

GERMAN-AMERICAN HISTORY

GERMAN IMMIGRATION IN THE 19TH CENTURY

The largest wave of immigration from Germany came in the 19th century. As word of the young, growing nation reached Germany, more and more Germans decided to seek their fortunes in this land of new promise and opportunity. The wave of immigration swelled even more around the middle of the century, fired by restrictive social conditions and suppression of liberal thought at home. In the aftermath of two unsuccessful revolutions in 1830 and 1848, many Germans sought political haven in the United States. Among them were many intellectuals, men and women of education and culture, who were to contribute to all aspects of life in their newly chosen homeland.

One of the most prominent of these was Carl Schurz. Arrested during the 1848 Revolution, he managed to escape and eventually fled to the United States. As inspired orator and respected writer, Schurz became a fervent supporter of Abraham Lincoln. The President appointed him Ambassador to Spain, and later commander of the German-American regiments in the Union Army. After the war, he was elected U.S. Senator from Missouri. As Secretary of the Interior, under President Hayes, Schurz championed civil rights for the American Indians, a merit system for the civil service and a national park system. His wife, Margarethe, established in 1855 the first kindergarten in the United States, in Watertown, Wisconsin.

It is estimated that 200,000 Germans fought in the Civil War. There were German regiments in both the Union Army and the Confederate Army. Count Zeppelin, the German inventor of the dirigible, served as a Union cavalry officer and engineer in this war. He made the first lighter-than-air experiments and his first ascent in a military balloon in the United States. A German-American woman, Barbara Frietchie, of Frederick, Maryland, risked her life in defense of her country's flag and became a symbol of patriotism for all women.

In the Spanish-American War, the key naval officers were Majors Lauchheimer and Waller, Captains Meyers and Marix and Lieutenant Schwalbe. Four Rear Admirals were Winfield Schley, Louis Kempff, August Kautz and Norman von Heldreich Farghar. The most distinguished feat of the War was accomplished by Rear Admiral Schley who on July 3, 1898 commanded the destruction of the Spanish fleet at Santiago, Cuba. Between 1830 and 1930, six million Germans came to the United States, more than any other national group. Many came with some resources and were consequently not forced to settle in the Eastern seaport cities. Attracted by cheap public lands, and later by free homesteads, they moved West by helping to farm the Mississippi Valley and to settle the West.

Much sought after because of their skills, German artisans became an important factor in U.S. economic expansion. They turned millions of acres of wilderness into productive lands, founded and developed enterprises in the

fields of lumbering, food processing, steel making, brewing, electrical appliances, piano-making, railroading, printing, and also promoted the concept of state endowed universities patterned after those in Germany.

German Immigration in the 19th Century
GERMAN-AMERICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS
Philadelphia Chapter