethnic Cultures,” 286.

⁷⁸ *BJ*, March 21, 1901, 7: “In solchen Häusern fehlt die mollige Wärme des deutschen Familienlebens, – der unstetige Geist des Boardighauses druchfröstelt die Räume, die vielleicht nur dort weniger eintönig sind, wo die Kinder die Mütter und durch diese die Väter regieren.”

⁷⁹ Kathleen Neils Conzen, “Germans,” in Stephan Thernstrom, Ann Orlov, and Oscar Handlin eds., *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), 417. See also *BJ*, March 17, 1870, 1: “Deutsche Frauen und amerikanische Ansichten” (German Women and American Views) and *BJ*, June 5, 1890, 1: “Ein Wort an deutsche Eltern” (A Reminder to German Parents).

⁸⁰ In this context see also Spencer, “Herder and Nationalism,” 5 and Spencer, “Towards an Ontology of Holistic Individualism,” 251.

tongue.” While its sentimental aspects remained intact – *Muttersprache* continued to represent the “dear familiar language in which your mother spoke to you ... whose cosy sound welled to the heart so sweetly and mildly” – its status as the ‘natural’ language of communication could no longer be taken for granted.⁸¹ In 1860, for instance, a poem “My Mother Tongue” described the sweet, familiar features of the German language.⁸² Twenty-six years later, this ode to the German language had been replaced by an elaborate defence; now, the mother tongue’s existence had to be justified by celebrating the greatness of German literature and the beauty of German philosophy.⁸³ At the turn of the century, finally, we witnessed the retreat of the German language into the family domain where spouses and children had to be taught not only how to *speak* German, but also how to *feel* it.⁸⁴ Despite Herder’s assurance that a people’s culture and heritage were embedded in the very fabric of their language, Reverend Basse had to recreate painstakingly a German cultural environment in which the mother tongue could thrive.

Heartfelt efforts notwithstanding, the English language was carried even into the most German of families. The innocuous ‘yes’, uttered by the Reverend’s youngest child, was a reminder that the networks of the English language extended far beyond the narrow confines of German family life and, therefore, possessed a greater vitality.⁸⁵ Just as the girl had learned her first English word from either playmates or siblings, she would later use English at school, the market and, if applicable, the workplace. If we assume that English represented the linguistic

⁸¹ *BJ*, August 21, 1890, 3.

⁸² *BJ*, October 4, 1860, 4.

⁸³ *BJ*, October 7, 1886, 6.

⁸⁴ In this context see also the disdain for young German priests who no longer ‘felt’ German even though they were still able speak it: “They read and think always in English. They write their sermons in English and then translate them into the German language.” (“sie lesen und denken alles englisch. Sie schreiben ihre Predigten englisch und übersetzen dieselben in das Deutsche”), *BJ*, September 17, 1885, 3.

⁸⁵ Joshua A. Fishman, “The Sociology of Language: An Interdisciplinary Social Science Approach to Language in Society,” in Thomas A. Seabok ed., *Current Trends in Linguistics*, vol. 12: *Linguistic and Adjacent Arts and Sciences* (The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1984), 1640.

system that was more often activated, the young woman might have found it increasingly difficult to speak German in situations where it was not explicitly required.⁸⁶ This generational transition was by no means unique to German migrants but characterized processes of language change within many ethnic communities as Alejandro Portes and Richard Schauffler have recently noted:

In the past, the typical pattern has been for the first generation to learn enough English to survive economically; the second generation continued to speak the parental tongue at home, but English at school, at work and in public life; by the third generation, the home language shifted to English, which effectively become the mother tongue for subsequent generations.⁸⁷

There exists, indeed, ample evidence that the majority of German migrants never embarked on the rigorous journey of language maintenance that Pastor Basse so heartily recommended.

A Drama of Language Change

From the early 1870s onwards, journalists noted the apparent readiness of German migrants to discard their native tongue.⁸⁸ In order to stem a language shift to English, they honed their rhetorical weapons and attacked. A favourite plot saw a newspaper agent (alternately, a census enumerator) entering a German household. Refusing to speak German, the residents addressed the visitor in a breathtaking mishmash which, they insisted, was standard English. The agent, in turn, responded in beautifully crafted German and English sentences, thus demonstrating that loyalty towards the mother tongue did not preclude mastery of the English language. The

⁸⁶ Smolicz, "Minority Languages and Core Values of Ethnic Cultures," 283-7 and Hayden, "Some Community Dynamics of Language Maintenance," 203-5.

⁸⁷ Alejandro Portes and Richard Schauffler, "Language and the Second Generation: Bilingualism Yesterday and Today," *International Migration Review*, 28, 4 (1994), 643. See also Jeffrey G. Reitz, "Language and Ethnic Community Survival," in Rita M. Bienvenue and Jay E. Goldstein eds., *Ethnicity and Ethnic Relations in Canada* (Toronto: Butterworth & Co., 1985), 105-23; Leo Driedger and Peter Hengstenberg, "Non-Official Multilingualism: Factors Affecting German Language Competence, Use and Maintenance in Canada," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 18, 3 (1986), 90-109 and Robert Swidinsky and Michael Swidinsky, "The Determinant of Heritage Language Continuity Evidence from the 1981 and 1991 Census," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 29, 1 (1997), 81-98.

⁸⁸ *BJ*, September 19, 1872, 4; *BJ*, February 10, 1875, 3, *BJ*, September 10, 1885, 4.

moral of the story could not be more straightforward. In throwing away their “beautiful inheritance”, their German mother tongue, these fools had entered a cultural wasteland for their butchered ‘English’ would forever bar them from American society just like their Anglicized ‘German’ marked them as renegades among German migrants.⁸⁹

If we peel away the thick layers of mockery, however, we find that this satirical poem captured a drama of language change. Evidently, many migrants associated the use of German with ethnic backwardness and cultural inferiority.⁹⁰ Fully aware that “the majority’s ideological linguistic system was that of monism,” as Jerzy Smolicz recently put it, they regarded their German mother tongue as a disadvantage, both socially and economically.⁹¹ While the story seemed to pit the ‘ignorant’ against the ‘educated’ German, we might, in fact, be observing the clash between two waves of immigrants, with the newspaper agent representing a more recent arrival. At times, instead of invigorating ethnic community life, new waves of immigrants effectively undermined it by preventing “the settled Germans from ... developing pride in their uniquely German-American way of life” and “reminding them of how un-German they had become and how defective and corrupted their language had become.”⁹² Interestingly, in Texas and parts of rural Wisconsin and Minnesota, German language maintenance was most pronounced in those areas that had received the fewest number of immigrants since 1890.⁹³ Clearly, we have

⁸⁹ *BJ*, March 14, 1867, 4; *BJ*, October 1, 1885, 7; *BJ*, April 4, 1888, 2.

⁹⁰ See also *BJ*, September 17, 1885, 3. Hermann Kurthen, “Gone with the Wind: German Language Retention in North Carolina and the United States in Comparative Perspective,” *Yearbook of German-American Studies*, 33 (1998), 58.

⁹¹ Smolicz, “Minority Languages and Core Values of Ethnic Cultures,” 284. See also Jürgen Eichhoff, “German in Wisconsin,” in Glenn G. Gilbert ed., *The German Language in America: A Symposium* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), 55.

⁹² Marion L. Huffines, “Language-Maintenance Efforts Among German Immigrants and Their Descendants in the United States,” in Trommler and McVeigh eds., *America and the Germans*, 247. See also *BJ*, September 17, 1885, 3.

⁹³ Heinz Kloss, “German-American Language Maintenance Efforts,” in Fishman ed., *Language Loyalty in the United States*, 233.

to be wary of story-lines that reduce the multi-layered process of language change to a battle of good against evil.

Sensing the precarious self-esteem of their fellow-Germans, journalists sought to boost it. They assured their readers that the United States had become the home of the “pure” mother tongue whereas the German, spoken in Germany itself, had been corrupted by French and Latin influences. Upon receiving newspapers from Germany, one editor complained bitterly that he had to translate the “atrocious and disgusting mishmash” and the “revolting language filth” of his colleagues in Germany into ‘real’ German, for the benefit of his readers.⁹⁴ Thirteen years later, in 1889, one commentator suggested that German-American writers had successfully transformed the German language into a more poignant tongue. Inspired by the style of English-language newspapers which they translated into the German on a regular basis, they had learned how “to render home, in the German language, the robust brevity of the closely related English tongue.”⁹⁵ Instead of altering the German language, they were tracing it back to its very roots, thereby restoring its old power that had been weakened by the oppressive German regime. In the United States, “the language of bureaucrats and underlings which permeates books and newspapers over there has been driven away by the frankness of our free republican spirit.”⁹⁶ What this argument demonstrated, of course, was not the alleged improvement of the German language but, more so, the transformation of its writers. For them, Germany had become ‘over there’ and the American republicanism ‘ours’. Their map of the world now was firmly centered upon the United States

⁹⁴ *BJ*, April 13, 1876, 4: “jenes gräuliche und abscheuliche Kauderwelsch”; “der ekelhafte Sprach-Unrath.”

⁹⁵ *BJ*, November 21, 1889, 7: “Sie haben gelernt, die kernige Kürze des so nahe verwandten Englischen auf das Genaueste im Deutschen wiederzugeben.”

⁹⁶ *BJ*, November 21, 1889, 7: “[die] Kanzlei- und Unterthanenschreibweise, die sich drüben noch immer in Büchern und Zeitungen breit macht, ist durch das derbe ‘Gradaus’ unseres freien republikanischen Wesens verdrängt worden.”

rather than the 'Fatherland' itself.⁹⁷ Not surprisingly, when journalists searched for role models of language maintenance, they no longer looked across the Atlantic. Instead, they turned their attention to the Italians, French, Spanish, Russians, and Poles; the German pioneers in Pennsylvania (the so-called "Pennsylvanian Dutch"); and, in Canada, the French Canadians.⁹⁸ These groups, they argued, demonstrated that the preservation of ethnic languages in North America was both feasible and desirable.

In addition, journalists ripped to shreds the illusion that an English-speaking German would ever be mistaken for an American. The self-identity of migrants, they pointed out, did not necessarily determine the identity ascribed to them: "And look, even if you were ashamed of your German origin, in the eyes of unadulterated patent-Americans, you would still remain a descendant of foreigners."⁹⁹ Although German accents, vocabulary and syntax often carried over into English, thereby revealing a speaker's foreign heritage, the German-ness in question here seemed to be broader than just language skills. Modes of socializing, a legion of associations (or *Vereine*), labour activism, Sunday picnics in the park or in the beer garden, a pronounced disdain for prohibitionists, the appeal of festivals and parades, and ethnic churches all pointed to the German origin of migrants even if the latter had already discarded the German language.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, commentators frequently encountered the puzzling paradox that members of German

⁹⁷ Kathleen Neils Conzen, David A. Gerber, Ewa Morawska, George E. Pozzetta, and Rudolph J. Vecoli, "The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A.," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 12, 1 (Fall 1992), 14.

⁹⁸ For other immigrant groups see *BJ*, September 19, 1872, 4 and *BJ*, April 9, 1891, 6. For Pennsylvanian Dutch see *BJ*, October 17, 1878, 4 and *BJ*, August 12, 1886, 7. For French-Canadians see *BJ*, May 27, 1880, 2 and *BJ*, June 7, 1905, 2.

⁹⁹ *BJ*, August 21, 1890, 3: "Und seht, würdet Ihr Euch schämen Euer deutschen Abkunft, in den Augen der unverfälschten Patent-Amerikaner seid Ihr doch Abkömmlinge Fremdgeborener." See also *BJ*, June 13, 1861, 2.

¹⁰⁰ See, for instance, Stanley Nadel, *Little Germany: Ethnicity, Religion, and Class in New York City, 1845-80* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990) and Kathleen Neils Conzen, "Ethnicity as Festive Culture: Nineteenth-Century Germany America on Parade," in Werner Sollors ed., *The Invention of Ethnicity* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 44-76.

associations no longer spoke German among themselves and even veterans of the Franco-Prussian War had switched to English.¹⁰¹ Exasperated, they concluded that Americans would only then accord equality to German migrants if the latter showed pride in their cultural heritage. “In the bottom of their hearts”, one author wrote, “Americans have nothing but contempt for somebody who is ashamed of his own nation, language, and mother.”¹⁰² Yet instilling this pride proved more difficult than the time-honoured practice of shaming.

In the mid-1880s, the dispersed writings on language were complemented by a series of articles that offered nothing less than a probing examination of the German future in Waterloo County (Ontario).¹⁰³ In nine lengthy contributions, published between September 1885 and February 1886, the author wove together irony, anecdotes, personal observations, and excerpts from German-language newspapers, arguing that families, churches, and public schools presented the bastions of the German language, now and in future.¹⁰⁴ Yet if he concluded his series on a constructive note, for the most part he revelled in righteous indignation. Hardly could he contain his contempt for those “thousands of Germans” who had exchanged their native surnames for English ones.¹⁰⁵ Surely, it was a disgrace, he wrote, that the brothers “Little” (i.e. *Klein*), “Small” (i.e. *Klein*), and “Klein” no longer shared a family name: “While I say ‘cheers’ to ‘Klein’, I have for Little and Small nothing but a ‘boo’.”¹⁰⁶ In an admittedly contrived story, he issued a warning of the unforeseen consequences of *Namensverhunzung* (mutilated surnames). If Herr Knoblauch had not changed his name to Mr. Garlic; if the clerk of the court had not changed it into ‘Gallic’,

¹⁰¹ *BJ*, October 27, 1870, 4 and *BJ*, April 9, 1891.

¹⁰² *BJ*, October 1, 1885, 7: “im Grunde ihres Herzens [verachten sie] einen Menschen, welcher sich seiner eigenen Nation, Sprache und Mutter schämt.”

¹⁰³ The title of the series “Wohin wir mit unserem hiesigen Deutschthum treiben” can roughly be translated as “In which direction is our local German community drifting?”

¹⁰⁴ *BJ*, February 4, 1886, 3.

¹⁰⁵ *BJ*, September 19, 1885, 4. See also *BJ*, October 1, 1885, 7.

¹⁰⁶ *BJ*, September 10, 1885, 4: “Während ich ein ‘Hoch!’ auf den ‘Klein’ anbringe, habe ich für den Little und Small ein ‘Pfui!’.”

by mistake; if the Prussian police had not questioned him about his military duties, upon a visit to Germany; then, his naturalization papers would have protected him from any harm. As it was, the German police officer no longer recognized the ‘Knoblauch’ in the ‘Gallic’ and pressed him into military service.¹⁰⁷ We are left to wonder whether this tale of mistaken identity was as far removed from the life of the *Journal* readers as ‘Mr. Gallic’ was from his native name.

What most incensed the author, however, was the intermingling of German and English words, phrases, grammar, and syntax. Instead of keeping the German language ‘pure’, English fillers like ‘well’, ‘yes’, ‘no’, ‘of course’, and ‘certainly’ peppered the talk of German migrants. Almost every fourth word was an English one, and English expressions were shamelessly incorporated into the German language, with dismaying results:

Table 1: Word Play in German Speech Patterns, Berlin, 1885

German-English Original	German ‘Translation’	English ‘Translation’
“Supposing, der Mann wird in das Parlament gevoted, so voten sie ihn just for fun.”	Gesetzt, der Mann wird in das Parlament gewählt, so wählen sie ihn bloß zum Spaß.	Supposedly the man is voted into Parliament, they will vote for him just for fun.
“Mein Johny ist ein schmärter Bub.”	Mein Johann ist ein kluger Junge.	My John is a smart boy.
“Ich gleiche dich.”	Ich mag Dich.	I like you.
“Es ist kein mehr Brod da.”	Es ist kein Brot mehr da.	There is no more bread here.

Source: *Berliner Journal*, September 17, 1885, 3.

This *Sprachmischmasch* (language mishmash), the author argued, resulted from an “idleness of thought” as it took speakers no longer to use the proper German idiom than the pidgin-German, so

¹⁰⁷ *BJ*, October 1, 1885, 7.

popular in Waterloo County.¹⁰⁸ Evidently, he interpreted language change as a sign of acculturation that would soon see German migrants abandoning their cultural heritage altogether.

Alternately, as historian David Gerber has suggested, the ‘language mishmash’ could be taken as evidence of an “extraordinary world-play by which some German immigrants sought to combine English and German in the daily use of written and spoken language.”¹⁰⁹ Rather than being concerned with the acculturation of German migrants – a model that Gerber dismisses as “deterministic, unilinear,” and hardly reflective of immigrants’ lived experiences – he professes himself intrigued by the migrants’ “linguistic inventiveness” and “experimentation with language.” In it, he detects not ethnic decline, but a “semi-conscious desire to gain control of the symbols of a new culture and, by doing so, move to master them.” German migrants, in other words, creatively blended their ethnic language with English, the language of the country, and, in doing so, demonstrated their symbolic mastery of life in the New World.¹¹⁰ While highly speculative in nature, Gerber’s analysis is nonetheless refreshing for its refusal to adopt a linear perspective of migration experiences. It also serves to remind us of the myriad of meanings which migrants attached to the German language. Needless to say, it is an interpretation at which the author of the newspaper series would have scoffed derisively.

While he tended to direct his scorn against his fellow-migrants, the author equally despised the language mishmash that permeated official notices. Since the early 1880s, the German settlers of Waterloo County had enjoyed the privilege of having council resolutions published in their native tongue. Yet in 1885, employing the services of an English printing office, one township

¹⁰⁸ *BJ*, September 17, 1885, 3. See also *BJ*, October 1, 1885, 7; *BJ*, October 29, 1885, 7; *BJ*, December 10, 1885, 3 and *BJ*, December 24, 1885, 3. Similar criticism can be found throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See, for example, *BJ*, January 10, 1889, 6 and *BJ*, May 27, 1914, 2.

¹⁰⁹ David Gerber, “‘You See I Speak Wery Well Englisch’: Literacy and the Transformed Self as Reflected in Immigrant Personal Correspondence,” *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 12, 2 (Winter 1993), 60.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 60-2.

council issued a 'translation' that hardly deserved this name. It was inconceivable, the author fumed, that "our noble German tongue" was mutilated in a county that possessed an abundance of German printers, learned editors, and highly educated citizens who could have easily produced "a pure, grammatically correct" translation. In denouncing the official pamphlet, the author did not hesitate to resort to strong language: "it is, indeed, a disgrace and an ignominy to have the language of Schiller and Göthe [sic] shoved into excrement in such an impudent manner."¹¹¹

In manning the battle-line of language purity, the author joined the ranks of journalists, priests and school teachers across North America who desired to keep the German language free from any interference. As the "gatekeepers" of language, these professionals sought to formulate norms of 'correct' language usage.¹¹² In doing so, they had little patience for processes of language change that led, first, to a greater overlap of speech domains and, subsequently, to interference.¹¹³ In fact, they regarded these changes with much apprehension, clearly concerned that the interaction between the German and English languages would lead to the replacement of their native tongue.¹¹⁴ Echoing the ideas of Herder and Fichte, they regarded the German language as vital for group continuity and believed that only linguistic purity could guarantee ethnic 'survival'. Their conception of language did not allow for the notion that languages "adapt to new conditions and requirements, but they do not do so in terms of linguistic purity," as John Edwards has explained.¹¹⁵ What their writings did demonstrate, however, was the close link

¹¹¹ It is ironic that the self-proclaimed guardian of the German language misspelled the name of Goethe, then as now one of Germany's most highly regarded authors. See *BJ*, October 22, 1885, 7: "[Verhunzung] unserer edlen deutschen Sprache"; "so ist es ja auch eine Schmach und Schande, die Sprache eines Schillers und Göthe [sic] auf ein [sic] solch freche Weise in den Koth treten zu lassen." See also *BJ*, October 1, 1885, 5.

¹¹² Fishman, "The Sociology of Language," 1639. See also Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, 111 and 117.

¹¹³ Fishman, "The Sociology of Language," 1708.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1733.

¹¹⁵ Edwards, *Language, Society and Identity*, 19.

linguistic nationalism and language purity that also saw language academies in Europe scrambling to issue rulings against neologisms and foreign borrowings.¹¹⁶

What made the battle for language purity all the more challenging was the linguistic diversity of German migrants. As many had left Germany generations ago for Central and Eastern Europe and come to North America in secondary migrations, they brought with them not a single 'German' culture but numerous varieties thereof and, accordingly, different dialects.¹¹⁷ In addition, migrants from the German states that came to constitute the *Deutsche Reich* in 1871 were divided by regional dialects such as Bavarian, Low German, Swabian, and Palatine, some of which even other 'Germans' understood only with difficulty.¹¹⁸ It is thus hardly surprising that High German (and, we might add, English) emerged as a 'lingua franca' that provided a common meeting ground for speakers of various German dialects.¹¹⁹ From the mid-1880s onwards, newspapers, churches, and schools encouraged German-speaking migrants to abandon their dialects for the sake of one standard language:

I urge all parents to send their old dialects – Low German, Hessian, Palatine, Swabian and others – into retirement and devote more time to cultivating High German. Those who teach their children nothing but Low German (*Platt*) or a mutilated German should not be surprised if the latter hate the German language and have no respect for their elders. Here, we do not live in *Plattdeutschland*. In this country, we should be content to preserve High German and make it respectable.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 162.

¹¹⁷ Dirk Hoerder, "German-Speaking Immigrants: Co-Founders or Mosaic?: A Research Note on Politics and Statistics in Scholarship," *Zeitschrift für Kanada-Studien*, 14, 2 (1994), 53.

¹¹⁸ Reinhard R. Doerries, "Organization and Ethnicity: The German-American Experience," *Amerikastudien / American Studies*, 33, 3 (1988), 310.

¹¹⁹ Fishman, "The Sociology of Language," 1644; Conzen, "Germans," 424; Eichhoff, "German in Wisconsin," 52-3; Jürgen Eichhoff, "The German Language in America," in Trommler and McVeigh eds., *America and the Germans*, 230-1.

¹²⁰ *BJ*, November 18, 1886, 7: "Den Eltern rathe ich dringend, ihre alten Dialekte, plattdeutsch, hessisch, pfälzisch, schwäbisch und dergleichen hübsch in den Ruhestand zu versetzen und das Hochdeutsche mehr zu pflegen. Wer seinen Kindern nichts als Platt, oder ein verstümmeltes Deutsch lehrt, der sollte sich nicht wundern, wenn diesselben das Deutsche haßen und die Alten wenig respektieren. Wir leben hier nicht in Plattdeutschland. Es ist genug, wenn man das Hochdeutsche in diesem Lande erhalten und respektabel machen kann."

Facing the omnipresence of the English language, the gatekeepers of the German mother tongue no longer trusted folk traditions and dialects to preserve the *Volksgeist*. Instead, they were actively moulding language into a 'correct' and 'standardized' means of communication that would bridge the cultural gaps between German migrants and unify them behind one single banner: the (standard) German language.¹²¹

A Language of Culture

In its new gown, the German language presented itself as a *Kultursprache*, as "a language of culture". Respected around the globe, it was a symbol of an educated and cultivated mind.¹²² As early as in 1886, one commentator marshalled an argument that discarded any notions of belonging and togetherness. Quoting the president of Cornell University, Professor A. D. White, he suggested that the German language would be an asset for American schools for three reasons:

1. For it is the language of the "greatest nation of our time".
2. For it is the key to the "richest and most powerful literature", and to the "strongest development of science and art".
3. For instruction in German offers "the best remedy against a certain inflexibility of the mind".¹²³

Importantly, none of these reasons made any mention of ethnic community life, nor was it the 'mother tongue' that the journalist championed. His was the language of Schiller and Goethe, a

¹²¹ For a point of comparison see John Higham, "Integrating America: The Problem of Assimilation In The Nineteenth Century," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 1, 1 (Fall 1981), 8-9 and Joshua A. Fishman, "The Historical and Social Context of an Inquiry into Language Maintenance Efforts," in Fishman ed., *Language Loyalty in the United States*, 27.

¹²² *BJ*, July 5, 1900, 5. See also *BJ*, July 5, 1890, 5; *BJ*, February 19, 1891, 7; *BJ*, October 17, 1901, 3; *BJ*, March 7, 1906, 2; *BJ*, December 1, 1909, 2; *BJ*, February 7, 1912, 2; *BJ*, June 12, 1912, 2; *BJ*, May 27, 1914, 2.

¹²³ *BJ*, February 4, 1886, 3: "(1) Weil es die Sprache des 'größten Reiches unserer Zeit' ist. (2) Weil sie den Schlüssel zur 'reichsten und mächtigsten Literatur und kräftigsten Entwicklung der Wissenschaft und Kunst bildet'". (3) Weil der Unterricht in der deutschen Sprache 'das beste Korrekturmittel für eine gewisse Unbehilflichkeit im Denken ist'."

language of cultural significance and practical merits, a language representing High Culture, education and national glory.¹²⁴

As this article vividly illustrates, ethnic spokespersons liked to bask in the recognition accorded to them by their host societies. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, German-American commentators pointed to the high regard in which Americans held the German language and contrasted the indifference of German migrants with the prudence of American families who send their sons and daughters to study at universities in Germany.¹²⁵ Indeed, as Heinz Kloss has shown, “German in the United States enjoyed unequalled prestige as *the* language of education and learning. This was true not only in the natural sciences and technology but also in the great part of the humanities, for example linguistics and philosophy.”¹²⁶ Not surprisingly, journalists felt confident in their assertion that bilingualism was a cultural and intellectual resource beyond any role it might play in ethnic life. Their confidence was further bolstered by the game of numbers in which they liberally indulged. Reflecting an international interest in linguistic statistics, they creatively used available data to demonstrate that English and German were the leading *Kultursprachen* of the world, with English being spoken by 125 million people, followed by German, spoken by 87 million.¹²⁷ Admittedly, their penchant for numbers was not always matched by an appreciation for the nuances of language usage as they refused to distinguish between “those who *can* speak a language – and the *degree* of fluency is clearly important here too – and those who *do so* regularly.”¹²⁸ Apparently, the grand sweeping canvass of *Kultursprache* offered more reasons to rejoice than the often annoying details of the picture.

¹²⁴ For a point of comparison see Fishman, “The Sociology of Language,” 1643 and Hayden, “Some Community Dynamics of Language Maintenance,” 203.

¹²⁵ *BJ*, February 2, 1865, 4; *BJ*, February 1, 1872, 4; *BJ*, October 1, 1885, 7; *BJ*, April 4, 1888, 2; *BJ*, August 21, 1890, 3; *BJ*, July 22, 1897, 3; *BJ*, July 18, 1906, 2.

¹²⁶ Heinz Kloss, “German as an immigrant, indigenous, foreign, and second language in the United States,” in Gilbert ed., *The German Language in America*, 119.

¹²⁷ *BJ*, December 1, 1909, 2. See also *BJ*, February 3, 1881, 5.

¹²⁸ Edwards, *Language, Society and Identity*, 72.

In the early twentieth century, then, endorsements of German as a 'language of culture' were accompanied by nationalist overtones. In an age that saw patriotic sentiment galvanized by the symbols of language, culture, and the nation, even the usually restrained *Berliner Journal* could be found indulging in nationalist sentiment.¹²⁹ In 1912, the *Journal* published "A National Catechism for Germans in Canada" whose recommendations, while hardly new, were presented with a patriotic fervour that contrasted with its previously moderate tone:

Let your home become a German castle! Allow only German to be spoken therein! ...

Speak only German with your fellow country-men! Otherwise, you treat your *Heimath* with contempt. ...

Speak the German language as purely as possible. ... Also, do not speak of Mr. or Mrs. if you mention your husband or wife. This is not a German thing to do. ...

German husband, German wife! Isn't this the best fundament for a shared life?

We Germans are said to have more songs than any other people in the world. ... O, do sing them all in your home, in the circle of your family and, then, your Canadian-born children will also learn to love our German-ness ... If you do all this, you are faithful.¹³⁰

But if the *Journal's* rhetoric lent support to the 'German' cause, its pronounced focus on Canadian concerns pointed to a change of character. From a German-language weekly, interested primarily in news from "our old homeland and Europe in general", the *Journal* had

¹²⁹ See, for instance, Roger Chickering, *"We Men Who Feel Most German": A Cultural Study of the Pan-German League, 1886-1914* (Boston: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 30.

¹³⁰ *BJ*, February 21, 1912, 2: "Laß Dein Haus zu einer deutschen Burg werden! Laß nur deutsch sprechen! ... Mit dem deutschen Landsmann sprich nur deutsch! Sonst verachtest du deine Heimath. Sprich möglichst ein reines Deutsch ... Rede auch nicht von Mr. and Mrs. wenn du von deinem Mann oder deiner Frau sprichst. Das ist gar nicht deutsch ... deutscher Mann, deutsche Frau! Sollte das nicht besonders fest verbinden für's Leben? ... Man sagt, wir Deutschen seien das liederreichste Volk der Welt ... O sing sie alle in deinem Hause, im Kreise deiner Familie und auch deine in Canada geborenen Kinder werden lernen, unser Deutschthum von Herzen lieb zu haben ... Thust du dies alles, so bist du treu."

transformed into a German-Canadian paper.¹³¹ By 1914 readers were invited to reflect upon “The German Language in Canada” rather than being treated to philosophical musings on “The German Language” which had dominated the *Journal's* pages in the mid-1860s.¹³² Thus, before the First World War would cut short a language odyssey that had spanned more than half a century, the *Berliner Journal* had taken on the task of a translator. It assisted its readers in coming to terms with the new ‘Canadian’ culture while also connecting them with their native language and traditions.¹³³ In navigating two cultures and negotiating between them, the *Journal* had helped to frame the terms within which its readers came to contemplate the interplay of language and identity.¹³⁴

Conclusion

“Core values,” wrote Jerzy J. Smolicz in 1992, “form the heartland of a group’s culture and act as identifying values that are symbolic of the group and its membership.”¹³⁵ There is little doubt that the ‘core value’, so tenderly nurtured in five decades of journalistic writings in the *Berliner Journal*, was language. From its early incarnation as an expression of the German *Volksgeist* to its role as a symbol of group solidarity, the German language emerged as a “symbolic umbrella” beneath which German migrants could (and did) rally.¹³⁶

There is, of course, nothing new in the realization that the German language offered migrants “a sense of togetherness and belonging” and fulfilled “a desire to remain part of a

¹³¹ *BJ*, December 29, 1859, 2: “unserer alten Heimath, und Europa überhaupt.”

¹³² *BJ*, March 23, 1865, 1 and *BJ*, March 30, 1865, 1: “Die deutsche Sprache”. *BJ*, May 27, 1914, 2: “Die deutsche Sprache in Canada” (emphasis added). See also *BJ*, October 17, 1901, 3: “Canada und die deutsche Sprache”.

¹³³ In this context see also Wittke, *The German-Language Press in America*, 1-6.

¹³⁴ For the concept of translation see Stuart Hall, “The Question of Cultural Identity,” in Stuart Hall, David Held, Don Hubert, Kenneth Thompson eds., *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1997 [1996]), 629.

¹³⁵ Smolicz, “Minority Languages and Core Values of Ethnic Cultures,” 279.

¹³⁶ Conzen et al., “The Invention of Ethnicity,” 5.

cultural community,” as numerous studies have pointed out.¹³⁷ However, in alluding to a ‘mood’ or a ‘feeling’, historians often overlook the sheer effort and enormous creativity that ethnic spokespersons devoted to making language *the* core German value. As we have seen, rather than being a ‘natural’ expression of group consciousness, language was a cultural construct, shaped by political and ideological forces alike. Drawing liberally upon the philosophical writings of Herder and Fichte, journalists established an intimate bond between language, culture, and community. While accepting the over-arching framework of ‘Canadian’ or ‘American’ values, they sought to transform the family into a bastion of German language and customs. From the early 1870s onwards, when the spectre of a collective language shift to English began to haunt them, commentators mixed ridicule, shame, and contempt into a powerful cocktail, trying to spur their readers into action. In the late nineteenth century, they turned to the concept of *Kultursprache* which offered a convenient rationale for the privileged position of the German language in North America.

At the turn of the century, ethnic spokespersons turned to language as the broadest cultural expression of the German *Volksgeist*. Intimately intertwined with music, literature, and the catch-all-phrase of German *Kultur*, language seemed to be eminently suited to form the ‘cultural’ clay out of which to mould a collective ‘German’ identity. Apparently, the less the German language was actually used, the more important became its symbolic significance. In transforming from a *medium of communication* into a *symbol of ethnic identity*, language continued to generate feelings of community.¹³⁸ But instead of being regarded as an indispensable element of groupness, its role was now increasingly framed as a marker of ethnic

¹³⁷ See, for instance, Peter J. D. Conally-Smith, “The Translated Community: New York City’s German-language Press as an Agent of Cultural Resistance and Integration, 1910–1918,” Ph.D. History, Yale University, 1996, 34.

¹³⁸ The distinction between the communicative and symbolic functions of language has been brought to my attention by John Edwards, “Language, diversity and identity,” in John Edwards ed., *Linguistic Minorities, Policies and Pluralism* (London: Academic Press, 1984), 280 and 289.

group boundaries that helped to mobilize German migrants in times of both triumph and crisis.¹³⁹

Yet we are getting ahead of ourselves. It would be decades until German language, culture and festivity – those mainstays of migrant popular culture – would transform into ‘symbols of identity.’ Indeed, for the thousands of German revellers at the Buffalo singers’ festival of 1860, it was the prospect of sociability, not a devotion to the abstract concept of German culture, that had drawn them from far-away towns and cities.

¹³⁹ In this context see also Fishman, “The Sociology of Language,” 1731 and Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalisms*, 112.

Chapter II

“Come Again, Teutons”: The Mingling of the American and German Peoples at the Buffalo *Sängerfest*, 1860

On 24 July 1860, in the early evening hours, ten thousand people began to pour into the railroad station at Exchange street that provided the stage for the “monster concert” of the Buffalo *Sängerfest* (singers’ festival). At the west end of the hall, six hundred feet long and one hundred feet wide, 600 singers were seated in ascending tiers, surrounded by the flags and banners of twenty-seven singing societies. Gas lights illuminated the platform where an orchestra of sixty-five musicians awaited the signal of conductor Carl Adam. The first low notes of *Tannhäuser* “hushed the audience to entire stillness,” enthused the reporter of the *Commercial Advertiser*.¹ Yet more than the music, it was the grandeur of the event that captivated the local press:

We, who were not at the Handel celebration in London; who have never heard the Orpheonists in the Crystal Palace; who have been accustomed to think that a hundred voices pealing over a St. James Hall full of people is a great exhibition, – to us, we say, the monster concert last night was simply a musical earthquake, or deluge, or anything else that conveys ideas of vastness and sublimity.²

For one evening, the “sublime” sound of classical music – displayed on a scale grander than what most American cities had ever seen – lent the city an air of sophistication that many contemporaries found sadly missing in Buffalo’s barren urban landscape.³ The sonorous voices

¹ Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*, July 25, 1860, 3.

² Buffalo *Daily Courier*, July 25, 1860, 2.

³ David A. Gerber, “‘The Germans Take Care of Our Celebrations’: Middle-Class Americans Appropriate German Ethnic Culture in Buffalo in the 1850s,” in Kathryn Grover ed., *Hard at Play: Leisure in America, 1840-1940* (Amherst and Rochester: University of Massachusetts Press and The Strong Museum, 1992), 45-6.

of the mass male chorus also made audible the contours of a German community that, like its music, reached out across boundaries of ethnicity and helped mould an emergent public culture.

For Buffalo's diverse German population, music provided quite literally a common language that was able to bridge the divisions of religion, political ideology, class, dialect, region and nationality that made German migrants one of the most heterogeneous groups in American society.⁴ In song and sound, the singers at the Buffalo festival celebrated the German language that, in its musical incarnation, would far outlast the spoken language.⁵ Intimately intertwined with a festive popular culture, the *Sängerfest* allowed singers and audience to locate a German cultural identity in the chorus of German voices and to imbue the vocal harmonies with cultural, social, and political meanings.

Music, as Celia Applegate has astutely observed, "communicates meaning in far more elusive ways than either words or pictures."⁶ It is for this reason, she suggests, that "cultural historians have tended to leave the history of music to music historians, the experts in music's technical language."⁷ To be sure, the "ocean of music which rolled its harmonies down the vast length" of the railroad station is as lost to the historian's keen ear as are the melodies that floated from taverns and homes onto Buffalo's streets, a faint echo preserved only in the city's newspapers that faithfully chronicled the musical extravaganza.⁸ But if we seek to unravel the

⁴ David A. Gerber, *The Making of an American Pluralism: Buffalo, New York, 1825-60* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 163-6.

⁵ Philip V. Bohlman, "'Still, They Were All Germans in Town': Music in the Multi-Religious German-American Community," in Eberhard Reichmann, La Vern J. Rippley, and Joerg Nagler eds., *Emigration and Settlement Patterns of German Communities in North America* (Indianapolis: Indiana University-Purdue University Press, 1995), 286; Bohlman, "Prolegomena to the Classification of German-American Music," *Yearbook of German-American Studies*, 29 (1985), 35.

⁶ Celia Applegate, "Bach Revival, Public Culture, and National Identity: The St. Matthew Passion in 1829," in Scott Denham, Irene Kacandes, and Jonathan Petropoulos eds., *A User's Guide to German Cultural Studies* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 142.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, July 25, 1860, 3; *Buffalo Daily Courier*, July 26, 1860, 2.

meanings that resonated in this music, the local press allows us to eavesdrop on public conversations on German-ness, race, public culture, leisure, and cultural nationalism, conversational topics brought to the fore by the festivities.⁹ As we shall see, the Buffalo *Sängerfest* of 1860 was notable not so much for its musical accomplishments as for its ability to provide an arena where Germans and Americans could, and did, mingle.

Music's very ambiguity allowed it to be appropriated by different groups for different purposes. It represented, alternately, a symbol of German culture, a language of emotion and sociability, a common voice for German migrants, and a shared platform for German singers from New York State, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and Michigan. As this lengthy list illustrates, the singers' festival could look both inward and outward, to paraphrase Kathleen Neils Conzen.¹⁰ Looking inwardly, the *Sängerfest* nurtured bonds between Buffalo's Germans while also providing a meeting place for German singing societies from the mid-eastern States. In the process, it helped forge the nucleus of a German public that would spring into bloom at the Peace Jubilee celebrations of 1871. Looking outwardly, the festival acted as a highly visible expression of German culture that attracted a vast non-German audience. Notwithstanding the fact that English-speaking observers routinely butchered the German mottoes that spanned the city's principal streets, they enthusiastically embraced the universal language of music.¹¹ Their ready praise was all the more remarkable if viewed before the backdrop of anti-foreign nativism that had gathered force in preceding years and

⁹ Mary P. Ryan, *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City during the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 12-4.

¹⁰ Kathleen Neils Conzen, "Ethnicity as Festive Culture: Nineteenth-Century German America on Parade," in Werner Sollors ed., *The Invention of Ethnicity* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 56.

¹¹ Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*, July 23, 1860, 3; Buffalo *Daily Courier*, July 24, 1860, 2.

denounced Sabbath recreation and alcohol consumption, two key elements of German popular culture which figured prominently at the *Fest*.¹²

The festival's colourful display of classical music, mirth, and sociability thus offers glimpses into the on-going dialogue between German-speaking migrants and Anglo-Saxon observers whose musing look into the German mirror led them to reflect out loud about the meaning of being 'American.' In the transcultural encounter, the meanings of 'German' and 'American' identities came into focus, were negotiated and transformed. In microcosm, then, the *Fest* allows us to probe the interplay of ethnic and national identities. Who performed at the festival? For whom were the performances intended? What does the festival reveal about intragroup and intergroup social relationships? In exploring these questions, we will learn how the *Fest* marked the entrance of German migrants into the mainstream of American life and nurtured a cultural nationalism whose contours slowly emerged beneath the exuberant sociability.

Creating a Festive Culture

In the 1840s, Buffalo's East Side, a flat meadowland bounded by thick forests, became the nucleus of the city's *Deutschendörfchen* (German village). Located far from the docks but within walking distance from the central business district, the area allowed for urban farming while the nearby forest provided for building material, fuel, and employment in the lumber industry. As such, the East Side attracted migrants from the southern German states, most of whom were farmers and peasants.¹³ Crop failures and the famine of 1817 had triggered a wave of emigration from southern Germany that was further fuelled by population growth and the custom of dividing landholdings equally among inheriting children, thereby

¹² Gerber, *An American Pluralism*, 371-409.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 173; Ismar S. Ellison, "The Germans of Buffalo: An Historical Essay," *Publications of the Buffalo Historical Society, Vol. II* (Buffalo: Bigelow Brothers, 1880), 123-5.

breaking up the land into ever smaller parcels.¹⁴ The decline of the cottage industry which crumbled in face of mechanized competition also contributed to the intensity of emigration.¹⁵ In 1839, migrants from southern Germany were joined by eight-hundred “Old Lutherans,” orthodox Protestants from the northern states of Saxony, Silesia, Brandenburg, and Pomerania who had endured harassment for their religious beliefs. They, too, settled on Buffalo’s vast East Side where the land was comparatively cheap, and pigs and cattle could graze on nearby fields.¹⁶

The presence of Lutherans, south German Catholics, and Alsations in Buffalo led to the establishment of migration chains that contributed to a radical population change. In 1855, Americans found themselves reduced to 25 per cent of the population. Among the city’s 70,000 residents, 39 per cent of household heads had been born in the German states, 5 percent in France (the majority of them German-speaking Alsations), 18 percent in Ireland, and 12 percent in Canada or the British Isles.¹⁷ Within the stream of German migration, the rough balance between German Protestants and Catholics had toppled in favour to the latter; by 1855, migrants from the southern and Rhenish provinces constituted the vast majority of Buffalo’s Germans.¹⁸ As David Gerber has observed in his penetrating study of German, Irish, and American ethnicization, the city “had more Bavarians than any other American city, and more southern Germans than such equally significant centres as St. Louis, Chicago, and New York.”¹⁹ Deeply divided along denominational lines, German-speaking migrants tended

¹⁴ Agnes Bretting, “Hallelujah, We’re off to America!: Western, Central and Northern Europe,” in Dirk Hoerder and Diethelm Knauff eds., *Fame, Fortune and Sweet Liberty: The Great European Immigration* (Bremen: Edition Tamm, 1992), 36-40.

¹⁵ Walter Kamphoefner, *The Westfalians: From Germany to Missouri* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 17-9, 27-30.

¹⁶ Gerber, *An American Pluralism*, 18-9, 170-3; Ellison, “The Germans of Buffalo,” 124.

¹⁷ Laurence A. Glasco, *Ethnicity and Social Structure: Irish, Germans, and Native-Born of Buffalo, N.Y., 1850-1860* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 15-8.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 19; Gerber, *An American Pluralism*, 191, 172.

¹⁹ Gerber, *An American Pluralism*, 172.

to marry within their own religion and region of origin.²⁰ The presence of German Catholics, Lutherans, Evangelicals, Methodists, and Baptists also brought to the surface denominational rivalries and antagonism.²¹ Except for the highly publicized battle between Bishop John Timon and the German lay management of St. Louis Church in the early 1850s, however, these religious divisions tended to escape the attention of English-speaking contemporaries.²²

Although encounters between Buffalo's Germans and Americans were frequent and positive, bolstered by the presence of German Protestants, a rich cultural life, property ownership, and orderly neighbourhoods, the *Deutschendörfchen* would long retain its foreign allure.²³ In 1855, no less than 80 percent of migrants from the German states resided there, numbering in total 25,000 people; they were joined by German-speaking Alsatians, Swiss, Austrians, Dutch, and Norwegians. Buffalo's East Side thus presented one of the nation's most residentially segregated German populations.²⁴ Little wonder, then, that in June 1854 one of the city's short-lived journals, *Democracy*, pointed to the existence of foreigners "among us" in an article that betrayed an almost anthropological curiosity:

Has it ever occurred [sic] to our American Citizens at large, that we have among us a German population of more than 25,000, whose daily customs and habits are as unknown to us as those of the Tartars. Their newspapers, three in number, we believe, are of course sealed books to us Americans, and as the Germans in general live in distinct portions of the city, and have their own churches, their own places of amusements, societies and organizations, the intercourse between the two nationalities must of necessity be slight. We would be very glad, if it were different. The peculiarities of the German people offer the observing descendants of the Puritans endless sources of study ...²⁵

²⁰ Glasco, *Ethnicity and Social Structure*, 144-5.

²¹ Gerber, *An American Pluralism*, 175, 196.

²² At the heart of this conflict lay the efforts of the Franco-German parishioners to defend their "centuries-old tradition of lay management." See *ibid.*, 286-96.

²³ *Ibid.*, 187, 201.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 173; Glasco, *Ethnicity and Social Structure*, 61, 63.

²⁵ As quoted in *Geschichte der Deutschen in Buffalo und Erie County, N.Y., mit Biographien und Illustrationen hervorragender Deutsch-Amerikaner, welche zur Entwicklung der Stadt Buffalo beigetragen haben* (Buffalo: Reinecke & Zesch, 1989), 116. [hereafter *Geschichte der Deutschen*]

To this contemporary observer, “the Germans” appeared united by their foreign tongue, their segregated settlement patterns, and their multitude of associations. This ascribed identity that saw German-speaking migrants as a group regardless of their internal differences, could not but affect how German migrants perceived themselves.²⁶

Clustered in wards 4, 5, 6 and 7, Germans did exhibit a high degree of institutional completeness. They populated “a village” replete with several German-language newspapers, churches, social organizations, cultural clubs, three militia companies, and six volunteer fire brigades.²⁷ While largely absent from the white collar and professional occupations, they came to dominate the crafts, comprising 70 per cent of brickmasons, coopers, and shoemakers, and 60 per cent of cabinet makers, tailors, butchers, and iron workers by 1855.²⁸ Levels of property ownership also reflected the sound material foundations of Buffalo’s German-speaking population; in 1855, 40 per cent of the Germans owned real estate, compared to 43 per cent of the Americans and 23 per cent of the Irish.²⁹ Duly impressed by German respectability, the *Democracy* saw among them “cultivated, intellectual minds, scientific and philosophical geniuses” and foretold rich rewards to anyone “fortunate enough to break through the barriers which surround them.”³⁰

Buffalo beigetragen haben (Buffalo: Reinecke & Zesch, 1989), 116. [hereafter *Geschichte der Deutschen*]

²⁶ In this context, see also Kathleen Neils Conzen, “Patterns of German-American History,” in Randall M. Miller ed., *Germans in America: Retrospect and Prospect* (Philadelphia: German Society of Pennsylvania, 1984), 25; Stanley Nadel, *Little Germany: Ethnicity, Religion, and Class in New York City, 1845-80* (Urbana, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 6.

²⁷ Glasco, *Ethnicity and Social Structure*, 63; Gerber, *An American Pluralism*, 188; Truman C. White, *A Descriptive Work on Erie County, New York, Vol. I* (Boston History Company, 1898), 610-28; H. Perry Smith, *History of the City of Buffalo and Erie County, Vol. II* (Syracuse, N.Y.: D. Mason & Co., 1884), 150-61; *Geschichte der Deutschen*, 54-8, 70-7, 101-5, 124-6, 144-9, 150-9, 177-80.

²⁸ Glasco, *Ethnicity and Social Structure*, 84-95.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 123; *Geschichte der Deutschen*, 90.

³⁰ *Geschichte der Deutschen*, 116.

To be sure, by 1854 the seemingly insurmountable “barriers” which the author conjured had begun to lessen. Since the German Young Men’s Association had instigated the celebration of St. John’s Day in 1851 – a folk festival that marked the onset of summer – the annual festival had become a “showcase for all of German popular and high culture” that was eagerly awaited by the city’s English-language press and attracted large numbers of American celebrants.³¹ The city’s musical life, orchestrated almost single-handedly by recent German migrants, also brought together Americans and Germans in the shared enjoyment of sacred, choral, and classical music.³² In all instances, German culture was publicized and popularized by the energetic efforts of political refugees and artisans whose arrival in the late 1840s and early 1850s transformed German Buffalo.

The number of middle-class intellectuals – among them Carl Adam, the musical director of the 1860 *Sängerfest* – who had fled the German states after the failed revolutions of 1848 and found employment in Buffalo, was not large.³³ But their ranks were joined by an indeterminate number of “radicalized artisans” whose local presence led to a brief flowering of a German labour movement and the founding of two singing associations, the Buffalo *Liedertafel* and the *Sängerbund*, who would organize the 1860 singers’ festival.³⁴ What distinguished the political refugees, the so-called ‘Greens’, from the old settlers (known as ‘Grays’) was the outlook of exile. Theirs was not a voluntary migration, but an inherently

³¹ Gerber, “‘The Germans Take Care of Our Celebrations’,” 52. See also *Geschichte der Deutschen*, 103-5.

³² Gerber, “‘The Germans Take Care of Our Celebrations’,” 52, 54.

³³ *Geschichte der Deutschen*, 102; Gerber, *An American Pluralism*, 196, 229.

³⁴ Gerber, *An American Pluralism*, 170; Carl Wittke, *Refugees of the Revolution: The German Forty-Eighters in America* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1952), 3, 341-2.

political one. The 'nation' left behind continued to exert a powerful hold on their imagination, even though it did not yet exist as a political entity.³⁵

The refugees' world-view which located a sense of peoplehood in the various manifestations of German culture had been shaped by "organized societal nationalism," to quote the title of Dieter Düring's pioneering work.³⁶ In turning to the associations of singers and gymnasts in the years between the German uprising against Napoleon and the revolutions of 1848, Düring uncovered the history of the first political mass movement in Germany. From its rituals, festivals, and communication networks, a nationalism emerged that celebrated language and folk culture as incarnations of a "people's spirit" (*Volksgeist*).³⁷ As early as in December 1808, the Berlin *Liedertafel*, an exclusive singing association founded by composer Karl Friedrich Zelter, had sought to cultivate songs "which breathe German spirit, solemnity, and joy" while refraining "from the mere imitation of foreign forms."³⁸ More influential was the Swiss music teacher and publisher, Hans Georg Nägeli, who saw in *male* choral singing the key to nation-building. According to Nägeli, the German language possessed an innate

³⁵ For a discussion of the "diasporic imagination" see Matthew Freye Jacobson, *Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish, and Jewish Immigrants in the United States* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1995), 1-10.

³⁶ Dieter Düring, *Organisierter gesellschaftlicher Nationalismus in Deutschland, 1808-1847: Bedeutung und Funktion der Turner- und Sängervereine für die deutsche Nationalbewegung* (München: R. Oldenburg Verlag, 1984). The literature on the culture of organized nationalism has since grown considerably. See, in particular, Dieter Düring and Paul Münch eds., *Öffentliche Festkultur: Politische Feste in Deutschland von der Aufklärung bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg* (Hamburg: Reinbeck, 1988); Friedhelm Brusniak and Dietmar Klenke eds., *"Heil deutschem Wort und Sang": Nationalidentität und Gesangskultur in der deutschen Geschichte – Tagungsbericht Feuchtwangen, 1994* (Augsburg: Dr. Bernd Wissner, 1995); Dietmar Klenke, "National-kriegerisches Gemeinschaftsideal als politische Religion: Zum Vereinsnationalismus der Sänger, Schützen und Turner am Vorabend der Einigungskriege," *Historische Zeitschrift*, 260, 2 (1995), 395-448.

³⁷ Düring, *Organisierter gesellschaftlicher Nationalismus*, 2-4, 22-42, 321.

³⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, 46: "Lieder[], 'die den deutschen Sinn, Ernst und Fröhlichkeit atmen' und die 'keine bloßen Nachahmungen ausländischer Formen sind'."

declamatory quality that could be rendered home only in the deeper male voices which were naturally suited to the precise articulation of vowels.³⁹

Inspired by Nägeli's idea of a patriotic choral movement that celebrated German folk culture in four-part harmony, the *Sängerbewegung* (singers' movement) first achieved momentum in 1820s southern Germany, from where gradually it spread to the north. The movement's ostensibly cultural outlook served to camouflage its political ideals and shielded it from the ban of political associations which the German Parliament imposed on July 5, 1832.⁴⁰ Communication networks between singing associations were forged at regional singers' festivals whose popularity promoted the idea of pan-German nation. But it were the 'national' festivals at Würzburg (1845), Cologne (1846), and Lübeck (1847) that first attracted singers from different regions and various bourgeois backgrounds, including petty bourgeoisie, intellectuals, artisans, civil servants, teachers, merchants, and a small, but prominent, number of musicians and industrialists.⁴¹ At these 1840s festivals, celebrants felt emboldened enough to demand "German unity" and to deplore, in no uncertain terms, the absence of civil liberties.⁴²

It was this symbolic vocabulary that was intimately familiar to German migrants who arrived in Buffalo in the late 1840s and early 1850s and, almost immediately, began to attack the world the Grays had created. Exile Dr. Karl De Haas, for one, held the Grays' "lower and middle class" origins responsible for the parochial character of German Buffalo and promised that the newly migrated "educated and cultured strata" would strive to fill the cultural void. Not surprisingly, the charge left settlers like Dr. Francis Brunck, the editor of the *Weltbürger*, fuming. He, in turn, accused the Greens of elitism and arrogance. As a result, Buffalo's

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 162-6.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 145-6.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 202-3, 253-7.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 259-89.

Deutschendörfchen whose ‘exotic’ charm had intrigued the 1854 observer was rocked by yet another conflict, a leadership struggle between the Grays and Greens who were sharply divided on questions of politics, slavery, capitalism, and religion.⁴³

What bridged these ideological divides was “an existential commitment to a shared, daily way of life,” as David Gerber, among others, has argued.⁴⁴ In picnics and excursion, family outings in beer gardens, processions, and musical performances, German-speaking migrants cherished a popular culture that led them to define their identity in group terms. And when the temperance movement and Sabbatarianism threatened to rupture this unique fabric of sociability in the 1850s, Greens and Grays, united, rose to its defence.⁴⁵

If a shared way of life bound German migrants together, a network of voluntary associations (*Vereine*) also extended across regional and national lines. The four major secular *Vereine* of the 1850s – three of which had been founded by the newcomers – all integrated members from several German States, thus becoming German melting pots in their own right.⁴⁶ Under the auspices of the German Young Men’s Association, the *Buffalo Liedertafel* was founded in May 1848 by “twenty-one gentlemen from among the German population of our then small city.”⁴⁷ Its constitution was a meticulously crafted document that not only stated the *Liedertafel*’s purpose, namely “the encouragement of music, particularly

⁴³ Gerber, *An American Pluralism*, 225-9; Wittke, *Refugees of the Revolution*, 73-4; *Geschichte der Deutschen*, 91, 100-9.

⁴⁴ Gerber, *An American Pluralism*, 167.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* See also *Geschichte der Deutschen*, 65-7; Conzen, “Ethnicity as a Festive Culture,” in *The Invention of Ethnicity*, 48; Wittke, *Refugees of the Revolution*, 58-9, 181.

⁴⁶ Andrew P. Yox, “Bonds of Community: Buffalo’s German Element, 1853-1871,” *New York History* (April 1985), 148-9.

⁴⁷ Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society [hereafter BECHS], Vertical File: Music - Organizations, Societies, Clubs, “Constitution und Nebengesetze des Gesangsvereins Buffalo Liedertafel, Buffalo, N.Y., Organisirt [sic] den 9ten May 1848 (Buffalo: Grant Bros., 1880)”; *Ibid.*, “History of the Buffalo Liedertafel with a list of its members. Published on occasion of the Fair, held February 13-18, 1882 (Buffalo: Gies & Co., n.d.), 3”; *Ibid.*, “Buffalo Liedertafel, 1848-1898,” 14; *Geschichte der Deutschen*, 121.

men's and mixed chorus singing, and the promotion of sociability and the love for art and beauty," but also established guidelines that governed the behaviour of its members as both singers and citizens. Unlike its prestigious Berlin name-sake, the Buffalo *Liedertafel* promoted both male and mixed chorus singing. In 1854, a mixed chorus was formed that consisted of 18 female and 31 male singers. Seven years later, the membership ranks had swelled to 24 female singers, 46 male singers, and 35 passive members, the so-called "friends of art" (*Kunstfreunde*), whose support not only helped financing four annual concerts but also broadened the association's social base.⁴⁸ From its beginnings, the *Liedertafel* tailored its performances towards American audiences, with conductor Carl Adam explaining the meanings of songs in halting English.⁴⁹ The musical offerings must have sufficiently enamoured some American concert-goers to make them join the society as passive members, thus qualifying for complimentary tickets at the 1860 Buffalo *Sängerfest*.⁵⁰

Buffalo's second German singing society, the *Sängerbund*, sprang from more modest and radical roots. In May 1849, German tailors, shoemakers, and carpenters banded together in the "German-American Workingmen's Union" (GAWU) that not only united workers of different crafts but also sought to appeal to Irish and American workers. The association's principal goal was the abolition of the "oppressive and intolerable" system of store-pay that paid workers in signed notes, rather than cash. By having to redeem notes at specific stores, workers had part of their earnings removed from their control and found themselves at the mercy of an often corrupt system that overpriced essential goods. In July 1850, two-hundred German tailors organized a rowdy procession, "on which occasion one of their principal store-pay bosses was hung in effigy in front of his store on Main Street," as *Sängerbund* member

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Geschichte der Deutschen*, 123.

⁵⁰ *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, July 21, 1860, 3.

Ernst Besser recalled. "This led to a sundry law suits; it was however one of the means which brought about the final abandonment of the obnoxious custom."⁵¹ Once its major rallying point disappeared, the GAWU dissolved into trade unions, co-operative workshops, and cultural organizations, the latter of which would far outlast the brief attempt at multiethnic mobilization.⁵²

In the mid-1850s, a fraction of the GAWU-singing society organized a new choral association, the *Sängerbund*. Weekly rehearsals were held in a private home and, in the autumn of 1855, the young association entered the public stage at its inaugural concert at Gillig's Hall.⁵³ Buffalo's cultural scene now featured a new chorus that, alongside with the *Liedertafel*, helped create a local musical life. Both associations combined performances of classical and sacred music with appearances at picnics and people's festivals. Both, too, courted American attendance by advertising in the English-language press and inviting Americans to join the festive sociability at Westphal's Garden, a beer garden in the north end of the city.⁵⁴ In doing so, they shaped a festive culture that was enjoyed by Germans and Americans alike.

Networks of Community

As a universal language, music seemed particularly suited to build social networks between German-speaking migrants. In Buffalo's singing societies, migrants of different German states, who might not have shared a common identity in their regions of origin, were united in the shared celebration of German song and sound. In entering the public sphere at

⁵¹ BECHS, Manuscript Collection MSS 25 VH B93b, "J. W. Ernst Besser. Historical Sketch and Printed Notes of the German Singing Society Deutscher Sängerbund of Buffalo, N.Y., May 1887."

⁵² *Ibid.*; *Geschichte der Deutschen*, 141-4; Gerber, *An American Pluralism*, 197-9, 233, 243-74.

⁵³ *Geschichte der Deutschen*, 160.

⁵⁴ Gerber, "The Germans Take Care of Our Celebrations," 52-5.

concerts, musical soirees, people's festivals, and picnics, they provided it with a German twist. In participating at the annual *Sängerfeste*, finally, they expanded social networks to partake in an emergent German public.

In speaking of social networks, rather than 'community', we might avoid the fallacious equation of 'community' with place and become more closely attuned to the varied interactions and exchanges that constituted German-American identity at a specific moment of time.⁵⁵ It is the fluid nature of these networks that makes the task of historical detection so challenging and rewarding. Members of networks continuously negotiated their relations with other networks that were equally in flux. Viewed from the perspective of social network theory, the Buffalo *Sängerfest* of 1860 is perhaps best understood as part of an on-going conversation that relied upon "channels of communication for cultural exchange."⁵⁶ It was the intensity of communication that flowed through these channels that would shape the contours of German identity.⁵⁷ If culture is "based upon the community of communication," as Karl W. Deutsch suggested in 1953, the presence of these communication channels was crucial in integrating local German societies into an inter-communicating regional system that had the potential of becoming a national one.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ The following discussion has been informed by the John C. Walsh and Steven High, "Rethinking the Concept of Community," *Histoire sociale / Social History*, 32, 64 (1999), 255-73. See also Charles Tilly, "Transplanted Networks," in Virginia Yans-McLaughlin ed., *Immigration Reconsidered: History, Sociology, and Politics* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 79-95.

⁵⁶ Hartmut Lehmann, "Transatlantic Migration, Transatlantic Networks, Transatlantic Transfers: Concluding Remarks," in Hartmut Lehmann, Hermann Wellenreuther, and Renate Wilson eds., *In Search of Peace and Prosperity: New German Settlements in Eighteenth-Century Europe and America* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 316.

⁵⁷ Craig Calhoun, "History, Anthropology, and the Study of Communities: Some Problems in Macfarlane's Proposal," *Social History*, 3 (1978), 363-73.

⁵⁸ Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1966 [1953]), 37, see also 86-102.

When the Buffalo *Liedertafel* and *Sängerbund* attended the 1859 *Sängerfest* in Cleveland (Ohio), the young associations joined the eleventh gathering of the *North American Sängerbund* that had been founded at Cincinnati in 1849. Even earlier, German singing societies from Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Cincinnati had visited each other occasionally “to sing, to drink, to enthuse, and to amuse themselves.”⁵⁹ But only in Cincinnati were their contacts formalized as singers from Cincinnati, Louisville, and Madison (Indiana) decided to meet each year for an urban mass song festival.⁶⁰ Beyond their musical functions, these festivals served as forums of communication. Singers who arrived in the host city stayed at private homes, joined musical forces in the grand concert, greeted friends at the festival’s headquarters, and forged new friendships in the casual encounters at banquets and taverns, picnics and excursions. Returning home, they carried with them not only tales and anecdotes which they liberally forced upon friends and relatives, but also a sense of belonging to a community of singers.⁶¹ Far from being mundane, the personal and group contacts, the solemn rendering of mass choruses, the toasts at the banquet, the merriment at the beer garden, and the courteous invitations to upcoming *Sängerfeste* helped build social networks that drew their members deeper into American life, all the while their music “continued to sound German,” to borrow Philip V. Bohlman’s memorable phrase.⁶² At the 1859 singers’

⁵⁹ Buffalo and Erie County Public Library [hereafter BECPL], Rare Book Room, *Frank & Leslie’s Illustrierte Zeitung*, July 28, 1883, 82.

⁶⁰ *Geschichte der Deutschen*, 124. See also Suzanne Gail Snyder, “The *Männerchor* tradition in the United States: An historical analysis of its contribution to American musical culture,” Ph.D., University of Iowa, 1991, 141; Mary Jane Corry, “The Role of German Singing Societies in Nineteenth-century America,” in E. Allen McCormick ed., *Germans in America: Aspects of German-American Relations in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University, 1983), 164-5.

⁶¹ Letter from the singing society *Eintracht* (Newark) to the organizers of the 1860 Buffalo *Sängerfest*, reprinted in the Buffalo *Demokrat*, August 1, 1860, 3. See also Buffalo *Demokrat*, August 4, 1860, 3 and August 7, 1860, 3.

⁶² Philip V. Bohlman, “‘Still, They Were All Germans in Town’,” in *Emigration and Settlement Patterns of German Communities in North America*, 276. For a German context see Düding, *Organisierter gesellschaftlicher Nationalismus*, 180-9, 319 and Klenke, “Das nationalheroische

festival in Cleveland, the *Sängerbund*'s soulful rendering of "Lebe wohl, mein Vaterland" ("Farewell, my Fatherland") earned hearty applause, but it was the *Liedertafel* that brought home the much-coveted first prize, a silver goblet. Together, the two societies were awarded the honour of hosting the 1860 *Fest* in Buffalo.⁶³

Preparations for the festival began in early January when the organizing committee appealed to Buffalo's German citizens "to take pride in supporting our singers, in both word and deed."⁶⁴ In the following months, the societies proved themselves to be skilful organizers. Drawing upon the programmes of previous years, they compiled a list of singing societies whom they formally invited to the *Sängerfest*. They also extended a warm welcome to any singing society that wished to join the festive gathering by publishing notices in the German-language press.⁶⁵ In stores and taverns, they posted "accommodation lists" where German-speaking residents could indicate their willingness to open their homes to the visiting singers. The committee, however, was quick to add a word of caution; prospective hosts should first consult with their wives "who did not suffer gladly to being ignored" in this important domestic decision.⁶⁶ Only if women agreed to accommodate guests, "if namely the housewife greets the stranger with a friendly word so that he feels right at home and like among old friends, ... will we celebrate a singers' festival in which we may take pride and which the singers will fondly remember."⁶⁷

Charisma der deutschen Sängerfeste am Vorabend der Einigungskriege," in *"Heil deutschen Wort und Sang!"* 171

⁶³ "J. W. Besser: Historical Sketch and Printed Notices of the German Singing Society Deutscher Sängerbund of Buffalo, N.Y., May 1887," 26; *Geschichte der Deutschen*, 124.

⁶⁴ *Buffalo Demokrat*, January 19, 1860, 3: "die hiesigen Deutschen sollten deshalb auch einen Stolz darin suchen, unseren Sängern mit Rath und That an die Hand zu gehen."

⁶⁵ See, for instance, *Buffalo Demokrat*, February 17, 1860, 2.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, April 24, 1860, 3: "die Frau [läßt] sich nicht gutwillig das Regiment aus der Hand nehmen."

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*: "wenn namentlich die Hausfrau mit freundlichen Worten den Fremden begrüßt, daß er sich gleich heimisch und wie unter alten Freunden fühlt, dann ... [werden] wir ein Gesangsfest feiern, auf das wir stolz sein und auf das die Sänger mit Freude zurückblicken können."

It was characteristic of the gendered underpinnings of the Buffalo *Sängerfest* that women were allotted a role as 'helpers', but barred from many major events. Recognized as rightful "dictators of domestic and familial standards," they were asked to provide an atmosphere of hospitality for the visitors from afar.⁶⁸ But they could only gaze upon the stage of the "monster concert" where the male singing societies had assembled, and observed the sumptuous banquet at St. James Hall from the seclusion of the galleries.⁶⁹

Still, the cult of true womanhood that discouraged women from "trespass[ing] beyond the feminine boundaries of the home, church, and charity," seemed to apply more to the native-born, Protestant population than to the German culture of familial celebration.⁷⁰ "American commentators," Kathleen Neils Conzen has observed, "constantly remarked upon the presence of seemingly respectable German families in public places where no genteel Anglo-American woman would venture."⁷¹ At the Buffalo *Sängerfest*, too, "gaily dressed women and children" attended the picnic at Moffat's Grove where fun and frolic awaited them.⁷² Women also occupied the public stage at selected events. At the reception concert of the *Sängerfest*, forty female singers, dressed in white, performed Weber's "Euryanthe" and Becker's "Gypsies" alongside "some 75 gentlemen." Admittedly, the white dresses evoked the image of female purity, while the press couched its praise in the language of Victorian gender ideology, lauding the soloists Miss Schmidt and Mrs. Carl Adam for their "tenderest

⁶⁸ Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History*, 75, 1 (1988), 28; Christine Stansell, "Women, Children, and the Uses of the Streets: Class and Gender Conflict in New York City, 1850-1860," *Feminist Studies*, 8, 2 (Summer 1982), 311.

⁶⁹ *Buffalo Express*, July 25, 1860, 3. For a point of comparison see April R. Schultz, *Ethnicity on Parade: Inventing the Norwegian American Through Celebration* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 67-9.

⁷⁰ Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984 [1981]), 188-9.

⁷¹ Conzen, "Ethnicity as Festive Culture," in *The Invention of Ethnicity*, 53.

⁷² *Buffalo Daily Republic*, July 27, 1860, 3.

expression” and “delicacy and feeling.”⁷³ Nonetheless, these appearances were remarkable for the fact that they allowed women to enter the public stage as *actors*, as celebrants and singers respectively, rather than casting them exclusively as female *symbols* of civic virtue.⁷⁴

As women ventured into the public sphere, ethnicity, as well, assumed a public role. In anticipation of the week-long festivities, Buffalo’s residents decorated the streets with banners and buntings, flags and festoons, with Americans “busily decorating” alongside their “German brethren.”⁷⁵ Just as the population partook in the festival, so, too, did the municipal authorities. Mayor Allberger “cordially welcomed the singers and their friends to the hospitality of the city” and, like his aldermen, attended concerts, banquet, and picnic.⁷⁶ The local English-language press similarly adopted the festival’s cause and encouraged its readers to “manifest by any means in their power that Buffalo as a city is desirous of welcoming the widely gathered army of singers and players.”⁷⁷ Buffalo’s population readily heeded the advice. At the festival’s musical highlights – the reception concert, the grand concert, and the prize concert – the singers performed before packed halls, with throngs of people crowding at the doors and pressing into the building.⁷⁸ The closing event, the picnic at Moffat’s Grove, turned into a veritable people’s festival:

⁷³ *Buffalo Daily Courier*, July 24, 1860, 2; *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, July 24, 1860, 3.

⁷⁴ In this context see also Mary P. Ryan, “Gender and Public Access: Women’s Politics in Nineteenth-Century America,” in Craig Calhoun ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: MIT Press, 1994 [1992]), 259-88; Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1990).

⁷⁵ *Buffalo Daily Republic*, July 23, 1860, 3; *Buffalo Express*, July 24, 1860, 3; *Buffalo Daily Courier*, July 24, 1860, 2; *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, July 23, 1860, 3; *Buffalo Demokrat*, July 24, 1860, 3.

⁷⁶ *Buffalo Daily Courier*, July 24, 1860, 2; *Buffalo Express*, July 24, 1860, 3.

⁷⁷ *Buffalo Daily Courier*, July 23, 1860, 2. See also *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, July 21, 1860, 2; *Ibid.*, July 23, 1860, 3; *Buffalo Express*, July 24, 1860, 3.

⁷⁸ *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, July 25, 1860, 3; *Buffalo Daily Courier*, July 25, 1860, 2; *Buffalo Daily Republic*, July 25, 1860, 3; *Buffalo Demokrat*, July 25, 1860, 2.

Main street, from the centre of the city far way to the hill, was one mass of moving multitude, making their way toward the grove. The horse cars swarmed with passengers. On the platforms, inside, on top, they were black with people. At every crossing stood crowds waiting for a chance to ride, who piled on every possible place, and although the car ran every three minutes, no one-fourth of those desiring to attend the pic-nic had an opportunity of riding. As a consequence, every carriage, vehicle, wagon, and even every old worn out omnibus was dragged from the dust of ages, and pressed into the service of the Saengerbund.⁷⁹

The *Sängerfest*'s broad, public appeal clearly delighted the organizing committee that, from the outset, had sought to make the *Fest* as inclusive as possible.⁸⁰

The organizers also sought to ensure that the gathering would be remembered as a "festival of joy and fraternization of the German singers of America."⁸¹ When the visiting societies arrived at the railway station – among them the sole Canadian representative, the *Concordia* society from Preston, Waterloo County – they were greeted by delegations of both *Liedertafel* and *Saengerbund* and ceremoniously escorted to St. James Hall, the festival's headquarters.⁸² Importantly, the singers of New York State, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Michigan, and Ontario had not arrived alone; they came accompanied by "nearly the triple number of passive members" – family, relatives, and friends who formed an integral (if less prominent) part of the musical networks.⁸³ In their spare time, the visitors toured the city's sights, readily identifiable by their society badges which the *Buffalo Express* dubbed "an ubiquitous object, discernable [sic] at every turn of the eye."⁸⁴ The beer halls, too, were popular destination where "visitors and their city entertainers hobnobbed together

⁷⁹ *Buffalo Daily Republic*, July 27, 1860, 3.

⁸⁰ *Buffalo Demokrat*, April 13, 1860, 3 and July 25, 1860, 2.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, April 10, 1860, 3 and July 23, 1860, 2: "Freuden- und Verbrüderungsfeste der deutschen Sänger Amerikas"; *Geschichte der Deutschen*, 94.

⁸² *Buffalo Daily Courier*, July 24, 1860, 2; *Buffalo Express*, July 24, 1860, 2.

⁸³ *Buffalo Daily Courier*, July 24, 1860, 2; *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, July 24, 1860, 3; *Buffalo Demokrat*, July 24, 1860, 3.

⁸⁴ *Buffalo Express*, July 25, 1860, 3.

around beer tables, pettering [sic] acquaintance with each other over many a glass of 'lager'.⁸⁵

Alcohol, it appeared, was as much an adjunct of the festivities as were the "snatches of song rung forth from half shut doors and windows, fully as fine as anything to which the public are invited to the concert room."⁸⁶ Thus, in both the realms of art and festive culture, social networks were formed that drew German-speaking migrants closer to each other while, simultaneously, building bridges between American residents and their "Teutonic cousins."⁸⁷

"This Splendid Achievement of Our Teutonic Cousins"

When scouring Buffalo's English-language papers for descriptions of the 1860 *Sängerfest*, their positive tenor is striking indeed. The local press not only devoted long articles to the singers' festival, it also revelled in the 'exotic' gathering that, for a moment, seemed to transform the city into "Buffalonian Germany":

Any one who walked the streets and haply [sic] listened at the open doors might have fancied that he stood in genuine Deutschland, and heard the prolonged merriment of a song-festival in some beautiful city of the Rhine. Sounds melodious and soft, of instrumental music floated far and sweetly in Buffalonian Germany, and it is not to be doubted that when at last, far in the night, the final echo died away into silence, many a stout Teutonic heart dreamed itself to the other side of the Atlantic. So thoroughly for the time being is Buffalo Germanized.⁸⁸

Rather than perceiving the "German invasion" as a threat, even the nativist *Commercial Advertiser* embraced "this splendid achievement of our Teutonic cousins," a remarkable endorsement from a paper that only three years earlier had sputtered with rage when the immigrant vote swept the Democratic Party to a decisive victory in the mayoral election.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Buffalo Daily Courier*, July 26, 1860, 2.

⁸⁷ *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, July 25, 1860, 3.

⁸⁸ *Buffalo Daily Courier*, July 26, 1860, 2.

⁸⁹ *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, July 24, 1860, 2 and July 25, 1860, 3; Glasco, *Ethnicity and Social Structure*, 301-14.

Blaming the “consolidated foreign vote” for the defeat, the *Commercial Advertiser* had scornfully characterized Buffalo’s East Side as

as little American as the duchy of Hesse Cassel; their population speaks a foreign language, reads foreign papers, isolates itself from the American element, and, steeped in ignorance of American politics, it clings to the bald name of democracy, and claims the right to subject the sons of the soil to the despotism of the brute force of numbers.⁹⁰

To understand the *Advertiser*’s reversal of opinion, we have to look beyond the party realignment of the late 1850s that saw German-speaking citizens among the supporters of the local Republican fusion ticket.⁹¹ And neither should we be satisfied with the observation that the *Commercial Advertiser* indulged in violent rhetoric primarily when ‘foreigners’ appeared as a political threat, while showing considerable tolerance for ‘cultural’ manifestations of ethnicity.⁹² Without dismissing either factor, the *Advertiser*’s change of heart appeared to reflect larger cultural currents that redefined the meanings of both ‘race’ and ‘recreation’, to the subsequent benefit of German-speaking migrants.

Studies of ‘whiteness’ have become fashionable as of late as historians have turned to the “construction of identity through otherness.”⁹³ In a fascinating work, David R. Roediger has shown that “the wages of whiteness” were eagerly embraced by Irish workers who “responded to a fear of dependency on wage labor and the necessities of capitalist work discipline.”⁹⁴ Historians Theodore W. Allen and Alexander Saxton, in turn, have reminded us that the republic’s promise of the pursuit of happiness was racially exclusive, for the 1790 naturalization law held out the

⁹⁰ Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*, June 12, 1857, quoted in Glasco, *Ethnicity and Social Structure*, 313.

⁹¹ Gerber, *An American Pluralism*, 375, 395, 399-404. See also Andrew P. Yox, “Decline of the German-American Community in Buffalo, 1855-1925,” Ph.D. History, University of Chicago, 1983, 84-90.

⁹² Glasco, *Ethnicity and Social Structure*, 290-1 and 295.

⁹³ David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London, New York: Verso, 1999 [1991]), 14.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 13. See also Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York, London: Routledge, 1995).

promise of citizenship to “free white persons” only.⁹⁵ The law, as Matthew Freye Jacobson has argued, was notable for both its “fierce exclusivity” and “staggering inclusivity”; it denied political rights to Asian Americans who were left vulnerable to white mobs or wartime hysteria, while granting successive waves of Irish, German, Scandinavian, East European, and Southern European migrants access to the civic polity.⁹⁶

But in the 1840s, the monolithic conception of whiteness began to fracture under the impact of unprecedented numbers of newcomers.⁹⁷ Concerns about the migrants’ assimilability combined with ethnologic discourses on race to supplant the image of a unified “Caucasian race”, a term first used by Samuel George Morton in his *Crania Americana* (1839).⁹⁸ The new thinking on race was reflected in the *Types of Mankind* (1854) in which Josiah C. Nott and George R. Gliddon set out to prove that humanity was divided into different “races” which displayed discrete physical, moral, and intellectual capabilities. The virtuous Anglo-Saxon, for instance, differed sharply from the “dirty,” “ragged,” “dark,” and “choleric” Celtic.⁹⁹ The idea of a hierarchy of races soon came to suffuse medical journals, school readers, and newspapers. In 1854, the *Buffalo Medical Journal* reported that the local “Teutonic races” had the highest “cranial capacity” (92 cubic inches), compared to the Celts

⁹⁵ Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Republic, Vol. 1: Racial Oppression and Social Control* (London: Verso, 1994); Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (London, New York: Verso, 1990), 10.

⁹⁶ Matthew Freye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1998), 40.

⁹⁷ Bruce Levine, *The Spirit of 1848: German Immigrants, Labor Conflict, and the Coming of the Civil War* (Urbana, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 2. As Levine points out, over four million migrants arrived on American shores between 1840 and 1860, a number equal to 30 percent of the nation’s free population.

⁹⁸ Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 41-5.

⁹⁹ Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonoism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1981), 135-7 and Dale T. Knobel, *Paddy and the Republic: Ethnicity and Nationality in Antebellum America* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1986), 88-9.

(87 cubic inches), Aborigines (84 cubic inches), and African Americans (83 cubic inches) respectively.¹⁰⁰ Three years later, the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser* evoked a kinship between the “Teutonic” and “Anglo-Saxon” races in an unabashed attempt to lure German Protestants into the Republican fold.¹⁰¹

By 1860, scientific discourses on race had become part of “the shared currency of cultural imagery.”¹⁰² In fact, so deeply embedded was the new racialism that it surfaced even in the “universal welcome” which the *Commercial Advertiser* extended to the participants at the 1860 Buffalo *Sängerfest*. As the *Advertiser*’s musings shed light on the complimentary public image of German-speaking migrants, they deserve quotation:

We are destined to become a mixed nationality and it is of the highest moment that the mixing should be done *secondaem artem*. There are crosses of humanity that are vile and worthless. Two fair originals can be spoiled by intermixture. The mulatto is a hybrid. Amalgamation of colors is only another name for annihilation of races.

And even with many European natives the Anglo-Saxon blood mingles unwillingly. The fair-haired Saxon intermarries with the swarthy Celt, but the two bloods combine like oil and water. In a few generations the original type is restored and among children of one family we may have the white-faced Englishman as the brother of the black-mazzled Celt. They are thus brought back to first conditions; there is no true crossing of the breed.

In this dilemma the Teuton comes in to furnish a strong and predominant element. Whatever our ideas of English ethnology, we all come back to a belief in the practical identity of the leading tribes of Briton with those of Germany. They blend, run in together, fuse, and out of the fusion comes as perfect a type of manhood as the world has yet produced.¹⁰³

The language of racial differentiation that permeates this editorial reminds us that the Irish were not necessarily considered as ‘white’ in antebellum America. It thus reflects a “hardening” of the popular Irish stereotype which Dale Knobel observed for the mid-nineteenth century. In the 1840s, Knobel notes, negative commentaries on “Celticism”

¹⁰⁰ *Buffalo Medical Journal*, 8 (1854), 152, as quoted in Mark Goldman, *High Hopes: The Rise and Decline of Buffalo, New York* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1983), 102, 300.

¹⁰¹ Glasco, *Ethnicity and Social Structure*, 315-6 and Gerber, *An American Pluralism*, 375.

¹⁰² Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, 7.

¹⁰³ *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, July 24, 1860, 2.

became linked to physical appearance, while the rationale for ethnic difference was located in “nature,” rather than “nurture.” It was, in other words, no longer the Old World experience of poverty and oppression that rendered Irish migrants a distinct people (a condition which could be overcome with conscious effort), but the immutable character of race which placed the Irish “outside the pale of ‘true’ Americanism.”¹⁰⁴

The public image of the Germans, on the other hand, minimized the distance between ‘Anglo-Saxons’ and ‘Teutons’. Since the early seventeenth century, English philosophers had portrayed “Anglo-Saxons as a vigorous branch of the sturdy Germanic tree,” relying heavily on Tacitus’s description of the Germanic tribes as a pure, noble, and freedom-loving people.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, across the Atlantic, adherents of the emergent polygenetic ‘sciences’ identified “the ancient German” as “the parent stock from which the highest modern civilization has sprung.”¹⁰⁶ The perceived racial kinship, which found expression in the family metaphors of “our Teutonic cousins” and “German brethren”, helps explain the benign treatment of German-speaking migrants in antebellum America.¹⁰⁷ Notwithstanding the fact that “Germans, too, were frequently Roman Catholic, had been raised under monarchical institutions, could sometimes be tarred with the brush of political radicalism, and spoke a foreign tongue besides,” as Dale Knobel has put it, their ‘Teutonic’ roots catapulted them to the top of the new racial hierarchy.¹⁰⁸

In sharp contrast to the “swarthy Celt,” physical characteristics were rarely attributed to Buffalo’s “Teutonic race.” Tongue in cheek, commentators described “stout” and “sturdy”

¹⁰⁴ Knobel, *Paddy and the Republic*, 12, 42, 56, 69-70, 88-89, 98-9.

¹⁰⁵ Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 11-9. See also John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New York: Atheneum, 1963 [1955]), 9-11.

¹⁰⁶ Joshua Nott (1840s), as quoted in Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 131.

¹⁰⁷ *Buffalo Express*, July 24, 1860, 3; *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, July 24, 1860, 2; July 25, 1860, 3; *Buffalo Daily Courier*, July 25, 1860, 2.

¹⁰⁸ Knobel, *Paddy and the Republic*, 99.

German singers whose faces were graced by “black, sandy and bushy moustaches.”¹⁰⁹ But these physical references were fleeting and few, and the irony unmistakable.¹¹⁰ More pronounced was the emphasis on ‘innate’ German qualities such as industry, order, and respectability. American observers at the 1860 *Sängerfest* painted a flattering image of German citizens who were “successful in business,” exhibited “energy and stability of character,” presented “a strong conservative element,” respected “law and order,” and had “wedded themselves to our institutions by that strongest of ties, the ownership of land.”¹¹¹ Waxing eloquently about “the breadth and geniality of the German character,” the *Daily Republic* left little doubt that a fusion of the German and Anglo-American elements seemed both possible and desirable.¹¹²

Looking into the German mirror, commentators glimpsed a reflection of Americans as money-making realists who showed appreciation for neither the arts nor sociability. The German singers, they remarked wonderingly, were attuned to “those hidden chords within us, which rouse so mysteriously to the concord of sweet sounds and respond to the utterances of poetry.” Their “conservatism and comtemplativeness” enabled them to appreciate “the depth of life.”¹¹³ Being “more soul-full” and of “emotional nature,” they demonstrated “a youth and joyousness of spirit – a heartiness of enthusiasm” that Americans heartily admired, but

¹⁰⁹ Implied, of course, was the contrasting image of the tall, thin, and clean-shaven American. See *Buffalo Daily Courier*, July 25, 1860, 2 and July 26, 1860, 2; *Buffalo Daily Republic*, July 27, 1860, 3.

¹¹⁰ The reporter for the *Buffalo Daily Republic*, for instance, finished his description of the picnic at Moffat’s Grove with a flourish that owes more to literary licence than a deeply ingrained stereotype of physical characteristics: “The example of our German friends was so infectious that all the Americans present became equally jovial, equally joyous, equally friendly, and before the party broke up, we saw several of them deep in the embrace of German brothers, the lips meeting in contact, below black, sandy and bushy moustaches.” (*Buffalo Daily Republic*, July 27, 1860, 3.)

¹¹¹ *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, July 24, 1860, 2. See also Knobel, *Paddy and the Republic*, 31-3 and 89.

¹¹² *Buffalo Daily Republic*, July 26, 1860, 2.

¹¹³ *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, July 24, 1860, 2; *Buffalo Daily Republic*, July 26, 1860, 2.

scarcely understood.¹¹⁴ Americans, by contrast, were chasing “the Almighty Dollar” and embracing “the idea of American progress.”¹¹⁵ As fitting for practical businessmen, their festivals had “a money-making turn. A surplus of receipts over expenditures is with us the index of success.” Not surprisingly, they marvelled at the curious sight of “thousands of strangers gathered from abroad, from East, West, and South” for the sole purpose of “arous[ing] the soul of music.”¹¹⁶ The “Musical Carnival,” one commentator suggested, might inspire Americans “to divest himself of his cares” and “to enjoy even for a day the actual liberty which only an absolute release from business can yield.”¹¹⁷ The *Commercial Advertiser* went further still; by blending “the fair-haired Saxon” and “the Teuton,” a new race would arise, ideally suited to American soil:

Out of the union of the two – the hard faced and resolute American and the more soul-full German – should come a glorious nationality; at once practical and poetic, utile and dulce, mingling the soft amenities of social life with the stern realities of a work-day world.¹¹⁸

If we take seriously the sentiment expressed here, the Buffalo *Sängerfest* (and, by extension, German festive culture) not only provided a forum where Germans and Americans could mingle; it also awakened in American celebrants a desire for the fine arts and the innocuous pleasures of recreation that could be incorporated (guilt-free) into their own lives. Equally important, it indicated a readiness to broaden the American mainstream by making room for German culture. Rather than being swallowed in the turbulent currents of mainstream culture, German migrants were encouraged to cultivate their ethnic differences and to change “the fair-headed Saxon,” just as they were changed by him.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*; Buffalo *Daily Courier*, July 25, 1860, 2.

¹¹⁵ Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*, July 24, 1860, 2; Buffalo *Daily Republic*, July 26, 1860, 2.

¹¹⁶ Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*, July 24, 1860, 2.

¹¹⁷ Buffalo *Daily Republic*, July 26, 1860, 2.

¹¹⁸ Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*, July 24, 1860, 2.

In an elegantly construed argument, David Gerber has suggested that something had to be “*lacking* among Americans that led them to lessen their resistance to German things and to seek foreign alternatives to the world they themselves were then creating during the formative era of American modernization.”¹¹⁹ Antebellum Americans, he holds, were disenchanted with Buffalo’s bleak cultural life that offered little opportunity for either “aesthetic transcendence” or “ordinary recreation.” At the same time, their moral culture imposed strict restraints on the type of leisure that was deemed respectable. It had to refrain from “excessive stimulation” and shield women and children from “public scenes of scandal and embarrassment.”¹²⁰ The *Sängerfest* admirably fulfilled both requirements. In saturating the city with music – indeed, making American commentators regret “the impracticability of bottling it up, in some fashion, for future use” – it brought to Buffalo the grand orchestral oeuvres of German composers and enveloped the commercial hub in “a whirlwind of sweet sounds.”¹²¹ But never did the musical carnival stray across the boundaries of respectable behaviour. On the contrary, notwithstanding the vast crowd assembled” at the picnic, “we heard of no accident or even brawl,” noted the *Commercial Advertiser*.¹²² Much like on the previous days, the “scene was one of *unmixed* enjoyment, uproar without riot; jollity without excess. It came fully up to our highest idea of German enjoyment and left us more than ever convinced that the Germans have reached perfection in the art of social intercourse.”¹²³ The 1860 singers’ festival, commentators concurred, was a memorable event that could teach Americans “a profitable lesson,” namely how to indulge in rational recreation without descending into excess.¹²⁴ Rather than suspending

¹¹⁹ Gerber, “‘The Germans Take Care of Our Celebrations’,” 42.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 42 and 48.

¹²¹ *Buffalo Daily Courier*, July 25, 1860, 2; *Buffalo Daily Republic*, July 25, 1860, 3; *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, July 24, 1860, 3; *Buffalo Daily Courier*, July 24, 1860, 2; *Buffalo Daily Republic*, July 25, 1860, 3.

¹²² *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, July 27, 1860, 3.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, July 26, 1860, 3.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, July 27, 1860, 3.

societal hierarchies and rules of conduct, the *Sängerfest* appeared to present a festive time that allowed for novel cultural exchanges while simultaneously reinforcing middle-class values of order, respectability, and self-control.¹²⁵

Still, “elements of the carnivalesque” remained embedded in the festivities, to the evident pleasure of American participants.¹²⁶ Surrendering himself willingly to the alcohol-fuelled merriment at the gentlemen’s banquet, one reporter captured the social whirlwind in equally fluid prose. Instead of orderly syntax, sentence fragments prevailed, with the writer professing:

a very confused recollection of Rhine whine; ... a distant collection of somebody singing – in fact everybody singing all at once; of an attempt to comprehend German by one vast mental effort; a general embracing of everybody; a moisture of twenty pairs of *male* German lips on our hitherto irreproachable labials; and a universal merging of everything into a happy, misty, indistinctiveness. And so ended the banquet.¹²⁷

At the picnic, as well, “lager was (and not figuratively either) on every lip and tongue” while the comic antics of “men dressed in the most outlandish costumes that can be imagined, some as devils, imps, Japanese, pirates, Yankees, corpulent Germans” delighted the audience.¹²⁸

Just like the musical performances had appealed to Germans and Americans alike, so too did the shady hills of Moffat’s Grove bring together Germans and Americans in frolic and fun.

Seemingly effortless, music adapted to the social occasion. Voiced in the German tongue, yet representing a universal language, it was equally at home in the concert hall, at the beer table,

¹²⁵ In this context see also Manfred Hettling and Paul Nolte, “Bürgerliche Feste als symbolische Politik im 19. Jahrhundert,” in Manfred Hettling and Paul Nolte eds., *Bürgerliche Feste: Symbolische Formen politischen Handelns im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 8, 16; Susan G. Davis, *Parades and Power: Street Theatre in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 20, 159, and 167; Robert Lewis, “Street Culture,” *Journal of American Studies*, 23 (1989), 86-8.

¹²⁶ Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London: Methuen, 1986), 177, see also 171-90.

¹²⁷ *Buffalo Daily Republic*, July 26, 1860, 3.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, July 27, 1860, 3. See also *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, July 27, 1860, 3.

or beneath the majestic trees, all the while alerting Americans to the fact that “these ‘Foreigners’ were really quite sociable people,” as a local German chronicle would muse thirty-eight years hence.¹²⁹

“Unser Talent, recht von Herzen vergnügt sein zu können”

Much has been made of the ‘cultural nationalism’ of the 1848er who waged a “battle for German art, music, science, and literature in America.”¹³⁰ To be sure, throughout the 1850s, Buffalo’s German-language press sought “to foster the German character and German customs” and enthusiastically embraced the refining influence of the fine arts.¹³¹ However, at the 1860 *Sängerfest*, the Buffalo *Demokrat* seemed to be more enamoured by the exuberant sociability of the *Fest* than its musical offerings. While paying an inordinate amount of attention to the picnic at Moffat’s Grove, it called the “monster concert” merely “satisfying” and offered a nuanced, rather critical, review.¹³² It might, of course, be argued that the *Demokrat*’s stance resulted from an intimate familiarity with the musical repertoire, its musical ear, so to speak, that none of the English-language papers possessed.¹³³ Although this was undoubtedly the case, the *Demokrat*’s coverage indicates that the 1860 *Sängerfest* did not yet speak *consciously* in the accents of cultural nationalism, to paraphrase Kathleen Neils Conzen.¹³⁴

In fact, the singers’ festival resembled more a festive hymn to German song, sound, and sociability than an ode to cultural nationalism. The grand concert at the railroad depot

¹²⁹ *Geschichte der Deutschen*, 116.

¹³⁰ Wittke, *Refugees of the Revolution*, 281; Gerber, “‘The Germans Take Care of Our Celebrations,’” 51.

¹³¹ Buffalo *Weltbürger*, June 28, 1851, as quoted in Gerber, *An American Pluralism*, 225. See also *ibid.*, 230.

¹³² For articles on the picnic see Buffalo *Demokrat*, July 18, 1860, 2; July 24, 1860, 3; July 25, 1860, 2; July 27, 1860, 2. For a review of the “monster concert” see Buffalo *Demokrat*, July 25, 1860, 2.

¹³³ For a notable exception see the Buffalo *Daily Republic*, July 25, 1860, 3.

¹³⁴ Conzen, “Ethnicity as Festive Culture,” in *The Invention of Ethnicity*, 51.

featured more classical music than folksy tunes.¹³⁵ Even at the prize concert of the singing societies where the charmingly rendered “On the Neckar, on the Rhine” stirred “the *amour patrie* in every German bosom,” if we are to believe the *Daily Courier*, two songs were markedly absent. At no point did singers burst into Ernst Moritz Arndt’s “Was ist des Deutschen Vaterland?” (1813) or Hoffmanns von Fallersleben’s “Deutschlands-Lied” (1841) – two patriotic tunes that had encapsulated the longing for German unity and liberty and dominated many a singers’ festival in 1840s Germany.¹³⁶ Also absent was the rhetorical pledge to the pervasive powers of German folk songs which the philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder had identified as a repository of the national spirit.¹³⁷ If the organizers of the *Fest* did profess any missionary zeal, it was channelled into propagating the “cheerful German nature” and revelling in “our talent to enjoy life wholeheartedly” (‘unser Talent, recht von Herzen vergnügt sein zu können’).¹³⁸

Only in a post-scriptum to the festivities was the *Sängerfest* viewed through the prism of cultural nationalism. In an article published in the *New Yorker Staatszeitung* and subsequently reprinted in the *Buffalo Demokrat*, editor Oswald Ottendorfer lauded “the ennobling influences of the German song in the formation of the American national character.”¹³⁹ For this 1848er who had fought in the revolutionary battles at Vienna, Dresden, and Prague, and fled to New York in 1850, music was intimately intertwined with national aspirations.¹⁴⁰ If German nationalists had wielded song as a weapon for national unity,

¹³⁵ *Buffalo Demokrat*, July 25, 1860, 2.

¹³⁶ Düring, *Organisierter gesellschaftlicher Nationalismus in Deutschland*, 270-6.

¹³⁷ Philip V. Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), xviii-xix, 6-12.

¹³⁸ *Buffalo Demokrat*, January 1, 1860, 3.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, August 2, 1860, 2: “die veredelnden Einflüsse des deutschen Liedes auf die Ausbildung des amerikanischen Nationalcharakters.”

¹⁴⁰ A. E. Zucker ed., *The Forty-Eighters: Political Refugees of the German Revolution of 1848* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1967 [1950]), 324-5. See also Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth Century Music* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 38-40.

German Americans could wield it to suffuse American materialism with “the blissful power of music.”¹⁴¹ Ottendorfer’s ideological stance mirrored the musings of other German-American intellectuals who, in the 1850s, were busily debating how German culture could be preserved in American society.¹⁴²

But in 1860 Buffalo, their theories of cultural nationalism had not yet come to dominate the festive gathering. The *Sängerfest* had to contend with more modest achievements. It expanded social networks to encompass German singers and celebrants from different regions, nations, denominations, and occupations; it displayed, to much effect, the infectious powers of German conviviality; and it broadened the boundaries of public culture. As we shall see in later chapters, it was not before the 1883 Buffalo *Sängerfest* that music donned its new gown as a *symbol* of German culture that would self-consciously seek to transform the American mainstream. For now, its role remained confined to a medium of communication. Couched in the language of festivity, it prepared the ground for the eventual convergence of German ‘villages’ across the nation into a German-America, and provided the mainstream with a German tinge.

In retrospect, the almost ‘timeless’ quality of the *Sängerfest* is startling. If festivals present “a time out of time,” as Alessandro Falassi has said so memorably, then, surely, the Buffalo singers’ festival was a prime example.¹⁴³ At a time when the United States was hurtling towards civil war and sectional politics divided the country as never before, the

¹⁴¹ Buffalo *Demokrat*, August 2, 1860, 2: “[die] beseligende... Macht der Musik.”

¹⁴² Kathleen Neils Conzen, “German-Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity,” in Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh eds., *America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred-Year History, Vol. 1: Immigration, Language, Ethnicity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 131-47.

¹⁴³ Alessandro Falassi ed., *Time out of Time: Essays on the Festival* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987).

Sängerfest conjured a world of social and musical harmony.¹⁴⁴ Perhaps, we may speculate, the almost wistful desire for musical enchantment and carnivalesque oblivion was fuelled by the extraordinary political tensions of the day. Yet if the *Sängerfest* of 1860 eschewed political commentary, another German festival – eleven years hence – would derive its very rationale from a political event, the achievement of German national unity in 1871.

¹⁴⁴ See John Niven, *The Coming of the Civil War, 1837-1861* (Wheeling, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, 1990).

Chapter III

Displays of *Deutschthum*: The German Peace Jubilees of 1871

"Today was a public holiday as there was a great peace-jubilee in town," Louis Breithaupt scribbled in his diary on May 2, 1871.¹ In a few broad strokes, the sixteen-year old captured the festive air of the celebration whose grandeur "was never surpassed by any similar event in Canada," as the *Toronto Daily Telegraph* gushed.² The jubilee that marked Germany's victory over France in the Franco-Prussian War was ushered in by a salute of twenty-one cannon shots, followed by divine service "in all the German churches of Berlin & Waterloo."³ Once the visitors from afar had been welcomed at the train station, a procession wound its way to the court house where orators celebrated Germany's "righteous" triumph over France. As exuberant as the speeches that conjured German unity and might were the ten thousand celebrants who clapped enthusiastically when an oak was planted "as a truly German symbol."⁴ In the evening, a torchlight procession marched down King Street that was "ablaze with illuminations, every house, workshop, factory, hotel and building being gracefully hung with Chinese lanterns, colored illuminations, devices in glass, and transparencies of every kind."⁵ With revellers singing German songs and loudly cheering at portraits of Emperor Wilhelm I and his "grim Chancellor," Bismarck, the jubilee culminated in a fireworks display and the unveiling of an oil-painting, *Germania*, which depicted the German nation as a belligerent woman, standing guard on the shores of the Rhine.⁶

¹ *University of Waterloo*, Doris Lewis Rare Book Room, Breithaupt Hewetson Clark Collection, "Diaries of Louis Jacob Breithaupt", May 2, 1871 [hereafter *Diaries of Louis Jacob Breithaupt*].

² *Toronto Daily Telegraph*, May 3, 1871, 4.

³ *Diaries of Louis Jacob Breithaupt*, May 2, 1871.

⁴ *Toronto Daily Telegraph*, May 3, 1871, 4; *Canadisches Volksblatt*, May 10, 1871, 2-3; *Berliner Journal*, May 4, 1871 and May 11, 1871, 2-3.

⁵ *Toronto Daily Telegraph*, May 3, 1871, 4.

⁶ *Ibid.*; *Diaries of Louis Jacob Breithaupt*, May 2, 1871; *Berliner Journal*, May 4, 1871.

In celebrating Germany's military triumph over France, the Germans of Waterloo County were not alone. In towns and cities across the United States, from San Francisco to New York, German communities staged elaborate festivals to honour Germany's ascent to the "leading European people" who had, at long last, won national unity.⁷ Hitherto, orator Georg Baltz mused at the Buffalo peace jubilee of May 29, 1871, "the German had a number of small Fatherlands, but one great Fatherland was wanting him."⁸ Now, he continued, "Germany may again carry her head proudly among the nations of the earth," for the founding of imperial Germany in 1871 had united a patchwork of regional German states into one single territory.⁹

If regional identities in Germany were refashioned into a national sense of belonging, in North America, too, Germany's unification constituted a significant symbolic event.¹⁰ As Brent O. Peterson has observed, "the fact of German unification added yet another variable to the multiplicity of forces already at work among German immigrants in the United States" – and, we might add, in Canada.¹¹ For a group that comprised a multitude of local and regional identities, the peace jubilee celebrations presented an opportunity to join together in city streets and market squares "in a short-term commitment to some larger civic identity."¹²

To probe the emergence of a German public among German-speaking migrants in Canada and the United States does not mean to assume that other identities, be they regional, religious, or

⁷ See the reports on the Buffalo Peace Jubilee in the Buffalo *Christian Advocate*, April 27, 1871, 1 and Buffalo *Daily Courier*, May 30, 1871, 2. For a summary description of German Peace Jubilees in the United States see *Die Deutschen in Amerika und die deutsch-amerikanischen Friedensfeste im Jahr 1871: Eine Erinnerungs-Schrift für die Deutschen diesseits und jenseits des Oceans* (New York: Verlags-Expedition des deutsch-amerikanischen Conversations-Lexicons, 1871).

⁸ Quoted in the Buffalo *Daily Courier*, May 30, 1871, 2.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 126-7 and Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials* (Berkeley, California: California University Press, 1990), 13.

¹¹ Brent O. Peterson, *Popular Narratives and Ethnic Identity: Literature and Community in Die Abendschule* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 141.

¹² Mary P. Ryan, *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City During the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 15.

political, were supplanted by an all-consuming ethnic identity. As we shall see, notwithstanding the homogenizing mould which the organizers sought to impose, intra-ethnic tensions and divergent constructions of *Deutschthum* surfaced during the festivities. Just as importantly, we have to recognize that localized identities were not mutually exclusive with national ones. If we take a clue from Alon Confino's study *The National as a Local Metaphor* in which he explores the construction of national identities in imperial Germany, the relationship between the local and the national was one of mutual reinforcement. In Germany, Confino argues, the powerful notion of *Heimat* (homeland) came to embody both the "small tangible community of people with face-to-face social relations" and the "imaginary national community that contained millions of people."¹³ In Canada and the United States, as well, memories of local homelands might have become synonymous with an imagined German nation that was thus being invested with feelings of familiarity.

How did an allegiance to Germany, as both the country of origin and the imagined national homeland, find expression in the peace jubilees? Conversely, how did national ideologies come to permeate the fabric of German migrant popular culture? Which historical narrative did the organizers present to the thousands of onlookers, and into which national myths did they tap? How did gender, class, and historical memory contribute to the construction of cultural identities in the course of the festivities? Finally, how did an emergent German identity translate into specific understandings of Canadian or American citizenship? To answer these questions, this chapter will probe notions of nation, narrative, unity, myth, citizenship and identity.

¹³ Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871-1918* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 126.

Nation

News of the Franco-Prussian War reached North America in July 1870 and, almost immediately, galvanized the representatives of organized *Deutschthum* into action.¹⁴ In the United States, “patriotic relief associations” (*patriotische Hilfsvereine*) formed to collect donations for the wounded, the widows and orphans of the war.¹⁵ Young men flooded the associations with requests to have their fares paid to Europe so they could fight on Germany’s side. Fearful that such acts might be construed as unpatriotic by Americans, these request were routinely denied. Humanitarian missions, by contrast, did not provoke the same misgivings. New Yorker relief societies sent forty-two physicians to Germany where they worked in make-shift hospitals.¹⁶ In Berlin (Canada), German spokesmen like John Motz, the editor of the *Berliner Journal*, and Hugo Kranz, who would be elected to the House of Commons in 1878 as its first ‘German’ member, spearheaded the founding of a ‘German patriotic relief organization’ that raised one thousand dollars for “the wounded and widows and orphans of the German armies,” while Toronto’s German community contributed two thousand dollars “for the relief of the widows and orphans of the Fatherland.”¹⁷ The very repetitiveness of these announcements revealed an important similarity in the mind-set of ethnic leaders. On both sides of the border, ethnic spokespersons were careful to highlight the humanitarian character of their donations, lest they be accused of disloyalty.

¹⁴ France had declared war on Germany on July 19, 1870. The war ended with the capitulation of Paris on January 28, 1871. See Manfred Görtemaker, *Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert: Entwicklungslinien* (Opladen: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1996), 237-55.

¹⁵ *Die Deutschen in Amerika*, 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

¹⁷ *Berliner Journal*, August 25, 1870, 2; October 20, 1870, 2; October 27, 1870, 2; November 17, 1870, 2; *Buffalo Daily Telegraph*, May 3, 1871, 4. For a brief profile of Hugo Kranz see John English and Kenneth McLaughlin, *Kitchener: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: Robin Brass, 1996 [1983]), 45-6.

The lingering sympathy with the German homeland that was reflected in multiple donations seems to support Herbert J. Gans's notion of 'symbolic ethnicity.' "Old countries," Gans holds, "are particularly useful as identity symbols because they are far away and cannot make arduous demands on American ethnics; even sending large amounts of money is ultimately an easy way to help unless the donors are making major economic sacrifices."¹⁸ Yet, as Matthew Frye Jacobson has noted, 'symbolic ethnicity' is no less real than American nationalism, for both are expressions of an 'imagined community'.¹⁹ Rather than calling the former 'symbolic' and the latter 'authentic', we should remember that both conceived community "as a deep, horizontal comradeship" whose 'reality' required a "leap of imagination."²⁰ Further, the symbolic donations to imperial Germany reflected long-standing transnational ties that surfaced, once again, when Waterloo County's residents proudly mailed accounts of 'their' peace jubilee to relatives in Germany.

Ironically, Germany itself was yet in the process of becoming. Far from constituting a national union on January 18, 1871, when the Prussian King was proclaimed Emperor of Germany in Versailles, it would take several decades until German local, regional and national identities merged into "one representation of the nation."²¹ But viewed from a trans-Atlantic distance, the newly created political entity had, almost instantaneously, donned the mantle of national greatness.

¹⁸ Herbert J. Gans, "Symbolic ethnicity: the future of ethnic groups and cultures in America," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2, 1 (January 1979), 10-1.

¹⁹ Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish, and Jewish Immigrants in the United States* (London, England and Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 220-1 and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, New York: Verso, 1991 [1983]).

²⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7 and Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, 221.

²¹ Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor*, 212, and 185-9. See also Görtemaker, *Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert*, 252.

The “dear Fatherland” and the “one Germany,” as it was described during the peace jubilee celebrations, evoked a feeling of belonging that transcended both time and space.²² “What could it be that reunited us – we, who for years long have lived thousands of miles away from the old Fatherland or know the same only from our parents’ accounts?,” a reporter of the *Canadischen Volksblatt* asked rhetorically. The answer, he asserted, was the realization of a long-cherished dream, “the unity and power of the country of our descent.”²³ Across the border, in Buffalo, orator Edward Storck evoked the eternal ties that bound German migrants to the Fatherland. “Upon such an occasion as this,” he said, “we cannot forget that we are Germans; born perhaps in a different province of our country, but still bound by every tie of consanguinity to the Fatherland.”²⁴ What is striking about these descriptions of the imagined homeland, Germany, is the attempt to naturalize the bonds of nationality by likening them to family and kinship ties. The land of our fathers (‘Fatherland’), orators held, was built upon ties of blood (the ties of ‘consanguinity’) and its memory kept alive by immigrants who faithfully handed down stories of the *Heimat* to children and grandchildren.²⁵ Indeed, another author suggested, the grand celebrations of Germany’s victory provided ample proof that German Americans presented “a genuine branch of the magnificent trunk whose roots rest in the heart of Europe and whose strong branches reach further, year for year.”²⁶ The flowery wording nicely captures the inherent paradox

²² *Berliner Journal*, April 16, 1896, 4 and *Canadisches Volksblatt*, May 10, 1871, 2-3. In fact, the enthusiasm which German-origin migrants showed during the course of the celebrations, was noted with surprise by English-language newspapers like the *Daily Telegraph*: “It must be borne in mind that it is a hard thing to become enthusiastic over a matter that happened three thousand miles away. The jubilants to-day did not see their countrymen win Weissenbourg, Gravelotte and Sedan, nor were they present when they marched in glory under the Arch de Triomphe” (May 3, 1871, 4).

²³ *Ibid.*: “Was war es, das uns, die wir zum Theil schon seit langen Jahren Tausende von Meilen vom alten Vaterlande leben, oder dasselbe nur durch Schilderungen aus dem Munde der Eltern kennen, dort zusammenführte?”

²⁴ As quoted in the *Buffalo Express*, May 30, 1871, 4.

²⁵ See also *Die Deutschen in Amerika*, 1-3.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 23: “ein echter Zweig des herrlichen Stammes ..., dessen Wurzeln in dem Herzen Europa’s ruhen und dessen starke Äste sich von Jahr zu Jahr weiter erstrecken.”

of nationalism that, in no way, distracted from its powerful appeal. Germany appeared not as an historical construction, but as a natural entity. Rather than being man-made, it was represented as an organic structure whose 'branches' reached as far as 'Germans' had travelled to foreign lands.²⁷

Learning about celebrations in other North American towns and cities, German-origin leaders in Berlin and Buffalo quickly concluded that they, too, had a 'national' obligation to organize a *Friedensfest*.²⁸ Throughout the months of April and May 1871, German-language newspapers in Buffalo and Berlin had reprinted detailed accounts of peace jubilees in New York, St. Louis, San Francisco, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. These descriptions furnished a festive 'vocabulary' with which Berlin and Buffalo could compose their very own celebrations. In due time, the two communities added their own tune to the chorus of festive voices, printed accounts of which reached readers across North America.²⁹ The fluid back and forth between the 'local' and the 'national' helps to explain why conversations about identity and community were strikingly similar in localities that were separated by vast geographical distances.³⁰

In eavesdropping on the conversations at the festivities, we find that nation was a malleable term. It signified both the *political* nation-state of imperial Germany, and the *cultural* community of German migrants in Canada and the United States. Indeed, the influx of visitors from across the border led orator Otto Klotz to exclaim that, today, Waterloo County celebrated a "truly ... national festival, ... considering that they had amongst them representatives from many other

²⁷ This image of the nation, of course, owed much to the ideas of romantic nationalism as they had been formulated by the German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder in the early nineteenth century. See William A. Wilson, "Herder, Folklore and Romantic Nationalism," in Elliott Oring ed., *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: A Reader* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1989), 22-3.

²⁸ *Berliner Journal*, March 9, 1871; *Canadisches Volksblatt*, April 26, 1871, 2; *Buffalo Demokrat*, April 12, 1871.

²⁹ See, for example, *Buffalo Demokrat*, April 3, 1871; April 12, 1871; May 4, 1871; and May 6, 1871. For Berlin see *Berliner Journal*, April 6, 1871, 3; April 2, 1871, 2; and May 25, 1871, 2.

³⁰ In this context see also *Die Deutschen in Amerika*, 26 and 32.

German associations, from the Province of Quebec, and also from the United States.”³¹ The spirit of community that suffused the festivities was perceptible to insiders and outsiders alike. “We question very much,” a reporter of the *Toronto Daily Telegraph* wrote, “whether the Berlin of the Fatherland will exhibit more enthusiasm when the Kaiser and his men make their formal entry into the capital, than was exhibited by the Berlin of Canada today.”³² In a similar vein, the *Buffalo Express* observed that “the spirit of nationality was rife and the sons and daughters of Fatherland joined heart and soul in celebrating the return of peace to Germany.”³³ Here, the imagined bond with Germany, and the more tangible community with fellow revellers, merged in a whirlwind of enthusiasm. In the act of communication, *communitas* was created – be it a community of readers, a union of celebrants, or an ‘imagined community’ of North American migrants.³⁴

Narrative

In staging the *Friedensfeste*, the organizers drew upon a historical narrative that pitted the noble nation of Germany against its jealous and frivolous “old hereditary enemy,” France.³⁵ In fact, although the festivities were ostensibly peace jubilees – a fact that was commented upon with much admiration in the English-language press – the rhetoric that permeated speeches and addresses served to subvert official tributes to the “return of bounteous peace and the ending of a cruel and devastating war.”³⁶ It was the laurel of the glorious victor, not the humble olive branch, that fired the imagination of orators in both Buffalo and Berlin.

³¹ *Ibid.* See also *Berliner Journal*, May 11, 1871, 2-3.

³² *Toronto Daily Telegraph*, May 3, 1871, 4.

³³ *Buffalo Express*, May 30, 1871, 4.

³⁴ See Victor Turner, as quoted in Kathleen Neils Conzen, “Ethnicity as Festive Culture: Nineteenth-Century German America on Parade,” in Werner Sollors ed., *The Invention of Ethnicity* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 47.

³⁵ Georg Baltz, as quoted in the *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 30, 1871, 2.

³⁶ *Buffalo Express*, May 27, 1871, 4.

Two historical narratives were intertwined in the celebrations. As the middle-class organizers of the festivals in Buffalo never grew tired of pointing out, today, they had assembled “to sing praises to the Shrine of Freedom.” In the words of festival president Dr. Storck, the city’s leading German Republican who had migrated to the United States after the failed 1848/49 revolutions and established a popular medical practice, “we meet as the votaries of peace, to celebrate the return of that happy state to our native Germany.”³⁷ Storck’s speech was listened to attentively by the members of Buffalo’s Common Council who had assembled in the Council Chamber before joining the peace jubilee procession. In Berlin, as well, Otto Klotz, a justice of the peace and the county’s longest-serving school trustee, addressed a crowd of several thousand in front of the court house, reminding them that they were celebrating “one of the noblest of public festivals – a peace festival.”³⁸ Not to revel in the downfall of Paris, but to express their “joy and gratitude that at last an end had been put to the late terrible sacrifice of life and destruction of property” had the Germans of Ontario assembled.³⁹ In casting the festival as a celebration of peace, both festival presidents sought to devise a “‘safe’ and non-threatening” narrative of German identity.⁴⁰ In doing so, they were not alone. So concerned were some members of the New York City jubilee committee that a grand jubilee procession might arouse the ire of “our American and Irish fellow-citizens” that they initially suggested avoiding any public demonstrations of ‘national’ pride.⁴¹

³⁷ Quoted in the *Buffalo Express*, May 30, 1871, 4. For a biographical profile of Storck see David A. Gerber, *The Making of an American Pluralism: Buffalo, New York, 1825-60* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 230-1.

³⁸ Quoted in the *Toronto Globe*, May 3, 1871, 4. For a biographical profile of Klotz see Geo. Maclean Rose, *A Cyclopaedia of Canadian Biography being chiefly Men of the Time: A Collection of persons distinguished in professional and political life; leaders in the commerce and industry of Canada, and successful pioneers* (Toronto: Rose Publishing Company, 1888), 26-9.

³⁹ Quoted in the *Toronto Globe*, May 3, 1871, 4.

⁴⁰ April R. Schultz, *Ethnicity on Parade: Inventing the Norwegian American Through Celebration* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 10.

⁴¹ *Die Deutschen in Amerika*, 29. See also 23.

The conciliatory air of the festivities certainly impressed English-language observers who noted that the celebrants “did not gloat over the sufferings of the French nor do anything by word or deed that could have pained the hearts of the most sensitive Frenchmen.”⁴² Yet despite the organizers’ attempts to devise a festive script which was devoid of any martial or nationalist overtones, orators tended to draw upon the binary opposition of “noble Germany” and “jealous France” that mirrored the anti-French tenor of Sedan celebrations in 1870s Germany.⁴³ Ethnic group feeling, much like nationalism, depends “on one group’s defining itself against another (or others),” as historian Matthew Frey Jacobson has reminded us.⁴⁴ In the case of the peace jubilees, this ‘other’ was France. Not, to be sure, the tiny minority of French-origin migrants who lived in Waterloo County (1,536 or 4 per cent of the county’s population), or Buffalo’s 2,232 residents who had been born in France (2 per cent), but, rather, the “old hereditary enemy” that had so arrogantly “medd[led] in the domestic affairs of the Fatherland.”⁴⁵

In recounting the history of the war, orators squarely placed the blame on the shoulders of France. Its “jealousy ... at seeing Germany becoming one and united,” James Young, the Member of Parliament for South Waterloo County said amidst cheers, had triggered “the triumphant but bloody march from Berlin to Paris.”⁴⁶ Indeed, orator Francis Brunck in Buffalo concurred, the war

⁴² *Toronto Daily Telegraph*, May 3, 1871, 4. See also *Hamilton Daily Spectator*, May 4, 1871, 3; *Toronto Globe*, May 3, 1871, 4; *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 30, 1871, 2; *Buffalo Express*, May 27, 1871, 4 and May 30, 1871, 4; *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, May 29, 1871, 4.

⁴³ Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor*, 47. Since Napoleon’s occupation of Germany and his subsequent defeat in the battle at Leipzig in 1813 (*Leipziger Völkerschlacht*), the notion of France as the “traditional enemy” of Germany had figured prominently at German national festivals. See Dieter Düring, “Das deutsche Nationalfest von 1814: Matrix der deutschen Nationalfeste im 19. Jahrhundert,” in Dieter Düring, Peter Friedemann, and Paul Münch eds., *Öffentliche Festkultur: Politische Feste in Deutschland von der Aufklärung bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988), 76-7 and 84.

⁴⁴ Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, 18. In this context, see also Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994 [1979]), 4-9.

⁴⁵ Georg Baltz, as quoted in the *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 30, 1871, 2.

⁴⁶ Quoted in the *Toronto Daily Telegraph*, May 3, 1871, 4.

had been wholly unprovoked on Germany's part.⁴⁷ Given that her "most sacred rights had been violated," even Buffalo's English-language press concluded that "the quarrel out of which she [Germany] came so gloriously was forced upon her. The power that was the first to draw the sword has perished by the sword."⁴⁸

But the orators did not stop at assigning blame. Their speeches also served a hefty dose of ethnic chauvinism that revelled in the superiority of Germany over France. The war, Dr. Brunck announced in Buffalo, was "a victory of justice over injustice," while Mr. Schunck in Berlin pitted Germany's "noble, prudent and brave conduct of war" against "the revengeful, helpless and cowardly behaviour of the French."⁴⁹ Unjust, jealous, frivolous, presumptuous, arrogant, insolent, barbaric and criminal – this was the arsenal of adjectives that orators used to describe the beaten foe.⁵⁰ Little wonder, then, that they finished their speeches with literary flourish: "In less than three months," Dr. Brunck concluded his address, "proud France lay helpless under the foot of despised Germany, and had to beg for peace."⁵¹ These, clearly, were not words of conciliation, but of triumph and righteousness which stood in marked contrast to the organizers' official agenda of holding a festival of peace.

In representing the nations of Germany and France to festive audiences in Berlin and Buffalo, orators and reporters drew upon gendered images. They celebrated the "militarized masculinity" of Germany, while reprimanding "beautiful" France for its vanity and self-

⁴⁷ Quoted in the *Buffalo Demokrat*, May 30, 1871.

⁴⁸ *Die Deutschen in Amerika*, 1; *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, May 29, 1871, 2.

⁴⁹ Dr. Brunck, quoted in the *Buffalo Demokrat*, May 30, 1871: "Ein Sieg der Gerechtigkeit über Ungerechtigkeit." Mr. Schunck, quoted in the *Berliner Journal*, May 4, 1871: "Er schilderte die würdevolle, umsichtige und tapfere Kriegsführung der Deutschen, gegenüber dem rachesüchtigen, rathlosen und feigen Benehmen der Franzosen."

⁵⁰ See, for instance, *Toronto Daily Telegraph*, May 3, 1871, 4; *Globe*, May 3, 1871, 4; *Buffalo Christian Advocate*, June 1, 1871, 3; *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 30, 1871, 2; *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, May 29, 1871, 2; *Die Deutschen in Amerika*, 1-2 and 11-2.

⁵¹ Quoted in the *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 30, 1871, 2.

indulgence.⁵² “The wickedness of her beautiful capital,” charged the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, “has culminated in an attempt at self-destruction. The fair city, like so many of those gay and guilty women of whom she is the prototype, has sought a suicide’s grave.”⁵³ By intertwining conceptions of gender and nationality, North American observers reinforced the notion that France, itself, was to blame for its humiliating defeat. Once renowned for its “ideas, habits, and diplomacy,” the country had become entrenched in “luxuries and pleasures.”⁵⁴ “Self-indulgence had become the law of the Parisian mind,” the *Christian Advocate* of Buffalo wrote, “there was no sense of duty to the family or the country ... The population were willing to forget their manhood.”⁵⁵ The thin veneer of civilization, a Berlin speaker suggested, only disguised a rotten core, for a country that ridiculed the sacred bonds of family was undermining its very own foundation.⁵⁶ Given the decadence and depravation of France, the *Christian Advocate* suggested, the Germans had acted merely as an “instrument of punishment,” restoring morality to European affairs:

Whatever were the faults of the law, they were especially free from the vices of their Celtic neighbors. They peculiarly represent to the world a pure family life, a profound reverence for law, self-control under the sense duty ... Henceforth the thorough schooltraining of Prussia, the universal service of the nation, and her close discipline and drill, will be the model towards which other countries will aspire.⁵⁷

Cast in gender terms, the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71 appeared not as a battle for power and territory, but as a moral struggle in which ‘feminine’ France had been rightfully chastised by ‘masculine’ Germany.

⁵² Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, 6; *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, May 29, 1871, 2.

⁵³ *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, May 29, 1871, 2.

⁵⁴ *Buffalo Christian Advocate*, April 27, 1871, 1.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Mr. Schunck, as quoted in the *Berliner Journal*, May 11, 1871, 2-3.

⁵⁷ *Buffalo Christian Advocate*, April 27, 1871, 1.

Visibly impressed with Germany's ascent to a major European power, English-language newspapers did not hesitate to portray the German victory as beneficial for both "the nations of Europe" and mankind at large. This happy state, the *Buffalo Daily Courier* mused, had been achieved by Germany overcoming the "state of political disunion" that, for so long, had plagued the country.⁵⁸ Political unity, of course, did not guarantee cultural unity, either in Germany or abroad. It remained to be seen whether the union of German-origin migrants, symbolized in the elaborate jubilee processions at Berlin and Buffalo, would translate into a German public that, at least momentarily, was able to transcend divisions of class, nationality, religion and gender.

Unity

The notion of unity was central to the peace celebrations that were staged across North America. Typically, orators began their speeches by recalling the disgrace of the German people in the era before national unity. The wretched provincialism, Georg Baltz declared in Buffalo, had allowed foreign armies to devastate the country.⁵⁹ Its disunity, Otto Klotz in Berlin chimed in, bode poorly for the Franco-Prussian struggle of 1870/71.⁶⁰ But as if to defy the boundaries of German principalities and kingdoms, the narrative went, the German people rose like one man to defend the country's integrity.⁶¹ "The Prussian did not look with disdain on the Hessian or the Swabian," Otto Klotz enthused, "every one appeared in his place, from the sandbanks of the North Sea to the foots of the Alps. The whole people were united, and sacrificed willingly even more than they were asked to do."⁶² Young and old; artisans and scholars; sons of day labourers and millionaires; Prussians, Mecklenburgers, Swabians, and Bavarians; republicans

⁵⁸ *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 30, 1871, 2.

⁵⁹ Quoted in the *Buffalo Demokrat*, May 30, 1871, 4.

⁶⁰ Quoted in the *Berliner Journal*, May 11, 1871, 2-3.

⁶¹ See the speeches by Georg Baltz and Otto Klotz, quoted in the *Buffalo Demokrat*, May 30, 1871, 4 and the *Berliner Journal*, May 11, 1871, 2-3.

⁶² *Berliner Journal*, May 11, 1871, 2-3.

and monarchists all joined hands to fight against the arrogant neighbour to the West.⁶³ Out of their courage and unity, it was suggested, the nation was born. Hitherto, the editor of the *Canadischen Volksblatt* reflected, 'Germany' had signified a geographical territory only. Now, it stood for a nation. At long last, he wrote, "our dear, old Fatherland" occupied the position which it so duly deserved.⁶⁴

From the triumphant cry "They were all Germans," it was a short step to exclaim that "We, too, are all Germans."⁶⁵ Basking in the glory of the newly-created German nation-state, the unity of German migrants in Canada and the United States suddenly seemed a tangible goal. "Germans, who now look with pride and joy upon united Germany," Dr. Storck in Buffalo exclaimed, "let us here, in this country, be united as our brethren beyond the ocean."⁶⁶ Nowhere did the increased identification with the German 'Fatherland' find a more public expression than in the massive peace jubilee celebrations that, by many, were read as a visible sign of 'German' unity.⁶⁷

By parading on the streets and congregating at market squares, the celebrants took over "the symbolically most important public space in the city," as Peter G. Goheen has argued in a thoughtful essay.⁶⁸ They seized on the city centre as a platform of the jubilees, a physical space invested with the power and dignity of the institutions located therein.⁶⁹ Evidently, the celebrations in Berlin and Buffalo took place on a very different scale. To an American observer, the peace jubilee in the neighbouring towns of Berlin and Waterloo on May 2, 1871 must have appeared charming in its simplicity. The procession that marched from the railway depot to the

⁶³ Georg Baltz, as quoted in the *Buffalo Demokrat*, May 30, 1871, 4. See also *Die Deutschen in Amerika*, 1.

⁶⁴ *Canadisches Volksblatt*, May 10, 1871, 2-3.

⁶⁵ Otto Klotz, as quoted in the *Toronto Globe*, May 3, 1871, 3 and the *Berliner Journal*, May 11, 1871, 2-3.

⁶⁶ Quoted in the *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 30, 1871, 2.

⁶⁷ See, for instance, *Die Deutschen in Amerika*, 1 and 22-3.

⁶⁸ Peter G. Goheen, "Symbols in the Streets: Parades in Victorian Urban Canada," *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 18, 3 (February 1990), 237-8.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

Berlin court house included – in no particular order – delegations from Hamilton, Toronto, and a host of other towns and villages, “urged into quick time by several excellent brass bands” and headed by twenty-four adjutants on horseback.⁷⁰ Its one distinguished feature were two wagons from Preston, carrying girls in white, and lovingly decorated with wreaths and garlands. Yet another wagon displayed a “beautiful fair-headed girl,” *Germania*, surrounded by thirty-four others, representing the German states.⁷¹ With Berlin decked in “holiday attire” and over 8,000 visitors cramming “sidewalks, balconies, windows, and houses,” the procession passed the arches on King Street, breaking into enthusiastic cheers once it reached the portraits of Emperor William and Bismarck, “as though they were anxious that they should be heard by the grim Chancellor all the way to the Fatherland.”⁷²

In Buffalo, as well, “the enthusiasm generally expressed was as genuine as it was unrestrained.”⁷³ But the celebration had little of the ad-hoc quality that characterized its Canadian counterpart. For weeks, the festival committee had elicited the participation of German associations, eighty-five of which marched in the three-mile long parade (“more than anyone knew even existed,” quipped historian Andrew P. Yox.⁷⁴ Festival marshal Richard Flach, a veteran of the Civil War, travelled to New York and Philadelphia to learn first-hand of the work entailed in organizing a peace jubilee.⁷⁵ On May 29, 1871, Flach was instrumental in dividing the multitude of organizations into seven divisions, each of which was headed by an assistant marshal. Unlike Waterloo County’s three humble wagons, the Buffalo parade showcased float after float. The cities’ fraternal associations had engaged in a veritable competition as to who would assemble the

⁷⁰ *Toronto Daily Telegraph*, May 3, 1871, 4 and *Toronto Globe*, May 3, 1871, 4.

⁷¹ *Berliner Journal*, May 4, 1871.

⁷² *Toronto Daily Telegraph*, May 3, 1871, 4.

⁷³ See the editorial in the *Buffalo Express*, May 30, 1871, 4.

⁷⁴ *Buffalo Christian Advocate*, June 1, 1871, 3 and Andrew P. Yox, “Decline of the German-American Community in Buffalo, 1855-1925,” Ph.D. History, University of Chicago, 129.

⁷⁵ *Buffalo Demokrat*, May 4, 1871.

most memorable display, while local German industries seized the opportunity to demonstrate their 'patriotism' – and, the sceptic may add, benefit from free advertising.⁷⁶

But despite the differences in scale, the peace jubilees in Buffalo and Berlin shared an important similarity. Notwithstanding their frequent tributes to a community of equals, they were staged by the ethnic intelligentsia, the civic leaders, and entrepreneurs. These ethnic spokesmen scripted the order of parades, indulged in lengthy speeches, and offered voluminous interpretations of the festivals' meanings in the local German-language press.⁷⁷ Rather than transcending boundaries of class, the jubilees reinforced them. They emerged, in the words of Keith Walden, as "instruments of social power," skilfully put to use by white, male, and middle-class representatives.⁷⁸

Indeed, beneath the cry of "We are all Germans now," class differences persisted. Much admired by the thousands of Buffalo spectators, the blacksmiths of Reiter's & Eager were busily swinging their hammers at a steam-boiler, while the float of the *Buffalo Telegraph* featured a printing press "in full operation", the printers tossing news sheets gratis into the crowd. "A bakery on wheels threw out hot rolls among the boys without regard to cost," while local butchers headed the seventh division whose notable feature was a "sausage factory."⁷⁹ These displays, of course, could be read as admirable signs of German industriousness that found pride in its contributions to building America or, alternately, as tributes to a "mythical world of

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, May 30, 1871. In this context see also *Die Deutschen in Amerika*, 42 and Schultz, *Ethnicity on Parade*, 71-2.

⁷⁷ In both Berlin and Buffalo, the list of peace jubilee organizers reads like a "who's who" of the German community. In Waterloo County, Otto Klotz, Hugo Kranz, and William Oelschläger, among others, sat on the festival committee, representing the county's cultural, political, and economic elites respectively. In Buffalo, organizers included Civil War veteran, Richard Flach; Reverend Otto Burger; Francis Brunck, the former editor of the *Buffalo Weltbürger*; and the city's most prominent German Republican, Edward Storck.

⁷⁸ Keith Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 18 and xiv.

⁷⁹ *Buffalo Christian Advocate*, June 1, 1871, 3; *Buffalo Express*, May 30, 1871, 4; *Buffalo Demokrat*, May 30, 1871.

craftsmen and farmers” that evoked a productive, orderly ‘German’ past.⁸⁰ At the same time, however, the floats conveyed a message of social harmony and industrial paternalism, with workers docily displaying their craft on wagons bearing their employers’ name. In the peace jubilees of Germans in North America, it appeared, some were more equal than others.

In fact, the cozy feeling of unity that permeated the festivities cannot wholly distract from the fact that internal ethnic power relationships were negotiated during the course of the jubilees.⁸¹ In Waterloo County, for instance, the beginning of the Franco-Prussian War had pitted German-origin migrants from Alsace-Lorraine (then part of France) against migrants from the German core areas. These latent hostilities sometimes erupted into altercations and even fist-fights, as the *Berliner Journal* reported in August 1870.⁸² One is left to wonder how those “German-French,” as the *Journal* dubbed them, reacted to Otto Klotz’s vocal endorsement of a policy of assimilation that would bring the provinces back into the fold of ‘German nationality’, or how they viewed the ubiquitous banners that celebrated the return of Alsace and Lorraine to the ‘Fatherland’.⁸³

Religion, as well, constituted a dividing line at the peace jubilees. To be sure, the festivals’ organizers invited all German churches, regardless of their denomination, to offer divine services at the morning of the jubilee.⁸⁴ This request, as historian April Schultz has suggested for a different context, may have been motivated by the desire to add “a sacred dimension” to a secular event.⁸⁵ In addition, “an insistence on religious devotion,” Schultz wrote, set celebrants apart from “foreign radicalism” and proved them “worthy Americans” who demonstrated “an abstract sense of religion

⁸⁰ Such an interpretation was advanced in a souvenir booklet of German-American peace jubilees. See *Die Deutschen in Amerika*, 23. See also Peterson, *Popular Narratives and Ethnic Identity*, 224.

⁸¹ Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, 79.

⁸² *Berliner Journal*, August 25, 1870, 2.

⁸³ Quoted in the *Berliner Journal*, May 11, 1871, 2-3. See also *Toronto Globe*, May 3, 1871, 4.

⁸⁴ *Toronto Daily Telegraph*, May 3, 1871, 4 and *Buffalo Freie Presse*, May 27, 1871.

⁸⁵ Schultz, *Ethnicity on Parade*, 83.

and spirituality.”⁸⁶ But this abstract spirituality never translated into a central role for German churches that remained marginal to the festivities. In Buffalo, Evangelical church groups joined the parade, as did members of Catholic associations; the latter, however, took pains to point out that they marched *not* as religious representatives, but as “friends of the German cause.”⁸⁷ The Catholic German-language weekly, *Die Aurora*, failed to even mention the grand celebration.⁸⁸ This telling silence becomes less puzzling if we realize that the outbursts of patriotism of 1871 did not resonate with the Catholic church that presided over a community of believers, not national groups. In addition, the prominent renditions of “Nun Danket alle Gott” reveal that a secular Protestantism underlay much of the festivities – a fact that, understandably, held little appeal for the Catholic hierarchy. Composed by the Father of the Reformation, Martin Luther, this chorus was sung alongside the ‘Wacht am Rhein’, thus furnishing further proof that the Catholic Church was central neither to the creation of imperial Germany, a country dominated by Protestant Prussia, nor to the peace jubilees in North America.⁸⁹

One group, finally, was so effectively denied a voice at the celebrations that its presence is easily overlooked. In the historical narrative of the jubilee celebrations, women were relegated to the roles of either cultural guardians or national icons.⁹⁰ While “our brethren beyond the ocean” had valiantly fought against the French foe, Dr. Brunck said in Buffalo, the country’s women had fed and clothed the German “warriors.”⁹¹ The work of political struggle, in other words, was left to men, while women found fulfilment in their roles as caretakers. At the peace

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 82-3.

⁸⁷ Yox, “Decline of the German-American Community in Buffalo,” 131 and Buffalo *Freie Presse*, May 13, 1871.

⁸⁸ Yox, “Decline of the German-American Community in Buffalo,” 131.

⁸⁹ Buffalo *Demokrat*, May 2, 1871 and Toronto *Daily Telegraph*, May 3, 1871, 4. See also Andreas Dörner, “Der Mythos der nationalen Einheit: Symbolpolitik und Deutungskämpfe bei der Einweihung des Hermannsdenkmals im Jahre 1875,” *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 79, 2 (1997), 401.

⁹⁰ See Jacobson’s insightful discussion in *Special Sorrows*, 80.

⁹¹ Quoted in the Buffalo *Demokrat*, May 30, 1871.

jubilees, too, women had to be content to decorate towns and market squares, or, as in New York, organize “lady fairs” in support of the widows and orphans of the Franco-Prussian War.⁹² If they entered the public sphere, it was as spectators, not as actors, as icons, not as citizens. Embodying abstract principles such as the ubiquitous *Germania*, they were “remov[ed] ... to a separate plane of representation” and effectively excluded from the “*politics* of nationalism,” as Matthew Frey Jacobson has noted in his dissection of gender prescriptions at immigrant parades.⁹³ The unity constructed during the course of the peace jubilees was thus a tenuous one. While no contemporary observer could deny the patriotism of the revellers, who celebrated their ‘German-ness’ on a scale never before witnessed on the continent, divisions of class, nationality, religion and gender persisted, only to be temporarily obscured in the exuberance of the celebration.

Myth

Given the diversity of German-speaking migrants, the challenge which the peace jubilees faced was how to create a “symbolic umbrella of the ethnic culture” that could offer shelter to Protestants, Catholics, and freethinkers alike; an umbrella “broad and flexible enough” to encompass migrants from such culturally and politically diverse German states as Württemberg and Mecklenburg, migrants from rural Germany and the country’s industrializing areas.⁹⁴ It was in the world of myth that jubilee organizers found the “symbols and slogans which could unify the group despite such differences.”⁹⁵ Out of German nature and geography, history and mythology,

⁹² *Buffalo Demokrat*, May 13, 1871 and *Die Deutschen in Amerika*, 67.

⁹³ See Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, 80.

⁹⁴ Kathleen Neils Conzen et al., “The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A.,” *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 12, 1 (Fall 1992), 5. See also Peterson, *Popular Narratives and Ethnic Identity*, 207.

⁹⁵ Conzen et al., “The Invention of Ethnicity,” 5.

they forged “myths of ethnic descent” that were broad enough to appeal to different groups, yet narrow enough to be readily identifiable as ‘German.’⁹⁷

These myths were suffused with ideas of romantic nationalism as they had been developed, most prominently, by the German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder. As we have seen in earlier chapters, Herder regarded nations as organic structures that were intimately shaped by the natural environment. Nature, in turn, he suggested, embodied many of the characteristics that made the German nation a ‘peculiar’ one, different from any other.⁹⁸ At the 1871 peace jubilees, the special closeness of the German people to their natural environment was evoked in two powerful symbolic gestures: the planting of an oak tree in Waterloo County, and the odes to the river Rhine, commonly regarded as a mythical source of German identity.

By planting an oak tree in front of the Berlin Court House, the Canadian festival committee drew upon a symbol that had formed part of the repertoire of German celebrations ever since the first German national festival of 1814, in which celebrants had adorned houses and streets with oak leaves, branches and wreaths to commemorate the liberation of Germany from Napoleon at the Battle of Nations. In the course of the festivities, the oak – “an incarnation of fertility, steadfastness, and strength” – transformed into a metaphor of the German nation itself.⁹⁹ Over half a century later, and a continent away, jubilee president Otto Klotz saw in the young oak (which had been imported from Germany for the occasion) a symbol of historical continuity. “The old Germanic tribes,” he said, “regarded the oak as the forest’s foremost tree; in oak groves they preferred to assemble to make decisions on war and peace, to hold court and divine service; for the old Teutons honoured god not in temples but in nature, ... in the grand temple of sacred

⁹⁷ Anthony D. Smith, “National Identity and Myths of Ethnic Descent,” *Research in social movements, conflict and change*, 7 (1984), 96.

⁹⁸ Schultz, *Ethnicity on Parade*, 93-7 and Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London: Harper Collins Publisher, 1995), 102-3.

⁹⁹ Düring, “Das deutsche Nationalfest von 1814,” 76 and 68.

nature.”⁹⁹ Reminiscent of Tacitus’s *Germania* which had contrasted German ‘authenticity’ with Roman decadence, Otto Klotz projected onto the German tribes an image of ‘noble savages’ whose inner strength and forthright morals were as admirable then as now.¹⁰⁰

If the oak reached far into Germany’s past – back to its ancient roots, so to speak – it also served as a reminder for future generations. “May this oak ...,” the orator’s voice urged the audience, “always remind us and our descendants of the great German accomplishments, be it a memorial of the virtues of the old Teutons ...”¹⁰¹ Although the oak failed to prosper in later years, its meagre growth a poor testimony to German greatness, Otto Klotz’s words did fall on fertile ground. In no less than twelve singing festivals, staged in Berlin and Waterloo between 1874 and 1912, the German-origin residents of Waterloo County would celebrate the ‘German soul’ in song and sound. Here, indeed, an imagined past had inspired an ethnic revival.

If the oak represented the inner qualities of the German nation, it was the Rhine that demarcated its outer boundaries. As the British anthropologist Anthony D. Smith has suggested, a “myth of spatial origins” is central to nationalist narratives that construct out of “a given territory a ‘homeland’.”¹⁰² In the case of the German Fatherland, the Rhine symbolized the ‘natural’ boundary to the west. For this reason alone, Buffalo orators claimed, Alsace and Lorraine had to return to the German nation-state so that the organic unity of the German people would be reflected in the ‘natural’ borders of the German Empire. As the former editor of the Buffalo *Weltbürger*, Dr. Francis C. Brunck, said with a fervour that belied his fragile health:

⁹⁹ Quoted in the *Berliner Journal*, May 11, 1871, 2-3: “Bei den alten Germanen war ... die Eiche der wichtigste Baum des Waldes; in Eichenhainen hielten sie am liebsten ihre Zusammenkünfte, hier ward über Krieg und Frieden entschieden, Gericht und Gottesdienst gehalten, denn die alten Germanen verehrten Gott nicht in Tempeln, sondern ... im großen Tempel der heiligen Natur.”

¹⁰⁰ Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 87 and 96-7.

¹⁰¹ Quoted in the *Berliner Journal*, May 11, 1871, 2-3: “Möge diese Eiche ... uns und unsern Nachkommen stete Erinnerung werden an die großen Errungenschaften der Deutschen, sowie ein Mahnruf stets eingedenk sein der Tugenden der alten Deutschen ...”

¹⁰² Smith, “National Identity and Myths of Ethnic Descent,” 101.

The German provinces conquered by France more than two hundred and fifty years ago returned to Germany – provinces of such a geographical location that a German could not navigate the celebrated stream of the history and the poets of his country without being reminded of the shame and misfortune of his native land as long as they remained in the possession of an arrogant neighbor. The Rhine, whose shores were inhabited by German tribes as far as history reaches, now flows free from the Alps to the ocean. The Swiss, who guard its source, and the Hollanders, who stand watch at its mouth, are independent German nations, whose history is the history of our people, and whose deeds in war and accomplishment in peace are glorified by our poets like our own.¹⁰³

Worth quoting at length, this passage captures the mythology surrounding the Rhine. Its shores, the orator held, not only constituted the particular property of Europe's 'Germanic' tribes, a term broad enough to encompass both the Dutch and the Swiss, but also represented the very source of German ingenuity. For centuries, the Rhine had inspired poets and historians who perceived in its majestic stream – lined by 'authentic' German villages and 'ancient' castles like Ehrenbreitstein, Stolzenfels, Sonneck and Rheinstein – the very embodiment of the nation's past. In more recent historical memory, the Rhine had seized the national imagination as the pivotal symbol of the Franco-Prussian War. "As soon as Germany resounded with the war trumpet," orator Georg Baltz proclaimed at Buffalo, "a whole nation arose in arms to guard the old and sacred watch of the Rhine, and with might and main to ward off the frivolous and wanton war with all its terrors from the fields of the Fatherland."¹⁰⁴ So powerful, in fact, was the image of the Rhine, as both a source of German identity and the nation's natural border, that it came to permeate not only the national imagination, but also German popular culture.

During the war of 1870/71, a song penned decades earlier advanced to the country's unofficial national anthem. "Die Wacht am Rhein" (The Watch on the Rhine), it was said, had called German men to war. Its refrain, certainly, did evoke a spirit of patriotism by deftly intertwining the themes of national unity, history and nature. "Dear Fatherland, o, be assured;

¹⁰³ Quoted in the *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 30, 1871, 2.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in *ibid.* See also *Canadisches Volksblatt*, May 10, 1871, 2-3.

Strong and loyal, the Watch on the Rhine stands guard," the twenty-one year old grocer Max

Schneckenburger had written during the Rhine crisis of 1840.¹⁰⁶

Illustration 1: "Die Wacht am Rhein", 1854

Die Wacht am Rhein.

Für eine Singstimme mit Begleitung des Pianoforte.

Arrangement vom Componisten.

Max Schneckenburger. Carl Wilhelm. Crefeld, 1854.

Allegro marcato.

1. Es braust ein Ruf wie Don = ner = hall, wie Schwer = t = ge = klirr und Wo = gen = prall: zum
 2. Durch Hun = bert = tau = send zuckt es schnell, und Al = ler Au = gen bli = gen hell. Der
 3. Er blickt hinauf in Him = melsau'n, wo Hel = den = vä = ter nie = der = schau'n, und
 4. „Und ob mein Herz im Lo = be bricht, wirst du doch drum ein Wel = scher nicht; reich
 5. „So lang ein Tro = pfen Blut noch glüht, noch ei = ne Faust den De = gen zieht und
 6. Der Schwur erschallt, die Wo = ge rinnt, die Fal = nen stat = tern hoch im Wind: zum

1. Rhein, zum Rhein, zum deutschen Rhein! Wer will des Stro = mes Hü = ter sein?
 2. deut = sche Jüng = ling fromm und stark beschirmt die heil' = ge Lan = des = marz.
 3. schwört mit stol = zer Kam = pfes = lust: „Du Rhein bleibst deutsch wie mei = ne Brust.
 4. wie an Was = ser bei = ne Fluth ist Deutschland ja an Hel = den = blut. } Lieb'
 5. noch ein Arm die Büch = se spannt, be = tritt kein Feind hier deinen Strand.“
 6. Rhein, zum Rhein, zum deutschen Rhein! Wir Al = le wol = len Hü = ter sein!

Source: Max Schneckenburger, *Die Wacht am Rhein: das deutsche Volks- und Soldatenlied des Jahres 1870*. Berlin: Franz Lipperheide, 1871, 33.

¹⁰⁶ Max Schneckenburger, *Die Wacht am Rhein: Das deutsche Volks- und Soldatenlied des Jahres 1870* (Berlin: Franz Lipperheide, 1871), 1-2: "Lieb' Vaterland, magst ruhig sein, Fest steht und treu die Wacht am Rhein!"

Fourteen years later, musician Karl Wilhelm set these lines to music, thus creating a song that was intoned, frequently and fervently, during the battles of the Franco-Prussian War.¹⁰⁷ As the quintessential ‘German’ song, “Die Wacht am Rhein” travelled across the ocean to Canada and the United States where it presented the highlight of peace jubilee celebrations across the continent.¹⁰⁸ Both a musical tune and a lesson in history, “The Watch on the Rhine” aimed at planting the ‘German’ spirit into the audience’s soul. As if to reinforce this message, the organizers of the peace jubilees in Buffalo and Berlin assembled impressive visual displays in which yet another symbol of German unity, *Germania*, guarded the river Rhine.

As a personification of the German people, *Germania* had a long tradition in German mythology, as historian Patricia Mazón has recently demonstrated.¹⁰⁹ Depicted as “a sorrowful captive” by the Romans, *Germania* metaphorsed into a queen during the middle ages, “representing the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation.” But it was the French revolution that effectively established *Germania* as a political symbol, “a companion piece,” Mazón puts it, to the figures of “Marianne, symbol of the new French republic.” In tracing representations of *Germania* through the 1840s to 1860s, Mazón encountered “increasingly belligerent portrayals” who wielded her sword aggressively, her feet caressed by the waters of the Rhine, her eyes watchfully turned to the West. In 1871, the metaphor for the German people underwent another

¹⁰⁷ As historian Friedemann Schmoll has speculated, it was with apparent unease that German dignitaries referred to Schneckenburger’s authorship, preferring instead to locate the origins of the popular song in “the depths of the nation’s inner soul.” Friedemann Schmoll, “Individualdenkmal, Sängerbewegung und Nationalbewußtsein in Württemberg: Zum Funktionswandel bürgerlicher Erinnerungskultur zwischen Vormärz und Kaiserreich,” in Friedhelm Brusniak and Dietmar Klenke eds., *Heil deutschem Wort und Sang: Nationalidentität und Gesangskultur in der deutschen Geschichte – Tagungsbericht Feuchtwangen 1994* (Augsburg: Dr. Bernd Wissner, 1995), 87-8.

¹⁰⁸ *Berliner Journal*, May 4, 1871 and *Buffalo Freie Presse*, April 29, 1871. See also *Die Deutschen in Amerika*, 23 and 28-66.

¹⁰⁹ Patricia Mazón, “Germania Triumphant: The Niederwald National Monument and the Liberal Movement in Imperial Germany,” *German History*, 18, 2 (2000), 169-71. See also Schmoll, “Individualdenkmal, Sängerbewegung und Nationalbewußtsein,” 90.

significant change. Having previously reflected a longing for national unity, *Germania* now came to signify the German Empire as a political entity.¹¹⁰

The irony that the German nation was depicted as a woman – “a member of the group most completely excluded from the nation as a political community” – is not lost on Mazón.¹¹¹ It was an irony replicated at the peace jubilees in Berlin and Buffalo where women and girls represented the German nation, but were otherwise refused a public voice at the festivities. Dressed in white, a symbol of moral purity, thirty-four “young ladies” at the Berlin parade personified the German states, with “Miss E. Hoffman, a flaxen haired Saxon lass of fifteen years of age, representing Germania.”¹¹² Observers readily agreed that only the solemn unveiling of the oil-painting *Germania* in the evening, accompanied by the tune “Die Wacht am Rhein,” could rival this sweet tribute to German unity.¹¹³

In Buffalo, too, *Germania* made her appearance, yet in far more extravagant fashion. A display that had dazzled Manhattan spectators at the New York *Friedensfest* in early April 1871 was brought to Buffalo by the central committee. “Drawn by six horses, each led by a footman arranged in costume of the olden time,” the float left Buffalo celebrants visibly impressed.¹¹⁴ “The central tableau was illustrative of the ‘Watch on the Rhine’,” the Buffalo *Express* reported,

Germania seated upon a massive rock, about the base of which the famed and lovely river was pictured in its winding course. At different points old castles might be seen rearing their towers and battlemented walls, and there was everything to complete the scene and make perfect the allegory. There were other figures also, arranged and costumed in harmony to represent the arts, the sciences, and the avocations of peace. This feature of the procession was truly superb, and was a centre of great admiration.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹¹² Toronto *Daily Telegraph*, May 3, 1871, 4 and Toronto *Globe*, May 3, 1871, 4. See also Jonathan Sperber, “Festivals of National Unity in the German Revolution of 1848-1849,” *Past and Present*, 136 (1992), 119.

¹¹³ *Berliner Journal*, May 4, 1871.

¹¹⁴ Buffalo *Express*, May 30, 1871, 4; *Die Deutschen in Buffalo*, 40; Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*, May 29, 1871, 3.

¹¹⁵ Buffalo *Express*, May 30, 1871, 4.

Markedly absent from the display were any references to the defeated foe. Instead, *Germania* surrounded herself with symbols of a romanticized Germany whose greatness lay not in its martial but cultural accomplishments. By vaguely alluding to a grand cultural heritage, the tableau reflected the pervasive influence of romantic nationalism that believed nations to be defined by their language, customs, and cultural attributes, a message reiterated in the speeches at the *Fest*.¹¹⁵ *Germania* personified Germany's newly attained national unity, while anchoring it in a nebulous past where myth and history merged at the shores of the Rhine.¹¹⁶

If *Germania* presided serenely over a unified nation, another float at the Buffalo *Friedensfest* delved deeply into the collective historical memory. It commemorated a battle between the Romans and Teutons in 9 A.D. that saw Hermann (Arminius), the Cheruscan, defeating a Roman army in the Teutoburg Forest.¹¹⁷ Again, this particular founding myth had evolved over decades, if not centuries. First formulated by Tacitus, it was rediscovered by the poet Friedrich Klopstock who published a massive trilogy on Arminius in the mid-eighteenth century.¹¹⁸ In 1821, Kleist's epic followed; in the 1860s, German theatres began to stage the clash between the heroic Teutons and the Roman colonizers.¹¹⁹ As a popular historical myth, memorialized in stone in the *Hermannsdenkmal* nearby Detmold (Germany) in 1875, the Cheruscan prince admirably suited the larger narrative of the peace jubilee. For one, Germany's victory in the Franco-Prussian War mirrored the military founding act of the Germanic tribes, as

¹¹⁵ Toronto *Globe*, May 3, 1871, 4; Buffalo *Express*, May 30, 1871, 4; Buffalo *Demokrat*, May 30, 1871; and Buffalo *Daily Courier*, May 30, 1871, 2.

¹¹⁶ For the role of myths in creating community see Smith, "National Identity and Myths of Ethnic Descent," 95 and Pierre Nora, "The Era of Commemoration," in *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past, Vol. III: Symbols* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998 [French edition 1992]), 632-3.

¹¹⁷ Dörner, "Der Mythos der nationalen Einheit," 395.

¹¹⁸ Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 102.

¹¹⁹ Doerner, "Der Mythos der nationalen Einheit," 396.

historian Andreas Dörner has rightly remarked.¹²¹ Further, the dramatic contrast between the “audacious ... and energetic” Teutons and the “lethargic, cynical, and weak” Romans – a plot first devised by Tacitus – found its parallel in the alleged differences between the pure and noble German nation and the decadence of France.¹²²

To suggest that the Hermann-float at the Buffalo peace jubilee was embedded in a mythical ‘Germanic’ context is not to say that this myth was consciously evoked by the organizers of the festival. Indeed, it is doubtful whether Friedrich Erstling, upon whom had fallen the honour of representing Hermann, paid much attention to a ‘creation myth’ as he balanced uneasily on a giant globe, always in danger of stumbling unceremoniously as the float hit one pothole after the other.¹²³ Rather, this is to suggest that the peace jubilee in Buffalo drew upon national myths that had evolved historically in Germany and travelled to the United States as part of the popular culture of German-speaking migrants, memories of which were rekindled in the elaborate printed accounts of peace jubilees, published in the spring of 1871. And even if Buffalo spectators were only dimly aware of the mythical subtext underlying the display, they would have been hard pressed to miss the float’s principal message. Connected to ‘Hermann’ with golden chains “sat eleven young ladies dressed in white representing Prussia, Bavaria, Saxony, Baden, Wurtemberg [sic], Mecklenburg, Hesse, Brunswick, Bremen, Hamburg [sic], Alsace and Lorraine,” thus symbolizing “the union of the German States in one great Teutonic Empire,” as the Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser* reported.¹²⁴

Although the organizers of peace jubilee celebrations made use of a festive vocabulary that had been developed at national celebrations in Germany, they did add their own symbols that

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 397.

¹²² Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 102.

¹²³ *Buffalo Demokrat*, May 30, 1871.

¹²⁴ *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, May 29, 1871, 3.

corresponded to their experience of migration.¹²⁵ The globe upon which ‘Hermann’ struggled precariously for his balance bore two clasped hands, “indicating the union of Germans in Germany and America and the countries themselves through them,” as one observer noted.¹²⁶ Even the most German of displays thus paid tribute to the migrants’ adopted homeland. The image projected by this gesture of friendship and mutual respect was one of dual identity. To be ‘German’ in 1871 Buffalo, it implied, was not mutually exclusive with being ‘American’; on the contrary, the feelings of fidelity and loyalty, so exuberantly displayed at the peace jubilee, revealed a measure of character that befit any American citizen. Even the *Commercial Advertiser*, a paper prone to nativist overtones in the 1850s and 1860s, readily recognized that in ‘Herman [sic], standing upon the globe and overlooking all, was symbolized that, as Germans when in distant countries still look back to the Fatherland, so does it look on them with pride.’¹²⁷ It was a realization that did not trouble the *Advertiser* editor in the least. Like other English-language papers in the city, it published lengthy reports on the jubilee whose tenor was unequivocally positive.¹²⁸

Judging from the coverage of the jubilee celebrations, the symbols of dual loyalty that permeated the festivities were as ubiquitous as they were persuasive. As the Buffalo *Express* observed appreciatively, the *Germania* float featured “trappings of crimson and gold, medallions with coat of arms, and the colors of Germany and America interwoven in all directions.”¹²⁹ From buildings fluttered the German tricolour in red, black and white, alongside “the glorious stars and

¹²⁵ See Dieter Düring’s discussion of the “matrix of German national holidays” in “Das deutsche Nationalfest von 1814,” 67-88.

¹²⁶ Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*, May 29, 1871, 3.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ See, for instance, the headlines in Buffalo’s English-language press: “The Great German Peace Jubilee - A Memorable Day in Buffalo - One of the grandest Demonstrations Ever Witnessed in the City” (Buffalo *Daily Courier*, May 30, 1871, 2) and “The Jubilee - Grand Peace Demonstration Yesterday - The Germans Out in Full Force - Splendid Procession and interesting Exercises” (Buffalo *Express*, May 30, 1871, 4).

¹²⁹ Buffalo *Express*, May 30, 1871, 4.

stripes.”¹²⁹ And if the celebrants intoned Luther’s chorus “Nun Danket Alle Gott” and burst into enthusiastic renditions of “Die Wacht am Rhein,” they ended their ceremony with “The Star Spangled Banner.”¹³⁰ Similarly, across the border, the Union Jack was as prominent as the German tricolour.¹³¹ And just like in Buffalo, Berlin revellers bowed their heads to their adopted homeland; only upon the rendition of “God Save the Queen” did the crowds disperse and the public celebration end.¹³²

Citizenship

Up until now, the Canadian-American border does not seem to have figured prominently in the construction of a festive ‘German’ identity. In fact, the contours of ‘German-ness’ that emerged from the celebrations appeared almost indistinguishable in either locality. Only when it came to inserting their German identity into an American or Canadian context, did the stories of Buffalo and Berlin begin to diverge.¹³³

In the United States, the Forty-Eighters, who had long dreamt of a unified Germany that would grant civil liberties to its people, viewed the country’s unification with mixed emotions. Although Germany’s victory over France fuelled the fires of national pride, it soon became apparent that Chancellor Bismarck had no intention of granting responsible government, nor

¹²⁹ *Buffalo Evening Post*, May 30, 1871, 3.

¹³⁰ *Buffalo Demokrat*, May 26, 1871.

¹³¹ *Toronto Globe*, May 3, 1871, 4.

¹³² *Berliner Journal*, May 4, 1871.

¹³³ In discussing early notions of citizenship, we have to be careful not to forget that ‘Canada’ and the ‘United States’ were yet in the process of national formation, and that ‘national identity’, in any case, is as fluid a construct as ‘ethnic identity.’ In this context see Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995 [1967]), xiii-xiv and Gerald Friesen, *Citizens and Nation: An Essay on History, Communication, and Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 3-7.

freedom of speech and assembly. Could the former radicals, many of whom had carved out a comfortable niche in American middle-class society, rejoice in unity without liberty?¹³⁴

Most of them did.¹³⁵ A radical New York paper, *Die Arbeiter-Union* (The Workingmen's Union), folded after its circulation had declined dramatically, an unmistakably reproof of the paper's critique of Bismarck's reactionary stance.¹³⁶ There were also those Forty-Eighters, like Karl Heinzen and Friedrich Hecker, who criticized the absence of civic liberties in the newly-created German nation-state.¹³⁷ More typically, however, was a feeling of fraternal unity that engulfed both 'Grays' and 'Greens.' In Buffalo, for instance, Francis Brunck and Edward Storck, prominent representatives of the city's pre- and post-1848 migration waves respectively, shared the speakers' podium at the peace jubilee. Together, they conjured the "thrill of patriotic gladness" that welled in every German's heart after national unity had been attained.¹³⁸

If freedom was mentioned at all, it was but an afterthought, coyly hidden in a stream of patriotic declarations.¹³⁹ Perhaps, speculated Francis Brunck, the democratic form of government was suited only for those people who had slowly grown accustomed to it. Rather than demanding the immediate introduction of civic liberties in Germany, he encouraged German migrants "to preserve, with all our might, the Republic in North America."¹⁴⁰ Even the city's German

¹³⁴ Carl Wittke, *Refugees of the Revolution: The German Forty-Eighters in America* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1970 [1952]), 345-52.

¹³⁵ Ironically, it was the Buffalo's most radical German association, the *Turner* (gymnasts), who had first suggested to hold a *Friedensfest* and marched proudly in the parade's first division. See *Buffalo Demokrat*, May 27, 1871 and *ibid.*, May 30, 1871.

¹³⁶ *Die Deutschen in Amerika*, 11.

¹³⁷ Wittke, *Refugees of the Revolution*,

¹³⁸ *Buffalo Express*, May 30, 1871, 4 and *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 30, 1871, 2.

¹³⁹ See, for instance, Georg Baltz's assertion that "we must be united, like our brethren over the ocean, who through unity opened the road to liberty." Quoted in the *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 30, 1871, 2.

¹⁴⁰ Quoted in the *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 30, 1871, 2: "Alles zu thun, was in unseren Kräften steht, um die Republik in Nordamerika zu erhalten."

Republican paper, the *Freie Presse*, only once hinted at Bismarck's moral obligation to pay the German people in the currency they so duly deserved, freedom and civil liberties.¹⁴²

Not freedom, then, dominated the German-American discourse on the Franco-Prussian War, but a curious mixture of pride and defensiveness. Finally, ethnic spokesmen concurred, Americans had become aware of the sizeable German element in their midst.¹⁴³ Just as importantly, Americans had publicly recognized German diligence and dignity, industry and intelligence – in short, the German gifts to America.¹⁴⁴ But while orators at peace jubilees basked in the overt admiration, they noted with dismay that some 'nativists' persisted to question German loyalty.¹⁴⁵ "They maintain," Dr. Brunck said in Buffalo, "that these demonstrations are not in accordance with our duties as citizens of the republic; that we cannot at the same time bear love and fidelity to our native land and this republic."¹⁴⁶ To refute this "very narrow minded idea," Brunck evoked a popular metaphor: "If a young man chooses a wife and leaves his father's house, does he cease to be faithful to mother and father because he ardently loves his wife and is faithful to her? We have chosen this republic as our bride, but love not less our native land."¹⁴⁷ A cultural allegiance to the 'Fatherland', in other words, did not interfere with political loyalty to the American nation-state. This was a message reiterated in the following decades, whenever calls for the assimilation of all 'foreigners' gathered force.

In Waterloo County, where German-speaking migrants presented the majority of the population, neither newspapers nor orators dared to question the loyalty of "the Germans of

¹⁴² Buffalo *Freie Presse*, April 29, 1871: "Der Dank, den das deutsche Volk erhalten muß, heißt Freiheit, heißt Grundrechte der Deutschen Nation."

¹⁴³ *Die Deutschen in Amerika*, 2-3 and 25-6.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 5. See also Buffalo *Daily Courier*, May 30, 1871, 2; Buffalo *Express*, May 30, 1871, 4; Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*, May 29, 1871, 3; and Buffalo *Evening Post*, May 30, 1871, 3.

¹⁴⁵ *Die Deutschen in Amerika*, 9.

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in Buffalo *Daily Courier*, May 30, 1871, 2.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Canada.”¹⁴⁷ Instead, speaker after speaker lauded “the German character – naturally quiet and unobtrusive, obedient to the laws, patient under extreme suffering, possessed of dauntless bravery,” as Charles Magill, M.P. for Hamilton, put it.¹⁴⁸ The very presence of dignitaries who included members of the House of Commons and the Ontario Legislature, the County Court Judge and the bar of the county, the town council and neighbouring county officials, indicated that the jubilee was an ‘institutional’ celebration, one that was “leveled with the power structure,” not against it, as historian April Schultz has contended.¹⁴⁹ In Waterloo County, the local establishment of both ‘German’ and ‘British’ cultural origins endorsed the festivities, vocally and enthusiastically.

It is, perhaps, not surprising that the *eminence grise* of the jubilee, Otto Klotz, sought to translate the festive exuberance into political claims. “We Germans, here in Ontario ...,” he announced, “should occupy in this country the position to which we are entitled as sons of the grand, enlightened Germany.”¹⁵⁰ Then, Klotz proceeded to map out both the entitlements and obligations of Canada’s ‘German’ citizens: the preservation of German customs, the cultivation of excellent schools, the promotion of commerce, arts, and science.¹⁵¹ His tone of confidence was palpable. Evidently, Waterloo County’s collective memory did not harbour stories of nativist attacks, or even native resentment. As local charter group, German-speaking settlers had cut the forest and cultivated the land. As pioneers, they claimed a place in the nation’s narrative that was at its centre, not its margins.

¹⁴⁷ Toronto *Globe*, May 3, 1871, 4.

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in the Hamilton *Daily Spectator*, May 5, 1871, 1.

¹⁴⁹ Schultz, *Ethnicity on Parade*, 92.

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in the *Berliner Journal*, May 11, 2-3: “Wir Deutschen hier in Ontario ... [sollten] hier im Lande die Stellung einnehmen, zu der wir als Söhne des großen, aufgeklärten Deutschlands berechtigt [sind].”

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

In what was one of the most remarkable characteristics of the peace jubilee, this place was readily conceded to them. Members of the House of Commons, who climbed the speaker's platform in Waterloo County, emphasized the close ties between the 'German' and the 'British' peoples who were united "by the bonds of sympathy between the German and British Empires."¹⁵³ Here, one is reminded of Matthew Frye Jacobson's assertion that "assimilation is world politics ... insofar as it requires the reconciliation or integration of competing national mythologies."¹⁵⁴ In a very real sense, the perceived closeness of the German and British Empires shaped the discursive universe in which peace jubilee unfolded. By emphasizing the ties of kinship that bound together Great Britain and Germany, the expressions of German patriotism could be cast as unthreatening. "While the German people took natural pride in the success of the Fatherland," James Young, M.P. for South Waterloo said, "they loved the Queen of England, and the glorious constitution under which they lived."¹⁵⁵ Nowhere was this image of an essential union between the German and British peoples more powerfully captured than in an address by local English-speaking citizens, presented to the organizers of the jubilee:

You can hardly fail to remember that the bond of union between your Fatherland and our Motherland is one that has been cemented by relationships the most tender and sacred possible, that in the hatred of oppression and aspirations after true liberty, the genius of our fellow-countrymen in both lands is the same; and that in reverence for truth, morality and religion, the observance of law and order, and respect for constituted authority, as well as in the cultivation of all the graces of every day national life, the people of Germany and Britain have long been in mutual accord.¹⁵⁶

It was in the Dominion of Canada, the address continued, that 'German' and 'British' citizens had joined forces to build a "Great Canadian nationality." In the New World, these two great peoples

¹⁵³ *Hamilton Daily Spectator*, May 5, 1871, 1.

¹⁵⁴ Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, 216.

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in the *Toronto Daily Telegraph*, May 3, 1871, 4.

¹⁵⁶ *Kitchener Public Library*, Grace Schmidt Room of Local History, Waterloo Historical Society, Manuscript Collection 15.1c, "Address of the English Deputation to the Managing Committee of the German Peace Festival, 1871, Berlin, Tuesday, May 2, 1871."

were merging “as Canadians and Colonists relying upon the same rights, civic and political, animated by the same principles and aims.” In fact, so similar were their character and mission that the ‘English Residents of Berlin’ were proud to assert that “we are so much one with you in every-thing as it is possible for any two peoples to be.”¹⁵⁷ A more public endorsement of the centrality of German migrants to the project of Canadian nation-building is hard to imagine.

Identity

Just as German migrants in Canada and the United States used different rhetorical strategies to place themselves in the centre of the nation – strategies that were developed in conversation with their host societies – so, too, did their sense of community differ. There was, of course, an understanding that a ‘German’ community was forged in the course of the jubilees. The American visitors from Buffalo (New York) and Ann Arbor (Michigan) who attended the celebration in Waterloo County, and the Canadian delegates from Berlin and Toronto who marched in the Buffalo parade, seemed to personify a German union that transcended borders.¹⁵⁸

At the same time, however, the festivities at Buffalo and Berlin were embedded in different national contexts. In the United States, the Buffalo peace jubilee was just one among many. In fact, no less than seventy-two German-American communities organized celebrations, thus warranting the publication of a booklet that commemorated “the German-American Peace Jubilees in the year 1871.”¹⁵⁹ When Buffalo added its own tune to the festive chorus on May 29, 1871, New York, St. Louis, San Francisco, Baltimore, and Philadelphia had already staged much larger celebrations. Although part of an emerging German-American community, Buffalo was hardly a leading voice.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Canadisches Volksblatt*, May 10, 1871, 2-3 and *Buffalo Demokrat*, May 30, 1871.

¹⁵⁹ *Die Deutschen in Amerika*.

Across the border, in Canada, a single celebration of Germany's victory over France took place. Staged in the small communities of Berlin and Waterloo, the Canadian *Friedensfest* attracted visitors from Toronto, Hamilton, London, Guelph, Breslau, Hespeler, Hamburg, Listowel and a host of other towns and hamlets.¹⁶⁰ If Berlin would, in later years, proudly proclaim to be the "German capital of Canada," it was a claim supported by the temporary influx of German-speaking migrants from south-western Ontario who made this town of less than 3,000 residents a focal point of German festivity.

As the one and only peace jubilee in Canada, the *Friedensfest* attracted much attention in the province's English-language press. On May 18, 1871, the local *Berliner Journal* re-printed, with evident pride, excerpts from eighteen newspapers that had reported on this "splendid celebration" and generously praised "the biggest and most successful demonstration which has ever taken place in Canada."¹⁶¹ Clearly, the elevation of Waterloo County to Ontario's German heartland did not go unnoticed in the English-speaking press whose reports, in turn, reinforced the association of 'German' with 'Waterloo County.' As a result, *Deutschthum* in 1871 Canada assumed a localized air, whereas it unfolded on a national scale in the United States.

While it is possible to outline the contours of a German identity as it emerged in Canada and the United States, it is difficult to trace changing notions of identity at the individual level. Nineteenth-century migrants rarely left behind documents in which they reflected explicitly upon their 'ethnic' or 'national' identities, a useful reminder to historians that identities are always multiple, and that, at various moments in time, gender, class, family, region, ethnicity and nation assumed varying importance in migrants' lives.¹⁶² There is, however, one intriguing source that

¹⁶⁰ *Toronto Daily Telegraph*, May 3, 1871, 4.

¹⁶¹ *London Advertiser* and *Galt Reformer*, quoted in the *Berliner Journal*, May 18, 1871, 2.

¹⁶² Dirk Hoerder, *Creating Societies: Immigrant Lives in Canada* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 281; Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 3-11; Wsevolod W. Isajiw, "Ethnic Identity Retention," in Raymond Breton et al. eds.,

allows us to assess how Germany's unification in 1871 might have impacted the self-perception of German-origin migrants.

In the old Erie Court House in Buffalo, naturalization records provide a privileged glimpse into shifting 'national' loyalties. According to the Naturalization Act of 1795, any American court was entitled "to grant American citizenship to aliens after five years of residence in the country and one year in the state where naturalization would take place."¹⁶³ As a first step in the naturalization process, prospective citizens were asked to declare their "intention to renounce their former allegiance" to the country of origin.¹⁶⁴ Like the U.S. census, the 'declarations of intention' relied on the self-identification of applicants. Unlike the census, however, they admitted multiple entries, thus allowing applicants to chose one identity (i.e. Bavarian) *alongside* another (i.e. German).

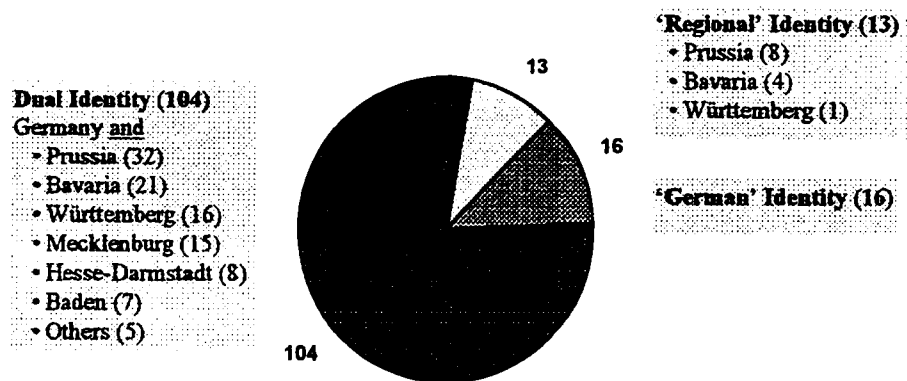
As the graph below demonstrates, in 1871, for the first time ever, the 'declarations of intention' featured a dual identity. In identifying their country of 'former allegiance,' applicant after applicant listed *both* Germany *and* his region of origin. Less than one quarter of respondents, in fact, identified themselves as either 'German', 'Prussian', 'Bavarian', or 'Württemberg.' The remaining 78 per cent renounced their former allegiance to both their home region and the German Empire.

Ethnic Identity and Equality: Varieties of Experience in a Canadian City (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 34-91.

¹⁶³ I am indebted to Randy William Widdis's study for bringing this source to my attention. See his *With Scarcely a Ripple: Anglo-Canadian Migration into the United States and Western Canada, 1880-1920* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 359-60.

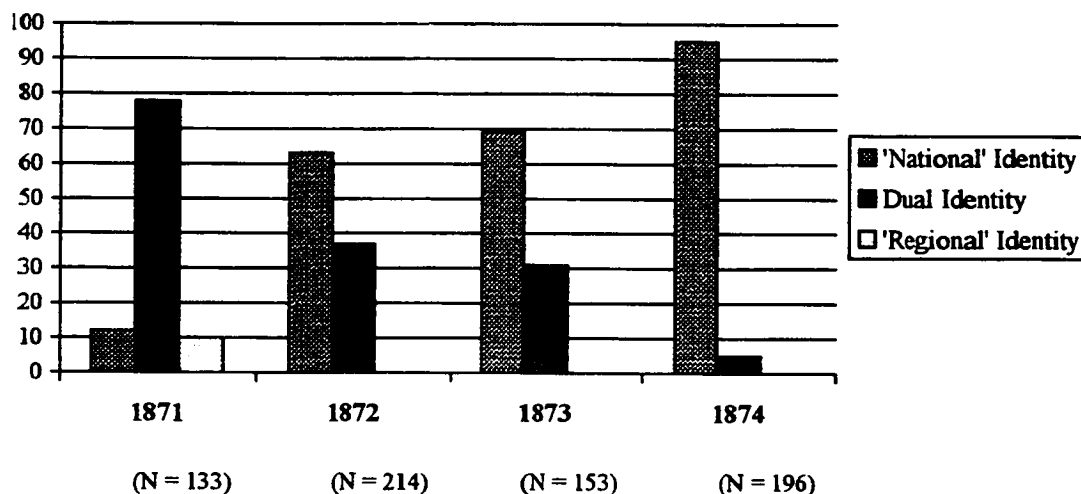
¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Graph 1: Self-Identification of German Migrants in Buffalo, 1871



Source: Erie County Court House (Buffalo), United States Naturalization Records, Declarations of Intention (N = 133).

Theoretically, of course, it is possible that the entry 'Germany' was added not by the migrants themselves but by conscientious county clerks. However, the very variety of responses which ranged from 'Germany' over the 'Emperor of Germany' to the 'Grand Duke of Baden' suggests that clerks merely listed whatever answer they received. In addition, the *gradual* disappearance of regional identities (whose bewildering diversity had, in all likelihood, always proved puzzling to non-German clerks) points to slowly shifting self-perceptions of German-speaking migrants.

Graph 2: Self-Identification of German Migrants in Buffalo, 1871-74 (in percentages)

Source: Erie County Court House (Buffalo), United States Naturalization Records, Declarations of Intention.

Evidently, we have to be careful not to overstate our case. The answer 'Germany' may have been chosen for the simple reason that it made eminent sense to American officials, in a way that 'Prussia', 'Württemberg,' or 'Baden' did not.¹⁶⁵ To proclaim the disappearance of local or regional identities, then, is not our goal. In family and kinship networks, sub-national identities might have persisted in Buffalo, as they did in other American cities.¹⁶⁶ Still, the fact that 95 per cent of the applicants for naturalization papers identified themselves as 'Germans' by 1874 strongly suggests that a German identity had become meaningful in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War.

Conclusion

The founding of the German Empire in 1871, alongside the jubilant celebrations of peace, placed German migrants firmly into the public eye and conspired to give meaning to a German identity. Importantly, this identity did not supplant more localized identities, nor did it mend divisions of class, gender, or religion. Despite the rhetorical tributes to a community of equals,

¹⁶⁵ Peterson, *Popular Narratives and Ethnic Identity*, 141.

¹⁶⁶ See, in particular, Stanley Nadel, *Little Germany: Ethnicity, Religion, and Class in New York City, 1845-80* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 1-11, 14 and 48-50.

the jubilee festivities were scripted by middle-class organizers. Women were all but excluded from the 'politics of nationalism', making an appearance only as icons, not as actors. French-German migrants, in turn, viewed the outburst of German patriotism with ambivalence, while ethnic churches – powerful organizations in their own right – were relegated to the margins of festivity. The homogenized German identity which the organizers of the jubilees sought to project was thus fractured even at the most German of festivals.

But even though the peace jubilees reflected the dynamic tension between unity and diversity, they did help to sketch the contours of a German identity that could be adopted by German-origin migrants, depending on the situational context. Suffused with myths and legends, this identity reflected an image of the German nation that was steeped in ideas of romantic nationalism. It portrayed Germany as an organic, immutable entity, embodied in nature itself and personified both in Hermann, the Cheruscan, and *Germania*.

In recognizing the liberal use of folk symbols and heroes, we should be careful not to dismiss them "as a retreat into an isolated agrarian simplicity free from all the disorders of civilization," as John Hutchinson has argued.¹⁶⁶ Although the imagery at the peace jubilees did evoke a romanticized German past, this past was deftly put to use for modern purposes. By conjuring the greatness of the German nation (and, by extension, the greatness of the German people), organizers at the Berlin and Buffalo jubilees sought to suggest that German migrants had not only earned, but duly deserved, a central place in the Canadian and American nation-states.

As early as in 1871, the German identity constructed in the course of the jubilees acquired a distinct 'German-American' and 'German-Canadian' tinge. German migrants in the United States framed their identity in the language of republicanism. Keenly aware that Bismarck's German *Reich* refused to grant civil liberties, yet smitten by Germany's unification and its newly-achieved national

¹⁶⁶ John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 32.

refused to grant civil liberties, yet smitten by Germany's unification and its newly-achieved national 'greatness', Forty-Eighters tuned down their calls for German democracy and, instead, expressed their appreciation for the freedoms available in the great American republic. Drawing upon the "doctrine of immigrant gifts," a notion first developed during a wave of anti-Catholic nativism in the mid-nineteenth century, they emphasized German 'contributions' to the project of nation-building, yet never quite succeeded in shedding their defensive air.¹⁶⁸ While revelling in the public tributes to German character and culture, as published in the English-language press, one critical comment seemed enough to evoke the spectre of nativism that had haunted German migrants in the 1850s.

In Canada, by contrast, a smug self-confidence permeated the speeches of German orators. Living in a heartland of German-origin migrants where the cultural norm was 'German,' not 'British,' speakers revelled in the entitlements of German citizens, without betraying the slightest fear that changing political circumstances might affect their position. English-speaking orators, in turn, confirmed the privileged role that German migrants held in Canadian society by pointing to the close ties between the German and British Empires. This rhetorical device, as we shall see in later chapters, was soon appropriated by migrants themselves, for it allowed them to camouflage as 'almost British' in the year of imperialism when cultural difference came to be regarded with suspicion.

The last question, then, which we have to ponder is the legacy of the jubilees. In sounding a cautionary note, historian Kathleen Neils Conzen has argued that "the ethnicity generated by festivity was a limited one. Efforts to convert the ethnic harmony of celebration into unity beyond the festival grounds generally came to nought. Too many incompatible perspectives were brought together in the consensual rites of ethnic festivity."¹⁶⁹ Indeed, although select German-American circles, under the leadership of German New York, contemplated the founding of a national organization that would harness the energies and enthusiasm exhibited at the peace jubilees, the new

¹⁶⁸ Conzen et al., "The Invention of Ethnicity," 13.

¹⁶⁹ Conzen, "Ethnicity as Festive Culture," 71.

association proved to be short-lived.¹⁷⁰ The brief flowering of German patriotism and ethnic solidarity, in other words, did not necessarily translate into a desire “to forge an ever closer union of the Germans of America” on an institutional basis.¹⁷¹

But although the peace jubilees did not result in a national organization, their impact at the local level was unmistakable. In Buffalo, they provided for an (albeit brief) experience of ethnic solidarity upon which German migrants could again draw in the school controversy of 1873/74. In Berlin, the jubilee sparked a campaign to cultivate “German nationality in language, customs, and traditions” that was spearheaded by the German-Canadian Choir Federation (*Deutsch-Canadischer Sängerbund*), founded in November 1873.¹⁷² A loose association of German choral societies of Berlin, Waterloo, Preston, Toronto and Hamilton, the *Sängerbund* organized no less than eight singers’ festivals in Waterloo County between the years 1874 and 1912. If the peace jubilee had spoken in the language of German nationalism, which thus became embedded in the ethnic consciousness, its musical successors helped formulate just what this German identity meant in a Canadian context.

¹⁷⁰ *Die Deutschen in Amerika*, 4-5 and 27.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁷² *Berliner Journal*, November 27, 1873.

Part II

Singing German Identities

Chapter IV

Song, Sound and Soul: Inventing the Folk in Waterloo County, 1874-1912

In September 1874, the *Toronto Globe* dispatched a reporter to Waterloo where the German *Sängerfest* (singers' festival) was about to begin. When boarding the train to Waterloo, the journalist did not merely face a four-hour journey. Rather, if his colourful reports are to be believed, he had travelled to a strange and foreign country whose natives were as "simple" and "innocent" as they were "enthusiastic". In reading his detailed descriptions, prominently featured on the *Globe's* front page, an Ontarian audience shared in the author's enthusiasm as he cheerfully joined the spirit of festivities: "What clouds of dust, what Niagaras of lager beer, what a flame of fair faces, what decorations, what hochs, what singing, what marching and counter-marching."¹

In anticipation of large numbers of celebrants, the "little centres" of Waterloo and Berlin had donned a festive garment, much admired by the visitor from the city: "Nothing could be prettier than the vista presented by the road partially lined by poplars, and spanned by one triumphal arch after another from which depended patriotic mottoes and Victoria wreaths. The village, in addition, was properly ornamented with flags, bunting and streamers." While the residents put finishing touches on the decorations, the reporter was rudely awakened, not by German folk tunes but "by a peculiar noise like the humming of a gigantic bee. I hope my German friends will forgive for considering this the commencement of their *Gesangfest*, it was only the noise of a pump factory over the way." Embellished by artistic license, the sound of this "sleep-robbing pump factory" provided a welcome excuse to visit the county's industries – the "largest tannery in Canada, and several small tanneries, a brewery and distillery, and the

¹ *Toronto Globe*, September 2, 1874.

Dominion Button Factory” – whose “prosperous condition” was only matched by the wealth of “sweet little residences and sometimes magnificent mansions.”

Evidently, the reporter liked what he saw. Good-naturedly, this urban dweller conceded that it might be misleading to call Waterloo a “village”. After all, the town boasted a population of 2,000, was home to both German- and English-language newspapers, and afforded visitors a choice between a half-dozen good hotels.² The lively account of sightseeing attractions turned positively enthusiastic when the *Sängerfest* began in earnest:

The bells swung, the cannon thundered, the bugles blew, and the drums gave forth their rat-tat-tat ... The Saengerbund from Buffalo, Montreal, Preston, Hamilton, Berlin, Baden, Toronto came and were all received at the entrance of the village – with its fine stone and brick houses, and all but magnificent public buildings – with great ‘hochs,’ and Mr. Jacob Conrad welcomed them in enthusiastic speeches. While waiting for each contingent, we ate German sausages and drank lager beer. When all had arrived we went to the Fest hall, where there was a choir of young ladies on a platform, from which was seen a vast hall properly ornamented with cedar, magic lanterns, and transparencies. The children were wonderfully gay. As the hall filled, and the guns thundered, more than once were repeated the lines which tell the German that if he is alone in a strange land and feeling himself lost, all he has to do is to sing German songs and he is straightaway at home.³

Faithfully, the reporter provided transcripts of the ensuing lengthy speeches, delivered by musical director, H.A. Zoellner, and M.P.P. Moses Springer. But as revealing as the official rhetoric, were his off-hand observations of the local folk.

When strolling through the streets of Waterloo, the Toronto editor indulged in the popular pastime of stereotyping.⁴ With a few words, he reduced the diversity of men, women,

² All quotations are taken from *ibid.* For a description of decorations see also the *Berliner Journal*, September 3, 1874.

³ *Toronto Globe*, September 2, 1874.

⁴ As Keith Walden has argued, it was considered to be “a mark of urban sophistication” to exhibit a talent for “playful stereotyping”. See Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 168.

and children he encountered to one-dimensional museum pieces; faintly exotic, quaint, and altogether charming:

Pretty little girls, with deep blue eyes, are playing around everywhere, and here and there one sees a group of small people, the boys with great wide-rim red straw hats, in the midst of tiny fiddlers about their own age. As you walk through Berlin or Waterloo you see a young girl pass by or cross the street, her fair hair plaited and falling in a long stream behind, just like Gretchen in the plot from *Faust*, and wherever a group gathers there you will see gesticulation and excitement such as puzzles one to account for, as the common idea is that the Teuton is a staid, quiet, unexcitable creature.⁵

In pinning down the identities of German youth, this urban flâneur offered a romantized and idealized view which echoed popular rural stereotypes. In an age of industrialization and urbanization, when newsboys, strays, habitual truants, and waifs roamed the streets of Toronto, he was pleased to find youthful dignity, healthy appearance, and refreshing innocence in Waterloo.⁶ The young girls, he enthused, were seemingly direct descendants of ‘Gretchen’, the archetypal female character in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s celebrated novel *Faust*. Their admirable mothers and fathers, in turn – “the women strong and domestic looking, the men with their rosy faces and light clothing looking as though they had stepped out of one of the pictures of German artists” – displayed all those qualities that made good citizens: respect for order, love of honest toil, and will to succeed.⁷ Stereotypical as these images were, they offered room for subversion. Determined to do justice to “the German character”, the reporter set out to correct a commonly held mis-perception. Far from being a “staid, quiet, unexcitable creature”, the “interesting German specimens” whom he had encountered knew both how to work and to celebrate.

⁵ *Toronto Globe*, September 3, 1874.

⁶ Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto*, 200-4; Neil Sutherland, *Children in English-Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth-Century Consensus* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1976), 97; Susan E. Houston, “The ‘Waifs and Strays’ of a Late Victorian City: Juvenile Delinquents in Toronto,” in Joy Parr ed., *Childhood and Family in Canadian History* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 129-142.

⁷ *Toronto Globe*, September 3, 1874.

The Concept of the Folk

It was the idea of the folk that captured the imagination of this contemporary observer. As described by the German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder, the folk were the innocent and uncivilized in society, those who had preserved in their 'primitive' and 'barbaric' ways the people's spirit (*Volksgeist*).⁸ Their songs and tales, dances and ballads evoked a past where life had been simple and virtuous, "the antithesis of all that was overcivilized, tired, conventional, and insincere," as the historian Ian McKay has put it.⁹ In an age of rationality and science, McKay suggests, the folk came to represent "a pastoral vision of society – one in which rich and poor were bound together by ties of love and understanding."¹⁰ The folk, in short, symbolized community (*Gemeinschaft*) before society (*Gesellschaft*) had complicated it.¹¹ They were, Ian McKay writes, "the living antithesis of the class divisions, secularism, and 'progress' of the urban, industrial world."¹² Apparently, this vision held as much appeal in 1870s Ontario as in nineteenth-century Germany. In the eyes of the *Globe* reporter who watched the 1874 *Sängerfest* with benevolent amusement, Waterloo County's German-origin residents seemed to be characters of a by-gone era, far removed from the temptations of modernity. Their celebration, he assured his readers, was a welcome embellishment of Canadian life, a reminder that virtue and innocence could persist in an urbanizing, industrializing society.

But while evoking a pastoral past, the *Globe* reporter undermined his own narrative by alluding to the county's thriving industries. By the mid-1870s, "the men with their rosy faces and light clothing looking as though they had stepped out of one of the pictures of German artists" lived

⁸ Philip V. Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), ix.

⁹ Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 12.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 12-3.

¹¹ Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*, 54.

¹² McKay, *The Quest of the Folk*, 12.

and worked in a county that underwent rapid urban-industrial expansion.¹³ Berlin, in particular, as Elizabeth Bloomfield has observed, represented “an outstanding example of a lesser town, with no natural advantages, which by determined effort and an industrial policy managed to raised itself in the urban hierarchy to become the leading city of its region by 1930.”¹⁴ Exhibiting a strong urban ethos, an energetic Board of Trade “vetted new industries, persuaded the town council to grant generous tax exemptions for new buildings and sought out local capital necessary for investment in Berlin’s industries,” thus fostering sustained economic growth.¹⁵ Clearly, while cherishing German language and culture, Waterloo County’s German settlers were, by no means, opposed to the “*Gesellschaft* of modernity”.¹⁶

If they, nonetheless, seized on the concept of the folk, it was not for its anti-modern appeal. Rather, they sought to achieve the ethnic unity which the *Globe* reporter had assumed as a given. The festivals presented an occasion to reflect upon what it meant to be German in Canada. They provided participants with an opportunity to dramatize the group’s collective myths and to establish the notion of *Deutschthum* in the collective consciousness.¹⁷

¹³ Toronto *Globe*, September 3, 1872.

¹⁴ Elizabeth Bloomfield, “City-Building Processes in Berlin/Kitchener and Waterloo, 1870-1930,” Ph.D. History, University of Guelph, Abstract.

¹⁵ John English and Kenneth McLaughlin, *Kitchener: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: Robin Brass, 1996 [1983]), 69.

¹⁶ McKay, *The Quest of the Folk*, 12.

¹⁷ In this context see also Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992 [1983]), 2 and 9.

In addition, the notion of the folk proved a convenient rhetorical device to legitimize a German identity within a Canadian context. By emphasizing the quaint and quintessential character of the singers' festivals, it distracted from their political potential. Notwithstanding the fact that the creation of a German public constituted a political act in itself, Waterloo County's cultural leaders took care to market the musical gatherings as non-political events. "The love of music and singing is a German character trait," Otto Klotz assured his audience in 1874. "At their social gatherings, one might wait in vain for a discussion of politics, yet soon, one will hear a German tune."¹⁸ It was a rhetoric that surfaced, once again, in the late nineteenth century, when the cult of the British Empire swept through Ontario.

The eight *Sängerfeste* that took place in Waterloo County between 1874 and 1912 followed a strikingly similar script that bore much resemblance to festivals in both Germany and the United States. At a first glance, the putative sameness appears to reflect an identity that remained virtually unchanged over the course of four decades. But although the singers' festivals employed a 'traditional' festive vocabulary, we have to understand that the highly formalized patterns of celebration belonged to the "ritual world" where, according to Roger D. Abrahams, "repetition is commonly carried out to intensify. Things done in unison convey the message that community exists and communion is possible."¹⁹ As we shall see, despite their ritualistic form, the function of these festivals changed dramatically over time. If the *Sängerfeste* of the 1870s had been concerned with forging a sense of German identity, the festivals of the 1890s sought to situate this identity into a Canadian context.

¹⁸ *Berliner Journal*, September 10, 1874, 2. "Liebe zu Musik und Gesang [ist] ein Charakterzug der Deutschen ... Bei ihren gesellschaftlichen Zusammenkünften wird man oft vergeblich warten auf eine politische Diskussion; man braucht aber nicht lange zu warten, bis eine deutsche Musik erklingt."

¹⁹ Roger D. Abrahams, "An American Vocabulary of Celebration," in Alessandro Falassi ed., *Time out of Time: Essays on the Festival* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 179.

Creating Community

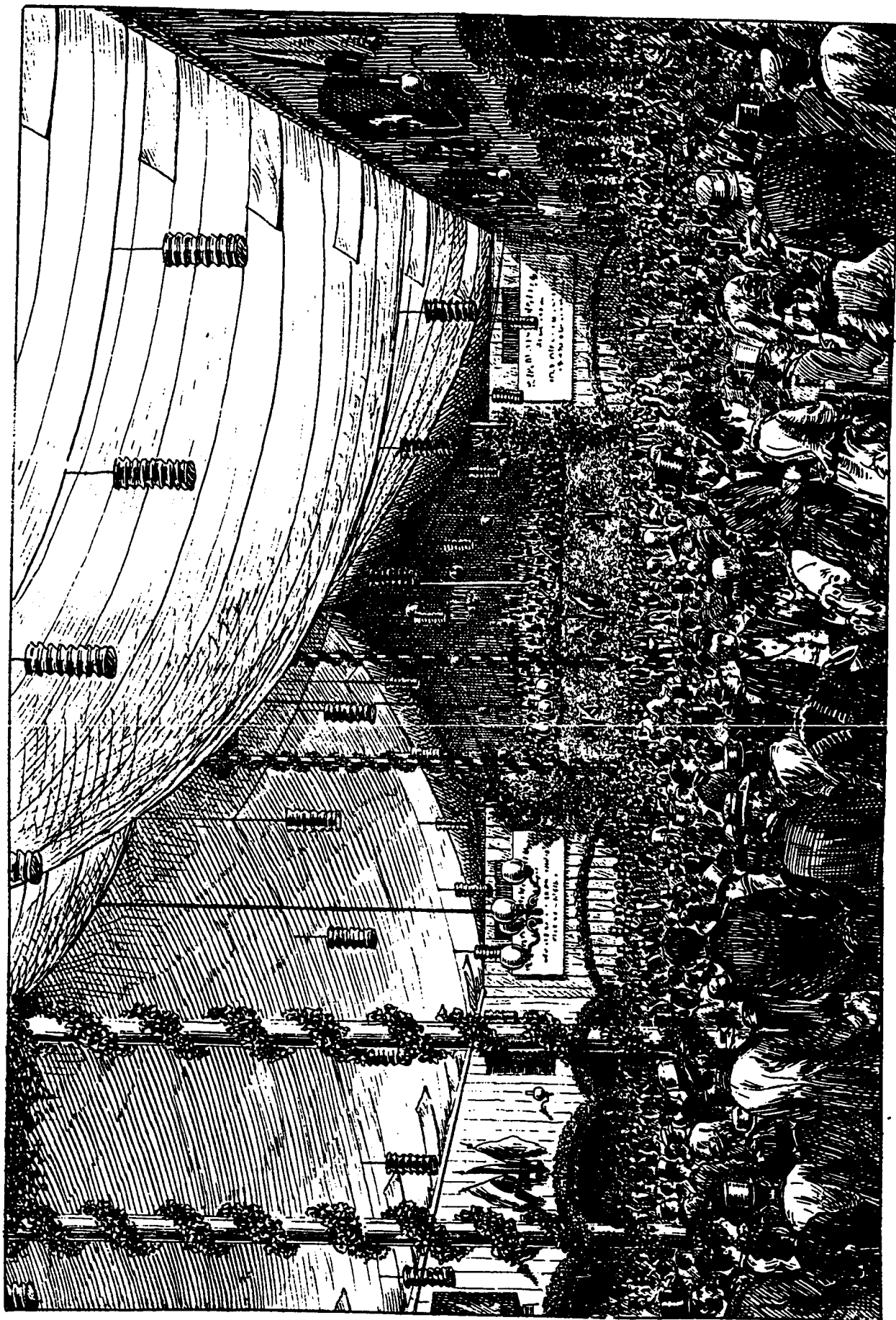
The streets of Waterloo did not only offer a rich tableau for stereotyping, they also provided a festive arena for merry-making. On the second day of the 1874 *Sängerfest*, three-thousand visitors had arrived in the village where “bodies of young men paraded the *trottois* in military array, singing German songs ... and so hearty were the notes that it almost seemed as if the flags of the German Empire fluttered through the night in the storm of song”.²⁰ At noon, the general rejoicing was channelled into the grand procession that;

formed at the Sanger’s Hall at 12:30 and marched through the principal streets with bands playing, banners flaunting in the breeze and crowds of wondering people accompanying them through clouds of dust that were thick enough to slice with a knife. The procession marshalled in the following order. Men in uniform on horseback; large wagon containing female singers in white with red sashes; the Waterloo band in uniform; Buffalo Gesang-verein; Toronto G.T.R. Artillery Band; the Harmonia; the Baden singers; the Berlin Concordia; Berlin bands; Waterloo Liedertafel; citizens following on foot and in carriages; The whole procession was about one third of a mile long.²¹

²⁰ *Toronto Globe*, September 3, 1874.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Illustration 2: Scene in the Concert Pavilion at the Waterloo Sngerfest, 1874



WATERLOO, ONT.—THE GERMAN GESANGFEST: SCENE IN THE INTERIOR OF THE PAVILION.—By P. W. GANNING.

Source: *Canadian Illustrated News*, 10, 12 (September 19, 1874), 188.

The procession presented the prelude to the dramatic climax of the *Sängerfest*, the concert. Packed to capacity, the concert hall accommodated an audience of 2,000 who “panted, perspired, and wilted in that atmosphere of heat and dust” until organizers cut air-holes into the canvas to provide relief.²³ Yet once the concert began, the earlier discomfort was forgotten in calls for encores, bursts of applause, and general delight.

Throughout the *Sängerfest*, hopes had been voiced that “this day’s festival will be the forerunner of many similar ones to follow in future years.”²⁴ The festival’s president, Otto Klotz, would have been pleased to learn that the singers’ festivals became, in the words of historian Geoffrey Hayes, “one of the most enduring cultural symbols of Waterloo County” – a social practice, in fact, that self-consciously forged a connection between the German past and the Canadian present.²⁵

For one thing, the festivals provided a meeting place for German singing societies from Waterloo County, Hamilton, Toronto, and Montreal.²⁶ As a festival of “fraternization”, one reader of the *Berliner Journal* held, the 1874 Waterloo *Sängerfest* was a truly “German national Fest.”²⁷ Conductor H.A. Zöllner, as well, voiced his hope that the musical gathering would

²³ *Ibid.*; *Berliner Journal*, September 10, 1874, 2.

²⁴ Otto Klotz, as quoted in the *Toronto Globe*, September 3, 1874.

²⁵ Geoffrey Hayes, *Waterloo County: An Illustrated History* (Kitchener: Waterloo Historical Society, 1997), 78. In 1902, the *Berliner Journal* published a chronicle of “all *Sängerfeste* that ever took place in Berlin and Waterloo”, namely the singers’ festivals of 1874, 1875, 1886, 1890, 1897, 1898 and 1902. See *Berliner Journal*, August 14, 1902.

²⁶ For a list of Canadian participants at the Waterloo County singers’ festivals see *Berliner Journal*, September 3 and 10, 1874; *Berliner Journal*, August 12 and September 2, 1875; *Toronto Globe*, August 12, 1886; *Berliner Journal*, August 21, 1890; *Berliner Journal*, August 19, 1897; *Kitchener Public Library – Grace Schmidt Room of Local History* [hereafter KPL], “Waterloo Historical Society” [hereafter WHS], Manuscript Collection 15, William H. E. Schmalz, “Official Programme: 13th Peninsular Saengerfest to be held at Berlin, Ontario, August 10, 11, 12, 1898” and “Saengerfest Souvenir. Waterloo, Ont., Aug. 12th, 13th and 14th, 1902,” *Waterloo Public Library*, Local History Collection, Vertical File: ‘Saengerfests’, “Saengerfest-Souvenir: 1862 Goldenes Jubilaeumsfest 1912. Waterloo, Ont. Thursday and Friday, August 1st and 2nd, 1912.”

²⁷ *Berliner Journal*, April 30, 1874, 2: “deutsche[s] National-Fest.”

“forge an ever closer union of the *Deutschthum* in Canada, to preserve the German language, customs, and traditions.”²⁸ Echoing the language of nationalism that had permeated the *Friedensfest* of 1871, music was celebrated as a means of group formation that transcended boundaries of geography, class, politics, nationality, and religion.²⁹

This message was explicitly spelled out when Berlin’s mayor, Hugo Kranz, climbed on the speaker’s platform at the 1875 singers’ festival in Berlin:

The clerk has left his office, the merchant his store; the craftsman has laid aside his tools, and even the farmer has left behind his important work, the harvesting of the bounty with which good providence has blessed our province of Ontario; everybody has gathered here today in order to enjoy a few days of rest and refuge from the worries and toils of everyday life; and what better occasion to do so than this *Sängerfest*? Here, there exist no barriers of status, nationality, politics or denomination. Here, we all gather on the broad platform of humanity in order to spread joy and cheerfulness.³⁰

In Hugo Kranz’s ‘imagined community’, social distinctions were rendered meaningless in the shared enjoyment of music. In the days of musical harmony, ‘merchant’, ‘farmer, and ‘artisan’ alike asserted their cultural heritage and joined their fellow-men in a celebration of ‘humanity’. Kranz’s community of celebrants was, of course, a romanticized one. In keeping with the conservative ideology of the folk, he evoked the image of a close-knit group that knew of neither conflict nor jealousy.

²⁸ Quoted in the *Berliner Journal*, September 10, 1874, 2: “das in Canada vorhandene Deutschthum enger an einander zu schließen, um dadurch die deutsche Sprache, Sitten und Gebräuche möglichst aufrecht zu erhalten.”

²⁹ In this context see also the speech by Otto Klotz, quoted in the *Berliner Journal*, September 10, 1874, 2.

³⁰ Quoted in the *Berliner Journal*, August 26, 1875: “Der Processionist hat seine [sic] Office verlassen, der Kaufmann sein Geschäft, der Handwerker hat sein Werkzeug auf die Seite gelegt, und sogar der Bauer hat seine dringende Arbeit, das Einheimsen der reichen Ernte eingestellt, womit die gütige Vorsehung unsere Provinz Ontario gesegnet hat; alle haben sich hier versammelt, um einige Tage Erhaltung und Ruhe von den Sorgen und Mühen des täglichen Lebens zu genießen; und wo böte sich dazu eine passendere Gelegenheit als bei dem Sängerfest? Hier gibt es keine Schranken des Standes, der Nationalität, der Politik, der Konfession. Hier versammeln wir uns alle auf der breiten Plattform der Humanität, um Freude und Frohsinn zu verbreiten.”

In years to come, Berlin did, indeed, pride itself in the perceived absence of social strife. Local lore had it that the town's substantial brick buildings, the "trim, neat houses, the well kept lawns, the air of comfort" so impressed a prominent visitor that he exclaimed: "But where do your workmen live? Have you no poor quarter?"³¹ In 1889, the *Toronto Globe* waxed eloquently about Berlin's "laughing, joking, cheerful and contented" work-force, suggesting that "there is more equity in the distribution of wealth produced."³² The Deputy Minister of Labour, William Lyon McKenzie King, found in 1907 that "[e]mployers and employed are not separated by a gulf of class distinctions so wide as to engender class hatred and distrust," while the Royal Commission on Industrial Relations for 1919 described Kitchener as "the happiest city in Canada," for its freedom of labour troubles and small numbers of strikes.³³

Evidently, these lofty sentiments, which often alluded to the common cultural background of employers and workers, cannot be taken at face value. As Elizabeth Bloomfield has told us, a study of labour relations and working-class life in Berlin that delves into patterns of wages, living costs, and electoral behaviour has yet to be written.³⁴ Rather than focusing on cultural attributes, such a study might highlight the fact that Berlin's diversified industry kept levels of unemployment low, that workers and employers had worked side by side in the early years of industrialization, that working conditions in the factories tended to be less onerous and dangerous than in most Ontario localities, and that the town's workers "had been spared the wild boom in land prices which had occurred in so many other Ontario towns as the shift from artisanal to industrial

³¹ Bloomfield, "City-Building Processes," 95. In the early twentieth century, local souvenir pamphlets never failed to mention that the Germans of Berlin were "great home lovers and home builders," a characteristic which suggested both economic growth and social stability. See KPL, WHS, MC 15.9-15.10, William H. E. Schmalz, "Official Souvenir: Berlin To-day, Centennial Number in Celebration of the Old Boys' and Girls' Reunion. August 6th, 7th, 8th, 1906."

³² *Toronto Globe*, August 31, 1889, as quoted in Bloomfield, "City-Building Processes," 93.

³³ As quoted in Bloomfield, "City-Building Processes," 94-5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

production took place across the province.”³⁴ In other words, if we want to understand why Berlin “seemed strangely isolated” from the social unrest and economic uncertainty that gripped 1890s Canada, we have to explore the impact of both cultural and socio-economic forces.³⁵

For now, suffice it to say that ethnic leaders drew upon the language of the folk to transform the multitude of celebrants into a German public.³⁶ Spectators were to be transformed into actors. Social, regional, and religious divisions were to be transcended in a German public realm where the imperative of ethnic solidarity would reign supreme.³⁷ Yet, as ethnic leaders were prone to discover, the ideal of a German public that “constructs itself as a unified entity” would prove elusive.³⁸

If a unified public existed, it was in the realm of representation, namely in the performances of the male mass chorus. It was not necessarily the quality of singing that left a lasting impression. Newspaper columnists offered carefully worded praise that commended singers for the absence of “serious hitches” and their “surprising precision and clearness of attack ... considering that only one mass rehearsal was held.”³⁹ Even the county’s main German-language paper, the *Berliner Journal*, admitted in 1890 that the mass chorus featured “natural singing” rather than “artistic achievement.”⁴⁰ H. A. Staebler, a participant at the 1898 singers’ festival, also conceded that “the choral singing was not of a standard that would be

³⁴ English and McLaughlin, *Kitchener: An Illustrated History*, 57 and 72.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

³⁶ For a point of comparison, see Roger Chickering’s penetrating analysis of the Pan-German League. Chickering, *We Men Who Feel Most German: A Cultural Study of the Pan-German League, 1886-1914* (Boston: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 156.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 156-7.

³⁸ Harold Mah, “Phantasies of the Public Sphere: Rethinking the Habermas of Historians,” *Journal of Modern History*, 72, 1 (March 2000), 155.

³⁹ *Toronto Globe*, August 12, 1886; August 15, 1902; August 12, 1886. See also *Hamilton Spectator*, August 14, 1902 and *Berlin News Record*, August 12, 1898.

⁴⁰ *Berliner Journal*, August 28, 1890.

considered professional, or even first class amateur.” But, he continued, “the nature of the occasion did not demand this. Entertainment was in the ascendant, decorations were colourful, and the whole atmosphere radiated good cheer.”⁴²

Given the uneven nature of performances, why did audiences and reporters alike regard the concert of the male mass chorus as the “grand climax” of the festivities?⁴³ The mass chorus, composed as it was of members of local and visiting singing societies, represented a visible and audible symbol of German unity in North America. By affording celebrants an opportunity to listen to “so large a number of voices singing the beautiful *Volkslieder* (folk songs) of Germany”, it created a German homeland out of song and sound.⁴⁴ It thus provided a “symbolic umbrella of the ethnic culture” beneath which a diversity of German singers and spectators could gather.⁴⁵

But although visitors at the singers’ festivals rushed to their seats, in eager anticipation of a musical treat, as a symbol of ethnic unity, the mass chorus was inherently flawed.⁴⁶ Not only did it imagine the ethnic community in decidedly masculine terms, it also failed to attract the generation of Canadian-born Germans. As early as in January 1875, frustration shone through the lines of a letter, written by a staunch supporter of Berlin’s *Concordia*, who attempted to cajole young men into joining the choir. As the writer assured prospective singers, the sacrifice was small – an evening a week – and great the rewards. But the “young gentlemen” proved oblivious to the appeal to “unite, join in, and sing” for the sake of the upcoming singers’ festival.⁴⁷ Eleven years later, in June 1886, a contributor to the *Berliner Journal* complained bitterly about the

⁴² H.L. Staebler, “Random Notes on Music of nineteenth-century Berlin, Ontario,” *Waterloo Historical Society*, 37 (1949), 16.

⁴³ *Toronto Evening News*, August 14, 1902.

⁴⁴ *Toronto Globe*, August 12, 1886.

⁴⁵ Kathleen Neils Conzen, David A. Gerber, Ewa Morawska, George E. Pozzetta, and Rudolph J. Vecoli, “The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A.,” *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 12, 1 (Fall 1992), 5.

⁴⁶ *Toronto Globe*, August 12, 1886.

⁴⁷ *Berliner Journal*, January 28, 1875.

young roughs who had made a mockery of the solemn opening of the new concert hall: "mostly young rascals who find enjoyment in disturbing the audience. It was scandalous and reckless ... to chatter, laugh and even whistle during the speeches."⁴⁸ The youth, the writer demanded, should be taught the rules of courtesy all over again. Their behaviour, in any case, made them unworthy of belonging to the ethnic group, for their "screaming, cheering, stamping, and whistling" was suitable only for a 'horde of Sioux-Indians.'⁴⁹ Beyond its blatant chauvinism, the remark is interesting for what it reveals about conflicts between the 'rough' and 'respectable' that occurred in many Ontario towns.⁵⁰ Age, it appears, was a boundary that even the most fervent appeal to ethnic unity could overcome only with difficulty. For many second-generation German Canadians, music did not hold the almost mythical appeal that it assumed in the eyes of ethnic spokesmen.

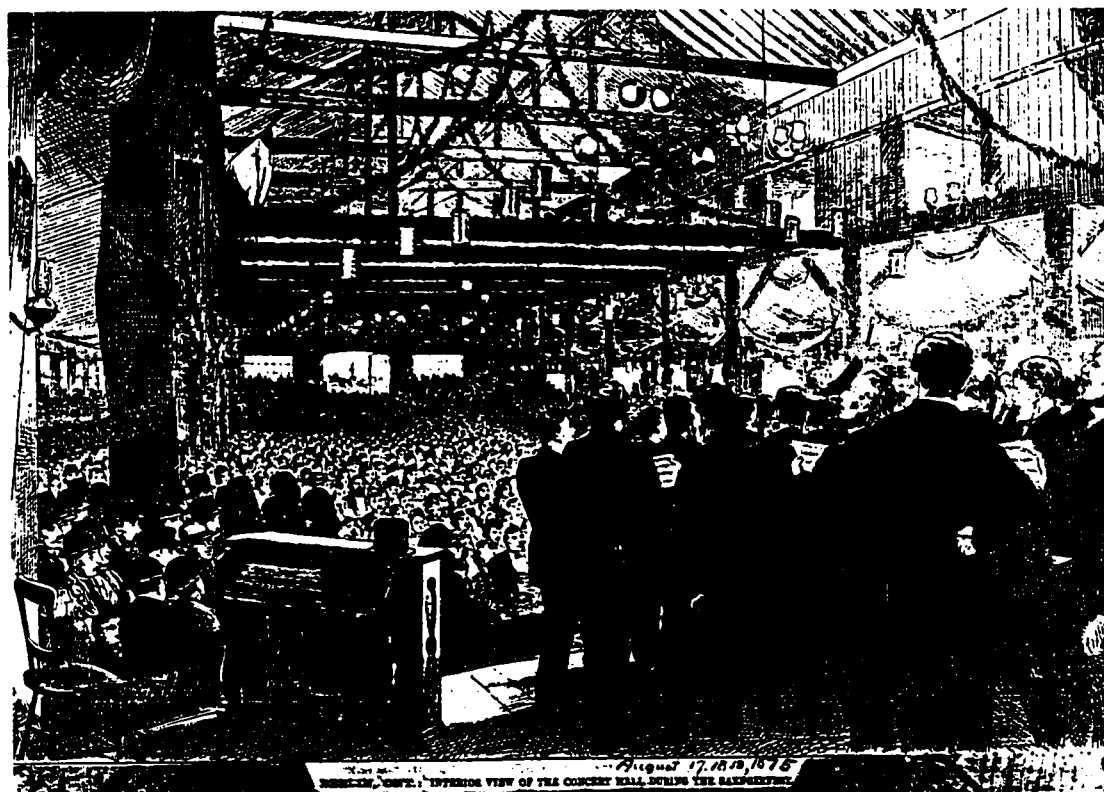
Women, as well, were markedly absent from the public stage. Here, alas, the rhetoric of the 'singing brethren' rang true; the mass chorus consisted of men only.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, June 17, 1886: "meistentheils junge Bengel, die sich ein Privatvergnügen daraus machen, das Publikum zu ärgern. Es ist geradezu empörend, takt- und rücksichtslos für den Sänger und Musiker sowohl wie für das gebildete Publikum, während der Vorträge zu schwatzen, zu lachen, sogar zu pfeifen."

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*: "ein solches Gellen, Jauchzen, Trampeln und Pfeifen, daß ich mich in eine Horde von Sioux-Indianern versetzt glaubte."

⁵⁰ See Lynne Marks's *Revival and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure, and Identity in Late-Nineteenth century Small-Town Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 81-106.

Illustration 3: Concert of the Mass Chorus at the Berlin *Sängerfest*, 1875



Source: Gottlieb Leibbrandt, *Jubiläums-Ausgabe/Centennial Issue: 100 Jahre/100 years Concordia, 1873-1973* (Kitchener: Concordia Club, 1973), 8.

Women had to content themselves with working behind the scenes. For the duration of the festivals, they hosted friends and relatives, served refreshments, prepared picnic baskets, and decorated concert halls. In so doing, they earned public praise only for the latter. “As to the interior decoration of the halls and assembly rooms,” wrote the *Toronto Globe* in 1875, “it would be impossible to say how much of it is owing to the taste and ingenuity of the fair sex.”⁵¹ If women caught the attention of newspaper columnists, it was in the form of anecdotes. Readers of the *Berliner Journal* encountered a lady who sobbed inconsolably after a pickpocket had stolen her purse, whereupon a gentleman presented her with three dollars out of his own pocket.⁵² They

⁵¹ *Toronto Globe*, August 18, 1875. The task of decoration was usually left to women. See, for instance, *Berliner Journal*, July 22, 1875; *Berlin Deutsche Zeitung*, August 4, 1897; *Berlin News Record*, August 1, 1898.

⁵² *Berliner Journal*, August 18, 1898.

might also have chuckled over the misfortune of a woman in white who slipped while stepping out of a streetcar. "For her," claimed the *Journal*, "the ruined dress marked the end of festive joy."⁵² These dependent and vain creatures were joined by a third type, the "pretty girls", whose beauty lightened up the celebrations. "The town," enthused one observer, "was beautifully and gaily decorated with arches of evergreens, bearing inscriptions of welcome, though, to tell the truth, such decoration is superfluous when one considers the quaint town, with its innumerable pretty girls."⁵³ Reduced to being singer's helpmate, a comic character, or yet another decorative ornament, women remained at the margins of festivities.⁵⁴

Indeed, although they donated flags, outward symbols of identity, they received scant notice in the press. In 1874, female ingenuity came to *Concordia's* rescue when the singing society desired to have its own banner. A sowing machine was the prize of a lottery whose revenues were topped by donations, collected by "the German matrons and maids of Berlin."⁵⁵ Twenty-three years later, when a majestic German flag was unveiled in Victoria Park, the *Berlin News Record* stated matter-of-factly that "it was obtained through the efforts of the German ladies of the town and was presented by them without formal ceremony, to the Park Board."⁵⁶ But, yet again, women's efforts were relegated to a footnote in the *Berliner Journal* that featured the men's rousing speeches instead.

⁵² *Ibid.*, August 21, 1902.

⁵³ *Hamilton Evening Times*, August 11, 1898. See also *Berliner Journal*, August 18, 1898: "Thundering applause arose, complimenting both the speaker and the pretty lady singers from Detroit, just entering the hall."

⁵⁴ *London Daily Advertiser*, September 2, 1874: "the whole female choir, under Mr. Zoellner's leadership, attired in white with red scarves, formed a tasteful finish to the beautiful perspective which met the visitor's gaze on entering the building." For a discussion of women's roles at German festivals see Margaret Schrader, "'Hoffmann's Lieschen' umarmt die ganze Welt: Die Rolle der Frau in der bürgerliche Festkultur am Beispiel hessischer Volksfeste", Ph.D., Philipps-University of Marburg/Lahn, Germany, 1991, 59-64.

⁵⁵ *Berliner Journal*, June 18 and August 27, 1874.

⁵⁶ *Berlin News Record*, August 13, 1897. See also Karl Müller-Grote, "Onkel Karl: Deutschkanadische Lebensbilder", *German-Canadian Yearbook*, 15 (1998), 228.

If women did enter the public stage, it was as participants of mixed choruses, which were featured at the 1874 and 1875 singers' festivals. Warmly, the *Toronto Globe* commended the organizers on this pleasing addition:

the voices of the ladies being felt as a relief after the large number of exclusively male choirs that had been heard, the ear being easily wearied by a monotony of *timbre*. Judging from the programme, there would seem to be danger of the German Canadians overlooking the importance of paying special attention to the organization and development of mixed choirs. It might be pointed out that unless steps are taken to encourage the formation of mixed choirs in greater numbers there will always be difficulty experienced in producing the choral works of the great masters.⁵⁸

But evidently, the performance of 'great' choral works was not considered essential. It was not before 1898 that a mixed choir sang again at a *Sängerfest* concert.⁵⁹ Even then, women remained woefully underrepresented, their number never exceeding one fifth of the united singers.⁶⁰

Apparently, much like in Germany, the mythical powers of folk music were located almost exclusively in the realm of male choral societies. It was "the sound of song, sung by free men", festival president William Oelschlaeger claimed in 1875, that had united the Fatherland.⁶¹ Similarly, it was the sound of male voices that came to represent German ethnicity in late nineteenth-century Waterloo County. Although female choirs such as the *Toronto Liederkrantz* were commended for singing "very prettily and sweetly," it was left to the men to bring to life the

⁵⁸ *Toronto Globe*, August 19, 1875 and August 20, 1875. See also the *Berliner Journal*, August 26, 1875.

⁵⁹ Favourable endorsements of mixed choirs include, among others, *Berliner Journal*, July 9, 1874; January 28, 1875; February 11, 1875; August 21, 1902; August 7, 1912; *Waterloo County Chronicle*, August 8 and 21, 1902; *Stratford Evening Beacon*, August 12, 1902.

⁶⁰ At the 1898 *Sängerfest*, 43 women (16 per cent) and 232 men (84 per cent) joined the ranks of the singers. Four years later, the number of singers had dramatically increased, while the percentage of women and men remained virtually the same; 74 female singers (17 per cent) and 367 male singers (83 per cent) participated at the 1902 *Sängerfest*. See "13th Peninsular Saengerfest to be held at Berlin, Ontario, August 10, 11, 12, 1898" and "Saengerfest Souvenir: Waterloo, Ont., Aug. 12th, 13th, and 14th, 1902."

⁶¹ Quoted in the *Berliner Journal*, August 26, 1875.

revered German folk song. In the realm of German festive culture, men were identified as ‘national’ actors, whereas women were confined to the supporting cast.⁶¹

Only at the turn of the century, after Waterloo County’s ‘German-ness’ had become firmly established in the public imagination, were female soloists invited to the singers’ festivals. Their performances elicited enthusiastic calls for ‘encore’ and made reporters resort to flowery prose: “Miss Ziegler possesses a voice of marvellous range and power, now strong and clear as a silver bell, now low and gentle as the rippling rill, but ever of entrancing sweetness and purity.”⁶² While this ample praise portrayed women soloists as “pure” and “sweet” impersonations of Mother Germania, the programme of the 1898 *Sängerfest* also paid tribute to the professional identity of singers such as Racie Boehmer and Emma Zoellner whose musical accomplishments it listed meticulously.⁶³ As the entrepreneur Louis Jacob Breithaupt recorded in his diary in August 1898, “Miss R. Boehmer of our town is one of the ‘star singers’.”⁶⁴ Here, ethnic consciousness became inseparably intertwined with local pride. Or perhaps, boundaries of gender were becoming more permeable once a historical narrative had been woven that portrayed Waterloo County as a centre of *Deutschthum* and part of a larger German public.

⁶¹ For a point of comparison see Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish, and Jewish Immigrants in the United States* (London, England and Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 80.

⁶² *Berlin News Record*, August 13, 1897. See also *Waterloo County Chronicle*, August 19, 1897; August 2, 1902; *Berlin News Record*, August 12, 1898; August 14, 1902; *Berliner Journal*, August 21, 1902.

⁶³ *Berliner Journal*, September 10, 1874, 2; Schrader, “Hoffmann’s Lieschen”, 23 and 59”; “Official Programme: 13th Peninsular Saengerfest to be held at Berlin, Ontario. August 10, 11, 12, 1898,” 18 and 20.”

⁶⁴ *University of Waterloo*, Doris Lewis Rare Book Room, Breithaupt Hewetson Clark Collection, “Diaries of Louis Jacob Breithaupt,” August 10, 1898.

Bonds Across Borders

While negotiating internal boundaries of gender and age, the festivals also navigated the international border. Whereas borders have commonly been conceived as lines of division and differentiation, the notion of the 'borderlands' has come to represent a zone of interaction, exchange, and mediation.⁶⁶ Borderlands, we might agree with Randy William Widdis, are "regions of both similarity and difference."⁶⁷ They are "spaces between cultures," as the historian David Thelen has put it, where individuals from different cultures explore and negotiate their relationship.⁶⁸ Such trans-cultural encounters, as we have seen, occurred in the metaphorical borderlands *within* Canadian society, namely in the zone surrounding the boundary of ethnicity. But meanings of German identity were also forged in the on-going conversation with German "singing brethren" south of the border.

Between 1874 and 1912, 24 German-American singing societies arrived on westbound and eastbound trains, with Buffalo and Detroit sending by far the most delegates. The excitement with which H. A. Zoellner, the musical director of the 1874 Waterloo *Sängerfest*, welcomed the "German singing brethren of our great neighbouring republic" was palpable indeed:⁶⁹

⁶⁶ See, for instance, Lauren McKinsey and Victor Konrad, *Borderlands Reflection: The United States and Canada. Borderlands Monograph Series # 1* (Orono: Canadian-American Centre, University of Maine, 1989), 7 and Victor Konrad, "Common Edges: An Introduction to the Borderlands Anthology," in Robert Lecker co-ordinator, *Borderlands: Essays in Canadian-American Relations* (Toronto: ECW, 1991), viii.

⁶⁷ Randy William Widdis, *With Scarcely a Ripple: Anglo-Canadian Migration into the United States and Western Canada, 1880-1920* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 28.

⁶⁸ David Thelen, "Of Audiences, Borderlands, and Comparisons: Toward the Internationalization of American History," *Journal of American History*, 79, 2 (September 1992), 444.

⁶⁹ Quoted in the *Berliner Journal*, September 10, 1874, 2: "deutsche Sangesbrüder unserer großen Nachbar-Republik."

by supporting our enterprise, they testify to the fact that, although we reside in different countries, we are all sons of one people, a people that surely occupies an outstanding place among the nations of the earth, a people unsurpassed in the arts of singing and music ... Dear brethren in song from the United States, I call out in gratitude that you honour us with your presence and thereby elevate and improve our *Fest*; may you be happy in our midst; may this gathering help to strengthen our natural bonds, not only as Germans, but also as singing brethren.⁷⁰

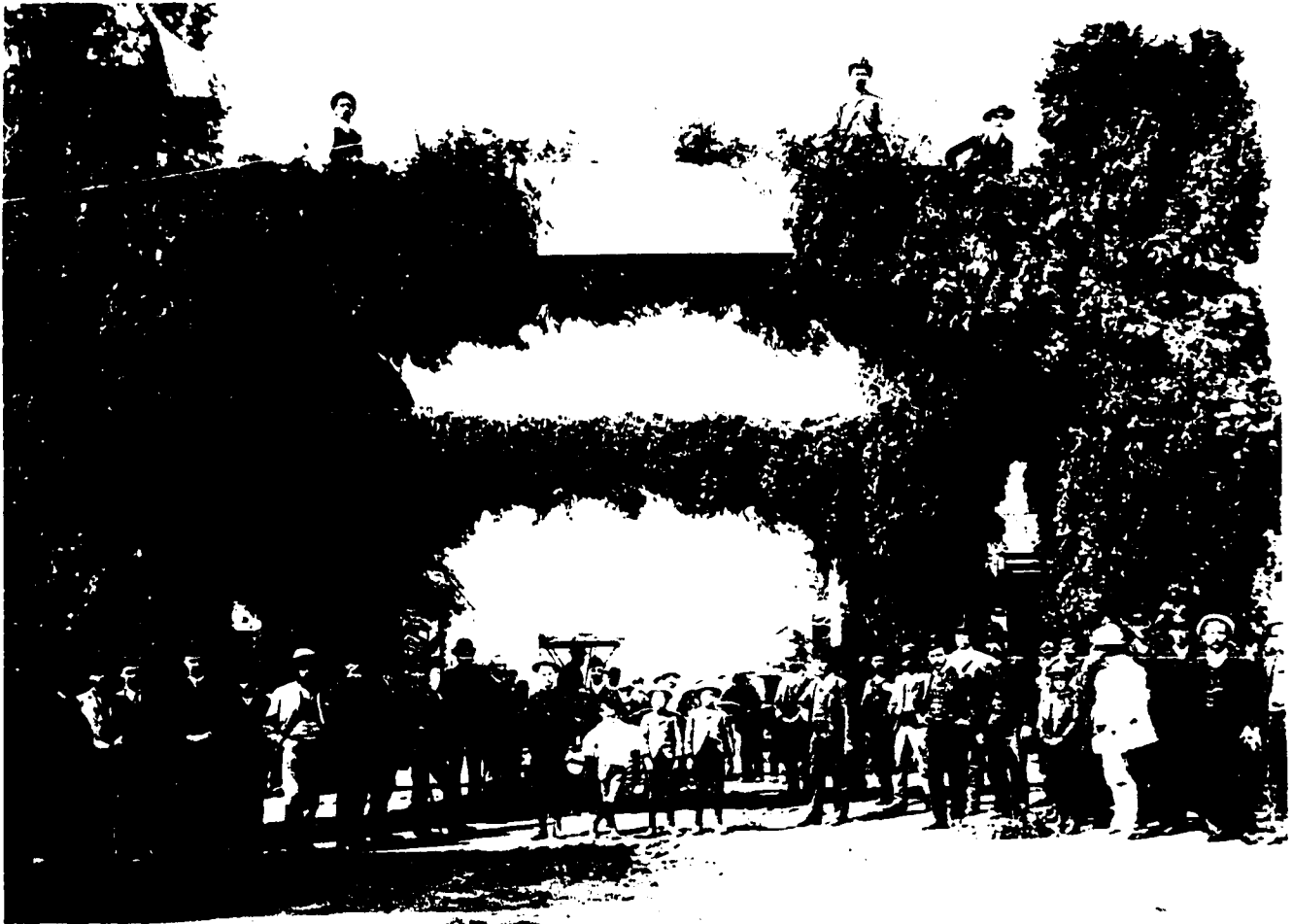
Zoellner's enthusiasm was infectious. He is "the heart and soul of the singers' festival," members of the Buffalo singing societies *Orpheus* and *Sängerbund* declared in unison. "Every singer loves him, for he knows how to make friends with everybody at the very first meeting."⁷¹ The genuine sympathy which the Buffalo singers expressed was only enhanced when Zoellner seized Carl Braun, the conductor of the Buffalo *Sängerbund*, into an embrace, exclaiming tears in his eyes: "Now, I have heard a male chorus once again; since I left Germany fourteen years ago, I have not heard anything like this."⁷² Flattery and festive exuberance conspired to make the visits of the Buffalo singers memorable ones.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*: "durch Unterstützung unseres Unternehmens ... bekunden [sie], daß, obgleich wir in verschiedenen Ländern unsern Wohnort haben, wir doch allesamt Söhne eines Volkes sind, das gewiß auf dem weiten Erdenrund unter allen Nationen eine der hervorragendsten Stellungen einnimmt, das sicher zumal in der Kunst des Gesangs und der Musik noch von keinem Volk der Erde überragt ist. Ihr lieben Sangesbrüder aus den Ver. Staaten, ich rufe Euch einen herzlichen Dank zu, daß Ihr uns mit Eurer Gegenwart beehrt und dadurch wesentlich zur Erhöhung und Verschönerung unseres Festes beiträgt, möge es Euch in unserer Mitte gefallen, möge diese Zusammenkunft dazu beitragen, nicht allein unsere natürlichen Bunde als Deutsche, sondern auch das Band als Sangerbrüder enger zu schließen."

⁷¹ Buffalo *Freie Presse*, August 19, 1875, 4: "das Herz und die Seele des ganzen Sängerfestes ... jeder Sänger liebt ihn, denn er weiß sich Jedem [sic] sofort bei der Zusammenkunft zum Freunde zu machen."

⁷² Quoted in *ibid.*: "Da habe ich wieder einen Männerchor gehört; seit vierzehn Jahren, seitdem ich Deutschland verlassen, habe ich so etwas nicht gehört." See also *Buffalo and Erie County Public Library*, Rare Book Room, "Zur Erinnerung an das 50-jährige Jubiläum des Buffalo Sängerbund den 19., 20. und 21. April 1903, 1853-1903," 11.

Illustration 4: Triumphal Arch at the Waterloo Singers' Festival, n.d.



Source: Courtesy of the *Waterloo Public Library*.

Year after year, the Buffalo societies commended their “Canadian fellow singers” on their generous hospitality, their warmth, and beautiful decorations.⁷² They seemed visibly impressed by the “small town” (*Städtchen*) of Waterloo whose residents “competed with one another to make the festival a success.”⁷³ After all, mused the correspondent of the Buffalo *Freie Presse*, “for a small town, it was no small feat ... to organize such a celebration; and that this small Canadian country town, which does not even have a train station, succeeded in doing does credit ... to its

⁷² Buffalo *Freie Presse*, August 18, 1875, 4: “unsere[] canadischen Gesangsgenossen.” See also Buffalo *Demokrat*, September 5, 1874, 2.

⁷³ Buffalo *Freie Presse*, September 5, 1874, 5: “Alle Bewohner des Städtchens wetteiferten untereinander, um das Fest zu einem Erfolg zu machen.”

German residents.”⁷⁴ At the Waterloo County festivals, ‘Canadian’ and ‘American’ singers forged friendships over liberal amounts of lager that made voices sound hoarse, yet spirits soar high.⁷⁵ More than one singer stumbled into the night and fell asleep beneath the stars, only to be rudely awakened by a shower in the morning.⁷⁶

Illustration 5: Festive Decorations Adorn Waterloo’s Main Streets, n.d.



Source: Courtesy of the *Waterloo Public Library*.

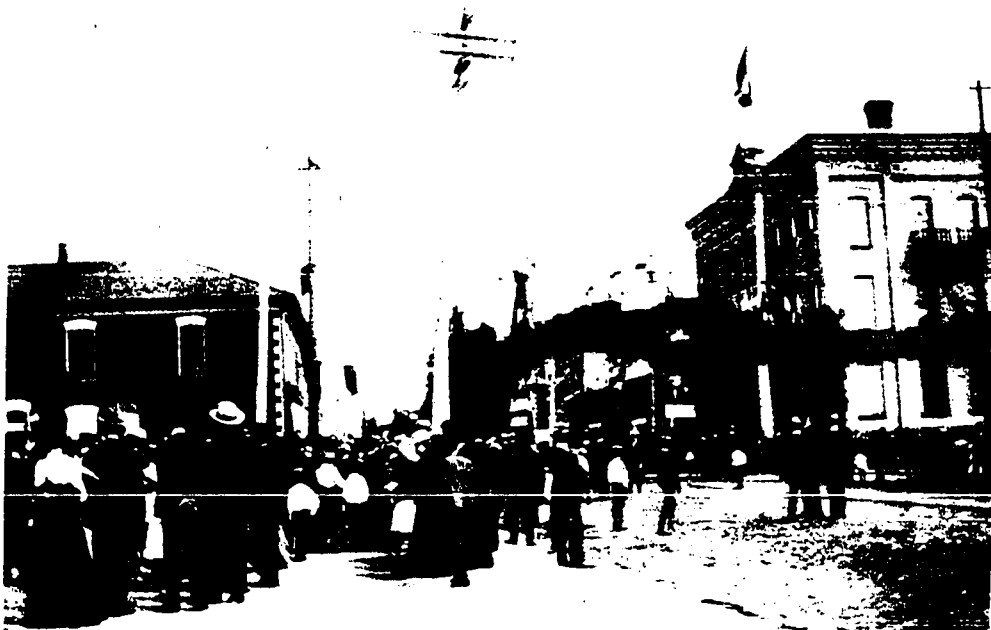
⁷⁴ *Ibid.*: “Es war keine Kleinigkeit für ein Städtchen ... ein solches Fest ... in’s Leben zu rufen; und daß dieses ein kleines kanadisches Landstädtchen, welches nicht einmal an einer Eisenbahn liegt, zu thun im Stande war, gereicht sicher dem Ort und seinen deutschen Bewohnern zu Ehre.”

⁷⁵ *Buffalo Freie Presse*, September 5, 1874, 4 and August 19, 1875, 4.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, September 3, 1874, 6.

In listening to the tales which the Buffalo visitors brought home, sociability seemed to be as important a festive ingredient as song. It was in the friendly encounters at homes and meeting halls, in the hours floating in Preston's mineral spa, in the sightseeing tours of Berlin and Hamilton that German singers learned to appreciate both their similarities and differences.⁷⁸

Illustration 6: Spectators at the Waterloo *Sängerfest*, n.d.



Source: Courtesy of the *Waterloo Public Library*.

In commenting upon the *Sängerfeste* in Waterloo County, the Buffalo singers betrayed the benevolent condescension which the city felt over the country town. The Berlin beer, they declared, was a miserable potion, and Waterloo's theatre performance hardly comparable to Buffalo plays. Not to be outdone by local musicians, the Buffalo *Sängerbund* formed its own impromptu band by purchasing instruments at a Waterloo store. The Buffalo *Orpheus*, in turn,

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, September 5, 1874, 4 and Buffalo *Demokrat*, August 21, 1875, 2.

revelled in the wild applause that greeted its performance of choral works.⁷⁸ The Waterloo festivals were nothing but impressive, the visitors said, particularly given the fact that “our neighbours in Canada” had yet to elevate *Deutschthum* (Germandom) to its proper heights.⁷⁹

The Canadian singers did, indeed, feel dwarfed by the German-American community of which their Buffalo “brethren” formed part. “Canada’s Germans,” H.A. Zoellner admitted in 1874, “are yet too isolated, and poorly represented in our big cities ... that we could dare to organize this pioneering *Fest*” in a more dignified setting.⁸⁰ Still, as a centre of German settlement, Waterloo provided a congenial location for the singers’ festivals, for its enthusiasm and heartiness offered rich compensation for its modest size. In keeping with the humble spirit of his speech, Zoellner then admitted that the musical accomplishments of the Canadian singers paled in comparison with their American ‘brethren’. But whatever its shortcomings, he added, Waterloo did not lack in hospitality, striving to cultivate festive joy in a manner that befitted the “cosy, honorable character of the German people.”⁸¹

In alternating between pride and defiance, Zoellner’s speech reflected the precarious self-esteem of German spokesmen, who found themselves “betwixt and between”.⁸² Unlike the United States, where German festivity had burst onto the national scene, 1870s Canada had one German heartland only, whose residents juggled three identities simultaneously. Not only did they have to reconcile their ‘German-ness’ and ‘Canadian-ness’. They also had to fashion an identity

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* See also Buffalo *Freie Presse*, August 19, 1875, 4.

⁷⁹ Buffalo *Demokrat*, August 21, 1875, 2.

⁸⁰ *Berliner Journal*, September 10, 1874, 2: “Die Deutschen Canada’s sind denn doch noch zu sehr vereinzelt und zumal in unsern größern Städten in einem gar zu geringen Verhältnis zu dem der anderen Nationalitäten, daß es wohl als gewagt erscheinen müßte, das erste derartige Fest in einer unserer größern Städte zu veranstalten.”

⁸¹ *Ibid.*: “eine gemüthliche anständige, deutschem Volkscharakter angemessene Heiterkeit.”

⁸² Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Adline de Gruyter, 1995 [1969]), 94.

similar to, yet different from, the brash self-confidence which the German-American visitors displayed (who were, not incidentally, called “the Yankees”).⁸⁴

They found an answer in ‘Canadian’ modesty. As the *Hamilton Spectator* noted with much satisfaction, the Waterloo *Sängerfest* of 1874 stood in refreshing contrast to ‘American’ opulence and extravagance:

Modest as was the plan of the first Waterloo fest as compared with the gigantic gatherings of German singers held in the States, the choruses were animated with a zeal and spirit that enabled them to afford a characteristic illustration of all the good elemental musical qualities of the German amateur in vigor, emphasis, accent and dynamic effect.⁸⁵

Again, it was the presumed simplicity and authenticity of the Waterloo County singers’ festivals that captured the imagination of contemporary observers. At a time when even German-American newspapers came to bemoan the giant *Sängerfeste* in the United States that had fallen victim to “American national vice,” namely the “tendency to exaggerate”, the modest scale of German-Canadian festivals was perceived as a decided advantage. In Waterloo County, it seemed, German festivity had remained frozen in time, thus preserving the true spirit of the German folk.⁸⁶ This sense of nostalgia was, of course, just that: a longing for the olden days, just out of reach, when German ethnicity had supposedly been sheltered from ‘contaminating’ influences. Little did it reflect the intrinsically modern networks of ethnicity that would emerge over the course of the next three decades.

Accompanied by families and friends, singers transformed the festivals into veritable German mass gatherings. In August 1886, Berlin welcomed no less than 500 visiting singers (not counting their entourage) from Montreal (50), Toronto (150), Hamilton (50), Guelph (50), Niagara (50), Rochester (100), and Buffalo (50). Together with the local singers from New

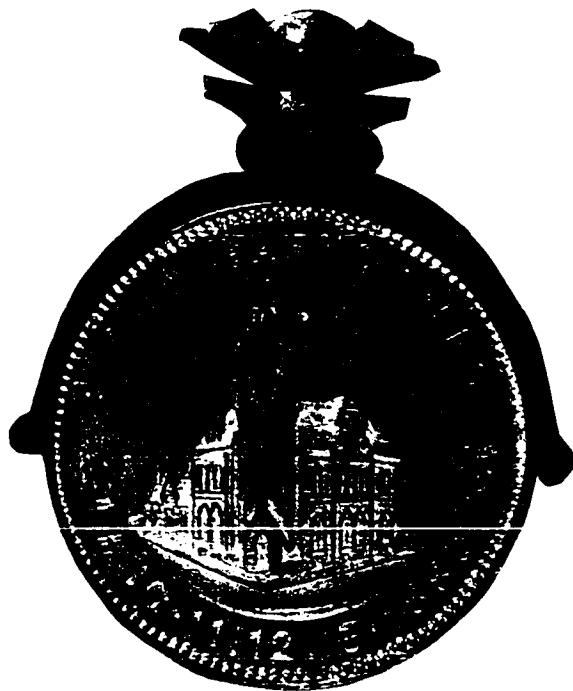
⁸⁴ See, for instance, *Berliner Journal*, September 10, 1874, 2.

⁸⁵ *Hamilton Spectator*, August 14, 1902.

⁸⁶ *Indianapolis Telegraph*, as quoted in the *Berliner Journal*, August 26, 1886, 7.

Hamburg (25), Waterloo (155), and Berlin (450), the mass chorus swelled to 1,130.⁸⁷ In the same month, the Waterloo *Liedertafel* travelled to Ann Arbor (Michigan) to participate in the seventh festival of the *Peninsular Sängerbund*.

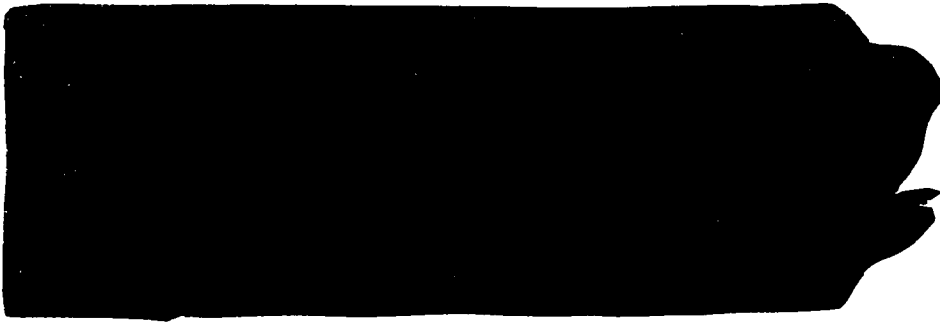
Illustration 7: Commemorative Coin of the Berlin *Sängerfest*, 1886



Source: Courtesy of *Doon Heritage Crossroads*, Regional Municipality of Waterloo.

⁸⁷ *Berliner Journal*, July 29, 1886, 4.

Illustration 8: Badge of the Waterloo *Liedertafel* at the Seventh Peninsular *Sängerfest* at Ann Arbor (Michigan), 1886



Source: Courtesy of *Doon Heritage Crossroads*, Regional Municipality of Waterloo.

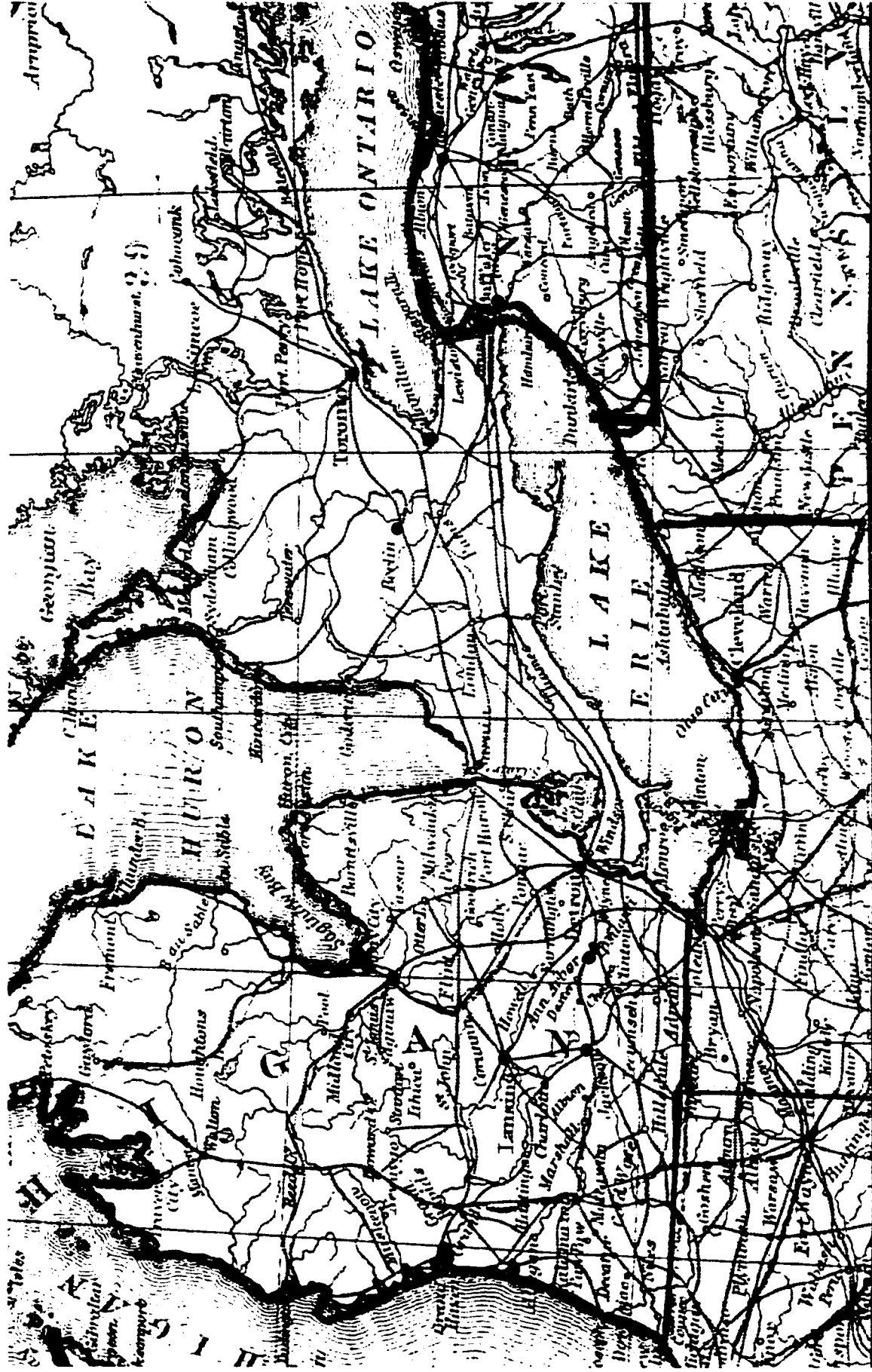
The bonds across borders were institutionalized in 1890, when singing societies from Waterloo, Berlin, Toronto, and Hamilton joined the *Peninsular Sängerbund*. Founded in Jackson (Michigan) in July 1877, the *Sängerbund* was regional in scope, its festivals geared towards singers in the Great Lakes Region. In 1890, it “made a raid into Canada” to hold its tenth *Peninsular Sängerfest* in Waterloo, for no American society had been willing to host the *Fest* after the financial fiasco of the Detroit festival of 1889.⁸⁸ Fortunately, enthused the Detroit *Abendpost*, “the little Waterloo, a small town of not even 3,000 residents – but German through and through – stepped in.”⁸⁹ The Waterloo festival, the newspaper enthused, would resemble the “singers’ festivals of our fathers”. It would delight in the German folk song, give prominence to male chorus singing, and refrain from hiring expensive soloists.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ *National Library of Canada*, “Souvenir and Official Programme of the Eleventh Peninsular Saengerfest held on August 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 1891, Hamilton, Ontario,” 5.

⁸⁹ Quoted in the *Berliner Journal*, August 21, 1890, 4: “Da aber sprang das kleine Waterloo, ein Städtchen von kaum 3000 Einwohnern, aber deutsch bis auf’s Mark, in die Bresche.”

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

Map 3: Bonds Across Borders – Participants at the Waterloo County Singers' Festivals, 1874-1912



Source: Alex Keith Johnston. *Handy Royal Atlas of Modern Geography*. Edinburgh: W. & A.K. Johnston, 1883.

So great was the success of the Waterloo festival that the *Peninsular Sängerbund* returned to Canada in subsequent years. In 1891 it convened in Hamilton, in 1898 in Berlin, in 1902 in Waterloo. German-Canadian singers thus joined a regional network of music and song that extended across the international border. In fact, as the map above suggests, in the borderland region of the Great Lakes, bonds of ethnicity (helped by excellent transportation links) connected German migrants in Ontario, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York State.⁹¹ In providing a forum of exchange and interaction, these gatherings had brought to the fore both what united and divided ‘German Canadians’ and ‘German Americans’.

Ethnicity and Empire

The rhetoric of the folk that had served the cause of German unity, also helped to depoliticize ethnicity, thus bringing German migrants safely into the Canadian mainstream. The singers’ festivals, as we shall see, managed to reconcile two seemingly incompatible goals. While paying tribute to the ‘great empire’ of Germany, they portrayed German Canadians as most ‘loyal citizens to Canada and to the British Crown,’ thereby legitimizing German-ness within a Canadian context.⁹² Not even the emergence of a new imperialism in the late 1880s and early 1890s, with its overt rhetoric of Anglo-Saxon superiority and its tales of glory and empire, could unsettle the Germans of Waterloo County.⁹³ Instead of feeling threatened by imperial sentiment, they embraced it.

Each year, the towns of Berlin and Waterloo celebrated the Queen’s birthday with parades, music, oratory, picnics and sport events.⁹⁴ In 1897, Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee was

⁹¹ In this context see also Widdis, *With Scarcely a Ripple*, 29-31.

⁹² See the speech by John C. Breithaupt, mayor of Berlin, at the 1897 *Sängerbund*, as quoted in the *Toronto World*, August 14, 1897, 1.

⁹³ Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970).

⁹⁴ For descriptions of the festivities see, for instance, *Berliner Journal*, May 31, 1888, 4; May 28, 1891, 4; June 1, 1893, 4; May 31, 1894, 4.

described, exuberantly and exhaustively, on the first page of the *Berliner Journal*.⁹⁵ In doing so, neither the editors nor Berlin's citizens ever lost sight of the Queen's German ancestry that, after all, provided "a wonderful justification of their role as German-Canadians within a British Dominion," as John English and Kenneth McLaughlin have noted.⁹⁶ "This woman, so highly revered, is of German origin," the *Journal* wrote, "her husband was a German prince, her family life followed German patterns, and the bonds of kinship tie her closely to the present German emperor, even though grandmother and grandson are currently not on very friendly terms."⁹⁷ Keenly aware of the consanguinity of the German and British empires, Berlin's citizens pointed to a special bond with the British Empire whose monarch they claimed as their own.

But the cult of the Empire that swept throughout Ontario had a distinctly 'German' twist in Waterloo County. Under the energetic leadership of fresco painter Karl Müller, Berlin's singing society *Concordia* began to organize annual banquets in honour of the German *Kaiser*.⁹⁸ In 1893, it resurrected the 'Canadian Choir Federation' (*Canadischer Sängerbund*) that convened for its first festival in Toronto in 1895.⁹⁹ In May 1896, then, *Concordia* turned to the past, to commemorate the 1871 *Friedensfest*.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, June 24, 1897, 1.

⁹⁶ English and McLaughlin, *Kitchener: An Illustrated History*, 51 and 82-91.

⁹⁷ *Berliner Journal*, June 17, 1897, 1: "die ... so hoch geehrte Frau ist von deutscher Abkunft; ihr Gemahl war ein deutscher Prinz; ihr Familienleben war nach deutschem Muster eingerichtet, und mit dem jetzigen deutschen Kaiser ist sie durch verwandtschaftliche Bande eng verbunden, wenngleich die Stimmung zwischen Großmutter und Enkel zur Zeit nicht von sehr freundschaftlicher Natur ist."

⁹⁸ *Concordia* had been founded in 1873 by three German tailors. See Gottlieb Leibbrandt, *Jubiläums-Ausgabe/Centennial Issue: 100 Jahre/100 years Concordia, 1873-1973* (Kitchener: Concordia Club, 1973), 5. *Berliner Journal*, February 4, 1892, 4; March 25, 1897, 4; February 2, 1899, 4; February 1, 1900, 4; February 1, 1905, 2; January 31, 1906, 6. For celebrations of the Emperor's birthday in a German context see Monika Wienfort, "Kaisergeburtstagsfeiern am 27. Januar 1907: Bürgerliche Feste in den Städten des Deutschen Kaiserreichs," in Manfred Hettling and Paul Nolte eds., *Bürgerliche Feste: Symbolische Formen politischen Handelns im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 157-91.

⁹⁹ Leibbrandt, *Jubiläums-Ausgabe/Centennial Issue*, 7; *Waterloo County Chronicle*, August 12, 1902.

In the preceding quarter of a century, the peace jubilee had metaphorsed into a “creation myth”. It became, in the words of Alessandro Falassi, “a foundation or migratory legend ... particularly relevant in the mythical or historical memory of the community staging the festival.”¹⁰⁰ Indeed, so deeply enshrined had memories of the peace jubilee become that they were to be carved out in stone. To replace the oak that the celebrants had planted (and which had long since withered away), Karl Müller suggested to commission a memorial plaque. When donations began to exceed expectations, ambitions soared. *Concordia* now set its eyes on erecting a monument of the late German Emperor Wilhelm I.¹⁰¹

As a tangible symbol of German unity, a fourteen-foot memorial to Emperor Wilhelm I was unveiled in Victoria Park on August 13, 1897, in a ceremony that constituted the highlight of the Berlin *Sängerfest*. The monument, acknowledged the *Hamilton Spectator*, is “very beautiful.”¹⁰² Looking northwards over the grounds, a larger-than-life bust of the Emperor sat imposingly on a pedestal of Quebec granite. Modelled in Germany, the bronze bust was accompanied by two reliefs, attached to the columns, which pictured former *Reichs*-Chancellor Bismarck and General Moltke respectively.¹⁰³ Once the German Consul of Toronto unveiled the bust, singers and spectators burst into a rendition of “Deutschland, Deutschland über alles” (‘Germany, Germany above all’).

The rhetoric of the ensuing lengthy speeches was, perhaps, more revealing than their actual content. If we are to believe contemporary observers, speeches were, invariably,

¹⁰⁰ Alessandro Falassi, “Festival: Definition and Morphology,” in Alessandro Falassi ed., *Time out of Time: Essays on the Festival* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 5.

¹⁰¹ Karl Müller-Grote, “Onkel Karl: Deutschkanadische Lebensbilder,” 226-9. See also *Berliner Journal*, August 19, 1897, 4.

¹⁰² *Hamilton Spectator*, August 14, 1897.

¹⁰³ English and McLaughlin, *Kitchener: An Illustrated History*, 83; Karl Müller-Grote, “Onkel Karl: Deutschkanadische Lebensbilder,” 227-8; Rych Mills and the Victoria Park 100th Birthday Historical Committee, *Victoria Park: 100 years of park & its people: an historical & photographic essay on Victoria Park* (Kitchener, Ontario: 1996), 19.

enthusiastic, captivating, and eloquent. Audiences, in turn, expressed their appreciation with hearty cheers and thundering applause.¹⁰³ The formulaic quality of these reports becomes compelling if we consider that language itself “conveyed the image of a group of people united in a profound collective experience,” as the historian Roger Chickering has observed.¹⁰⁴ Both speakers and spectators, Chickering suggests, were performers, their ‘play’ directed towards the audience of local and regional newspapers. In their demonstrative affirmations of German-ness, participants at the singers’ festivals helped to create a German public that extended far beyond the geographical confines of Waterloo County.¹⁰⁵

Celebrating Dual Allegiance

The overt celebration of ‘German-ness’ at the *Sängerfest* of 1897 created a stir on the local scene. Most notably, the *Berlin Telegraph* accused the town’s German residents of disloyalty, an assertion which the *Berlin News Record* passionately refuted:

If the monument had borne a bust of Washington, Canadians might well raise objections to its appearance on British soil; but here we have a class of citizens whose fidelity and patriotism have never been questioned by any fairminded person, erecting a memorial in commemoration of the peace of 1871 and designed to serve as a reminder to their offspring of the land of their forefathers and to act as an incentive to them to acquaint themselves with the richness of its literature and traditions, that they may be stirred to become good and useful citizens in Canada, by imitating all that is best in German character.¹⁰⁶

Apparently, the ‘principle of nationality’ was not, per se, perceived as threat, particularly if the nation in question was the ‘great empire’ of Germany.¹⁰⁷ In 1871, many Canadian observers had

¹⁰³ *Toronto Globe*, August 14, 1897, 1 and 15.

¹⁰⁴ Chickering, *We Men Who Feel Most German*, 155.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 155-6.

¹⁰⁶ *Berlin News Record*, August 14, 1897.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

regarded the “Fatherland’s” unification with sympathy, even admiration.¹⁰⁹ Twenty-six years later, the *Berlin News Records* declared that, surely, a “son of the Fatherland may be pardoned for thinking well of it, even if he has chosen to become a Canadian citizen.” This English-language newspaper, for one, saw no contradiction in the dual loyalty of Berlin’s “industrious, law-abiding, thrifty Germans”. While cherishing their German linguistic and cultural traditions, they had become faithful and loyal citizens of the Canadian nation state, it asserted.¹¹⁰

By and large, Ontario’s English-language press concurred with this assessment.

Admittedly, correspondents from Hamilton and Toronto felt a little lost in the overwhelmingly ‘German’ crowd in Victoria Park. “It was a very impressive affair, and, notwithstanding that nearly everything was said in German, the spectators seemed very much interested,” remarked, somewhat cautiously, the *Hamilton Spectator*.¹¹¹ The correspondent of the *Toronto Globe*, in turn, noted with palpable relief that entrepreneur W. H. Seyler had kindly agreed to translate the lengthy speeches into English. Only the columnist of the *Toronto Daily Mail and Empire* stated impatiently that he “had left his German dictionary at home, so he did not catch much of what Mr. Nordheimer said.”¹¹² Still, even though the ceremony was conducted almost exclusively in the German language, neither journalist questioned the loyalty of the celebrants.¹¹³ On the contrary,

¹⁰⁹ *Toronto Globe*, May 3, 1871.

¹¹⁰ *Berlin News Record*, August 5, 1897. The editorial was entitled “The Loyalty of Our German Citizens”. See also *ibid.*, August 12, 1897; English and McLaughlin, *Kitchener*, 91; Gottlieb Leibbrandt, *Aus Geschichte und Leben der Deutschkanadier in der County Waterloo, Ontario, 1800-1975* (Kitchener: Allprint Company Limited, 1977), 47 and 52.

¹¹¹ *Hamilton Spectator*, August 14, 1897.

¹¹² *Toronto Globe*, August 14, 1897; *Toronto Daily Mail and Empire*, August 14, 1897.

¹¹³ To deliver speeches in the German language constituted, in itself, a political act. As H. V. Nelles has remarked in his discussion of the Quebec Tercentenary, “[t]he organizers concluded that the inconvenience of unilingual English speakers was vastly outweighed by the offence that might be given if the past were rendered to French-speaking Quebecers in another language.” Nelles, “Historical Pageantry and the ‘Fusion of the Races’ at the Tercentenary of Quebec, 1908,” *Histoire sociale/Social History*, 29, 58 (novembre/November 1996), 408.

in big bold letter print, prominently featured on its front page, the *Globe* announced “A Proud Day For the Citizens of Berlin”.¹¹⁴

These sympathetic endorsements reflected the fact that the organizers of the 1897 singers’ festival had gone to great lengths to devise a historical narrative that was both “‘safe’ and unthreatening”.¹¹⁵ John Motz, for one, reassured his audience that “we do not wish to establish a sectional state in this land: we will remain loyal and true to the land in which we have found a home and a livelihood.”¹¹⁶ Mayor John C. Breithaupt similarly emphasized that “we Germans are proud of the Fatherland, but we are first, last, and always Canadians,” while his brother Louis held that “there were no more loyal citizens to Canada and to the British Crown than the German residents of Canada.”¹¹⁷ The latter then stated, amidst thundering applause, that he soon hoped to witness the unveiling of “another monument in this beautiful park, one to her Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria – (applause) – thus having memorials of the two greatest personages and Sovereigns of the nineteenth century.”¹¹⁸ What made these claims so persuasive in the eyes of contemporaries were the symbols of dual loyalty that graced every aspect of the festivities.

Eager to accommodate non-German speaking visitors, festival committees encouraged speakers to address audiences in both the German and the English languages. Otto Klotz was happy to oblige, and so was, in later years, Louis Breithaupt.¹¹⁹ At concerts, unilingual citizens could rely on English programme flyers. From 1898 onwards, *Sängerfest* souvenirs were published in English.¹²⁰ Largely unnoticed by contemporary observers, the festivals’ tribute to the

¹¹⁴ *Toronto Globe*, August 14, 1897.

¹¹⁵ See Schultz, *Ethnicity on Parade*, 10.

¹¹⁶ *Toronto Globe*, August 14, 1897.

¹¹⁷ Quoted in the *Toronto World* and the *London Free Press*, August 14, 1897.

¹¹⁸ *Toronto Globe*, August 14, 1897.

¹¹⁹ *Berliner Journal*, September 10, 1874 and *Berlin News Record*, August 13, 1897.

¹²⁰ “Official Programme: 13th Peninsular Saengerfest to be held at Berlin, Ontario, August 10, 11, 12, 1898”; “Saengerfest Souvenir. Waterloo, Ont., Aug. 12th, 13th and 14th, 1902.”

English language indicated a desire to communicate a positive image to Canadians. In addition, organizers might have deemed English-language publications an appropriate medium to attract a generation of young German Canadians.¹²⁰

In an effort to portray German migrants as faithful Canadian citizens, Berlin's civic leaders also resorted to two powerful emblems of national identity, the flag and the anthem.¹²¹ On the flag pole in Victoria Park, a large German flag waved beneath a British ensign, a reminder of the dual nature of civic loyalties. While the British flag occupied the position of honour, it was dwarfed by the sheer size of the German flag that made its British companion appear "like a colourful napkin."¹²² In the town itself, much like in previous and coming years, "the Red, White and Blue merged with the Canadian and German flags, and the Stars and Stripes of our Southern cousins."¹²³ In harmonious co-existence, German, British, Canadian, and American flags fluttered side by side, with the occasional side-swipe being reserved for the neighbour to the south. "The American visitors," wrote the *Berlin News Record*, "should not feel slighted in view of the fact that there are twenty-four American flags in the rink and 48 Canadian flags."¹²⁴ The dual symbolism, so tightly woven into the fabric of the singers' festivals, was also reflected in the performance of national anthems. Upon arrival at the train depot, visitors at the 1897 *Sängerfest* were greeted "with the strains of the German national anthem, 'Die Wacht am Rhein'," a song that evoked memories of the victorious Franco-Prussian war.¹²⁵ But although 'Die Wacht am Rhein' entranced "every German heart in the audience" and, in fact, remained one of the most

¹²⁰ See April Schultz's persuasive analysis in *Ethnicity on Parade*, 58.

¹²¹ For an outstanding discussion of these national symbols see Raoul Giradet, "The Three Colors: Neither White nor Red" and Michel Vovelle, "La Marseillaise: War or Peace," in Pierre Nora ed., *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past, Vol. III: Symbols* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998 [1992]), 3-26 and 29-74 respectively.

¹²² Karl Müller-Grote, "Onkel Karl: Deutschkanadische Lebensbilder," 229.

¹²³ *Berlin News Record*, August 13, 1897 and August 10, 1898.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, August 2, 1912.

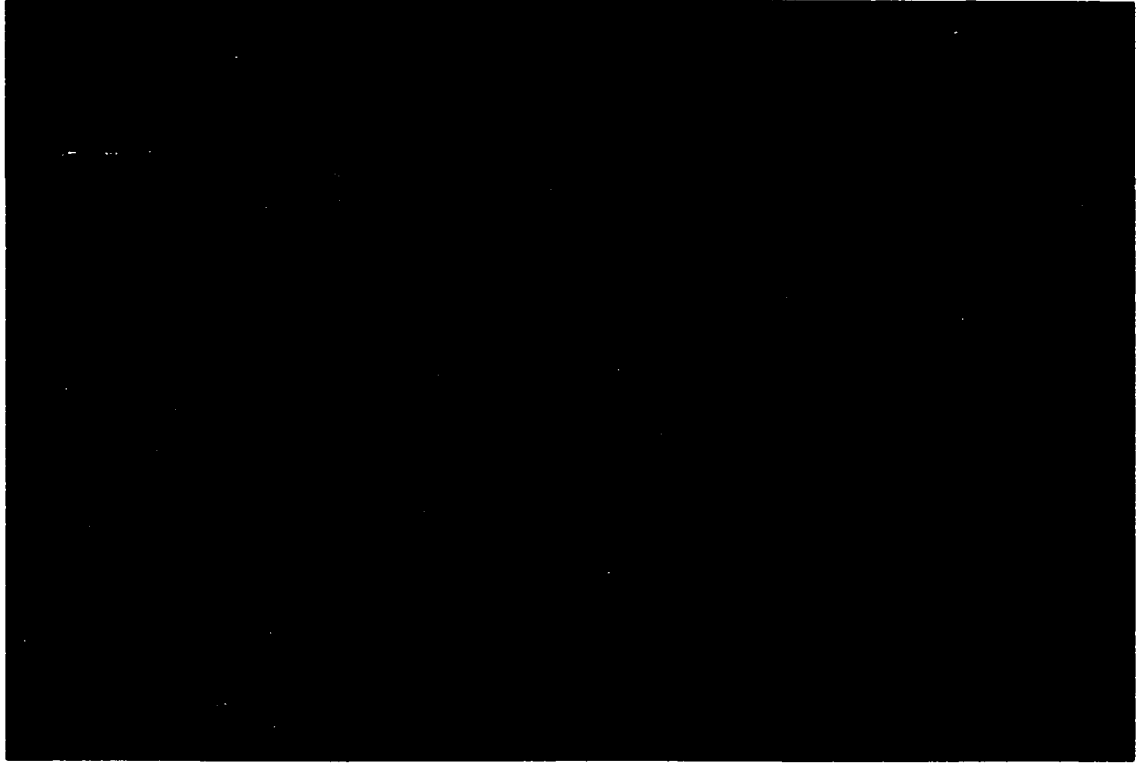
¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, August 12, 1897.

popular songs at the festivals, no concert would have been complete without the earnest rendition of “God Save the Queen”.¹²⁷

In fact, as innocuous a symbol as the festival ribbons may illustrate how the contours of the German public were being shaped by the host society surrounding it. In 1874, at the first Waterloo County *Sängerfest*, ribbons were printed in the German language only, their ‘foreignness’ highlighted by the use of Gothic print. By 1890, the script had become modernized yet continued to feature a German umlaut in *Sängerfest*. Eight years later, the old Gothic print had all but disappeared, a nostalgic remainder being preserved only in the word *Mitglied* (member). The German language, as well, was in retreat. ‘*Sängerfest*’ had become ‘Saengerfest’, while the numerical system had been changed to suit Canadian sensibilities (‘13.’ had transformed into ‘13th’). In 1902, finally, the ribbon had become thoroughly ‘Canadian’, with only a faint ‘German’ trace to be detected in the ornamental print of ‘Saengerfest’. As the iconography of the singers’ festivals revealed, even the most ‘authentic’ of folk festivals was not impervious to the passage of time, nor did it constitute a cultural island.

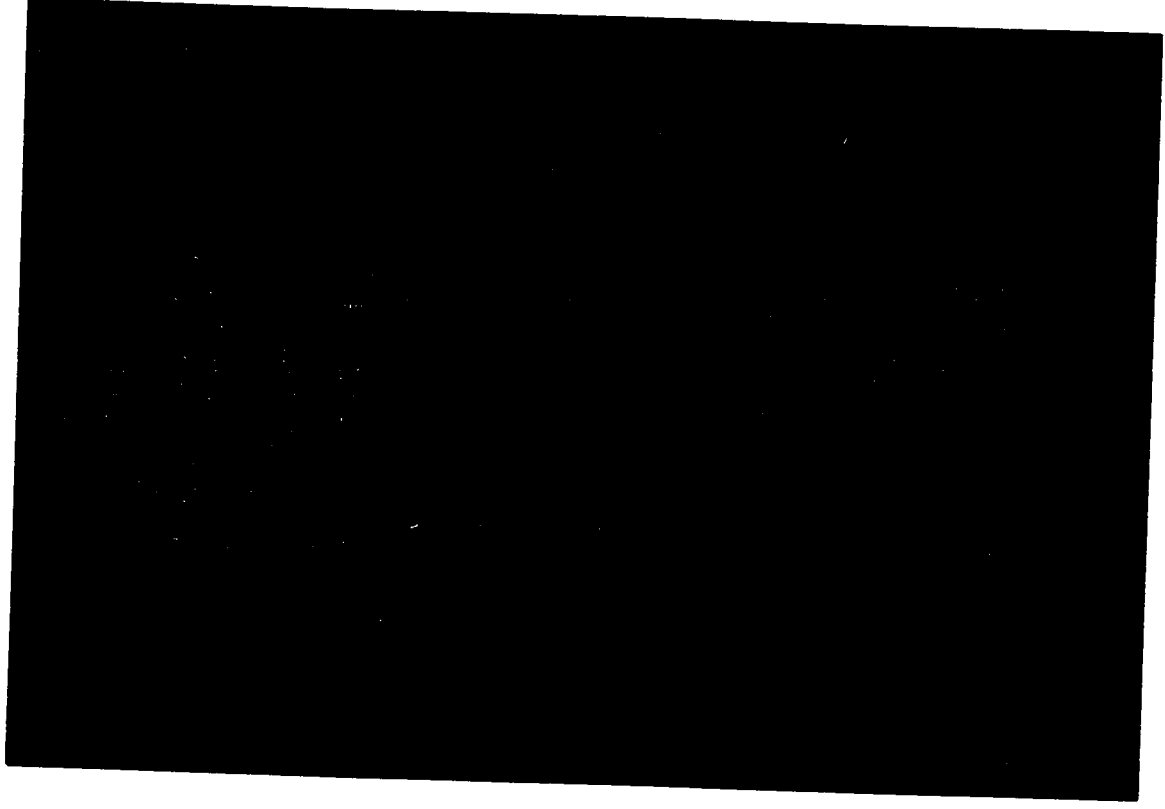
¹²⁷ *Berlin News Record*, August 12, 1912; *Berliner Journal*, August 12, 1897.

**Illustration 9: First German-Canadian Singers' Festival,
Waterloo, 1874**



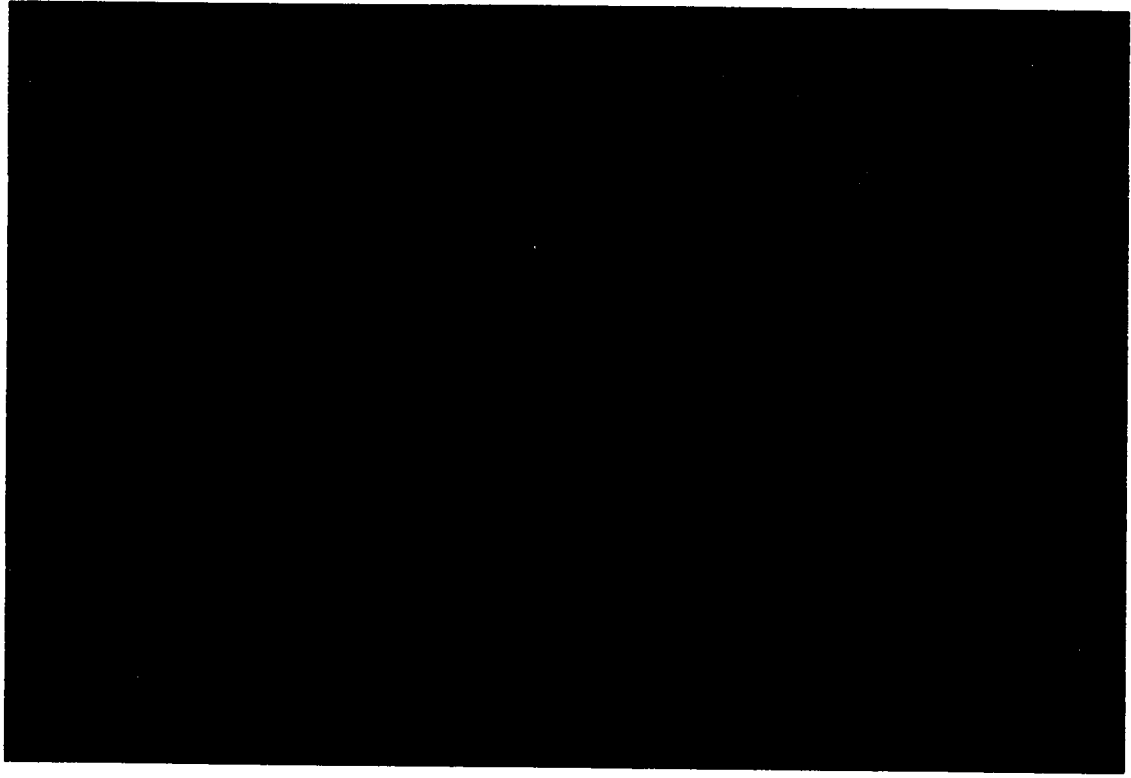
Source: Courtesy of *Doon Heritage Crossroads*,
Regional Municipality of Waterloo.

**Illustration 10: Tenth Peninsular Singers' Festival,
Waterloo, 1890**



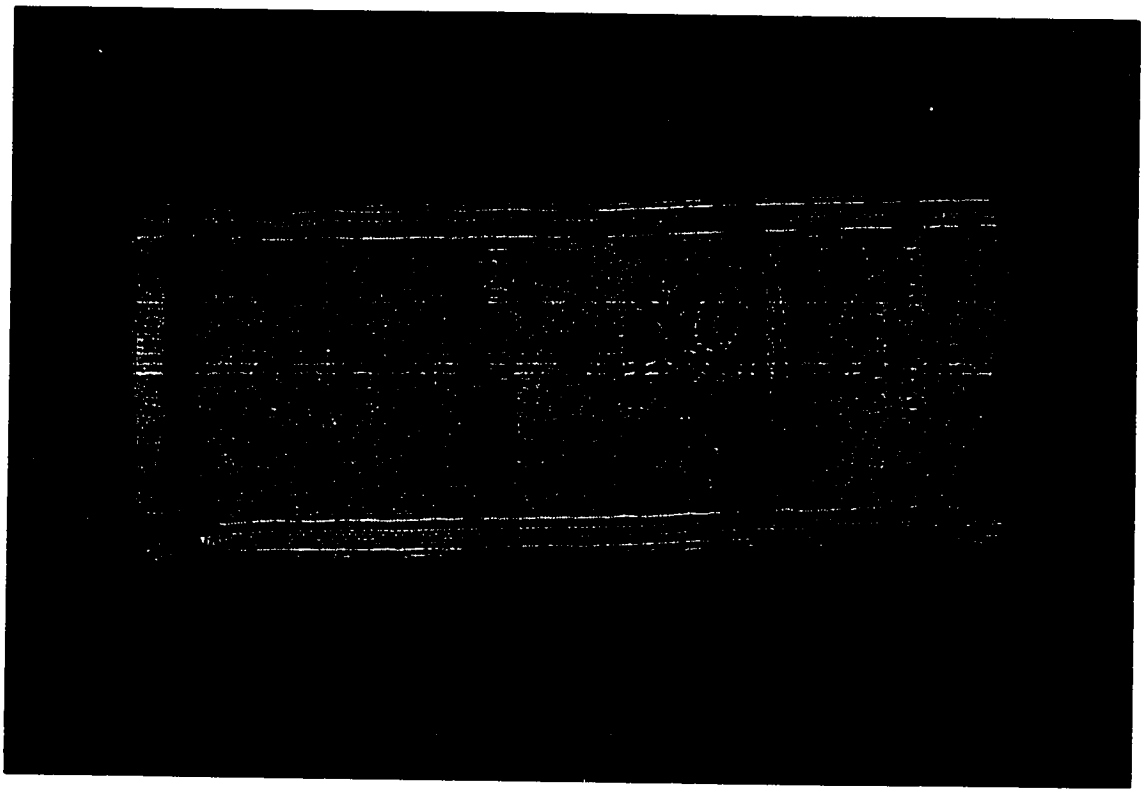
Source: Courtesy of *Doon Heritage Crossroads*,
Regional Municipality of Waterloo.

**Illustration 11: Thirteenth Peninsular Singers' Festival,
Berlin, 1898**



Source: Courtesy of *Doon Heritage Crossroads*,
Regional Municipality of Waterloo.

**Illustration 12: Lake Erie and Canadian Singers' Festival,
Waterloo, 1902**



Source: Courtesy of *Doon Heritage Crossroads*,
Regional Municipality of Waterloo.

In a similar revealing way, the closing ceremonies of the 1898 *Sängerfest* projected German cultural identities literally onto the sky. In a fireworks display at Victoria Park, a giant German flag appeared alongside the Canadian and American flags, all intertwined around a lyre, the traditional *Sängerfest* emblem.¹²⁷ In the blink of an eye, the colourful display raised intriguing questions. How would ‘German’, ‘Canadian’, and ‘American’ identities blend in the New World? Did the fireworks display pay tribute to ‘German’ unity in North America? Or did it, rather, point to the emergence of German-Canadian and German-American identities? The visitors would have to ponder answers on their own as the burning letters “Good Night” announced the end of festivities – in English.

Mundane as it might appear, the fireworks presented an important element of the larger festival narrative. Directed towards insiders and outsiders alike, its very ambiguity allowed onlookers to read it in different ways. It thus encapsulated the dynamic tension that permeated the celebrations. The dual symbolism reflected in the German and English languages, the German and Canadian/British flags, the German and English songs, and the declarations of loyalty to both Germany and Canada all pointed to a cultural identity that pursued multiple goals. It sought to unite the ‘Germans of Canada’, preserve communal connections to the ‘Fatherland’, and establish *Deutschthum* as an accepted element of Canadian society.¹²⁸

Power and Play

Whereas organizers of earlier singers’ festivals had carefully courted “our English-speaking fellow-citizens”, festival committees in the late 1890s could rely on their enthusiastic

¹²⁷ *Berlin News Record*, August 13, 1898; *Berliner Journal*, August 18, 1898.

¹²⁸ In this context see also Kathleen Neils Conzen, “Ethnicity as Festive Culture: Nineteenth-Century Germany America on Parade,” in Werner Sollors ed., *The Invention of Ethnicity* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 55 and Schultz, *Ethnicity on Parade*, 10 and 104.

support. As the county's largest English-language daily, the *Berlin News Record*, reminded its readers: "Show your loyalty to your town; show your sympathy with the Saengerfest Movement. Advertise while you have the opportunity, and show visitors that any enterprise that will do us good is backed up heartily by every good citizen."¹³⁰ The county's business-owners gladly followed suit. At the turn of the century, *Saengerfest* souvenirs featured advertisements for shirts and shoes, bread and cigars, hardware and hotels.¹³¹ Here, the duties of citizenship were framed in the language of boosterism. In extolling the virtues of 'Busy Berlin', the singers' festivals demonstrated, yet again, how a localized German culture had come to colour the rhetoric of civic patriotism, so characteristic of the age.¹³²

Illustration 13: "A Good Cigar," Berlin, 1898



Geo. O. has music on tap.

Call in and enjoy some of it and
Incidentally smoke a **GOOD CIGAR.**
I keep the Choicest Lines in Canada.

GEO. O. PHILIP,

Tobacconist and Billiardist.

Source: "Official Programme: 13th Peninsular Saengerfest, to be held at Berlin, Ontario, August 10, 11, 12, 1898," 16.

¹³⁰ *Berliner Journal*, September 10, 1874 and August 26, 1875; *Toronto Globe*, August 18, 1875; *Berlin News Record*, August 11, 1898 and August 10, 1898. For examples of local boosterism see also the *Berlin Daily Telegraph*, August 9, 1902; *Waterloo County Chronicle*, July 31, 1902; August 12, 1902; August 8, 1912; *Berlin News Record*, August 14, 1902.

¹³¹ See "Official Programme: 13th Peninsular Saengerfest to be held at Berlin, Ontario, August 10, 11, 12, 1898" and "Saengerfest Souvenir. Waterloo, Ont., Aug. 12th, 13th and 14th, 1902."

¹³² See also English and McLaughlin, *Kitchener: An Illustrated History*, 79-80 and Bloomfield, "City-Building Processes," 68-72.

Illustration 14: "Piping for the Saengerfest," Waterloo, 1902

PIPING..

- for the -

SAENGERFEST

and for anybody who
desires good

Plumbing, Heating,

Tinwork, etc.

Phone 260.



Hareware, Paints, Oils,

GLASS, STOVES

FURNACES

and Manufacturers

... of the ...

DOBBIN DRUMS.

CONRAD BROS.,

WATERLOO.

Source: "Saengerfest Souvenir. Waterloo, Ont., Aug. 12th, 13th and 14th, 1902," 26.

Perhaps the most powerful reminder of the heavy business presence at the festivals was provided by the "Grand Trades' Procession" of 1886 that showcased "the principal mercantile and manufacturing interests of the rising town of Berlin."¹³³ Much admired by the thousands of spectators, the elaborate display of a "gigantic shirt", a "rustic house on wheels", and an "artistic display of barrels" paid homage to Berlin's economic growth and prosperity.¹³⁴

Although the public face of the singers' festivals granted prominence to local elites, the parades generated a festive atmosphere that appealed to on-lookers and singers, men and

¹³³ Toronto *Globe*, August 12, 1886.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

women, workers and entrepreneurs alike. By the turn of the century, the simple parades of the early years had evolved into elaborate spectacles that featured colourful hats and uniforms as well as a giant umbrella, measuring 25 feet, that gave shelter to the singers from Ann Arbor, Michigan.¹³⁵ Seven little pipers in knee breeches and green sports jackets walked alongside the *Cannstatter* band from Detroit whose members “appeared to weigh 200 pounds each” and who captivated their audience with a performance “even Mozart could not have dreamt of”.¹³⁶ The parade, a columnist of the *Deutsche Zeitung* wrote admiringly in August 1898, resembled a “glittering, splendid serpent [that] glided through arches, flags, and bunting and was cheerfully greeted by thousands of spectators.”¹³⁷ In their shared enjoyment, the celebrants appeared united indeed.

The ensuing mass picnic in the park – traditionally, the closing feature of the singers’ festivals – also offered much latitude to deviate from any “official” script which the local elite might have had in mind. Only one forth of the 4,000 celebrants paid the required 25 cents. The remainder sneaked into the park via side entrances or over the fence.¹³⁸ Once seated around picnic tables, celebrants mingled liberally, as the *Berlin News Record* reported in 1902:

As to the general visitor he or she – he AND she in many cases – strolled about, chatted, listened to the music, much of which was hastily improvised and fell upon the ear as mixed choruses, – badly mixed at times – with various sorts and kinds of orchestral accompaniment. Dancing went on in the pavilion, and this feature was well patronized.¹³⁹

If sociability presented one equalizer, alcohol presented the other. “There are no prohibitionists among the singers,” the *Berliner Journal* conceded in August 1902.¹⁴⁰ Pubs reported record

¹³⁵ *Berlin Deutsche Zeitung*, August 17, 1898.

¹³⁶ *Berliner Journal*, August 18, 1898.

¹³⁷ *Berlin Deutsche Zeitung*, August 17, 1898.

¹³⁸ *Berliner Journal*, August 18, 1898.

¹³⁹ *Berlin News Record*, August 15, 1902.

¹⁴⁰ *Berliner Journal*, August 21, 1902.

revenues of \$500 per day as visitors freely sampled the local lager and teacher Louis von Neubronn opened his wine cellar to both male and female singers.¹⁴¹ In evoking scenes of beer garden life in Germany, a journalist of the *Toronto World* reported in 1886 that the “evening wound up with a regular German ‘Commers’ where the small hours still found the singers and their wives, sweethearts and friends at the social tables, sweetening life with song and lager.”¹⁴² Significantly, this festive culture drew together men and women in a social space where they could enjoy the pleasures of public mingling. In addition, the ready acceptance of wine and beer as ‘natural’ ingredients of sociability allowed female celebrants to drink publicly, in moderation, without being labelled as deviant.¹⁴³

Yet even though beer fuelled the general merriment, order always prevailed. According to the *Guelph Daily Mercury Advertiser*, “not a drunken man could be seen in the park. Such is life among the good Germans.”¹⁴⁴ This observation was echoed in numerous press reports.¹⁴⁵ While the tone of English-language papers was heavy with admiration for the orderly behaviour of celebrants who “enjoyed themselves immensely, as only German citizens can,” the local German-language press could not resist a gleeful hint at ‘German’ superiority: “Despite the fact that much beer was consumed, due to the ‘heat’, not a single drunk person could be seen on the streets nor was a single disturbance reported. This fact was noted, with much surprise, by several visitors from cities where the English element predominates.”¹⁴⁶ Order thus formed the hallmark of the singers’ festivals which enjoyed a reputation of respectability, notwithstanding the amounts of

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, August 18, 1898 and *Berlin Deutsche Zeitung*, August 17, 1898.

¹⁴² *Toronto World*, August 12, 1886.

¹⁴³ For a point of comparison see Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks*, 87-8.

¹⁴⁴ *Guelph Daily Mercury Advertiser*, August 23, 1890.

¹⁴⁵ See, for instance, *Berlin News Record*, August 14, 1897; *Berliner Journal*, August 12, 1897 and Aug. 7, 1912; *Berlin Deutsche Zeitung*, August 18, 1897; *Waterloo County Advertiser*, August 8, 1912.

¹⁴⁶ *Berlin News Record*, August 13, 1898 and *Berliner Journal*, August 19, 1886. See also *Hamilton Spectator*, August 14, 1902.

alcohol consumed. It was in this context that festival president Georg Rumpel remarked in 1897 that "Berlin has almost 9000 residents, and only one policeman – and he doesn't have any work to do." Except, Rumpel added to the general amusement of his audience, "to arrest any celebrants who do not look cheerful."¹⁴⁷

While the *Sängerfeste* had always been a family affair, the emphasis on entertainment and leisure increased over the years. Social dances, baseball matches, high wire performances, and sightseeing tours began to rival musical rehearsals and concerts.¹⁴⁸ Somewhat apologetically, the *Berliner Journal* wrote in 1898 that "a baseball match presented an ill fit for the programme of a German *Sängerfest*." But much as the festival committee had hoped, the two-hour game brought in over \$ 700.¹⁴⁹ Four years later, a columnist of the *Hamilton Spectator* reported

fears that the convivial celebration is assuming greater proportions than the musical functions ... There are not wanting grumblers, who say that the introduction into the program of conventional waltz numbers, to say nothing of a xylophone solo is not keeping up the standard of traditional German music, and that it should be the aim of the promoters of a Saengerfest to produce what is distinctively national in the choral compositions of the fatherland. It was disconcerting for these malcontents to find that the xylophone solo so specially objected to was received with the most enthusiastic, prolonged and spontaneous applause of the afternoon.¹⁵⁰

Apparently, the audience at the singers' festivals cared more about a splendid performance than the preservation of 'German' cultural traditions.¹⁵¹ The Waterloo *Sängerfest* of 1912, finally, featured one concert only, while indulging in a wealth of social activities, including a "Kommers", an "Automobile trip of the Singers to Berlin", a "Monster Picnic" and a "Baseball Match", a "Grand Promenade Band Concert and Prize Drawing" as well as "Social Dance".¹⁵² As a result,

¹⁴⁷ Quoted in the *Berlin Deutsche Zeitung*, August 18, 1897.

¹⁴⁸ See, for instance, *Berlin News Record*, August 8, 1902 and *Waterloo County Chronicle*, August 12, 1902.

¹⁴⁹ *Berliner Journal*, August 18, 1898.

¹⁵⁰ *Hamilton Spectator*, August 14, 1902.

¹⁵¹ *Berliner Journal*, August 21, 1902; *Berlin News Record*, August 14, 1902.

¹⁵² "Saengerfest-Souvenir: 1862 – Goldenes Jubilaeumsfest – 1912," 17.

two years before the Great War would bring to an abrupt end any public displays of *Deutschthum* in Waterloo County, the distinctive 'German' touch of the festivities had already given way to a culture of amusement.¹⁵³ In this respect, the history of the Waterloo County's singers festivals mirrored their Buffalo counterpart that saw a German festive culture irrevocably altered by the culture of consumption.

¹⁵³ For a point of comparison see E.A. Heaman, *Exhibitions in Canadian Society during the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 6.

Chapter V

“We are all Germans this Week”: Music and Modernity at the Buffalo Singers’ Festivals, 1883 and 1901

Twenty-three years had elapsed since the *North-American Sängerbund* had last convened in Buffalo. If 450 singers of 25 associations had graced the stage at the 1860 monster concert, the German song now rang from 2,000 male voices of 70 associations.¹ Changed, too, had the musical context of the celebration. Since the late 1860s and early 1870s, the United States had witnessed a flowering of musical culture. The Boston Jubilees of 1869 and 1872, the concerts of the New Yorker Choral Society and the Cincinnati music festivals all “established the reality of essentially non-German musical ventures,” as historian Robert C. Vitz has reminded us.² Inspired by the 1870 *Sängerfest* (singers’ festival) at Cincinnati, the first Cincinnati May musical festival departed in a crucial sense from its German predecessors. Devoted exclusively to classical music, it was stripped of the activities that made singers’ festivals both musical and social gatherings. Eliminated were “all pageantry, popular songs, singing competitions, and the sale of beer during performances.”³ Much to the irritation of the local German community, the German-born conductor Theodore Thomas was determined to make the 1873 festival a truly artistic affair that would champion art, not amusement, and place instrumental and vocal music on an equal level.⁴ Despite the initially reserved press coverage, reviewers across the country soon glowingly reported

¹ *Buffalo Demokrat*, July 17, 1883.

² Robert C. Vitz, “Starting a Tradition: The First Cincinnati May Musical Festival,” *Cincinnati Historical Society Bulletin*, 38, 1 (1985), 33. See also *Buffalo and Erie County Public Library* [hereafter BECPL], Rare Book Room, “Fest-Zeitung, No. 3, 15ten Februar, 1883,” 9.

³ Vitz, “Starting a Tradition,” 33-6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 36.

on the concerts' artistic merits and heralded the quality of the music as "unequalled in the country."⁵

The *Sängerfest* had found a musical competitor, the 'American' music festival.

It is "a matter of taste," the Buffalo *Sängerbund* member Ernst Besser wrote in 1887, "whether these sober and quiet musical gatherings are preferred, or the Saengerfests with their more noisy days of pleasure, manifestation of joy, and the thousands of happy faces met everywhere."⁶ But, as Besser himself knew, to draw a sharp line between 'high' and 'popular' art was not always possible. Just as the success of the *Sängerfeste* had served as an inspiration for the first Cincinnati May festival, so, too, did the *Sängerfeste* begin to incorporate features of the music festivals. The gatherings of the *North American Sängerbund* in Louisville (1877), Cincinnati (1879), and Chicago (1879) strove for "notable artistic results" by erecting suitable halls for the concerts, hiring expensive soloists and first-class orchestras, and employing "choruses of mixed voices which are almost an American creation."⁷ It was a change that was viewed with deep scepticism by the adherents of the old-style *Sängerfeste*.

Beyond the realization that "the reckless extravagance of engaging solo talent at such high figures as \$ 8,000" meant flirting with "financial disaster," critics were concerned that the very essence of the singers' festivals was being sacrificed.⁸ In their eyes, the musical gatherings were, first and foremost, people's festivals at which singers formed ties of friendship, cultivated German *Geselligkeit* and *Gemüthlichkeit* (sociability and cosiness), and cherished the "true festive spirit of

⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁶ *Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society* [hereafter BECHS], Manuscript Collection, Mss 25 VH B93b, "Besser, J.W. Ernst. Historical Sketch and Printed Notices of the German Singing Society Deutscher Saengerbund of Buffalo N.Y., May 1887," 5.

⁷ BECHS, Joseph Mischka, Music Clippings, M67, vol. 6, "New York Daily Tribune," June 25, 1901. See also BECPL, Rare Book Room, "Fest-Zeitung, No. 3, 15ten Februar, 1883," 9 and "Fest-Zeitung, No. 14, 18ten Juli," 2.

⁸ *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 15, 1882, 2 and "New York Daily Tribune, June 25, 1901." See also BECPL, Rare Book Room, "Frank & Leslie's Illustrierte Zeitung, New York, 21. Juli 1883," 82.

singing brethren.”⁹ Out of the acts of singing and sociability, they suggested, community was created and a sense of belonging to the German ‘nationality’ forged.¹⁰ To favour classical over folk music, in other words, or to mimic the ‘American’ music festivals, was to allow an erosion of ‘German’ culture.¹¹ In an attempt to reinforce ethnic boundaries and insulate German culture from harmful influences, the delegates at the Chicago *Sängerfest* of 1881 decided to forego the “trinkets and glitter” of music festivals and “resume the old ways.”¹² They charged the organizers of the Buffalo *Sängerfest* of 1883 with the task of “dispens[ing] with expensive professionals” and giving centre stage to folk music and male chorus singing.¹³

Here, again, we find folk music depicted as “the crystallization of the cultural core,” to borrow a phrase coined by the ethno-musicologist Philip V. Bohlman.¹⁴ Projected into an idealized past, folk music was held to be stable and immutable, the musical incarnation of a people’s spirit.¹⁵ Accordingly, if we follow the logic of *Sängerbund* delegates, the ‘Americanization’ of the singers’ festivals represented a ‘decline’ of German values and traditions. Only by returning to the ‘golden

⁹ BECPL, Rare Book Room, “Fest-Zeitung, No. 14, 18ten Juli,” 2: “echte sängerbrüderliche Feststimmung”; “Fest-Zeitung für das 32st Nord-Amerikanische Sängerfest / Official Gazette of the 23d North American Saengerfest, No. 1, 15ten Januar 1883,” 1 and “Fest-Zeitung, No. 3, 15ten Februar 1883,” 9. See also Buffalo *Freie Presse*, July 16, 1883 and July 19, 1883.

¹⁰ Buffalo *Freie Presse*, May 25, 1882: “das Bewußtsein deutscher Stammesgemeinschaft.” In this context see also Philip V. Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 111.

¹¹ “Fest-Zeitung, No. 3, 15ten Februar 1883,” 9.

¹² Buffalo *Freie Presse*, May 25, 1882, “Putz und Flitter.” See also “Fest-Zeitung für das 32st Nord-Amerikanische Sängerfest / Official Gazette of the 23d North American Saengerfest, No. 1, 15ten Januar 1883,” 1. For a seminal discussion of ethnic boundaries see Fredrik Barth, “Introduction,” in Fredrik Barth ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969), 16.

¹³ *Ibid.*; BECPL, Rare Book Room, “Um die Welt, Keppler & Schwarzmann’s Illustrierte Zeitung, New York, 28. Juli 1883,” 323.

¹⁴ Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*, 54.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 6, 15 and 17.

age' of German festivity, they held, could the ethnic group be regenerated.¹⁶ It was left to the Buffalo singers' festival to accomplish this goal.

"There is, then, chaos"

Given its mandate of cultural renewal, the beginnings of the 1883 Buffalo *Sängerfest* were nothing but inconspicuous. Not harmony but discord characterized the initial preparations. In keeping with the loose organizational structure of the *North American Sängerbund*, all local arrangements were left to the singing societies of the host city. Each society was entitled to one delegate for every twelve active members who, together, would constitute the festival's central committee.¹⁷

In September 1881, the Buffalo *Liedertafel* and *Sängerbund*, the city's two oldest German singing societies that alone had attended the Chicago *Sängerfest*, invited their fellow societies for a meeting to discuss the upcoming festival. The invitation irritated the Buffalo *Orpheus* which had been founded in 1869 when 19 singers left the *Liedertafel*.¹⁸ As one of the city's premier singing societies – like *Liedertafel* and *Sängerbund*, the *Orpheus* comprised 60 active and 540 passive members – it felt "it would be derogatory to their position to be placed on a par with societies having neither musical nor financial standing, and who would likely send delegates having no idea of

¹⁶ This reasoning corresponds to the myths of 'decline' and 'regeneration' which the British anthropologist Anthony D. Smith has identified as central "myths of ethnic descent." Smith, "National Identity and Myths of Ethnic Descent," *Research in social movements, conflict and change*, 7 (1984), 104-5.

¹⁷ Buffalo *Daily Courier*, May 15, 1882, 2.

¹⁸ BECHS, Vertical File: Music - Organizations, Soc., Clubs, 'Buffalo Orpheus', File: Programs, 1894-1897, "Buffalo Orpheus, 25th Anniversary, Oct. 6th, 7th. & 8th." For a history of the association see also *Geschichte der Deutschen in Buffalo und Erie County, N.Y., mit Biographien und Illustrationen hervorragender Deutsch-Amerikaner, welche zur Entwicklung der Stadt Buffalo beigetragen haben* [hereafter *Geschichte der Deutschen*] (Buffalo, N.Y.: Reinecke & Zesch, 1898), 169-77.

the responsibility to be assumed.”¹⁹ With one stroke, the *Orpheus* thus dismissed the seven younger and smaller singing societies on Buffalo’s East Side, such as the *Arion*, the *Harmonie*, and the *Ost Buffalo Männerchor*, to name just a few.²⁰ Only if the central committee dissolved and was constituted anew, the society’s secretary informed the committee in May 1882, would the *Orpheus* lend its support to the festival.²¹

The *Liedertafel*, as well, withdrew from the central committee. Indignant that its conductor, Joseph Mischka, had not been elected for the prestigious role of festival conductor (he trailed four votes behind the *Sängerbund*’s conductor, Friedrich Federlein), the society offered to sing at the upcoming festival, but refused to help in any other way.²² While conceding “Mr. Federlein’s musical knowledge, they doubted his administrative ability and foresaw in this election only artistic and financial disaster,” as the *Buffalo Daily Courier* informed its readers on May 15, 1882.²³ Not only had the “singers’ battle” (*Sängerkrieg*) spilled over into the public arena, it also cost the central committee its president. Dismayed that his advice had been rejected, Phillip Becker resigned from his post.²⁴ Two of Buffalo’s most established and influential singing societies had thus distanced

¹⁹ *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 15, 1882, 2. See also *Buffalo Express*, May 17, 1882, 4. The membership numbers are estimates, based upon Ernst Besser’s musical reminiscences and attendance figures at the rehearsals for the 1883 reception concert. See “Besser, J.W. Ernst. Historical Sketch and Printed Notices of the German Singing Society Deutscher Saengerbund of Buffalo N.Y., May 1887,” 6 and *Buffalo Demokrat*, May 25, 1883, 4; May 28, 1883, 4; May 31, 1883, 4; and June 4, 1883, 4.

²⁰ *Buffalo Demokrat*, May 25, 1883, 4; May 28, 1883, 4; May 31, 1883, 4; and June 4, 1883, 4.
²¹ *Ibid.*, May 17, 1882, 4.

²² *Buffalo Freie Presse*, April 22, 1882 and May 8, 1882.

²³ *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 15, 1882, 2.

²⁴ For a concise summary of the 1882 *Sängerkrieg* see *Buffalo Freie Presse*, July 16, 1883 and April 22, 1882.

themselves from the *Sängerfest*, as had the city's former mayor.²⁵ "There is, then, chaos," reported the *Daily Courier*.²⁶

Yet despite gloomy predictions that the festival was doomed, the central committee refused to bow to the singers' elite. While trying to lure *Orpheus* and *Liedertafel* back into the fold, the interim president, artisan Louis Allgewähr, sought to boost the morale – with evident success. The remaining societies vowed to support the festival committee "man for man."²⁷ In early June, a "mass assembly of German and American citizens" similarly voiced its support for the upcoming *Fest*. Swayed by the momentum of the *Sängerfest* movement, Phillip Becker deigned to accept the position of festival president once more, while *Liedertafel* and *Orpheus* quietly joined the central committee in mid-July.²⁸ Their decision was eased by the fact that the committee had adapted the statutes of the *North American Sängerbund* to allow for three festival conductors; at the 1883 singers' festival, Friedrich Federlein (*Sängerbund*), Joseph Mischka (*Liedertafel*), and Carl Adam (*Orpheus*) would share the honour of musical director. Natives of Bavaria, Bohemia, and Silesia respectively, these men seemed to represent an ethnic unity that transcended regional divisions.²⁹ It was a unity that had eluded Buffalo's German singers in the stormy months of May and June 1882.

The 'singers' battle' vividly illustrated that Buffalo's German population had expanded from a village to a large, complex community in which ethnic institutions vied for leadership.

Notwithstanding the folksy image that English-language newspapers created of the "festive

²⁵ The wholesale grocer Phillip Becker – a Lutheran, Bavarian, and Republican – was the first German-born migrant to ascend to the mayoralty in the fall of 1875. Andrew P. Yox, "Decline of the German-American Community in Buffalo, 1855-1925," Ph.D. History, University of Chicago, 1983, 144-7.

²⁶ *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 15, 1882, 2.

²⁷ *Buffalo Freie Presse*, May 25, 1882 and May 25, 1882. See also *Buffalo Demokrat*, May 20, 1882 and May 25, 1882, 4. For a profile of Louis Allgewähr see "Frank & Leslie's Illustrierte Zeitung, New York, 21. Juli 1883," 82.

²⁸ *Buffalo Freie Presse*, July 16, 1883.

²⁹ BECP, *Official Text-Book and Programme of the Twenty-Third Saengerfest of the North-American Saengerbund Held at Buffalo N.Y., July 16-20, 1883* (Buffalo: N. S. Rosenau, 1883), 92.

German” whose gatherings floated “on a sea of natural good-fellowship,” as the Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser* wrote admiringly in July 1883 (an image, to be sure, that German organizers themselves perpetuated), ethnic associations were locked in a struggle about who would lead, and shape, the ethnic group.³⁰ Yet instead of undermining the community, the conflict served to strengthen it, a phenomenon that historian David A. Gerber has dubbed the “paradox in intra-ethnic conflict: the more members of the emergent group quarrelled with one another, the more they became involved in being ethnic and in attempting to determine the destiny of the group.”³¹ Indeed, when Louis Allgewähr took over the much-decimated festival committee in May 1882, he declared that the ‘battle’ had only helped the cause: “Formerly passive people have become involved and everybody seeks to do his share to spare Buffalo the embarrassment that the *Fest* will not take place.”³² Allgewähr’s words rang true when the, now united, festival committee embarked on the task of providing a hall for the *Sängerfest* concerts. Rather than renting a suitable venue, the committee decided to erect a permanent monument for Buffalo’s *Deutschthum*, a local music hall.

Festive Anticipation

The city’s oldest German society, the venerable German Young Men’s Association which had been founded in 1841, took the lead.³³ It acquired a plot between Main and Franklin Streets upon which “a magnificent building” was to be erected “which should in the first place be the

³⁰ Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*, July 18, 1883, 2.

³¹ David A. Gerber, *The Making of an American Pluralism: Buffalo, New York, 1825-60* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 168 and 119. See also Stanley Nadel, *Little Germany: Ethnicity, Religion, and Class in New York City, 1845-80* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 4.

³² Quoted in the Buffalo *Demokrat*, May 27, 1882, 4: “früher passive Leute seien jetzt angespornt und alle wollen mitwirken, um Buffalo die Blamage, daß das Fest nicht stattfinde, zu ersparen.”

³³ *Geschichte der Deutschen*, 95-7.

assembly hall for the 'Saengerfest', and afterwards the centre of all german [sic] social efforts."³⁴

Buffalo's German elite stood firmly behind the project; influential businessmen such as Phillip Becker, Jacob Schoellkopf, and Albert Ziegele contributed one thousand dollars each to the music hall fund. To help offset the building cost of \$ 235,000, lifetime membership in the society was offered in exchange for a donation of fifty dollars.³⁵ The ground was broken on November 21, 1882, and the corner stone laid on March 5, 1883. In the crisp cold of a March afternoon, the singing societies paraded to the building site where they held an impromptu concert and Mayor Manning complimented the city's German citizens on their generosity. The music hall, he said, would serve as a memorial to the "public spirit of Buffalo's German Americans."³⁶

The hall did, indeed, present an important public landmark, as the city's English-language newspapers readily conceded. "Not often," held the *Commercial Advertiser*,

is a festival celebrated from which permanent results of so great a value to our city may be anticipated ... It is a building that is an ornament to the city, that supplies a long-felt want, and that will enable the people of Buffalo to enjoy entertainments and attract important conventions that have been obliged to decline invitations that Buffalo has extended heretofore, because of the limited accommodations at the city's disposal. Long after the Saengerfest of 1883 has been forgotten the Music Hall will stand, a splendid monument of private enterprise, and a popular place for public enjoyment and edification.³⁷

At the *Sängerfest* of 1860, the singers had taken possession of the city's streets and squares, thus transforming public space into a stage for German festivity. Twenty-three years later, they proceeded to "shape the stage to their liking," as historian Kathleen Neils Conzen has put it.³⁸

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 109.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 109-12; Yox, "Decline of the German-American Community in Buffalo," 177-81. See also Buffalo *Demokrat*, March 2, 1883, 4; BECPL, Rare Book Room, *Die Deutsche Jungmänner Gesellschaft zu Buffalo, N.Y.: Festschrift zur Feier ihres fünfzigjährigen Stiftungsfestes am 11. und 12. Mai 1891* (Buffalo, N.Y.: 1891), 37-42.

³⁶ Buffalo *Demokrat*, March 6, 1883, 4.

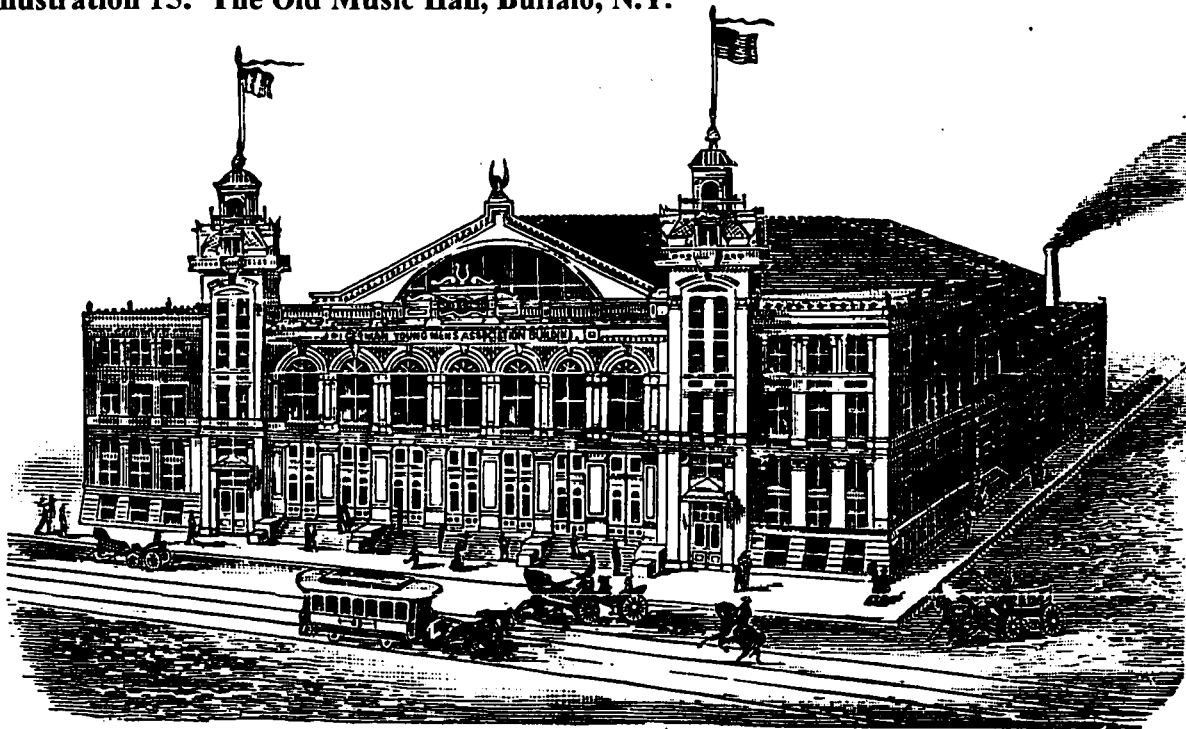
³⁷ Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*, July 16, 1883, 2.

³⁸ Kathleen Neils Conzen, "Ethnicity as Festive Culture: Nineteenth-Century German America on Parade," in Werner Sollors ed., *The Invention of Ethnicity* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 64. In this context see also Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French*

Unlike its 1860 predecessor which had left traces in the memories of participants only, the 1883 singers' festival left behind a tangible legacy. The music hall constituted a welcome addition to the city's public landscape and a physical testimony that Buffalo's *Deutschthum* had come of age.³⁹

The hall, an imposing building in French renaissance style, could seat an audience of 8,000 and accommodate 2,000 singers on its massive stage.⁴⁰

Illustration 15: The Old Music Hall, Buffalo, N.Y.



Alte Musikhalle, errichtet 1883–84.

Source: BECPL, Rare Book Room, *Die Deutsche Jungmänner Gesellschaft zu Buffalo, N.Y.: Festschrift zur Feier ihres fünfzigjährigen Stiftungsfestes am 11. und 12. Mai 1891* (Buffalo, N.Y.: 1891), 41.

Its elegant design drew much admiration from the local English-language press. “This noble edifice,” wrote the *Buffalo Evening Telegraph*, “is solid and generous as the liberality that erected

Revolution (Harvard, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1988 [1976]), 126–7.

³⁹ For a nostalgic recollection of the 1860 *Sängerfest* see the speech by Edward Storck, quoted in the *Buffalo Freie Presse*, July 19, 1883.

⁴⁰ *New York Daily Tribune*, July 17, 1883, 5.

it.”⁴¹ The *Sängerbund* singers, in turn, praised the “excellent acoustic properties” of the hall.⁴²

Who cared that the interior had not been painted yet, or that only a few adventurous souls dared to climb to the unfinished third story to listen to the concert’s opening movements, in a hall packed to capacity?⁴³ What the building might have lacked in finish, it made up with lavish decorations and electric illuminations, “giving it a gala appearance, and showing it off to decided advantage,” as visitors and locals alike concurred.⁴⁴

As the builders rushed to construct the hall, the central committee turned to the grand logistic undertaking that was the *Sängerfest*. A committee was established to spearhead a \$ 50,000 guarantee fund subscription; by mid-July 1883, \$ 40,000 had been pledged, thus reducing the financial risk of hosting the festival.⁴⁵ Provisions had to be made to find accommodation for 2,000 active singers and 100 instrumental musicians, all of whom were entitled to free room and board.⁴⁶ The standing committee on railways negotiated special rates for singers and visitors, while the music committee engaged the New York Symphony Society under its conductor Leopold Damrosch for the duration of the *Fest*.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the festival conductors expended time and energy on preparing local singers for the reception concert.⁴⁸ Much to the dismay of the music committee, attendance at the weekly rehearsals was sporadic at best, rarely exceeding 60 per cent of the registered 301 singers. To shame the singers into

⁴¹ *Buffalo Evening Telegraph*, July 17, 1883, 2.

⁴² *New York Daily Tribune*, June 17, 1883, 5.

⁴³ Yox, “Decline of the German-American Community in Buffalo,” 181 and *Buffalo Evening News*, July 19, 1883, 1.

⁴⁴ *Buffalo Evening Telegraph*, July 17, 1883, 2 and *Buffalo Freie Presse*, July 16, 1883. See also “Um die Welt, Keppler & Schwarzmann’s Illustrierte Zeitung, New York, 28. Juli 1883,” 323.

⁴⁵ See, for instance, *Buffalo Demokrat*, June 18, 1883, 4 and July 23, 1883, 4.

⁴⁶ *Buffalo Demokrat*, April 20, 1883, 4 and April 27, 1883, 4. See also *Buffalo Freie Presse*, May 19, 1883 and May 28, 1883.

⁴⁷ *Official Text-Book and Programme of the Twenty-Third Saengerfest of the North-American Saengerbund*, 92. See also the *New York Staatszeitung*, as quoted in the *Buffalo Freie Presse*, July 23, 1883.

⁴⁸ *Buffalo Freie Presse*, May 12, 1883 and May 17, 1883. See also *Buffalo Demokrat*, March 27, 1883, 4.

attendance, the committee decided to have the meagre figures published in the local press. It also warned singers that they forfeited their right to participate in the reception concert if they missed more than three rehearsals.⁴⁹

In striving for musical quality, the committee revealed that, despite all declarations to the contrary, the bi-annual *Sängerfeste* had become much more than social gatherings. No longer was it acceptable that ill-prepared singers belted out folk songs or, even worse, ignored the concerts altogether, preferring to visit local taverns instead. The ‘beer bassos’, the *North American Sängerbund* ruled after the Cleveland fiasco of 1875, did not deserve to perform at the festivals. Henceforth, only those associations would be admitted that sent a minimum of 12 singers, all of whom attended a rehearsal with the festival conductor, demonstrating that they had studiously practiced the mass choruses on the programme.⁵⁰ It was a practice adhered to by the Buffalo music committee. In mid-June 1883, festival conductors Friedrich Federlein and Joseph Mischka left for a two-week round of inspection in the eastern and western districts of the *North American Sängerbund* respectively.⁵¹ To all accounts, the rehearsals were conducted in a jovial manner whereupon ‘inspector’ and singers retired to the associations’ headquarters to consume generous amounts of lager. No singing society failed the exercise. But many were reminded of the work yet to be done – and some so incensed over an ‘unjust’ verdict that they travelled to Buffalo to demand clarification.⁵² These, evidently, were not the standards enforced at

⁴⁹ Buffalo *Freie Presse*, May 22, 1883 and Buffalo *Demokrat*, May 22, 1883, 4; May 25, 1883, 4; May 28, 1883, 4; May 31, 1883, 4; June 4, 1883, 4.

⁵⁰ ‘Frank & Leslie’s Illustrierte Zeitung, New York, 21. Juli 1883,” 82 and ‘Fest-Zeitung für das 23ste Nord-Amerikanische Sängerfest / Official Gazette of the 23d North American Saengerfest, No. 1, 15ten Januar, 1883,” 1. See also *Official Text-Book and Programme of the Twenty-Third Saengerfest of the North-American Saengerbund*, 6.

⁵¹ In the east, Friedrich Federlein conducted rehearsals in Dunkirk, Erie, Cleveland, Tiffin, Columbus, Wheeling, Allegheny, Philadelphia, Newark, New York, Elmira, and Rochester. Meanwhile, Joseph Mischka visited Detroit, Milwaukee, Chicago, St. Louis, Indianapolis, Louisville, and Cincinnati. See Buffalo *Demokrat*, June 16, 1883, 4.

⁵² Buffalo *Demokrat*, June 26, 1883, 4 and Buffalo *Freie Presse*, June 23, 1883 and July 2, 1883.

‘American’ music festivals, but neither were the conductors’ visits a mere formality. They illustrated that, by 1883, even popular tunes like the “Lorelei” had to conform to musical sensibilities.⁵³ The folk song had donned an artistic gown.

Music and Identity

While paying homage to German values and traditions, the *Sängerfest* of 1883 showed many modern characteristics. To be sure, in the rhetoric of the festival, the emphasis on folk music as the ‘cultural core’ of German identity persisted. Across the waves of the Atlantic Ocean, orator Edward Storck declared, the German song had been transplanted to the United States where it helped preserve “the sweet mother tongue, German customs and habits.”⁵⁴ Like others, Storck cherished the feeling of *communitas* which the singers’ festivals evoked: a sense of commonality that transcended boundaries of class, nationality, and religion.⁵⁵ In music, this frail Forty-Eighter found the common denominator that bound together the ethnic group. The Germans, Buffalo tenor Ernst Besser chimed in, “bring over with them their inborn love for Song and Music ... be they Protestant or Catholics, Jews or Gentiles, whether they come from the shores of the Rhein, Donau or Elbe, whether from the Black Forest or the Thueringer Wald, whether from the Riesengebirge or the mountainous Alps.”⁵⁶ Encapsulated in the German folk song, wrote the editor of the *Sängerfest* gazette in a similar vein, was “a powerful bond between our old and new homelands. Whenever we hear the noble sound of our earthy folk songs, we are ... transported back into the happy time of our youth.”⁵⁷ This nostalgia, as historian April

⁵³ *Official Text-Book and Programme of the Twenty-Third Saengerfest of the North-American Saengerbund*, 11 and 13.

⁵⁴ Quoted in the Buffalo *Freie Presse*, July 19, 1883.

⁵⁵ For a discussion of the concept of *communitas* see Conzen, “Ethnicity as Festive Culture,” 47.

⁵⁶ “Besser, J.W. Ernst. Historical Sketch and Printed Notices of the German Singing Society Deutscher Saengerbund,” 3.

⁵⁷ “Official Gazette of the 23rd North American Saengerfest,” 5: “Auch ist die Musik ein mächtiges Bindeglied geworden zwischen unserer alten und neuen Heimat. Wenn wir dahier die

Schultz has suggested, pointed to a past that was not static but “dynamic, dependent on the needs and desires of the present.”⁵⁸ But for the celebrants it was real nonetheless, conjuring memories of the old *Heimat* (homeland). It was no coincidence that the audience was moved most not by the programme’s artistic fare but the folk song “With my Loved One at Home” (“Beim Liebchen zu Haus”) which was demanded for an encore.⁵⁹ Perhaps, we may speculate, *Heimat* took on a new meaning for the crowds at the Buffalo festival. No longer did it depend on a bond between a place and its people. Instead, *Heimat* was located in a set of relationships. In the shared act of singing and celebrating, a community was created that provided a sense of belonging, much like the German homeland had done.⁶⁰

But even though folk music was ‘naturalized’ by the chroniclers of the *Fest* who likened its “sweet melodies” to the bird that “warbles its song through the air”, the festival itself had become a thoroughly modern affair.⁶¹ The determined drive for a guarantee fund, the establishment of a press office for out-of-town correspondents, the negotiation of special railway rates, and the publication of a professional festival gazette made the 1883 *Sängerfest* a far cry from its 1860 predecessor whose organizers had discussed festival affairs “leisurely over a glass beer,” as Edward Storck recalled.⁶² Even the folk song was caught in a web of regulations. Quietly discarding the idea that social pleasure ranked above artistic obligation, the festival’s central

erhabenen Klänge unserer kernigen Volkslieder vernehmen, da versetzen wir uns auf einmal zurück in unsere frohe Jugendzeit.”

⁵⁸ April R. Schultz, *Ethnicity on Parade: Inventing the Norwegian American Through Celebration* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 126.

⁵⁹ BECPL, *Zur Erinnerung an das 50-jährige Jubiläum des Buffalo Sängerbund den 19., 20., und 21. April 1903, 1853-1903*, 14 and *Buffalo Evening News*, July 18, 1883, 1.

⁶⁰ Tedd Rippley, Melissa Sundell, and Suzanne Townley, “‘Ein wunderbares Heute’: The Evolution and Functionalization of ‘Heimat’ in West German *Heimat* Films of the 1950s,” in Jost Hermand and James Steakley eds., *Heimat, Nation, Fatherland: The German Sense of Belonging* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 51.

⁶¹ “Official Gazette of the 23rd North American Saengerfest,” 1. See also Andreas Dörner, “Der Mythos der nationalen Einheit: Symbolpolitik und Deutungskämpfe bei der Einweihung des Hermannsdenkmals im Jahre 1875,” *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 79, 2 (1997), 405.

⁶² Quoted in the *Buffalo Freie Presse*, July 19, 1883: “in größter Gemüthsruhe beim Glas Bier.”

committee offered free room and board only to those singers who attended rehearsals regularly and punctually; singers who skipped rehearsals had to eat and sleep at their own expense.⁶³

Just as the festival's organizational framework was changing, so, too, were the meanings attached to the music. Whereas the 1860 singers' festival had evolved around the *experience* of celebration, the 1883 singers' festival revelled in the alleged *cultural superiority* of German migrants. As historian Wolfgang Helbich has observed in his sensitive reading of German immigrant letters, German migrants did "compartmentalize culture on the crude model of 'American in business and politics, German in culture and *Gemüthlichkeit*.'" ⁶⁴ Orator Edward Storck, for one, professed himself "sufficiently Americanized for all practical purposes." In America, he had found the political freedom for which he had fought in vain in the German revolutions of 1848/1849. Still, he insisted on his right to remain loyal to "the old customs and traditions of our old Fatherland."⁶⁵ Others went even further. They declared that the cultivation of German language and culture presented not only a right, but a historical mission of America's *Deutschthum*.⁶⁶ German music and ideals, they asserted, had elevated the American nation. As the editor of the festival gazette wrote in January 1883, "we German-Americans can claim without ostentation, that we have exercised a benevolent influence upon American culture, not only in helping to build up and enrich this country, but also in teaching our fellow-men, that there

⁶³ In doing so, the committee followed the precedent set at the Louisville *Sängerfest* of 1877. See BECPL, Rare Book Room, "Fest-Zeitung, No. 13, 9ten Juli 1883," 1. Similar rules were enforced at the 1901 *Sängerfest* in Buffalo. See New York *Daily Tribune*, June 26, 1901, 2.

⁶⁴ Wolfgang Helbich, "Immigrant Adaptation at the Individual Level: The Evidence of Nineteenth-Century German-American Letters," *Amerikastudien / American Studies*, 42, 3 (1997), 414.

⁶⁵ Buffalo *Freie Presse*, July 19, 1883.

⁶⁶ In this context see also Kathleen Neils Conzen et al., "The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A.," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 12, 1 (Fall 1992), 10-11; Conzen, "Ethnicity as Festive Culture," 55; Kathleen Neils Conzen, "German-Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity," in Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh eds., *America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred-Year History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 140-3.

is something higher to live for than the strife for the daily bread – the unselfish love of art.”⁶⁷

Underlying this and similar claims were stereotypical images of the ‘American’ and ‘German’ characters. The former was described as puritanical, practical, and materialistic. The latter earned accolades for being warm and joyful, poetic and musical, in short, culturally superior.⁶⁸

German migrants thus showed “the narrow minded soul ... who has made the almighty dollar his God” that the cultivation of music, art, and conviviality was as important as business pursuits.⁶⁹

Ironically, the “cultural superiority complex” which these speeches and editorials reflected “conformed largely to American patterns rather than clinging to German traditions,” as Wolfgang Helbich has argued.⁷⁰ At a time when migrants from southern and eastern Europe began to arrive in considerable numbers, Germans sought to solidify their position in American society by portraying German culture as the saving grace of the nation.⁷¹ According to Kathleen Neils Conzen, the doctrine of German ethnic contributions to the American melting pot was not a defence of ethnic pluralism but, rather, a “Germanocentric argument” that envisioned “an America codominated by German and Anglo culture.”⁷² Such missionary zeal that sought to mould ‘mainstream’ culture after the German image was markedly absent at the singers’ festivals in Waterloo County, across the border.

⁶⁷ “Official Gazette of the 23d North-American Saengerfest,” 2.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 2 and 6; ‘Frank & Leslie’s Illustirte Zeitung,’ 82; ‘Fest-Zeitung, No. 3, 15ten February 1883,’ 4; BECPL, Rare Book Room, ‘Fest-Zeitung, No. 2, 1st Februar 1883,’ 8; Buffalo *Freie Presse*, July 16, 1883 and July 23, 1883; Buffalo *Demokrat*, July 17, 1883.

⁶⁹ “Official Gazette of the 23rd North American Saengerfest,” 2.

⁷⁰ Helbich, “Immigrant Adaptation at the Individual Level,” 410.

⁷¹ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New York: Atheneum, 1963 [1955]), 87. For attempts to ‘Americanize’ the newcomers see Cecilia Elizabeth O’Leary, *To Die For: The Paradox of American Patriotism* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 172-93 and Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), 179-219.

⁷² Conzen, “German-Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity,” 139 and 141.

The vocal assertions of German superiority also betrayed a craving for recognition.

German Americans, Wolfgang Helbich has suggested, “implicitly admitted a superior position of Anglo-Americans, who were felt to be the authority that could dispense approval.”⁷³ Indeed, for Albert Krause, who had migrated to the United States in 1861 and described himself as sadly lacking in “American audacity”, the Buffalo *Sängerfest* provided a welcome boost for his fragile self-confidence.⁷⁴ “Dear, good Mother!,” he wrote to Germany on July 22, 1883,

The Americans are completely startled and cannot comprehend how so many people, 2,000 visiting singers and almost 40,000 visitors, can amuse themselves without even the slightest discord or quarrel. With regard to artistic merits, the festival has made history as well; the concerts by good soloists, supported by a trained singers’ chorus of 2,000 men in our new, grand music hall ... were splendid indeed, the impression on the Americans overwhelming, as their English newspapers candidly admitted. Thanks to this *Fest*, the respect for the local Germans has markedly increased.⁷⁵

Buffalo’s German newspapers, as well, gleefully reported that, much to the surprise of Anglo-American observers, order reigned throughout the festival, notwithstanding the fact that liberal amounts of lager were being consumed. Even the ‘gentlemen’ of the prohibition movement, the *Freie Presse* wrote with ill-concealed disdain, should by now have realized that Germans knew how to celebrate in a joyful but civilized fashion.⁷⁶

⁷³ Wolfgang Helbich, “Die ‘Englischen’: German Immigrants Describe Nineteenth-Century American Society,” *Amerikastudien / American Studies*, 36, 4 (1991), 529.

⁷⁴ Ruhr-University of Bochum (Germany), Bochumer Briefsammlung, “Krause-Krause,” Buffalo, August 27, 1865 and December 31, 1865. I am indebted to Wolfgang Helbich for bringing this correspondence to my attention and generously providing me with a complete set of transcripts.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, Buffalo, July 22, 1883: “Die Amerikaner sind ganz frappiert und können gar nicht begreifen, wie so viele Leute, 2000 fremde Sänger und ungefähr 40,000 Besucher sich so fröhlich amüsieren können, ohne auch nur den geringsten Streit oder Mißton unter sich aufkommen zu lassen. Aber auch in künstlerischer Beziehung war das Fest epochemachend, die Konzerte von guten Solokräften, unterstützt mit einem geschulten Sängerkhor von 2000 Mann in unserer neuen, großartigen Sängerrhalle ... waren wirklich großartig, der Eindruck beim Amerikanertum überwältigend, dessen dann ihre englischen Zeitungen auch ohne Rückhalt sich aussprachen. Durch dieses Fest hat die Achtung vor den hiesigen Deutschen auffallend zugenommen.”

⁷⁶ Buffalo *Freie Presse*, July 18, 1883. See also *ibid.*, July 13, 1883; July 19, 1883; July 20, 1883 and Buffalo *Demokrat*, July 20, 1883, 4.

Affirmation came from the highest political echelons. State Governor Grover Cleveland

himself delivered a rousing speech in which he declared that:

we owe much to the German element among our people. Their thrift and industry have added immensely to our growth and prosperity. The sad and solemn victims of American overwork may learn of them that labor may be well done and at the same time recreation and social enjoyment have their place in a busy life. They have also brought to us their music and their song, which have done much to elevate, refine and improve, and to demonstrate that nature's language is as sweet as when the morning stars sang together. I am inclined to think that a music loving people are not apt to be a bad people, and it may well be hoped that occasion like this will tend to make the love and cultivation of music more universal in our land.⁷⁷

Why, we may ask, did Governor Cleveland so readily embrace the confident assertions of German ethnicity at the Buffalo *Sängerfest*? For one, he welcomed the 'civilizing' effects of music on American society. Like other Anglo-American observers, he credited German migrants with having brought to the United States the "great works of the great master."⁷⁸ "Modern instrumental music" was a genuinely German invention, wrote the Buffalo *Sunday Morning News* in July 1883, and the "rapid strides made by the people in this country in musical taste" would not have been possible without "the German people who have come among us to live."⁷⁹ German migrants had founded musical societies; they provided conductors and musicians for the country's principal orchestras; they organized "musical entertainments in such numbers, variety and excellence as to place them as high in rank for musical taste as that of any city in Europe." Their music, concluded the *Sunday Morning News*, "has a deep and beneficial effect upon national culture no one will deny."⁸⁰ Ironically, this commentator praised German migrants for their very professionalism and modernity that disconcerted *Sängerfest* purists.

⁷⁷ Quoted in the Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*, July 17, 1883, 3.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, July 24, 1860, 2 and Buffalo *Sunday Morning News*, July 22, 1883, 1.

⁷⁹ Buffalo *Sunday Morning News*, July 22, 1883, 1.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* See also Buffalo *Daily Courier*, July 4, 1883, 4.

In the eyes of many Anglo-American observers, music also tempered the “ceaseless rush and roar of business” that characterized American life. “[W]e often rather exist than live,” held the editor of the *Buffalo Catholic Union and Times*, “and how often do not the over-taxed brain and system fall exhausted into death’s dreamless sleep, for want of holiday and recreative amusement.”⁸¹ As historian Jackson Lears has observed, the triumph of corporate capitalism in the 1880s provoked a “recoil from an ‘overcivilized’ modern existence” and a “yearning for authentic experience – physical, emotional, or spiritual.”⁸² Disenchanted with the exigencies of modern life – its unrelenting demands for efficiency and productivity, its cult of the clock, its deference to science and rationality – American cultural leaders “were ready for a more permissive, more leisurely style of living,” Lears suggests.⁸³ This was exactly what singers’ festival had to offer. For a week’s time, the routines of work and business were suspended in a whirlwind of festivity that intertwined musical offerings with ‘rational’ amusement. When Buffalo’s English-language newspapers wonderingly remarked on the “orderly and well-behaved” celebrants who displayed “utmost decorum,” they, in fact, complimented German Americans for conforming to the code of Victorian respectability that undergirded bourgeois culture.⁸⁴ As a ‘respectable’ form of art and entertainment, the *Buffalo Sngerfest* of 1883 was welcomed into the cultural mainstream.

Yet even though the local English-language press enthusiastically greeted the “feast of fun,” at least one newspaper felt ambivalent about the effusive praise that Governor Cleveland heaped on German migrants as an ethnic group.⁸⁵ While conceding that “the Germans are

⁸¹ *Buffalo Catholic Union and Times*, July 19, 1883, 4.

⁸² T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), xiii and xvii.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 4-11.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 14; *Buffalo Express*, July 21, 1883, 4; *Buffalo Sunday Morning News*, July 22, 1883, 4. See also the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, July 20, 1883, 3. The only dissenting voice in the chorus of universal approval was the *Erie County Independent* that railed against the “Sabbath-desecration” and “general dissipation” at the 1883 *Sngerfest* (July 20, 1883, 1).

⁸⁵ *Buffalo Weekly Press*, July 19, 1883, 2.

unquestionably a music-loving people," the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser* took pains to point out that "in the musical portion of the entertainment American singers are doing their full share."⁸⁶ The newspaper also questioned the wisdom of "classify[ing] citizens of this municipality, state and republic according to their foreign connections." After all, visitors were "being welcomed [not] by Germans as such, but by Buffalonians and ... in the cordiality of the city's hospitality there is no distinction of nationalities." The *Commercial Advertiser*, in other words, claimed the *Sängerfest* as a local affair in which all citizens of Buffalo took equal pride.⁸⁷

Music did indeed provide an important meeting point for both German-speaking migrants and local residents. Just as the festival's central committee had invited members of German church choirs to participate in the grand reception concert, it had asked American singers to lend their support.⁸⁸ Moreover, American residents had contributed liberally to the guarantee fund and rendered "excellent service" in several standing committees.⁸⁹ Music, in other words, brought together representatives of the 'German' and 'American' middle and upper classes who saw in the festival an opportunity to boost the city's image. It is here that the outlook of the 1860 and 1883 Buffalo *Sängerfeste* most clearly diverged. Although festival president Phillip Becker continued to profess his loyalty to the larger German-American community, the former (and future) mayor seemed much more impressed with the *Fest*'s potential to stimulate local trade, business and industry.⁹⁰ English-language newspapers, as well, were keenly aware that Buffalo's "railroads, the hotels, the restaurants and the mercantile establishments" stood to profit from "every stranger attracted to this city."⁹¹ Even more important, as the *Commercial Advertiser* pointed out, the

⁸⁶ *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, July 17, 1883, 2.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Buffalo Freie Presse*, May 29, 1883.

⁸⁹ *New York Daily Tribune*, July 19, 1883, 5 and *Buffalo Sunday Morning News*, July 22, 1883, 4.

⁹⁰ *Buffalo Demokrat*, June 17, 1882, 4. In this context see also *Buffalo Demokrat*, May 22, 1882; June 10, 1882; July 16, 1883; July 21, 1883.

⁹¹ *Buffalo Daily Courier*, July 15, 1883, 2.

singers' festival would advertise the city's natural and commercial resources: "The Saengerfest brings intelligent business-men to Buffalo from the leading cities of the North and the West. It puts them in communication with the educated and enterprising residents of the city, and gives them a chance to see what Buffalo is, what she is doing, and what she promises to be."⁹² In the age of boosterism, the celebration of German song and sound no longer constituted an exclusively 'ethnic' affair. Instead, it was appropriated for local purposes. Their festival had become ours. Or, as the *Commercial Advertiser* put it with characteristic verve: "We are all Germans this week."⁹³

The enthusiasm with which Buffalonians greeted the visitors illustrated that the German *Fest* had become a local attraction. When the singers marched into town, the sidewalks were lined with curious spectators. At the closing concert, there was standing room only. And wherever one looked, one was sure to see a festival badge, pinned to men's jackets and women's hats. "Some of the banners and emblems today utter the words of hospitality in two languages," wrote the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser* on the opening day of the festival, "but the greeting comes from citizens of one mind, heart and purpose."⁹⁴ It was an exuberance that would last to the closing day of the festivities. In the unanimous verdict of German- and English-speaking celebrants, the 1883 *Sängerfest* had been an unqualified success.⁹⁵ Despite the small deficit of \$ 2,600 which the festival had accrued, it seemed to have fulfilled its mandate of cultural renewal.⁹⁶

⁹² *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, July 16, 1883, 2.

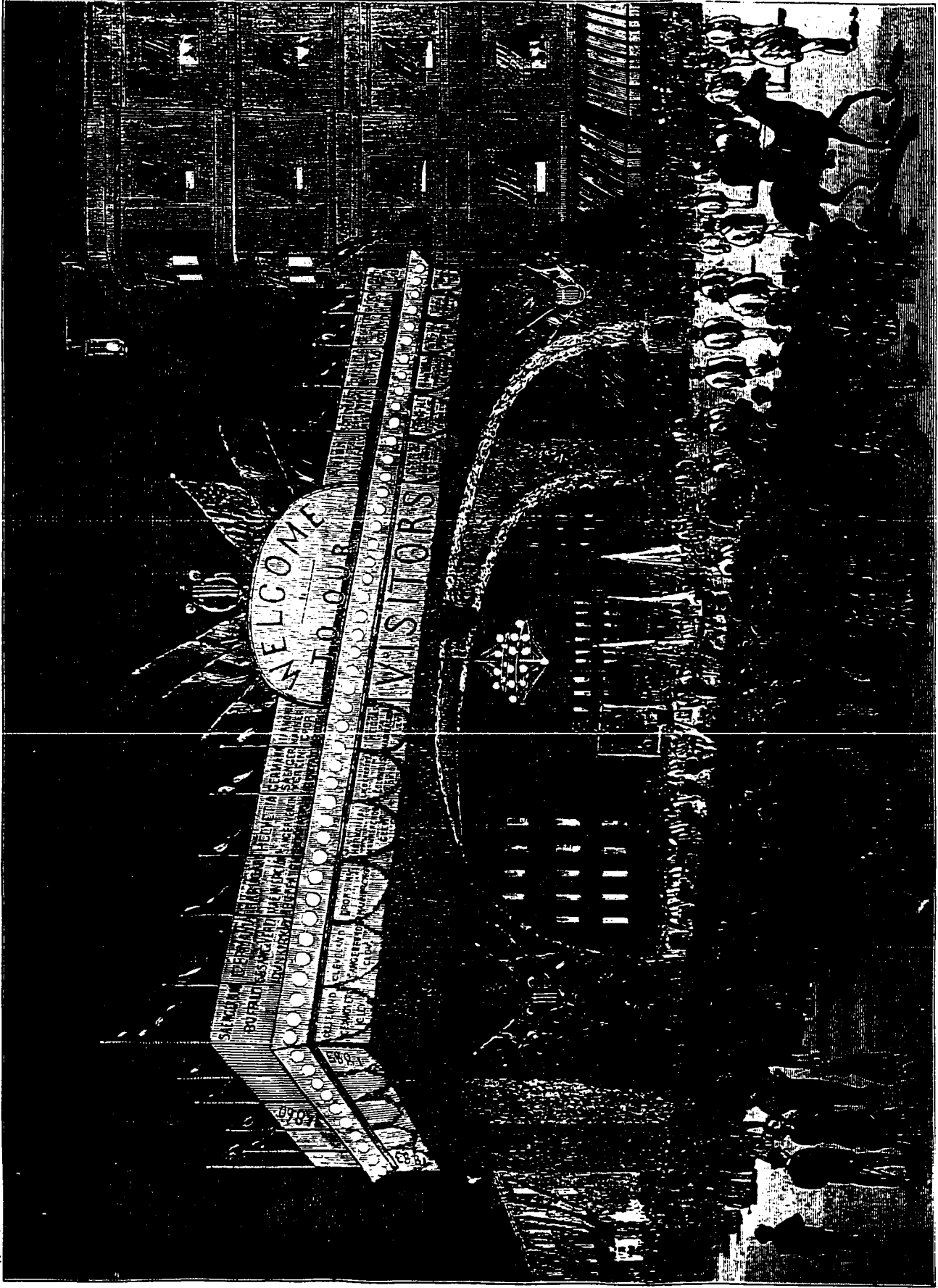
⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ See, for instance, *Buffalo Weekly Press*, July 19, 1883, 2; *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, July 18, 1883, 2; *Buffalo Evening Telegraph*, July 16, 1883, 4; *Buffalo Demokrat*, July 31, 1883; *Buffalo Freie Presse*, July 23, 1883.

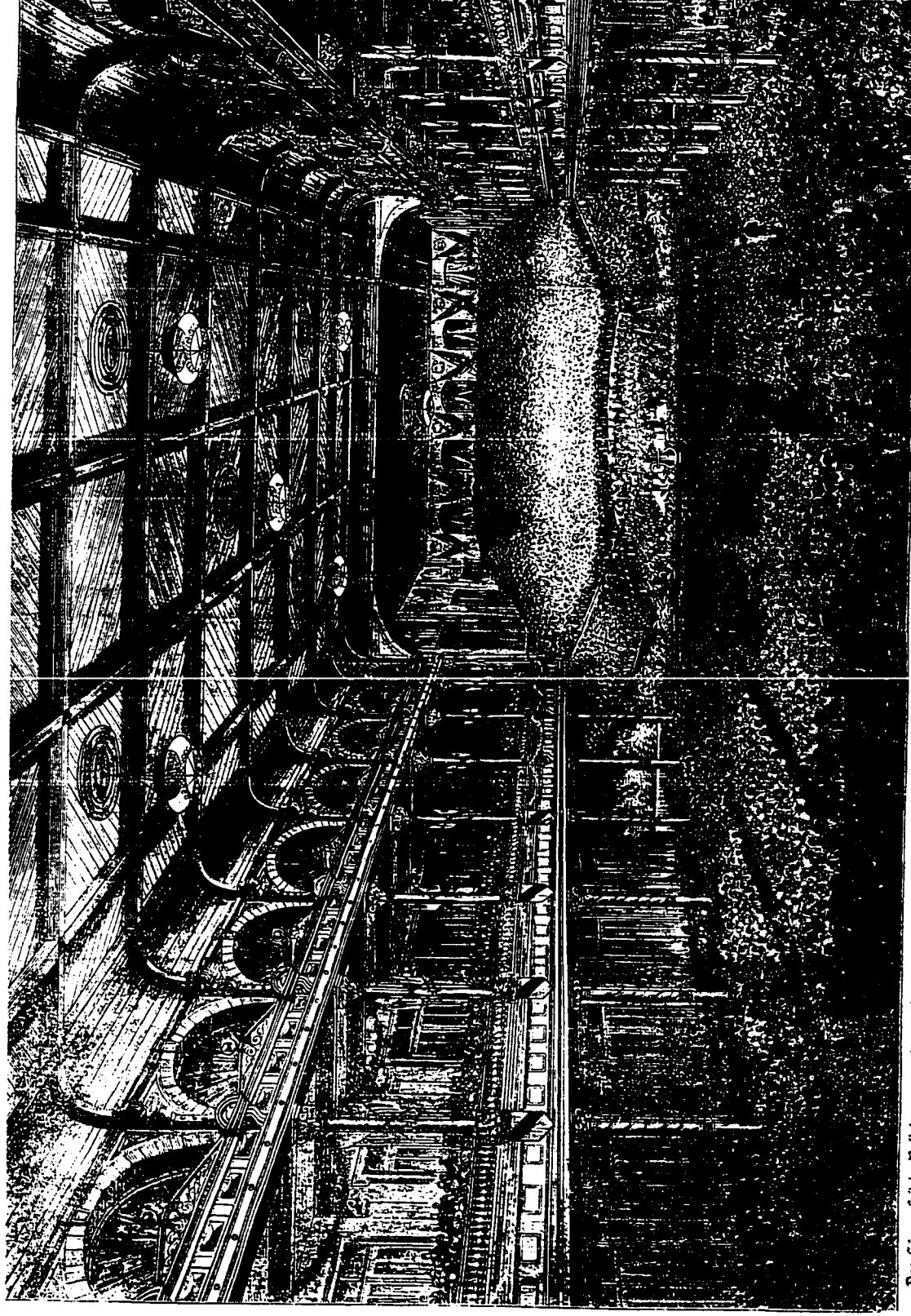
⁹⁶ *Buffalo Demokrat*, July 25, 1883, 4 and July 26, 1883, 4. See also *Buffalo Freie Presse*, July 23, 1883.

Illustration 16: The Reception Committee Escorting Visiting Societies to the *Sängerbund* Hall, Buffalo, July 1883



Source: BECPL, Rare Book Room, "Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspapers, July 28, 1883, 369."

Illustration 17: Scene in the Music Hall, Buffalo, July 1883



Das Singspiel in Buffalo vom 16. bis 19. Juli 1883. — Szene in der Festhalle an einem der großen Concert-Abende. (Nach Zeichnungen von Freihand Press und H. J. Marx gezeichnet von A. Verghens und G. Ray.)

Source: BECPL, Rare Book Room, "Um die Welt," No. 21, 28. Juli 1883, 324."

Illustration 18: The Official Badge of the Singers' Festival, Buffalo, July 1883

FEST-ZEITUNG.

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ALO, N.Y.



Die offizielle

Fest - „Badge“.

Die nebenstehende Zeichnung repräsentirt die offizielle „Badge“ für das 23te Nord - Amerikanische Gesangsfest, deren Anfertigung und Verkauf mir von der Fest-Be- hörde zuerkannt wurde.

Da diese „Badge“ die alleinige offizielle ist und ich das ausschließliche Recht habe, diese in der Fest-Halle, Picnicplatz und auf dem Excursions Train zu verkaufen, so bitte ich meine Sängersfreunde und das Publikum im Allgemeinen, keine andere „Badge“ zu berücksichtigen, da nur diese als offizielle einen bleibenden Erinnerungswert an das Fest haben kann.

Der Preis ist **25 Cts.** mit Band und Nadel in Briefumschlag.

Emil Meyer.**Sängerfest Tickets.**

In reflecting upon the ‘lessons’ of the Buffalo festival, the correspondent of the Philadelphia *Demokrat* praised the organizers for having placed “the simple German folk song and the mass choruses” centre stage.⁹⁷ Yet after this nod to the honoured traditions of German singers’ festivals, the writer revealed just how much the context of celebration had changed. Buffalo’s greatest advantage, he suggested, was its comparatively small size. Unlike the bigger cities of the East and West “where the cult of music and the art of song are commonplace, where the hustle and bustle offers too many manifold attractions,” Buffalo’s citizens had devoted themselves wholeheartedly to the great *Fest*.⁹⁸ It remained to be seen how the festive enthusiasm would fare in an age of hardening class distinctions.

Culture, Class, and Consumption

On March 25, 1885, a great fire engulfed the music hall. Gas, leaking from a pipe, had become ignited and transformed the building into “a fiery sea from front to rear,” as the local press breathlessly reported.⁹⁹ “[D]riven northwards by the strong wind,” sparks and flames also set fire to the neighbouring St. Louis Catholic Church that was burned to the ground.¹⁰⁰ Within two hours, two symbols of Buffalo’s *Deutschthum* had fallen victim to the flames. The German Young Men’s Society had lost its headquarters and its 8,000-volume library. Buffalo’s premier singing societies – *Liedertafel*, *Sängerbund*, and *Orpheus* – had lost their entire collection of note sheets, instruments, and memorabilia, alongside their concert hall.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Quoted in the Buffalo *Demokrat*, July 31, 1883.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*: “wo der Kultus der Musik und der Kunst ein alltäglicher ist, das Leben und Treiben zu viele und mannigfaltige Attraktionen bietet.”

⁹⁹ *Geschichte der Deutschen*, 86.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Yox, “Decline of the German-American Community,” 182 and BECHS, Vertical File: Music - Organizations, Soc., Clubs, ‘Buffalo Orpheus’, File: Programs, 1894-1897, “Buffalo Orpheus, 25th Anniversary, Oct. 6th, 7th. & 8th.”

Almost immediately, Phillip Becker – his eyes set on the mayoral elections in the fall – called a meeting of German businessmen in which he pledged \$ 5,000 for a construction fund, an offer matched by another industrial giant of the community, Jacob Schoellkopf.¹⁰² An assembly of citizens at the local *Turnhalle* (gymnasts' hall), attended by both German Americans and Anglo Americans, raised \$ 20,000 in subscriptions.¹⁰³ By April 1, 1885, the construction fund had increased to \$ 40,000 whereupon the German Young Men's Association appointed a building committee.¹⁰⁴ One year later, the corner stone for the new music hall was laid. The new hall, whose total cost amounted to \$ 246,000, was completed in November 1887, with the generous support of the non-German community that had grown fond of the local temple of music.¹⁰⁵

In order to express their appreciation to the public, two younger members of the German Young Men's Association suggested to present the building to the city as a place of public not ethnic, interest. It was a motion heatedly defeated by the German-born members of the association who "refused to hand these material symbols of their community over to the city," as historian Andrew P. Yox has remarked.¹⁰⁶ Instead, the imposing hall was to testify, once again, to the solidarity of Buffalo's German-origin population, its sturdy brick walls a symbol of ethnic prosperity.

¹⁰² Yox, "Decline of the German-American Community," 182. Having arrived in Buffalo in 1843, Jacob Schoellkopf became the founder of a family dynasty that owned both the area's first power plant and a chemical company that specialized in the manufacture of aniline, "a chemical used in the manufacture of explosives." See Mark Goldman, *High Hopes: The Rise and Decline of Buffalo, New York* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1983), 177-8.

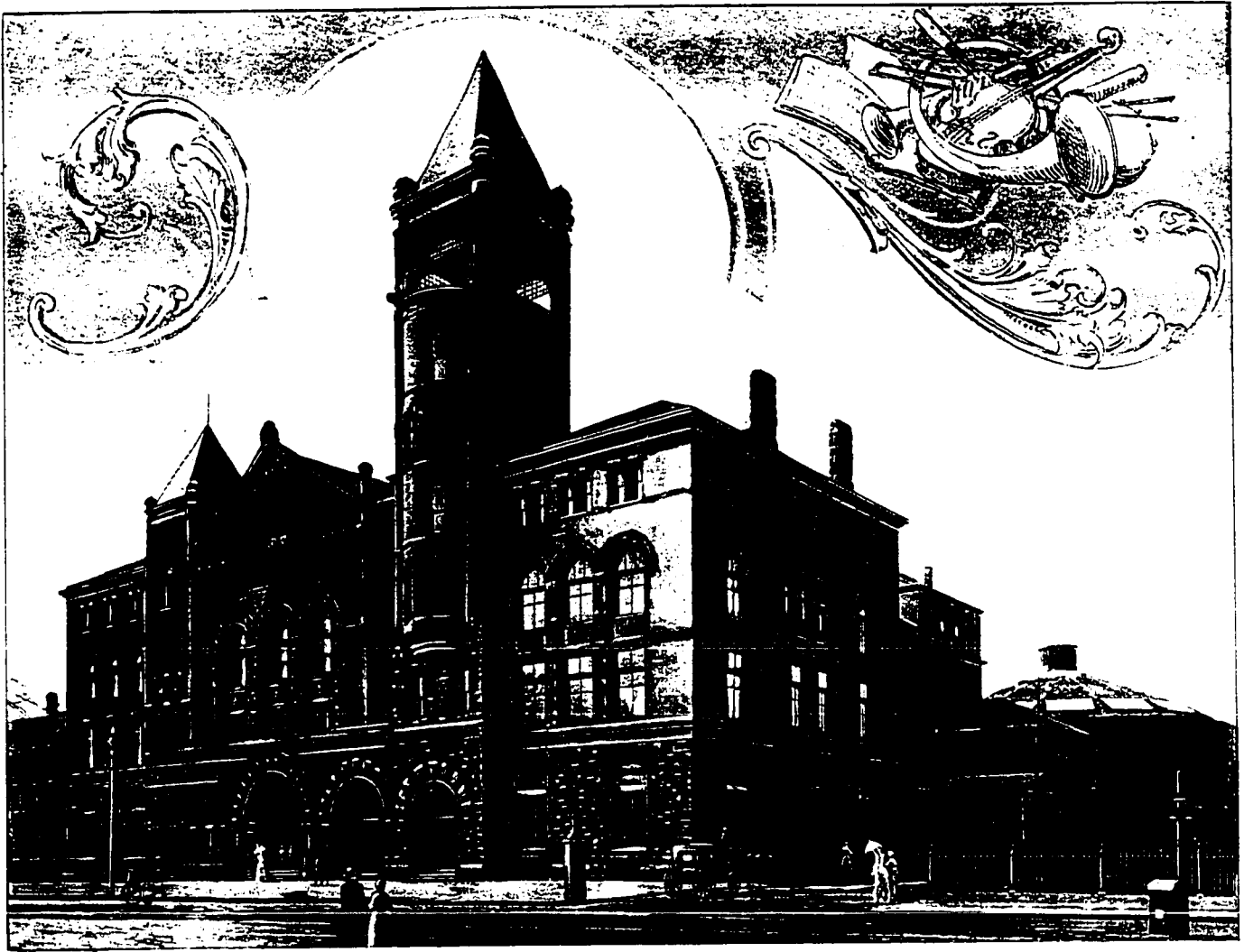
¹⁰³ *Die Deutsche Jungmänner Gesellschaft zu Buffalo*, 49.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 49; *Geschichte der Deutschen*, 114; Yox, "Decline of the German-American Community," 183.

¹⁰⁶ Yox, "Decline of the German-American Community," 184-5.

Illustration 19: The New Music Hall, Buffalo, N.Y.



Source: *Geschichte der Deutschen*, 93.

Yet despite the apparent solidity of the city's local *Deutschthum*, generational and language changes were about to alter the very fabric of the ethnic community.¹⁰⁷ As early as 1883, singing societies reported difficulties in recruiting new members.¹⁰⁸ As the founding generation retired from the ranks of active singers, their American-born children, who 'thought' and 'felt' in the English language, had to be attracted to the *Vereine*.¹⁰⁹ This was no easy task, as

¹⁰⁷ In this context see also Conzen, "Ethnicity as Festive Culture," 69.

¹⁰⁸ *Buffalo Evening Telegraph*, July 16, 1883, 4.

¹⁰⁹ *Zur Erinnerung an das 50-jährige Jubiläum des Buffalo Sängerbund*, 19.

Sängerbund member Ernst Besser, realized. Young German America, he observed, showed far greater enthusiasm for the pursuit of national sports than for the beauty of German poetry that was immortalized in the German folk song.¹¹⁰ Confronted with a growing number of members who spoke German only with difficulty, even the venerable Buffalo *Liedertafel* opted to make English the language of business meetings.¹¹¹ As the *Liedertafel*'s conductor, Joseph Mischka, took pains to explain, the society did not intend to cut loose its 'German affiliations'. "By the use of English", he said in 1888, "the German would be best able to fulfil their mission in familiarizing Americans with German sociability and customs."¹¹²

Eleven years later, Mischka was again invited to "explain the paradox of a German singing society without German singers."¹¹³ By then, only 10 out of 50 *Liedertafel* singers were proficient in German. According to Mischka, common sense as well as artistic considerations demanded performances in English, for a "correct pronunciation of the umlauts and gutturals of the German language can only be acquired after careful study," while "the obscurity of the sense of the words in a language one does not understand hinders correct musical expression."¹¹⁴ Mischka's confident assertion that English could peacefully coexist with a respect for "German habits and customs" did not persuade Ernst Besser who predicted the demise of the *Liedertafel*.¹¹⁵ And indeed, when the *North American Sängerbund* reconvened in Buffalo in 1901, the *Liedertafel* was no longer among the six local participating societies.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ BECHS, Joseph Mischka, Music Clippings, M67, vol. 3, "Buffalo Courier," September 4, 1888.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, "Buffalo Express," December 14, 1899.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* and *Zur Erinnerung an das 50-jährige Jubiläum des Buffalo Sängerbund*, 19.

¹¹⁶ BECPL, *Official Book: Thirtieth Sängerfest of the North-American Sängerbund, held in Buffalo, June 24, 25, 26 and 27, 1901* (Buffalo, N.Y.: The Buffalo Sängerfest Company, 1901). See also BECHS, Joseph Mischka, Music Clippings, M 67, vol. 1, "The Lyra: Official Organ of the North American Saenger Bund," August 5, 1897 and April 25, 1899.

Joseph Mischka, by then, had long abandoned the bâton of the *Liedertafel*. In May 1894, he had been appointed musical director of the Buffalo public school system, supervising the teaching of vocal music in the city's elementary classrooms.¹¹⁷ The introduction of singing lessons into the public school curriculum reflected the widespread appreciation for music as a 'civilizing factor'.¹¹⁸ Yet, in entering the realm of public schooling, music had shed its ethnic gown. When the Grand Army of the Republic staged an encampment in 1896, Joseph Mischka trained a chorus of 4,000 children to perform a selection of "national and patriotic" songs.¹¹⁹ The children's performance elicited much praise from the local press that seemed more enamoured with the display of patriotism than with the "precision, perfect intonation and enunciation" which so pleased Joseph Mischka's ear:

Two thousands fresh young faces, with eyes dancing and shifting with excitement; two thousand joyous children gaily bedecked in the National colors; two thousand voices rising and swelling with the songs that rung in the ears of the soldiers thirty years ago or more; a shield of the Stars and Stripes, moving and palpitating, breathing and animated with all the glorious sentiments of patriotism in hearts young and innocent.¹²⁰

Rather than serving the cause of ethnic group formation, music now helped to craft a "narrative of the nation".¹²¹

¹¹⁷ BECHS, Joseph Mischka, Music Clippings, M 67, vol. 1, "The Lyra: Official Organ of the North American Saenger Bund," August 5, 1897 and April 25, 1899.

¹¹⁸ Department of Public Instruction, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education of the City of Buffalo, 1896-97* (Buffalo: The Wenborne-Summer Co., 1897), 87-91 and Department of Public Instruction, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education of the City of Buffalo, 1899-1900* (Buffalo: The Wenborne-Summer Co., 1901), 69-71.

¹¹⁹ The nation-building functions of these encampments are discussed in O'Leary, *To Die For*, 55-6.

¹²⁰ *Buffalo Times*, quoted in the *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education of the City of Buffalo, 1896-97*, 88.

¹²¹ Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," in Stuart Hall, David Held, Don Hubert, and Kenneth Thompson eds., *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997 [1996]), 613.

Still, the elevation of music to a 'national' art facilitated preparations for the 1901 singers' festival in Buffalo. The State of New York provided a spacious concert hall, the 74th Regiment Armory, while the organizers of the Pan-American exhibition sponsored the *Fest* with a grant of \$ 7,500.¹²² Entrepreneurial motives had dictated the simultaneous celebration of two 'world-class' events. Having heavily invested in the Pan-American Exposition, local managers of the *Sängerfest* hoped to draw visiting singers to the exposition grounds.¹²³ The city itself honoured the festival with a chorus of 3,500 schoolchildren from 62 public schools. Celebrated as "one of the most brilliant performances" of the *Sängerfest*, the "sweet" and "happy" melodies of the children's chorus, under their conductor Joseph Mischka, moved the audience to standing ovations.¹²⁴

The local English-language press, as well, lent its enthusiastic support to the musical venture.¹²⁵ While indulging in playful stereotypes of the "jolly, musical German-Americans" who were of the "broad, substantial kind with big moustaches and big voices," it wrote admiringly that

The Saengerbund has done much to elevate, as well as popularize music in this country. Its singing fests are at once a treat and an education ... These German singers can be sure of a hearty reception in Buffalo. The Germans are the most conservative element in our community and are certainly one of the most respected and influential. Many Americans of other races, too, have come to love the German music and the German pleasures.¹²⁶

In stark contrast to the more recent arrivals from Poland and Italy, German-origin residents enjoyed the reputation of model citizens whose contributions had immeasurably enriched

¹²² *Buffalo Times*, June 27, 1901, 6; *New York Daily Tribune*, June 27, 1901, 7.

¹²³ *New York Daily Tribune*, July 26, 1901, 2.

¹²⁴ *Buffalo Freie Presse*, June 25, 1901; *Buffalo Volksfreund*, June 28, 1901, 7; *Buffalo Evening News*, June 27, 1901, 1; *Buffalo Times*, June 26, 1901, 1; *Buffalo Daily Courier*, June 27, 1901.

¹²⁵ For playful stereotyping see *Buffalo Express*, June 24, 1901, 6; *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, June 25, 1901, 10 and June 27, 1901, 12; *Buffalo Daily Courier*, June 25, 1901, 8; *Buffalo Catholic Union and Times*, July 4, 1901, 4. For enthusiastic endorsements see *Buffalo Evening News*, June 24, 1901, 2; *Buffalo Enquirer*, June 24, 1901, 1 and June 26, 1901, 10; *Buffalo Review*, June 26, 1901, 7; *Buffalo Daily Courier*, June 25, 1901.

¹²⁶ *Buffalo Morning Express*, June 25, 1901, 4.

American national culture.¹²⁷ What, however, were Anglo-American observers to make of the fact that the patronage of the *Sängerfest* concerts was disappointing, to say the least?

At the turn of the century, as we shall see, the celebrations of German song and sound had begun to fracture along class lines. No longer did the musical extravaganza provide a unifying, albeit temporary, bond of ethnic solidarity. Instead, different festivals catered to different classes. This, perhaps, was not surprising in a city that had seen violent confrontations between German-American employers and workers since the mid-1880s.¹²⁸ In the *United Trades and Labor Council* (UTLC), a loose federation of trade unions, skilled workers of mostly German and Irish origins fought for union recognition, the eight-hour day, and higher wages. They also lobbied against the importation of cheap labour from eastern and southern Europe, turning the rhetoric of 1850s nativists against late-nineteenth century immigrants.¹²⁹ Interestingly, having achieved ‘respectability’, in the late 1890s even the UTLC suppressed memories of past struggles, preferring instead to portray the city’s skilled workmen as part of the local establishment. It was a self-image nurtured in Buffalo’s proliferating working-class associations and union locals, many of which conducted their affairs exclusively in the German language.¹³⁰

In 1901 Buffalo, the internal differentiation of the city’s German population found expression in the *Arbeiter-Sängerfest* (workingmen’s singers’ festival) that took place just prior to the ‘official’ festival. Founded in 1897, the *Arbeiter-Sängerbund* had first convened in Cleveland in 1898. Three years later, working-class singers from Erie (Pennsylvania), Toledo (Ohio), Cleveland (Ohio), Detroit (Michigan), Auburn (New York), and Rochester (New York) met in Buffalo for a

¹²⁷ These images are reflected in the official guidebook of the Pan-American Exposition. See Goldman, *High Hopes*, 178.

¹²⁸ Compared with Manhattan’s *Little Germany*, of course, intra-ethnic conflict in Buffalo seemed relatively benign. Rarely did labour disputes spill over into industry-wide strikes. The obvious exception were the railroad strikes of 1877 and 1892. See *ibid.*, 156-9; Yox, “Decline of the German-American Community,” 192; Nadel, *Little Germany*, chapters 7 and 8.

¹²⁹ Goldman, *High Hopes*, 155.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 156 and 154.

second gathering, hosted by the singing societies *Vorwärts Männerchor*, *Herwegh Männerchor*, and *Saxonia Männerchor*.¹³¹ The festive vocabulary which they employed bore a remarkable resemblance to its bourgeois counterpart. It included a parade, a people's festival in Teutonia Park, and a concert of the united mass chorus.¹³² As the local press did not comment on the address by Robert Steiner, the editor of the Buffalo *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, we are left to wonder whether the festival did have a political agenda. If so, it was well camouflaged. At the parade, the union of song and work was "charmingly" represented by "young, pretty girls," as the Buffalo *Demokrat* remarked approvingly.¹³³ The beer brewers' union, in turn, had prepared a colourful float on which Gambrinus, the king of beer, toasted the onlookers with a glass of lager.¹³⁴

Yet even though the *Arbeiter-Sängerfest* drew upon cultural expressions of German festivity as they had evolved in the preceding six decades, its social profile contrasted markedly with the festivals of the *North American Sängerbund*.¹³⁵ No alderman, mayor, or state governor graced the *Fest* with his presence. No local dignitaries marched along Fillmore Avenue to Teutonia Park. Instead, the parade featured working-class singing societies and music bands, local sharpshooter and benevolent associations, not to mention a host of German union locals, among them the brewers, coopers, beer drivers, printers, carpenters, butchers, millhands, and barbers.¹³⁶

In retrospect, the *Arbeiter-Sängerfest* was remarkable for its participatory character that combined music with sociability, much like the earlier singers' festivals had done. It was precisely this popular flair that the 'official' festival no longer possessed. At the Buffalo *Sängerfest* of June

¹³¹ Buffalo *Freie Presse*, June 22, 1901.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Buffalo *Demokrat*, June 24, 1901, 6.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ In this context see also Gunter Mühl, "Das Verhältnis der Arbeiter-Sänger zum bürgerlichen Gesangsvereinswesen bis 1933," in Rainer Noltenius ed., *Illustrierte Geschichte der Arbeiterchöre* (Münster: Druckwerkstatt, 1992), 65-6.

¹³⁶ Buffalo *Freie Presse*, June 22, 1901.

1901, the former exuberance had given way to “an emphasis upon decorum within the hollowed precincts or temples devoted to art and music,” as historian Michael Kammen has said.¹³⁷

With evident indignation, the *Commercial Advertiser* reported that the audience at the *Sängerfest* showed none of the requisite attentiveness and restraint:

After the first rush, the crowd straggled in, late and noisy. They were still coming at 9 o'clock. The opening of the concert had to be delayed because of their tardiness. It was because of them that two numbers were omitted from the program. It seemed strange that a festival of music of the proportions and unparalleled beauty of the Saengerfest, some 1,000 men and women could have the nerve to tram into the hall half an hour after the time fixed for the overture.¹³⁸

What the *Commercial Advertiser* spelled out was nothing but prescriptions for the enjoyment of fine art. Punctuality, appreciation, and, above all, as Michael Kammen has argued, “quiescence” were required qualities for “polite” music lovers.¹³⁹ It is hardly surprising, then, that the reporter professed himself highly irritated by the “steady unending fluttering of fans” in the hands of the female audience. “The perpetual motion of the fans,” he wrote, “affected the vision like the flickering of a badly constructed vitascope, and the roar of voices and skirts and shuffling feet became a burden to the mind.”¹⁴⁰ In the eyes of this observer, singers’ festivals no longer constituted popular events but cultural ones. The “noisy days of pleasure”, which Buffalo singer Ernst Besser had so fondly described, had been supplanted by “sober and quiet musical gatherings” that resembled ‘American’ music festivals.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Michael Kammen, *American Culture, American Taste: Social Change and the 20th Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 10.

¹³⁸ *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, June 26, 1901, 10.

¹³⁹ Kammen, *American Culture, American Taste*, 31.

¹⁴⁰ *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, June 26, 1901, 10. See also *ibid.*, June 27, 1901, 12.

¹⁴¹ “Besser, J.W. Ernst. Historical Sketch and Printed Notices of the German Singing Society Deutscher Saengerbund of Buffalo N.Y., May 1887,” 5.

A popular art-form had thus been adopted by the local bourgeoisie.¹⁴² Once a celebration of “our Teutonic cousins”, the *Sängerfest* had become a cultural event for “the wealthy and fashionable people of Buffalo,” as the *Buffalo Times* observed.¹⁴³ The admission charges certainly conspired to keep the audience exclusive. Unlike the *Arbeiter-Sängerfest* where 35 cents had bought entrance to the concert hall, visitors at the singers’ festival had to pay one to three dollars for a seat in the armory.¹⁴⁴ As a result, attendance figures at the concerts lagged behind expectations. In a hall fitted to seat 12,000 persons, only 8,000 were present at the opening concert.¹⁴⁵ To make matters even worse, the hall’s spacious dimensions made an audience of 8,000 look “like a paltry gathering of a few hundred.”¹⁴⁶

While Buffalo’s upper and middle classes attended the musical offerings in the armory, *Sängerfest* visitors from afar headed to the Pan-American Exposition. Much as the managers of the singers’ festival had hoped, the onset of the festival marked “a glorious time for the Exposition.”¹⁴⁷ Gone were the days of poor attendance. “Visiting members of the National Saengerfest owned the Exposition yesterday,” reported the *Buffalo Review*. “Everywhere their badges and emblems were in evidence and German melodies could be heard in every corner of the grounds.”¹⁴⁸ The main attraction was, of course, “Alt-Nürnberg on the Mall”, as it was advertised in the official programme of the *Fest*. A recreation of Nürnberg’s medieval cityscape – including market squares, half-timbered houses, and German taverns – it featured daily concerts, Bavarian folk dances, and German import beer on tap.

¹⁴² For making this connection, I am indebted to Kammen, *American Culture, American Taste*, 35.

¹⁴³ *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, July 24, 1860, 2; *Buffalo Times*, June 26, 1901, 5.

¹⁴⁴ *Buffalo Freie Presse*, June 22, 1901 and July 1, 1901.

¹⁴⁵ *Buffalo Times*, June 26, 1901, 5.

¹⁴⁶ *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, June 26, 1901, 10. See also *ibid.*: “There were over 2,000 persons in the balcony, and yet anyone on the floor, in forming an estimate of the attendance, might easily have overlooked them, so far away and infinitesimal did they seem to be.”

¹⁴⁷ *Buffalo Review*, June 25, 1901, 6.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, June 26, 1901, 6.

Illustration 20: "Alt-Nürnberg on the Mall", Buffalo, 1901

Alt-Nürnberg ON THE MALL

Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo, N. Y. e e e e e

Genaue Wiedergabe eines Theiles der alten deutschen Reichsstadt.



Tägliche Concerte der Königl. bayerischen Infanterie Kapelle, 18 Mann, unter Leitung des Königl. Musikmeisters, Jakob Peuppus, sowie der „Königl. oberbayerischen Sänger und Schuhplattler-Gesellschaft“ (10 Personen).

Gebhard's Astronomische Uhr. Das größte mechanische Wunder der Jetztzeit, 12 Fuß hoch und 12 Fuß breit. Dreißig Jahre zur Fabrication benöthigt.

Frl. Amalie Scholle's Stereoptische Darstellung der Gemälde deutscher Künstler.

Güchow's (New York) Deutsches Restaurant. . .
Civile Preise. Gute Bedienung.
Alleiniger Ausshank von importirtem Bier in der Ausstellung.

Nur ein Eintritt zu allen Attraktionen: 25 Cents.

Source: *Official Book. Thirtieth Sängerfest of the North-American Sängerbund, held in Buffalo, June 24, 25, 26 and 27, 1901* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Sängerfest Company, 1901), 130.

It was here that singers congregated after the concerts. It was here, too, that *Sängerfest* visitors could be found who preferred the old world charm of the “ancient German village” to the stilted atmosphere in the armory.¹⁴⁹ The repercussions for the singers’ festival were severe. “The exposition did not help, it hurt the festival,” wrote the *New York Daily Tribune*. “The city’s

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, June 27, 1901, 6; *Buffalo Freie Presse*, June 26, 1901 and June 27, 1901.

visitors ignored the concert, as they did all the others and the audience like that of to-night and yesterday, was composed overwhelmingly of Buffalonians.”¹⁵⁰ A site of commercialized amusement had diverted attention from “the greatest singing festival of modern times.”¹⁵¹ Confronted with the choice of listening to a mass chorus of 3,500 voices, “representing 108 societies of 40 American cities,” or strolling through the portals of ‘Alt-Nürnberg’, the majority of visitors chose to do the latter.¹⁵²

At the 1901 Buffalo *Sängerfest*, organized amusement took the place of spontaneous sociability. No longer did the festival present “a time out of time” that saw workers suspending their daily routines for a whirlwind of festivity.¹⁵³ No singers’ parade wound down the streets of Buffalo. No decorations adorned the houses in honour of the *Fest*. Even the social round of banquets, parties, and picnics had been abandoned in favour of a ‘people’s festival’, organized by the Pan-American Exhibition.¹⁵⁴ In a stadium filled to capacity, singers were treated to marching “Indians”, dancing dervishes, magicians, lions, and swordplay. Except for a brief performance of Bavarian folk singers, this cultural potpourri was devoid of any references to ‘German’ mirth and music.¹⁵⁵

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the *Sängerfest* had succumbed to a culture of consumption. The “people’s festival” at the stadium was stripped of any ethnic signifier.¹⁵⁶ The oasis of ‘refined culture’ at the armory, in turn, redefined music from a participatory and inter-

¹⁵⁰ New York *Daily Tribune*, June 27, 1901, 7. See also Buffalo *Volksfreund*, June 28, 1901, 8.

¹⁵¹ Buffalo *Enquirer*, June 4, 1901, 1.

¹⁵² Buffalo *Times*, June 26, 1901, 5.

¹⁵³ Alessandro Falassi ed., *Time out of Time: Essays on the Festival* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987). As many observers noted, the audience at afternoon concerts consisted primarily of women and children – an indication, perhaps, that work schedules in the age of corporate capitalism could be less easily accommodated to local festivities. See Buffalo *Express*, June 26, 1901.

¹⁵⁴ Buffalo *Freie Presse*, July 1, 1901.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, June 28, 1901.

¹⁵⁶ Conzen, “Ethnicity as Festive Culture,” 74.

active practice to a passive and receptive one.¹⁵⁷ German popular culture, in other words, had dissolved into 'high culture' and 'mass culture' respectively, infusing both with a German flavour.

Evidently, we have to guard against the temptation of romanticizing the 'authentic' German singers' festivals that, we may safely assume, existed only in the realm of imagination. But if we conceptualize culture in a Geertzian sense, as Kathleen Neils Conzen has suggested, namely "as the publicly constructed meanings in and through which that life is lived," we may avoid the pitfall of lamenting the 'loss' of migrant cultures that were seemingly devoured by the American melting pot.¹⁵⁸ As the story of the Buffalo *Sängerfeste* illustrates, meanings of German identity resided not in a presumably 'static' culture, but in the processes of interaction and exchange that wove changes into both 'sidestream' and 'mainstream' cultures.¹⁵⁹

Ironically, at a time when even sympathetic observers began to question the rationale of the singers' festivals whose mass choruses, they held, no longer suited the musical sensibility of the day, the programme of the *Sängerfest* was as 'German' as never before.¹⁶⁰ While still featuring works by Bruch, Mozart, Schumann, Wagner and Weber, the bulk of the programme consisted of German folk songs that were celebrated as a "mirror of the people's soul."¹⁶¹ New, too, was the vehemence with which some commentators denounced the "foreign" parts of the

¹⁵⁷ See Michael Kammen's persuasive definitions of 'popular culture' and 'mass culture' in Kammen, *American Culture, American Taste*, 22.

¹⁵⁸ Kathleen Neils Conzen, "Mainstream and Side Channels: The Localization of Immigrant Cultures," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 11, 1 (Fall 1991), 12 and Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in Clifford Geertz ed., *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 1-30.

¹⁵⁹ Conzen, "Mainstream and Sidestream Channels," 15-17.

¹⁶⁰ As the Buffalo *Freie Presse* suggested, in terms of artistic merits, smaller festivals were far superior to the mass gatherings of the *North American Sängerbund*. The Buffalo *Volksfreund*, as well, found the mass chorus's performance wanting. The time for rehearsals had been insufficient, it argued. See Buffalo *Freie Presse*, June 27, 1901; Buffalo *Volksfreund*, June 26, 1901, 8 and June 28, 1901, 8.

¹⁶¹ Evansville *Demokrat*, as quoted in the Buffalo *Volksfreund*, June 27, 1901, 4. Among the folk songs performed at the Buffalo *Sängerfest* were: "Abschied hat der Tag genommen", "Lied eines fahrenden Gesellen", "Hänsel und Gretel", and "Horch die alten Eichen rauschen."

programme; the overture 'Mignon' by the French composer Ambroise Thomas, for instance, or the compositions by Tschaikowsky and Leoncavallo.¹⁶² These musical selections, they suggested, had no place at a German festival whose singers proudly celebrated their "Germanic" roots.¹⁶³

The rhetorical attempt to confine folk music to a cultural island where it would remain 'pure' and 'true' did not correspond to the cultural exchanges across ethnic boundaries which we have observed.¹⁶⁴ Far from being a 'static' cultural heritage, music proved eminently adaptable to life in the New World. As Philip V. Bohlman has said so memorably, "music withstood the pressures of immigration because it responded with change and all the while continued to sound German."¹⁶⁵ At the *Sängerfest* of 1901, the sound of German music was reminiscent of the tunes that had floated through Buffalo's streets in 1860. What had changed irrevocably were the meanings which this music carried. Ostensibly a symbol of 'folk' culture, music had become a vehicle of modernity. It served the entrepreneurial motives of *Sängerfest* managers who enlisted the festival for the cause of boosterism. It brought together 'German' and 'American' middle and upper classes in the shared enjoyment of musical events. And it broadened the boundaries of public culture, deftly intertwining its fortunes with the emergent 'high' and 'mass' cultures. Indeed, it had found entrance even into the public school curriculum where it presented not an 'ethnic' subject but a 'national' one. In this, music mirrored the history of the German language which had entered American and Canadian public schools as a 'mother tongue', only to be transformed into a language of modernity.

¹⁶² *Philadelphia Gazette*, as quoted in the *Buffalo Volksfreund*, June 27, 1901, 8.

¹⁶³ See the speech by Charles A. Wenborn, chairman of the reception committee, as quoted in the *Buffalo Freie Presse*, June 25, 1901.

¹⁶⁴ Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*, 58.

¹⁶⁵ Philip V. Bohlman, " 'Still, They Were All Germans in Town': Music in the Multi-Religious German-American Community," in Eberhard Reichmann, La Vern J. Rippley, Joerg Nagler eds., *Emigration and Settlement Patterns of German Communities in North America* (Indianapolis: Indiana University-Purdue University Press, 1995), 276.

Part III

Teaching the Nation

Chapter VI

State, Community, and the Classroom, Waterloo County, 1850-1883

The mid-nineteenth century was a period of state-building.¹ New government institutions came to appropriate and regulate functions that had formerly been “carried out communally” in the hamlets, villages, and towns of Upper Canada.² What made the growth of state agencies so remarkable, the historical sociologist Bruce Curtis asserts, was the “transformation in the scope and nature of governmental activity”.³ In the field of educational reform, the 1840s witnessed a centralization of knowledge in the form of state curricula that replaced locally defined courses of study.⁴ Administration was being bureaucratized by creating provincial institutions such as the superintendency of common schools and a corps of educational inspectors who “were to inspect all schools at least annually, and to report a detailed and specified body of intelligence to the Chief Superintendent”.⁵ The task of teaching, finally, was being professionalized by instituting teaching certificates and founding a provincial teacher-training institution, the Toronto Normal School.⁶

In portraying the history of education as the history of politics, Bruce Curtis has reminded us of the centrality of the question of power. Previous chapters of this study – in re-visiting the exuberant celebrations of German language, culture, and ‘nationality’ – may have, inadvertently, minimized the role of the state. They have highlighted the social space between government and

¹ Bruce Curtis, “Preconditions of the Canadian State: Educational Reform and the Construction of a Public in Upper Canada, 1837-1846,” *Studies in Political Economy*, 10 (Winter 1983), 103.

² *Ibid.*, 113.

³ Bruce Curtis, “Class, Culture and Administration: Educational Inspection in Canada West,” in Allan Greer and Ian Radforth eds., *Colonial Leviathan: State Formation in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 104.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 105 and Susan E. Houston and Alison Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 112.

⁵ Bruce Curtis, “Representation and State Formation in the Canadas, 1790-1850,” *Studies in Political Economy*, 28 (Spring 1989), 77 and Houston and Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars*, 108.

⁶ Houston and Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars*, 119.

civic society – the realm of “discourse, demonstration, and contention” – while paying scant attention to “public decisions and public policies”.⁷ To guard against a primacy of culture over politics, the following chapters will examine the interplay of ethnicity and the public not in streets and market squares, but in a public institution: the elementary school.

In Ontario, the central figure in ‘building the educational state’ was Reverend Egerton Ryerson, the Chief Superintendent of Common Schools between 1844 and 1876.⁸ According to Ryerson, the public school system represented a ‘sphere above politics’.⁹ Schools, he implied, did not simply provide a place where members of all social classes did meet and mingle; rather, schools sought to construct a public which would “internalize the assumptions and expectations of the emerging Canadian state”.¹⁰ Ryerson thus envisaged schools as “places purged of the conflicts, struggles and stresses of civil society,” as Bruce Curtis has put it. “In the ‘republic of letters’ the poor and rich man would be social equals. Schooling would create a real commonality on a national scale.”¹¹

In representing schools as ‘pure state spaces’, Ryerson was not alone.¹² In Great Britain, France, and Germany, as well, schools came to be regarded as “the secular church,” as historian Andy Green has said so memorably. Schools were called upon, alternately, to “assimilate immigrant cultures,” “spread the standard form of the appointed national language,” and “forge a national identity and a national culture.”¹³ Conceived as instruments of *unity*, the

⁷ Mary P. Ryan, *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City during the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 8 and 16-7.

⁸ Bruce Curtis, *Building the Educational State: Canada West, 1836-1871* (London, Ontario: Althouse Press, 1988) and Alison Prentice, *The School Promoters: Education and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Upper Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), 13.

⁹ As quoted in Curtis, “Preconditions of the Canadian State,” 115.

¹⁰ Chad Gaffield, “Back to Schools: Towards a New Agenda for the History of Education,” *Acadiensis* (Spring 1986), 174.

¹¹ Curtis, “Preconditions of the Canadian State,” 114.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Andy Green, “Education and State Formation Revisited,” *Historical Studies in Education/Revue d’histoire de l’éducation*, 23, 3 (1994), 10. In this context see, for example,

question inevitably arose how much *diversity* public institutions could, and should, allow. More specifically, was German-language instruction to become part of the public school curriculum?

Before turning to the history of German-language schooling in a Canadian context, it is necessary to probe Ryerson's conception of schools as social spaces of equality and classlessness. Exponents of the social control thesis have long held that mid-nineteenth-century "school promoters" were motivated not so much by "democratic and humanitarian impulses," but the desire to better the population, promote social harmony, and create a compliant citizenry. As 'respectable', middle-class, and deeply religious men, school reformers sought to mould the population in their image, thus revealing pervasive "social and political biases", as historian Alison Prentice has argued.¹⁴ More recently, Bruce Curtis has suggested that, instead of coercing the population to partake in the project of state-building, the dominant classes subtly enlisted its support. Through an elaborate system of inspection, he argues, they made their educational blueprint appear "normal and proper" and "forestalled alternative visions" by closely monitoring local practice. State intervention, in other words, took the form of hegemony, not social control.¹⁵

It is a third interpretative approach that has shaped the argument of this chapter, namely the concept of interaction between state authorities and local ratepayers, parents, teachers, and trustees.¹⁶ As D. A. Lawr and R. D. Gidney have persuasively argued, "[l]ocal people had ... a

L. Harp, *Learning to be Loyal: Primary Schooling as Nation Building in Alsace and Lorraine, 1850-1914* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998).

¹⁴ Prentice, *The School Promoters*, 14, 170-84. In this context, see also Paul Axelrod, "Historical Writing and Canadian Education from the 1970s to the 1990s," *History of Education Quarterly*, 36, 1 (Spring 1996), 19-38.

¹⁵ Curtis, "Class, Culture and Administration," 110, 113, 120 and Curtis, *True Government by Choice Men?: Inspection, Education, and State Formation in Canada West* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 7-11, 124-5, 143, 176, and 193-5. For a succinct discussion of the concept of hegemony see Geoff Eley, "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century," in Craig Calhoun ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: MIT Press, 1994 [1992]), 319-25.

¹⁶ See, in particular, R.D. Gidney and D.A. Lawr, "Bureaucracy vs. Community?: The Origins of Bureaucratic Procedure in the Upper Canadian School System," 438-57 and Chad Gaffield,

degree of independence or semi-autonomy which enabled them to challenge central policy in significant ways, shape it to their own ends, and play an active role in making the kind of system that had emerged by the late nineteenth century.”¹⁷ In Waterloo County, as we shall see, state authorities and community leaders were united in their efforts to offer “good, practical education” to all school children.¹⁸ Although Thomas Pearce, the County School Inspector, seemed, at times, baffled by the strong attachment of German-origin residents to their mother tongue, he never questioned the intrinsic value of bilingual education and even enrolled his daughter Harrie in Berlin’s German-language programme.¹⁹ German spokespersons, in turn, lobbied for the rights of German-language schooling with an eloquence, energy, and confidence that belies any attempts to cast them as representatives of a “passive rural society”, held hostage to the manipulative efforts of state agencies.²⁰ They had an agenda of their own which they deftly sought to incorporate into the expanding public school system.

Language, Schooling, and Cultural Conflict: The Origins of the French-Language Controversy in Ontario (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1987).

¹⁷ D. A. Lawr and R. D. Gidney, “Who Ran the Schools?: Local Influence on Education Policy in Nineteenth-century Ontario,” *Ontario History*, 72, 3 (September 1980), 132.

¹⁸ Thomas Pearce, “School History, Waterloo County and Berlin,” *Waterloo Historical Society*, 2 (1914), 35. For widespread public support for schooling – for reasons that were not always identical with ‘official’ purposes of school policies – see Houston and Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars*, 203-14 and David B. Tyack, “The Spread of Public Schooling in Victorian America: In Search of a Reinterpretation,” *History of Education*, 7, 3 (1978), 175.

¹⁹ *Berliner Journal* [hereafter *BJ*], May 6, 1880, 2; *BJ*, June 3, 1884, 4; *Canadian Manuscript Census*, 1901.

²⁰ In fact, as Chad Gaffield has noted, Curtis’s account of class hegemony and state formation includes many “examples of popular resistance” that bear “testimony to the vitality of rural society.” Gaffield, “Children, Schooling, and Family Reproduction in Nineteenth-Century Ontario,” *Canadian Historical Review*, 72, 2 (1991), 178.

German-language Schooling in Waterloo County, 1850-1871

In the first half of the nineteenth century, schooling in Waterloo County was an informal affair, governed by the needs of the family economy and the availability of teachers.²¹ As Inspector Thomas Pearce would later recall, early schools “were kept in private houses, meetinghouses, abandoned dwellings, unused shops or under any available and convenient shelter ... In the 1820s and 1830s an occasional log schoolhouse was built and paid for by private subscription.”²² In a county of farmers and artisans, the length of the school year was determined by the seasons; schools tended to open for two months in the summer and four months in the fall and winter.²³ The teachers were mostly “mechanics who during the winter months would engage to teach and as soon as their trade was again to be had they quit teaching, or keeping school,” Otto Klotz noted in his meticulous chronicle of local schooling.²⁴ Their education was often haphazard and their teaching restricted to “very elementary reading, writing & arithmetic”; instruction in geography or grammar was virtually unknown.²⁵ To be sure, Otto Klotz admits, “the salary usually paid in rural sections was so low that it was no inducement to a person to fully qualify himself to be a teacher for a term of years.”²⁶ A teacher customarily earned \$ 10 to \$ 12 per month, while receiving board and lodging for free.²⁷

In 1841, the first Common School Act introduced a modicum of regulation into local structures of schooling. Elected township commissioners, who replaced the local school trustees,

²¹ In this, Waterloo County’s patterns of schooling resembled province-wide trends. See Houston and Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars*, 8-32.

²² Pearce, “School History, Waterloo County and Berlin,” 33.

²³ *Kitchener Public Library – Grace Schmidt Room of Local History* [hereafter KPL], “Waterloo Historical Society” [hereafter WHS], Manuscript Collection 53, “Rev. A. B. Sherk,” 25.

²⁴ *National Archives of Canada*, MG 30, B 13, vol. 9, “Statistics and history of the Preston School compiled and written by Otto Klotz for the use of his family,” 58 (hereafter Klotz, “School History”), 58.

²⁵ KPL, WHS, Manuscript Collection 53, “Rev. A. B. Sherk,” 23-4 and KPL, WHS, Manuscript Collection 71, “Isaac Moyer, Biography and Reminiscence, January 1st, 1915,” 11-3.

²⁶ Klotz, “School History,” 58.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

were charged with building schools, setting school rates, devising courses of study, and examining and hiring teachers.²⁸ Yet if the intention of the act had been to standardize the administration of Upper Canadian Schools, a lack of experience soon subverted this goal. In Waterloo County, Otto Klotz wrote, “there not being a regular and established uniform system of examinations, each of the Township Commissioners adopted its own mode of examining candidates for the office of teacher, and since many of those Commissioners themselves possessed a very limited education, it could not be expected that they were good examiners.”²⁹ In the province at large, the act led to “chaos rather than orderly change” for it provided little guidance on how to carry out the provisions that were, in themselves, often confusing. The widespread local dissatisfaction found vivid expression in letters to the Chief Superintendent of Education in which farmers, artisans, professionals, and merchants complained that the burden of overseeing “all the schools in a township was an impossible one.”³⁰ It would take a wave of successive school acts, and a decade of experimentation and adjustment, until Egerton Ryerson succeeded in striking a balance that satisfied both his desire to centralize authority in the Department of Public Instruction in Toronto and calls for more local autonomy.

The landmark law of 1850 re-instituted locally elected board of trustees who were responsible for managing the day-to-day school affairs in their school sections. The office of district superintendent, a much-maligned feature of the 1846 Common School Act, was abolished in favour of locally appointed township superintendents. Each local superintendent was granted a seat on the County Board of Examiners that certified teachers at the semi-annual examinations.³¹ It is from the reports of these local superintendents, as well as scattered school records and rare memoirs, that a picture of German-language schooling in Waterloo County emerges.

²⁸ Houston and Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars*, 108.

²⁹ Klotz, “School History,” 58.

³⁰ Houston and Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars*, 110-1.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 130-1.

The reports testified to the predominance of German-origin migrants in the county's social, educational, and political affairs. As the local charter group that made up the majority of the county's population, German settlers tended to establish German schools, as the superintendent for Wilmot Township, John Finlayson, reported in 1851: "A large proportion of the inhabitants of Wilmot are Germans, and more than half of the schools are so exclusively, – where German only is taught, these schools are very inferior in every respect. The books used are the German New Testament, a Roman Catholic catechism, and a Bible history."³² Other superintendents, similarly, mentioned the peculiar burden under which teachers in Waterloo County laboured. "An English teacher who is not acquainted with the German language," superintendent Martin Rudolph wrote in 1854, "will meet here with a great many difficulties; as most of our children speak the German language in their families, and he is not able to make familiar explanations to them."³³ Indeed, in subverting widespread notions that assimilation meant 'Canadianization', in Waterloo County, it was the *English-speaking* newcomers who had to adapt to the local mainstream. "[T]he talking or explaining ... was all done in German, So we were kept Pennsylvania [sic] Dutch," Isaac Moyer recalled of his early schooldays. "If an English family moved in, there [sic] children soon learn [sic] to speak our language."³⁴ But even in this 'Germanized' local world, as we will see, the English language began to gain prominence.

The gradual, and often uneven, shift to English as the language of instruction was instigated by German settlers themselves. "Surely," the historian David A. Gerber has speculated, "no more disorienting and potentially humiliating daily situation existed for the immigrant than that involving

³² *Annual Report of the Normal, Model, and Common Schools, in Upper Canada for the Year 1851 ... by the Chief Superintendent of Schools*, 102. As the title of the annual reports varied from year to year, they will hereafter be referred to as *Annual Report*.

³³ *Upper Canada Annual Report for 1854*, 118.

³⁴ KPL, WHS, Manuscript Collection 71, "Isaac Moyer, Biography and Reminiscence, January 1st, 1915," 12. See also the comments by Reverend J. McMechan, Local Superintendent of Education for the Township of Waterloo, as quoted in *Upper Canada Annual Report for 1861*, 186.

the failure to understand the most ordinary interactions involving speech.”³⁵ It is, admittedly, unlikely that the young Isaac Moyer was ridiculed for his uneven English, for German presented the medium of communication, both in his classroom and the local world beyond.³⁶ Still, the young boy was painfully aware that he never acquired facility in the English language. As the eldest child, Isaac’s labour was needed on the family farm and he could attend school only sporadically. Unlike his younger brothers, who grew up to become school teachers, he was “trained to Farm [sic].” And, he added somewhat defiantly, “[I] made a success of it, so that I came out at the end About [sic] as well as the rest. But I do miss very much good common English language.”³⁷

To all accounts, Isaac Moyer’s feelings were shared by many German-origin settlers. As early as in the 1850s, local superintendents noted that:

the Germans in the townships of Waterloo, Wilmot and Wellesley, are becoming alive to the uselessness of teaching German only, in their schools; – so much so, that in some school sections among them, the German is excluded, and all the ordinary branches of a common English education is taught. In other sections, the German language is taught alternately with the English.³⁸

John Finlayson’s observation was echoed in other reports that testified to the settlers’ “desire to be instructed in both languages” or stated, unequivocally, that a “German teacher who teaches the German language only is of very little use, as it would be unwise to educate children in a country without a knowledge of the language of this country.”³⁹ To all accounts, German-origin migrants did not seek to remain an ethnic world apart.

³⁵ David A. Gerber, “‘You See I Speak Wery Well Englisch’: Literacy and the Transformed Self as Reflected in Immigrant Personal Correspondence,” *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 12, 2 (Winter 1993), 61.

³⁶ In this context see also KPL, WHS, Manuscript Collection 53, “Rev. A. B. Sherk,” 31.

³⁷ KPL, WHS, Manuscript Collection 71, “Isaac Moyer, Biography and Reminiscence, January 1st, 1915,” 13.

³⁸ *Upper Canada Annual Report for 1851*, 102.

³⁹ See the remarks by Alexander Allan, Local Superintendent for Waterloo Township, as quoted in *Upper Canada Annual Report for 1852*, 111 and Martin Rudolph, Local Superintendent for Wilmot Township, as quoted in *Upper Canada Annual Report for 1854*, 118.

The skill with which migrants navigated the worlds of both ‘German’ and ‘English’ cultures is captured in the story of Otto Klotz who emigrated from his hometown Kiel (Germany) at the age of twenty in 1837, drawn to the New World out of a sense of adventure, rather than economic necessity. The young man dabbled in agriculture and the brewing business before he built a hotel in Preston, a German settlement in Upper Canada, about which he had learned by word of mouth.⁴⁰ Without delay, he immersed himself in local affairs. In 1838, he was elected trustee of the Preston School Board, an office he held for 54 years. In 1853, he was appointed Local Superintendent and, as such, entitled to a seat on the Board of Examiners for the County of Waterloo.⁴¹

During his tenure as County Examiner which spanned almost two decades, Otto Klotz dispelled any notions that state-building was a process imposed solely from above. Professing “great love and enthusiasm for the cause of education,” Klotz frequently deplored the incompetence of his fellow superintendents who, he alleged, “were not capable of answering one half of the questions required to be answered by Candidates applying only for a third class certificate.”⁴² Even when the School Act of 1871 rendered the office of local superintendents superfluous, Klotz welcomed the innovation. As he wrote in his memoir, a county school inspector “who had served the office of Teacher at Common or Public School for at least five years and who held a first class Provincial Certificate as Teacher” was to be preferred to “incompetent men”.⁴³ This local school supporter, for one, was averse to neither regulation nor professionalization, if only they helped to raise the quality of instruction. At the same time, however, Otto Klotz did not hesitate to tailor provincial regulations to local needs.

⁴⁰ Jesse Edgar Middleton and Fred Landon, *Province of Ontario: A History, 1615-1927, vol. III* (Toronto: Dominion, 1927), 171.

⁴¹ Klotz, “School History,” 54 and 68.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 92, 94 and 58.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 92.

Since the early 1840s, the status of German-born teachers had been somewhat ambiguous. The school acts of 1841 and 1843 had stipulated that teachers had to be British subjects by either birth or naturalization. Yet, as the Chief Superintendent of Education was informed in 1846, to enforce this rule rigidly would mean to deprive the townships of Waterloo, Wilmot, Wellesley and Woolwich of a substantial number of teachers. In heeding local concerns, Egerton Ryerson exempted European-born teachers from the rule, provided they applied for a special teaching license.⁴⁴ In 1851, the Council of Public Instruction that developed educational policies for the Department of Education further sought to clarify language requirements for aspirant teachers. It ruled that “[i]n regard to teachers of French or German, ... a knowledge of French or German Grammar be substituted for a knowledge of English grammar, and that the certificate to the teacher be expressly limited accordingly.”⁴⁵

In the eyes of Otto Klotz, however, this concession was not far-reaching enough. In showing a confidence and creativity with which historians D.A. Lawr and R.D. Gidney have credited many local leaders, Klotz devised German examination papers for all branches of instruction, rather than for grammar alone.⁴⁶ This liberal interpretation of provincial law, he held, would allow for a gradual transition from German to English; for it “was only a matter of time and of short duration when the people would come to the conviction that the teaching of English to their children is of paramount importance and that instead of teaching German exclusively, it should be taught as an auxiliary.”⁴⁷ With only one dissenting voice, the Waterloo County Board of Examiners consented to Klotz’s decision to skirt the letter of the law.⁴⁸ His actions serve as a

⁴⁴ Alan William Junker, “Otto Klotz and the Implementation of Education Policy in Waterloo County, 1846-1871,” M.A. History, Wilfrid Laurier University, 1987, 67-70.

⁴⁵ *Regulations and Correspondence relating to French and German schools in the Province of Ontario* (Toronto: Warwick & Sons, 1889), 1.

⁴⁶ Lawr and Gidney, “Who Ran the Schools,” 132.

⁴⁷ Klotz, “School History,” 94.

⁴⁸ This tacit approval is reflected by the fact that, year after year, the Board asked Otto Klotz “to prepare questions in the German Language for Examination.” See, for instance, KPL, WHS,

reminder that methods of governance could be subverted and adapted to local needs. Even the English-speaking chairman of the Waterloo County Board of Examiners, who vocally opposed the 'German certificates', had to bow to the authority which Klotz quietly wielded among board and community members.⁴⁹

Notwithstanding his personal attachment to the German mother tongue, Klotz embraced English as "the language of this country". He encouraged German-born applicants "to study English, so as to qualify them to obtain a certificate to teach English." Conversely, Canadian-born candidates were encouraged to obtain additional German certificates to "be able to command higher salary." "A number of them followed my advise," the ageing Otto Klotz wrote in his school chronicle, "and it was pleasant to note that after a lapse of some years there was quite a number of Germans who had obtained certificates in English and could teach both languages."⁵⁰

The cultural duality, which Otto Klotz envisaged for the county as a whole, had long become embedded in the structures of schooling in his local Preston. Schools where only German was taught "belonged to the past," Klotz declared. As early as in 1852, the Preston public school had established English as the language of instruction.⁵¹ This, however, did not prevent the trustees from lavishing time, care, and energy on German as a special branch of education. As the minute books of the Preston Public School Board reveal, many a meeting was devoted to finding competent candidates, expanding the hours of German-language instruction, selecting appropriate German readers, and even making German lessons mandatory for all pupils.⁵² In the neighbouring

WAT C-87, "Records of the Board of Examiners for Waterloo County. Berlin: s.n., 1853-1908," June 27, 1865.

⁴⁹ See the comments by Rev. J. McMechan, Local Superintendent of Waterloo Township, quoted in *Upper Canadian Annual Report for 1861*, 186.

⁵⁰ Klotz, "School History," 96.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* See also *City of Cambridge Archives*, "Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the Preston School, January 3, 1852 to January 5, 1853".

⁵² *City of Cambridge Archives*, "Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the Preston School, August 6, 1858 to August 5, 1863," February 1, 1860 and January 6, 1861. See also *ibid.*, "Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the Preston School, October 7, 1863 to July 27,

town of Berlin, as well, English presented the language of instruction by the late 1850s.⁵³

Although the school maintained a German-language classroom, where children could study German as an elective subject, enrolment rarely reached one fifth of the school population.⁵⁴ In sum, long before the School Act of 1871 was enacted, Waterloo County's German-origin residents had begun to adopt English as the language of instruction.

The School Act of 1871

One of the more persistent tenets of local historiography has been the assertion that the School Act of 1871 led to the erosion of German-language schooling in Waterloo County. The landmark law did, indeed, enact sweeping changes. It made common schools (now renamed 'public schools') free and school attendance mandatory for all Ontario children between the ages of seven and twelve. Teaching was recognized as a profession, with teachers' examinations becoming standardized and centralized. Where formerly each County Board had prepared its own examination papers and awarded certificates according to its discretion, the new Board of Examiners under the direction of County School Inspectors administered centrally prepared questions simultaneously across the province. Although examination papers for Third- and Second-Class-Certificates continued to be evaluated locally, the Education Department in Toronto reserved the right to decide on the merits of candidates for First-Class-Certificates. In addition, the School Act established a new agency that was to enforce these regulations.

1869," March 16, 1864; May 4, 1864; November 2, 1864; November 30, 1864; December 9, 1864; February 1, 1865; March 3, 1865; December 19, 1865; October 9, 1867; October 21, 1867; August 5, 1868; September 3, 1868.

⁵³ The school board minutes do not reveal when exactly this change occurred. See KPL, WHS, Manuscript Collection 40.1, Box 1: City of Kitchener Collection, "Proceedings and Cash Book, Board of School Trustees, Berlin, 1853-1863."

⁵⁴ Enrolment figures are only estimates, calculated from *BJ*, July 13, 1865, 2 and July 29, 1869, 2. The inner workings of the German-language classroom are described in *ibid.*, July 24, 1862, 2; December 23, 1862, 2; July 23, 1863, 2; January 7, 1864, 2; July 21, 1864, 2; February 2, 1865, 2; July 13, 1865, 2; July 29, 1869, 2.

Professional county school inspectors, appointed by the county council yet responsible to the Department of Public Instruction, replaced the more locally controlled lay superintendents.⁵⁵ Unlike their local predecessors, the new corps of school inspectors had to hold a First Class Provincial Certificate and furnish proof of five years of teaching experience.⁵⁶

In Waterloo County, the widely respected headmaster of Berlin's Central School, Thomas Pearce was appointed county school inspector, a position he held for 41 years.⁵⁷ A familiar figure in the educational landscape of Waterloo County, schoolchildren like M. G. Sherk watched "in awe" when they saw him "arriving and tying his horse near the gate ... for he was very dignified looking. We found, however, unless we deserved it, we had nothing to fear, for he was a very kindly disposed man. I think perhaps the teacher feared him as much as we did."⁵⁸ Indeed, teachers might have noted Pearce's arrival with much apprehension as the school inspector was not one to mince words. Generous in his praise where he perceived "splendid ability", and acutely aware of intolerable overcrowding that, at times, made it impossible for him to offer a fair assessment of a teacher's merits, he refused to issue teaching permits to instructors he deemed unfit.⁵⁹ The trustees, in turn, were publicly admonished for employing "cheap incompetent

⁵⁵ "Circular from the Chief Superintendent to the Inspectors of Public Schools in Ontario, 1871," in J. George Hodgins ed., *Documentary History of Education in Upper Canada, vol. III: 1836-40* (Toronto: Warwick Bros. & Rutter, 1895), 135-140; "Qualifications of Public School Inspectors and County Examiners," *Journal of Education, Province of Ontario*, 24, 2 (February 1871), 22; "Programme for the Examination and Classification of Teachers of the Public Schools in the Province of Ontario," *Journal of Education, Province of Ontario*, 24, 2 (February 1871), 22-3; "Ontario Teachers' Association," *Journal of Education, Province of Ontario*, 24, 9 (September 1871), 129-30.

⁵⁶ "Circular from the Chief Superintendent to the Inspectors of Public Schools in Ontario, 1871," 135; "Qualifications of Public School Inspectors and County Examiners," 22.

⁵⁷ For praise of Pearce see, for instance, *BJ*, February 2, 1865, 2 and July 13, 1865, 2.

⁵⁸ M. G. Sherk, "Reminiscences of Freeport - Waterloo County from 1867 to 1873," *Waterloo Historical Society*, 12 (1924), 102.

⁵⁹ Pearce, "School History," 46; *City of Cambridge Archives*, "Minute Book of the Board of Trustees of the Preston School, June 13, 1905 to February 6, 1917," November 29, 1907; April 7, 1907; December 10, 1908; *Waterloo County Board of Education* [hereafter WCBE], "Wilmot Township S.S. 2, New Hamburg, School Board Minutes, 1875-1895," December 27, 1879.

teachers”, seating the children on “miserable desks”, tolerating “very dirty” rooms, and “throwing obstacles” in the way of earnest, diligent teachers.⁶⁰

Pearce’s pithy comments illustrated the work involved in making schools conform to official expectations. They also reflected the considerable power which the County School Inspector wielded. But to portray Thomas Pearce as “unsympathetic” towards the German language, or to charge him with strangling German-language instruction, is to misunderstand the complex dynamics of language and identity that would unfold over the following decades.⁶¹

To unravel the web of meanings spun around the history of German-language schooling, this chapter will re-visit the decade following the 1871 School Act from three different vantage points. It will turn its attention to local advocates of German-language instruction who frequently and eloquently appealed to Toronto authorities over the head of the County Inspector Thomas Pearce. It will follow Inspector Pearce on his daily rounds in Waterloo County, reading anew his annual reports and using his statistical data to examine the extent of German-language instruction between 1871 and 1881. And it shall seek to reconstruct the culture of German-language classrooms by probing the experiences of children, teachers, and families.

⁶⁰ KPL, WHS, WAT C-87, “Report on the Public Schools of the County of Waterloo by the County Inspector Thomas Pearce (Waterloo: ‘Chronicle Office’, 1875).” The schools in question were Waterloo Township S.S. 25 (Beringer’s); Wellesley Township, S.S. 7 (Jansis); Wellesley Township, S.S. 5 (Gless’s); Woolwich Township, S.S. 1 (Conestogo).

⁶¹ In pitting Pearce’s allegedly anti-German agenda against the “enthusiasm of the German-speaking settlers for their mother tongue,” historian Patricia McKegney devised a dramatic plot that has since informed numerous local historical studies. See Patricia P. McKegney, “The German Schools of Waterloo County, 1851-1913,” *Waterloo Historical Society*, 58 (1970), 61, 67, 58, and 64; John English and Kenneth McLaughlin, *Kitchener: An Illustrated History* (Scarborough, Ontario: Robin Brass Studio, 1996 [1983]), 50; Elizabeth Bloomfield, *Waterloo Township Through Two Centuries* (Waterloo: St. Jacobs Printery, 1995), 243.

Community

When the County Council prepared to appoint a school inspector in June 1871, the *Berliner Journal* became the platform upon which a vocal campaign for a German-speaking inspector was waged. In a letter to the editor, one reader stated emphatically that Waterloo County, with its German settlements and German schools, needed the services of a school inspector who understood ‘our language’: “To hire a man for our German-English county, capable of speaking English only, would be a slap in the face of the *Deutschthum*.”⁶² In appealing to the “German members of the esteemed council”, the writer lobbied for the appointment of a qualified candidate who possessed an intimate knowledge of both languages. The English council members, by contrast, were addressed in a more scathing manner: “Certainly some of the English gentlemen, who could hardly lavish enough praise and glory upon the German nation at the Peace Jubilee, will now, when electing the future school inspector, demonstrate just how sincerely they have meant their praise.”⁶³ This plea was to the liking of the *Journal* that endorsed the candidacy of John Moran, a man it considered sufficiently qualified to examine students in German language classes, for his knowledge of the language was “quite good”.⁶⁴

Yet notwithstanding the *Journal*’s efforts, the Council appointed Thomas Pearce whose command of German was perfunctory at best. Slightly outnumbered by their anglophone colleagues, the German members of the council might have been frustrated in their effort to elect a German-speaking school inspector. More likely, however, they viewed the choice of county inspector through the prism of professional credentials, not ethnicity. Rather than selecting a

⁶² *BJ*, June 8, 1871, 3: “Die Anstellung eines nur der englischen Sprache mächtigen Mannes für unseres deutsch-englische County wäre geradezu ein Hohn gegen das Deutschthum.”

⁶³ *Ibid.*: “Gewiß werden einige der englischen Herren, die bei dem Friedensfest des Lobes und des Ruhmes der deutschen Nation fast kein Ende finden konnten, es nun auch bei der Wahl des künftigen Schulaufsehers bekunden, wie aufrichtig und treu sie es mit diesem gezollten Lob meinten.”

⁶⁴ *BJ*, June 15, 1871, 2.

German-speaking candidate of unproven abilities, they were willing to entrust the office of school inspector to the Irish principal of Berlin's Central School, a man of experience and prestige who also possessed the necessary qualifications.⁶⁵

Local advocates of German-language schooling proved undeterred. In channelling their concerns into various petitions, they now demanded the appointment of special 'German school inspectors'.⁶⁶ Although the issue eventually dropped from the pages of the *Berliner Journal*, the agitation did not subside. In January 1872, delegates of the German-Canadian Society of Bruce and Grey Counties presented the Chief Superintendent of Education, Egerton Ryerson, with a memorial, asking:

That in the counties of the Province of Ontario, where German-English schools are existing, or may be yet started, the County Council shall appoint a commission or board of professional educators who shall have authority to examine German teachers and grant certificates; it shall also be the duty of one of the members of such board to visit with the County Inspector, or alone, all such schools in which the German language is taught, and he shall have the same power regarding the method of teaching and the general government of such German schools as the County Inspector has.⁶⁷

The delegation, in other words, wanted to make the appointment of German teachers more susceptible to local needs by allowing a locally constituted 'board of professional educators' to examine and certify candidates. They further hoped to curtail the powers of county inspectors by endowing 'German inspectors' with the authority to examine both teachers and students of German language classes. This catalogue of demands, the *Berliner Journal* concurred, was only legitimate and Ryerson's response nothing but encouraging. The Chief Superintendent of Education readily conceded that the matter of German schools had been overlooked by the

⁶⁵ Regional Municipality of Waterloo (Kitchener), *Journal of the Proceedings and By-Laws of the Municipal Council of the County of Waterloo*, 1870 and 1872.

⁶⁶ *BJ*, June 29, 1871, 2.

⁶⁷ "Memorial, received at the Department of Public Instruction on January 29, 1872," in *Regulations and Correspondence*, 10.

Council of Public Instruction and pledged his support.⁶⁸ In February 1872, he led the Council in amending the School Act, adding a paragraph that provided for German or French examiners at the semi-annual teachers' examinations.⁶⁹

Only three months later, Egerton Ryerson received yet another petition, signed by "certain German-speaking inhabitants of the County of Waterloo," who asked for the appointment of an "Inspector of the German departments of all Public Schools in the Province of Ontario."⁷⁰

Ryerson's lengthy reply is revealing for his comments on 'German' schools which, he asserted in passing, were almost indistinguishable from 'English' ones:

According to the memorial in question there are only about eighty schools in which German is the native language of any considerable number of the pupils; and these schools are chiefly situated in six counties, but in all these schools English is taught and the teacher is required to have a certificate of qualification to teach the ordinary subjects of Public School education.⁷¹

Having already provided for the examination of German teachers, the Chief Superintendent of Education could identify only one remaining blind spot in the School Act, namely "the examination of pupils in German." The appointment of German examiners by the county council, Ryerson felt, would "gratify the German inhabitants at the same time that it will not create such an appointment in any county in which the county councils shall not deem it expedient." As to the availability of qualified candidates, he assured the provincial secretary that he had met or corresponded with numerous "accomplished scholars and gentlemen" of German settlements who were "fully competent to examine the pupils in German and judge of the efficiency of the teaching

⁶⁸ *BJ*, July 27, 1871, 2.

⁶⁹ "Meeting of the Council of Public Instruction, February 9, 1872," in *Regulations and Correspondence*, 12.

⁷⁰ *BJ*, April 4, 1872, 2; "Letter by Egerton Ryerson to Messrs Otto Klotz and others, Berlin, May 3, 1872," in *Regulations and Correspondence*, 9; "Letter by Egerton Ryerson to Peter Gow, Provincial Secretary, May 6, 1872," in *Regulations and Correspondence*, 9.

⁷¹ "Letter by Egerton Ryerson to Peter Gow, Provincial Secretary, May 30, 1872," in *ibid.*, 10-11.

in German.”⁷² No such clause was ever enacted. Still, Ryerson’s response bore testimony to the favourable image of German spokespersons. Equally important, in the personal contacts between the chief superintendent of education and German ethnic leaders, communication channels were established that continued to be skilfully used by local leaders.

If the campaign for German school inspectors occupied German-language advocates in the early 1870s, later years witnessed growing concerns about the scarcity of German teachers. As the *Berliner Journal* reported in 1873, even in predominantly German school sections, ‘English’ teachers were replacing ‘German’ ones at a bewildering rate, “for the simple reason that no Germans could be found”.⁷³ By standardizing the certification of teachers across the province, the editors of German-language papers charged, the School Act of 1871 had erected an almost insurmountable hurdle for immigrant pedagogues. According to J. H. Schmidt, editor of the *Stratford Kolonist*, “only few teachers who have immigrated from Germany are capable of passing the difficult English exam; most had to leave the country or find work in other professions.”⁷⁴

It is true that the County Board of Examiners, under the presidency of inspector Pearce, took seriously its duty to award teaching certificates only to qualified candidates. The rejection rates for applicants for third-class teaching certificates – the lowest form of certificates – were staggering. Only in 1872 did the board pass 85 per cent of the applicants. In later years, rejection rates ranged from 55 to 100 per cent, a ratio that must have seemed daunting in the eyes of Canadian-born and foreign-born candidates alike.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *BJ*, May 8, 1873, 2: “aus der einfachen Ursache, weil keine deutsche zu bekommen waren”; “Eingewanderte Lehrer können in den meisten Fällen nicht angestellt werden, da sie der englischen Sprache nicht mächtig genug sind, um auch darin Unterricht ertheilen zu können.”

⁷⁴ Quoted in the *BJ*, January 4, 1877, 2: “Von Deutschland eingewanderte Lehrer, die fähig sind, das schwierig gemachte englische Examen zu bestehen, gibt es nur noch sehr wenige in Ontario; die meisten haben sich genötigt gesehen, das Land zu verlassen, oder andere Erwerbszweige zu ergreifen.”

Table 2: Success Rates of Candidates for Third-Class Teaching Certificates, Waterloo County, 1872-1880

Date	Successful Applicants		Unsuccessful Applicants		Total
	N	%	N	%	
July 1872	27	79	7	21	34
Dec. 1872	24	92	2	8	26
July 1873	9	24	29	76	38
Dec. 1873	9	37	15	63	24
July 1874	15	43	20	57	35
July 1875	33	45	41	55	74
July 1876	20	31	45	69	65
July 1877	7	16	37	84	44
July 1878	5	20	20	80	25
July 1880	0	0	18	100	18

Source: KPL, WHS, WAT C-87, "Record of Board of Examiners for Waterloo County."

Still, the letter of the law proved flexible enough to provide for the granting of special 'German' teaching permits, thus offering a loophole for German candidates. In appealing to local sensibilities in Waterloo County, the chief superintendent of education, Egerton Ryerson, had suggested that German-speaking candidates be allowed "to prepare their answers in German."⁷⁵ "I assume they can all read English," Ryerson wrote, "and the ordinary examination papers can be used by them, ... except in reading, spelling, etymology and grammar, in which some members of your Board might prepare examination papers." These special certificates, Ryerson further specified, would qualify candidates "for teaching schools in the German language" while excluding them from "English schools."⁷⁶ Ever the attentive civil servant, Thomas Pearce and the Board of Examiners issued eight third-class 'German' certificates between November 1871 and December

⁷⁵ "Letter by Egerton Ryerson to Thomas Pearce, November 15, 1871," in *Regulations and Correspondence*, 8. See also "Council of Public Instruction, November 13, 1871," in *ibid.*, 11-12; "Letter by Thomas Hilliard, Secretary of the Board of Examiners, Waterloo County, to J. G. Hodgins, Deputy Superintendent of Education, November 13, 1871," in *ibid.*, 9; "Letter by Egerton Ryerson to Thomas Hilliard, November 21, 1871," in *ibid.*, 9; *BJ*, February 8, 1872, 2.

⁷⁶ "Letter by Egerton Ryerson to Thomas Pearce, November 15, 1871," in *Regulations and Correspondence*, 8.

1872. Thereafter, however, German teaching permits faded into oblivion, with not a single one granted in the remainder of the decade.⁷⁷

German certificates, it appears, never succeeded in shedding their image of inferiority. Immigrant pedagogue Louis von Neubronn, for one, regarded his German permit but as a stepping stone to a 'regular' certificate which he eventually received in July 1875.⁷⁸ Even more important, monolingual teachers found their field of work severely limited. Only at the German Departments of Berlin and New Hamburg could they hope to carve out a professional niche that promised long-term security. Rural schools, by contrast, sought to hire bilingual teachers, capable of teaching German in addition to the regular English-language curriculum.

As a look at the advertizing columns of the *Berliner Journal* reveals, the demand for bilingual teachers was as much a local requirement as it was a provincial one. Throughout the 1860s, only one job advertisement in the *Journal* was addressed to 'German' candidates, while the remaining twenty-three were directed at bilingual applicants.⁷⁹ Similarly, in the 1870s, local school trustees solicited applications from bilingual candidates in seventy-five per cent of all cases.⁸⁰ With English being the standard and German a welcome extra, no financial rewards awaited teachers willing to assume the burden of bilingual instruction.⁸¹ Not surprisingly, by the mid-1870s, teachers

⁷⁷ The same held true for candidate Oscar Brückner. See KPL, WHS, WAT C-87, "Record of Board of Examiners for Waterloo County," November 1871, July 1872, and December 1872.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, July 1875.

⁷⁹ For job advertisements directed at bilingual teachers see *BJ*, Nov. 15, 1860, 3; Nov. 22, 1860, 3; Aug. 29, 1861, 3; Sept. 10, 1863, 3; June 16, 1864, 3; Dec. 22, 1864, 3; Nov. 2, 1865, 3; Nov. 9, 1865, 3; Nov. 8, 1866, 3; March 14, 1867, 4; May 9, 1867, 3; Aug. 15, 1867, 3; Oct. 10, 1867, 3; Oct. 31, 1867, 3; Nov. 21, 1867, 4; July 16, 1868, 3; Oct. 15, 1868, 3; Nov. 19, 1868, 3; March 18, 1869, 3; May 6, 1869, 4; July 8, 1869, 3; Sept. 10, 1869, 3; Nov. 4, 1869, 3. Only the school trustees at New Hamburg's public school advertized for a teacher "for the German department." See *BJ*, March 28, 1867, 3.

⁸⁰ For job advertisement directed at bilingual teachers see *BJ*, Jan. 3, 1871, 3; Aug. 15, 1872, 3; Dec. 5, 1872, 3; Jan. 2, 1873, 3; April 3, 1873, 3; Dec. 18, 1873, 3; July 16, 1874, 3; June 17, 1874, 3; June 22, 1876, 3; Aug. 23, 1877, 2; Nov. 15, 1877, 3; July 3, 1879, 3. Only four advertisements did not specify language requirements. See *BJ*, Oct. 19, 1871, 3; Jan. 18, 1872, 3; Feb. 17, 1876, 3; Oct. 4, 1877, 3.

⁸¹ See *BJ*, December 14, 1876, 2 and January 4, 1877, 2.

saw little incentive to hone their German language skills to a point where they could offer instruction in German reading, writing, translation, and grammar on top of their regular duties.

Interestingly, it was not too much, but too little state intervention that was being held responsible for the shortage of German-language teachers. In 1877, Otto Klotz voiced his concern about the gradual disappearance of the German language from the family circle. "Instead of teaching children the German language and insisting that it alone be spoken in the family circle," he reprimanded parents, "they are prattling in poor English and even proud of it."⁸² Anxious to stem a large-scale shift to the English language, Klotz sought to enlist provincial institutions in the service of German-language schooling. Like John Motz, the editor of the *Berliner Journal*, he called upon the provincial government to establish training facilities for German teachers and provide for the proper inspection of both German teachers and students. In concert with like-minded language activists who convened in January 1877 to discuss prospects of German-language schooling, he urged the newly-appointed Minister of Education to institute a "German School Inspector for the German Schools of the Province." Confronted with the fact that over 90 per cent of county teachers had been born in Canada, the petitioners also deemed it necessary "to grant German-Canadian teachers the opportunity to learn proper German" by hiring German professors at the Toronto Normal School.⁸³

Here, in the passing reference to 'proper German', we are allowed a glimpse of the history of spoken language that so often defies the historian's investigation. To all accounts, the majority of Waterloo County's German-origin settlers continued to use German as the language of home throughout the 1870s. In 1871, for instance, a young Scottish Presbyterian minister who

⁸² *BJ*, January 4, 1877, 2: "Statt ihren [sic] Kindern Deutsch zu lehren und darauf zu dringen, daß im Familienkreise nur Deutsch gesprochen werde, plappern sie ein sehr schlechtes Englisch und bilden sich noch viel darauf ein."

⁸³ *Ibid.* Between July 1872 and July 1880, the Waterloo County Board of Examiners compiled biographical profiles of candidates at the annual teachers' examinations that included, among others, information on birthplace. See KPL, WHS, WAT C-87, "Record of Board of Examiners for Waterloo County."

wandered the streets of Berlin observed that “you heard scarcely anything spoken in the streets but German. It was necessary for anyone living there to speak both languages.”⁸⁴ But the casual conversations in German, often rendered in the Pennsylvanian dialect, were a far cry from the linguistic visions of community leaders who sought to preserve German as a language of culture (*Kultursprache*).⁸⁵ Only a “pure, cultivated language”, Reverend Ludwig wrote in the *Berliner Journal* in December 1876, would present a bulwark of “the German way of life, the German song, and even the German *Gemüthlichkeit* (coziness).” While his fellow-migrants still *spoke* the German mother tongue, Ludwig no longer felt that they *knew* it: “An oral acquaintance of the mother tongue may outlive, for over a century, a real knowledge thereof. But such a way of speaking turns, over time, indescribably ugly.”⁸⁶ Fighting a battle for language purity, these gatekeepers of language sought to enlist the support of the state. The combined efforts of German inspectors and Normal Schools, they hoped, would ensure the ‘proper’ training of German-Canadian teachers and the maintenance of language standards.

When Otto Klotz, John Motz, and J. H. Schmidt presented their claims to the Minister of Education in January 1877, they received much good will – but no concessions. Sympathetically, Adam Crooks listened to the Berlin delegation and assured them that German could be taught at public schools wherever parents and local trustees so desired. However, the Minister did not see the need for hiring German professors at the Normal Schools nor was he willing to appoint a provincial German school inspector, suggesting instead the appointment of German-speaking county inspectors.

⁸⁴ Quoted in W. V. Uttley, *A History of Kitchener* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1985 [1937]), 119-20.

⁸⁵ According to Elizabeth Bloomfield, most families in Waterloo County spoke a dialect, the ‘Pennsylvania German’ “at home and for business and social contacts; it provided a basis for co-operation in some social and political activities.” Bloomfield, *Waterloo Township Through Two Centuries*, 140.

⁸⁶ *BJ*, December 7, 1876, 2: “Das Sprechen der Muttersprache behauptet sich wohl ein Jahrhundert länger als das Kennen derselben. Aber ein solches Sprechen wird auch allmähig [sic] namenslos häßlich.”

In short, while confirming the right to minority-language education, Crooks regarded it as a local responsibility whose success, or failure, would depend on ratepayers and parents.⁸⁷

During Crooks' uneventful tenure, ethnic spokespersons made no further attempts to pursue the cause of German-language schooling. But throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Crooks' words of reassurance would be reiterated at public meetings on language matters, thus becoming part of local lore.⁸⁸ His simple formula that combined provincial protection with local initiative accorded well with the world-view of community leaders which the editors of the *Berliner Journal* astutely described as follows: "it will depend on the Germans themselves – their work and their willingness to make sacrifices – whether or not they will have German schools and German teachers. Those who help themselves will be helped by the government; yet those not interested in cultivating the *Deutschthum* cannot reasonably expect the support of others."⁸⁹ Having failed to persuade educational authorities to support German-language teaching, ethnic spokespersons nonetheless felt reassured that German, as a subject of instruction, was regarded as compatible with the project of mass schooling – by the Minister of Education himself.

State

For Thomas Pearce, the vocal demands for a German-speaking inspector must have presented a powerful reminder that his authority could be challenged at any time. Institutionally speaking, the new corps of school inspectors were "men in the middle," as John Abbott has so aptly described them. "Top men" in the local educational hierarchy, where they oversaw the work of

⁸⁷ *BJ*, January 25, 1877, 2.

⁸⁸ *BJ*, February 12, 1903, 4 and *BJ*, December 20, 1905, 6.

⁸⁹ *BJ*, January 25, 1877, 2: "Es wird jedoch nach wie vor hauptsächlich von der Thätigkeit und Opferwilligkeit der Deutschen selbst abhängen, ob sie deutsche Schulen und deutsche Lehrer haben oder nicht. Wer sich selbst hilft, dem hilft auch die Regierung; wenn man aber selbst nichts für die Erhaltung des Deutschthums thun will, dann darf man auch nicht erwarten, daß Andere etwas dafür thun sollen."

teachers and trustees, they were “low men” in the provincial administrative hierarchy in Toronto where they reported “every detail of the doings and progress of the schools.”⁹⁰ With that office came high expectations. Not only were inspectors asked to advance the public schools “to the highest state of efficiency,” they were also expected to “be men whom teachers and trustees and ratepayers everywhere will look up to with respect, whose counsel will be sought with confidence, whose approbation will be valued, and for whose blame reverence will be felt.”⁹¹ The work of school inspectors, in other words, required a considerable amount of social energy, not the least of which was spent in reaching a consensus for ‘right and reasonable’ standards of schooling.

We know from studies of school inspectors in Canada and the United States that a particular class of men (for there were no female school superintendents in late nineteenth century Canada) was recruited for the “evangelical enterprise” of school promotion.⁹² Middle-aged, middle-class, native-born, white, Protestant, and Anglo-Saxon married men came to oversee a teaching force that was increasingly comprised of young and single women teachers.⁹³ In many ways, Thomas Pearce fit this profile. Having immigrated from Ireland in 1857 at the age of twenty-two, he attended the Normal School in Toronto upon the suggestion of his old teacher “who knew something of his former pupil’s ability and scholarship,” as Pearce proudly recalled.⁹⁴ As for many superintendents in the United States, encouragement and sponsorship by older male

⁹⁰ John Abbott, “Accomplishing ‘a Man’s Task’: Rural Women Teachers, Male Culture, and the School Inspectorate in Turn-of-the-Century Ontario,” *Ontario History*, 78, 4 (December 1986), 313. Pearce, “School History,” 35.

⁹¹ “Ontario Teachers’ Association,” 130.

⁹² David Tyack argued in 1976 that nineteenth century school superintendents conceived of their work as an ‘evangelical enterprise’. See Tyack, “Pilgrim’s Progress: Toward a Social History of the School Superintendency, 1860-1960,” *History of Education Quarterly*, 16, 3 (Fall 1976), 258. See also Bruce Curtis’s assertion that the district superintendents in Canada West in the 1840s “were joined in a common project of ‘improvement’, in which rational religion, useful knowledge, and personal self-discipline were seen as keys to both social order and individual advancement.” Curtis, “Class Culture and Administration,” 118.

⁹³ Tyack, “Pilgrim’s Progress,” 258 and Curtis, *True Government by Choice Men?*, 7.

⁹⁴ Pearce, “School History,” 49. Biographical data on Pearce has been gleaned from the manuscript census of 1901.

administrators and professors played an important role in his career. A few days after receiving his certificate in October 1858, an instructor at the Normal School forwarded his name for the position as first assistant at the Central School in Berlin. With evident pride, Pearce stated that he “was the first Normal trained teacher, not only in Berlin, but for several miles around.”⁹⁵

It was in this overwhelmingly German community that his “occupational socialization” began.⁹⁶ First as a teacher – whom colleague Elizabeth Shoemaker remembered as “a very nice, young man much more sociable than Mr. Strong” – and then as principal (1864-71), Pearce internalized role prescriptions for ‘good’ teaching which he would later spell out to novice teachers:⁹⁷

Teacher’s methods of teaching (individuality highly valued), ability to impart what he knows, his style of questioning, his liking for and earnestness in his work, his energy, his manner to pupils in class and individually, his English, his address and manners, his personal neatness, tidiness of his desk, and his punctuality.⁹⁸

Somewhere along his fourteen years as a teacher, the ‘young, sociable man’ appears to have transformed into the dignified representative of the teaching profession whom M. G. Sherk watched tying his horse at the school gate of Cornell’s Corners. Given the fact that the school inspector worked much in the public eye, it must have enhanced his authority considerably that the community perceived him as respectable and dignified, a guardian of morality and decorum.⁹⁹

Thomas Pearce was keenly aware of the fact that 50 to 75 per cent of all children in Waterloo County – “yes, in some sections, even 100 percent” – made their first attempts to speak English when they entered school. But for the freshly-minted school inspector, rudimentary language skills were just one among many educational challenges. His was a crusade to boost

⁹⁵ Pearce, “School History,” 49.

⁹⁶ Tyack, “Pilgrim’s Progress,” 268.

⁹⁷ KPL, WHS, MC 14.5.a.b.c., Shoemaker Family Collection, “Draft letter, undated, by Elizabeth Shoemaker to her sister ‘Han’.”

⁹⁸ “Twentieth Annual Report of the Inspector of Public Schools of the County of Waterloo, For the Year ending 31st December, 1891”, 15

⁹⁹ Tyack, “Pilgrim’s Progress,” 270 and 273-4.

rates of school attendance, build solid schoolhouses, raise standards of scholarship, and attract highly qualified teachers. As long as German-language instruction did not interfere with these goals, it presented but a curious feature of the local fabric of schooling which Pearce faithfully sought to convey in his annual reports.¹⁰⁰

Throughout Waterloo County, he wrote, teachers laboured under a disadvantage: "Until the pupils become tolerably familiar with the English language, a very great part of the teacher's explanation and instruction is entirely lost."¹⁰¹ As many schools devoted "a considerable portion of each day" to the study of German, they could not be reasonably expected to have as "high a standing in the classes of the programme, as in schools where instruction is given exclusively in English and the whole school-time devoted to the prescribed subjects."¹⁰² Further, much to the inspector's chagrin, German language lessons were taken up already by "very young children", thereby leading "to such confusion of sounds of letters and pronunciation of words in the minds of the little ones as greatly to retard their progress in both languages."¹⁰³ In attributing the low standing of several rural schools to the attempt "to lead children through this bewildering maze," Pearce recommended to reserve German-language instruction exclusively for the higher grades:

Experience teaches that children should not begin German until they have entered the third English Reader, and it will be found that the pupil of ordinary ability who commences German then will, at the end of six or eight months, have caught up with and be fully equal to the pupil who had been plodding away in both languages since he was five or six years old, while in English there will be no comparison – the former being infinitely superior to the latter.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ See, for instance, Pearce's comments on the schools in New Hamburg and Wilmot Centre. Although Pearce listed several educational obstacles, he did not dwell on the fact that both schools offered German-language instruction. KPL, WHS, WAT C-87, "Report on the Public Schools of the County of Waterloo, for the Year 1875, by the County Inspector Thomas Pearce" (Berlin: 'Telegraph' Office, 1876), 6.

¹⁰¹ "Report on the Public Schools of the County of Waterloo by the County Inspector Thomas Pearce, Esq. (for 1872)," 5-6 and 8.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ "Report on the Public Schools of the County of Waterloo, for the Year 1875, by the County Inspector Thomas Pearce," 7.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

But interestingly, the inspector did not seem particularly unsettled by his findings. Given his familiarity with local conditions, it might rather have come as a pleasant surprise that “there are at present very few pupils in the County studying German exclusively,” the sole exception being New Hamburg where 120 to 150 pupils received German instruction only.¹⁰⁵

In 1871, Thomas Pearce advised Egerton Ryerson to tread carefully on issues of language: “The Germans in this county are a brave and highly intelligent people, but exceedingly sensitive on the question whether their language is to be continued in the schools.”¹⁰⁶ Pearce’s letter also revealed an apparent fondness for the people in his inspectorate who had readily embraced the project of mass schooling by constructing decent school houses and hiring qualified teachers.¹⁰⁷ As early as in 1872, he lavished praise on the school trustees of Waterloo Village, Preston and Hespeler, who had met all his suggestions “with the heartiest response.”¹⁰⁸ Five years later, he detected “general improvement in almost every department of school work” and commended trustees and ratepayers for “taking a more lively interest in school matters.”¹⁰⁹ Surely, in a county whose people embraced public education and English-language instruction in such a manner, educational authorities could indulge local desires for German language lessons.

It is, perhaps, not surprising that neither inspector Pearce nor chief superintendent Ryerson perceived German as a threat to the project of mass schooling. Between 1874 and 1880, the percentage of school-children studying German in Waterloo County fell by almost half, from

¹⁰⁵ “Report on the Public Schools of the County of Waterloo by the County Inspector Thomas Pearce, Esq. (for 1872),” 5-6 and 8.

¹⁰⁶ “Letter sent by Thomas Pearce to Egerton Ryerson, November 9, 1871,” in *Regulations and Correspondence*, 8.

¹⁰⁷ Pearce, “School History,” 33.

¹⁰⁸ “Report on the Public Schools of the County of Waterloo by the County Inspector Thomas Pearce, Esq. (for 1872) (Galt, Ontario: S. Hutchinson, 1873),” 1.

¹⁰⁹ KPL, WHS, WAT C-87, “Report on the Public Schools of the County of Waterloo, for the Year 1877, by the County Inspector Thomas Pearce (Berlin: ‘Telegraph’ Office, 1878),” 1.

16 per cent to 9 per cent. During the same decade, the county's German-origin population slightly increased, from 55 per cent in 1871 to 57 per cent in 1881.

Table 3: Enrolment in German-language Classes at Public Schools, Waterloo County, 1874 and 1880

	1874			1880		
	Pupils Total N	Pupils Studying German N	%	Pupils Total N	Pupils Studying German N	%
Berlin	757	83	11	771	138	18
Waterloo	483	95	20	*		
Preston	336	172	51	345	145	42
New Hamburg	302	149	49	298	105	35
Waterloo Township	2,122	253	12	1,948	191	10
Wilmot Township	1,679	453	27	1,474	179	12
Wellesley Township	1,500	354	24	1,386	108	8
Woolwich Township	1,566	190	12	1,449	64	4
Galt	1,006	0	0	980	0	0
Hespeler	269	0	0	210	0	0
North Dumfries Township	1,182	0	0	1,025	0	0
TOTAL	11,202	1,749	16	9,886	930	9

Source: *Manuscript Annual School Reports* for the years indicated.

* In 1876, the inspection of schools in Waterloo Village fell under the responsibility of school inspector Thomas Hilliard and was no longer included in the reports of County School Inspector Thomas Pearce.

Table 4: German-origin Population of Waterloo County, 1871 and 1881

	1871			1881		
	Pop. Total N	German-origin Population N	%	Pop. Total N	German-origin Population N	%
Berlin	2,743	2,002	73	4,054	3,053	75
Waterloo	1,594	1,275	80	2,066	1,602	78
Preston	1,408	991	70	1,419	1,063	75
New Hamburg	1,003	701	70	1,240	795	64
Waterloo Township	7,838	5,622	72	7,594	5,385	71
Wilmot Township	5,811	3,801	65	5,358	3,439	64
Wellesley Township	5,710	2,847	50	5,752	3,509	61
Woolwich Township	5,569	4,070	73	5,524	4,373	79
Galt	3,827	156	4	5,187	422	8
Hespeler	797	311	39	698	322	46
North Dumfries Township	3,951	274	7	3,848	407	57
TOTAL	40,250	22,050	55	42,740	24,370	57

Source: *Census of Canada* for the years indicated.

As the tables above illustrate, even in the overwhelmingly 'German' villages and townships of Waterloo County, enrolment in German-language classes barely reached 50 per cent in the early 1870s. More typically, it hovered between 11 and 27 per cent, despite the fact that German Canadians constituted between half and four-fifths of the population. Between 1874 and 1881, then, the percentage of children receiving German-language instruction dropped dramatically. Only Berlin defied the general trend; in the 'German capital' of Canada, where enrolment figures in German had been at a low 11 per cent in 1874, they climbed to 18 per cent by 1881.

The data, which inspector Pearce so painstakingly compiled reveals that, by 1880, the strongholds of German-language instruction were located not in rural areas, but in towns and incorporated villages. To a certain extent, this development had been foreshadowed by the type of language lessons offered since the early 1870s. In 1872, German-language classes in Berlin, Waterloo, Preston and New Hamburg had offered instruction in reading, writing, translation and grammar. By contrast, teachers at rural schools appeared to be content to instruct their flock in reading and writing only, with many limiting their lessons to reading exercises.¹¹⁰ By 1880, the casual German-language lessons in the township had fallen victim to either a scarcity of teachers or the disinterest of German-origin parents who did not seem to place a high premium on bilingual instruction. Meanwhile, public schools in the urbanized areas of Berlin, Preston, and New Hamburg offered a fairly comprehensive German-language curriculum. But even here, the German language was confined to a special branch of education, rather than being the medium of instruction. Special German teachers taught in separate *German Departments* which children visited for no more than one-and-a-half hours daily.¹¹¹ The self-contained nature of German-language programmes that never aspired to replace English as the language of instruction must

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Annual Report of the Normal, Model, Grammar, and Common Schools in Ontario for the Year 1871* (Toronto: Hunter, Rose & Co., 1873), 126.

have gone a long way to alleviate any official fears regarding the persistence of German-language schooling in Waterloo County.

After 1880, Thomas Pearce no longer provided statistical data on instruction in German, a silence that should not be taken as evidence for the disappearance of German-language programmes. Rather, the template for annual school reports was becoming more standardized and local peculiarities discarded as irrelevant. As Bruce Curtis has noted, the centralization of the school system went hand in hand with a centralization of knowledge.¹¹² While the categories of intelligence gathering had been remarkably fluid in the 1840s, county superintendents of the 1880s were expected to fill out increasingly standardized forms, developed by provincial, not local, agencies. But although the history of German-language schooling began to fade from official records, it can be pieced together from scattered reports, German-language newspapers, and a variety of local sources.

After 1880, contacts between provincial authorities and ethnic spokespersons were sporadic and few. A decade after the introduction of the School Act of 1871, both sides had arrived at a tacit agreement which they regarded as mutually satisfactory. While the Department of Education had pledged to respect the rights of 'German' schools in Waterloo County, German language communities had demonstrated their support for the project of mass schooling and endorsed English as the language of instruction. Although local leaders had not succeeded in persuading the government to intervene on behalf of German-language schooling, even benevolent tolerance was a decided asset in the increasingly heated debates on minority-language education of the 1880s. One group, of course, was as far removed from the political skirmishes on the language question as colloquial German was from being "a language of culture", the schoolchildren and teachers who worked in the German classes of the county's schools.

¹¹² Curtis, "Class, Culture, and Administration," 105 and 122-3.

Classroom

When Barbara Beatty characterized children as “notoriously elusive historical actors,” she pinpointed a major weakness in the writing of educational history.¹¹³ Preoccupied with the intentions of politicians, educators, and social leaders, historians have given scant attention to the *experience* of schooling.¹¹⁴ Instead of reconstructing the culture of the classroom – the experiences of children, the obstacles faced by teachers, the involvement (or disinterest) of parents, the methods of instruction – they have examined the history of minority-language education from the vantage point of political debates.¹¹⁵ In doing so, historians have been prone to overrate “the importance of formal schooling to actual experience,” as Chad Gaffield has wryly noted.¹¹⁶ Indeed, what Neil Sutherland observed in 1969 still holds true: “schooling is more a matter of learning than it is of teaching”, and learning depends more on a child’s personality, family, and class than on textbooks, teachers, and curricula.¹¹⁷

It is, admittedly, far easier to find historical evidence for educational reforms than it is to assess the culture of the classroom and the role of (German-language) schooling in the lives of children. In Waterloo County, the diary of twelve-year old Louis J. Breithaupt provides a privileged inroad into a world of childhood in which family, school, church, and work were inseparably intertwined.¹¹⁸

¹¹³ See Barbara Beatty, “Essay Review – Children in Different and Difficult Times: The History of American Childhood, Part I,” *History of Education Quarterly*, 40, 1 (Spring 2000), 74.

¹¹⁴ See Chad Gaffield’s pertinent comments in “Coherence and Chaos in Educational Historiography,” *Interchange*, 17, 2 (Summer 1986), 116-7 and “Back to School: Towards a New Agenda for the History of Education,” 182-7.

¹¹⁵ Marilyn Barber, “The Ontario Bilingual Schools Issue: Sources of Conflict,” *Canadian Historical Review*, 47, 3 (1966), 227-48; Cornelius J. Jaenen, “Ruthenian Schools in Western Canada, 1897-1919,” *Paedagogica Historica*, 10, 3 (1970), 517-41; Jack Cecillon, “Turbulent Times in the Diocese of London: Bishop Fallon and the French-language Controversy, 1910-18,” *Ontario History*, 87, 4 (December 1995), 369-95.

¹¹⁶ Gaffield, “Back to School,” 177. See also Houston and Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars in Nineteenth-Century Ontario*, 190.

¹¹⁷ Neil Sutherland, “The Urban Child,” *History of Education Quarterly*, 9, 3 (Fall 1969), 305.

¹¹⁸ *University of Waterloo*, Doris Lewis Rare Book Room, Breithaupt Hewetson Clark Collection, “Diaries of Louis Jacob Breithaupt” (hereafter *Diaries of Louis Jacob Breithaupt*).

Evidently, no path of growing up was alike and Louis's life – like the lives of others – was moulded by the forces of gender, class, and ethnicity.¹¹⁹ His was a world of class privilege: an affluent home with a servant girl; a close and caring family environment; a social world that encompassed prayer meetings, Sunday school, singing and piano lessons. But although the Breithaupt family was 'bourgeois' in its ownership of a leather tannery and real estate, its life-style was essentially middle-class.¹²⁰ The daily routines evolved around domestic life, with child-rearing practices seeking to inculcate 'character', instil ambition, and nurture habits of thrift, hard work, and piety.

The first diary opens on March 4, 1867, a day after Louis had celebrated his twelfth birthday: "Today I also received a school desk and 5 glass marbles from Grandfather and Grandmother for my birthday. I was at school today with my two brothers. Lessons good." In marking his birthday, Louis celebrated a comparatively novel ritual that indicated a growing cultural awareness of age.¹²¹ The gift of a school desk, in turn, suggested that the boy's family took schooling seriously.¹²² Thoroughly middle-class, Louis's parents expected their children to excel at school and to internalize proper notions of conscience and responsibility. In eschewing corporal punishment, they relied on the power of emotional rewards, financial incentives and mild

In my quotations, I follow the transcriptions and translations, prepared by the archival team at the Doris Lewis Rare Book Room.

¹¹⁹ My analysis of Louis's diary is informed by Harvey Graff's voluminous work on the 'paths of growing up' in eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries America. Also of interest is Mary Jo Maynes's brilliant study of French and German workers' autobiographies. Graff, *Conflicting Paths: Growing Up in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1995) and Maynes, *Taken the Hard Road: Life Course in French and German Workers' Autobiographies in the Era of Industrialization* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

¹²⁰ For a point of comparison see David A. Gerber's discussion of "Culture, Ethos, and Ideology in Class Formation" in ante-bellum Buffalo. Gerber, *The Making of an American Pluralism: Buffalo, New York, 1825-60* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 63-91.

¹²¹ Graff, *Conflicting Paths*, 282.

¹²² A year later, Louis's mother transformed the loft into workspace "so we could study in the evenings" and, in the winter of 1869, equipped the room of her two eldest sons with a table and a small heater.

reprimands.¹²³ When Louis and William arrived late at home one evening, their mother's agitation was punishment enough: "William and I were in Doon to pick up some pollard. My mother was very worried as we were late getting back."¹²⁴ Similarly, the boys' sibling rivalry that would resurface repeatedly during their adult lives bore witness to the expectations of a middle-class household that prized ambition and competition. Rather than feeling weighed down by these expectations, young Louis revelled in them: "There was a terrible snow storm today. My brother and I were at school. Today I received a beautiful picture from Mr. Wittig (the German teacher at school) because I read from page 120 to 215 in the German reader. I'm good."¹²⁵ Written in pencil, the childish letters are fading yet still convey a boyish exuberance and self-confidence.¹²⁶ Rarely did the twelve-year old betray any doubts regarding his own sense of ability and achievement: "John couldn't go to school today because the snow was 1 1/2 feet high. In the mornings and evenings I nail down sheep hides and get 4 cents a dozen from Father. I'm good.

¹²³ Only once did Louis mention physical punishment: "Brother William got a beating at school today and then he and John got one at home, too." See *Diaries of Louis Jacob Breithaupt*, January 8, 1868. As Mary P. Ryan's observed in her analysis of Victorian child-rearing practices, the "sly manipulations of maternal socialization" were intended to implant "the usual array of petit bourgeois traits – honesty, industry, frugality, temperance, and, pre-eminently, self-control." Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984 [1981]), 161.

¹²⁴ *Diaries of Louis Jacob Breithaupt*, August 12, 1867.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, March 21, 1867.

¹²⁶ Louis's self-confidence contrasted markedly with the nagging self-doubts that twelve-year old Rose Eby recorded in her diary in 1879. Reflecting cultural prescriptions on female intelligence and proper comportment, she felt "unperfect in all my home lessons" and reprimanded herself for biting her finger nails: "so nasty". Whereas Louis proudly wrote "I'm good", Rose's self-esteem was anything but: "Today Minnie was six years old and so she got six slaps from me. I'd wish I was a better girl than what I am." Rose's diary presents a vivid reminder that no world of childhood was alike. Unlike Louis who worked on the family's farm and helped out in his father's business, Rose's life was confined to home and school which, consequently, received much greater attention. Unlike Louis, who depicted an harmonious family life, Rose described conflicts and tensions. Her parents tended to have "some high rows about money matters. I wish to God they would not", and favoured their son over his female siblings: "This morning Mama hit me most awful bec [sic] I wanted my ruler from Rob she always makes us give into Rob but she will find out something yet." See KPL, WHS, MC 87: Aaron Eby and Matilda Bowers Eby Collection, "Rose Eby, Diary 1877", February 8, 1877; June 11, 1877; January 2, 1877; August 30, 1877; June 13, 1877.

Today I received another picture from Mr. Wittig because I spelled the best today.”¹²⁷ Yet if

Louis was competing with his younger brothers, William and John, they were also his peers with whom he swam in the river, went fishing, skated on the rink, went to church, attended Sunday School, and walked to Berlin’s Central School, morning after morning.¹²⁸

Towards his mother, Louis was tenderly protective. Frequently ill, Katharina Breithaupt encouraged her children to keep extensive journals, attend church, and read the bible. Louis followed her example and, soon, the pages of his diary echoed his efforts of character refinement. In attending prayer meetings of the Evangelical Congregation and visiting the Sunday School of the English Methodist Church, his religion was bounded by neither denomination nor language but by the number of verses memorized, the chapters read in the bible and the donations to charity, paid out of his pocket-money.¹²⁹

If Louis’s spiritual life was guided by his mother, a strong-willed woman who skilfully took over the family business after her husband’s premature death, it was his father who groomed the boy for a career as a tanner and entrepreneur. Meticulously, Louis chronicled his father’s business-trips, negotiations, and investments, thus growing into a world of work that gradually began to overshadow his life as a pupil: “We had exams at school today. August Werner and I were the best pupils in German class. After the exams, Father and I went to Mannheim and Williamsburg to buy building timber.”¹³⁰ Although his parents placed a high premium on formal education, school never interfered with the demands of the family economy. Readily, Liborius and Katharina Breithaupt pulled their eldest sons out of school to work at the store, run errands, buy staples, help on the farm, and tend to

¹²⁷ *Diaries of Louis Jacob Breithaupt*, March 22, 1867.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, August 6, 1867; March 28, 1868; July 1, 1868 (fishing); June 21, 1867; July 2, 1868; July 20, 1868 (swimming); December 19, 1868 (skating); March 24, 1867; April 7, 1867; April 18, 1867; October 11, 1868 (church and Sunday School).

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, March 24, 1867; April 7, 1867; April 14, 1867; August 18, 1867; August 25, 1867; October 13, 1867 (verses); April 21, 1867; April 28, 1867; May 19, 1867; May 26, 1867; January 28, 1868 (bible); October 11, 1868 (donation).

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, July 12, 1867.

pigs, cows, and horses.¹³¹ For Louis and his brothers, then, the hours spent on a school-bench presented just one among many encounters with the world outside the home.

When Louis remarked upon his schoolwork, his comments were brief and perfunctory: "Lessons good", "Lessons not so good", "Lessons fairly good", "Lessons good today", "Lessons not good".¹³² Only occasionally did he highlight special events. As a senior student, he twice worked as a substitute teacher: "August Werner and I taught Miss Kneve's class today because she wasn't there."¹³³ In March 1867, he entered the top class in arithmetic and, a year later, "earned half day off (from school) because I was first in arithmetic class."¹³⁴ He took part in school plays and won prizes in competitions: "I received 3 prizes. Two in German class and one in English. John received the first prize in Mrs. Kneve's class for good behaviour. William got nothing."¹³⁵ Except for fleeting references, teachers rarely appeared on the pages of Louis's diary, the sole exception being "Mr. Wittig (the German teacher)" who had rewarded the studious boy with "a beautiful picture". Apparently, the self-reported star pupil who was entrusted with the care of younger students was not subject to harsh discipline.¹³⁶ Yet if teachers left no traces in his childhood recollections, schooling did nurture a new conception of time. Almost imperceptibly, the boy's life became structured by the demands of the classroom which alone, among his many duties and diversions, demanded strict punctuality. "To be late" was an

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, October 17, 1867; June 22, 1868; September 4, 1868; October 7, 1868; November 13, 1868.

¹³² *Ibid.*, March 5, 1867; March 6, 1867; March 19, 1867; April 1, 1867; May 13, 1867.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, December 12, 1867.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, March 26, 1867; November 2, 1868.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, May 19, 1868; June 29, 1868; July 17, 1868.

¹³⁶ For a discussion of the ways in which children remembered their teachers see Maynes, *Taking the Hard Road*, 85-99.

experience intimately tied to the realm of schooling, yet tempered by the demands of the family economy that valued children's labour higher than regular school attendance.¹³⁷

In the colourful fabric of Louis's life, schooling represented but one thread that was interwoven with many others. Accordingly, his studies at the 'German Department' have to be seen in the context of a family environment that cultivated German as the language of the home, corresponded with friends in the old homeland, and treasured family heirlooms from Germany.¹³⁸ For a boy who kept his childhood diaries in German – even if his style was, at times, uneven and the grammar faulty – the school lessons in German must have presented little of a challenge.¹³⁹ Not surprisingly, Louis and his siblings regularly headed the honour rolls of the German Department.¹⁴⁰ Compared with their English-origin classmates, the Breithaupt children had a distinct advantage; it was far easier to retain language skills taught at school if German was used daily in the social world beyond the classroom.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ *Diaries of Louis Jacob Breithaupt*: "We were late to school today." (April 4, 1867); "We were late for school yesterday." (October 24, 1867); "We were late for school this morning." (November 30, 1868); "We were late for school again today." (December 2, 1868).

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, February 3, 1868; December 24, 1867.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* "Bruder Wilhelm bekam heute Schläge in der Schule und er und Johan bekamen auch zu Hause." (January 8, 1868); "Es gehen bei 400 Schüler in die Schule hinn [sic] in Berlin." (April 1, 1868). While the diaries of the first years were written in German, later entries would alternate between German and English, thus mirroring a life that comfortably navigated the spheres of both 'German' culture and 'English' politics and business.

¹⁴⁰ For William Breithaupt see *BJ*, July 6, 1871, 2. For Melvina Breithaupt see *BJ*, July 19, 1877, 2; January 3, 1878, 2; May 2, 1878, 2; November 7, 1878, 2; June 5, 1879, 2; July 10, 1879, 2; March 4, 1880, 2; April 8, 1880, 2. For Ezra Breithaupt see *BJ*, May 2, 1878, 2; November 7, 1878, 2; December 24, 1878, 2; June 5, 1879, 2; July 10, 1879, 2; November 20, 1879, 2; March 4, 1880, 2; April 8, 1880, 2; June 10, 1880, 2; July 15, 1880, 2; November 11, 1880, 2; December 9, 1880, 2; January 6, 1881, 5. For Albert L. Breithaupt see *BJ*, January 4, 1883; January 3, 1884, 4; March 20, 1884; June 12, 1884, 4; January 8, 1885, 7; February 12, 1885, 4; March 19, 1885, 4; June 11, 1885, 8; October 15, 1885, 4; November 26, 1885, 8; February 11, 1886, 4. For Katie Louisa Breithaupt see *BJ*, January 3, 1884; June 12, 1884, 4; February 12, 1885, 4; March 19, 1885, 4; May 14, 1885, 1; October 15, 1885, 4; November 26, 1885, 8.

¹⁴¹ As Stephen L. Harp has reminded us, the 'problem' of foreign-language instruction at elementary schools "was not what was taught in the schools but what was forgotten afterward. ... It was retention of skills, and not initial learning, that depended on social context." Harp, *Learning to be Loyal*, 154.

In sending their children to the German Department of Berlin's Central School, the Breithaupts were among a select group of German-origin parents. Old as they are, the pages of the *Berliner Journal* still exude a righteous indignation that so few German families took advantage of the 'fine German Department' nor showed an active interest in its semi-annual examinations.¹⁴² In 1874, the audience at the public examination was comprised of a single observer, the reporter of the *Berliner Journal* who praised the children's progress and commended the "English children" who "diligently applied themselves to the study of the German language."¹⁴³ Six years later, the German teacher at Berlin's public school was so frustrated by the general levels of apathy that he resorted to an unusual step. In a letter to the editors of the *Berliner Journal*, Louis von Neubronn publicly lectured the Germans of Berlin:

It appears that many Germans in Berlin care little, or none at all, whether or not we have a good German school in our midst; otherwise they would behave differently and let their children enjoy the privilege of which even many English-speaking pupils take advantage ... But unfortunately, those people show no interest in their beautiful and noble mother tongue and, consequently, do not care whether or not their children acquire a thorough knowledge thereof.¹⁴⁴

Neubronn distinguished between two classes of parents, those who completely deprived their children of German-language instruction ("which is shameful enough for a German family") and those who sent their child into the German Department for less than a year, falsely assuming that a term or two in the German classroom would suffice.¹⁴⁵ The latter group, Neubronn wrote, seemed unaware that

¹⁴² *BJ*, July 16, 1874, 2.

¹⁴³ *BJ*, December 23, 1873, 2: "mit welchem Fleiß englische Kinder dem Erlernen der deutschen Sprache obliegen."

¹⁴⁴ *BJ*, October 6, 1881, 4: "Es scheint, daß vielen Deutschen Berlins sehr wenig oder gar nichts daran gelegen ist, ob wir hier eine gute deutsche Schule haben oder nicht; sonst müßten sie ganz anders handeln und würden sie ihre Kinder den Vortheil, den selbst viele englisch redende Schüler sehr fleißig benutzen auch genießen lassen ... Aber leider geben viele dieser Leute selbst nichts um ihre so schöne und edle Muttersprache und scheren sich deswegen auch nicht darum, ob ihre Kinder dieselbe gründlich erlernen oder nicht."

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: "was für eine deutsche Familie Schande genug ist".

progress only occurred after months of thorough instruction in reading, writing, and the rudiments of grammar:

Yet instead of obliging and encouraging such a child to attend the German classroom regularly, it suddenly occurs to those people that 'My son or my daughter has to learn too much in the English subjects; thus, away with the German.' In short, without giving it much thought, the teacher receives a written note: 'In the next term, my son or my daughter will no longer attend the German Department'.¹⁴⁶

Robbed of the fruits of his labour, Neubronn saw the German classroom becoming the "poor cousin" of Berlin's public school system rather than being its shining asset: "Therefore, you German residents of Berlin, send your children to the German classroom regularly and for an extended period of time; and do not act as if you were ashamed of the German language."¹⁴⁷ Yet his heartfelt plea went unheard; enrolment figures in the German Department would continue to decline in the next two decades. While prizing their children's participation in the regular English-language curriculum, German-origin parents did not seem to regard German-language lessons as a necessary adjunct to advancing their children's fortune in the new world.

Conclusion

In Waterloo County, this heartland of German language and culture, German migrants learned English with a determination that may seem baffling. Neither ethnic spokesmen nor the community at large lamented the gradual disappearance of 'German' schools. On the contrary, both embraced English as the language of public instruction. Their behaviour is a reminder that even 'localized' migrant cultures reached out beyond the ethnic world to establish links with the

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*: "Anstatt ein solches Kind anzuhalten und aufzumuntern, die deutsche Klasse regelmäßig weiter zu besuchen, fällt es plötzlich solchen Leuten ein 'Mein Sohn oder meine Tochter haben in den englischen Fächern zu viel zu lernen, darum fort mit dem Deutschen!' Kurz, der deutsche Lehrer wird ohne lange Umstände und Überlegung schriftlich benachrichtigt: 'mein Sohn oder meine Tochter wird mit dem nächsten Viertel die deutsche Schule aufgeben'."

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*: "Darum, deutsche Einwohner Berlins, schickt Eure Kinder regelmäßig und lange Zeit zur deutschen Klasse und handelt nicht, als ob Ihr Euch der deutschen Sprache schämtet."

'national' public sphere. Never once did the county's inhabitants seem to question the tenet that English was the language of the country, a language that promised occupational mobility and business opportunities. And yet, language did remain contested terrain.

Unlike the select group of ethnic leaders, few parents publicly commented upon German-language schooling. Their attitudes have to be read through their behaviour, namely their willingness (or the lack thereof) to enrol their children in the German-language classroom. If we apply this criterion, formal instruction in the German language did not seem to be a priority for the vast majority of German-origin families. Indeed, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that, by 1880, German-language schooling responded to the desire of some, but not the need of many. This is not to say that the German language was becoming extinct. Rather, the majority of German-origin families did not consider German as a symbol of identity that had to be cultivated in the formal setting of a classroom.

Undeterred, ethnic spokespersons sought to construct a German public that would form an integral part of a 'national' institution, namely the public schools. As a special branch of instruction (opposed to the language of instruction), German-language departments were to ensure both language purity and preservation. Energetically, local language advocates lobbied the Department of Education for supporting the rights of German-language schooling. In numerous petitions and meetings, they demanded the appointment of German School Inspectors, the establishment of training facilities for German teachers, and special provisions for the examination and certification of German teachers. Although provincial authorities granted only the latter request, the channels of communication which were thus established heightened the reputation of German spokespersons as 'accomplished scholars and gentlemen' who cared deeply about the progress of public education. Local leaders, in turn, rested assured that government officials would not interfere with the German-language classroom.

Rather than quietly succumbing to the forces of state-building and bureaucratization, ethnic spokespersons in Waterloo County voiced their demands vocally and persuasively. And instead of regarding the Department of Education as their foe, bent on the destruction of German-language schooling, they sought to enlist the help of educational authorities in maintaining language standards and training German teachers. Although these far-reaching goals never translated into educational policies, a tacit agreement ensued. While the Department vowed to refrain from interfering with German-language programmes, the communities of Waterloo County embraced English as the language of the curriculum. It remained to be seen how the comfortable routines of German-language schooling would fare in the political turbulence that raged around Franco-Ontarian education in the 1880s.

Chapter VII

Building the Nation in the Country's School, Waterloo County, 1883-1901

Throughout the late nineteenth century, ethnic spokespersons in Waterloo County held a 'natural' pride in their mother tongue and native customs to be perfectly compatible with a deep respect for the constitutional and institutional liberties "which we enjoy under a wise and well-meaning government."¹ What is remarkable about this statement is its ready acceptance of the sovereignty of the Canadian state. Never once did this commentator – or, for that matter, any others whose writings were published in the *Berliner Journal* – advocate ideas of political autonomy. Theirs was a community defined exclusively in cultural terms. While participating in the common polity of the Canadian nation, they hoped to preserve their culture and its most visible badge, the German mother tongue.

While local leaders in Berlin seized upon language as a symbol of cultural identity, the Canadian government began to endow language with national significance. The process, as we shall see, was a gradual one. In the 1880s, Conservative politicians and editors directed their wrath against French-language schools which, they alleged, deprived francophone children of the civilizing influence of the English language and presented "nurseries not merely of an alien tongue but of alien customs, of alien sentiments, and, we say it without offence, of a wholly alien people."² In 1889, Oliver Mowat's Liberal Government ceded to Conservative demands to investigate the extent and conditions of French-language instruction at public schools. The

¹ *Berliner Journal* [hereafter *BJ*], October 2, 1862, 2: "welcher wir uns unter einer weisen und gutgesinnten Regierung erfreuen." See also *BJ*, January 12, 1893, 4; *BJ*, October 5, 1893, 4; March 13, 1902, 1.

² *Toronto Mail*, November 24, 1886, as quoted in Chad Gaffield, *Language, Schooling, and Cultural Conflict: The Origins of the French-Language Controversy in Ontario* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), 3. See also *ibid.* 21, xiv and 185.

Commission of 1889 subsequently inspected all minority-language programmes in the province.³

In 1901, then, the Canadian census, for the first time ever, inquired into the linguistic profile of the Canadian population. When census enumerators knocked at household doors across the country, they asked about the respondents' mother tongue as well as their ability to speak English and/or French.⁴

In probing the language loyalties of Canadians, the government joined an international trend. As early as in 1853, the First International Statistical Congress in Europe had debated "whether a question on the 'spoken language' should be included in such censuses, and what bearing, if any, it had on nation and nationality."⁵ Two decades later, the Congress officially endorsed such questions, having concluded that language was of national importance.⁶ As historian Eric J. Hobsbawm has noted, "by asking the language question, censuses for the first time *forced* everyone to choose not only a nationality, but a linguistic nationality."⁷ Language, in other words, had become politicized. By the very act of devising language questions, governments demonstrated that they "were sufficiently committed to ... linguistic uniformity to compile such data."⁸

This chapter proposes to examine changing assumptions of the 'national' language and the perceived nature of the nation. It contends that language was discovered as a symbol of national identity in late nineteenth-century Canada. Mirroring developments in other Western nation-states, treatises on language and the nation echoed the German philosopher Johann Gottlieb von

³ *Ibid.*, 26. For the commission's report on 'German Schools' see *Regulations and Correspondence Relating to French and German Schools in the Province of Ontario* (Toronto: Warwick and Sons, 1889), 110-4.

⁴ *Fourth Census of Canada*, vol. viii (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1902), xx.

⁵ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programmes, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Canto, 1991 [1990]), 97.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁸ Stephen L. Harp, *Learning to be Loyal: Primary Schooling as Nation Building in Alsace and Lorraine, 1850-1914* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998), 48.

Herder who had located in language a “people’s spirit.”⁹ Yet instead of merely assuming a national entity, defined by the boundaries of language, late-nineteenth-century advocates of national languages actively sought to create one. Through linguistic assimilation, they hoped, a citizenry would be created who willingly fulfilled their duties and responsibilities.¹⁰ Associated with a plethora of ‘national’ values, the construct of a national language was perceived not only as a symbol of citizenship, but also a mark of modernity. In an industrializing and modernizing world, the argument went, linguistic homogenization was a necessary prerequisite for an educated, literate, and mobile work force.¹¹ But to construct an ‘imagined community’ around a perceived ‘national language’ was a process fraught with difficulties, as English-speaking Canadian nationalists were apt to find out.¹²

⁹ See Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993 [1960]), 4-5 and Vicki Spencer, “Towards an Ontology of Holistic Individualism: Herder’s Theory of Identity, Culture and Community,” *History of European Ideas*, 22, 2 (1996), 250.

¹⁰ In nineteenth-century Alsace-Lorraine, for instance, both France and Germany hoped to transform local residents into ‘Frenchmen’ and ‘Germans’ respectively by “defining and teaching the national language, loyalty to the nation-state, and national culture” in the region’s primary schools. In Ireland, the national revival movement was spearheaded by the ‘Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language’ (1876), the ‘Gaelic Union’ (1880), and the ‘Gaelic League’ (1893). Meanwhile, in Germany, the ‘General German Language Association’ (*Allgemeiner Deutscher Sprachverein*) was founded in January 1886 for the purpose of “fostering the genuine spirit and unique essence of the German language, awakening love and understanding for the mother tongue, and activating a sense of its purity, correctness, clarity, and beauty.” See Harp, *Learning to be Loyal*, 4; John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 114-195; John Edwards, “Language, diversity and identity,” in John Edwards ed., *Linguistic Minorities, Policies and Pluralism* (London: Academic Press, 1984), 285; Roger Chickering, *We Men Who Feel Most German: A Cultural Study of the Pan-German League, 1886-1914* (Boston: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 36-8.

¹¹ Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1977), 303-38. In this context see also Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 154-61 and John Breuilly, “Approaches to Nationalism,” in Gopal Balakrishnan ed., *Mapping the Nation* (London, New York: Verso, 1996), 152-3.

¹² The brand of nationalism that dominated late-nineteenth-century Ontario was the movement for imperial unity which envisioned a “closer union of the British Empire through economic and military co-operation.” While often wary of British ‘superciliousness’ and ‘insularity’, Canadian imperialists nonetheless revelled in the rhetoric of Anglo-Saxon superiority and vowed to transform the heterogeneous newcomers to Canadian shores into British subjects. See Berger,

What defied their desire for “a sense of Canadian nationality rooted in the same language, identical traditions, and similar racial characteristics” was, of course, the province of Quebec.¹³ In a country of two founding peoples, the existence of French as a second official language had been formally recognized in the British North America Act of 1867.¹⁴ It stipulated, as historian Donald A. Bailey has reminded us, that “*both* French and English *shall* be used in the records and journals of the federal and Quebec legislatures and in the printing and publishing of their enactments.” It also allowed for either language to be used “in legislative debates.”¹⁵ If the constitutional recognition of French undermined the status of English as the ‘national’ tongue, so, too, did the presence of a francophone province; Quebec provided a “living heartland” for the French language that was spoken by the mass of its population across a wide range of domains.¹⁶ To complicate matters even further, Herder’s mystical identification of language with a ‘people’s spirit’ (*Volksgeist*) could be appropriated not only by Ontarian imperialists, but also the province’s ethnic groups. In the mid-1880s, in response to journalist attacks from Toronto, Franco Ontarians rose to the defence of their mother tongue by celebrating the sacred bonds between French language, culture, and tradition.¹⁷

The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 3, 149-51 and 260.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 134.

¹⁴ *Fourth Census of Canada, vol. 1* (Ottawa: S. E. Dawson, 1902), xx: “English and French were made official languages by section 133 of the British North America Act, 1867, and therefore special provision is made in the schedule for a record of all persons five years of age and over who speak one or other of these languages.”

¹⁵ Donald A. Bailey, “The Judicial Fortunes of French on the Canadian Prairies,” *Great Plains Quarterly*, 9 (Summer 1989), 140.

¹⁶ Linguists have identified such a ‘heartland’ as a necessary condition of language maintenance. See John Edwards, “Language, diversity and identity,” 288 and Heinz Kloss, “German-American Language Maintenance Efforts,” in Joshua A. Fishman ed., *Language Loyalty in the United States: The Maintenance and Perpetuation of Non-English Mother Tongues by American Ethnic and Religious Groups* (London: Mouton & Co., 1966), 207.

¹⁷ Gaffield, *Language Schooling, and Culture Conflict*, 146-52.

Why, one may justifiably ask, are the debates surrounding francophone schools relevant for our understanding of German-language schooling? For one, ethnic spokespersons in Waterloo County overtly sympathized with the plight of Franco Ontarians. Their desire to rally around ‘la conversation de notre belle langue française,’ as Prescott County’s *La Nation* put it in September 1885, could not but strike a chord with Waterloo County’s *Berliner Journal* that had long seen in language the essence of ‘German’ identity.¹⁸ Further, the province-wide debates on francophone schooling often drew upon a French-German analogy that heralded Germans as the model which Franco Ontarians should emulate. German-origin migrants, in other words, presented the yardstick against which the language loyalty of francophone settlers was measured. While no less stereotypical than assertions of French ‘backwardness’ and ‘superstition’, the effusive praise for the ‘good Germans’ helped shape their public image.¹⁹ Finally, government inquiries such as the *Commission of 1889* and the national census of 1901 afforded glimpses onto the dynamics of language and schooling in Waterloo County that might otherwise have proven elusive.

In this sense, the history of German-language schooling cannot be divorced from the French-language controversy that arose in 1880s Ontario and represented a complex amalgam of demographic, economic, social and cultural changes. As historian Chad Gaffield has shown, the demographic profile of the province’s eastern corner had changed dramatically in the 1870s when chain migration from Quebec to Prescott and Russell Counties relegated English-speaking residents to the status of a minority. Simultaneously, the shortage of land and the demise of the lumber industry forced francophones and anglophones to compete for resources and political leadership at the local level. In the process, the language question – seldom a preoccupation in times of prosperity and stability, as Gaffield asserts – became a catalyst for social, class, and

¹⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, 147.

¹⁹ See, for instance, *Ontario Annual Report of Education for 1874*, 70-1; *Toronto Globe*, August 3, 1889; M.P. F. Oliver in the House of Commons, as quoted in the *BJ*, May 30, 1901, 4; *Debates in the Legislative Assembly of Canada*, M.P. H.H. Miller (South Grey), April 14, 1908, 6826-33.

cultural division.²⁰ Local conflicts spilled over in the provincial arena when it became apparent that no less than 27 public schools in Prescott and Russell Counties taught exclusively in the French language.²¹ What alarmed provincial observers, Gaffield suggests, was not so much “the growing francophone presence in Ontario,” but rather “the absence of any indication of substantial assimilation. The continued demand for French-language schooling reflected a degree of cultural stability that had not been anticipated and that was frightening to those who considered Ontario to be the bastion of English Canada.”²²

Upon taking office in 1883, the Liberal Minister of Education, George Ross, immediately probed the extent of francophone schooling in Eastern Ontario. Before political pressures even mounted, he introduced the 1885 regulations of the Ontario Education Act that required the daily use of English in all public schools of the province, specifying a minimum of two hours in the lower grades and four in the upper grades. In addition, prospective teachers were expected “to pass such examinations in English grammar and in translation as may be prescribed by the Boards of Examiners,” thus demonstrating a working knowledge of the English language.²³ Neither regulation worked to the detriment of German-language schooling in Waterloo County where teachers had long been bilingual and German classes limited to a mere supplement of the regular English-language curriculum. Still, the 1885 regulations signalled “a significant revision of Ontario’s language policy”, as Chad Gaffield has argued. No longer did school officials share Ryerson’s confidence that minority-language schools would soon become Anglicized, surrounded as they were by English-speaking settlements. Instead, the government itself had come to believe that Ontario’s linguistic minorities “required a stimulus to start down the path of voluntary

²⁰ Gaffield, *Language, Schooling, and Cultural Conflict*, 34 and 182-6.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

²² *Ibid.*, 184-5.

²³ *Ibid.*, 21.

assimilation.”²⁴ But how to provide this stimulus was a question that left Ross puzzled and the Conservative press jeering.

Language and the Nation

After years of acrimonious public debate, the thorny issue of French-language schooling erupted in the provincial legislature. On March 8, 1889, the conservative opposition rose to deliver its passionate plea that “the English language, and the English language only” should be taught at the province’s schools.²⁵ In attacking the French-language schools of Prescott and Russell Counties, the conservative M.P.P. Craig marshalled an argument that linked linguistic unity to national unity. Ontario, he exclaimed, was “an English-speaking province” and while he heartily welcomed “all nationalities”, he nonetheless felt that newcomers “should submit to the laws and institutions of the country, and especially learn to adapt themselves to the language of the country.”²⁶ Seemingly effortlessly, this statement transformed English from a provincial language (“an English-speaking province”) to a national one (“the language of the country”). This slip, unconscious as it was, reflected a deep-seated conviction that English presented Canada’s true national tongue. As another conservative put it more bluntly in the ensuing debate:

This was a British Canadian country, an English-speaking country. Nineteen-twentieth of the people were desirous that it should remain an English-speaking country, and the present policy of the Government was directly contrary to that desire inasmuch as in some counties French was given precedence over English in the Public schools.²⁷

We may safely assume that the over-heated rhetoric was, then as now, part of a staged battle between conservative opposition and liberal government. Still, the statement above is notable for

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 22 and 15.

²⁵ *Toronto Globe*, March 9, 1889, 9.

²⁶ *Toronto Empire*, March 9, 1889, 14.

²⁷ *Toronto Globe*, March 12, 1889, 6.

its intent to minimize the role of French in a Canadian context. Equally interesting, the proclaimed insignificance of the French language did not lead to its tacit toleration.

Grudgingly resigned to the fact that Canada harboured a French-speaking province, conservative members seemed determined to ward off any “encroachments made by that race on the Anglo-Saxon race” in the province of Ontario.²⁸ Only by containing the French language within Quebec, they reasoned, could the linguistic unity (i.e., national unity) of Ontario (i.e., Canada) be preserved. The desire to ‘contain’ a perceived problem, either spatially or discursively, was by no means atypical of Victorian society. As Michel Foucault has argued, nineteenth-century societies designated certain spaces – brothels, mental hospitals, and prisons – for certain ‘problems’.²⁹ The “disciplinary power” of nation-states also found expression in new institutions such as factories, schools, and hospitals that regulated, supervised, and disciplined modern populations.³⁰ If we apply Foucault’s insights to the controversies surrounding French-language education, we find both mechanisms at work. Conservative speakers sought to contain the French language by limiting its role, alternately, to the province of Quebec, the private realm of family, or a special branch of education.³¹ At the same time, they denounced the ‘encroachments’ made by the French language on Ontario’s public schools as a covert attack on the project of nation-building. As the leader of the conservative opposition stated: “the State should control the education of the young in the country. The education of the young must be looked upon as the most important factor in the bringing up of a nation.”³² To allow French as the language of instruction, in other words, meant to relinquish control over the public schools, the symbolic cradle of the nation.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ See Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Book, 1991 [1975]), 141-9 and Peter Jackson, *Maps of Meaning: An Introduction to Cultural Geography* (London, New York: Routledge, 1994 [1989]), 116.

³⁰ Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*, 213-6.

³¹ See the speeches by Meredith and Craig, quoted in the *Toronto Empire*, March 9, 1889, 14 and the *Toronto Globe*, March 12, 1889, 6.

³² *Toronto Empire*, March 9, 1889, 14.

Conservatives then proceeded to question the intrinsic value of the French language. M.P.P.

Craig, for one, was not content to describe French-language schools as “generally inferior.” He also evoked the threatening prospect of a racial hierarchy turned upside down: “French children”, he warned, were in danger of being surpassed by “the Indian” who “learn[ed] the English language easily”.³³ In appealing to the common sense of the province’s francophones, finally, Craig praised English as the language of modernity: “If French parents were made aware of the advantages that would accrue to their children from the acquirement of the English language they would be in favor of it themselves.”³⁴ This statement, of course, implied that French was a language of the past that left monolingual speakers ill-prepared for the exigencies of modern life.

In rising to the conservative challenge, the Minister of Education, George Ross, delivered what the partisan newspaper, the *Toronto Globe*, dubbed “the finest speech of the session.”³⁵ After praising the glorious history of the French tongue, a language of noble character and freedom, Ross pledged his support to francophones who “with the pertinacity of all nationalities, loved their own tongue.”³⁶ Then, however, the Minister left the realm of culture to emphasize the essentially political character of the Canadian nation-state. He refused to consider linguistic homogeneity a pre-condition of national cohesion. Instead, he argued that the vast British Empire rested not on the English language, but on the greatness of its Magna Charta:

We find that every tongue is tolerated and respected in every part of the Empire; and out of all that diversity we have an Empire strong and powerful. And why is it strong and powerful? Why, but because of the liberty of the Constitution we recognise, and the liberty and greatness of mind of those men who have guided the destinies of Great Britain.³⁷

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Toronto Globe*, March 9, 1889, 9.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

If nations are 'imagined communities', as Benedict Anderson has suggested, Canada was imagined in markedly different ways during the debates in the provincial legislature.³⁸ The notion of an English Canada that was defined by linguistic and cultural unity competed with the idea of a national polity which, like the British Empire, could tolerate cultural diversity within political unity. This is not to say that the Minister of Education had foregone his desire to transform French-language schools in Eastern Ontario into agents of assimilation that would teach the English language to francophone children. Rather, he believed that minority-language education would naturally diminish over time, much as it had done in German settlements.

As early as in 1887, George Ross had drawn comparisons between French and German settlers. Both groups, he wrote, showed a "natural" desire to teach their children exclusively in their mother tongue, a "hereditary bias by no means peculiar to the Teutonic or Gallic races":

In German settlements, however, partly because they were not so isolated, and partly, it may be, from racial instincts, English was regarded with more favor, and as a consequence, every German Public School years ago devoted a certain portion of the day to the study of English reading, grammar, and composition. The French settlements were apparently less disposed to encourage the study of English and much blame was attached to the Education Department because of its tolerance of what was said to be an anomalous condition of affairs in an Anglo-Saxon community.³⁹

Ross thus portrayed German settlements as living proof that the strategy of 'voluntary assimilation' did work. "In the County of Waterloo, in this Province," the Minister held in March 1889, "German is taught, but the English language prevails and is always increasing in efficiency."⁴⁰ With this observation, even conservatives were likely to agree.⁴¹ "The Germans," M.P.P. Craig said in his address to the Provincial Legislature, "were not, while they were

³⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London, New York: Verso, 1991 [1983].

³⁹ *Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1887* (Toronto: Warwick & Sons, 1888), lix.

⁴⁰ *Toronto Globe*, March 9, 1889, 8.

⁴¹ For a discussion of the concept of 'voluntary assimilation' see Gaffield, *Language, Schooling, and Cultural Conflict*, 5-16.

spreading, carrying their language with them like the French.”⁴² The French-German analogy which liberals and conservatives alike conjured, is revealing for several reasons. In his favourable mention of Waterloo County, George Ross demonstrated how Waterloo had become synonymous with German in the public mind.⁴³ In highlighting the readiness of German migrants to learn English, he sought to undermine the status of francophones as a group deserving of special treatment.⁴⁴ While Ross perceived Franco Ontarians to cling tenaciously to their language and culture, he praised German migrants for yielding readily to the pressures of “assimilation and absorption.”⁴⁵

Not surprisingly, his words were carefully noted in Waterloo County where the *Berliner Journal* followed the round of debates. Any journalistic detachment, however, that the editors might have possessed, evaporated when the rights of German-language schooling were questioned by a German-born M.P.P., George Hess from North Perth: “He wanted to have his children speak the English language, and to speak it better than he could himself, and therefore he did not ask to have German taught in the schools.”⁴⁶ The editors of the *Berliner Journal* were aghast.⁴⁷ In a series of articles, they bitterly complained that this “peculiar representative of the people” had wilfully downplayed not only the extent of German-language schooling but also its long history in the province.⁴⁸ In doing so, they alleged, Hess had threatened the efforts of German newspapers, teachers, associations, and clergy to cultivate the “German language,

⁴² *Toronto Empire*, March 9, 1889, 14.

⁴³ See also the exchange between M.P.P. George Hess and the Minister of Education, *Globe*, March 12, 1889, 6: “He desired the Minister of Education to mention a single Public school in which German was taught. The Minister of Education jerked out ‘Waterloo’.”

⁴⁴ In this context see Gaffield, *Language, Schooling, and Cultural Conflict*, 25.

⁴⁵ *Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1887*, lix.

⁴⁶ Quoted in the *Toronto Globe*, March 12, 1889, 6.

⁴⁷ *BJ*, March 14, 1889, 4. By contrast, the province’s English-language press only briefly mentioned this “gentleman’s” endorsement of English as the country’s “common tongue.” See the *Toronto Empire*, March 12, 1889, 4.

⁴⁸ *BJ*, April 25, 1889, 4; May 2, 1889, 5; July 24, 1890, 4.

German customs, German literature, and German songs in Canada”.⁴⁹ What was at stake, evidently, were two diametrically opposed views of the German language in Canada. The *Berliner Journal* regarded language as the broadest expression of a ‘people’s spirit’ which could be forsaken only at the cost of losing one’s very identity. Georg Hess, by contrast, considered German a ballast of the past that had to be shed in order to become a true British subject.⁵⁰

To counter his attack, the *Berliner Journal* forged an alliance with French-Canadians. This alliance, ironically, remained restricted to the realm of political commentary and never translated into political action. To all accounts, French Canadians in Eastern Ontario were blissfully unaware of the fact that they possessed an ally in this German-language weekly whose editorials staunchly supported their right to French-language schooling. Voicing their sympathy for the hard-working francophone settlers, the *Journal* felt reminded of Waterloo County’s German pioneers. Forty years ago, they wrote, “there were many sections where both children and teacher understood little English, or none at all; and it would not have made any sense to suggest the appointment of English teachers or the introduction of English school readers.”⁵¹ Just as poverty had prevented German pioneers from investing in their schools, French-Canadians now had to eke out a living with meagre resources and to channel their energies into working the land.⁵² Instead of deriding these hardy settlers, they should be commended for clinging to “the language and the customs of their forefathers.”⁵³ In the eyes of the editors, the crusade against French-language schooling was incomprehensible; French and German-language schools had a

⁴⁹ *BJ*, March 14, 1889, 4: “deutsche Sprache, deutsche Sitten, deutsche Literatur und deutsche Lieder in Canada.”

⁵⁰ *BJ*, January 3, 1889, 4.

⁵¹ *BJ*, December 23, 1886, 4: “Damals gab es viele Sektionen, wo Kinder und Lehrer wenig oder gar kein Englisch verstanden; und es wäre Unsinn gewesen, wenn man von der Anstellung englischer Lehrer und der Einführung englischer Bücher hätte sprechen wollen.”

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *BJ*, June 20, 1889, 4.

long-established presence in the Province of Ontario, were rightfully recognized in the school law, and had readily complied with the regulations of 1885.⁵⁴

In colourful language, the *Journal* heaped ridicule on 'linguistic fanatics' who saw their country's salvation in "Anglicization" and betrayed an "ignorant arrogance" (*dummen Dünkel*) by treating all non-English with contempt.⁵⁵ "Whoever believes that 43,000 French could dominate a total population of 2,000,000 citizens and, over time, change everything to be French and Catholic, shows little trust in the resilience of the English and Scottish peoples and makes a complete fool of himself."⁵⁶ Similarly, when the *Toronto Mail* railed against the publication of council resolutions in French, the *Journal* responded with biting irony: "Here [in Waterloo County], such resolutions are printed in both German and English, and German is occasionally spoken in the municipal council. Yet it is highly unlikely that this will cause the British Empire to forfeit either the Province of Ontario or the Dominion of Canada."⁵⁷ It is equally unlikely, one might want to add, that this line of argument would have impressed the *Toronto Mail*. As the self-proclaimed guardian of Ontario's British heritage, the *Mail* regarded cultural difference with deep suspicion and expected the 'others' to conform to the country's perceived Anglo-Saxon cultural norm. The *Journal*, by contrast, saw

⁵⁴ *BJ*, December 23, 1886, 4; July 18, 1889, 4. As we know from Chad Gaffield's work, francophone schools in Prescott County had not complied with the 1885 regulations of the Ontario Education Act. In rendering the intent of the regulations meaningless, classes were taught by francophones, French was the language of instruction, and textbooks were imported from Quebec. What is of interest here, however, is not so much the factual accuracy of the debates but, rather, the discursive universe in which they unfolded. See Gaffield, *Language, Schooling, and Cultural Conflict*, 182.

⁵⁵ *BJ*, June 20, 1889, 4.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, July 18, 1889, 4: "Wer da glaubt, daß etwa 40,000 Franzosen unter einer Gesamtbevölkerung von 2,000,000 Einwohnern die Oberhand bekommen, und mit der Zeit Alles französisch und katholisch machen konnten, der hat einen schwachen Glauben an die Widerstandsfähigkeit des englischen und schottischen Volkes, und macht sich ungeheuer lächerlich."

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, December 23, 1886, 4: "Hier werden solche Sachen deutsch und englisch gedruckt, und wird an der Rathstafel auch mitunter deutsch gesprochen. Deswegen wird doch wohl die Provinz Ontario oder die Dominion Canada dem britischen Reiche nicht verloren gehen."

“the English” as only one people among many, all of whom possessed the right to cultivate their history, literature, customs, songs, and mother tongue.⁵⁸

While showing nothing but disdain for the concept of cultural uniformity, the *Journal* endorsed the school regulations of the Ontario government. English, it affirmed, was the language of the country and should be taught at the public schools, wherever it could reasonably be expected.⁵⁹ It was this ready embrace of the English language that impressed the ‘Commission on German Schools’ that visited Waterloo County’s public schools in the summer of 1889.⁶⁰

Of ‘German’ Children and ‘English’ Schools

The *Commission of 1889* was to inquire into the conditions of minority-language schooling in the province of Ontario. Although the focus was Prescott and Russell Counties, where, as Chad Gaffield has observed, “the francophone presence was considered to be most disturbing”, the commissioners also investigated “the teaching of English in the said Public Schools in which the German language is taught.”⁶¹ In so doing, they were authorized “to consider and report in what way the study of English may be most successfully promoted among those accustomed to the use of the German language as their mother tongue.”⁶² The wording of these instructions suggests a focus on language abilities, rather than ethnicity. Indeed, in presenting their findings, the commission collapsed the ethnic and cultural amalgam of Waterloo County’s Pennsylvania Mennonites, South German Catholics, North German Protestants, Amish, Swiss, and Alsations into the category ‘German(-speaking)’, just as they subsumed the county’s Scotch, English, and Irish

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, June 20, 1889, 4. See also February 2, 1890, 4 and February 13, 1890, 4.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, July 18, 1889, 4.

⁶⁰ The three commissioners in question were “John J. Tilley, Inspector of County Model Schools for the Province of Ontario, the Reverend Alfred H. Reynar, M.A., Professor of Modern Languages in Victoria University, and the Reverend D. D. McLeod of the Town of Barrie, in the County of Simcoe.” See *Regulations and Correspondence*, 110.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* and Gaffield, *Language, Schooling, and Cultural Conflict*, 26.

⁶² *Regulations and Correspondence*, 110.

settlers under 'English(-speaking)'.⁶³ Lost in between were the seven per cent of county residents that belonged to neither cultural group; they were, presumably, categorized as either 'German' or 'English'.⁶⁴ In establishing language as the defining criterion of group membership, the commissioners kept with their mandate. But they did commit the slippage of confusing language with ethnic origin.⁶⁵

Table 5: Enrolment in German-language Classes by Ethnic Origin, Waterloo County, 1889

	'German' Pupils Total	'German' Pupils Studying German		'English' Pupils Total	'English' Pupils Studying German	
		N	%		N	%
Berlin	745	68	9	202	13	6
Preston	173	50	29	76	17	22
New Hamburg	201	35	17	37	5	14
Waterloo Village	371	35	9	76	7	9
Waterloo, S.S. 18	35	12	34	2		0
Waterloo, S.S. 25	16	8	50	0		0
Wilmot, S.S. 13	146	16	11	26	1	4
Wilmot, S.S. 16	38	5	13	0		0
Wellesley, S.S. 16	138	16	12	8		0
Woolwich, S.S. 10	42	19	45	0		0

Source: *Regulations and Correspondence*, 114.

By 1889, as we can see above, German-language instruction had all but disappeared in the rural areas of Waterloo County. The lingering presence of German in a select number of rural schools

⁶³ For the diversity of German-origin settlers in Waterloo County see Heinz Lehmann, *The German Canadians, 1750-1937: Immigration, Settlement & Culture*. Translated, Edited & Introduced by Gerhard P. Bassler (St. John's, Newfoundland: Jespersen Press, 1986), 68-72 and Gerhard P. Bassler, "The Problem of German-Canadian Identity," *Yearbook of German-American Studies*, 33 (1998), 160.

⁶⁴ *Census of Canada*, 1881.

⁶⁵ Donald Harman Akenson, "The Historiography of English-Speaking Canada and the Concept of Diaspora: A Sceptical Appreciation," *Canadian Historical Review*, 76, 3 (September 1995), 399.

seemed due to a predominantly 'German' student body and the consequent lack of 'German-English' interaction which the commissioners had observed in the remainder of the county.

The strongholds of German-language instruction were located in the German-language Departments of Berlin, Preston, New Hamburg, and Waterloo Village which enrolled roughly equal numbers of 'German' and 'English' children. It was here that the transformation of German from the *language* of instruction to a *subject* of instruction had been completed; while failing to win the unequivocal support of German-origin settlers, German had become an elective subject for the general school population. In comprehensive German-language programmes, children received between 10 and 12.5 hours of weekly instruction in reading, writing, and grammar. Yet, in no instance, the commissioners marvelled, did German-language instruction impede the children's overall progress: "The German pupils who were learning German were quite as well advanced in their studies as those who were not learning German. The learning of German does not seem to have interfered with the progress of the pupils in English or in other subjects."⁶⁶ Far from interfering, the German language itself seemed to be in retreat.

As the commissioners observed, the sustained interaction between German and English settlements had resulted in 'English' schools that were attended by 'German' children:

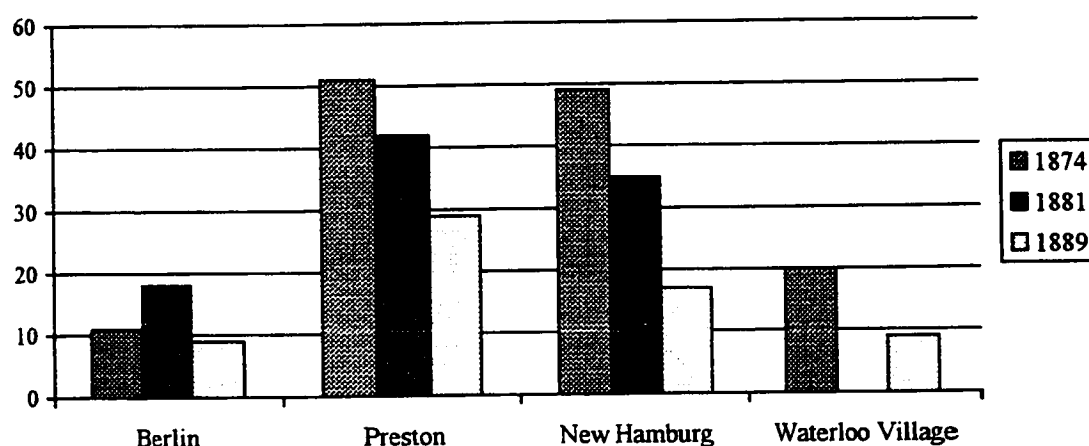
As the surrounding districts became occupied by English-speaking people, the German language gradually gave way to the English, so that now the schools, though attended by German children and making some use of German, are practically English schools and the German language is no longer used as the medium of instruction in any of them, except so far as may be necessary to give explanation to those pupils who, on coming to school, know but little English.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁶⁷ *Regulations and Correspondence*, 111 and 113. In the late nineteenth century, francophone settlements in south-western Ontario exhibited similar levels of bilingualism. As David Welsh and Jack Cecillon have noted for Essex and Kent counties, economic transactions, transportation links, churches and schools provided a forum of interaction between anglophone and francophone settlers. See Welsh, "Early Franco-Ontarian Schooling as a Reflection and Creator of Community Identity," *Ontario History*, 85, 4 (December 1993), 321-47 and Cecillon, "Turbulent Times in the Diocese of London: Bishop Fallon and the French-Language Controversy, 1910-18," *Ontario History*, 87, 4 (December 1995), 369-95.

While preserving “their attachment to their mother tongue,” German parents had recognized “the necessity of an English education in this country.” This reasonable attitude, the commissioners held, accounted for the smooth, if gradual, “transition from German to English.”⁶⁸

Graph 3: Schoolchildren Enrolled in German-language Classes at Public Schools, Waterloo County, 1874-1889 (in percentages)



Source: *Regulations and Correspondence*, 114; KPL, WHS, WAT C-87, Manuscript Annual School Reports for 1874 and 1881.

In fact, the report pointed to a marked drop in the enrolment in German Departments. Except for fluctuating enrolment figures at Berlin – which, in any case, had always been substantially lower than in either Preston or New Hamburg – the percentage of children studying German had been cut in half between 1874 and 1889. Thus, even in the province’s German heartland, English constituted the language of instruction. German was confined to a special branch of education and enrolment figures in German-language programmes were rapidly declining.

For Berlin’s school children, the commissioner’s brief visit likely constituted their only exposure to the heated debates on minority-language education in the late 1880s.⁶⁹ Protest only

⁶⁸ *Regulations and Correspondence*, 113.

⁶⁹ Although the government quickly responded to the commission’s findings, the regulations of 1889 did not affect Waterloo County’s public schools where teachers were already ‘properly’

flared briefly in September 1889 when “some citizens complained that the German teacher at the local Central School has been banished from his former room and re-allocated in the smallest room in the building.”⁷⁰ Yet as the chairman of the Berlin School Board, L. Janzen, quickly reassured *Journal* readers, the measure was only temporary and did in no way constitute a threat to German-language instruction. The threat lay elsewhere, Janzen continued, namely in the failure of German parents to send their children to Louis von Neubronn’s classroom: “I am afraid that parents let children have their own way in this important matter far too often. This should not be the case. Once those children will have grown into men and women, they will realize their grand mistake and rebuke their parents for not having been more strict with them.”⁷¹

To the disappointment of German-language advocates, the 1890s showed no sign of a renewed interest in German-language instruction. On the contrary, in keeping with the spirit of the 1889 regulations, teachers devoted their efforts to providing their young flock with “a thorough knowledge of English.”⁷² At a meeting of the *Berlin Teachers’ Association* in May 1895, Miss Scully presented a step-by-step manual on how to teach composition to “Junior Pupils, especially German Children”:

certified and capable of offering an English-language curriculum. See “Additional Regulations Respecting the Study of English in French and German Schools,” in *Report of the Minister of Education (Ontario) for the Year 1890* (Toronto: Warwick & Sons, 1891), 59.

⁷⁰ *BJ*, September 5, 1889, 4: “Einige Bürger beschwerten sich darüber, daß man dem deutschen Lehrer an der hiesigen Zentral-Schule das seitherige Zimmer genommen, und ihm den allerkleinsten Raum im Schulgebäude angewiesen.”

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, September 12, 1889, 5: “Ich befürchte sehr, daß man den Kindern in dieser wichtigen Sache oft ihren eigenen Willen zu viel läßt. Dieses sollte nicht der Fall sein. Sind diese Kinder zu Männern und Frauen herangewachsen, dann werden sie zur Einsicht kommen, daß sie in ihrer Jugend einen großen Fehler begangen haben, und werden ihre Eltern tadeln, daß sie nicht schärfer mit ihnen in dieser Hinsicht verfahren sind.”

⁷² *Report of the Minister of Education for the Province of Ontario (Canada), 1890* (Toronto: Warwick & Sons, 1891), 68.

1. You can teach them very little until they have acquired some knowledge of English.
2. Insist on the pupils speaking English during recess.
3. Be on the constant lookout to correct mistakes in English.
4. Children will follow teacher's example and correct each other.
5. When an unfamiliar word occurs ask some intelligent pupils to give the word in German.
6. When pupils begin to understand English language lessons must be oral and very simple.
7. When pupils are further advanced oral exercise must precede written exercise. ...
10. Endeavor to set the children to like writing stories. ...
15. Give them the title merely of a simple story, as 'Going to School' 'What I would do if I had \$ 10'. The latter one being a means of finding out certain phases of a child's character and then read to the lads the composition of the unselfish and compare it with that of the selfish child.⁷³

On a most basic level, Miss Scully's suggestions remind us that the German language was spoken in many families – a fact sometimes obscured by the sorrowful laments about the demise of the German language or the optimistic assertions of widespread voluntary assimilation. It was the teachers' responsibility to transform these minimally bilingual children into fluent English-language speakers – a task which Miss Scully tackled with the skill and energy of an experienced teacher.

In working with German-origin children, she devised innovative ways of teaching the English language. Rather than relying on the rehearsal of grammatical rules, she regarded oral lessons – the hearing and speaking of English – as the key to learning. In doing so, her pupils were granted time to assimilate the structures of the English language inductively before moving on to

⁷³ *Waterloo County Board of Education, "Minute Book of Berlin Teachers' Association," May 10, 1895.*

written exercise.⁷⁴ Gentle coercion, as well, played an important role in Miss Scully's teaching arsenal. She confined the use of German to the German-language classroom and insisted that children spoke English even on the playground. Last but not least, her language lessons were morality plays en miniature. Ostensibly exercises in creativity, Miss Scully did not hesitate to shame "the selfish child" by reading their composition to the class. A flight of "imagination", it appears, was allowed only within the narrow boundaries of 'proper' behaviour. As if to confirm the gradual 'Anglicization' of Waterloo County in which Miss Scully took an active part, the 1901 Canadian Census pointed to a town in which English had become the language of the majority.

The 1901 Canadian Census

Perhaps stimulated by the 'discovery' of linguistically defined nationhood, the science of language proliferated in the late nineteenth century. Interestingly, its very terminology pointed to a connection between language and a larger speech community that was reminiscent of Herder's musings on language and the 'people's spirit'. The term 'mother tongue', for example, tended to refer not to actual parents and their role in the process of language acquisition, as it would in later years, but to an ethnically or racially defined community.⁷⁵

The ambiguity of linguistic concepts like 'mother tongue' was reflected in the 1901 national census of Canada that struggled, in vain, to devise a simple and practical definition:

⁷⁴ Miss Scully's teaching manual reflected a modern approach to foreign-language teaching that emphasized oral language skills over grammar and translation. In doing so, she was ahead of her times; the Minister of Education would not embrace phonetics before 1900. See "Bi-Lingual Schools: Methods of Teaching," in *Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1900* (Toronto: L. K. Cameron, 1901), 97. In this context see also Manfred Prokop, "Canadianization of Immigrant Children: Role of the Rural Elementary School in Alberta, 1900-1930," *Alberta History*, 37, 2 (Spring 1989), 4-5 and 10 and Susan N. Bayley, "The Direct Method and modern language teaching in England, 1880-1918," *History of Education*, 27, 1 (1998), 43.

⁷⁵ Chad Gaffield, "Linearity, Nonlinearity, and the Competing Constructions of Social Hierarchy in Early Twentieth-Century Canada: The Question of Language in 1901," *Historical Methods*, 33, 2 (Fall 2000), 256.

Mother tongue is one's native language, the language of his race; but not necessarily the language in which he thinks, or which he speaks most fluently, or uses chiefly in conversation. Whatever it may be, English, French, Irish, German, Swedish, Russian or any other, it should be entered by name in column 33 if the person speaks the language, but not otherwise.⁷⁶

Although this explanation likely compounded the confusion of the 8,800 census enumerators, it sheds light on a perceived correspondence between language and 'race', or, more generally, between language and one's people (one's *native* tongue). Evidently, in a country of immigrants, ethnic unity presented an elusive goal; not so, however, linguistic unity.

In justifying the introduction of language categories into the Canadian census, government authorities argued that:

In a country peopled by so many foreign elements as Canada, it is desirable to know if they are being absorbed and unified, as may appear by their acquirement of one of other of the official languages. And as English is now in a very large degree the language of commerce throughout the world, it is also desirable to ascertain to what extent citizens of French origin are able to speak it in addition to their own.⁷⁷

This statement, as Chad Gaffield has observed, assumed a linguistic hierarchy that "placed mother-tongue Anglophones at the top, with those who spoke neither French nor English at the bottom."⁷⁸ It also established a perceived superiority of the English tongue which was depicted as the language of modernity. To communicate effectively in the language of trade and commerce, the commissioner implied, was an indispensable requirement for the citizens of this young, industrializing nation.

If we follow the logic of the Canadian census, Berlin was ready to enter the twentieth century. Indeed, the census confirmed what educational authorities had long asserted.⁷⁹ In a

⁷⁶ *Fourth Census of Canada, 1901*, vol. xiii, xx.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Gaffield, "Linearity, Nonlinearity," 256.

⁷⁹ The following discussion draws upon a computer file which I created from the 1901 manuscript census. In keeping with the methodology developed by the *Canadian Families Project*, households, not individuals, constituted the unit of analysis. This approach proved to be

town whose 'German-ness' was unmistakable – 78 per cent of Berlin's 9,747 residents were of German origin in 1901 – 93 per cent of the German population were able to speak English.⁸⁰

Table 6: Language Ability by Cultural Origin, Berlin, Ontario, 1901

	N	%
<i>German-Origin</i>		
Can speak English	2,937	91.8
Can speak French	2	0.1
Can speak both English and French	34	1.1
Can speak neither English nor French	225	7.0
<i>Total Population</i>	3,198	100.0

Source: Manuscript Census, 1901. Data are for the population five years of age and older.

As census enumerators were explicitly instructed not to inquire about language proficiency, we are left to wonder to what extent German accents, grammatical constructions, and vocabulary carried over into the English.⁸¹ Yet although English might have been spoken with varying degrees of ease and sophistication, the English-language skills of Berlin's German-origin residents far exceeded those of francophones in Eastern Ontario.⁸² As the graph below indicates, English was a foreign language only for the very young and the elderly.

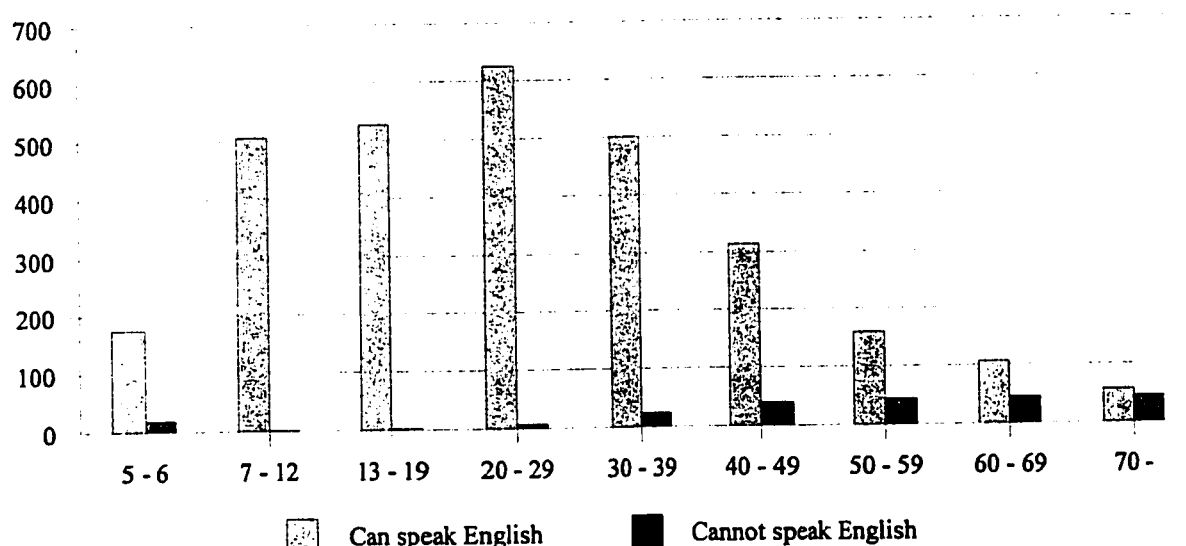
invaluable as it allowed me to examine the language dynamics within families and between generations. My database consisted of a fifty per cent random sample of Berlin's population, encompassing a total of 4,747 individual cases. Data analysis was done using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS).

⁸⁰ *Census of Canada*, 1901.

⁸¹ The instruction to census enumerators read as follows: "account is not to be taken of the degree of proficiency as regards any one of the questions." See *Fourth Census of Canada*, vol. I, xx.

⁸² Gaffield, *Language, Schooling, and Cultural Conflict*, 181.

Graph 4: Language Ability of German-Origin Residents by Age Groups, Berlin, Ontario, 1901



Source: Manuscript Census, 1901. Data are for the population five years of age and older.

In the unlikely event that the provincial Minister of Education should have sifted through the pages of the manuscript census and wondered why nine per cent of Berlin's five to six-year old German children did not speak English, he would soon have felt re-assured. Although Walter Hauser, Nellie Decker, and Oliva Koebel, to name just as few, spoke only German at home, they would soon learn English in the classroom, much as their older siblings Emma, Norman, Matilda, and Edgar had done.⁸³ In other words, although their families upheld German as the language of the home, both parents and older children were bilingual. Familiarity with English was the rule among Berlin's German school-aged children and youth; a negligible 0.3 per cent of the seven to nineteen-year-olds were unable to speak English.

It was out of a multitude of daily encounters and relationships – at the market, the school, the workplace, the church, and associations – that migrants grew familiar with the language of English-Canada. For German-origin men, in particular, social mobility provided a powerful

⁸³ All of these German-origin children had been born in Ontario.

impetus for learning English. This, in fact, was the experience of Karl Müller. Upon emigrating to Canada in 1872, the twenty-four year old heeded his brother's advice and attended the local high school. After his language immersion, which lasted six months and included tutorial lessons by brother Adolf in the evenings, Müller began an apprenticeship as a telegraph operator for the railway. Later, he operated a successful painting business in which he comfortably interacted with both German- and English-speaking patrons.⁸⁴ Thus, while it was possible to lead a 'German' life in Berlin, mastery of the English language promised occupational mobility.

Taken together, these findings help to explain why German-language schooling was rarely perceived as a threat by state representatives. First, the number of non-English speakers of German-origin was comparatively small which reflected a general willingness to embrace English as the language of the country. Just as important, school-aged children and youth between the ages of seven and nineteen 'scored' almost perfectly with regard to English-language ability (99.7 per cent) and literacy (99.1 per cent). As a result, in the eyes of educational authorities, the long-term prospects of 'Germans in Canada' must have appeared nothing but promising. The future bearers of the ethnic group seemed to be destined to blend almost completely with Canada's English-speaking population. To put it differently, if the ability to speak English constituted a corner-stone in the construction of a Canadian nation, the public schools of Berlin seemed to have fulfilled their duty to provide for "a lasting bond and cement of society," much as Ontario's Minister of Education, Egerton Ryerson, had envisioned in 1872.

But, interestingly, the census also illustrated the remarkable persistence of the German language in Waterloo County. When census enumerators knocked at their doors, the overwhelmingly majority of German-origin residents (89.5 per cent) reported German as their

⁸⁴ Karl Müller-Grote, "Onkel Karl: Deutschkanadische Lebensbilder", *German-Canadian Yearbook*, 15 (1998), 116-20.

mother tongue. Although they might no longer have spoken German fluently, their responses reflect an emotional attachment to the German tongue that was significant in itself.⁸⁵

Table 7: Mother Tongue by Cultural Origin, Berlin, Ontario, 1901

	N	%
<i>German-Origin</i>		
German	2,863	89.5
English	293	9.2
Other	42	1.3
<i>Total Population</i>	3,198	100.0
<i>British-Isles-Origin</i>		
German	48	6.3
English	708	92.2
Other	12	1.6
<i>Total Population</i>	768	100.1*

Source: Manuscript Census, 1901. Data are for the population five years of age and older.

* Does not add to 100 because of rounding.

As illustrated above, 6.3 per cent of Berlin's residents of British-Isles-origin identified German as their mother tongue, a phenomenon largely due to mixed marriages; the offspring of British/German marital unions tended to acquire their mother's first language as mother tongue.⁸⁶ A less obvious pattern emerges if we restrict our analysis to those 9.2 per cent of German-origin families whose members reported English as their mother tongue. In one third of these cases, the parents came from divergent linguistic backgrounds. In one tenth of the families, however, the children's mother tongue was English, although both parents had (supposedly) grown up speaking

⁸⁵ As Joshua A. Fishman has pointed out "these data are suspect not only because they are based upon claims rather than upon actual proof of language use, but also because they relate to mother tongues rather than to current facilities." See Fishman, "Language Maintenance," in Stephen Thernstrom ed., *Harvard Encyclopaedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 1980), 629.

⁸⁶ Gillian Stevens, "Nativity, Intermarriage, and Mother-Tongue Shift," *American Sociological Review*, 50 (February 1985), 77.

German, a finding which suggests a gradual language shift from German to English. This shift, in fact, had already occurred in over half of those families; here, both German-origin parents and children reported English as their mother tongue.

The 1901 census thus captures the dual nature of a German/English life in Berlin which ethnic spokespersons had conjured in the preceding five decades, with equal measures of pride and trepidation. As we have seen, the “spectre” of a language shift that loomed so large for the editors of the *Berliner Journal* did, indeed, reflect changing patterns of language behaviour. But the census also depicted a town where the cultural norm was ‘German’, not ‘British’, and where the vast majority of German-origin residents cultivated the German mother tongue as either a medium of communication or a symbol of cultural identity.

The national census, whose prominent role in the machinery of modern nation-states exuded an air of science and authority alike, was markedly mute on the question of cultural conflict.⁸⁷ For this, we have to turn to Berlin’s local press that meticulously commented upon the trials and fortunes of German-language schooling. Unbeknownst to provincial and federal authorities, a drama over German-language instruction captivated the town of Berlin at the turn of the century, pitting county school inspector Thomas Pearce’s against Berlin’s social and economic elite. X

⁸⁷ Chad Gaffield, “Back to School: Towards a New Agenda for the History of Education,” *Acadiensis* (Spring 1986), 174-5.

Chapter VIII

“A Storm of Indignation’: The German School Association, Berlin, 1900-1914

If the stagnating enrolment at Berlin’s German Department was any indication, the German public did not seem to be deeply rooted in the everyday life of the town’s residents. In 1898, the editors of the *Berliner Journal* remarked with a deep sigh that “the complete abolition of German-language instruction would likely meet with a storm of indignation; but to see it slowly strangled ... is being happily tolerated by our good-natured *Deutschthum*.”¹ Indeed, at the turn of the century, it had become increasingly difficult to find qualified German-language teachers. With Louis von Neubronn heading for retirement in 1893, and William Euler leaving the profession after a six-year tenure (1893-1899), an era of revolving doors began during which inexperienced teachers followed each other in quick succession.²

Yet, just as the structures of German-language schooling seemed to be eroding, the Berlin Public School Board adopted its cause. In September 1897, only four weeks after Berlin’s citizens had gathered in Victoria Park to unveil the monument of *Kaiser Wilhelm I*, the town’s school trustees expanded the scope of German-language instruction to include “the teaching of German in the Central and the Agnes Street Schools.”³ In the following month, they “recommended that a proportionate remuneration for the extra time be paid to the teacher of

¹ *Berliner Journal* [hereafter *BJ*], December 22, 1898, 4: “Die gänzliche Abschaffung des deutschen Unterrichts würde wohl große Entrüstung hervorrufen, aber die langsame Erdrosselung desselben ... läßt sich unser gutmüthiges Deutschthum ganz wohl gefallen.”

² *Waterloo County Board of Education* [hereafter *WCBE*], “Berlin Board Minutes, 1898-1908,” October 26, 1893; January 17, 1894; April 6, 1899; July 10, 1899; December 7, 1899; December 18, 1899; August 30, 1900.

³ *Ibid.*, September 7, 1897. As the Berlin Public School Board Minutes contain only the results of prolonged deliberations, we are left to speculate whether or not there existed a direct link between the 1897 *Sängerfest* and the subsequent extension of German-language schooling. The timing certainly suggests that much.

German,” thus providing a monetary incentive for German-language teachers that Otto Klotz had demanded, in vain, twenty years earlier. The trustees also suggested that “German can be best taught by taking up German between 8:15 and 9 o’clock in the forenoon.”⁴ The latter innovation presented a double-edged sword; by removing German-language instruction from the regular school curriculum, the School Board assigned it to second-class status.⁵ The trustees’ subsequent decision, however, was likely to mollify critics. In December 1899, the Berlin Public School Board passed a motion “that German shall be taught in all the Berlin Public Schools in all classes from Junior 3rd up.”⁶

In broadening the scope of German-language instruction, the trustees erected an institutional monument for the German language that was no less significant than the *Kaiser’s* bust. Just as the Emperor’s memorial represented a confident, bourgeois German-ness that took possession of the public sphere, so did the expansion of German-language programmes reflect a new awareness of German language and culture.⁷ In Berlin, with its overwhelmingly German-origin population, the public school board had always provided a supportive environment for German-language schooling. Only now, however, did the trustees become actively involved in safeguarding and expanding the German-language classroom. At a time when enrolment figures at the Central’s German Department were declining, the trustees identified the German language as an emblem of groupness that had to be sheltered, nurtured, and protected.⁸ The school board’s

⁴ *Ibid.*, October 5, 1897.

⁵ *Ibid.*: “By adopting this plan children can take German without missing any of the other classes.”

⁶ *Ibid.*, December 7, 1899.

⁷ See Friedemann Schmoll, “Individualdenkmal, Sängerbewegung und Nationalbewußtsein in Württemberg: Zum Funktionswandel bürgerlicher Erinnerungskultur zwischen Vormärz und Kaiserreich,” in Friedhelm Brusniak and Dietmar Klenke eds., *“Heil deutschem Wort und Sang! Nationalidentität und Gesangskultur in der deutschen Geschichte – Tagungsbericht Feuchtwangen 1994* (Augsburg: Dr. Bernd Wissner, 1995), 74.

⁸ In this context see Herbert J. Gans, “Symbolic ethnicity: the future of ethnic groups and cultures in America,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2, 1 (January 1979), 9.

decision provoked almost no editorial comment in local newspapers, nor did the trustees consider it necessary to explain their actions. We are just left with the paradox that the German language was discovered as a symbol of identity at the very moment when the German classroom seemed to have become an ethnic anachronism.

This chapter suggests that, even as a symbol of identity, the German language continued to command a powerful hold on the imagination of German migrants. As tenuous as membership in the German public appeared to be, in times of struggle it transformed from an “informal and taken-for-granted frame of reference” into an ‘imagined community’ that mobilized members from several classes and groups.⁹ In the moment of crisis, language became a rallying point, lending impetus to an ethnic movement whose vitality took school inspector Thomas Pearce by surprise.

The School Crisis of 1900

The trigger of the Berlin school crisis was innocuous enough. In February 1900, School Inspector Seath had criticized the reading at the local high school “rather adversely,” as the *Berlin News Record* remarked.¹⁰ The newspaper could not agree more. “That the Queen’s English is murdered on every hand is admitted,” the editors wrote – and were quick to point out the reasons why. “Oral reading will not reach the highest standard in North Waterloo for several generations, owing to the difficulties that pupils of German descent have to surmount in mastering the English tongue.”¹¹ Always striving for excellence in schooling, the Berlin Public School Board instructed Inspector Pearce to submit “a report on the situation,” which the latter promptly delivered:

⁹ Gopal Balakrishnan, “The National Imagination,” in Gopal Balakrishnan ed., *Mapping the Nation* (London, New York: Verso, 1996), 210.

¹⁰ *Berlin News Record*, April 27, 1900, 4.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, February 2, 1900, 4.

I was more than surprised to find children of British parentage reading and speaking fully as 'broken' as those of German parentage. The reason is obvious ... if the foundation of good reading must be laid when pupils are in Second Reader, is it not a mistake to permit children in the Second Reader to study German, in other words, to permit the minds of young children to be confused with the sounds of letters and the pronunciation of words of two languages in many respects so very difference? Experience shows that such children are unable to distinguish the differences and the result is they read and speak English with a German accent and pronunciation and vice versa, a habit it becomes almost impossible to eradicate during the rest of the course.¹²

For Inspector Pearce, reading had long been a matter of professional concern. As early as in the 1870s, he had observed German pupils struggling with English letters and was taken aback by "the strong German accent of many of the pupils."¹³ In 1894, he still reported rather regretfully that "distinct articulation, good inflection and naturalness of expression are heard in few schools."¹⁴ Thus, what could be more natural than limiting German-language instruction to the upper grades where pupils were not quite as easily confused by the "bewildering maze" of two languages?¹⁵

Little was Thomas Pearce aware that he had stirred up a hornets' nest. The outcry in the community was almost immediate. Painter Karl Müller, for one, called upon Berlin's *Deutschthum* to fight for "our language", stating that "a school inspector who has held office in the German County for forty years and still not learned the German tongue .. is incapable of judging the benefits or drawbacks of German-language instruction."¹⁶ On a more moderate note,

¹² Quoted in *ibid.*, July 4, 1900, 4.

¹³ *Kitchener Public Library – Grace Schmidt Room of Local History* [hereafter KPL], "Waterloo Historical Society" [hereafter WHS], KIT 6, "Visitors' Book – Roman Catholic Separate School Board, Berlin, 1875," February 6, 1878. In the case of the township school of St. Jacob's, the inspector found that "[t]he pupils did fairly in the subjects in which I examined them, except in reading, which is, apparently, very difficult to teach in this place." See WCBE, "Woolwich Township S.S. 8 (St. Jacob's), Minutes & Accounts, 1872-1907," March 26, 1880.

¹⁴ KPL, WHS, WAT C-87, "Twenty-Third Annual Report of the Inspector of Public Schools of the County of Waterloo, for the Year ending 31st December, 1894."

¹⁵ *Ibid.*: "Report on the Public Schools of the County of Waterloo, for the Year 1875, by the County Inspector Thomas Pearce."

¹⁶ See Müller's letter to the editor in the *Berliner Journal*, May 17, 1900, 4: "[ein] Schulinspektor, der seit einigen vierzig Jahren in diesem deutschen County seines Amtes waltet und bis

Reverend Teufel refuted the inspector's claim that bi-lingual instruction impeded the progress of young children: "We have always found that pupils who learn more than one language are superior to those who deal only with one."¹⁷ Such was the protest that the School Board asked Jeremiah Suddaby for his expert opinion. In his statement, the experienced headmaster of the Central School added a voice of calm to a heated debate. As many parents spoke English but poorly, it was left to the teachers to correct children's pronunciation. Their efforts, however, were undermined by the fact that reading ranked lowest in the annual school examinations, thus providing little incentive to invest time and care in reading lessons.¹⁸ Shortly thereafter, the School Board heeded Suddaby's advice and abolished the annual examinations, for they were "unfair to pupils as well as injurious to some, unjust to the teachers and misleading to the public, and not in accord with the broad modern idea of the purpose of education."¹⁹ The trustees' decisive step, however, failed to appease local language advocates.

It was the craftsmen of the singing society *Concordia*, valiantly supported by the *Berliner Journal*, who organized an indignation meeting on June 22, 1900 to discuss "the better development of German instruction in our public schools."²⁰ In attendance were prominent local citizens, including "some of our English fellow-citizens who recognize the use and desirability of a broader education for our children," to whom the organizers had extended a warm welcome.²¹

heute noch kein Deutsch gelernt hat [ist] gar nicht befähigt ... über den Nutzen oder Schaden des deutschen Unterrichts ein Urtheil zu haben." See also A. Gläser in *BJ*, June 28, 1900, 4.

¹⁷ *BJ*, May 17, 1900, 4: "wir haben immer gefunden, daß Schüler, die mehr als eine Sprache erlernen, immer solchen Schülern voraus sind, die sich nur mit einer Sprache befassen."

¹⁸ *BJ*, June 7, 1900, 4. A month earlier, Suddaby's explanation had been endorsed by the Berlin Teachers' Association that identified three reasons for the low reading standards: "(1) The marks in reading at the Entrance examination being low in comparison with other subjects. (2) The large amount of German spoken at School and at home. (3) The crowded curriculum." See WCBE, "Minute Book of the Berlin Teachers' Association, October 1891 to November 8, 1912," May 11, 1900.

¹⁹ WCBE, "Berlin Board Minutes, 1898-1908," June 29, 1900.

²⁰ *BJ*, October 18, 1905, 6.

²¹ See the announcement published in the *Berlin News Record*, June 21, 1900, 4.

Unanimously, the assembly rejected the assumption that German-language schooling accounted for low reading standards. Instead, it held that “the thorough study of German, as both a written language and a colloquial one, will benefit the pupils most highly.”²²

Almost a quarter of a century had passed since Otto Klotz, John Motz, and others had assembled in the town hall to debate the prospects of German-language schooling. The passage of time had woven changes into the rhetoric of language advocates. No longer did ethnic spokespersons seek to transform the family into a bastion of the German language. Instead, they presented German-language schooling as a political entitlement and eloquently evoked the “twin souls” that imbued their lives, namely the German and the English languages.²³ Confidently, Louis Jacob Breithaupt portrayed German as a world language which children should learn for their own benefit: “Germany and England are the nations of modernity and progress; therefore, the languages of these two countries are presently the most important ones.”²⁴ In his sweeping redefinition, Breithaupt transformed his mother tongue from a language of tradition, closely associated with the ethnic heritage, to a language of progress that basked in the reflected glory of the German Empire. In the process, the social setting of the family, which had hitherto provided a metaphorical home for the German language, was supplanted by political principles, cultural abstractions, and material advantages.²⁵

²² *BJ*, June 28, 1900, 4: “das gründliche Studium des Deutschen als Schrift- und Umgangssprache [ist] von größtem Nutzen für die Schüler.” In the ensuing debate, this point was elaborated by, among others, Reverend Tafel, Reverend Tuerk, Reverend Boese, Sheriff John Motz, and high school teacher J.W. Connor.

²³ *BJ*, June 28, 1900, 4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*: “Deutschland und England sind die modernen Fortschritts-Nationen, daher sind die Sprachen dieser beiden Länder heutzutage die wichtigsten.” See also the speeches by Mr. J. G. Schmidt and Reverend Pirch.

²⁵ For a point of comparison see John Edwards, “Language, diversity and identity,” in John Edwards ed., *Linguistic Minorities, Policies and Pluralism* (London: Academic Press, 1984), 288.

By elevating language to the realm of abstraction, it could serve a multitude of purposes.

Reverend Boese, for one, claimed that language presented the key to social harmony that had long prevailed in Berlin:

The Germans have built Berlin. Here, both employers and workers get along, for both are of German origin. Yet if one robs the worker of his language, one changes his mind, and, thereby, the present relationships between workers and employers will be disturbed, and great turmoil will ensue, just as it did in other cities.²⁶

In asserting that language transcended the boundaries of class, Boese was not alone. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, prominent visitors to Berlin had commented upon the perceived absence of social strife which they attributed to the common cultural background of employers and their workers. Yet the bonds of culture, as we will see, did not, by any means, obliterate class distinctions.

A Social Profile of the German School Association

The birth of the German School Association (*Deutscher Schulverein*), formally founded in August 1900, allows us to probe the social profile of the groups which rose to the defence of German language and culture between 1900 and 1914.²⁷ In turning from the realm of rhetoric to a quantitative, socio-historical analysis, the following discussion is informed by the pioneering work of Miroslav Hroch who brought to the study of national movements the concepts and methods of social history.²⁸ In a field previously dominated by the historians of ideas, Hroch

²⁶ *BJ*, June 28, 1900, 4: "Die Deutschen haben Berlin emporgebracht. Arbeitgeber und Arbeiter kommen hier gut voran, weil letztere Deutsche sind. Nimmt man aber dem Arbeiter seine Sprache, so ändert man seinen Sinn, und dadurch wird man das bestehende Verhältnis zwischen Arbeiter und Arbeitgeber stören und ebenso große Unruhen wie in anderen Städten verursachen."

²⁷ For the constitution of the German School Association see *BJ*, August 16, 1900, 4.

²⁸ Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups Among the Smaller European Nations* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985) and Hroch, "From National Movement to the Fully-Formed Nation: The Nation-Building Process in Europe," in Geoff Eley

painstakingly assembled biographical profiles of 'patriots' in small European countries, thereby arriving at a careful, comparative sociology of national movements. In a similar vein (albeit on a much more modest scale), a list of the members of the German School Association was compiled from articles in the *Berliner Journal* and subsequently linked with biographical data from the manuscript census of 1901, city directories, histories of the province of Ontario, the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, trade reports, obituaries, and local historical studies.

Table 8: Social Profile of the German School Association, Berlin, 1900-1914

	N	%
Professions	22	24.7
Clergymen	11	
Lawyers	3	
Physicians	3	
Newspaper Editors	3	
School Inspector	1	
Teacher	1	
Manual Work	19	21.3
Trades	13	
Industrial Workers	4	
Labourers (unspecified)	2	
Manufacturers / Proprietors / Owners	18	20.2
Manufacturers	15	
Hotel Keepers	2	
Insurance Company Owner	1	
Small-Scale Proprietors	10	11.2
Shopkeepers	9	
Builder	1	
White-Collar Work	7	7.9
Commercial Travellers	3	
Store-Clerks	2	
Town Clerk & Treasurer	1	
Manager - Insurance Company	1	
Unknown	13	14.6
TOTAL	89	99.9*

* Does not add to 100 because of rounding.

Sources: Manuscript Census of 190; *Ontario Gazeteer and Directory, 1901-02*; *Vernon's Berlin, Waterloo and Bridgeport Directory for the Years 1903 to 1905*; *Ontario Gazeteer and Directory, 1905-06*; *Province of Ontario: Gazeteer and Directory, 1910-11*; *Vernon's City of Berlin and Town of Waterloo and Bridgeport Directory for the Years 1912-13*; Jesse Edgar Middleton and Fred Landon, *Province of Ontario: A History, 1615-1927* (Toronto: Dominion, 1927-8), vols. 3 & 4; Alexander Fraser, *History of Ontario: Its Resources and Development* (Toronto: The Canadian History Company, 1927), vol. 2; KPL, WHS, MC 6.21: Elias Weber Bingeman Snider Collection, "Annual Report of the Board of Trade of the Town of Berlin, 1905"; W. V. Uttley, *A History of Kitchener, Ontario* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1975 [1937]); Elizabeth Bloomfield, "City-Building Processes in Berlin/Kitchener and Waterloo, 1870-1930," Ph.D. Thesis (History), University of Guelph, 1981; *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. XIV, 1911-20 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

As illustrated above, the *Schulverein's* membership comprised primarily men of the middle and upper classes, distinguished by either their education or wealth. Professionals and capital owners accounted for 45 per cent of the membership, whereas teachers were conspicuously absent. Clearly, support for German-language schooling was generated outside the school system, not within it. Taken together, lawyers, physicians, newspaper editors, and, most prominently, clergymen emerged as "custodians of culture." Their education (*Bildung*) and professional training singled them out as men of value and virtue who could translate their "cultural capital" into political leverage.²⁹ These representatives of the *Bildungsbürgertum* were joined by Berlin's leading manufacturers, merchants, hotel-keepers, and landowners, the *Besitzbürgertum*, whose economic power enhanced the prestige of the young association.

To understand the extent to which Berlin's elites rallied behind the cause of German-language schooling, we only have to turn to the local assessment rolls of 1897.³⁰ Among Berlin's top forty-six property owners, we find no less than eleven members of the German School Association.³¹ Not surprisingly, the men who wielded the community's economic and social power, were also prominently represented in political institutions. The ranks of the German

²⁹ Roger Chickering, *We Men Who Feel Most German: A Cultural Study of the Pan-German League, 1886-1914* (Boston: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 111.

³⁰ As compiled by Elizabeth Bloomfield, "City-Building Processes," 502. Bloomfield notes that the only surviving copy of the 1897 assessment rolls is in the possession of the Waterloo Historical Society in the Kitchener Public Library.

³¹ See Bloomfield, "City-Building Processes," 502.

School Association included eight past and two future mayors, seven members of the county council, ten members of the municipal council, and twelve members of the Board of Trade.³² The founding meeting of the Association was graced by the presence of Hugo Kranz who, as a member of the Conservatives, had represented North Waterloo in the House of Commons between 1878-87. Also in attendance were two members of the Provincial Legislature, Dr. G. H. Lackner (South Waterloo) for the conservatives, and Louis J. Breithaupt (North Waterloo) for the liberals. Less prominently, the *Schulverein's* ranks were bolstered by seven school trustees whose long-standing, or present service on the Berlin School Board helped to ensure that the *Verein's* suggestions would be granted a hearing at future board meetings.

Notwithstanding Reverend Boese's praise for the class-transcending power of language, the leadership structure of the German School Association was strictly hierarchical, with clergymen, manufacturers, journalists, physicians, and lawyers occupying the positions of president, vice-president, German school inspector, and treasurer, respectively. But although tradesmen rarely spoke up during meetings, and only once joined a delegation to the Berlin Public School Board, their presence vividly illustrated that the association could draw upon the support of many classes, encompassing both artisans and entrepreneurs, labourers and professionals.³³ It was painter Karl Müller, in particular, whose quiet work behind the scenes kept the association afloat during the coming decade.³⁴

³² The mayors in question were Hugo Kranz (1874-78), John Motz (1880-81), H. G. Lackner (1886-87), L. J. Breithaupt (1888-89), Conrad Bitzer (1892), Daniel Hibner (1894-95), J. C. Breithaupt (1896-97), George Rumpel (1898), William H. E. Schmalz (1911-12), and John E. Hett (1915-16).

³³ We have, of course, to keep in mind that evidence of associational meetings is fragmentary at best, preserved only in the columns of the *Berliner Journal*. Still, the fact that the paper rarely quoted speeches by workers seems to indicate that the latter belonged to the lower ranks of the German School Association.

³⁴ *BJ*, October 18, 1905, 6. See also Karl-Müller Grote, "Onkel Karl: Deutschkanadische Lebensbilder," *German-Canadian Yearbook*, 15 (1998), 107-255.

The *Schulverein*'s public face was constituted by its eleven clergymen who performed the time-consuming task of visiting the town's German-language programmes and submitting detailed reports to the Berlin Public School Board. Their close co-operation symbolized the common meeting ground that language could, indeed, provide; clergy from six denominations joined forces in the association.³⁵ To the men of the cloth who had witnessed the gradual shift from German to English as a language of worship, the German School Association might have appeared as a bulwark against language change.³⁶

That linguistic loyalties extended across denominational boundaries is also suggested by the religious profile of the German School Association. The forty-three members whose religious affiliation could be traced belonged to no less than eight denominations, most prominently the Lutheran Church (45.7 per cent) and the Evangelical Association (15.2 per cent). For both denominations, the use of German as a language of worship was an "article of faith," with ethnic and religious identities complementing and reinforcing each other.³⁷ In 1901, "nearly 80 per cent of the town's population still worshipped in the German language."³⁸ If we compare the association's religious profile with that of Berlin as a whole, we find one group conspicuously absent, namely the local Mennonites whose cultural identity seemed to evolve around religion, rather than language.

³⁵ The following denominations were represented among the eleven clergymen in the German School Association: Lutheran (3), Evangelical Association (2), Baptist (2), Roman Catholic (1), Presbyterian (1), New Jerusalem (1), Unknown (1).

³⁶ As Louis Breithaupt noted in his diary, this shift had begun as early as in 1888: "By a vote of 54 to 20, it was to-day decided by our congregation to have English services every 2d. Sabbath evening." See *University of Waterloo*, Doris Lewis Rare Book Room, Breithaupt Hewetson Clark Collection, "Diaries of Louis Jacob Breithaupt", March 18, 1888. See also *ibid.*, April 29, 1888: "Our new minister Rev. Mr. Hugh Jr. preached two most acceptable sermons to-day – a.m. in German and this evg. in English."

³⁷ John English and Kenneth McLaughlin, *Kitchener: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: Robin Brass, 1996 [1983]), 87. See also Gottlieb Leibbrandt, *Little Paradise: Aus Geschichte und Leben der Deutschkanadier in der County Waterloo, Ontario, 1800-1975* (Kitchener: Allprint Company Limited, 1977), 158-9.

³⁸ English and McLaughlin, *Kitchener: An Illustrated History*, 88.

Table 9: Religious Profile of the German School Association, Berlin, 1900-1914

	German School Association		Total Population, Berlin, 1901*	
	N	%	N	%
Lutheran	21	45.7	1,795	37.8
Roman Catholic	4	8.7	958	20.2
Methodist	0	0	420	8.8
Evangelical Association	7	15.2	343	7.2
Presbyterian	4	8.7	262	5.5
Baptist	4	8.7	212	4.5
Church of England	1	2.2	194	4.1
Mennonite	0	0	189	4.0
United Brethren	0	0	103	2.2
Swedenborgian	3	6.5	60	1.3
New Jerusalem	2	4.3	46	1.0
Christian Scientist	0	0	44	0.9
Others	0	0	121	2.5
TOTAL	46	100.0	4747	100.0

Sources: As indicated in table 8 above.

* Manuscript Census, 1901.

Equally striking is the comparatively low percentage of Roman Catholics. In a town where 20.2 per cent of the population belonged to the Catholic church, only 8.7 per cent of the *Schulverein's* members were Catholic. The notable absence of Catholic members was likely due to the popularity of Berlin's Roman Catholic Separate School which enrolled a quarter of the local school population in the early twentieth century.³⁹ Shielded from the probing glance of provincial observers, the Separate School treated German as a regular part of the curriculum.⁴⁰

But if Roman Catholic parents did not flock to the German School Association in impressive numbers, at least two prominent citizens of Catholic faith lent their support to the venture: the aging founder of the *Berliner Journal*, John Motz, now Sheriff of Berlin, and the

³⁹ See the statistical data in the *Reports of the Minister of Education: Province of Ontario* (Toronto: L.K. Cameron), for the years 1900-14.

⁴⁰ Theobald Spetz, *Diamond Jubilee History of the Diocese of Hamilton with a Complete History of the County of Waterloo, 1856-1916. The Catholic Church in Waterloo County* (The Catholic Register and Extension, 1916), 43 and 125-6.

esteemed principal of Jerome College, Reverend Theobald Spetz. At the bi-annual meetings of the *Schulverein*, both men shared their intimate knowledge of German-language instruction at the Separate School.⁴¹ And each, in his own terrain, fought tirelessly for the right to German-language schooling: John Motz in the columns of the *Berliner Journal*, and Reverend Spetz in his correspondence with educational authorities in Toronto whom he assured that “we have German taught thoroughly in our Schools, without the least detriment to the English branches.”⁴²

Confronted with the determined campaign for German-language schooling that united Berlin’s political, economic, religious, and intellectual elites, School Inspector Thomas Pearce made one feeble attempt to clear up the misunderstanding, and then fell silent.⁴³ In future years, he seemed determined to avoid any further controversies by describing the reading ability of Berlin’s pupils as “generally speaking, good”.⁴⁴ For a man used to having his suggestions followed to the letter and his opinions highly valued, the “agitation in town to resume German in the schools” – as he would indignantly describe it in his school history – must have been injurious to his professional pride.⁴⁵ It did not help that the *Berliner Journal* gloated in its ‘victory’.

⁴¹ See, for instance, *BJ*, June 28, 1900, 4 and *BJ*, April 1911, 1912, 6.

⁴² For John Motz’s influential role in moulding public thinking on language issues see chapter 1. Theobald Spetz made his voice heard in the French-language debates of 1889 and the Bishop Fellon controversy of 1911. See KPL, WHS, MC 6: Elias Weber Snider Collection, “Letter dated April 2, 1889, received from Theo Spetz, C.R., D.D. of St. Jerome’s College, offering Mr. Snider a copy of a letter from the R.C. Separate School Board of Berlin to the Attorney General of Ontario, regarding the debates on Separate Schools,” and *Ontario Archives* (hereafter OA), Sir James P. Whitney Papers, F 5, MU 3132, “Letter from Rev. Father Spetz, St. Mary’s Church, Berlin (Kitchener) to Whitney, regarding bilingual schools in German localities, December 2, 1911.”

⁴³ See Inspector Pearce’s letter to the editors of the *Berlin News Record*, printed July 4, 1900, 4. See also *BJ*, July 5, 1900, 4.

⁴⁴ *BJ*, June 27, 1901, 4.

⁴⁵ Thomas Pearce, “School History, Waterloo County and Berlin,” *Waterloo Historical Society*, 2 (1914), 41. School board minutes in various localities in Waterloo County reflect Inspector Pearce’s pervasive influence in shaping standards of teaching and accommodation. See, for instance, *City of Cambridge Archives*, “Minute Book of the Trustees of the Preston School, February 7, 1877 to November 6, 1895,” June 13, 1898 and WCBE, “Woolwich Township, S.S. 8 (St. Jacobs), Minutes & Accounts, 1872-1907,” December 12, 1904.

“Now, the number of German pupils has increased,” the editors wrote in 1901, “yet the reading has not deteriorated ...; on the contrary – the Inspector is quite satisfied with it. How curious!”⁴⁶

Not surprisingly, Inspector Pearce did not even hint at the “agitation” in his annual school reports. As a result, a reliance on government documents alone would have left us with the misleading impression of a man who wielded supreme authority and power in local school affairs, rather than that of a widely respected inspector whose quest for better schools and teachers was whole-heartedly endorsed by the local communities of Waterloo County -- that is, until Thomas Pearce misjudged the quiet, but powerful, current of ethnic identity that he had successfully navigated for almost three decades.

Language and Identity

To understand Inspector Pearce’s misconception, we have to be willing to relinquish our preconceived notion of ethnicity as a linear process, characterized by the progressive integration of an ethnic group into the social and cultural mainstream.⁴⁷ As historian David A. Gerber has remarked, “a picture of one-way, mechanical movement out of one ethnic group and into the evolving majority” obscures the “dynamic tensions”, the conflicts and clashes, the negotiation and accommodation that characterized the interaction between German migrants and mainstream society.⁴⁸ In Waterloo County, this interaction was accompanied by a gradual shift from “ethnic identity” to “symbolic ethnicity”, to borrow sociologist Herbert J. Gans’s memorable phrase:

⁴⁶ *BJ*, June 27, 1901, 4: “Jetzt ist die Zahl der deutschen Schüler gestiegen, das Lesen ist aber nicht schlechter geworden, ... sondern im Gegentheil – der Inspector ist sogar ganz zufrieden damit. Merkwürdig!”

⁴⁷ This “straight-line theory” has long presented the “dominant sociological approach to ethnicity.” See Gans, “Symbolic ethnicity,” 1-3.

⁴⁸ In this context, see also David A. Gerber, “Language Maintenance, Ethnic Group Formation, and Public Schools: Changing Patterns of German Concern, Buffalo, 1837-1874,” *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 4, 1 (Fall 1984), 51.

Symbolic ethnicity can be expressed in a myriad of ways, but above all, I suspect, it is characterized by a nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation, or that of the old country; a love for and a pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behavior.⁴⁹

To be sure, at the turn of the century, Berlin continued to be a living heartland of the German language that was spoken by 75 per cent of the population.⁵⁰ But in the past three decades the meanings of the German mother tongue had undergone a change, so gradually and imperceptibly, that even astute contemporary observers seemed to be unaware of its magnitude.

If language advocates of the 1870s had evoked the image of families divided by barriers of language which separated German-speaking parents from their English-speaking children, this rhetoric had become obsolete in 1900 when 92 per cent of Berlin's German-origin residents were capable of speaking English.⁵¹ Indeed, even Louis Jacob Breithaupt who occupied the presidency of the *Schulverein* between 1909 and 1914, began to write to his children in English, not German.⁵² Accordingly, the German School Association portrayed German not as a medium of common parlance but as a language of culture, business, and modernity.⁵³ This shift from the

⁴⁹ Gans, "Symbolic ethnicity," 7.

⁵⁰ Manuscript census of 1901.

⁵¹ See, for instance, KPL, WHS, MC 6: Elias Weber Snider Collection, "Letter dated April 2, 1889, received from Theo Spetz, C.R., D.D. of St. Jerome's College": "our children ... are thereby enable to appreciate the rich treasures of German literature and can also retain as much of the German character as necessary for the perfect union between children and parents many of whom know very little English."

⁵² Interestingly, Louis Breithaupt opened a letter to his daughter Catherine with a German blessing whereupon he switched to English. Here, the German language had a ritualistic quality whose formality evoked a language of worship: "My dear Catherine; Ich wünsche dir den seggen [sic] Gottes zum Gruss! You have doubtless heard from home of my trip West to Winnipeg + also to cities of the United States ... Well, I hope you are getting along very well at College. Many a wishes ... I am with love + kisses, Father." See University of Waterloo, Breithaupt Hewetson Clark Collection, Box # 8, "Catherine Olive, née Breithaupt (1896-1977)," September 3, 1913.

⁵³ See, for example, OA, Sir James P. Whitney Papers, F 5, MU 3132, "Letter from Rev. Father Spetz, St. Mary's Church, Berlin (Kitchener) to Whitney, regarding bilingual schools in German localities," December 2, 1911: "The knowledge of a second language especially if it is their mother tongue so easily learned fits them so much better for society and business later on."

communicative aspects of language to its symbolic function was mirrored (and fuelled) by the confident displays of *Deutschthum* that revelled in the celebratory and festive aspects of German-ness. The concept of “symbolic ethnicity” thus helps explain the apparent paradox of a highly visible ethnicity, staged in elaborate festivities such as the *Friedensfest* of 1871 and the *Sängerfest* of 1897, and the dwindling enrolment figures in Berlin’s German Department.

Yet if German ethnicity appeared to lie dormant, taken off the heritage shelf only for festive occasions, it never ceased to hold the imagination of ethnic spokespersons. In a moment of crisis, when the mother tongue seemed under attack, the casual, taken-for-granted membership in an imagined ‘German’ community transformed into a determined ethnic movement that recruited members from several classes and groups. Even as a symbol of ethnic identity, then, the German language exerted a powerful influence which Inspector Pearce had underestimated (or, in good faith, overlooked) at his own peril.

The rebuttal of Pearce’s alleged threat against the revered German mother tongue was all the more effective in a town where German-origin residents constituted the vast majority of the population. So deeply was German culture ingrained into the social, cultural, economic and political institutions of Waterloo County that the local mainstream had effectively become ‘Germanized’.⁵⁴ Not surprisingly, when ethnic spokespersons felt that their German-ness was under attack, they swiftly and effectively mounted a response.

There is, of course, always the danger of reading the actions of ethnic spokespersons as direct expression of ethnic group values.⁵⁵ As we have seen, the membership of the German

⁵⁴ Kathleen Neils Conzen, “Mainstream and Side Channels: The Localization of Immigrant Cultures,” *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 11, 1 (Fall 1991), 6.

⁵⁵ The study of ethnic leaders has become unfashionable as of late. As John Higham remarked as early as in 1978, “[t]he reassertion of ethnic identities in recent years is connected with a general distrust of elites and (on the part of scholars) a desire to look at history from the bottom up.” Accordingly, scholarly enquiry has been primarily interested in the rank-and-file members of ethnic groups, rather in at their self-declared spokespersons. See John Higham, “Introduction:

School Association never exceeded 100 members in good standing and, more typically, hovered around 60 – a minuscule fraction of the town's German-origin population in 1901.⁵⁶ Its members were hardly typical of the average native German speaker in Berlin, having been recruited from the well-educated and propertied middle and upper classes.⁵⁷ Still, ethnic leaders were “constrained by their own upbringing in the respective cultures of their forefathers, and by the ideas and assumptions of their ethnic constituencies,” as the anthropologist Anthony D. Smith has observed.⁵⁸ In other words, if they hoped to mobilize widespread support for the cause of German-language schooling, they had to win allies among local school board trustees and tailor their campaign towards German-origin parents and their children.

While waging an energetic language campaign at the local level, the *Schulverein's* members successfully navigated social networks beyond their ethnic world. They transacted business deals in Canada and the States, represented their constituencies in the provincial and federal Legislatures, and lobbied the provincial Minister of Education for the rights of German-language schooling.⁵⁹ By no means were these men isolated from ‘modern’ society nor locked into an ethnic past whose charming simplicity and serenity contrasted markedly with the harsh realities of modernization and industrialization.⁶⁰ Rather, they functioned effectively in Canada's

The Forms of Ethnic Leadership,” in John Higham ed., *Ethnic Leadership in America* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University, 1978), 1.

⁵⁶ In 1901, 7,562 residents of Berlin (or 77.6 per cent of the town's population) were of German cultural origin. See *Census of 1901*. Figures on membership in the German School Association have been compiled from *BJ*, January 4, 1905, 6 and *BJ*, April 4, 1908, 6.

⁵⁷ As such, their social profile bears a striking similarity to the language revival movement in late-nineteenth-century Ireland which John Edwards has characterized as a “movement of Dublin-based upper-middle class individuals, rather romantic in outlook, for most of whom Irish was an acquired competence.” See Edwards, “Language, diversity and identity,” 286.

⁵⁸ Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1983 [1971]).

⁵⁹ Lobbying efforts in the early twentieth century included a campaign to establish a Normal School in Berlin where teachers would be trained in the German language. See *BJ*, April 11, 1906, 2 and *BJ*, July 10, 1907, 2.

⁶⁰ For an American context, Brent O. Peterson has argued that family magazines like *Die Abendschule* helped “immigrants cope with the dislocations of migration and modernization” by

political and economic institutions, while regarding German-ness as a point of pride they sought to cultivate and preserve.⁶¹ It is this imaginative blending of ethnicity and modernity that was often overlooked by anglophone observers at the *Sängerfeste* who appeared smitten by the 'folksy' character of Waterloo County's German-origin residents.⁶² Yet, if we dismantle their sentimental renderings of "men with their rosy faces and light clothing looking as though they had stepped out of one of the pictures of German artists," we find successful entrepreneurs who shared in the urban ethos of boosterism, whose sustained support for the project of mass schooling had earned them the unstinted praise of provincial observers, and whose willing embrace of English as the language of the country was noted in parliamentary speeches. We should, accordingly, be careful not to mistake their confident assertions of German-ness for "a defensive, anti-assimilation struggle, motivated by a negative goal," namely the aversion to be 'Canadianized'.⁶³ Instead, to paraphrase David Gerber, the social and political power of these 'Germans of Canada' "gave them the ability to defend German ethnic culture, to which they continued to be committed even while simultaneously becoming more [Canadian]."⁶⁴ In mounting their defence, they were tremendously successful. The following fourteen years would not only see enrolment figures in the town's German-language classroom soar, but also witness the institutionalization of German-language schooling.

providing "a space where the idyllic and therefore compensatory life of the precapitalist small town could continue." See Peterson, *Popular Narratives and Ethnic Identity: Literature and Community in Die Abendschule* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 251-2. See also the definition of the 'folk' by Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal, Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 9-17.

⁶¹ Here, my analysis has benefited greatly from David A. Gerber's study "Language Maintenance, Ethnic Group Formation, and Public Schools," 51-2.

⁶² *Toronto Globe*, September 3, 1874, 4.

⁶³ Gerber, "Language Maintenance, Ethnic Group Formation, and Public Schools," 51.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 50.

Institutionalizing the German-language Classroom, 1900-14

In establishing the German-language classroom as a prominent feature of Berlin's schools, the members of the German School Association emulated the methods of educational authorities. Skilfully using the local school board to translate their suggestions into practice, they embedded German-language instruction so firmly into the local structures of schooling that it became a taken-for-granted element of education. The first step, predictably, was to suggest the appointment of honorary German School Inspectors who would help develop a curriculum of German-language schooling, group pupils according to their abilities, assess the children's progress, examine the language and teaching abilities of German-language teachers, alert school trustees to weaknesses in the present system of instruction, and submit bi-annual reports to the Berlin Public School Board.⁶⁵ In January 1901, the School Board officially appointed Reverends R. von Pirch (Lutheran), W. Friedrich (Baptist) and M. Boese (Lutheran) as "Inspectors for the German Classes for 1901."⁶⁶ In later years, this team of inspectors would be succeeded by Reverends Henry Wagner (Evangelical), E. Hoffman (Lutheran) and A. Mihm (Baptist).⁶⁷

Having provided for the systematic supervision of German-language teaching, the *Schulverein* proceeded to re-establish German-language instruction as a regular branch of the public school curriculum. As the German School Inspectors frequently complained, the greatest stumbling block on the road to efficient German-language schooling was the relegation of German to a special branch of instruction, taught each morning before the onset of the regular school day between 8:15 and 9:00 a.m.⁶⁸ An "injustice to the child's nature," for whom seven hours on the school bench were enough long already, and a major inconvenience for parents, the early hour of

⁶⁵ The work of the local German School Inspectors is described in the Inspectors' biannual reports that were published in the *Berliner Journal*. See, in particular, *BJ*, December 27, 1900, 4; January 4, 1905, 6; December 5, 1906, 6; April 8, 1908, 6; January 6, 1909, 6; June 28, 1911, 6.

⁶⁶ WCBE, "Berlin Board Minutes, 1898-1908," January 16, 1901.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, March 27, 1906; May 29, 1906; December 28, 1909; September 20, 1912.

⁶⁸ *BJ*, December 27, 1900, 4.

instruction was held responsible for the children's irregular attendance and unpunctuality.⁶⁹

Repeatedly, the secretary of the German School Association, Karl Müller, raised the issue with the Public School Board, requesting "the teaching of German in the Berlin Schools during school hours." For years, the trustees politely referred the question to a special committee that, inevitably, identified a more pressing issue, namely the lack of special German-language classrooms.⁷⁰

It necessitated some radical changes, and a good deal of creativity, to provide German-language teachers and their students with a room of their own. In March 1903, the special committee on German teaching offered the following suggestion which was carried unanimously by the Board:

That, since you are compelled to provide further accommodation this year in any case, we would recommend that a four room addition be built to each of the schools on Margaret Ave. and Courtland Ave. Thus you will see, by changing the school boundaries, it will be possible to provide a spare room at both the Agnes St. School and the Central School, which in addition to the new rooms provided at the other two schools would give you at each of the four schools a room to be used exclusively for German instruction.⁷¹

In its exhausting detail, the committee's recommendation reads somewhat tediously. Hidden behind the technical language, however, we find an astounding willingness to re-integrate German-language instruction into the public school system, despite the considerable expenses involved. One-and-a-half years later, the *Schulverein* could credit itself with yet another major success. After four years of lobbying, German-language lessons were integrated into the regular curriculum and taught by two full-time German teachers who divided their time between Berlin's four public

⁶⁹ *BJ*, May 5, 1904, 4: "eine Ungerechtigkeit gegen das Kindesgemüth." See also *BJ*, December 27, 1900; June 27, 1901, 4; July 4, 1901, 4; December 26, 1901, 4.

⁷⁰ WCBE, "Berlin Board Minutes, 1898-1908," August 26, 1902; February 24, 1903; March 31, 1903. See also *BJ*, September 4, 1902, 4.

⁷¹ WCBE, "Berlin Board Minutes, 1898-1908," March 31, 1903.

schools.⁷² The official recognition for German-language instruction was also reflected in the marks that pupils now received for their efforts.⁷³ From a special branch of education German had changed to a regular (if optional) subject of instruction, taught in regular classrooms at regular times and equal to all other subjects, as the *Berliner Journal* announced in August 1904.⁷⁴

Why, we may ask, was the *Schulverein* so extraordinary successful in realizing its objectives? For one, the association's social leaders were eminently 'respectable' men, a word that carried the weight of "refined manners and taste, respectable religion, proper speech and, finally, the ability to read and write proper English."⁷⁵ Personified in the impressive number of local clergymen who volunteered their time and energy to inspect German-language lessons, they commanded the respect of the Berlin Public School Board. In addition, the *Schulverein*'s representatives who attended the board's monthly meetings represented no less than Berlin's economic and social elites.⁷⁶ To deny their voices to be heard, or to dismiss their suggestions as irrelevant, might have endangered the trustees' social advancement in the tightly-knit local community. Finally, the Berlin Public School Board appeared to identify with the values and interests, voiced by the German School Association. As Bruce Curtis has observed for an earlier time period, trustees "were situated locally and hence constrained to interact with friends and neighbours, to live as members of the local community. In many instances, they defined their interests in ways congenial to the majority of people in the locality."⁷⁷ In early twentieth-century

⁷² *BJ*, August 24, 1904, 4.

⁷³ *Ibid.* In this context see also *BJ*, May 15, 1902, 4 and WCBE, "Berlin Board Minutes, 1898-1908," May 13, 1902.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Alison Prentice, *The School Promoters: Education and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Upper Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), 68.

⁷⁶ WCBE, "Berlin Board Minutes, 1898-1908," April 29, 1902.

⁷⁷ Bruce Curtis, *Building the Educational State: Canada West, 1836-1871* (London: The Athlone Press, 1988), 144. In this context see also D. A. Lawr and R. D. Gidney, "Who Ran the Schools?: Local Influence on Education Policy in Nineteenth-century Ontario," *Ontario History*, 72, 3 (September 1980), 132 and 140.

Berlin, the trustees used their considerable latitude to further the cause of German-language schooling in a systematic and elaborate way that, interestingly, rarely came to the attention of provincial authorities.

In fact, the Department of Education in Toronto was contacted only when the trustees requested exemptions from the general school law on behalf of the German School Association. In June 1903, the Department declared that the German language could be added to the entrance exam for the local high school, provided that all other subjects would be retained.⁷⁸ The *Schulverein's* suggestion to substitute the provincially authorized German readers for a new series of textbooks also met with success, despite some initial difficulties.⁷⁹ In September 1903, the School Board notified the *Schulverein* that:

the books submitted by them are not authorized by the Educational Department, this Board on the advice of the Inspector cannot permit them to be used in the schools but would recommend that the Association submit said books for the inspection and authorization of the Education Department as soon as possible.⁸⁰

The association's request was successful. In January 1904, children in Berlin's German-language classrooms opened their new German readers, sanctioned by the *Schulverein*, the trustees, and provincial authorities.⁸¹ The administrative procedure illuminated patterns of interaction that were all the more remarkable if viewed before the backdrop of the French-language controversy: Local language-advocates and trustees abided by the rules which the Department had spelled out regarding the authorization of text books. The Department, in turn, relinquished its right to insist on the continued use of *Ahn's* German readers.⁸²

⁷⁸ *BJ*, June 25, 1903, 5.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ WCBE, "Berlin Board Minutes, 1898-1908," September 1, 1903.

⁸¹ *BJ*, December 31, 1903, 4.

⁸² *Regulations and Correspondence Relating to French and German Schools in the Province of Ontario* (Toronto: Warwick and Sons, 1889), 111-3; *Report of the Minister of Education, Province of Ontario (Canada), 1890* (Toronto: Warwick & Sons, 1891), 65-66.

Having decided *what* was taught in the town's German classrooms, the members of the German School Association now sought to determine *who* would teach the revered German mother tongue. In their efforts to secure qualified personnel, they spared no expenses. John C. Buchhaupt, chairman of the Berlin Public School Board and himself a member of the *Verein*, offered to top up the salary of Miss Bornhold of Waterloo out of his own pocket:

Chairman Buchhaupt announced that he had seen Miss Bornhold regarding her engagement, including German language teaching. She will not come for less than \$ 400, and as the Board's schedule – including the \$ 100 for teaching German – allows for only \$ 360, he had taken it upon himself to engage her, the difference of \$ 40 a year to be made up outside of the Board.⁸³

What local language advocates had envisioned as early as in 1877, namely financial incentives for German-language teachers, was finally put into practice.⁸⁴ Those who taught in the German-language classroom received a recompense of \$ 100, in addition to their regular salaries. The extra money allowed female teachers to break through the local salary ceiling. Between 1901 and 1905 (the only years for which such data is available), Berlin's German-language instructors were among the highest paid women teachers in Waterloo County.⁸⁵

⁸³ WCBE, "Berlin Board Minutes, 1898-1908," August 31, 1900.

⁸⁴ *BJ*, January 4, 1877, 2.

⁸⁵ Compared with their male colleagues, Berlin's women teachers were poorly paid. In 1901, Berlin's two male principals received an annual salary of \$ 875; the town's two male teachers commanded an annual salary of \$ 536. In this context see also Marta Danlywycz and Alison Prentice, "Teachers' Work: Changing Patterns and Perceptions in the Emerging School Systems of Nineteenth- and Early-Twentieth-Century Canada," *Labour/Le Travail*, 17 (1986), 59-82.

Table 10: Average Salaries of Women Teachers at Public Schools, Berlin, 1901-1905

Year	Principals		German Teachers		Kindergarten Teachers		Teachers		Salary Schedules
	N	\$	N	\$	N	\$	N	\$	
1901	2	400	2	388	5	315	14	271	240-350
1902	1	400	2	397	5	340	13	285	250-350
1903	1	400	2	418	5	325	17	275	250-350
1904	1	450	3	445	5	385	17	341	300-450
1905	0	0	2	491	5	408	20	355	300-450

Source: "Berlin Board Minutes, 1898-1908," *Waterloo County Board of Education*.

Given the added prestige and value of German teaching positions, it is hardly surprising that the number of applicants soared. In June 1906 alone, teachers from Goderich, Kingston, Penetang, Greenzolle, Sargenoon, Branchton, and Berlin applied for a vacant position.⁸⁶

Preceding this hiring process, a heated controversy had erupted regarding the competence of Simon Reid, a Canadian-born German instructor. While conceding that Reid might be an excellent English teacher, the *Schulverein* questioned his German language abilities:

Our Mr. Teacher may well be capable of mastering our local German. Yet between our local German on the one hand, and written German and High German on the other, there is a difference so vast that a teacher cannot bridge it. Mr. Reid does not live in the German language. He is thinking in English.⁸⁷

The Berlin Public School Board did not take kindly to this pointed criticism. Insisting on its prerogative to hire teachers, it faulted the association for not having voiced its opinions sooner and challenged the judgement of German Inspector Reverend Boese who resigned in a fury.⁸⁸ Simon Reid rose to his own defence. In a letter submitted to the editors of the *Berliner Journal*, he insisted that Canadian-born teachers were as capable of teaching their young wards as German-

⁸⁶ WCBE, "Berlin Board Minutes, 1898-1908," June 26, 1906.

⁸⁷ *BJ*, April 4, 1906, 6: "Unser Herr Lehrer kann unser hiesiges Deutsch sehr wohl bemeistern. Zwischen unserm hiesigen Deutsch aber, und einem Schrift- und Hochdeutsch ist ein Unterschied so himmelweit, daß ein Lehrer denselben nicht überbrücken kann. Herr Reid lebt nicht in der deutschen Sprache. Er denkt in Englisch."

⁸⁸ WCBE, "Berlin Board Minutes, 1898-1908," March 27, 1906 and *BJ*, March 28, 1906, 6.

born instructors.⁸⁹ Reid's letter helped resolve the issue, yet hardly in the way he had envisioned. His shaky construction of German sentences, compounded by no less than 50 mistakes in 55 newspaper lines, swayed the opinion of the trustees.⁹⁰ On June 26, 1906, a "joint committee composed of three members of the School Board and three members of the German School Association" was appointed to recommend "no less than two applicants whom they consider capable of filling the vacancy on our staff of German language teachers."⁹¹ When teacher Theo Schultz of Berlin received his job offer two weeks later, the German School Association had not only rectified a "scandalous" situation, but also asserted its right to be intimately involved in shaping the German-language classroom.⁹²

As the Simon Reid episode illustrated, conflicts over German-language schooling occurred, although they never spilled into the provincial arena. In 1905, when it became apparent that the costs of German lessons approached \$ 2000 annually, members of the Berlin Public School Board began to question the extravagance of bilingual instruction. As trustee Dr. Arnott pointed out, parents whose children did not attend the German-language classroom were wary about paying for it. Even Arthur Pequegnat, a staunch supporter of German-language schooling, was doubtful as to whether Berlin's citizens would support the German classrooms if given a choice in a public vote.⁹³

The *Berliner Journal* immediately denounced the critics as "deutschfeindliche Schwarzseher" (pessimists and enemies of the German language) who sought to undermine the praiseworthy work of the *Schulverein*.⁹⁴ The association's chairman also lashed out in defence. German-language instruction, Reverend Boese argued, was neither unpatriotic nor a luxury but,

⁸⁹ *BJ*, February 14, 1906, 6.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* See also *BJ*, April 4, 1906, 6.

⁹¹ WCBE, "Berlin Board Minutes, 1898-1908" June 26, 1906.

⁹² *BJ*, February 14, 1906, 6 and WCBE, "Berlin Board Minutes, 1898-1908," July 10, 1906.

⁹³ *BJ*, December 6, 1905, 1.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* See also *BJ*, September 14, 1904, 6 and December 12, 1901, 4.

rather, an asset that placed the Berlin's schools among the best in the country.⁹⁵ Furthermore, Boese held, in a "German town, with only very few non-German residents, the Germans effectively paid for all public school instruction, including the German."⁹⁶ After this blunt reminder of the town's essentially 'German' character, the criticism subsided. In fact, so complete was the 'surrender' of the British minority, that School Inspector Thomas Pearce purposefully stayed aloof when the *Schulverein* deliberated on a German-language curriculum. His successor, Inspector Sheppard, did not only join the German School Association but also assumed the role of German Inspector in January 1914.⁹⁷

Bolstered by the *Schulverein*'s energetic efforts, the number of school children enrolled in the programme rose from 11.8 per cent in 1900 to 66.5 per cent in 1912. Among Berlin's German-language pupils were many "English children" whom the German School Inspectors commended for their fine progress.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ *BJ*, December 6, 1905, 4. See also *BJ*, March 28, 1906, 6.

⁹⁶ *BJ*, December 20, 1905, 6: "hier in Berlin, der deutschen Stadt, mit nur sehr wenigen nicht-deutschen Einwohnern, [zahlen] die Deutschen thatsächlich für allen Unterricht ..., daher auch für den deutschen."

⁹⁷ *BJ*, January 4, 1905, 6 and WCBE, "Berlin Board Minutes, 1898-1908," January 1, 1914: "From Mr. F. W. Sheppard advising the Board that the Department will not permit him to accept any official appointment as Inspector of German but allows him to do all that the Board expected of him in this connection."

⁹⁸ *BJ*, June 21, 1905, 2 and *BJ*, December 5, 1906, 6.

Table 11: Schoolchildren Taking German-language Classes at Public Schools, Waterloo County, 1900-1912

Year	Berlin		Waterloo		School Section 25 Waterloo		School Section 21 Waterloo		School Section 2 Woolwich		School Section 14 Wellesley	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1900	166	11.8	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
1901	349	24.5	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
1902	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
1903	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
1904	400	26.0	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
1905	550	34.0	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
1906	794	49.1	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
1907	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
1908	1,055	61.1	529	95.7	20	51.3	0	0	25	43.4	0	0
1909	1,216	67.8	526	100.0	17	50.0	22	61.1	37	63.8	26	63.4
1910	*	*	0	0	14	38.9	30	56.6	0	0	0	0
1911	1,263	64.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1912	1,355	66.5	0	0	16	47.1	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: "Memo regarding teaching of German in bilingual schools, August 2, 1913," Whitney Papers, F5, MU 3135, *Ontario Archives*; *Berliner Journal*, December 27, 1900; September 14, 1904; January 1, 1905; December 5, 1906; July 30, 1913; *Manuscript Annual School Reports*, Waterloo County.

* No data available.

In Waterloo County's rural schools, German-language instruction seemed to be an ad-hoc response to the demands of parents (and, we might add, a reflection of the availability of German teachers), with enrolment figures plummeting from 38.9 per cent to zero in one year and rising to 47.1 in the next. The town of Berlin, by contrast, boasted a German-language programme that took place in systematic fashion and on a large scale.⁹⁹

In accomplishing this goal, the German School Association had focused on propelling the local school board into action. Simultaneously, it subsidized the children's school readers, organized school picnics for the pupils of the German classes, and annually awarded prizes for outstanding students.¹⁰⁰ Once the infrastructure of German-language schooling was established,

⁹⁹ In this context, see also Joshua A. Fishman, "The Sociology of Language: An Interdisciplinary Social Science Approach to Language in Society," in Thomas A. Seabok ed., *Current Trends in Linguistics*, vol. 12: *Linguistic and Adjacent Arts and Sciences* (The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1984), 1715.

¹⁰⁰ *BJ*, February 12, 1903, 4; June 25, 1903, 5; July 23, 1903, 4.

the association turned to Berlin's parents, appealing to their sense of duty to preserve "our dear mother tongue" and urging them to send their children to the German classroom.¹⁰¹

With enrolment figures still rising in 1908, the membership of the *Schulverein* began to decline.¹⁰² The sense of urgency that had led to its birth was fading. Yet the search for ever better methods of German-language instruction continued, now spearheaded by the Berlin Public School Board itself. Given the scarcity of qualified German-language teachers, the School Board arranged for the granting of "special permits" by the Education Department that allowed uncertified teachers to work in the German classroom.¹⁰³ Abandoning the hitherto strictly voluntary nature of German-language instruction, it resolved "[t]hat the pupils who commence taking German be requested to continue until the end of the term unless the Parents furnish to this Board satisfactory reasons for wanting their child to drop that subject."¹⁰⁴ Taking up prior suggestions of the *Schulverein*, the Board introduced German lessons into all kindergartens and lower grades.¹⁰⁵ Tacitly acknowledging the fact that German lessons had transformed into foreign-language instruction by 1911, it instructed the German teachers in its employ "to make more use of conversational exercises and not lay so much stress as heretofore on reading and writing."¹⁰⁶ So fully had the Berlin Public School Board adopted the mission of German-language instruction, that the *Schulverein's* existence was rendered superfluous. German-language schooling had been institutionalized at the local level.

¹⁰¹ *BJ*, August 24, 1904, 4. See also *BJ*, September 7, 1904, 6 ("Attention, German Parents! Don't forget about German-language Instruction" – "Deutsche Eltern, aufgepaßt! Vergesst nicht den deutschen Unterricht") and September 30, 1908, 3 ("Let the children learn German!" – "Laßt die Kinder deutsch lernen!").

¹⁰² *BJ*, March 11, 1908, 6.

¹⁰³ WCBE, "Berlin Board Minutes, 1898-1908," November, 26, 1907; January 28, 1908; June 23, 1908.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, February 27, 1908.

¹⁰⁵ *BJ*, September 14, 1904, 6; June 21, 1905, 2; July 5, 1905, 6. WCBE, "Berlin Public School Board, Minutes, 1908-1915," August 18, 1911; April 19, 1912.

¹⁰⁶ WCBE, "Berlin Public School Board, Minutes, 1908-1915," November 17, 1911.

Epilogue

In an energetic language campaign, the members of the German School Association had endowed the German language with new meaning. No longer did they portray German as the key to family cohesion and parental authority. Instead, in reflecting changing patterns of language behaviour, they celebrated German as a language of modernity and progress, a proverbial entrance ticket to a world of business and trade. As the historian Eric Hobsbawm has astutely observed, “languages become more conscious exercises in social engineering in proportion as their symbolic significance prevails over their actual use.”¹⁰⁷ At a time when even the president of the *Schulverein* conversed with his children in English, not German, the German-language classroom presented a convenient means to displace the wish for language maintenance on a public institution. Neatly confined to the one-and-a-half hours of weekly instruction, German-language schooling had transformed into “a symbolic tradition” that could “be easily expressed and felt, without requiring undue interference in other aspects of life.”¹⁰⁸

Importantly, even though German-language instruction had become embedded in the local structures of schooling, it never lost its transitory character. It was a part *within* the system, but not *of* the system. By the early twentieth century, teachers were special instructors who did not possess provincial teaching certificates. German-language classrooms had been abolished in favour of a system of itinerant teachers. German-language instruction was optional, not mandatory. As County Inspector F. W. Sheppard reported to the provincial Superintendent of Education in 1913:

¹⁰⁷ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programmes, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Canto, 1991 [1990]), 112.

¹⁰⁸ Gans, “Symbolic Ethnicity,” 9.

In Berlin an average of 1/2 hour per lesson is given twice and three times per week respectively to lower and higher classes, beginning with the Kindergarten and ending with Junior Third classes ... German is the language of instruction and communication to pupils only while taking lessons in German ... Teachers are well educated Germans and speak the language fluently, but none of them at present engaged has any professional standing as teacher in Ontario ... The teachers of German pass from room to rooms and from school to school ... The regular teacher in charge of the room remains in the room during the German lesson and is responsible for discipline ... The lessons consists of Reading, Writing, Spelling, and Translation; but most of the time is given to oral composition of conversation.¹⁰⁹

While capturing the local imagination, the German mother tongue had transformed into a language of modernity. In this, the stories of Berlin and Buffalo converged once again.

¹⁰⁹ OA, Sir James P. Whitney Papers, F 5, MU 3132, "Memo regarding teaching of German in bilingual schools."

Chapter IX

German Re-Visited: From Mother Tongue to Modern Language, Buffalo, 1870-1915

On August 1, 1870, 96 men and 20 women teachers gathered in Louisville, Kentucky, for the inaugural meeting of the National German-American Teachers' Association.¹ Their goal was, as the *Amerikanische Schulzeitung* reported, "to assemble and unite the guardians of the German language and spirit who have been scattered across our adoptive Fatherland."² Their mandate, too, was nothing short of ambitious. By promoting German language teaching at American schools, they sought to reform the public school system. The mindless recitation of facts, the reliance on textbooks as the source of all knowledge was to be replaced by the rational and natural methods of German pedagogy as they had been pioneered by Pestalozzi and Fröbel in the early nineteenth century.³ The German language, in short, presented but a vehicle for the transformation of public schools into "a modern school of culture."⁴

The evident enthusiasm of the participants that found expression in an almost missionary zeal was fuelled by the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71. The war, one member mused, was nurturing a new sense of national pride, both in Germany and abroad. Hitherto, Germans had loved their *Heimat* (homeland) but not their Fatherland; for the tiny German states and principalities could hardly lay

¹ "Protokolle des Ersten Deutschen Lehrertages in Louisville, Ky., am 1., 2., 3. und 4. August, 1870," *Amerikanische Schulzeitung* [hereafter *Schulzeitung*], 1, 1 (September 1870), 3-18.

² "Gruß an die Leser," in *ibid.*, 2-3: "[Es war dies der erste gelungene Versuch], die in unserem Adoptiv-Vaterlande zerstreuten Erhalter deutscher Sprache und deutschen Wesens zu versammeln und zu einen."

³ *Ibid.* See also "Rede gehalten auf dem ersten deutschen Lehrertag in Louisville, Ky., von Karl Knortz von Oshkosh, Wisc.," *Schulzeitung*, 1, 3 (November 1870), 80-4. For criticism of the reliance on textbooks see "Rede gehalten auf dem ersten deutsch-amerikanischen Lehrertage von A. Schneck, Lehrer am deutsch-amerikanischen Seminar in Detroit, Michigan," *Schulzeitung*, 1, 2 (Oktober 1870), 51-2 and E. Dapprich, "Die Stellung der öffentlichen und deutsch-amerikanischen Schule zum Deutschthum in den Vereinigten Staaten," *Schulzeitung*, 3, 1 (September 1872), 16.

⁴ "Protokoll der dritten Hauptsitzung," *Schulzeitung*, 1, 1 (September 1870), 13.

claim to such proud a title. Now, Germany seemed to be poised to fulfil its mission as “the bearer of culture and humanist education.”⁵ In turn, German-American teachers should cling tenaciously to German language and learning so that they, “as Americans among Americans,” could introduce German pedagogy into American schools.⁶

There was, of course, nothing peculiar about German-ness as a point of pride. As historian David Gerber has put so succinctly, the European events of 1870/71 “provided a basis for a stronger overarching German national identity.” Language, in particular, came to constitute “an ideological imperative, symbolic of identification with the new, powerful German state.”⁷ What attracts attention is the emergence of a network of German-American teachers that aspired to translate this pride into politics. Each year, the National German-American Teachers’ Association (*Nationaler Deutsch-Amerikanischer Lehrerbund*) convened in American cities to debate strategies for promoting the teaching of German. Its monthly journal, the *Amerikanische Schulzeitung*, presented a forum for animated discussions on methods of instruction and the role of the German language in the United States.⁸ Equally important, the columns of the *Schulzeitung* faithfully chronicled the state of German-language instruction. Under the heading “Statistics” (later “Correspondence”), members reported on the bewildering diversity of German language programmes at parochial, private and public schools.

This chapter proposes to regard the National German-American Teachers’ Association as a social movement, intent on spreading the virtues of German language and pedagogy across the

⁵ Louis Stierlin, “Der bisherige Mangel an Nationalstolz bei den Deutschen und die Ursachen desselben,” *Schulzeitung*, 1, 2 (Oktober 1870), 60-2.

⁶ “Eröffnungs-Rede des Herrn Direktor E. Feldner,” *Schulzeitung*, 1, 1 (September 1870), 21-7.

⁷ David A. Gerber, “Language Maintenance, Ethnic Group Formation, and Public Schools: Changing Patterns of German Concern, Buffalo, 1837-1874,” *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 4 (Fall 1984), 54.

⁸ Note that the *Amerikanische Schulzeitung* changed its named frequently; it subsequently appeared as *Erziehungs-Blätter für Schule und Haus* [hereafter *Erziehungs-Blätter*], *Pädagogische Monatshefte/Pedagogical Monthly: Zeitschrift für das deutschamerikanische Schulwesen* [hereafter *Pädagogische Monatshefte*], and *Monatshefte für deutsche Sprache und Pädagogik* [hereafter *Monatshefte*]

continent. Its members, as we shall see, shared a common ethnic-political and economic identity. Members of the lower middle class, they had migrated from Germany in the wake of the failed 1848/49 revolutions and carried with them the conviction that society could be reformed through education. Not content to restrict their work to ethnic institutions alone, they confidently claimed a role in the mainstream of educational reform. Although their numbers at the annual conventions rarely exceeded two-hundred, their meetings presented an important forum of communication that connected German-American educators and pedagogues. In the absence of a national German-American organization, the *Lehrerbund*, as it became known, helped build a network of ethnicity.⁹

In the following pages, we will explore how Buffalo – which was yet at the periphery of German America – was drawn into the orbit of the *Lehrerbund*. This is not to say that a supposedly ‘national’ organization dictated a blueprint for German-language instruction at the local level. As we know from the socio-historical studies by Bettina Goldberg and David Gerber, the dynamics of language and schooling have to be carefully examined in their local context whose complexity we can overlook only at our peril.¹⁰ Rather, this is to suggest that channels of communication between educators in Buffalo and the *Lehrerbund* were growing in density, thus allowing for a lively exchange of ideas. Significantly, the conversations about teaching methods were not restricted to ethnic networks alone. Instead, as we shall see, just as the *Lehrerbund* reached out to Anglo-American educators, so, too, did professionals endorse its suggestions on modern language teaching. In the

⁹ Karl W. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1996 [1953]), 86-101. For the role of social movements in the history of American education see David B. Tyack, “The Spread of Public Schooling in Victorian America: In Search of a Reinterpretation,” *History of Education*, 7, 3 (1978), 173-82. An insightful discussion of social network theory has been provided by John C. Walsh and Steven High, “Rethinking the Concept of Community,” *Histoire sociale/Social History*, 32, 64 (November 1999), 255-73.

¹⁰ Bettina Goldberg, “The German-English Academy, the National German-American Teachers’ Seminary, and the Public School System in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1851-1919,” in Henry Geitz, Jürgen Heideking, and Jürgen Herbst eds., *German Influences on Education in the United States to 1917* (Washington, D.C.: German Historical Institute, 1995), 177-92 and Gerber, “Language Maintenance, Ethnic Group Formation, and Public Schools,” 31-61.

end, it was the convergence of *ethnic* and *professional* networks that sought to transform German from a 'mother tongue' to a 'modern language.' In its new gown, German became enshrined in the Buffalo public school system where it constituted a distinctive feature, if not a dominant one.

Language and the *Lehrerbund*

The *Nationale Deutsch-Amerikanische Lehrerbund* was many things, but 'national' it was not. The bulk of its founding members came from the so-called "German Triangle," the area defined by the cities of Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Milwaukee.¹¹ In 1870, delegates from Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana presented almost three quarters of the participants, compared to the lone representative from Buffalo, W. H. Weick.¹² Until December 1918 when the last issue of the *Schulzeitung* would appear, these mid-western states constituted the stronghold of the *Lehrerbund*. To be sure, the association did attempt to reach out to German language teachers in the East. As early as in 1872, it convened in Hoboken, New Jersey, to ease the burden of travel costs for delegates from the eastern states. The apparent disinterest of the latter, however, drew the wrath of the organizers. With ill-concealed disappointment, they concluded "that the majority of teachers in the bigger cities of the East do not seem to agree with the principles of the *Lehrerbund*, they do not seem to endorse its goals: to introduce natural and rational methods into the public schools and to earn the German language the position it so duly deserves."¹³ As if to counter this criticism, the German Teachers' Association

¹¹ Kathleen Neils Conzen, "Immigrants in Nineteenth-Century Agricultural History," in Lou Ferleger ed., *Agriculture and National Development: Views on the Nineteenth Century* (Ames, Iowa, 1990), 303-42.

¹² Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana sent 37, 24 and 21 delegates respectively. See "Mitgliederliste," *Schulzeitung*, 1, 1 (September 1870), 20.

¹³ "Der 3. deutsch-amerikanische Lehrertag," *Schulzeitung*, 3, 1 (September 1872), 44: "Wir sehen uns deshalb zu dem unangenehmen Schluß gedrängt, daß die große Mehrzahl der deutschen Lehrer in den größeren Städten des Ostens mit den Prinzipien des Lehrerbundes nicht übereinstimmt, daß sie seine Ziele – natur- und vernunftgemäße Methoden in die öffentlichen Schulen unseres Landes einzuführen und der deutschen Sprache gebührende Berücksichtigung zu verschaffen – nicht gut heißt."

from New York proposed, in 1877, to found a *Lehrerbund* for the eastern states that would work closely together with its western counterpart. This suggestion failed to win the support of representatives from Cleveland, Cincinnati, St. Louis and Milwaukee, with the predictable result that the *National German-American Teachers' Association* never lost its western tinge.¹⁴

In another way, too, the *Lehrerbund* was a self-selected group. In its early years, it was dominated by refugees of the failed revolutions of 1848/49, among them the association's first president, E. Feldner.¹⁵ The radical bent of the 1848ers manifested itself in a strong resentment of religious education; in joint-declarations with the *Turner* (gymnasts), the most radical and free-thinking element among German migrants; and a firm belief that education had the power, nay the obligation, to reform society.¹⁶ In early nineteenth-century Germany, these reformers – many of whom common school teachers – had enthusiastically endorsed efforts to liberate German schools from clerical supervision and introduce child-centred methods of instruction into the classroom.¹⁷ They had also revolted against the conservative backlash in the wake of the Congress of Vienna (1815) that pitted progressive teachers' associations against repressive governments.¹⁸ When crossing the Atlantic, they brought with them both a zeal for reform and an aversion against religion which they eloquently expressed. The "sectarian schools," one delegate held, presented "a weapon ... against German character and civilization, against modern science and progress," while another spoke of the "poison of sanctimonious stultification."¹⁹ Only one voice of protest could be heard, when the

¹⁴ Herrmann Schuricht, *Geschichte der Deutschen Schulbestrebungen in Amerika* (Leipzig: Verlag Friedrich Fleischer, 1884), 77.

¹⁵ "Eröffnungs-Rede des Herrn Direktor E. Feldner," 24.

¹⁶ Bettina Goldberg, "Die Achtundvierziger und das Schulwesen in Amerika: Zur Theorie und Praxis ihrer Reformbestrebungen," *Amerikastudien / American Studies*, 32, 4 (1987), 484-7.

¹⁷ "Protokoll der ersten Hauptsitzung," *Schulzeitung*, 1, 1 (September 1870), 12; "Zweite Hauptversammlung," *Schulzeitung*, 2, 1 (September 1871), 9; Schuricht, *Geschichte der Deutschen Schulbestrebungen in Amerika*, 109-15.

¹⁸ Goldberg, "Die Achtundvierziger und das Schulwesen in Amerika," 482-4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, "Protokolle der dritten Hauptsitzung," 17 ("eine Waffe, die vornehmlich gegen die deutsche Gesittung und Gesinnung, gegen die moderne Wissenschaft und gegen jeden Fortschritt gerichtet werden würde") and 14 ("Gifte pfäffischer Verdummung").

inaugural meeting voted to ban the bible from the schools.²⁰ This rhetoric, of course, could not but drive a wedge between German-language teachers of secular and religious persuasion. Teachers at parochial schools tended to remain aloof from the *Lehrerbund*, thereby depriving the association of a large contingent of potential members.²¹

United in their rejection of religious instruction, the founding members of the German-American Teachers' Association also agreed that the United States presented "a nation in the making," as one speaker said in 1871.²² Indeed, when turning the pages of the *Amerikanische Schulzeitung*, one is struck by the pervasive use of the melting pot metaphor.²³ Far from implying a duty to assimilate, this version of the melting pot suggested that German 'gifts' enriched American culture, thus offering a justification for the continued existence of the German language.²⁴ "Germans and Americans should complement each other," the editor of the *Schulzeitung*, L. Klemm, wrote in October 1870. While 'the American' possessed a healthy realism, stout manliness, and practical sense, 'the German' brought to the United States the treasures of German science, art, and culture, coupled with an innate humanity. It was in the mutual exchange of languages, Klemm argued, that "the student of language acquired the spirit of

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ "Der 3. deutsch-amerikanische Lehrertag," *Schulzeitung*, 3, 1 (September 1872), 44-5.

²² "Protokolle des zweiten Deutsch-Amerikanischen Lehrertages," *Schulzeitung*, 2, 1 (September 1871), 12: "die erst im Werden begriffene amerikanische Nation."

²³ See, for instance, *ibid.*, 12-3 and 37; L. Klemm, "Was trennt die deutsche von der amerikanischen Schule and was verbindet Beide," *Schulzeitung*, 3, 1 (September 1872), 12; "Über deutsch-amerikanische Schulen und Lehrer," *Schulzeitung*, 1, 3 (Dezember 1873), 11; "Protokolle des 6. deutsch-amerikanischen Lehrertags zu Toledo, Ohio," *Erziehungs-Blätter*, 2, 12 (September 1875), 2; "Protokolle des 8. deutsch-amerikanischen Lehrertages," *Erziehungs-Blätter*, 4, 12 (September 1877), 2.

²⁴ For an elegant formulation of the 'melting pot' theory in German-American thinking see Kathleen Neils Conzen, "German-Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity," in Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh eds., *America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred-Year History, Vol. 1: Immigration, Language, Ethnicity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 138-9 and Kathleen Neils Conzen et al., "The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A.," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 12, 1 (Fall 1992), 11.

language and, thus, partook in the spirit of the nation.”²⁵ In the case of German migrants, this cultural exchange entailed both a duty to learn English, “as perfectly as possible,” and an obligation to cultivate the German language on American shores.²⁶

Importantly, although the members of the *Lehrerbund* saw themselves as “citizens of two tongues” who were equally at home in two cultural communities, they pledged their *political* loyalty to one nation-state only, the United States.²⁷ Coloured by an air of cultural superiority, this dual identity found expression in the association’s constitution. Having announced their goal “to cultivate German language and literature alongside the English one,” they voiced their intention to “raise truly free American citizens” by introducing the natural methods of German pedagogy into the schools.²⁸ It is the subtext of these claims that is of interest here. In the homeland of republicanism, the *Lehrerbund* suggested, the prevalent methods of teaching fostered a blind belief in authority. The “slavish dependency” on the textbook stifled the child’s natural curiosity and ought to be replaced by teaching methods that encouraged both independent thinking and true understanding.²⁹

If the delegates concurred in their overall goals, they engaged in a heated debate as to the best vehicle for language maintenance. In addressing the first meeting of the *Lehrerbund*, President Feldner was adamant that the increase of private German-American schools was the pivotal goal of the association.³⁰ Like others, he felt that these independent schools fulfilled a pioneering role in teaching their students both the German and English language. By contrast, pupils at public schools

²⁵ “Bleiben wir uns selbst treu!,” *Schulzeitung*, 1, 2 (Oktober 1870), 63: “mit dem Geiste der Sprache geht ein Theil des Geistes der Nation in den Lernenden über.”

²⁶ “Rede gehalten auf dem ersten deutschen Lehrertage in Louisville, Ky., von Karl Knortz,” 82-3.

²⁷ “Eröffnungs-Rede des Herrn Direktor E. Feldner,” 23: “Bürger zweier Zungen.”

²⁸ “Verfassung des D.-A. Lehrerbundes,” *Schulzeitung*, 2, 1 (September 1871), 3.

²⁹ Dapprich, “Die Stellung der öffentlichen und deutsch-amerikanischen Schule,” 16. See also “Rede gehalten auf dem ersten amerikanischen Lehrertag von A. Schneck,” 50-3.

³⁰ “Eröffnungs-Rede des Herrn Direktor E. Feldner,” 22. For a brief history of secular German-American private schools see Schuricht, *Geschichte der Deutschen Schulbestrebungen in Amerika*, 56-66.

rarely acquired more than a smattering of German.³¹ Further, in the select circles of the *Lehrerbund*, German-American private schools enjoyed the enviable reputation of being far superior to public schools. Faithful disciples of German reform pedagogy, private schools offered child-centred instruction that cultivated a lively discourse between teachers and students rather than textbook learning and memorization.³² Finally, as delegate W. Müller argued in 1873, an independent German-American school system presented the only true bastion of the German language; for the introduction of German language classes at American public schools was a political concession that American shrewdness could withdraw at any moment.³³

Notwithstanding the vocal support for private schools, a new strategy for promoting German-language instruction emerged in the 1870s. Buoyed by Germany's victory in the Franco-Prussian war, the *Schulzeitung's* editor, L. Klemm, became convinced that the *public* schools presented the future home of German language and pedagogy. "Let's change our tactics!," he proclaimed in a programmatic article. "The public schools are the proper place for cultivating true pedagogical principles among Americans."³⁴ At the association's third convention in 1872, he demanded that German teachers should join the American mainstream in a rhetorical fireworks that left many of his colleagues reeling.³⁵ Klemm professed little patience with "German haughtiness" that preferred to remain aloof from the grand project of nation-building. Instead, he aspired to apply the principles of German education to the country's public schools. "The more refined metal we cast into the pot," he concluded, alluding to the melting pot metaphor once more, "the more refined the blend will be."³⁶

³¹ W. Müller, "Ist die deutsch-amerikanische Schule überflüssig," *Schulzeitung*, 3, 12 (August 1873), 449 and A. Douai, "Zweisprachiger Unterricht," *Schulzeitung*, 1, 1 (Oktober 1873), 16.

³² Dapprich, "Die Stellung der öffentlichen und deutsch-amerikanischen Schule," 16. See also Goldberg, "Die Achtundvierziger und das Schulwesen in Amerika, 485 and Schuricht, *Geschichte der Deutschen Schulbestrebungen in Amerika*, 105-6.

³³ Müller, "Ist die deutsch-amerikanische Schule überflüssig," 449.

³⁴ Quintus Fixlein, "Aendern wir unsere Taktik!," *Schulzeitung*, 2, 8 (April 1872), 269-70.

³⁵ Klemm, "Was trennt die deutsche von der amerikanischen Schule," 9-13. See also the ensuing debate in *ibid.*, 20-22.

³⁶ *Ibid.*: "je mehr des edlen Metalls wir in den Tigel werfen, desto edler wird die Mischung."

In the early 1870s, Klemm's optimism seemed to be justified. Between 1864 and 1874, eight major American cities had introduced German-language instruction into the public school system.³⁷ Cities like Cleveland, Indianapolis, and Baltimore established extensive bi-lingual programmes. Others, like Chicago, Buffalo, Milwaukee, and New York were content to integrate German-language classes into the regular curriculum.³⁸ To the chagrin of the German-American Teachers' Association, only few emulated the example of Cincinnati, "the unchallenged pioneer in nineteenth-century German-language education," as Steven L. Schlossman has remarked.³⁹ Here, as early as in 1840, German had become part of the regular school curriculum and, by the 1870s, flowered into an sophisticated program of dual language instruction. In the first four elementary grades, two teachers – one German and one English – were jointly responsible for teaching the class. While half the children attended the German lessons during the mornings, the other half pursued their studies in the classroom of the English teacher, only to take turns in the afternoon. In the higher grades, children had one German-language class daily.⁴⁰ Still, although few cities matched the scope and quality of

³⁷ According to Paul Rudolph Fessler, these cities were: St. Louis, Missouri (1864), Chicago, Illinois (1865), Buffalo, New York (1866), Milwaukee, Wisconsin (1870), Cleveland, Ohio (1870), New York City, New York (1870), Indianapolis, Indiana (1871) and Baltimore, Maryland (1874). See Fessler, "Speaking in Tongues: German-Americans and the Heritage of Bilingual Education in American Public Schools," Ph.D. History, Texas A&M University, 1997, 23.

³⁸ See William J. Akers, *Cleveland Schools in the Nineteenth Century* (Cleveland, Ohio: W. M. Bayne Printing House, 1901); Dimitri Katasreas, "The Public and Private English-German Schools of Baltimore: 1836 to 1904," Ph.D., Georgetown University, 1994; L. Viereck, *Zwei Jahrhunderte Deutschen Unterrichts in den Vereinigten Staaten* (Braunschweig: Friedrich Vieweg und Sohn, 1903); Heinz Kloss, "Die deutschamerikanische Schule," *Jahrbuch für Amerikastudien*, 7 (1962), 141-75.

³⁹ Steven L. Schlossman, "'Is There an American Tradition of Bilingual Education': German in the Public Elementary Schools, 1840-1919," *American Journal of Education*, 91, 2, 146-7. For German schooling in Cincinnati see also John B. Shotwell, *A History of the Schools of Cincinnati* (Cincinnati: The School Life Company, 1902) and Carolyn R. Toth, *German-English Bilingual Schools in America: The Cincinnati Tradition in Historical Context* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990).

⁴⁰ "Dritte Hauptversammlung," *Schulzeitung*, 2, 1 (September 1871), 12-3 and H. Woldmann, "Der gegenwärtige Stand des deutschen Unterrichts in den Ver. Staaten," *Monatshefte*, 8, 7-8 (September-Oktober 1907), 221-2.

Cincinnati's bilingual curriculum, the readiness to open the doors of the public school system to the German language must have seemed encouraging.

The reasons why German gained a foothold in the public system were exceedingly complex, as we shall see later in the example of Buffalo. For now, suffice it to say that the massive numbers of Germans who had emigrated before the Civil War had settled on the farms of the west and in the country's burgeoning cities where 37 per cent of the German-born resided by 1860.⁴¹ By the early 1870s, many of the migrants had acquired American citizenship and entered the electoral rolls, thereby increasing German political clout.⁴² As a result, their lobbying efforts for German-language instruction became harder to defuse. Simultaneously, Anglo-American educators such as William Torrey Harris, the superintendent of education in St. Louis (Missouri), developed a pragmatic socio-political rationale for introducing German-language classes. If public schools offered instruction in German, Harris reasoned in 1869, German children would be drawn from the private into the public schools where they could be rapidly assimilated.⁴³

Triggered by the economic recession that hit the country in 1873, there was, indeed, a noticeable shift in enrolment from private to public schools.⁴⁴ As Bettina Goldberg has demonstrated for Milwaukee, once the school board added German language lessons to the public school curriculum in 1870, public school enrolment rose significantly, "especially in Milwaukee's heavily German wards."⁴⁵ As enrolment patterns changed, so, too, did the membership structure of the *Lehrerbund*. As early as in 1876, delegates from public schools began to outnumber teachers from

⁴¹ According to Kathleen Neils Conzen, Germans presented 37 percent of all immigrants in 1850, a figure that equalled almost a million. See Conzen, "Patterns of German-American History," in Randall M. Miller ed., *Germans in America: Retrospect and Prospect* (Philadelphia: German Society of Pennsylvania, 1984), 17.

⁴² Gerber, "Language Maintenance, Ethnic Group Formation, and Public Schools," 49.

⁴³ St. Louis School Board Minutes, 1869, 29-30, quoted in Schlossman, "Is There an American Tradition of Bilingual Education?," 150-5.

⁴⁴ Schuricht, *Geschichte der Deutschen Schulbestrebungen in Amerika*, 64-6.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 185.

private schools at the annual conventions.⁴⁶ Given these developments, it is hardly surprising that public schools came to occupy a central position in the *Lehrerbund's* agenda.

Although tensions between public and private school supporters never completely subsided, both factions found common ground in the pedagogical principles they advocated. Long before the reform movement of modern language teaching rose to international prominence in the 1880s, the members of the *Lehrerbund* formulated innovative teaching strategies that treated German as a living language, not a dead one.⁴⁷ In discarding the conventional grammar-translation method, they stipulated that language lessons ought to teach children to *speak* German fluently, correctly, and clearly.⁴⁸ Innocuous as it seemed, this goal presented a radical departure from contemporary thinking on modern language instruction. As Susan N. Bayley has shown for a British context, modern languages had “won inclusion in the liberal curriculum by capitalizing on their similarity to the classics as subjects with complex linguistic textures and rich literatures.”⁴⁹ In an academic culture that regarded conversational skills as a “trifling accomplishment,” modern languages were cherished not as a medium of communication but as a means to sharpen the intellect. Accordingly, French and German were taught like the classics, “by memorization, recitation, parsing and translation.”⁵⁰

Understandably, this practice held little attraction for the members of the *Lehrerbund*. As native speakers who were deeply involved in their respective German-American communities, they could not but think of their mother tongue as a living language. As professionals, in turn, they were

⁴⁶ Schuricht, *Geschichte der Deutschen Schulbestrebungen in Amerika*, 76.

⁴⁷ For an excellent discussion of this ‘reform movement’ see Susan N. Bayley, “The Direct Method and modern language teaching in England, 1880-1918,” *History of Education*, 27, 1 (1998), 39.

⁴⁸ See, for instance, Ortmann, “Der Sprachunterricht in den beiden ersten Schuljahren: Referat für den deutsch-amerikanischen Lehrerberein zu Baltimore,” *Schulzeitung*, 2, 7 (März 1872), 236.

⁴⁹ Bayley, “The Direct Method and modern language teaching in England, 1880-1918,” 39.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 39 and 42. See also Teodor Thurm, “Wie kann die deutsche Sprache mit Erfolg in die Volksschule eingeführt werden?,” *Schulzeitung*, 3, 2 (Oktober 1872), 61-2 and L. Klemm, “Deutscher Sprachunterricht für Kinder nicht deutscher Eltern,” *Schulzeitung*, 2, 6 (März 1875), 5.

finely attuned to a language shift that manifested itself among their young charges as early as in the 1870s. On the playground and the streets, members observed German children speaking English amongst themselves. Even in *Turner* societies and German-American publishing houses, those bulwarks of German language and culture, young gymnasts and typesetters were overheard conversing in English.⁵¹ In this era of transition, one commentator mused, German-American youth no longer seemed to have a mother tongue.⁵² For them, German had become a foreign language, a process that could be reversed only through the concerted efforts of dedicated educators who sought to instil “the love of German language and German spirit into our pupils’ hearts.”⁵³

German thus emerged as a peculiar hybrid of ‘mother tongue’ and ‘foreign language.’ While retaining the emotive power of the former, it was its latter incarnation that called for new methods of instruction. Hearing and speaking, German-American school teachers urged, were the foundations of all language teaching. Instead of submitting children to a torturous course of grammatical rules, conjugation, and declension, designed only to stifle their interest and discourage them, they were to learn grammar inductively. Conversational exercises and a systematic course in *oral* instruction were to supplant formal lessons in grammar and translation.⁵⁴ In heeding Pestalozzi’s advice to see the world through the child’s eyes, teachers should proceed from the simple to the difficult, from the

⁵¹ “Rede gehalten auf dem ersten deutschen Lehrertag in Louisville, Ky., von Karl Knortz von Oshkosh, Wisc.,” 79-80. See also W. R. Hailmann, “Thesen zu einem Vortrag über das Thema: ‘Mittel und Wege zur direkten Beeinflussung des Anglo-Amerikaner zu Gunsten deutscher Erziehungsmethoden,’” *Schulzeitung*, 1 (1871), 203.

⁵² Ortmann, “Der Sprachunterricht in den ersten beiden Schuljahren: Referat für den deutsch-amerikanischen Lehrerverein zu Baltimore,” *Schulzeitung*, 2, 6 (February 1872), 203: “Die Eltern, besonders die Mütter, reden oft nur deutsch – die Kinder oft nur englisch.”

⁵³ “Rede gehalten auf dem ersten deutschen Lehrertag in Louisville, Ky., von Karl Knortz von Oshkosh, Wisc.,” 82: “um deutscher Sprache und deutschem Sinn in den Herzen unserer Schuljugend für immer eine liebende Heimat zu sichern.”

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 84; Ortmann, “Der Sprachunterricht in den ersten beiden Schuljahren,” (February 1872), 205; Ortmann, “Der Sprachunterricht in den ersten beiden Schuljahren,” (März 1872), 239; “Deutscher Unterricht für Anglo-Amerikaner,” *Erziehungs-Blätter*, 3, 1 (Oktober 1875), 7. For a point of comparison see Susan N. Bayley, “‘Life is too short to learn German’: Modern Languages in English elementary education, 1872-1904,” *History of Education*, 18, 1 (1989), 62.

concrete to the abstract, from the known to the unknown. Instruction in reading and writing, in other words, should be postponed until children had immersed themselves into the sounds of the German language, able both to understand the teacher (who, of course, spoke in German only) and formulate simple thoughts of their own.⁵⁵

At the heart of the new course of study was ‘object-teaching,’ or, more precisely, *Anschaungsunterricht*. In simple conversations, children were to be encouraged to observe their surroundings and describe what they saw. “The language of the teacher has to be stimulating and lively,” one school instructor recommended. “Incidentally, the teacher should speak less and the pupils more.”⁵⁶ The topic of conversation were many, he continued. In the first year, the school, the home, animals and plants provided ample opportunity for building a vocabulary and nurturing a ‘feeling for language’ (*Sprachgefühl*). In the second year, conversation might turn to fields and woods, the sky, sun, moon and stars. In asking the children to describe the names, shapes, parts, and colours of the natural world, they would – playfully – learn about adjectives, adverbs, and gender. Learning by doing would thus replace the dry study of grammar.⁵⁷ At all times, children were asked to speak in complete sentences. Their pronunciation had to be correct from the very beginning. And never should the English language be used in the German classroom.⁵⁸

In this ‘ideal’ course of instruction, as educator Ortman described it, children proceeded to a *study* of language only after they had learned how to *speak* it. Phonetics provided a particular useful tool, not only in teaching pronunciation but also in helping children to analyze the components of sentences and words: “The spoken sentences – or parts thereof – have to be broken into words,

⁵⁵ Ortman, “Der Sprachunterricht in den ersten beiden Schuljahren,” (February 1872), 205-6.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 206: “Die Sprache des Lehrers muß ... anregend und lebendig sein; übrigens muß der Lehrer weniger, der Schüler viel sprechen.”

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 205-6.

⁵⁸ Ortman, “Der Sprachunterricht in den ersten beiden Schuljahren,” (März 1872), 236.

words into syllabi and, thereafter, into sounds.”⁵⁹ These exercises prepared the teaching of reading and writing; for written language simply visualized the sounds of spoken language, an area with which the children were already familiar.⁶⁰ Grammar and translation, finally, should be limited to a minimum. While undoubtedly useful in helping older students understand the nuances and structure of language, they should not be taught at the cost of conversational skills. “In my many years of teaching,” one teacher recalled, “I have encountered several students who had gulped down the entire grammar à la Ollendorf and, yet, could not express a single thought in correct German.”⁶¹ Conversational skills and oral fluency, German-American pedagogues agreed, were the stepping stone to a true mastery of the German language. Needless to say, these tried principles of German-language teaching were advocated for Anglo-American pupils as well. Although it might be advisable to teach Anglo-American children in separate classrooms, they, as well, had to learn how to understand, speak, write and read the German language.⁶²

These recommendations presented the distilled wisdom of years of classroom teaching, mostly at private German-American schools. The lesson plan that thus emerged was remarkable for its practical suggestions. It was developed by school teachers who were guided not by academic aspirations, but by the desire to keep the German mother tongue alive as a medium of communication. In drawing upon their personal experiences, their detailed suggestions provide glimpses into the German-language classroom that was idealized as a place of true learning.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 238: “Die gesprochenen Sätze – oder ein Theil derselben – müssen in Wörter aufgelöst, geeignete Wörter in Silben und hierauf in Laute zerlegt werden.”

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 238-9.

⁶¹ L. Klemm, “Deutscher Sprachunterricht für Kinder nicht deutscher Eltern,” 5: “Ich habe in meiner mehrjährigen Praxis Schüler gehabt, die, ehe sie zu mir kamen, sich durch die ganze Grammatik a la Ollendorf durchgewürgt hatten und nicht einen einzigen Gedanken in sprachrichtigem Deutsch auszudrücken vermochten.”

⁶² H. Woldmann, “Deutscher Unterricht für Anglo-Amerikaner,” *Erziehungs-Blätter*, 3, 1 (Oktober 1875), 7.

Their enthusiasm notwithstanding, German-American teachers were pragmatic enough to realize that the pedagogical principles they advocated were a far cry from the textbook-centred learning that characterized many an American school. To disseminate their methods, it was not enough to present them at the *Lehrerbund* conventions or publish them in the pages of the *Amerikanische Schulzeitung*. Rather than preaching to the converted, they had to reach out to both the German-American public and their Anglo-American colleagues.

In seeking to enlist the help of German associations and communities across the country, the German-American Teachers' Association presented itself as the guardian of German language and culture. Its goal, it proclaimed, was to fight a "battle for the preservation of *Deutschthum* (German-ness)."⁶³ For this worthy endeavour it welcomed the support of gymnastic societies, singing societies and German clubs.⁶⁴ It also encouraged the founding of German school associations that were to lobby for the "reform of public education" in general and the introduction of German into the public school curriculum in particular.⁶⁵ The daily press, in turn, was asked to publicize the *Lehrerbund's* agenda and mobilize the German-American population.⁶⁶ If these appeals lacked in fervour, the detailed suggestions on how to harness German political clout did not. In no uncertain terms, the *Lehrerbund* called upon "all German-American citizens" to "stand guard that no delegate of the people or public official will be elected ... who has not fully committed himself to the programme of school reform."⁶⁷ Neither petitions nor mass meetings would ensure the success of German-language

⁶³ "Rede gehalten auf dem ersten deutschen Lehrertage in Louisville, Ky., von Karl Knortz von Oshkosh, Wis.," 79.

⁶⁴ See, for instance, "Eröffnungs-Rede des Herrn Direktor E. Feldner," 24.

⁶⁵ P. Stahl, "Wie läßt sich die entwickelnde Methode in die englische Normal- und Volksschule einführen?," *Schulzeitung*, 3, 1 (September 1872), 8; "Verhandlungen des dritten deutsch-amerikanischen Lehrertages: Dritte Hauptversammlung," *Schulzeitung*, 3, 3 (November 1872), 112.

⁶⁶ Stahl, "Wie läßt sich die entwickelnde Methode in die englische Normal- und Volksschule einführen?," 8; "Die deutsche Presse New Yorks," *Schulzeitung*, 3, 1 (September 1872), 47.

⁶⁷ Stahl, "Wie läßt sich die entwickelnde Methode in die englische Normal- und Volksschule einführen?," 9: "Wache zu halten, daß kein Volksvertreter oder öffentlicher Beamter gewählt werde ..., der nicht sich auf das Programm der Schulverbesserung verpflichtet hat."

instruction, L. Klemm reminded his audience. Instead, it was at the ballot box that the fate of German would be decided.⁶⁸ This strategy, of course, could not succeed without German unity. German particularism, this deplorable “enemy in our own ranks” had to be overcome, Klemm urged.⁶⁹

If the *Lehrerbund* was a German-American association whose members proudly asserted their ethnic identity and sought to mobilize ethnic organizations and newspapers, it also was a professional association that was dominated by school teachers and pedagogues. In its latter function, the *Lehrerbund* reached out to Anglo-American educators with whom it shared a common interest in school reform. As historian Daniel T. Rodgers has shown, such professional networks frequently crossed boundaries of nationality or ethnic identity and liberally drew upon “foreign models and imported ideas.”⁷⁰ In a similar vein, the *Lehrerbund* was keenly aware of debates within the *National Education Association* (NEA) that had been founded in 1856 as an association of professional teachers.⁷¹ It was with evident satisfaction that the *Amerikanische Schulzeitung* described the mounting support for object teaching and the “natural method of instruction” (*die entwickelnde Methode*) that it perceived among Anglo-American educators. Little wonder that the *Lehrerbund* sought to forge bonds with the NEA whose political influence it admired and wished to emulate.⁷²

As early as in 1872, the *Lehrerbund* began to make its overtures by inviting “renowned Anglo-American reform pedagogues” to participate in special English-language sessions at its annual conventions.⁷³ The dialogue thus initiated was continued by publishing conference proceedings in

⁶⁸ L. Klemm, “Wie ist der deutsche Unterricht in die öffentlichen Schulen einzuführen an Plätzen, wo er noch nicht besteht?,” *Schulzeitung*, 2, 1 (Oktober 1874), 2-3.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷⁰ Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 4.

⁷¹ Cecilia Elizabeth O’Leary, *To Die For: The Paradox of American Patriotism* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 177 and 292.

⁷² Stahl, “Wie läßt sich die entwickelnde Methode in die englische Normal- und Volksschule einführen?,” 7.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 8; “Bericht über die Thätigkeit des N.-Amer. Lehrerbundes für den 3. Lehrertag,” *Schulzeitung*, 3, 1 (September 1872), 4; “Arbeitsresultate des 3. Lehrertages,” *Schulzeitung*, 3, 1 (September 1872), 45.

both the German and the English language and sending delegates to the twelfth annual meeting of the NEA in Boston in 1872.⁷⁴ What John Kraus, A. Douai, and W. R. Hailmann witnessed at the Boston convention was nothing but encouraging; a progressive spirit manifested itself throughout the conference, they reported. In detecting a potential ally, the *Lehrerbund* delegation submitted a communication in which they assured their Anglo-American colleagues of their “desire to join their earnest efforts with yours.”⁷⁵ But how far should co-operation extend?

An eloquent few enthusiastically advocated a merger with the NEA. For men like P. Stahl or L. Klemm, a melting of the two associations was the only sensible course. As a sub-section of the NEA, the forces of reform would be united and the *Lehrerbund*'s prestige enhanced.⁷⁶ Yet when, in 1872, delegate Schrenck proposed to hold a joint-convention with the NEA (provided, of course, the selected location was reasonably close to the “centres of *Deutschthum*”), his suggestion was soundly rejected. His critics cautioned against the danger of reducing the *Lehrerbund* to a mere appendix of the Anglo-American association. In order to wield its influence, the *Lehrerbund* had to preserve its independence. In a strongly worded resolution, they carried the day. Until its dissolution in 1918, the German-American Teachers' Association would remain an independent organization that politely rejected any offers of the NEA to join its ranks.⁷⁷ This independent stance, however, did not prevent it from forging ever-closer ties with Anglo-American educators. Eventually, in 1874, the *Lehrerbund* and the NEA convened simultaneously in Detroit, Michigan. Rather than being swallowed by its

⁷⁴ Schuricht, *Geschichte der Deutschen Schulbestrebungen in Amerika*, 71.

⁷⁵ “Die 12. jährliche Versammlung der National Educational Association,” *Schulzeitung*, 3, 1 (September 1872), 46-7. See also “Die Konvention der nationalen Lehrer-Assoziation in Elmira,” *Erziehungs-Blätter*, 1, 1 (Oktober 1873), 9.

⁷⁶ Stahl, “Wie läßt sich die entwickelnde Methode in die englische Normal- und Volksschule einführen?,” 7 and Klemm, “Was trennt die deutsche von der amerikanischen Schule und was verbindet Beide?,” 12.

⁷⁷ “Verhandlungen des dritten deutsch-amerikanischen Lehrtages: Dritte Hauptversammlung,” 109-11.

English-speaking counterpart, the members of the *Lehrerbund* revelled in the praise being heaped upon Germany's pioneering role in promoting rational principles of education.⁷⁸

The accolades of Anglo-American pedagogues figured prominently in the pages of the *Amerikanische Schulzeitung*. Perhaps betraying a craving for recognition, the official organ of the *Lehrerbund* meticulously listed any speech that showed appreciation for "the true value of German-language instruction for the cultural development of the United States," as the Cleveland superintendent of education, Andrew Rickoff, put it in 1876.⁷⁹ For the German migrants who had tirelessly championed the virtues of German pedagogy, Rickoff's words provided a welcome assurance that the German language had successfully entered the American mainstream, suffusing it with a cultural sophistication hitherto unknown. No longer did German educators work in an ethnic enclave. Instead, as the smug satisfaction in the *Schulzeitung* reflected, their contributions to American culture seemed to be recognized at last.⁸⁰

German-American campaigns for language maintenance, by contrast, failed to garner similar effusive praise. When it came to their fellow German migrants, the *Lehrerbund* members did not hesitate to admonish and preach, scold and berate. If only more German teachers attended the annual conventions; if only German immigrants learned to set aside their differences; if only German Americans shook off their infuriating apathy, then, the reasoning went, the cause of German-language teaching would be won.⁸¹ In trying to spur German Americans into action, the *Lehrerbund* clearly

⁷⁸ "Protokolle des 5ten Deutsch-Amerikanischen Lehrertages, gehalten in Detroit, Mich., am 4-7 August 1874," *Schulzeitung*, 1, 12 (September 1874), 2-3.

⁷⁹ "Protokolle des 7. deutsch-amerikanischen Lehrertages zu Cleveland, O.," *Erziehungs-Blätter*, 3, 12 (September 1876), 1: "der wirkliche Wert, den der Unterricht in der deutschen Sprache für die Kulturentwicklung in den Ver. Staaten habe."

⁸⁰ Kathleen Neils Conzen, "Mainstream and Side Channel: The Localization of Immigrant Cultures," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 11, 1 (Fall 1991), 8.

⁸¹ See, for instance, Thurm, "Wie kann die deutsche Sprache mit Erfolg in die Volksschule eingeführt werden?," 61 and L. Klemm, "Wie ist der deutsche Unterricht in die öffentlichen Schulen einzuführen?," 2-5.

preferred the proverbial whip to the carrot. No German-language programme shy of a comprehensive bilingual curriculum could hope to win its admiration. The city of Buffalo was no exception.

In the discursive universe of the *Lehrerbund*, Buffalo was one among many delinquents. At the 1872 annual convention, Buffalo – like many cities of the East – was notable only for its absence.⁸² One year later, it was again singled out for criticism. As the *Schulzeitung* reported, in the spring of 1873, Buffalo's superintendent of education had "accidentally (?) omitted to include the salaries for the German teachers in his estimate for the school budget." This oversight was, in fact, a betrayal that bode poorly for the future of German language instruction at public schools. "In Buffalo," the author wrote, "the melting pot has been revealed to be a bedlam of ignorance, of prejudice and fanaticism."⁸³ To be sure, this tirade was fuelled by the author's weariness about abandoning private German-American schools in favour of public ones. Yet it also reflected Buffalo's alleged role as Cinderella in the field of education. Just as Anglo-American educators sneered at the city's lack of a school board, so, too, did German-American pedagogues bemoan the "snobbish nativism" of Buffalo's Anglo-American population.⁸⁴

The infamous incident of 1873/74 was described very differently in local lore. If we are to believe local histories and Buffalo's German-language dailies, German-American associations waged a spirited battle to protect German-language instruction at public schools. In the process, the city's German population became as united as never before. After the enemies of the German language had been ousted from office in the municipal elections, a chastised Common Council hastened to re-

⁸² Thurm, "Wie kann die deutsche Sprache mit Erfolg in die Volksschule eingeführt werden?," 61.

⁸³ Müller, "Ist die deutsch-amerikanische Schule überflüssig," 450: "der Schulsuperintendent [hat] aus reinem Zufall (?) aus dem Schuletat die Saläre für die deutschen Lehrer weggelassen. ... In Buffalo hat sich der Tiegel der Verschmelzung als einen [sic] Hexenkessel der Ignoranz, des Vorurtheils und des Fanatismus erwiesen."

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* and "New York Teachers' Association: Proceeding of the Forty-Fourth Annual Meeting, Held at Brooklyn, July 2 and 3, 1889," in State of New York – Department of Public Instruction, *Thirty-Sixth Annual Report of the State Superintendent, 1890, for the school year ending July 25, 1889* (Albany: James B. Lyon, 1890), 81-2.

establish the programme on an ever-grander scale in March 1874.⁸⁵ Nativist prejudice was thus overcome by German unity and strength.

The campaign for German-language instruction was, indeed, decided at the ballot box. Yet its story was one of neither tragedy nor triumph. Instead, it revealed a fascinating microcosm in which the arguments for and against the German language were rehearsed. Significantly, while the Buffalo story was shaped by specific local circumstances, it played to the captive audience of German-American newspapers across the country. In the telling and re-telling, Buffalo was drawn into German America.

Networks of Ethnicity

The contours of the controversy of 1873/74 have been mapped by David Gerber in an incisive study.⁸⁶ It was in 1866, Gerber writes, that the German language first entered Buffalo's elementary schools.⁸⁷ Upon the suggestion of aldermen Jacob Schau and Richard Flach, Superintendent John S. Fosdick proposed to the City Council "to employ two German teachers" to be "assigned to Public Schools Nos. 12, 13, 15 and 31, which Districts are principally inhabited by citizens of German descent."⁸⁸ Remarkable for a city in which the issue of German language instruction had stirred public debate and nativist sentiment in 1837-39 and again 1850-51, not a negative word was to be heard in either the council or in the local newspapers.⁸⁹ "While it would be a mistake to argue that

⁸⁵ See, in particular, "Die deutsche Sprache in den städtischen Schulen," in *Geschichte der Deutschen in Buffalo und Erie County* (Buffalo: Reinecke & Zesch, 1898), 80-1 and Ismar S. Ellison, "The Germans of Buffalo: An Historical Essay," *Publications of the Buffalo Historical Society, vol. II* (Buffalo: Bigelow Brothers, 1880), 142-3.

⁸⁶ See Gerber, "Language Maintenance, Ethnic Group Formation, and Public Schools," 31-61.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁸⁸ "Minutes No. 28, August 13, 1866" and "Minutes No. 29, August 20, 1866," in *Proceedings of the Common Council of the City of Buffalo, 1862* (Buffalo: Joseph Warren & Co., 1863), 435 and 472. See also *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 12, 1873, 2 and *Geschichte der Deutschen*, 79.

⁸⁹ Gerber, "Language Maintenance, Ethnic Group Formation, and Public Schools," 45. See also *Buffalo Demokrat*, August 15, 1866, 2 and September 4, 1866, 2.

nativist prejudice was dead in the mid-1860s," Gerber suggests, "the sharp fall in immigration in the war years, combined with the growing social integration of the ante-bellum immigrants, doubtless made American desires for speedy acculturation somewhat less pressing."⁹⁰ It might also have helped that German migrants had enlisted in the Civil War in greater numbers than either Anglo-Americans or Irish Americans, the city's two other major nationality groups.⁹¹ In addition, Democrats now dominated the Council who perceived themselves as the "protector of ethnic communalism."⁹²

In the following years, the German-language programme grew steadily, soon encompassing thirteen elementary schools, 774 pupils, and seven instructors, four of them male itinerant teachers who had been hired at the generous salary of \$ 1,075 each. By comparison, the three female teachers of German earned an average of \$ 557 per annum.⁹³ In the words of David Gerber, a "small, token program in German" had thus quickly metaphorsed into "a large, expensive, and ethnically separate program, staffed by ethnic teachers with no other obligations."⁹⁴ To the dismay of Superintendent Larned, the system of itinerant teachers was both ineffective and expensive. Rather than spending their time in the classroom, the four male instructors spent long hours walking from one school to the next, for a trolley service was available only on Main and Niagara streets.⁹⁵ Female teaching assistants, Larned suggested, should replace the itinerant teachers. They would "teach at only one school ... and assist instruction in other subjects, but earn about half the salary."⁹⁶ The vocal resistance of German Americans prevented Larned from implementing the change. Still, he began to

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Andrew P. Yox, "Decline of the German-American Community in Buffalo, 1855-1925," Ph.D. thesis, University of Chicago, 1983, 91-112.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education for the year ending December 31, 1872* (Buffalo: Buffalo Printing Company, 1873), 47.

⁹⁴ Gerber, "Language Maintenance, Ethnic Group Formation, and Public Schools," 47.

⁹⁵ *Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education*, 45-6 and *Geschichte der Deutschen*, 80.

⁹⁶ Gerber, "Language Maintenance, Ethnic Group Formation, and Public Schools," 46.

hire female assistants in greater numbers, examined male itinerant teachers, and standardized the course of study.⁹⁷

Given Larned's well-known objections to the itinerant system, it could not but look suspicious when he submitted a school budget for the year 1873/74 that did not include the salaries for the four male German teachers at elementary schools. Larned was adamant that the omission had been an oversight and immediately asked the City Council to reinstate the funds.⁹⁸ However, the council thwarted his efforts. In a heated, often acrimonious debate, the Republicans, who held twenty-two out of twenty-six seats, rejected any attempt by the school committee to restore the salaries.⁹⁹ In arguments reminiscent of the 1840s and 1850s, representatives from the most heavily American wards voiced their dislike of American schools sponsoring a German-language programme.¹⁰⁰ Alderman Webster spoke for many when he said that the "Germans came here to be American citizens. Let them forget their old country and prejudice as soon as possible."¹⁰¹ The protracted debate demonstrated that "a nativist reflect," as Gerber dubs it, was still evident among Republicans whose ranks had absorbed many members of the Know-Nothing movement that had collapsed in the late 1850s.¹⁰² Still, as Gerber rightly observes, it is noteworthy that even the opponents of restoration agreed to support German-language instruction in principle, if not with public funds.¹⁰³

The response of Buffalo's German-American population revealed that the city's *Deutschthum* had achieved a degree of material stability that translated into political confidence. By the early 1870s, 54 per cent of the German-American households owned land, compared to 42 per cent of

⁹⁷ *Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education*, 46-7.

⁹⁸ "Minutes No. 45, April 14, 1873," in *Proceedings of the Common Council of the City of Buffalo, 1873* (Buffalo: Haas & Kelley, 1874), 251.

⁹⁹ Gerber, "Language Maintenance, Ethnic Group Formation, and Public Schools," 47.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Quoted in the *Buffalo Express*, April 15, 1873, 1.

¹⁰² Gerber, "Language Maintenance, Ethnic Group Formation, and Public Schools," 47.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 47. See also "Minutes No. 18, April 30, 1873," in *Proceedings of the Common Council of the City of Buffalo, 1873*, 300.

Anglo-American households and only 33 per cent of the Irish. The majority of the city's artisans (60 per cent) was of German descent.¹⁰⁴ Ethnic leaders had forged close connections with American political and economic institutions, moving with ease among American business partners. Institutions like the 'Buffalo German Insurance Society' (1869) and the 'German Bank of Buffalo' (1870) signalled "the interest of affluent Germans in using ethnic financial resources to influence local economic development."¹⁰⁵ It is hardly surprising, then, that German migrants began to make their influence felt after having taken their naturalization papers. In 1873, eleven out of the twenty-six councilmen were of German origin.¹⁰⁶

But in order to make language a public issue, political clout alone was not enough. An ethnic group exhibiting such deep religious, linguistic, class, regional, and national divisions had first to learn how to identify with language as a common denominator. This, David Gerber holds, was the remarkable characteristic of the 1873-74 language controversy. Unlike in 1837-39 and 1850-51, German-speaking migrants did rally around a common cause and demonstrated a new sense of ethnic unity.¹⁰⁷ When their elected representatives failed to sway the council's opinion, an energetic campaign outside the council gathered force.

The details of the restoration campaign of 1873/74 do not need to concern us here.¹⁰⁸ Suffice it to say that it was the representatives of organized *Deutschthum*, mainly of secular and liberal persuasion, that spearheaded the movement: the gymnasts (*Turner*), the *German Young Men's Association*, the newly appointed *Committee of Thirty-Five* (a body of renowned professionals and businessmen), and, of course, the local German-American press.¹⁰⁹ Ismar Ellison, the editor of the

¹⁰⁴ Yox, "Decline of the German-American Community," 119-22.

¹⁰⁵ Gerber, "Language Maintenance, Ethnic Group Formation, and Public Schools," 50-1.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 50-4.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 48-9.

¹⁰⁹ See, for instance, *Buffalo Express*, April 18, 1873, 1; *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 12, 1873, 2; *Buffalo Freie Presse*, May 20, 1873, 2; *Buffalo Demokrat*, May 20, 1873, 3; "Minutes No. 24, June 2, 1873," in *Proceedings of the Common Council of the City of Buffalo, 1873*, 399.

Buffalo *Freie Presse*, for one, held an impassionate speech at the mass indignation meeting of May 1873 and composed a petition on behalf of the *Committee of Thirty-Five*.¹¹⁰

As it turned out, the *Turner* had not delivered an empty threat when they warned to “use all honourable means in future to keep those holding such narrow know-nothing views out of office.”¹¹¹ In the fall of 1873, the election results indicated the existence of “a significant German protest vote,” as David Gerber notes. “Of the five Republican seats lost, four were in German wards, where German Democrats replaced German Republicans.”¹¹² After this resounding rebuke for the Republican Party, the City Council listened carefully when the German *Committee of Thirty-Five* delivered a petition for the continued existence of German language classes in March 1874.¹¹³ Only three weeks later, it decided “that provision be made in the estimates for the School Department for the year 1874, for teaching the German language in the public schools of the city where the patrons of such schools desire it.”¹¹⁴ The new system of instruction owed much to the recommendations of Superintendent Larned. Upon his advice, female assistant teachers of German origin replaced the male itinerant teachers. Permanently assigned to one school, they worked together with their English-language colleagues in whose classrooms they assisted when necessary.¹¹⁵ Thus, while the German language was publicly recognized as a symbol of ethnic identity, it lost the appearance of an “ethnically separate program.” Instead, it became an increasingly popular option within the regular school curriculum that was offered at 73 per cent of the public elementary schools by 1910.

¹¹⁰ Buffalo *Daily Courier*, May 20, 1873, 2; “Minutes No. 9, March 2, 1874,” in *Proceedings of the Common Council of the City of Buffalo, 1874* (Buffalo: The Courier Company, 1875), 177-9; Buffalo *Freie Presse*, March 5, 1874, 2.

¹¹¹ Buffalo *Express*, April 18, 1873, 1.

¹¹² Gerber, “Language Maintenance, Ethnic Group Formation, and Public Schools,” 49.

¹¹³ “Minutes No. 9, March 2, 1874,” in *Proceedings of the Common Council of the City of Buffalo, 1874*, 177-9.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, “Minutes No. 13, March 23, 1874,” 235-6.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 236.

If the success of the restoration campaign was remarkable, so, too, was the way in which news about its trials and triumphs travelled along the Eastern Coast and across the Middle West. German-language newspapers in New York, Chicago, Milwaukee, Evansville, and Cincinnati, to name just a few, denounced the decision of the Buffalo City Council to withhold funds for German instruction. Their greatest wrath, however, was reserved for the four German Republicans who had sided with the “know-nothings.”¹¹⁶ “Four German villains,” wrote the *Seebote* from Milwaukee, had joined the ranks of the enemy.¹¹⁷ They had betrayed the “dearest treasure of *Deutschthum*, its beautiful language,” chimed in the *Union* from Evansville, while neither the *Illinois Staatszeitung* (Chicago) nor the New Yorker *Demokrat* hesitated to pillory the “traitors” in bold-letter print: Louis Herman, Jacob Bott, Louis P. Reichert, and Wilhelm Heinrich.¹¹⁸ With historical hindsight, it is evident that these aldermen were not necessarily opposed to German language and culture. Rather, as historian Andrew P. Yox has pointed out, they represented a German constituency whose educational needs were already met by parochial schools.¹¹⁹ Judging from the city council minutes for 1873, their refusal to restore the salaries of the male itinerant teachers was motivated as much by their austerity in public school matters as by the wish to expedite the end-of-year budget deliberations that were nearly wracked by the restoration debate. But in the aftermath of the council’s controversial decision, these nuances were lost in a whirlwind of indignation.

As the Buffalo incident vividly demonstrates, German-American newspapers played a critical role in making language a public matter. They engaged in an ongoing conversation about the role of the German language in the United States. They reported ‘deplorable’ attacks against German-language programmes at public schools. They heaped praise on ‘enlightened’ Anglo-American

¹¹⁶ *Union*, Evansville (Indiana), as quoted in the Buffalo *Freie Presse*, May 10, 1873, 4.

¹¹⁷ *Seebote*, Milwaukee (Wisconsin), as quoted in the Buffalo *Freie Presse*, May 6, 1873, 4.

¹¹⁸ *Union*, Evansville (Indiana), as quoted in the Buffalo *Freie Presse*, May 10, 1873, 4; *Illinois Staatszeitung*, Chicago and New Yorker *Demokrat*, as quoted in the Buffalo *Freie Presse*, May 6, 1873, 4.

¹¹⁹ Yox, “Decline of the German-American Community in Buffalo,” 142.

educators who showed appreciation for German-language teaching. And they described the introduction of German “in the public schools of the union” and lauded exemplary German programmes.¹²⁰ In assigning importance to language as a matter of national significance, newspapers also implied that language provided a common denominator for the remarkably diverse group of German-speaking migrants.¹²¹ Equally important, in the very act of conversation, they helped create a community of print that enabled German Americans to look beyond their local societies and engage in a national debate. This community was akin to Benedict Anderson’s notion of an “imagined community” in that it fostered a sense of belonging to a greater entity among fellow-readers.¹²² It was from the conversation between the local and the national, mediated through the German-American press, that a German public derived its meanings.¹²³

The image of an ongoing conversation may help us to understand why reflections about language bore a striking similarity in Buffalo’s German-language press and the pages of the *Amerikanische Schulzeitung*. In both media, ethnic spokespersons began to re-define the question of language from an ethnic into a cultural one.¹²⁴ The advantage of such an approach is readily

¹²⁰ In the case of Buffalo see, for instance, *Buffalo Freie Presse*, April 26, 1873, 2; *Buffalo Freie Presse*, May 2, 1873, 2; *Buffalo Freie Presse*, May 20, 1873, 2; *Buffalo Demokrat*, May 20, 1873, 3; “Minutes No. 9, March 2, 1874,” in *Proceedings of the Common Council of the City of Buffalo, 1873*, 178-9; *Buffalo Demokrat*, August 20, 1873, 2.

¹²¹ Seebote, Milwaukee (Wisconsin), as quoted in *Buffalo Freie Presse*, May 6, 1873, 4.

¹²² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, New York: Verso, 1991 [1983]), 6-7 and 33-6. See also Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish, and Jewish Immigrants in the United States* (London, England and Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 58 and 62.

¹²³ David Waldstreicher’s “Rites of Rebellion, Rites of Assent: Celebrations, Print Culture, and the Origins of American Nationalism,” *Journal of American History*, 82, 1 (June 1995), 37-8 and Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 10-11.

¹²⁴ For Buffalo see, in particular, *Buffalo Freie Presse*, April 17, 1873, 2; *Buffalo Daily Courier*, May 20, 1873, 2; and the ‘Memorial of the Committee of Thirty-Five,’ recorded in “Minutes No. 9, March 2, 1874,” in *Proceedings of the Common Council of the City of Buffalo, 1874*, 177-9. For the *Amerikanische Schulzeitung* see, for instance, “Editorial,” *Pädagogische Monatshefte*, 1, 4 (März 1900), 2; Constantin Grebner, “Zweihundert Jahre deutscher Schule in Amerika,”

apparent. It sought to remove the issue of German-language teaching from the highly contentious field of politics, where settlement patterns and ethnic political clout determined the scope of German-language programmes, to the 'cultural' realm. If the German language was embraced as the language of 'true' pedagogy; if it was recognized as the language of business, arts, and science, its continued existence would no longer depend on the vigorous lobbying efforts of German communities. Instead, it would become a mandatory part of the public school curriculum whose 'innate' values were appreciated by all citizens of class and culture.¹²⁵ At the turn of the century, this argument was further refined by downplaying the social context of language acquisition altogether. Faced with a precipitous drop of German immigration, as well as rapidly declining language retention rates, educators acknowledged that German had, in fact, become a foreign language for many German-American children.¹²⁶ Accordingly, they celebrated the German language no longer as "a language of the country" (*Landessprache*), but as a "modern language" that deserved "the *first* place, both for its cultural and commercial importance."¹²⁷

A similar creativity shaped the arguments for German-language instruction at public schools. In Buffalo, newspaper editor Ismar Ellison penned a petition to the Common Council that reflected his fervent anti-Catholicism.¹²⁸ Deftly appropriating the reasoning of William T. Harris, St. Louis's superintendent of education, Ellison argued that "[b]y discontinuing the teaching of the German language you drive a majority of the children of German parentage out of the public schools and

Pädagogische Monatshefte, 3, 9 (Oktober 1902), 303-4; and Joseph Winter, "Der deutsche Unterricht in den New Yorker Schulen," *Monatshefte*, 11, 7 (Juni 1910), 179-81.

¹²⁵ See the 'Memorial of the Committee of Thirty-Five,' recorded in "Minutes No. 9, March 2, 1874," in *Proceedings of the Common Council of the City of Buffalo, 1874*, 177-9.

¹²⁶ H. Woldmann, "Welche gemeinschaftlichen Ziele sollte der Unterricht im Deutschen unter den verschiedenen Schulsystemen haben?," *Pädagogische Monatshefte*, 6, 7-8 (September-Oktober 1905), 264 and Woldmann, "Der gegenwärtige Stand des deutschen Unterrichts in den Ver. Staaten," *Monatshefte*, 8, 7-8 (September-Oktober 1907), 221-9. In this context see also Goldberg, "The German-English Academy," 189-91.

¹²⁷ M.D. Learned, "When should German Instruction begin in the Public Schools?," *Pädagogische Monatshefte*, 3, 3 (February 1902), 88.

¹²⁸ Yox, "Decline of the German-American Community in Buffalo," 136-7 and 164.

compel them to attend sectarian schools. These children will grow up, not as worthy citizens recognizing the principles of universal equality of this republic, but as prejudiced sectarian, strangers to the grand principles of our constitution.”¹²⁹ The assimilationist thrust of the melting pot concept was thus ingeniously put to use for an ethnic cause. Not in order to remain apart, but to raise their children as “citizens of this republic” did German Americans demand “the teaching of the German language in our public schools.”¹³⁰ Hardly surprising, the denunciation of parochial schooling provoked the anger of Buffalo’s German Catholics and Protestants who, in turn, submitted a petition to the Council, asking for an annual grant of \$ 10,000 “for the support of the German denominational schools.”¹³¹ While their letter rang with anger, it did not object “to the introduction of the grand and noble German language into the public schools,” a further indication that the German language was seen to be above the religious divisions that ran through Buffalo’s ‘German village.’¹³² In any case, as the Buffalo *Demokrat* advised its readers, the attack against parochial schools should not be taken at face value. It presented, first and foremost, an exercise in rhetoric, designed to persuade the local Anglo-American population of the necessity of German language teaching.¹³³

It is important to note that the spirited defense of the German language was never understood as an endorsement of foreign-language teaching per se. As Kathleen Neils Conzen has observed, German spokesmen advanced a “Germanocentric argument, not so much for the right of all groups to coexist but for the special right of Germans to support an ethnic existence in America because of the special gifts they would ultimately bring into the melting pot.”¹³⁴ Indeed, while

¹²⁹ See the ‘Memorial of the Committee of Thirty-Five,’ recorded in ‘Minutes No. 9, March 2, 1874,’ in *Proceedings of the Common Council of the City of Buffalo, 1874*, 177-9.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* See also Herman Schuricht, “Die Bedeutung des Deutschamerikanerthums im Bildungsproceße der amerikanischen Nation,” *Erziehungs-Blätter*, 20, 1 (Oktober 1889), 3.

¹³¹ “Minutes No. 11, March 16, 1874,” in *Proceedings of the Common Council of the City of Buffalo, 1874*, 195.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Buffalo *Demokrat*, March 4, 1874.

¹³⁴ Conzen, “German-Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity,” 139.

groping for a defense of their own ethnic rights, Buffalo's German-language newspapers were not above ridiculing the demand of alderman Jessemin for the teaching of the Celtic language at the city's schools. Did he not know, thundered the *Freie Presse* in March 1874, that Celtic no longer presented a living language? The Celtic language, the *Demokrat* seconded, was spoken only by a tiny percentage of Ireland's population, namely those most ignorant and destitute.¹³⁵

A quarter of a century later, the *Amerikanische Schulzeitung* exhibited a similar ethnic chauvinism, this time directed against the "hordes of Slavs." In an attempt to refute demands for Polish language instruction, the *Schulzeitung* suggested that "even the roughest Germans" were preferable to the "best Slavs."¹³⁶ Another author was adamant that "no foreign language should be taught in the American public schools simply because the pupils and patrons of the schools speak the foreign language in question. If this be not recognized we should have not only German schools, but Hungarian, Polish, Italian as well."¹³⁷ Instead, the author wrote, "only such foreign languages should be introduced as have a general cultural importance or commercial value for Americans."¹³⁸ In a nutshell, we have here the rationale for German-language instruction at public schools. The German language, ethnic spokesmen argued, presented a symbol of culture whose presence would enrich the American nation as a whole. By contrast, the ill-informed attempts to introduce Hungarian, Polish, or Italian would lead to the Balkanization of public schools.

This line of reasoning presented an attempt "to appropriate the notion of 'Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism' that was part of the English-speaking mainstream's response to the new immigration," as Brent O. Peterson has argued.¹³⁹ In seeking to draw a line between 'us' and 'them,'

¹³⁵ Buffalo *Freie Presse*, March 25, 1874, 2.

¹³⁶ "31. Jahresversammlung in Indianapolis, Ind.," *Pädagogische Monatshefte*, 2, 7 (September 1901), 291.

¹³⁷ Learned, "When should German Instruction begin in the Public Schools?," 88.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Brent O. Peterson, *Popular Narratives and Ethnic Identity: Literature and Community in Die Abendschule* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 192.

German-American editors turned the nativist arguments of the 1850s against the newly arrived immigrants of the 1890s. Unlike those 'dirty' and 'lazy' newcomers at the fringes of American society, German Americans were firmly anchored in the American mainstream, editors claimed.¹⁴⁰ There is, indeed, some indication that the foreign-ness of the formerly reviled 'Dutchman' paled in comparison with the 'strangeness' of the new immigrants. When, in 1910, Buffalo's superintendent of education, Henry P. Emerson, wrote of the daunting task "to mold this strange population into a useful, homogeneous citizenship," he meticulously described a "foreign population that included 80,000 Poles, 30,000 Italians, 8,000 Hungarians, and many thousands of Slavs, Greeks, Ruthenians, Syrians and others."¹⁴¹ Markedly absent from his list were Buffalo's 43,815 German-born residents who, together with the American-born Germans, constituted 29 per cent of the city's population.¹⁴² In the eyes of Henry Emerson, German Americans had blended into the Anglo-American mainstream; they had acquired the distinction of being "good American citizens" that yet eluded the more recent arrivals.¹⁴³ Although Emerson's implicit praise did not seem to translate into a special interest in German language teaching, his long-term tenure did provide a professional, and generally supportive, climate in which the German-language classroom could prosper.¹⁴⁴

The Birth of a 'Modern Language'

The graded course of instruction, which Superintendent Larned had devised for the German-language classroom in 1872, reflected the pervasive influence of the grammar-translation method.

¹⁴⁰ Yox, "Decline of the German-American Community in Buffalo," 173 and 249-51.

¹⁴¹ *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education of the City of Buffalo, 1910-1911*, 41.

¹⁴² The percentage of Buffalo's German population was likely to be even higher as Andrew P. Yox's estimate is calculated not for the year 1910, but for 1915. See *Census of the United States, 1910* and Yox, "Decline of the German-American Community in Buffalo," 385.

¹⁴³ *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education of the City of Buffalo, 1910-1911*, 41.

¹⁴⁴ For endorsements of superintendent Henry P. Emerson by local German teachers see Bertha Raab, "Buffalo," *Pädagogische Monatshefte*, 1, 7 (Juni 1900), 37 and J. Lübken, "Buffalo," *Monatshefte*, 13, 1 (Januar 1912), 17-8.

Conversational exercises were absent from the curriculum. Instead, the course of study consisted of exercises in spelling, grammar, and translation. When reading Larned's detailed instructions, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the "declension of nouns, declension of adjectives, auxiliary verbs, ... conjugation of regular and irregular verbs, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, interjection" must have proved sorely trying (and tiring) for schoolchildren.¹⁴⁵ Yet only when the *National German-American Teachers' Association* convened in Buffalo in July 1882 did conversational exercises find entry into the curriculum.

It was with some trepidation that the *Lehrerbund* had chosen Buffalo as the site of its annual convention. The city, after all, did not enjoy a reputation of being progressive in matters of education.¹⁴⁶ However, the hospitality of Buffalo's German population left a lasting impression on the *Lehrerbund* members who met daily in the chapel of the Central School to discuss educational reforms.¹⁴⁷ Among their attentive audience, it seemed, was Superintendent James F. Crooker who took to the new ideas with great enthusiasm. With the zeal of the converted, his annual report for the year 1882 announced the end of the grammar-translation method. "In studying a modern language," Crooker wrote,

it is absolutely necessary to get acquainted with the idioms of the language to be mastered, but this cannot be done by grammatical rules alone. There is no practice better adapted to become a master of a foreign language than conversational exercises, in which the foreign language is made the only means of communication. The pupils, therefore, should gradually be led to talk about the things which surround them, and to ask (or be asked) simple questions concerning things they have before their eyes. The object of instruction in German should not be to stuff the pupils with dry grammatical rules.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ *Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education*, 33-4.

¹⁴⁶ Schuricht, *Geschichte der Deutschen Schulbestrebungen in Amerika*, 89-91. See also "Das Schulwesen in der Stadt Buffalo, N.Y.," *Erziehungs-Blätter*, 4, 3 (Dezember 1876), 4-5.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* See also "Minutes No. 27, July 3, 1882" and "Special Session, Friday, July 7, 1882," in *Proceedings of the Common Council of Buffalo for 1882* (Buffalo: The Courier Company, 1883), 677 and 701.

¹⁴⁸ *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education, 1882* (Buffalo: Henry Nauert, 1883), 49. See also J. Henry Wood ed., *Schools of Buffalo* (Buffalo: Mrs. Ida C. Wood, 1899), 10.

In his endorsement of the reform methods, Crooker paid tribute to the principles which the *Lehrerbund* had been promoting for over a decade. Hearing and speaking skills formed the core of the new curriculum. Phonetics was singled out for special attention. Teachers were cautioned against using English in the German-language classroom. Object-teaching, finally, was hailed for its success in awakening the students' interest while honing their language skills.

Importantly, Crooker was not alone in recommending the natural method of instruction for the city's German-language classrooms. When Buffalo's newly appointed *Superintendent of German*, Adolf Fink, took over the portfolio in 1887, he, as well, instructed teachers "to use the 'natural method' almost exclusively."¹⁴⁹ The natural method, Fink elaborated in 1890, was modelled after the way in which children learned their mother tongue; for even in the foreign-language classroom, he continued, "the main end to be kept continually in view is to teach the pupil, to whatever nationality he may belong, **to speak German**."¹⁵⁰ In the years to come, Fink's successor, Matthew J. Chemnitz, would engage in a similar unending quest for the best methods of German-language teaching. His goals were modest: "a good pronunciation, an ability to understand easy German when spoken, an ability to read simple German stories without painful efforts, and an ability to construct short German sentences by applying the elementary rules of grammar."¹⁵¹ Yet, in order to achieve these goals, Chemnitz realized, the so-called 'natural method' would have to be modified to the less-than-ideal learning conditions in the city's over-crowded German-language classrooms.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education, 1888-9* (Buffalo: Times Printing House, 1890), 32 and *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education of the City of Buffalo, 1915-1915*, 19.

¹⁵⁰ Original emphasis. See *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education, 1889-90* (Buffalo: Haas & Klein, 1891), 31.

¹⁵¹ *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education of the City of Buffalo, 1893-4* (Buffalo: Baker, Johnes & Co., 1894), 65.

¹⁵² *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education of the City of Buffalo, 1894-1895* (Buffalo: C. E. Northrop, 1895), 83.

In sifting through the city's *Annual Reports of Education*, it is easy to forget that the focus on educational methods, in itself, was remarkable. In Buffalo, the energies of local educators were no longer bound up in the question of *whether* the German language was to be taught at public schools. Instead, successive superintendents of education were occupied with the question of *how* to attain "progress in methods and achievements."¹⁵³ At a time when German communities across the United States reported hostile attacks against the German-language classroom, Buffalo seemed to be shielded from the nativist resurgence of the early 1890s.¹⁵⁴

The comparatively low enrolment figures in Buffalo's German-language programme may help explain why German received scant criticism. In a city where 40 per cent of the population were of German origin, only 17 per cent of the schoolchildren studied the German language in 1896, nearly half of them at parochial schools. Among the large American cities offering German-language instruction, only Chicago and Toledo showed similar disproportional numbers, as the table below illustrates. Yet, unlike in Chicago, the political influence of Buffalo's *Deutschthum* provided protection against nativist attacks.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹⁵⁴ In his seminal study *Strangers in the Land*, John Higham has characterized American nativism as a popular frame of mind whose ebbs and flows were directly related to the falling and rising fortunes of the nation. The nation-wide depression of 1893-1897 led to a marked increase in anti-foreign sentiment that was further fuelled by the onset of the so-called 'new immigration' of southern and eastern Europeans. See Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New York: Atheneum, 1963 [1955]), 68-9, 73 and 87.

Table 12: German-language Instruction in American Cities (Population over 100,000), 1896

<i>CITY</i>	<i>POPULATION</i>		<i>PUPILS AT PUBLIC SCHOOLS</i>			<i>PUPILS AT PRIVATE SCHOOLS</i>			<i>TOTAL</i> Percentage of Pupils Studying German
	German %	Total N	Studying German N	%	Total N	Studying German N	%	Total N	
Milwaukee (Wisconsin)	66	250,000	21,190	66	32,027	10,525	55	19,093	62
Cincinnati (Ohio)	40	360,000	17,287	40	42,789	10,700	64	16,793	50
Cleveland (Ohio)	40	340,000	17,643	35	50,454	8,041	54	15,000	40
New York (New York)	38	1,800,000	60,000	23	261,326	18,240	37	50,000	25
Columbus (Ohio)	20	120,000	3,980	22	17,369	1,580	45	3,529	22
Indianapolis (Indiana)	19	150,000	4,537	16	27,662	1,861	83	2,241	18
Chicago (Illinois)	37	1,600,000	31,768	15	213,825	25,340	28	91,041	19
Buffalo (New York)	40	350,000	7,030	14	52,157	5,030	26	19,082	17
Denver (Colorado)	13	150,000	2,861	13	21,280	530	37	1,450	15
Toledo (Ohio)	38	115,000	1,932	12	16,724	1,868	42	4,500	18
Baltimore (Maryland)	23	550,000	8,450	11	75,610	7,250	42	17,400	16

Source: Compiled from L. Viereck, Zwei Jahrhunderte Deutschen Unterrichts in den Vereinigten Staaten (Braunschweig: Friedrich Vieweg und Sohn, 1903), 174-5.

In Buffalo, as Andrew Yox has observed, "Germans held the balance of power."¹⁵⁵ With the vast majority of Irish Catholics voting for the Democrats and Anglo-American wards leaning heavily towards the Republicans, the German east side cast the deciding vote in election after election. Two German Democrats, Charles Bishop and Conrad Diehl, rose to the mayoralty in the 1890s, visible symbols that Buffalo's German population had come of age.¹⁵⁶ As a result, although the nativist and patriotic movements of the decade provided a less than congenial climate for foreign-language instruction, Buffalo's *Deutschthum* emerged from the "nationalist nineties" largely unscathed.¹⁵⁷

It might also have helped that the local educational hierarchy was outspoken in its support for German-language teaching. In 1895, Matthew J. Chemnitz, whose long tenure as German superintendent coincided with superintendent's Emerson's reign, voiced his hope "never again to hear the preposterous assertion that teaching a foreign language will tend to make the children less patriotic."¹⁵⁸ The study of German, he said, was based

upon the weighty fact that German, next to English, is the commercial, as well as scientific and educational language of the world; that it is the language of the greater part of our foreign-born population, and is used extensively in trade and business; that it is the Saxon relative to English, therefore easier and more comprehensive to us; and last, but not least, that nothing is as essential to the training of the minds as the study of a foreign language.¹⁵⁹

In formulating his "vigorous encouragement of our German instruction", Chemnitz drew liberally upon the writings of Anglo-American educators who had endorsed the study of foreign languages.¹⁶⁰ Like his predecessors, he pointed to the experience of his colleagues in Cincinnati, St. Louis, Chicago, Cleveland, and New York who had encouraged German-language teaching in

¹⁵⁵ Yox, "Decline of the German-American Community," 222.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 221-4.

¹⁵⁷ Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 68.

¹⁵⁸ *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education of the City of Buffalo, 1894-1895*, 92.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 91-2.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 91 and *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education of the City of Buffalo, 1897-1898* (Buffalo: The Wenborne-Summer Co., 1898), 90-1.

the strongest possible terms.¹⁶¹ Re-assured by contemporary pedagogical wisdom, Buffalo's German superintendents praised the intellectual and cultural benefits of German-language classes that were taught by 53 teachers at 38 elementary schools in 1896.¹⁶²

The *Lehrerbund*, as well, found comfort in the speeches of Anglo-American pedagogues who regarded German not as an 'ethnic' subject of instruction but as a 'cultural' one.¹⁶³ Disenchanted with its failure to mobilize German-American communities against nativist attacks, the association changed its tactics. If the American educational system could not be reformed from the bottom-up, perhaps, it could be changed by adopting a top-down approach, namely by convincing "our colleagues at the universities" and in the *National Education Association* of the values of German-language instruction.¹⁶⁴ While it is difficult to gauge the success of the *Lehrerbund's* strategy, there is evidence that foreign-language teaching came to be viewed favourably by Anglo-American educators. In the U.S. Commissioner of Education, Professor William Torrey Harris (the former superintendent of education in St. Louis), the *Lehrerbund* could appeal to a man whose intimate familiarity with and positive attitude to German-language instruction was well-known.¹⁶⁵ Further, as early as in 1894, the *National Education Association*

¹⁶¹ *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education, 1887-8*, 28-31.

¹⁶² *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education of the City of Buffalo, 1894-1895*, 91-2, 123-4, and 161.

¹⁶³ See, in particular, the articles by Prof. M. D. Learned, "The 'Lehrerbund' and the Teachers of German in America," *Pädagogische Monatshefte*, 1, 1 (Dezember 1899), 10-16; "Deutsch gegen English, oder Deutsch neben English," *Pädagogische Monatshefte*, 2, 8 (September 1901), 290-3; "When should German Instruction begin in the Public Schools?," *Pädagogische Monatshefte*, 3, 3 (Februar 1902), 86-9.

¹⁶⁴ Leo Stern, "Vergangenheit und Zukunft des Lehrerbundes," *Monatshefte*, 8, 7-8 (September-Oktober 1907), 208-9. Here, one is reminded of the "organizational revolution" that characterized American schooling at the end of the nineteenth century. As David B. Tyack has argued, "[i]n the governance of education, lay community control gave way to the corporate-bureaucratic model under the guise of 'taking the school out of politics'." See Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1974), 6.

¹⁶⁵ "Bericht des Komitees zur Pflege des Deutschen," *Pädagogische Monatshefte*, 1, 1 (Dezember 1899), 21.

lauded the “immense benefit” of modern-language study which it viewed in purely educational terms:

It will train their [the children's] memory and develop their sense of accuracy; it will quicken and strengthen their reasoning powers by offering them at every step problems that must be immediately solved by the correct application of the results of their own observations; it will help them to understand the structure of the English sentence and the real meaning of English words; it will broaden their minds by revealing to them modes of thought and expression different from those to which they have been accustomed.¹⁶⁶

Three years later, the *Modern Language Association of America* commissioned a nation-wide survey on the status of French- and German-language instruction at secondary schools that explicitly endorsed the teaching of German in the primary grades. Its findings and recommendations were presented at the 1898 annual meeting of the *National Education Association* in Los Angeles where they met with “extraordinary approval.”¹⁶⁷ Clearly, in its new role as a ‘modern language’, German-language instruction could rely on the approval of professional networks of education, just as it hitherto had relied on networks of ethnicity.

Having weathered the nativist attacks of the early nineties, German-American educators spent most of the following decades refining their methods of instruction. The ‘direct method,’ as it became known, differed in degree, not in kind, from the ‘natural method’ it succeeded.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ See the report of the committee of ten to the National Educational Association in 1894, quoted in L. Viereck, “Chapter XIV. German Instruction in American Schools,” in United States Bureau of Education, *Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year 1900-1901*, vol. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902), 639.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 583-5. See also “Protokoll der 31. Jahresversammlung des Nationalen Deutschamerikanischen Lehrerbundes,” *Pädagogische Monatshefte*, 2, 9 (Oktober 1901), 314.

¹⁶⁸ See, for instance, Emil Dapprich, “Die Methoden des modernen Sprachunterrichts,” *Pädagogische Monatshefte*, 1, 1 (December 1899), 33-6; Jean Hepp, “Ueber Natürliche Methoden beim Lehren neuer Sprachen,” *Pädagogische Monatshefte*, 1, 2 (Januar 1900), 7-12; Bernhard Kuttner, “Wertschätzung und Lehrmethoden der deutschen Sprache,” *Pädagogische Monatshefte*, 2, 5 (April 1901), 185-92; Ed. Prokosch, “Der erste deutsche Sprachunterricht an angloamerikanische Schüler,” *Pädagogische Monatshefte*, 3, 9 (Oktober 1902), 307-11.

Its praise was sung by the *Lehrerbund* when it convened in Buffalo in 1896 and 1911.¹⁶⁹ Yet while the *Lehrerbund* endorsed the direct method unhesitatingly, Buffalo pedagogues cautioned against discarding translation and grammar altogether. “Much damage has been done in this country by following too closely the natural method and despising the scientific one of our ancestors who carried it too far,” wrote Matthew J. Chemnitz in his 1897-98 report on German education.¹⁷⁰ To be sure, Chemnitz did seek to hone the conversational skills of Buffalo’s schoolchildren attending the German-language programme. But he was not prepared to relinquish the mental and intellectual benefits offered by exercises in grammar and translation. His hesitation might have also resulted from his frustration with the German Department. In overcrowded German-language classrooms that featured “benches instead of desks, desks without ink,” book-centred learning provided an invaluable aid for teachers who were frequently unprepared for the exigencies of modern-language instruction.¹⁷¹

In fact, as much as the prescriptive literature in the *Amerikanische Schulzeitung* can teach us about changing meanings of language, as little we learn about the culture of the local German classroom. Who enrolled in the German-language programme? Who taught? How effective were the lessons? Answers to these questions can be gleaned from Buffalo’s annual reports of education and a survey conducted by the New York State Education Department in 1915.

¹⁶⁹ “Der Lehrertag in Buffalo,” *Erziehungs-Blätter*, 26, 9 (Juni 1896), 2 and “Protokolle der 39. Jahresversammlung des Nationalen Deutschamerikanischen Lehrerbundes. Buffalo, 11. bis 14. Juli 1911,” *Monatshefte*, 12, 7 (September 1911), 198-213.

¹⁷⁰ *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education of the City of Buffalo, 1897-1898* (Buffalo: The Wenborne-Sumner Co., 1899), 61; *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education of the City of Buffalo, 1894-1895*, 85; *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education of the City of Buffalo, 1896-97* (Buffalo: The Wenborne-Sumner Co., 1897), 85. See also the article by Johannes L. Lübben, teacher of German at the Masten Park High School in Buffalo, “Die Direkte Methode in der amerikanischen Schule: Das Brauchbare an derselben für uns,” *Monatshefte*, 14, 7 (September 1913), 261-1.

¹⁷¹ *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education of the City of Buffalo, 1894-1895*, 84 and Lübben, “Die Direkte Methode in der amerikanischen Schule,” 251.

The Culture of the Classroom

The German-language classroom in Buffalo was beset with difficulties. Tired of lamenting its shortcomings in year after year, superintendent Chemnitz pictured an “ideal German Department” instead. His 1895 utopia presented a counter-image of the very real challenges that faced Buffalo’s German-language teachers.¹⁷² Where Chemnitz dreamed of “a separate German room” in which twenty to thirty pupils received “fully thirty minutes” of instruction daily, German teachers laboured in overcrowded makeshift rooms in which students arrived late and left early.¹⁷³ Where Chemnitz pictured a supportive staff of English-language colleagues who did not “let the pupils suffer for his attention to the German lesson, but ... instruct[ed] him in the missed subject willingly,” German teachers worked in isolation, unable to draw upon “the constant help of principal and associate teachers, as is the case in the English branches.”¹⁷⁴ Where Chemnitz envisioned an enhanced prestige for the German-language programme, with “proficiency in German to be mentioned at graduating and other exercises,” German teachers faced “a marked drop in registration from first to second grade” and parents all too willing to let their children abandon the study of German.¹⁷⁵

These ‘negligent’ parents were mostly of German origin. Unfortunately, although the city of Buffalo kept meticulous records of the ‘nationality’ of its pupils, it tended to undercalculate the percentage of German-origin children. Rather than asking for the children’s ethnicity, the school statistics recorded their parents’ birthplace. With increasing numbers of German-Americans born in the United States, the number of “German” children in the German Department

¹⁷² *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education of the City of Buffalo, 1894-1895*, 91.

¹⁷³ Education Department of the State of New York, *Examination of the Public School System of the City of Buffalo* (Albany: The University of the State of New York, 1916), 109.

¹⁷⁴ *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education of the City of Buffalo, 1893-4*, 64-5.

¹⁷⁵ *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education of the City of Buffalo, 1899-1900* (Buffalo: The Wenborne-Sumner Co., 1901), 67.

declined rapidly, to be superseded by “American” children as early as in 1900.¹⁷⁶ Still, it is possible to discern two general trends. First, German names dominated the school register of the German Department as late as in 1915.¹⁷⁷ Secondly, while retaining its ethnic ‘flair’, the German-language classroom attracted increasing numbers of Anglo-American pupils, particularly after German was recognized as “one of the studies entitling to entrance into the high school” in 1896.¹⁷⁸ Almost imperceptibly, it seems, German was being re-invented from an ‘ethnic’ language into a ‘modern’ one whose study promised cultural and material benefits to pupils beyond Buffalo’s German-American community.

This, in fact, is suggested by the fact that enrolment figures at local high schools soared between 1900 and 1910. At the same time, superintendent Chemnitz reported a dramatic increase of pupils wishing to study the German language in the higher grades of the elementary schools.¹⁷⁹ Not so much as a medium of communication, then, but as a language of learning and culture, did the German tongue make its mark in early twentieth century Buffalo.

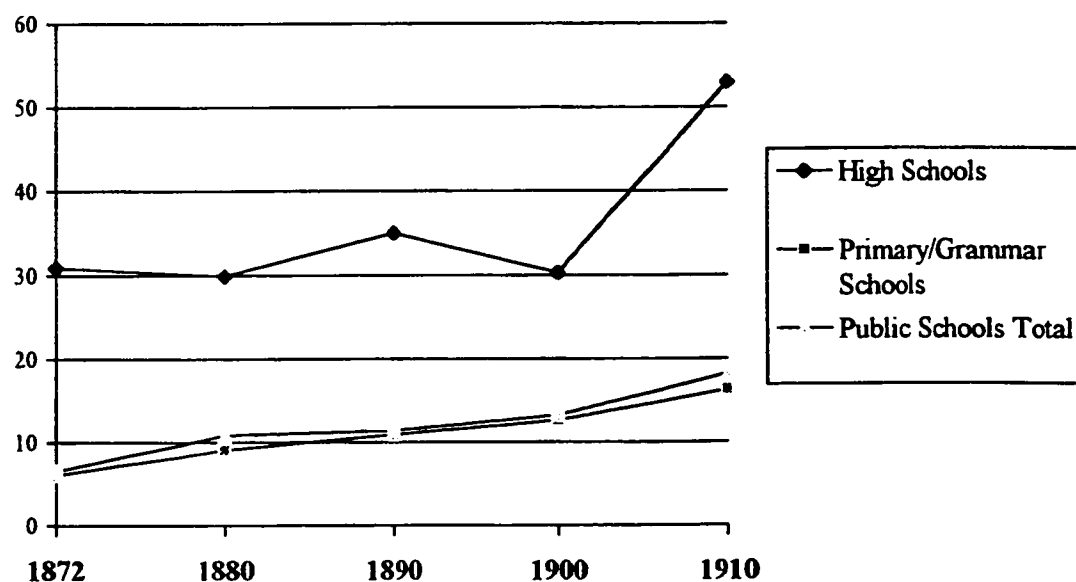
¹⁷⁶ A similar “massive undercalculation” has been observed in the case of the U.S. census reports. See Stanley Nadel, *Little Germany: Ethnicity, Religion, and Class in New York City, 1845-80* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 41.

¹⁷⁷ *Examination of the Public School System of the City of Buffalo*, 108.

¹⁷⁸ *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education of the City of Buffalo, 1893-4*, 63 and *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education of the City of Buffalo, 1896-97*, 83. See also Yox, “Decline of the German-American Community in Buffalo, 1855-1925,” 247.

¹⁷⁹ *Annual Report of the Superintendent of the City of Buffalo, 1909-1910* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Buffalo Commercial, 1910), 21.

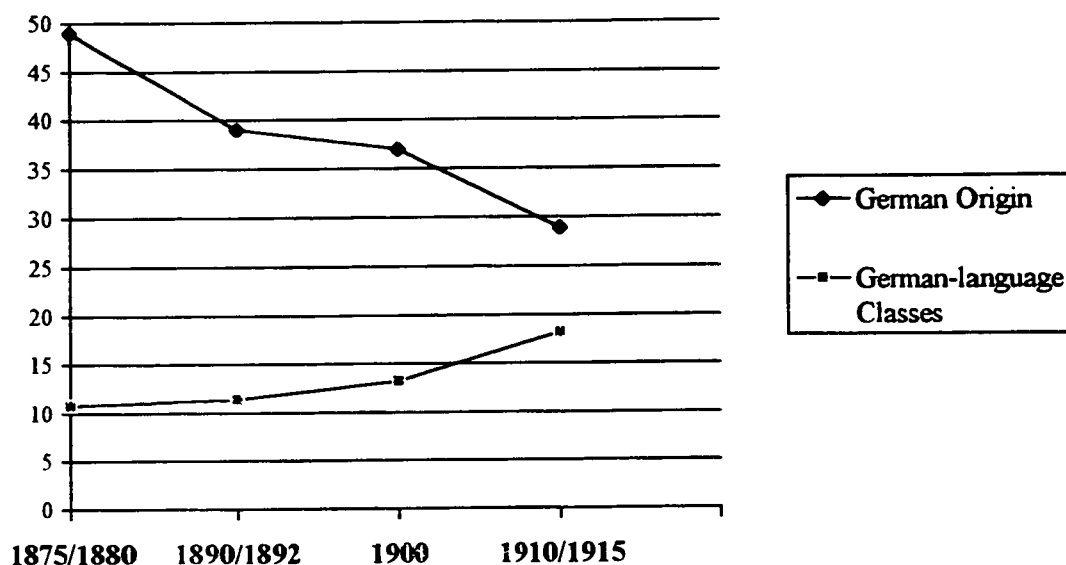
Graph 5: Enrolment in German-language Classes at Public Schools, Buffalo, 1872-1910 (in percentages)



Source: *Annual Reports of the Superintendent of the City of Buffalo, 1871-1910.*

A second finding emerges if we compare the enrolment in German-language classes with Buffalo's German-origin population, as calculated by Yox. Here, we find that as Buffalo's German population decreased, from 49 per cent in 1875 to 29 per cent in 1915, enrolment in the German Department rose from 11 per cent in 1880 to 18 per cent in 1910.

Graph 6: Enrolment in German-language Classes at Public Schools by German Population, Buffalo, 1875-1915 (in percentages)



Sources: *Annual Reports of the Superintendent of the City of Buffalo, 1880-1910* and Andrew P. Yox, *Decline of the German-American Community in Buffalo, 1855-1925*, Ph.D., University of Chicago, 1983, 385.

Two explanations may help us understand this apparent contradiction. On the one hand, the ethnic revival of Buffalo's German-American community at the turn of the century might have inspired a renewed interest in German as a symbol of identity.¹⁸⁰ Evidently, at a time when nine out of ten German-born adults were able to speak English, the German language derived its significance no longer from its communicative functions, but from its symbolic ones.¹⁸¹ On the other hand, if German was becoming disassociated with a specific ethnic heritage, its future no longer depended on continuing immigration from Germany but, instead, on its new incarnation as a language of learning. Quite possibly, it was a combination of both trends that shaped enrolment patterns in Buffalo's German-language programme.

¹⁸⁰ Yox, "Decline of the German-American Community in Buffalo, 1855-1925," 251-62.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 245. In the words of sociologist Herbert J. Gans, "a nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation" may have found expression in the desire of having children learn the language of their parents and grandparents. Gans, "Symbolic ethnicity: the future of ethnic groups and cultures in America," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2, 1 (January 1979), 9.

The children who flocked into the German-language classroom encountered a teaching force that was comprised of German-born and German-American teachers.¹⁸² According to an observer sent by the New York State Education Department in 1915, the teachers' "knowledge of the subject is adequate, although nearly all have traces of dialect in their speech." In fact, he continued, one "may hear as many different pronunciations, in some respects, as there are teachers."¹⁸³ When it came to their teaching ability, however, the visitor delivered a devastating judgement. He declared the extensive German-language programme to be "a non-productive investment," "largely a waste," and recommended "that the study of German be deferred until the high school is reached."¹⁸⁴ Under present conditions, he elaborated, "nearly ten thousand pupils are taught by 67 teachers in 43 schools in order that approximately 400 may get what they would have been able to obtain under two or three teachers in one year of the high school course."¹⁸⁵

The ailments of Buffalo's German-language programme were many, and dissected with professional detachment by the New York State inspector. Most importantly, he argued, Buffalo's German-language teachers were insufficiently trained and supervised. Lacking "adequate teaching ability," they perfunctorily 'went over' the assigned pages in the German reader, without demonstrating any understanding of general "aims of instruction." The archaic classroom vocabulary had little relation "to the sphere of activities of the pupils in his home and school life," nor did it enable them to read German-language newspapers or literature. Conversational exercises were rare. The poor reading skills of the pupils were only matched by their poor pronunciation that proved difficult to eradicate in the ensuing high school course.

¹⁸² As much is suggested by the names of the German teachers listed in the *Annual Reports of the Superintendent of Education in the City of Buffalo*. See also *Examination of the Public School System of the City of Buffalo*, 106.

¹⁸³ *Examination of the Public School System of the City of Buffalo*, 106.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 108.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 107.

Given the dismal results of the German-language programme, the visitor found it impossible to escape the conclusion that German was taught “for purely sentimental reasons.”¹⁸⁶

This harsh assessment by an external observer contrasts markedly with the quiet confidence that the annual reports on the German-language programme had exuded in the 1890s. It appears that the “ideal German Department” which superintendent Matthew J. Chemnitz had sketched in a few broad strokes in 1895, was as much a utopia then as it was twenty years later. Put simply, the ranks of Buffalo’s German-language teachers seemed to be unable to deliver what the upper echelons of the local educational hierarchy had preached since 1882. Instead of presiding over an interactive classroom in which children honed their conversational skills and engaged in active learning, teachers clung to textbook lessons which they taught with little imagination. A more glaring contrast to the idealized German-language classroom which the *Lehrerbund* had promoted since its inception is hard to imagine.

Conclusion

In the end, then, we are left with two stories. One tells the tale of the emergence of a German public. The other recounts the tensions between the high aspirations of pedagogues and the culture of the local German-language classroom. On the one hand, as we have seen, the German language effectively evoked a sense of community among German-speaking migrants of different linguistic, class, religious and regional origins. Regarded as a matter of public interest, the German language presented the focal point of ‘conversations’ that drew local German communities into German America. The many channels of communication that came to connect these local communities – such as, for instance, the German-American press or the annual conventions of the *Lehrerbund* – accounted for a gradual convergence of the meanings assigned

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 106-8.

to language. Once regarded as a medium of communication, the German language was being reinvented as a language of learning and culture. As such, it was hoped, it would weather both the “nationalist nineties” and the linguistic assimilation of German Americans who, by 1900, spoke the English language with ease. Having shed its ethnic gown, the German language would emerge as a language of modernity whose allure neither Anglo-American educators nor students could resist.

This rhetoric did, indeed, prove appealing to educators and pedagogues both at the local and national levels. By the late nineteenth century, the *Lehrerbund* had found allies in the *Modern Language Association of America*, the *National Education Association*, and Buffalo’s superintendents of the German Department. It may also have helped that the *Lehrerbund* had toned down its agenda. Rather than trumpeting a sweeping reform of the American public school system, it now was content to advocate natural methods of foreign-language teaching. And rather than seeking to mobilize German-American communities in an effort to introduce German-language classes into the public school curriculum, it cherished the more modest accomplishment of having forged close contacts with Anglo-American educators with whom it shared a common interest in the educational values of foreign-language instruction.

But if the *Lehrerbund* had found a comfortable niche in the mainstream of educational thought, this did not mean that its prescriptions were translated into practice in the local German-language classroom. Far from it. With a few exceptions like Milwaukee where the “National German-American Teachers’ College” offered a comprehensive curriculum, complete with practice lessons at the local German-English school, the training of German language teachers was woefully inadequate. In Buffalo, the German superintendent, who also occupied the position of clerk of the superintendent of education, was too overworked to offer more than monthly workshops on German-language instruction. Similarly, his annual foray into the German-

language classroom was hardly enough to give teachers proper guidance as to the intricacies of modern-language teaching.

Interestingly, although Buffalo's German Americans had rallied around the cause of German-language teaching in 1873/74, they never mounted a similar movement to improve the quality of German-language instruction. It was as if the mere presence of the German language in the public school curriculum was enough to satisfy local desires. Rather than responding to the communicative needs of German-American children, the German-language classroom seemed to fulfil a symbolic role. It was a public acknowledgement that Buffalo's German population deserved a place of honour in the Anglo-American mainstream, symbolized in the public school. This, in fact, would help to explain why only a fraction of German-origin children who attended the public schools enrolled in the German-language classroom. Grafted onto the public school system, rather than being firmly anchored in it, it is not surprising that the German language was washed away by the currents of World War One.

Conclusion

Long before World War I repudiated the idea of dual identities, language and music had transformed into symbols of ethnicity. As such, they continued to generate a sense of collective belonging. But no longer were they grounded in behavioural ethnic identity. At Canadian and American public schools, instruction in the German mother tongue had given way to lessons in German as language of culture. At the singers' festivals, the celebration of German music had ceded to popular entertainment that no longer carried a distinctive 'German' flair. Yet, as this study has contended, the German public was no less real because of its symbolic character. Indeed, its history points to a cultural creativity that had broadened the very boundaries of public culture.

In weaving a narrative of the German public, ethnic gatekeepers had intertwined both myth and memory. There was, first and foremost, the foundational myth of Germany's triumphant victory in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/1871. The country's unification, speakers at the jubilee celebrations suggested, had transformed a patchwork of regions into a national entity. If only German migrants in North America could emulate this unity, the future of the ethnic group would rest assured. In locating a German character in the mists of time, orators then painted the image of a primordial group whose essence "remained unchanged through all the vicissitudes of history", to quote Stuart Hall.¹ The emphasis on tradition and timelessness framed the experience of migration in terms of historical continuity. The folk tunes that had echoed in the German *Heimat* since time immemorial, orators held, had been transplanted to the New World where they, once again, created a homeland out of song and

¹ Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," in Stuart Hall, David Held, Don Hubert, and Kenneth Thompson eds., *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997 [1996]), 614.

sound. Similarly, it was in the revered German mother tongue, “whose cosy sound well to the heart so sweetly and mildly”, that migrants could find a sense of belonging.²

Yet not even the most eloquent attempts to situate the German public into a “suitable historic past” could distract from the changing nature of *Deutschthum*.³ In Berlin, ethnic leaders lamented the ‘disgraceful’ *Sprachmischmasch* (language mishmash) that permeated the speech patterns of German migrants. In the United States, spokespersons saw the ‘true festive spirit of singing brethren’ succumbing to the ‘trinkets and glitter’ of ‘American’ music festivals. These “myths of decline”, as the anthropologist Anthony D. Smith has told us, sought to explain “how the community lost its anchor in a living tradition, how the old values became ossified and meaningless, and how, as a result, common sentiments and beliefs faded to give way to rampant individualism and the triumph of partisan interests over collective ideals and communal solidarity.”⁴ Almost inevitably, they engendered a “myth of regeneration” that entailed detailed prescriptions for self-purification.⁵ To return to the golden age of the folk, ethnic leaders concurred, linguistic and cultural purity had to be preserved. In Berlin, they seized upon the German-language classroom as a means to maintain ‘proper’ language standards. In Buffalo, they encouraged celebrants to ‘resume the old ways’ and return to the *Sängerfeste* of ‘our fathers’.

To map the discourse of the German public is not to paint a picture of a unified entity; nor is it to imply a communion of interest between journalists, educators, businessmen, educators and the German population at large. There was considerable motion and flux that stemmed from the mass character of the German public. On the one side stood cultural

² *Berliner Journal*, August 21, 1890, 3.

³ Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992 [1983]), 1.

⁴ Anthony D. Smith, “National Identity and Myths of Ethnic Descent,” *Research in social movements, conflict and change*, 7 (1984), 104.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 104-5.

gatekeepers – men like Otto Klotz of Waterloo County or Edward Storck of Buffalo – who sought to uphold ethnic boundaries. On the other side stood a community for whom the German public represented, first and foremost, a shared way of life. While using the German language as a means of communication, they did not necessarily regard it as a symbol of identity. Enrolment in the German-language classroom at Berlin and Buffalo public schools remained conspicuously low for most of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Similarly, many migrants seemed to be swayed more by the popular, participatory character of the singers' festivals that provided an opportunity for play and pleasure, song and sociability, than by a devotion to music as a repository of the German 'essence'. Their membership in the German public was a tenuous one. In a moment of crisis when the rights of German-language schooling appeared under attack, they rallied behind the banner of the German language, as they did in the school controversies of Buffalo and Berlin. But they proved unwilling to invest the German public with either the emotional glory or the exalted importance which ethnic leaders conjured. The German public, in short, was dynamic; it was crosscut by internal divisions of class, gender, and religion.

Yet notwithstanding its internal contradictions, it provided members and opponents, spectators and actors with an opportunity to debate what it meant to be German – to consider options, formulate alternatives, and define loyalties. In the process, German migrants learned to speak in the language of cultural nationalism. They learned about the "imaginary geographies," to quote Edward Said, that projected a German identity into a symbolic space and time.⁶ They learned a vocabulary of signs that transcended local identities. Indeed, just as local identities became coloured by the notion of a German public, so, too, did a German public emerge from a multitude of conversations about local experiences.

⁶ Edward Said, "Narrative and Geography," *New Left Review*, 180 (March/April 1990), 81-100.

In both its literal and figurative sense, border crossing involves “differentiation and mediation”.⁷ Nowhere was its Janus-face more evident than in the interplay of the German public and the Canadian-American border. Although the German public bore a remarkable similarity in both Buffalo and Berlin, grounded as it was in a shared festive culture, the national sphere left its indelibly print. The discourse of ethnic contributions that loomed so large in the United States never crossed the border into Canada. In Waterloo County, ethnic leaders instead sought to depolitize German culture and to re-inforce the idea of dual loyalties. In both countries, the idea of race minimized the distance between ‘Anglo Saxons’ and ‘Teutons’. But only in Canada could German migrants evoke the ties that bound together the Royal Houses of Germany and Britain. When Louis Breithaupt told the Ontario Legislature in 1902 that “German Canadians are devoted to the British crown and, therefore, nobody will blame them for preserving, in their hearts, a strong affection for the old Fatherland,” he reflected the customs of a local charter culture that celebrated the birthday of Queen Victoria alongside the birthday of *Kaiser* Wilhelm I.⁸ In reconciling competing national mythologies, German Canadians thus highlighted the perceived closeness of the German and British Empires, whereas German Americans deftly appropriated the notion of cultural superiority, so prominent in the United States.

What makes the history of the German public so intriguing was its inherently contradictory rationale. Cloaked in the language of tradition, it was a vehicle of modernity. While upholding the image of the folk, it constituted a cultural hybrid whose transnational and

⁷ Victor Konrad, “The Borderlands of the United States and Canada in the Context of North American Development,” *International Journal of Canadian Studies / Revue internationale d’études canadiennes*, 4 (Fall/Automne 1991), 78.

⁸ *Berliner Journal*, March 13, 1902, 1: “Die Deutsch-Canadier sind der britischen Krone treu ergeben, und Niemand wird es ihnen daher übelnehmen, wenn sie in ihren Herzen eine warme Zuneigung zum alten Vaterland bewahrt haben.”

transcultural outlook defied the rhetoric of authenticity and cultural purity.⁹ Not to be confined to a cultural island, it wove changes into the fabric of mainstream society: by illustrating the 'propriety' of leisure culture; by expanding the boundaries of public institutions to accommodate German-language instruction; by championing methods of German reform pedagogy; and, most importantly, by demonstrating that ethnic difference was a legitimate category within nation-states.¹⁰

As the German public interacted with the cultural mainstream, it was irrevocably changed by it. People belonging to "cultures of hybridity," Stuart Hall has argued, "must learn to inhabit at least two identities, to speak two cultural languages, to translate and negotiate between them."¹¹ While usually associated with the era of late-modernity, this was an experience intimately familiar to migrants of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the act of translation, German migrants were, themselves, being translated.

In the early twentieth century, the culture of consumption began to rival German festive culture, while the German mother tongue was refashioned into a language of modernity. The German public, in other words, had transformed into a symbolic entity, its contours fracturing around class and generational lines. And yet, in transforming both its members and the mainstream, it had crossed the border into modernity.

⁹ For the concept of transcultural identities see, for instance, Wolfgang Welsch, "Transkulturalität: Zur veränderten Verfaßtheit heutiger Kulturen," *Zeitschrift für Kulturaustausch*, 45, 1 (1995), 39-44.

¹⁰ In this context see also Kathleen Neils Conzen, "German-Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity," in Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh eds., *America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred Year History, vol. 1: Immigration, Language, and Ethnicity* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1985), 131-47.

¹¹ Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," 629.

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