

The German Element in Wilmington

From 1850 to 1914

by

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FOREWORD

In the century before the First World War, there took place one of the greatest migrations the world has ever experienced. First the Irish and the Scotch, next the Germans, and finally the Italians and Slavic peoples sought in America a new and more bountiful homeland. That they were largely successful cannot be denied. America was bountiful but no less so was the immigrant. With his coming, the United States grew with a rapidity seldom, if ever, equalled by any other nation in the annals of history. Not only did the manpower which these immigrants provided enable us to subdue the great wilderness west of the Alleghenies, but by their perseverance, thrift, ingenuity, and patience, along with their cultural contributions, they played an integral role in making America the greatest nation of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER I

THE GERMAN MIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

Of the nations of the world which have contributed to the population of the United States in the nineteenth century, none has provided a greater number of immigrants than Germany. From 1820 to 1929, 5,881,032 Germans came to the shores of America to make their homes in the United States.¹

From the first plodding peasants who settled on the frontier to the later artisan who made his home in the cities, the German brought with him the plain, homely virtues of perseverance, patience, thrift, and respect for authority which lent a conservative stabilizing force much needed in a growing America.

Drawn by cheap lands, and later by the Homestead Acts, the German became an important factor in settling the Mississippi Valley and the lands beyond. The well-trained German tradesman, a product of the thorough guild system of the old world, provided an important and valuable labor supply for America's rapidly expanding industries. In contrast to the unskilled, land-shunning Irishman, the home-loving, unexcitable, and sometimes philosophical German, who by thrift and industry acquired a home and business in the new world, added a new flavor to American life.

¹ Albert B. Faust, The German Element in the United States, (New York, 1909) I, xvi.

"The German was essentially conservative, a hard worker, a careful investor and anything but a speculator, he took fewer chances in the lottery of life than his enterprising Scotch-Irish and Yankee neighbor. He has drawn fewer big prizes, but also fewer blanks." ²

Before the Revolutionary War it has been estimated that some 225,000 Germans had come to the colonies. These people were to be found mainly on the frontier extending from the Mohawk Valley to Georgia. They settled two major geographic areas, the Piedmont Plateau, lying between and at the base and east of the Appalachian ranges from New York to Georgia, and the Great Valley lying between the Blue Ridge and Allegheny Mountains, beginning in Pennsylvania and extending across Maryland and southwest through Virginia.³ They and the Scotch-Irish were the two most important contributors to the population increases during the eighteenth century.

Largely consisting of discontented elements, the Germans who came to America were dissatisfied with their homeland on political, religious, and economic grounds. Palatines, ruined by French invasions of the Rhenish Palatinate; sects, such as the Mennonites, Moravian Brothers, and Dunkards,

² Marcus L. Hansen, The Atlantic Migration, (Cambridge, 1940) 228.

³ Faust, op. cit., I, 573.

who were not accorded freedom of worship in Germany; and Pietists, whose relation to the Lutherans was similar to that of the Puritans to the Church of England. Many of them were aided by the English government to come to England, where they embarked for America and were given grants of land. Numerous others came over directly from Germany as redemptioners given free passage by ship owners who reimbursed themselves by selling the labor of their passengers for a stipulated number of years. The great majority of this group entered the colonies at Philadelphia where they spread out fanwise along the coast and into the back country. They brought their own language and culture, established newspapers and a fine musical tradition. In Pennsylvania, they took up the best land and became the most prosperous agriculturists in North America.⁴

In addition to those mentioned above, there came near the end of the century another group under somewhat different circumstances. They were the impressed German soldiers whose rulers had sold them to the British to supplement the redcoats in the Revolutionary War, and who are referred to as the "Hessians." Of the 29,875 German troops used in America, 12,562 failed to return. About half of these were

⁴ Samuel E. Morison and Henry S. Commager, The Growth of the American Republic, (New York, 1942), I, 95.

casualties and the remainder stayed at the war's end and settled in the new world.⁵ Thus it can be seen that the eighteenth century emigration was largely confined to those German sectarians whose religion and temperments nullified them as military assets. Outside of the few soldiers whose presence was more an act of fate than policy, emigration was quite limited. The widespread adherence to the mercantilistic theory by the rulers of Europe, among whom were the German princelings and dukes, was chiefly responsible for this situation. Widespread emigration violated one of the principle tenets of the theory, for mercantilists everywhere believed that the most thickly populated states are potentially the richest. It was not until the nineteenth century that emigration as a universal right came to the Germans.

Light in the early years, emigration gathered momentum as the century progressed until it approached titanic proportions. Shiploads of immigrants from the German states arrived at all the leading ports of the United States. Many Germans moved inland to the Mississippi and points west, but as time passed, thousands remained in the cities and towns of the mid-atlantic states.⁶ By 1832 German immigration

⁵ Faust, op. cit., 356

⁶ Carl Wittke, We Who Built America, (New York, 1939), 187

into the United States exceeded ten thousand a year, by 1834, 17,000, and from 1845 to the Civil War a total of 1,250,000.

Although much has been made of the political factor in explaining the causes for the German emigration, particularly of the refugees of the ill-fated revolution of 1848, the primary cause was economic.⁷ Increased industrialization, surplus agricultural population, and a series of disastrous crop failures were the outstanding causes; next in importance was the desire to escape from the incessant wars and compulsory military service.

The political situation in the opening years of the century, however, was such that it gave no indication of the great wave that was shortly to follow. The French Revolution, the Alien and Sedition Acts, the Napoleonic Wars and their American counterpart, the War of 1812, all created a situation which immediately, at least, was unfavorable to any sizable migration of peoples from Europe.

If the immediate effect of the Napoleonic wars was

⁷ See Faust, The German Element in the United States, I, Chap. X; Hittke, We Who Built America, 186; Hansen, The Atlantic Migration, 267.

to hinder the emigration to the new world, in the long run it sowed the seeds for much of the dissatisfaction which gave impetus to the great waves to follow.

The Germans suffered much from the Napoleonic wars, particularly in southern Germany, and when the reactionary governments assumed firm control in Europe, considerable dissatisfaction arose among the people of the German states. The tyrannical persecution of the student societies and the suppression of the Turner movement brought many to the land of political liberty.⁸

The bad winter of 1816 destroyed many of the crops in Germany and this coupled with the political situation brought more than 8,000 Germans to America. Almost half of this number came to New York or Philadelphia where they were easily absorbed since many of the eastern farmers were anxious to sell their farms to seek new lands in the west.⁹ From 1818 to 1828 German immigration to the United States dropped considerably once more numbering less than 1,000 per year as the depression in America made possibilities slight. The scarcity of jobs in America for even the natives, and the poverty of the Germans, made the immigrant quite

⁸ See Faust, I, Chap. X; Wittke, 190.

⁹ Hansen, op. cit., 90.

unpopular. German emigration did not stop however, for many settled in other parts of Europe, Russia and Poland getting the majority. It was not until the decade of 1831-40 that immigration to the United States increased once more. This time the United States, emerging from the depression of the twenties, was going through a period of expansion and prosperity unmatched in its short history. This change in conditions was soon made known in Germany. The promise of light taxes, the urgent need for laborers, and the opportunity to acquire land, all attracted the impoverished and restricted peasant and artisan, for in Germany the situation was worse than ever; recurring crop failures, coupled with the older problems of overproduction and overpopulation of the farming districts plagued the farmer, while the artisan and small hand industries were falling prey to the efficiency of the new factory system that was taking hold.¹⁰ Thousands of artisans and craftsmen found themselves without jobs because of mass production and the deadly competition it offered.¹¹ As a result, the movement across the Atlantic resumed once more and the year 1832 saw over 10,000 immigrants entering the United States.

¹⁰ Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, X, 432-433.

¹¹ Faust, op. cit., 584.

Increasing yearly, the immigration for the decade totaled 152,000.

Letters from the earlier immigrants and newspaper reports of conditions over here were quite favorable, and among Germans America was looked upon as a haven from the political, economic, and social evils of the fatherland. Discontented Germans and particularly those of the hard hit lands of the southern Rhine region, began to plan and save for the day that they too would be able to enjoy the opportunities which lay on the other side of the Atlantic.

This trend continued upward until 1854, and then slowly declined as the shadow of Civil War fell over the United States. Nevertheless, in the two decades between the forties and the sixties, over 900,000 arrived. The year 1854 set a record bringing the highest number yet to come in one year, 215,009, the majority of this number coming from southwest Germany. This section of Germany had always contributed the largest portion of immigrants; however, the failure of the potato crop in the years immediately following 1846 and the vintage crop in the three years following 1850, aggravated the conditions already mentioned. In some regions conditions were so bad that the local governments often encouraged the exodus of part of their population. That the wave reached its peak from 1850-1854 was no doubt due in some measure to the ill-fated revolution

of 1848. While economic causes were chiefly responsible for bringing the rank and file to America, the political troubles of 1848 brought many Germans of wealth and education, who once in the United States exerted an influence which proved to be far out of proportion to their number. Although the importance of the ordinary immigrant cannot be overestimated, it was from this group of intellectuals that America gained some of the best minds.

With the ending of the Civil War, immigration once more resumed its high level. America was again looked upon as a haven for peace and security. Before 1870, the great wars of Prussia and the convulsive repercussions which attended the unification of the German states, further aggravated by high taxes and compulsory military service, had much to do with increasing the emigration. After the Franco Prussian war there was little relief. Financial troubles and economic troubles due to the change from an agricultural to an industrial society, still higher taxes and state-wide military conscription affected all Germany.

This new wave continued until 1873 when the panic of that year and the depression that followed, once more served to discourage the stream of Germans coming across the Atlantic. America recovered and by 1880 over 100,000 were entering the states annually. There was a marked change however in

this new group, the number of peasants decreased and more industrial workers and artisans came.¹² In 1882 came the highest point in German immigration, with over 250,630 entries recorded by immigration authorities. The trend continued until 1885 and then slowly dropped off, rising but once more, in the years 1891-1892, and falling until World War I.¹³

The disappearance of the frontier and remaining areas of cheap land affected the pattern of immigration considerably. It reduced the number of Germans who entered the United States and, secondly, it tended to settle them in the cities. We have already seen that the later immigrants were largely artisans and industrial workers. Being city dwellers, these people rarely had the receipts of the sale of lands in their pockets to tide them over or to bring them further inland as their peasant predecessors had, and, as a result, few landed here with any cash reserves. Without the means to go further, or the enticement of free land to take them westward, many upon landing on the eastern coast stayed in the cities of their embarkation. As time passed, by industry and privation, they usually bought truck farms on the out-

¹² Wittke, op. cit., 210.

¹³ Faust, op. cit., 587.

skirts of the metropolitan areas or saved enough to go into business for themselves. It is this later group who were chiefly responsible for the German American population of Wilmington.

CHAPTER II

WILMINGTON'S GERMAN IMMIGRATION

Despite its location and the fact that the Germans are the most equally distributed of all foreign elements in the United States, Delaware is one of the minority of states in which the Germans are less numerous than other foreign elements. The German immigration of the eighteenth century, which so greatly added to the population of neighboring Pennsylvania, contributed very little to that of Delaware. Although the waters of the Delaware River carried many German immigrants on their way to a new homeland and undoubtedly many landed in Wilmington and New Castle as well as the main port of Philadelphia, the number who settled in the Diamond State remained insignificant until the second half of the nineteenth century.

The most plausible explanation for this is that the eighteenth and early nineteenth century immigration sprung almost exclusively from the German peasantry. To them America was the promised land of cheap and good soil. It was quite natural then for them to seek the lands best adapted for farming. These they found in the limestone areas of Pennsylvania, particularly in the region of what is now the garden spot of America, Lancaster County, and

later further west in the Ohio and Mississippi river valleys.

To be sure there were some Germans in the more industrialized areas of northern Delaware, particularly in and about Wilmington, but the bulk of the German immigrants neglected the State of Delaware, as a whole. It was not until the latter part of the nineteenth century, when the number of artisans and tradesmen began to increase among the migrating Germans, along with the political refugees of 1848, that Delaware and New Castle County and Wilmington in particular began to nourish a growing German community.

While there were Germans living in Wilmington before 1850, there are few if any records available concerning their activities and number.¹ One indication of their numbers and occupations may be gleaned from the city of

¹ In consideration of the lack of statistics, attempts were made to establish a better indication of the German population of Wilmington by compiling totals from applications for citizenship. Upon investigating the possibilities for such a project it was learned through the Department of Justice Clerk in Wilmington, that the early records, where they exist, are unreliable because until the twentieth century, the granting of citizenship was largely a local function handled by local authorities and not under the control of the Department of Justice.

Wilmington's first city directory, printed in 1814.² This directory included among a list of the inhabitants of the city, some fifty names which are of distinct German origin.³

² Only two copies of this book are known to exist. One is in the Wilmington Free Institute Library and the other in the possession of the Delaware Sängerbund at 205 East Sixth Street.

³ The names of these inhabitants and their occupations are as follows:

Barr, Neal; Cooper	Leonard, Frederick; lumber merchant
Benderman, Bridget; buckster	Lowderbach, Henry; blacksmith
Powers, Thomas; shoemaker	Mendenhall, Joseph; grocer
Curtz, Elizabeth; midwife	Mendenhall, Eli; dry goods
Fletcher, James; butcher	Mendenhall, Thomas; Captain USA
Post, James; plasterer	Mendenhall, Phillip; Lieutenant USA
Forbes, Azariah; teacher	Metz, George; traveling bookseller
Fussell, Jacob	Metz, Henry
Fussell, Esther; mantumaker	Waff, Hance, auctioneer
Gest, Abraham; carpenter	Newlin, Joseph; carpenter
Gurger, Hezekiah; carter	Ocheltree, Eliz; dry goods
Grasell, Susan; nurse	Ocheltree, Eliza; miller
Grubb, Joseph; ironmonger	Pedrich, Henry; silversmith and
Grubb, Adam; tinman	jeweler
Giffing, Andrew; grocery	Rudolph, John; butcher
Giffing, Thomas; shoemaker	Rankin, William; teacher
Giffing, John	Ring, William; nailer
Giffing, Edward; cooper	Ring, Thomas; tanner
Guyer, Hezekiah; cattle	Schrader, Frederic; gunsmith and
Hedrick, John; merchant	tavern keeper
Hendrickson, John; cart owner	Sparkman, Thomas; bricklayer
Hendrickson, Isaac; conveyer	Stedhan, John; miller
Heckman, Aaron; carman	Stari, Jacob; waterman
Hellman, Benjamin; copper	Ullman, widow
Holstein, William; carter	Yandegrift, James; miller
Lang, Mrs.	

Dr. John Brinckle
Dr. Alexander Forrester

The number of these who were German born or of German parents is impossible to tell; furthermore, it is safe to assume that many of German origin cannot be traced due to intermarriage with other stock, the Irish in particular. Since the fifty names are those of family heads only, a fairly accurate count on this basis cannot be obtained, however, a conservative estimate would set the German American community somewhere near two hundred and forty people. In 1810 the population of all of Wilmington was four thousand four hundred and sixteen making the German Americans .05 % of the inhabitants.⁴

Census figures on a national scale during this early period are conspicuous only by their absence. Until 1820 no attempt was made on the part of state or local governments to tabulate the number and origins of immigrants entering the United States. After 1820 a count was taken at sea ports but these records shed no light on the problem dealt with here. In 1856 another directory of Wilmington was published which upon inspection revealed four hundred and sixty-six names of definite German origin.⁵

⁴ This count was arrived at by counting each family head plus three dependents which in an age of large families is a conservative estimate.

⁵ In each case the names appearing in the directory of 1814 and that of 1856 suspected of being of German origin were verified by a German American citizen of Wilmington, Joseph Maucher, Librarian of the Delaware Sängerbund.

From this list it is estimated that there were over fifteen hundred people of German descent among the population of Wilmington.⁷

The census of 1850 reported that there were three hundred and forty-three foreign-born Germans in Delaware as compared to nine hundred and fifty-two English and three thousand five hundred and thirteen Irish. The majority of immigrants lived in New Castle County which had a combined total of five thousand thirty-one. The two lower counties, Kent and Sussex together only had two hundred and twenty-two foreign born inhabitants. No information concerning the foreign born population of Wilmington was given. From 1860 onward foreign born populations were listed according to nationality by state, county, and the larger cities.⁸

The number of Wilmington's foreign born Germans and of the State of Delaware from the census reports of 1860

⁷ It should be noted here that the accuracy of the list of names of the inhabitants of Wilmington is not entirely accurate. In a number of cases names listed in the early record of the early German Societies with Wilmington addresses do not appear in the Wilmington Directory which was supposed to include every family head in the city.

⁸ In Delaware, only Wilmington was reported on.

through 1910 are as follows:⁹

Census	TOTAL Germans in Delaware	TOTAL Germans in Wilmington
1860	1263	603
1870	1112	684
1880	1310	773
1890	2469	1954
1900	2523	1921
1910	3561	2798

These figures although they give an accurate indication of the immigration from 1860 to 1910, are not indicative of the actual size of the German American community. The census of 1890 lists nineteen hundred and forty-four Germans of foreign birth living in Wilmington; however, Scharf's History of Delaware estimates the German-speaking population of Wilmington and vicinity at six thousand.¹⁰ Undoubtedly there were many of second and third generation German Americans who composed an important part of the German activities, for of all the foreign elements, the Germans least readily shed the customs of the fatherland.¹¹

⁹ Austrians are included in all figures. This does not include the non-Germanic parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

¹⁰ J. Thomas Scharf, History of Delaware (Philadelphia, 1883) I, 459.

¹¹ Wittke, op. cit., 211.

The census of 1910 gives a total of three thousand five hundred and sixty-four Germans living in Delaware and of those who are of foreign born German parents but who were born in the United States a total of three thousand seven hundred and seventy-one. Those with one German-born parent, one thousand six hundred and twenty-nine, making a total of eight thousand nine hundred and sixty-four German Americans living in Delaware. From previous census figures on the Germans given earlier in this chapter, it can be estimated that three-fourths of this total lived in Wilmington or approximately six thousand nine hundred.

Although many Germans first settled in the German communities of the larger port cities such as Baltimore, New York, and particularly Philadelphia, they and their friends often migrated to the rapidly expanding city of Wilmington to seek better opportunities or open their own business.

Just when the movement began in force is hard to tell, but for the first time during the decade of 1850-60 there is ample evidence of an active German American community as is proven through the societies and churches which were founded then.¹² From this point on until the World War, the German American was an economic and social influence the importance of which, cannot be overlooked.

¹² The Delaware Bangerbund 1853; Wilmington Turngemeinde 1859; German Baptist Church 1856; Zion Lutheran Church 1846.

CHAPTER III

GERMAN ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES IN WILMINGTON

When the German immigration to Wilmington began to increase during the forties and fifties, the character of the immigration as a whole was already undergoing a marked change. Instead of the steady stream of German peasants which had characterized the German migrations in the past, tradesmen, artisans, and unskilled industrial workers began to appear in ever increasing numbers. It was this group which largely added to the German American community of Wilmington.

There is little evidence that any were men of means; they were largely poor, or of the lower middle class. Few of these earlier immigrants came directly to Wilmington from Europe. Many, landing at Philadelphia and New York where there were large German communities, stayed with friends or relatives until they were able to support themselves and had saved enough money to seek better opportunities.

During the 1840's and 1860's Wilmington began to expand rapidly both in industry and population. Many new factories were built and industries started. This necessitated the employment of many workmen both in construction and operation and the demand for labor caused

a rapid migration to the city. Wilmington's prosperity and growth attracted wide attention as can be seen from the following articles which appeared in newspapers of the period.¹ The Delaware Journal in the issue of September 9, 1845 says:

"The present year is, beyond comparison, the most prosperous in the annals of our city. Two hundred and fifty dwelling-houses were erected. The population increased one thousand. The most gratifying circumstances in connection with the improvement is that they proceed from no speculative fever. The increasing business of the city fully justifies the movement. Every branch of the manufacturing interest to which our people have directed their capital and energies has increased beyond precedent, and the future is as promising as the past has been successful. If not interrupted, Wilmington will soon attain a commercial and manufacturing consequence which was never dreamed of by her early citizens."

The Philadelphia News, in its issue of October 27, 1847, says:

"Wilmington is prospering. We doubt if any city in the Union has made such rapid strides in improvements during the past few years. In 1840 we spent a few days in that city. It then contained a population of eight thousand four hundred and fifty-two. By an enumeration, recently taken, the population is now nearly thirteen thousand, having increased sixty-five per cent in less than seven years. New buildings have been erected on every side, new streets have been laid out, many factories established and every branch of business is enjoying the highest degree of prosperity."

From 1860 to 1880 great strides were made in Wilmington's

¹ Scharf, op. cit., II, 305-6.

factory production, their yearly net value increased from nine million dollars to over thirteen million dollars in 1880. This trend continued well into the twentieth century.

The German immigrant looking for an opportune place to settle could hardly overlook reports such as these, and from all indications he didn't. Not only were they drawn here by favorable newspaper reports but many of them were met upon debarkation and were offered jobs and fare to come to Wilmington for themselves and their families. This was a common practice at Castle Gardens, the immigrant landing place in New York City for a number of years after 1855.² This practice was subscribed to by a number of Wilmington contractors and industrialists who were experiencing a shortage of labor. David Dangel, who in later years was one of Wilmington's larger contractors, was accosted in this manner upon his arrival in New York by Patrick Fahey, a builder of this city. Mr. Fahey offered Mr. Dangel a carpentry job at ten dollars a week and fare for himself and his family to Wilmington which he readily accepted.³

² Wittke, op. cit., 121.

³ This information was supplied by David Dangel, Jr., son of David Dangel, an executive at the Diamond State Brewing Company.

A few of the immigrants arriving in Wilmington had enough cash set aside to open small shops of their own, but the majority were wage earners, finding employment in the trades they had practiced in the old country or as common laborers. Of the latter group many worked with building contractors, in the leather factories, and on the railroads. The artisans and skilled workers included among their numbers coachmakers, tailors, carpenters, cabinet makers, machinists, bakers, butchers, bricklayers, and brickmakers.

From the business list of Wilmington in Boyd's Delaware State Directory of 1859-60, which undertook to include all shops and firms within the city limits, it can be seen that the Germans were particularly active as bakers, saloon keepers, butchers and coachmakers. The only brewery listed in the directory was that of a German, Christian Krauch whose establishment was on 308 King Street where he brewed beer in the rear of his hotel and saloon. Of the eighteen bake shops listed as being in Wilmington at this time, fourteen were owned by Germans, an almost complete domination of this trade.⁴

⁴ By comparing the names of these early shopkeepers with the records of the German American institutions and clubs organized during this period, it can be seen that a large number were among the founders of the German Baptist and the Lutheran churches, the Turner organization, and the Delaware Sängerbund.

Under the heading of Lager Beer Saloons, all were Germans, as were the city's only two locksmiths. This however was not the extent of their endeavors for their number also included several machinists, tailors, butchers, cigarmakers, and hotel keepers. Among these early hotels there was the Indian Queen, at 500 Market Street, owned by C. W. Allmond; the Mount Vernon, at 308 King Street, owned by Christian Krauch; and the National, at 109 East Water Street, owned by Sylvester Rianhard.

Many of the Germans prospered and eventually went into business for themselves, and by the end of the century they had a sizable stake in the business life of the city.

For a long time the German neighborhood in Wilmington was located in an area on the east side of the city, bounded by Front Street on the south and Eighth Street on the north, spreading east and west from French to Poplar Streets.⁵ As the community grew and the inhabitants prospered, many bought lots in the East Lake section and later built their homes there. A larger number however moved to the west side of town in the vicinity of the Zion Lutheran Church. Many homes were built there by David

⁵ From numerous interviews with the older German Americans of Wilmington.

Dangel & Sons, prominent German Americans, who built up a prosperous contracting business.

Perhaps the industry most completely dominated by the German Americans was that of brewing and dispensing beer. The first record of a German-owned brewery was the establishment of A. Rudman, who built and conducted a brewery at Fourth and Tatnall Streets as early as 1835.⁶ It was not until the 1850's however that brewing was undertaken on a large scale. In 1859 the three Webeker brothers, George, Samuel, and Aquilla built an establishment on the site of an abandoned quarry at Fifth and Adams Streets. In 1871 the plant was sold to the A. Bickta Brewing Company. This later became the Diamond State Brewery, for a long time one of the largest and most modern in the State of Delaware. One of the members of the A. Bickta Company, Joseph Stoeckle, later became owner of the Diamond State Brewing Company. Mr. Stoeckle was one of the most influential German Americans in the city.⁷

⁶ Scharf, op. cit., II, 760.

⁷ Joseph Stoeckle came to America in 1834 from Württemberg, Germany. Settling in Wilmington in 1854, he became a saloon keeper and brewed beer in a small way in the kitchen of his establishment. His enterprise prospered and he became a large stockholder in the A. Bickta Brewing Co. In 1875 he gained complete control of the business and organized the Diamond State Brewery. He died in 1893 a wealthy man. Also see: H. C. Conrad, History of Delaware (Wilmington, 1908) II, 416; J. Travers Jones, comp., History of Wilmington, (Wilmington 1894), 245; Scharf, op. cit., II, 802.

In addition to the Diamond State there were two other large establishments, the Hartmann and Fehrenbach Brewery and the Bavarian Brewery. The Hartmann and Fehrenbach Brewery was organized in 1866 by John Hartmann and John Fehrenbach, proprietors of a large saloon at Fourth and French Streets. The two partners began brewing beer in a small shed behind their establishment. This venture was so successful that they finally built a brewery on Lovering Avenue and Scott Street. In 1878 the buildings were renovated, and in 1885 the Company was incorporated as the H & F Brewing Company.

In 1880 Karl Specht and Peter Spahn built an establishment on Fifth and Dupont Streets to make beer for their Bavarian Brewing Company. Although not very successful at first it soon became a strong competitor of the Diamond State Brewing Company.

These breweries were an important part of the German American community for not only did they provide employment for a large number of the German Americans living here but what was more important, they were instrumental in aiding many to enter the saloon business.⁸ By careful management of their expenditures, the majority of the Germans who came

⁸ From an interview with Mr. Dangel of the Diamond State Brewery.

to Wilmington saved money for the day that they would be able to go into business for themselves. It was to the credit of the local German-owned breweries that a large number entered the saloon business. It was the policy of these breweries to underwrite a large percentage of the costs of setting up an establishment if the owner would agree to sell the brand of beer the brewery made. So many Germans became saloon keepers that before the First World War almost every other saloon in Wilmington was German owned.

Until the advent of the automobile, the carriage building industry was also an important source of employment and profit to the city's German Americans and for a number of years they were the backbone of the industry. The German carriage builders had an excellent reputation for fine craftsmanship. They were highly skilled in constructing horse drawn vehicles of all kinds and were in demand the world over. Many of these artisans migrated to America and many came to Wilmington which possessed a large carriage manufacturing industry. In many cases the whole family was engaged in the trade, each being trained in one or more of the different crafts, such as painting, trimming and wheelmaking, which were made use of

in the construction of a carriage.⁹

Before the Civil War Wilmington's carriage builders supplied a large section of the southern market. Much of this trade was lost as a result of the war, nevertheless the industry of Wilmington still ranked among the largest in this field, where it remained until the popularization of the motor car.

In the early years of the nineteenth century William Merrick operated a carriage factory in an old cotton warehouse on Front and Orange Streets with a large group of German employees. Dissatisfaction broke out however, among his employees and they left his establishment and formed a cooperative factory on Market and Water Streets under the name of Flagler and Company. They too disagreed and a year later part of the company removed to Baltimore. In 1856 two of the cooperative, Joel Frist and George Allmon, withdrew and started a partnership under the name of Frist and Allmon. In 1859 another member of the old Merrick Company, Enos Hunsburger broke away and opened a carriage factory on Front Street.¹⁰ Despite the fact

⁹ From an interview with J. Maucher, Librarian of the German Library Association.

¹⁰ Conrad, op. cit., II, 393.

that there were four factories now in the place of one, all prospered.

By 1860 there were nine carriage factories in the city, and seven were owned by Germans.¹¹ Thus a large part of the coachmaking business had its roots in the early nineteenth century German immigration to Wilmington. Although the Civil War dealt a hard blow to those firms which depended on southern trade, by the end of the century there were over eighteen establishments engaged in coachmaking and eight were German owned. Together they employed over seven hundred and fifty men, a large number of whom were German Americans.¹²

While the brewing and coachmaking industries accounted for the larger part of their economic activity, the Germans by no means limited themselves to these pursuits. Many worked as machinists in the shops of the Pennsylvania Railroad, while others found employment in the saddleries and coppersmithys and as tool and die makers with such corporations as the Lobdell Car Wheel Company, The Diamond State Iron Works, The Pusey and Jones Company, and others.

¹¹ Boyd's Delaware State Directory 1859-1860.

¹² Conrad, op. cit., II, 325.
Scharf, op. cit., II, 501.

Many small machine shops were founded by German Americans, one of the more successful of these was the firm of A. L. Henderer and Sons, builders of stationary steam engines, hydraulic jacks, and special boiler plate.¹³

Of those who entered the contracting business, the most successful was the firm of David Dangel and Sons. This company built a great many houses throughout Wilmington particularly on the west side of town. Among the larger projects undertaken by the firm was the construction of the Diamond State Brewery and part of the elevation of the Pennsylvania Railroad through the city.¹⁴

In 1834, James H. Shoemaker and Louis P. Buck erected a playhouse, which was called the Academy of Music on Tenth Street east of Tatnall Street. This enterprise did not last long, however, for a few years later the theater

¹³ Conrad, op. cit.; I, 383.
Scharf, op. cit., II, 778.

¹⁴ From an interview with David Dangel, Jr. Mr. Dangel, Sr. brought to Wilmington as a carpenter by Patrick Fahey, a Wilmington builder, soon became a partner of his. Later, however, the firm was dissolved and Mr. Dangel went into business for himself. David Dangel and Sons is still in existence and is owned and operated by a grandson.

closed. In 1893 William L. Dockstader began a small theater at 309 Shipley Street which proved so successful that he leased a larger building on Seventh and Shipley Streets which presented vaudeville. In 1902 he bought a lot on Market Street and constructed one of the most beautiful vaudeville theaters in Wilmington called the Garrick. Years later when movies became popular, the theater presented a movie show in addition to vaudeville acts.¹⁵

Charles C. Kurtz, Jr., son of Charles Kurtz, one of Wilmington's first German bakers, entered the real estate business near the end of the century which grew into one of the larger firms of its kind in Wilmington. In the spring of 1910 this firm was appointed agent of the Wilmington Trust Company to handle its real estate activities.¹⁶

In 1859, the first paper printed in the German language, The Delaware Pioneer, appeared in Delaware. Published by Frederick Haeuble, it was a weekly twenty-two by twenty-four inches. Herman Rau bought the paper in 1861 and until his

¹⁵ Conrad, op. cit., 430.

¹⁶ Mr. Charles Kurtz is today one of the foremost citizens of Wilmington and contributed a considerable amount of information for this chapter. The firm is now known as Charles Kurtz and Sons and is located in his own building on Delaware Avenue opposite the Du Pont building.

death in 1876 was both owner and publisher. Francis Scheu, the business manager of the paper, purchased the name and presses and continued publication. In 1881 the German-speaking population had grown to the point where it was feasible for Mr. Scheu to establish a daily paper, the Freie Presse, twenty-four by thirty inches. F. Scheu was editor and owner of both papers until his death in 1886, when his wife took over ownership and his son Gustavus Scheu became editor.¹⁷

Sometime within the next ten years the Delaware Pioneer was discontinued and the Freie Presse was sold to Max Goetz. The paper now appeared under the new title of the Lokal-Anzeiger und Freie Presse. Its office and presses were located at 1, 3, and 5 City Hall Place for a number of years.

The coverage of the German press was mainly local, however it made an attempt to supply its readers with the more important news of world affairs. In politics it was constantly independent, which is not surprising since the German element in Wilmington followed no one political

¹⁷ Francis Scheu was a native of Württemberg, Germany, and came to Philadelphia in 1849 where he was a printer for several years. He conducted a German newspaper in Egg Harbor, New Jersey, and published the Sonntags Zeitung in Philadelphia before coming to Wilmington.

pattern.

Perhaps the only generalization that can be made of the political sentiments of Germans as a group is to say that they were firm believers in democratic ideals and a republican form of government. Outside of that they represented all shades of political opinion. The majority voted with the Democratic and Republican parties, but there was another and somewhat smaller group which had definite socialistic leanings and sympathized with the earlier labor movements and proposed legislation which provided for the protection, welfare and insurance of the working class. Max Goetz, printer and owner of the Lokal-Anzeiger, was a member of this faction. Although it is quite probable, there is no evidence to suggest that they were actually connected with the Socialist party, but it is not unlikely, for the German artisans played a significant role in the history of American socialism.

That the German workers in Wilmington were active as a group in organized labor is evident from the establishment of the Labor Lyceum Hall at 112 North Jackson Street which was built in 1890. The parent organization of this movement was the Labor Lyceum Association whose officers for a long time were Fritz Schuman, Albert Timm, and Max Goetz. It often sponsored lectures by the important socialist and labor leaders of the time and the Labor

Lyceum Hall served as a meeting place for the Brauereiarbeiter Union (Brewery Workers Union), The Baker Union (Bakers' Union), and others.¹⁸ The prime purpose of these labor organizations however were in social and insurance benefits rather than as bargaining agents in the sense it is used today in referring to labor unions.

Before 1850 the large majority of German immigrants like those of other countries were Democrats. This affiliation is probably due to two things: (1) the Democrats were quick to cater to the new groups to capture new votes. In general the Democrats praised the foreign-born voter, denounced the nativist Whigs, and supported proposals to print official documents in the German language, (2) The name "Democratic" appealed to the immigrant after fleeing from the despotism of the old world, whereas the name Whig had little consequence.¹⁹ Although the actions of the Democratic party before the Civil War, namely the identification of the party with the slave interests, and the subsequent passage of the Kansas Nebraska Act, which opened the West to slavery, were

¹⁸ The Baker Union moved to its own building at Thirteenth and Hald Streets after 1911.

¹⁹ Wittke, op. cit., 242-3.

credited with turning many Germans to the Republican party, this was not the case in Wilmington. It was not until the turn of the century that the Germans began to vote Republican in any large numbers. On September 10, 1910, the following article appeared in the Sunday Star of Wilmington:

"Some years ago the rank and file of the German vote with very few exceptions could be classed as belonging to the Democratic party. This has changed and at the nominations of yesterday many former Democrats were observed casting the ballots for the Republican party. The number this year was unusually large."

The reasons for this late change are not clear. Some of the older German Americans claim that as the Germans became more prosperous in business they quite naturally turned to the more conservative Republican party.

Outside of one notable exception, that of Calvin B. Rhoades, a music teacher of German descent, who was mayor of Wilmington from 1885 to 1888, very few of the city's German Americans sought office in the state, county, or city governments. The following article pretty well voices the sentiments of the German population in regard to this question:

"Now that both parties have nominated their candidates, it is noticeable that no German Americans are enrolled as candidates for county or state office on any ticket."

This fact shows that the German-Americans still maintain their indifference to holding office. This may be a good plan because to aspire for the nomination of an office in either party is rather an expensive luxury. The matter was talked about at a German gathering and all present came to the conclusion that it was better to vote than to be voted for." 20

20 "News of the German Americans", Sunday Star, September 18, 1910.

CHAPTER IV

GERMAN SOCIAL LIFE IN WILMINGTON

In spite of the energy which the German immigrant expended on the more immediate objectives, such as establishing himself in the new world and in making a living, he nevertheless found time to participate in an amazing number of organizations and social functions of the German American community.

The German loved his beer and beer gardens, his Sunday picnics, dances and group singing and the "Gemutlichkeit" which accompanied them. Wherever he settled in America, in the crowded cities or on the frontier, he organized clubs and societies to enjoy these pastimes. In this respect the German community of Wilmington was no exception.¹

The number and variety of German organizations in which the Wilmington German element found expression for its gregarious and convivial instincts is large. Beginning in 1853 with the founding of the Delaware Sängerbund, the

¹ This Chapter is based on newspaper accounts which appeared in the Wilmington Sunday Star particularly from 1890 to 1910 and supported by conversations with twenty of the older generation of German Americans who live in Wilmington.

number of German organizations in this city grew until in 1914 there were over twenty-four societies with a combined membership of seventeen hundred and forty-three. Besides the singing society and the Turners, there was the German Library Association, a skat club and numerous fraternal, benevolent and workingmen's clubs. These societies played such an important part in the German American community that from 1908 to 1917 a German Directory was published every two years containing the names and addresses of each society and their members.² It was printed by Max Goetz, publisher of the Lokal-Anzeiger, and distributed free of charge to the Germans. The numerous advertisements which appeared in the directory covered the expense of publication and indicate the importance of the Germans in Wilmington as a source of income to the local merchants. Below is the introduction as it appeared in the first edition of the Vereins Adress Buch von Wilmington Delaware für 1908-1909.

"BY-WAY OF INTRODUCTION

"In presenting this book to your consideration we would most respectfully submit to you that there are twenty-two German Societies in the City of Wilmington with a large membership. This book will be a complete directory of all the German Societies in this city, giving the names of the Societies, their officers, the objects of the respective organizations, meeting days and places, and the names and home addresses of all the members, and much other information of value to members as well as to the public in general.

² An earlier one was printed in 1895 but was unsuccessful and discontinued.

"A sufficient number of copies will be issued, so as to be able to place one or more copies in the home of every member of the German Societies of the City of Wilmington, and it will constantly be used by them as a book of ready reference.

"Its value as a medium of publicity among the Germans of Wilmington is too evident as to require comment and the publication of your business card on one of its pages will be regarded by the German Society members as an evidence of the respective advertisers interest in the success of the various organizations with which they are affiliated.

MAX GOETZ,
Publisher,

"Wilmington Lokal-Anzeiger".

In addition to the above material, the directory printed, in both English and German, instructions for taking out citizenship papers and a list of questions likely to be asked by the examiners along with the answers. The following is the list of the German Societies which existed in Wilmington on the eve of the first World War as they appeared in the German Directory of 1915-1916:

Delaware Sängerbund, founded in 1853, met at Deutsche Halle;
Deutscher Bibliothek-Verein (German Library Association) founded 1873, met at Deutsche Halle;
Wilmington Turngemeinde, founded in 1859, met at Turnhalle;
Labor Lyceum Association, founded in 1890, met at Labor Lyceum Halle;
Delaware Loge No. 349, Deutscher Order der Harugari, founded in 1874, met at Deutschen Halle;
Deutscher Gegenseitiger Unterstützungs-Verein, No. 2, (German Beneficial Society), founded in 1875, met in Deutschen Halle;
Turner Einjähriger Unterstützungs-Verein (Turner Beneficial Society), founded in 1897, met in Turn-Halle;
Arbeiter Kranken-und Sterbe-Kasse (Workingsmen's Sick and Death Benefit Fund) Branch No. 73, founded in 1893, met in Labor Lyceum Halle;

Arbeiter Kranken-und Sterbe-Kasse (Workingsmens' Sick and Death Benefit Fund), Branch 255, founded in 1909, met at Deutsche Halle;
St. Benediktus Unterstuetzungs-Verein (St. Benedict's Beneficial Society), founded in 1878, met at Schul-Halle der Herz Jesu Kirche;
Father W. M. Mayer Council No. 256 (Catholic Benevolent League), founded in 1889, met at Schul-Halle der Deutschen Herz Jesu Kirche;
Liberty Lodge No. 10 (Ancient Order of United Workmen), founded in 1887, met in Deutschen Halle;
Staatsverband deutscher Vereine in Delaware (German American Alliance), founded ?, met in Turnhalle;
Lutherischer Männer-Verein (Men's Lutheran Society), founded 1914, met in Deutsch-Lutherische Zionskirche;
Frauen-Verein (Women's Club), founded 1888, met in Deutsch-Lutherische Zionskirche;
Jugend-Verein (Young People's Club), founded in 1879, met in Deutsch-Lutherische Zionskirche;
"Willing Workers", founded in 1913, met in Deutsch-Lutherische Zionskirche;
Damen-Club des Delaware Saengerbundes, founded 1895, met in Deutschen Halle;
Damen-Sektion der Wilmington Turngemeinde, founded ?, (women's section of the Wilmington Turngemeinde), met in Turnhalle;
Frauen-Sektion der Labor Lyceum Association (Women's Section of the Labor Lyceum Association), founded ?, met in Parlor of the Labor Lyceum Halle;
Germania Tempel No. 7, Damen des Goldenen Adler, founded 1898, met in Deutschen Halle;
Frauen-Missions-Verein (Women's Missionary Society), founded ?, met in Deutsche Baptisten-Kirche;
German American Society of Delaware, founded ?, met in German Hall;
Germania Social Club, founded 1888, met in homes of members;
Wilmington Skat-Club, founded 1908, met in Deutschen Halle;

These societies were the backbone of the community for without them there would have been very little German influence felt. They kept up the traditions and customs of the old world, in the absence of which the German element probably would have soon lost its identity. There were few Germans who were not members of more than one society and fewer

still who did not belong to any. Although all the clubs represented different interests and purposes such as the group singing of the Sngerbund, the athletic activity of the Turners, and the intellectual pursuits of the German Library association, they sponsored numerous social events in which the whole community could participate. Aside from regular meetings, seldom did a week go by in Wilmington without one of the societies sponsoring some social event which attracted the whole German community. As a result the social calendar of the Germans was perhaps the fullest of any group in Wilmington during all seasons of the year.

Summer festivals and picnics were zealously participated in by the Germans, and on Saturday nights and Sundays some were always to be found at one or more of the amusement parks around Wilmington such as Brandywine Springs, Shellpot Park and the Bavarian Park, so popular during the trolley car age. The Bavarian Park was located behind Mrs. John Still's saloon on the corner of Fifth and Du Pont Streets and contained picnic grounds, bowling alleys and a dance floor. The festivities invariably included the quaffing of lager beer, singing, dancing, and general merrymaking. Tables were usually set with beer, wine, cheese, sausage, and rye bread. Good food, good beer, and music were the prime components of a German holiday.

Each society usually had its traditional affairs that it held annually. Perhaps the largest and most popular of these was the Volksfest sponsored by the Delaware Sngerbund which lasted for a number of days and nights.³

The German Staatsverband Deutscher Vereine in Delaware, popularly known as the German American Alliance, also held a yearly picnic and summer night's festival in the Bavarian Park every August. The attractions included a German kitchen, bowling, dancing, a Turner exhibition and singing by the Delaware Sngerbund. Not to be overlooked were the annual butchers and bakers picnics as well as that of the Arbeiter Sngerbund. As a gesture of good will, official delegations of the other societies would show up at these affairs and the guests were treated to beer and refreshments in return for an impromptu song by the Sngerbund or an exhibition from the Turners.

Excursions, though a more American institution, were also part of the summer activities of the Germans. The choir of the Zion Lutheran Church held an annual outing, and each year they would visit a different place. In 1910

³ See Chapter V, page 57.

they chose New York City where they visited places of interest and ended up in Coney Island. This activity necessitated a great deal of stamina, for they boarded the train at the Pennsylvania station in Wilmington at six a.m. and did not return until the small hours of the next morning.

It was also during the summer months that the two leading societies of the German community, the Sngerbund and the Turners engaged in their annual Turnerfest and Sngerfest which were usually held in one of the neighboring cities. Whenever they returned from their trips, victorious or not, they were met at the station by their Ladies Auxiliary and by representatives of the other German societies. After the welcoming committee made its speeches, they would all march triumphantly to the club rooms where a supper would be waiting the participants and a homecoming celebration would be held.

The last function of the outdoor season was the Harvest Home Outing sponsored by the Ladies Club of the Delaware Sngerbund. This affair, unlike the others, was usually kept for the singers and their families.

Although the colder weather drove the Germans from their outdoor activities, the winter months had their compensations. Masquerade balls were popular with the

Germans and almost every society held one or more during the fall and winter months. In October the Turners held the Halloween Masked Ball and on Thanksgiving Eve the Ladies Section of the Turners sponsored a monster ball to raise money for the annual Christmas party for the children of the society. In December the annual ball and banquet of the Sängerbund was held in the German Hall and in February the ladies club of that organization held their anniversary ball. The Turners gave a masked ball for the children of the German American community in March and on the Monday after Easter the last and biggest social event of the winter season was held. The Easter Monday Ball was given by the German Library Association. All the leading German American citizens religiously attended this function and the Grand March was led by one of the more prominent daughters of the community.

The Germans did not confine themselves to balls however, for their activities were as varied as they were numerous. The fall also began a series of Saturday night sauerkraut and pork dinners which continued until late in the spring. Numerous lectures were offered the Germans in the Turn Hall and in the German Hall on a variety of subjects which included among the lecturers prominent members of the Socialist party. Every year two or three plays were given

in German in the Turner Gym by travelling German road companies, some on tour in the United States from Germany. Below is a newspaper account of one of these occasions:

"The German Americans of Wilmington witnessed the Village Priest, a play by Berchtesgaden, given by a German theatrical company in the Turn Hall. The large audience taxed the Turn Hall and consisted of the best German residents of the vicinity. The performance was given in the Bavarian dialect."⁴

Every year, sometime in May, the Delaware Sängerbund would give its spring concert in the auditorium of the German Hall. The program would usually include classical selections of German music and an orchestra was brought in to accompany them. After the concert, dancing and refreshments were offered to the guests. Concerts, however, were not enough to satisfy the members love of music and the Sängerbund often treated their friends about the city with Ständchen. Ständchen is the German name given to the practice of serenading people with songs in front of their homes. The provocation for these impromptu performances was usually birthdays, anniversaries or to cheer a sick member. Often upon the completion of the serenade the singers were invited inside by the recipient and treated to refreshments.

Under the surface of this outward gaiety however there was a strong sense of social responsibility on the part of

⁴ Wilmington Sunday Star, April 17, 1911.

the Germans and their organizations. Many times the motivating cause for many of their social activities was to raise money for some sick or unfortunate member of the German community, and the newspapers of Wilmington contained many announcements of benefit concerts and dances given by the Germans to pay the medical expenses for a sick member or to aid the widow and family of a deceased member. A number of the churches and clubs provided their membership with some form of social insurance in the form of sick benefit funds.

Some were only open to the members of the sponsoring club such as the Turner einjähriger Unterstützungs-Verein but those that met in the Labor Lyceum Hall and others in the German Hall were open to all. Those that met in the German Hall were the Deutscher Unterstützungs Verein No. 1, and the Deutscher Unterstützungs Verein No. 2. The Arbeiter Kranken and Sterbe-Kasse met in the Labor Lyceum Hall. Other organizations of this type were the secretive German fraternal association, the Delaware Lodge No. 349 of the Deutscher Orden der Harugari, the St. Benediktus Unterstützung Verein and Father W. M. Mayer Council No. 256 of the Catholic Benevolent League. The last two met in the German Catholic church.

The functions of these organizations was to provide the members with social insurance on a non-profit basis,

which included a weekly payment to a member if he was sick, and a lump sum payment to his heirs upon his death. In many cases the death payment was only sufficient to provide the costs of burial, but this depended upon the organization. The size of the benefits depended upon the dues paid and these varied according to the beneficial society to which the German American belonged. There were enough societies that the German American could choose the one which best suited his income. The sick benefits ranged as high as from five dollars a week to ten, and the death payments from one hundred dollars for men and fifty dollars for women, to three thousand dollars for both. The result of these social insurance plans was that there were very few German American wards of the state or city. Not only did the German societies offer its people a measure of social security and an outlet for their more gregarious instincts but it also provided those who were inclined to spend a quiet evening now and then with a fairly complete library of German literature. This library was to be found at the German Hall under the sponsorship of the Deutsche Bibliothek-Verein (German Library Association) of Wilmington. The Deutsche Bibliothek Verein was organized in 1873 by Heinrich Müller, Frederick von Bourdon, Anton Hauber, Sebastian Burkhardt and Kassimer Abberger. Its purpose was to cultivate the German language and literature and to institute a German library. The first books were

contributed by the members and others were solicited from the German population of Wilmington. In the early years of its existence the number of volumes was small and the association was able to keep the books and hold meetings in the home of Heinrich Wilhelm at 411 Shipley Street. By 1880 however, the membership and size of the library had grown to the point where the activities could no longer be held in a private house. Two rooms were rented in the Herdmann Building on Fourth Street below Market. One room was used as a reading and meeting room and the other housed the library. In 1883 the organization was incorporated, and the Sängertunde and Turngemeinde along with the German Library Association moved into the German Hall on Sixth Street.

The library contains about two thousand well selected volumes, about ten of which date as far back as the sixteenth century. These books were printed in old German and Latin which only a few are able to read.⁵ About one-fifth of the books are in English. Although the collection is small compared to the German Libraries of Philadelphia and New York, it is well rounded and includes works on botany,

⁵ Many of the old volumes are still in the shelves of the Association but few are ever referred to. The illustrations appearing in a few of these books are hand painted in vegetable colors and are still in excellent condition.

horticulture, magic, science, religion and philosophy.⁶

⁶ After the first World War the membership of the German Library Association fell sharply. Few of the new generation could read German or wanted to. In 1924 the Library Association combined with the Sängerbund as many of the older German members were dying off. At present (1948) the books are maintained by the Sängerbund; however, they are not used. The old reading room is unfurnished and the books, particularly the rare volumes, are kept locked in an old safe; no effort is being made to preserve them.

CHAPTER V

THE DELAWARE SÄNGERBUND

Group singing has ever been a favorite pastime of the Germans. Wherever Germans live, societies which foster male choruses have been established, and the existence of the Delaware Sängerbund shows that the Wilmington German Community was no exception. "Life is serious enough", declared an old Sängerbund pamphlet, "and there is no greater diversion for entertainment and pleasure than singing."

On March 17, 1853, sixteen German American citizens met to create a German social center. These were, in order of the first record, G. Anton, L. Roder, L. Grieb, J. H. Mühlhausen, John Fehrenbach, Salomon Prell, Karl Kaiser, Andreas Witz, Reinhard Reinhold, Heinrich Becker, August Halger, Julius O. Krauch, Jacob Stuck, Valentin Walter, Johan Brodhag and A. Hiller. It was during this meeting that they arrived at a purpose which would unite the German community most readily, it was the fostering of joint singing. The new society was to be called the Sängerbund (singing society).

The writing of the by-laws was entrusted to J. H. Mühlhausen, a well-known tailor of 210 East Fifth Street. On March 21 a meeting was called and a constitution and

by-laws were presented to the membership. So well was the idea received by other Germans that in the three-day interval between the meetings, five more members had joined.

Upon acceptance of the work of Mr. Mühlhausen, the election of the new club's first officers was held. The first officers of the society were: W. Pappenmeier, president; Lucas Grubb, vice president; J. H. Mühlhausen, secretary; H. Bleyer, treasurer; and John Fehrenbach, librarian. The first conductor was S. Anton.

When the rehearsing and singing began, the membership increased so quickly that the club planned an excursion. At a meeting on April 26, a motion was passed to buy an organizational flag. The money was partly collected by donations and with the profits of \$15 from the Pentecost Excursion, the club on June 1 paid \$7¹/₄ for the flag.¹

In the early years there was no club house; however in April 1856 the society was meeting in the home of Heinrich Albert, who was then conductor, at Sixth and Market Streets, the present site of Mullin's Clothing Store.

¹ The flag, beautifully embroidered is still preserved in the German Hall at Sixth Street.

It was the custom in those days, even more than now, for the German singing societies to engage in competitions. They were usually held annually and at a different city each year. All cities with German American communities participated who were within reasonable distance of each other. Wilmington's S ngerbund usually met with the Liederkr nz of Philadelphia, and other organizations from New York City, Baltimore, Reading, and Lancaster.

On June 6, 1856, the Delaware S ngerbund attended its first S ngerfest in Baltimore. The club had not applied for participation in the singing contests but the members returned quite satisfied, for they had gained a reputation for themselves and their young organization. Despite the fact that the membership increased considerably and that the growing prosperity of the members paved the way for a more extensive social program, the members of the S ngerbund separated on September 23, 1856.²

In 1858, however, the Delaware S ngerbund was activated once more on May 18. Whatever the causes, the records merely state that "...the reunion, longed for by both sides, took place".

² There are no records available explaining the reason for this schism.

In that year the roster shows thirty-eight active members, eighteen passive members and six honorary members.³

From that time on the Sangerbund grew in prestige and numbers only rivaled by the Turnergemeinde in popularity among Wilmington's German Americans, until its growth was interrupted by the Civil War. Many of the German American community responded to the call of the colors, and they included many of the Sangerbund.⁴ In the meantime H. Muller, then president, kept the society together until the close of the war.

After the war the society again resumed its activities on a large scale and continued its growth. Because of private jealousies among a few of the more active members, an argument broke out concerning the policies of the organization. This resulted in a schism and a new singing society was formed by some of the members and called "Liederkrantz". The existence of two organizations led to competition for membership and the division weakened both. This was finally realized by members of both societies.

³ Passive is the name given to those who do not sing.

⁴ Here again it is impossible to determine how many of the organization went into the service of their country as a list does not exist. From references made in the society's minutes, of which only scattered portions exist, three of the Sangerbund are mentioned as soldiers. They are: George Schellkopf, Andreas Grotz and Henry Feldmaier.

On January 10, 1871, when Germans everywhere were celebrating the victory of the "Fatherland" over France, there was great rejoicing in the Wilmington community. The two societies combined their facilities to celebrate the victory. The fruits of unity were made clear in the activities of the day and the two groups combined. A reorganization followed shortly and a new name was given to the old Sngerbund. It was called the "Delaware Harmonie". Henrich Muller was its president, Fred von Bourdon, secretary, Franz Stuhlfeld, librarian, Fritz Becker, conductor, and Joseph Sell, treasurer. To commemorate the occasion, the women of the community, led by Mrs. Johanna Stoeckle and Mrs. Elizabeth Manz, presented a flag to the new organization.

A room was rented for meetings and practice was held on the second floor of the building on Fourth and French Streets. In 1873 the organization held its first local (Sngerfest) singing festival. It was an event which attracted city-wide attention. During the two days of the Sngerfest, Wilmington was host to many other singing groups such as the Philadelphia Harmonie and Ladies Auxiliary, the Philadelphia Sngerbund, the Camden Men's Singing Society and others. The well known German orchestra, "Oberkirch" was also invited and for the two-day affair all visiting organizations were guests of the society. At this time the decision was made to affiliate the "Delaware

Harmonie" with the North Eastern Sngerbund.⁵

With the depression that came the next year the energies of the members became increasingly devoted to earning a livelihood and the activity of the club slackened considerably. The club room was relinquished and the meetings became irregular for want of a place to hold rehearsals. In 1876, however, a meeting place was found in the home of Conrad Manz on Pine Street and singing quartets were once more organized. In June 1877 the society was again re-organized and the old name, Delaware Sngerbund, was once more adopted. By 1879 the Sngerbund was again ready for competition, and in the following summer the singers travelled to Baltimore to enter the Sngerfest held there.

Now composed of nineteen active members, the club needed more room and in autumn 1879, it moved to a room in Joseph Stoeckle's Restaurant which was then located on King Street. The active members then were: Charles Yetter, Christian Bachar, Conrad Manz, Gottlieb Knittel, Franz

⁵ The North Eastern Sngerbund was the regional organization of the German singing groups whose function it was to sponsor contests and print music for the local chapters. Some of these old song books are still in the possession of the Sngerbund and the Library Association.

Stuhlfeld, Joseph Niedermair, William Cloos, Daniel Maier, Christopher Bauer, Joseph Sell, Franz Scheu, Gustave Scheu, Johan Seide, E. P. Frey, George Staib, C. P. Rohrbacher, Anton Hauber, George Metzner and Peter Ebner.

By 1883 the organization, having over ninety members, including those who were classed as "active" as well as "passive", sought a meeting place of its own.

A large building was for sale at the time on Sixth Street between French and Walnut. The building was formerly part of The Wesleyan Female College. In order to put less strain on its finances, the Sngerbund joined with the German Library Association and the Wilmington Turngemeinde to buy the property from the Wilmington Savings Fund for \$7,500. Since the building had been a ladies' school and boarding house, an extensive program of remodeling was necessary. Four thousand dollars was spent on improving this four-and-one-half story brick structure and renovation which included a rathskellar and an auditorium. This money was raised by the board of directors of the three societies who issued bonds amounting to \$3,000. In this manner the Wilmington German Americans obtained their first social center.

It was not long before the German Hall was one of the social centers for all Wilmington and many of the

smaller and younger German societies rented it for meetings and held their social functions there.

This union even if only for materialistic reasons was an unusual event because German Societies, although bound by ties of language and culture were intensely individualistic and it was not often that they associated with each other without jealousy. A great deal of credit for this arrangement, however, goes to Anton Hauber, since he was in the unique position at the time of being President of the Sangerbund and of the German Library Association as well as First Speaker of the Wilmington Turngemeinde.

From the Sangerbund records of the celebration which was held on the opening of the hall there is ample evidence of the importance of the German American population. The Governor of the State, Charles C. Stockley; Mayor Harrington of Wilmington; Senator Bayard; and other leaders in politics as well as those of commerce and industry participated in the opening exercises and the banquet which was held. Although an entrance fee of three dollars per head was charged, the hall was filled to capacity. "Despite the great expenses incurred for the grand reception of this esteemed company," declares a report of the affair that was read at a joint meeting, "a profit of more than \$5,000

was realized".⁶

The union with the Turners did not last long. The noise and the disturbance caused by the Turner drills and other athletic pursuits soon became unbearable to the singing and library enthusiasts of the other two societies. After a series of disputes both friendly and otherwise, the Turners sought a home of their own.

At this point in its history and in the years to follow, the Sängerbund held many social functions in addition to their Sängerfests. Volksfests (folk festivals), picnics, and parades were held during the warm seasons, while balls and sauerkraut dinners were held during the winter months.⁷

⁶ Translated from the original German script in the Sängerbund Minutes of 1883-4.

⁷ The Volksfest was an extended picnic which often lasted from two to four days. In the earlier years they were held at Scheutzen Park and later on in Shellpot Park, Bavarian Park and Brandywine Springs Park. The Volksfest, always under the sponsorship of the Sängerbund, was attended by inhabitants of Wilmington to such an extent that in later years, it came to be considered a city-wide activity. As guests usually remained for the day, a German kitchen was set up to supply meals and confections. Beer was kept iced and consumed in great quantities but despite this there was very little rowdiness and drunkenness. The Germans, good family men; never held functions which they could not take along their wives and children.

The festivities usually began in the morning and ran till eleven in the evening. There were Operas, Sängerfests by the club and visiting singing societies, German Band concerts, howling, games for children, and in the evening dances were held. The profits from these occasions were large for the times and greatly contributed to the expenses of the singing activities of the society, which often included traveling in order to participate in contests as far away as New York, Reading, and Baltimore.

Not only the German Americans attended these functions. All of Wilmington entered wholeheartedly into the Volksfests and picnics which never failed to draw large crowds. The festival of 1886 was so successful that the \$3,000 bond issue, floated to finance the renovation of the hall was completely wiped out. Seven years later in 1893 when the society celebrated its Fortieth Anniversary, it was entirely debt free.

Since the first visit at the singing festival in Baltimore, the Delaware Sangerbund never failed to appear at any Sangerfest. At a Sangerfest in Newark, New Jersey, in 1891, it competed for a prize for the first time. At this occasion it gained honorable mention.

In 1894 at the Sangerfest in New York the club was not as skillful and was only able to finish near last place. It was a great disappointment, and the members decided to change conductors. After engaging C. A. Hartmann of Philadelphia as conductor, a change in rehearsal methods was made, and as a result the singing was better than at anytime in the club's history. Three years later at the Sangerfest in Philadelphia when it once more competed in a singing contest, the Delaware Sangerbund won first prize.

On March 18, 1903, the Fiftieth Anniversary of the society was celebrated and was attended by more than five hundred

persons. The program for the celebration offered much variety, with German food, songs, and speeches alternating during the evening. Among those who formed the society in its early years, the following members attended the fiftieth birthday: George Schellkopf, Andreas Grotz, Henry Feldmaier, Christian Spoerl, Fred Weilt, John Waier. Mr. Wiedemann, an official of the North Eastern Sngerbund, and Mr. Malemet, conductor of the Baltimore Sngerfest, were the principal speakers.

As the expenses incurred in singing festivals had been rather high during the past years it was decided to hold the Volksfest yearly in early autumn. Previous Volksfests had been very profitable, and it was hoped that held yearly it would provide a steady source of income to finance the other activities of the club. From 1903 these festivals were held annually, the last one being held in 1914. German friends and singers always attended these affairs, some coming from Philadelphia, Camden, Reading, Riverside, and other nearby towns. A great part of the non-German residents of Wilmington also attended these affairs. Preparations for the Volksfest usually were made far in advance, and from time to time announcements were made in the newspapers concerning the attractions that would be offered. The society appointed a special Volksfest Committee, which began its work as early as June. About a

week before the opening, a trolley car was hired to traverse the city to make the announcement that the Volksfest was to be held. The car was gaily decorated and either carried a Sngerbund quartet or a German band.⁸

Below is an excerpt of an account of the Volksfest of September 1910 at Brandywine Springs, as it appeared in the Wilmington Star.

"The two days Volksfest of the Delaware Sngerbund was a success in every way and reflected much credit on Delaware's foremost German society. President Heinel may well feel pleased with the work of his appointees... The Executive Committee composed of Mr. Heinel and Bernard Kleitz watched over all details in a careful and businesslike way...

"The German kitchen in charge of J. Fehl and Ernest Echert, both well-known hotel men, was excellently managed. Not only were the meals well prepared, but the quality of the dishes served was of the best and the prices, well within the reach of all... The German kitchen did a great business.

"The games especially for the children were under the management of such old sports as Joseph Sell and Ludwig Milchoir... About one hundred youthful contestants entered them with a will to win... Even the Punch and Judy show which is as old as the hills claimed the attention of the young and old alike.

"The show presented on the impromptu stage at the east end of the German Village was really good and enjoyed by the many excursionist and visitors

⁸ Information concerning these activities is found in abundance in the newspapers of this period, particularly the Wilmington Sunday Star, which ran a column entitled "News of the German Americans."

from this city. Politicians from both parties were there and made many acquaintances...

"No better selection could have been made than to hire a band to play real 'Dorfmusick'. The band was composed of two cornets, one violin, and a drummer who covered the mistakes...

"Those who wanted to be particular in a musical way, had chances to listen to the opera company who presented the Mikado, or hear some of the fine selections of the Sangerbund... Both the Delaware Sangerbund and the Orpheus Singing Society sang together under Professor Wenzel...

"Every steamer on the Wilson Line from Philadelphia brought many German Americans from Philadelphia and Chester for the Volksfest..."⁹

The Volksfests not only gained the respect of the community for the Sangerbund but also achieved its original purpose -- to raise funds.

With the income largely provided by the yearly Volksfests, the Sangerbund was able to enter contests quite frequently. In 1906 it participated in the German Festival at Newark, New Jersey, from June 30 to July 5. In 1909 the Singing Society travelled to a Sangerfest in New York City, where they finished in the second category.

In 1911 a house at Grubbs Landing was bought by the organization which served as a summer residence and a place of relaxation for the members.

In a statement to the press concerning the Sangerbund option on the Grubbs Landing property, a member of the Sangerbund explained:

⁹ Wilmington Sunday Star, September 4, 1910.

"We propose to have this place for a summer home for our members, their wives and children. Many of us cannot spend the time away at a resort, but we often have time with our families to spend a day without neglecting our occupations, and get a breath of fresh air." ¹⁰

The facilities which this site offered were swimming on the Delaware and boating, and was so situated as to afford an excellent view of the surrounding countryside.

At the time of the outbreak of the World War in 1914, the society was at its peak having fifty-two active members on its roll and seven hundred and twenty passive. With the war, few social functions were held and those that were had few participants. In the summer of 1916 a bazaar was held in the Turner Hall for German children and the Sangerbund participated with enthusiasm. When, however, in 1917 the United States entered the war and feeling against Germans ran high, the membership diminished and all outward activity ceased.

¹⁰ Wilmington Sunday Star, December 25, 1910.

CHAPTER VI

THE WILMINGTON TURNERS

The great German migrations to this country brought many people, during the latter part of the nineteenth century, to whom group exercising was an important part of their lives. For many years before the establishment of the German Empire, there existed throughout the German states gymnastic halls built by the Deutsche Turnverein.¹

In the revolution of 1848 the German Turners fought almost to a man for freedom and when the republican forces were defeated, many departed from their native land in haste to seek healthier homesteads. The greatest number came to America. America at the time had little to offer

¹ After the battle of Jena in 1806, the German people faced a dark pit of national humiliation and contumely. Divided into small and impotent principalities, Germany was at the mercy of Napoleon.

In this period there emerged a high school teacher from Berlin, Frederick Ludwig Jahn, who published a book called "Nationality". He held that regeneration and restoration of Germany was only possible through the youth of the land. He strenuously advocated a national program of "rational physical education" designed to arouse patriotic sentiments. The book was widely read and throughout Germany the idea was discussed. In 1811 Jahn opened his public outdoor gymnasium in Hasenheide, Berlin. In a few months the Turner societies spread to every city, town, and hamlet of the Country.

The Turner movement was essentially nationalistic in character and its members fought for the liberation of the German states from the French and later on unity of the German states. "Unity with liberty" was the cry. In the unsuccessful revolutions of the forties, the Turners made up a large part of the leadership and the majority of its members fought for the cause of democracy. Ernst A. Weier, The Work of the Turner Societies (Indianapolis 1919) 6.

in the way of gymnastic clubs outside of the few which existed in the colleges and universities. As a result, in 1853, the German colonies in Cincinnati, Baltimore and Philadelphia formed Turnvereins.²

About this time the German population of Wilmington although still small in proportion to those of the larger cities, was growing steadily. It was only natural then that upon arriving in a strange city, these Germans would want to band together in a group which could speak their native tongue and provide them with a semblance of life and customs which they pursued in the homeland.

On November 1859 the Wilmington Germans organized what is now the Wilmington Turners. The group was then known as the Wilmington Turngemeinde.³ The Wilmington Turngemeinde immediately affiliated itself with the national body in Cincinnati, The American Turnverein, known as the American Turners. This organization was an important factor in the Americanization of the German immigrant and

² Of all the organizations introduced in the United States in the course of the last century by German immigration, perhaps none represented a higher level of intellectual interest and broader cultural objectives than the Turnvereins.

³ The name means simply, "A society for the practice of physical exercises".

was instrumental in the introduction of physical education in the elementary and secondary schools of this country. It now maintains a normal school in conjunction with the University of Indiana for the training of teachers of physical education.

Originally the Wilmington Turngemeinde was composed of German speaking citizens only and for a time acted as an anchoring place for the German immigrants. Soon however, many other Wilmingtonians, attracted by the healthful and social activities of the society, began to join. There never was any rule limiting membership to persons of German birth or extraction. On the contrary, for in the constitution of the National Society one of the first laws adopted was and still is today, that no man can become a member of the Turnverein unless he is a citizen of the United States or had declared his intentions of becoming one. This rule has been rigidly enforced and no exceptions are allowed to it.⁴

⁴ The Turner societies in the United States acted as Americanization agencies. Many of them maintained neighborhood night and Sunday schools in which American History, American Constitutional Law, and other subjects were taught.

Weiler, op. cit., 9.

Outside of German language classes there is no indication of any other instruction given by Wilmington's Turngemeinde.

For many years the privilege of voting and holding office in the Turngemeinde was extended only to German American members. "This," explained a member of the society, "was not occasioned by any prejudice against the other members but was due to the fact that the business meetings were held in the German tongue. It was reasonable since the non-German speaking members not being able to understand what was going on, would be unable to vote intelligently." 5

The first meeting place of the new society was located in a room over Kiels saloon on Poplar Street. Later, because it was too small to allow full scope to the gymnastic games, they moved to a larger hall located at Fifth and Market Streets, where they remained until 1883. At this time the Turners had a membership of thirty. Every Sunday, Dr. Stahl of Philadelphia would journey to Wilmington to conduct a class in gymnastics.

In 1883 the Wilmington Turngemeinde in conjunction with the Delaware Sngerbund and the German Library Association purchased the annex building of the Wesleyan Female College at 205 East Sixth Street.⁶

⁵ From a conversation with one of the leading members of the Wilmington Turners, Mr. Steven Reskowitz.

⁶ See Chapter on The Delaware Sngerbund, page 55.

This building which later became known as the German Hall was thought to provide a perfect setting for the three clubs with a common heritage. It was not long before the noisy activities of the Turners disturbed the activities of the other occupants of the hall. With this the Turners began to seek a new home of their own. After months of fruitless searching, a site was donated by Henry Bush, a prominent German business man, on the northwest corner of Eighth and French Streets. The land contained two frame residences which were not at all suitable for the club's activities. With little money in the treasury at the time, the club members began to construct their own building, doing all the work themselves. By 1895 the building, a two-story brick affair which included a large gymnasium was finished. On February 19 of the same year, the Wilmington Turnergesinde, shortly after moving into its new quarters, became incorporated.

At the new Turnhall the society reached a high point of its growth and activities. By 1906 the membership was over three hundred. The hall became not only the center of the Turners' athletic endeavors but also was the focal point of many social functions. The annual masked ball, a popular feature of the Wilmington social calendar, was held there for many years.

The Turners, once they moved into their own hall, held regular classes in physical education which consisted of about thirty pupils. In addition to this, a leader's class was conducted in which young men were trained to lead other groups in mass exercise. Known to the members as Turnschule, these classes were participated in by everyone in the family regardless of age and sex. Below is a schedule of classes and instructions sponsored by the Wilmington Turngemeinde in a pamphlet which appeared in 1915.

Turn Hall, 802 French Street
Hours of Instruction

1st Boys' Class, age 6 to 10 - 2nd Boys' Class, age 10 to 14 years
Tuesday and Friday 4 to 5.30 p. m.
Junior Class, age 14 to 18 years Tuesday and Friday, 7 to 8.30 p.m.
Active Members Class, 18 bis 30 years...Tuesday and Friday, 8 to 10 p.m.
Senior Class (Beers), 30 years and upward...Every Saturday, 8 to 10 p.m.
1st Girl's Class, age 6 to 10 years...Monday at 4 p.m. and Saturday at 2 p.m.
2nd Girl's Class, age 10 to 15 years
Wednesday 4 to 5.30 and Saturday 3 to 4.30 p.m.
Ladies' Class, 15 years and upward...Monday and Thursday, 8 to 10 p.m.
GERMAN LANGUAGE AND DRAWING LESSONS Sundays, from 10 to 12 a.m.

Children of Members are free of charge.
Children of Non-Members, 25¢ per month.

Although modified to fit the age of the participants, the procedure followed during class meetings was as follows:

"...march in step around the hall, then to run in step about five minutes. Following this after a short rest are calisthenic exercises, about twenty minutes. The class ends with a game, nameless but played in this way: All

members but one lie on the floor forming a circle. The one member holds himself stiff and in this position falls upon the upraised feet of the others. They pass him around the circle and the one who allows him to fall must leave the game."⁷

Every February for a number of years the Turners would present a special dance festival in which the members performed European Folk dances in native costumes. A special feature was a sixteenth century Swiss dance. In this exhibition, six young men and six young women donned Swiss costumes and pirouetted in the old canton steps. Numerous other colorful dances were included in the program including a Dutch dance done in wooden shoes. These dances were so popular that at one time William Dockstader engaged the troupe to appear on the stage of the Opera House, which was at one time one of Wilmington's vaudeville houses.

In June 1907 the Wilmington Turngemeinde had the honor of being the center of all Turner activities in the mid-Atlantic area when the district Turnerfest was held in Wilmington. The Turnerfest "a gala two-day affair" included field and gymnastic events during the daylight hours and musical and social activities in the evening.

⁷ Delmarva Star, November 5, 1933.

Professor Otto Goepel was master of the field sports on this occasion. George Weth, president; and Henry Blouth, treasurer of the club were in charge of the arrangements. Ainscow's Restaurant, then at 802 Market Street, prepared an elaborate menu of German dishes for the visiting Turners.

Every spring the Turners presented a gymnastic exhibition known to the German Americans as the "Grosses Jahrliches Schauturnen". Attended by the Germans and other inhabitants of Wilmington, it was an important factor in raising money for the many activities of the society. Each class of the Turn school put on an exhibition of their skill. The program was as follows:

Part I

1. Ouverture.....Orchestra
2. Grand March of all Turnclasses...Seniors, Ladies, Actives,
Girls and Boys
3. Wand Drill.....I Class Girls
4. Dumb Bell Exercises.....Boys' Classes
5. Calisthenic Exercises and Pyramids.....Ladies' Class
6. Club Swinging.....II Class Girls
- Extra Club Swinging.....Turner Frank Kyle
7. Bock Exercises.....Boys' Classes

Part II

1. Ouverture.....Orchestra
2. Dumb Bell Exercises.....Senior Class (Boers)
3. Maypole Drill.....16 Girls
4. Apparatus Work.....Ladies, Seniors, Actives
 - (a) Horizontal and Parallel Bars.....Active Classes
with changing of Apparatus.
 - (b) Parallel Bars.....Ladies Class
 - (c) Side Horse.....Senior Class
5. Great Tableau, Pyramids and Groups. 8

8 Program of Turngemeinde of May 16, 1915.

After the exhibition was concluded a ball and social gathering was held.

Not only did the Turngemeinde provide for the physical and cultural betterment of its members but through the Turner Einjähriger Unterstützungs - Verein (Turner voluntary aid society) founded in 1897 it endeavored to provide them with social insurance. Through this plan, each member who joined and paid a small premium, a benefit payment of \$5 per week was made to a family in case of his illness. In case of the death of a member \$50 was paid for men and \$30 for women.⁹

A singing society was also part of the Wilmington Turngemeinde which met in Turn Hall and was composed of thirteen of the more musical members. This organization although it went out of existence shortly before 1915 was a favorite feature at all Turner social events.

Before 1914 the membership of the Turngemeinde in Wilmington numbered over 300; during the war, however, the function of the Turners was curtailed due to popular prejudices against societies of German origin. Membership

⁹ Max Goetz, ed., Vereins Adress Buch von Wilmington, Delaware für das Jahr 1908-1909 (German-American Organizational Address Book of Wilmington, Delaware for the Year 1908-1909).

fell off considerably. By 1916 it was two hundred and twenty-eight and fell lower when the United States entered the war against Germany. Efforts were made to counteract this feeling against Turnerism and it was pointed out that as early as 1872 American Turnerism had been completely separated from German Turnerism and had completely dedicated itself to democratic ideals. When the United States entered the war twenty-two of the Wilmington Turners volunteered and a larger number eventually saw service in the Army and Navy.

With the end of the war Turners began to resume their place in community life. The opening of the Baynard stadium on June 22, 1922 was heralded by a large Turnerfest held there. The late William F. Kurtz, prominent lawyer was president of the Turnerfest in which societies from many cities took part.

With the arrival of prohibition the Turners once more had to readjust themselves by eliminating many of their social functions and putting renewed emphasis on physical culture.

In the early twenties, they sold the old hall on Eighth and French Streets and purchased the old Democratic House at 600 Clayton Street. On the large grounds behind the club house they constructed a fully equipped

gymnasium.

Like their comrades all over the United States, the Turners are continuing to dedicate their organization to the purpose of furthering physical education and the dissemination of rational opinion and ideas according to scientific knowledge and experience which may be assumed to advance the physical, moral and intellectual and material welfare of mankind.¹⁰

¹⁰ Weier, op. cit., 25.

CHAPTER VII

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH

By 1848 there were sufficient Germans (Lutheran) in Wilmington to band together and thirty-seven citizens of Wilmington and vicinity indicated on August 6, 1848 by their signatures their desire to form and support a German Lutheran Congregation. The Rev. T. W. Weyl, of Baltimore, had called the meeting and he, as well as others, supplied the pulpit during a trial period of three months. Although on November 6th, the organization disbanded, it should be noted that twenty-two of its thirty-seven sponsors were later to be found among the thirty-three charter members of Zion Church.

Meanwhile, a seminary graduate, the Rev. Friedrich Walz, had arrived in this country from Switzerland. On his way to Illinois as a missionary, he stopped in Philadelphia where he became acquainted with a letter from a group of sincere Christians in Wilmington, who urgently requested that they be provided with the services of a pastor.

Pastor Walz heeded the summons and on December 3, 1848,

Unless otherwise noted, the material for this chapter was taken from Ninety Years In Zion, a history of the Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, by Rev. Sterling F. Bashore, Wilmington, Delaware, 1938, and interviews with the author.

he first conducted services on the second floor of a small house on the east side. In the record of that Sunday, we read that, after service, thirty-three persons, agreed to form a Lutheran congregation. "The Holy Ghost was in our midst," say the minutes of that day, "and we were of one heart and one soul."

Thus in 1848 with the founding of the Zion Lutheran Church, we have the first formal evidence of a German American community in Wilmington. The following were charter members: Gustav Weyl, Heinrich Klund, Johann F. Busch, Karl Botzmer, Johann Schwager, Ludwig Keiser, Johann M. Busch, Georg Hoffmeister, Ludwig Brecht, Katharina Wink, Margarete Schmit, Maria Butz, Elizabeth Butz, Mrs. Gutmann, Christina Barber, Friedrich Klund, Johann Greiner, Jacob Butz, Peter Mohr, Wilhelm Brodmeier, Friedrich Grenninger, Georg Busch, Georg Gauert, Friedrich Fellmet, Weyl the Elder, Wilhelm Goette, Jacob Karch, Johann Schmitt, Johann Neubeck, Johann Otto, Heinrich Grebe, J. H. Ehle and Jacob Kienle.

On Monday, December 4th, the members met for purposes of organization. After an opening prayer, Pastor T. W. Weyl presented Pastor Friedrich Walz. A Church Council of six members were elected: Johann Otto, Jacob Karch, Friedrich Klund, Friedrich Busch, Heinrich Klund and Georg Gauert. To these men the welfare of the congregation was

entrusted. At the close of the first quarterly statement appears the following:

"Expenses \$91.94; Receipts, \$78.56, or a Deficit of \$13.38, which was wiped out by gifts from Councilmen."

On December 7th, the Church Council met at the home of Jacob Harch. It was decided to hire a hall for the holding of services in the Centre Building, on the north-west corner of Fourth and French Streets, at a fee of \$50 per year. To raise this amount, a collection was appointed for each Sunday at each service and in addition to this the members promised to pay one dollar per quarter-year. It was also decided to call the Rev. Friedrich Walz as Pastor of the newly organized congregation at a yearly salary of \$300, to be paid quarterly. On Sunday, December 9th, Pastor Walz was informed of what had transpired and he officially indicated his acceptance of the call.

The first ten years brought the new congregation many trying moments. According to the financial statement of the first year there was a deficit of \$33.64. The salary of the preacher was rearranged according to the following rules: that after the rent had been paid, the income for each quarter shall be given to the Pastor as salary. The Sexton received \$1.50 for his services during the first year.

Monies from members per quarter averaged \$55, and collections \$27. However, through synodical assistance, amounting at first to \$150 annually and continuing to the close of 1866 Zion Church found it possible to survive.

In the minutes of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania for the year 1849, appears a letter from a congregation in Wilmington asking Synod to receive both the congregation and its pastor. The letter was accompanied by a contribution to the missions fund of Synod of \$3.50. The Synod passed the following resolution:

"That Synod heartily rejoices that a Congregation just recently organized has made a contribution to the Treasury of Synod and that it grants its request for reception into Synod."

In 1849 the Church bought two lots in the churchyard of Old Swedes Church. Twenty-eight persons subscribed to this project. Members of the congregation were to be buried here under certain conditions. In 1857, the restriction was made that only the orphaned, the widowed and the impoverished should be buried here. Later on the number of lots was increased to six.

Pastor Wals served the congregation for a little more than three years until the spring of 1852. He was followed by the Rev. Carl M. Jaeger, who was pastor of Zion for almost

three years, at the end of that time he returned to Reading, Pennsylvania. In 1855 the infant Church faced a serious crisis. Because the financial support had dropped almost to the vanishing point, the pastor's salary could not be paid. This was met by placing dues on a yearly basis. In a subscription list of 1856, totaling \$368, are annual gifts of \$20, \$12, \$10, etc. -- which were large for that time.

Pastor Jaeger's successor was the Rev. Thomas Steck whose pastorate extended from 1856 to 1859. Under him the congregation built its first Church in 1857 on Walnut Street above Sixth. In reading the discussions which preceded, the consensus of opinion was that "it should be as large as the Methodist Church on Seventh Street, only higher." The site, sixty-two feet square, cost \$938.50. The Church, a one-story building erected by Mr. Joseph M. Pyle, cost \$1980. Furniture and equipment cost \$1307.26, making a grand total of \$3287.26. The new church was dedicated on March 8, 1857. To clear the debt, a society of five women was organized but their success was meager.

The first mention of the Sunday School in church records are in those of 1856 when it already numbered 30 children. The church council were the first teachers. Mr. August Robelon taught the children to sing, instructed and led the

choir and played the melodeon (donated in 1857 by Mrs. Kuenmerle and Mrs. Stilz of Philadelphia) -- for all of which he received a yearly salary of \$60. In 1860 the Rev. Wilhelm Hasskarl, who was pastor from 1859-1861, gave instructions in the catechism for the first time in Zion Church. The first constitution of the Sunday School was drawn up in October 1862 -- an elaborate document. In 1863 the Sunday School was set up as an independent organization and a relief society was formed.

Pastor Hasskarl was followed by the Rev. Johann Kucher, who served from 1861 to 1864. At this time the Sunday School had grown to include seventy-five pupils. Since a debt continued to rest upon the congregation, efforts were made to clear it.

"It was decided to send an appeal to the former Pastor of the congregation, Mr. Steck, and his Church Council to permit funds to be raised in their congregation. No answer was received. We tried different Pastors, with the request that they give lectures for the benefit of the Church, but all declined."¹

That the relation between Zion Church and various social groups was cordial is shown by the fact that the Delaware Sangerbund offered to sing at the services in 1861.

¹ Taken from existing church records.

Pastor Kucher resigned his office in 1864 and was succeeded by Pastor Heinrich Weicksel who stayed until 1867. The congregation organized a parochial school, in 1865, but since there was no room in the church, it was decided to sell the church and to purchase Number One School at Sixth and French Streets. In September the church was sold to Bethel A.M.E. Church for \$4,000.

In October 1866, an offer of \$4,500 for the school building was accepted by the City Board of Education and the church moved to the three story structure. The lower story was furnished as a school, the middle story was made into a church at a cost of \$1,856, and the upper story leased to the City at a yearly rental of \$150. While alterations were being made, services were held in the Institute Building for which \$5 per Sunday was paid.

Pastor Weicksel had ability as a teacher and by 1864 the school was attended by ninety-five children, of which fifty-two belonged to their congregation, four were Baptist, three Catholic, two English, one Jewish, and thirty-four unchurched. It had a staff of fourteen teachers and the attendance grew to almost one hundred and thirty pupils in 1867.

Under the Rev. E. B. Kuhn (1867-1870) considerable trouble was caused in the congregation because of the school.

The pastor lacked the ability and the patience to keep school and the congregation the means of hiring a separate principal. Thus the school was detached from the congregation and was eventually discontinued.

With the increasing immigration of Germans to Wilmington, however, the congregation grew, and a semi-annual report of 1868 showed receipts of \$1,265.79. Apparently the Civil War made little impression on the congregation for nowhere is it mentioned in the Minutes.

In 1870 the Rev. Paul Isenschmid, M.D. of Norristown, Pennsylvania, was extended a call at the congregational meeting and he accepted his new duties on January 1, 1871. Meanwhile the congregation had grown and its quarters on the second floor had become too cramped. It, therefore, proceeded to build. The ceiling was removed and the upper story became part of the church. A vaulted ceiling was built, high Gothic windows were set in, and a choir gallery constructed. On September 16, 1873, the church was re-dedicated. The main contract for this work was awarded to Mr. John P. Ernest for \$2,484.95. The carpet, a new melodeon, gas fittings and glass work brought the total to \$2,988.48. After payment, a debt of \$1,500 rested upon the congregation.

Through the efforts of Mr. William J. Finck (who later

became a Pastor) a Young Men's Society with twenty-eight members was formed on October 28, 1878, on September 18, 1879 girls were admitted and the name was changed to the Young People's Society with a membership of forty-eight. Meetings were held on Thursday evening, twice a month -- one for devotional and the other for social purposes. The society in its heyday sponsored a number of entertainments, strawberry festivals and excursions for the benefit of the church, and played an important role in the building of the present church and in introducing English into its services.

Nine years later on March 15, 1888, sixteen women met in the Sunday School at the Pastor's invitation and organized the Frauenverein.

"To work for the welfare of the congregation and the furtherance of the Kingdom of God."

In 1889 it had one hundred and eight members; in 1898, one hundred and twenty-five; and continued to grow until 1914. Largely through the aid of this society the present church was built. It raised \$27,000 over the years, two-thirds of which has gone toward church and parsonage expenses and the remainder toward missions.

In August, 1880, the gloomy gray walls of the church were frescoed in a variety of vivid colors by Mr. Nicholas

Kuschan, a member, at a cost of \$245. November 4th, 1888 was another festive day for the congregation. The reason for rejoicing was indicated by the phrase: "Debt-free," which shone down from the wall in golden letters on a background of green leaves. An old debt, contracted back in 1865, when the building was purchased was wiped out and the congregation was once more free of all debt.

A surprise party was given Dr. Isenschaid on July 31, 1894, his fiftieth birthday, when a fine gold watch was presented to him. Two years later, on January 19, 1896, the pastor celebrated the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of his installation. The Rev. J. J. Kuendig of Reading, who had installed the pastor in 1871, preached at the morning service. Mr. Theodore Fueckel directed the choir. That evening a reunion of catechumens was held. At a service the following evening, Mr. Gotthold Yaeger, President of the Church Council, presented the celebrant with a silver tea service. A dinner in the German Hall closed the celebration.

As the years passed the congregation and the Sunday School grew. Instead of thirty pupils there were now three hundred; although space was opened up wherever possible, still more space was needed and during the next few years there was much discussion about building a new

church. A lot was sought, plans were laid, and expenses estimated. Meanwhile Wilmington was undergoing a rapid expansion and many of the members were moving to other sections, especially to the West Side. On April 5, 1893, Mr. Henry Snyder reported that the substructure of the church was becoming weak. A church to cost \$15,000 was decided upon, an architect secured, and a preliminary committee appointed, with Daniel Maier as Chairman.

Just a week later Mr. Joseph Stoeckle kindly offered a piece of ground on the West Side of Jackson Street, between Fifth and Sixth Street as a site for the new church. His offer was gratefully accepted and arrangements were made to realize a long cherished dream. Plans were drawn up, but bids ran too high. Other plans were drawn up. Then all sorts of objections were voiced. Many members did not want to leave the old site. Many did not want to move so far to the West. Finally in 1895 the decision was reached to return the site as unsuitable and to seek another. This was done and the search for a lot continued.

The matter rested until 1897 when the committee had at last found a suitable site on the northeast corner of Sixth and Jackson Streets. A son of the original donor, Mr. Harry J. Stoeckle, and his mother, Mrs. Johanna S.

Stoeckle, purchased the site for \$4,000 and presented the gift in lieu of the other. Mrs. Anna S. Gam donated the lot to the rear and Mr. Emil Hartmann, a Philadelphia architect, drew up the plans which, after various changes were accepted. The contract for building the church to cost \$16,000 was awarded to David Dangel & Sons.

On January 2, 1898, the cornerstone was laid and work begun. The whole congregation gathered at the place of building and at 2 o'clock the Sunday School and the Church Council met in the old church and then marched in procession to Sixth and Jackson Streets, while the congregation streamed in from all sides. At 3 o'clock the pastor in vestments, after brief devotions, struck the cornerstone thrice, as he said:

"In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. I do now lay the cornerstone of a building ... to be consecrated to the service of Almighty God, according to the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in teaching and office and practice."

Into the cornerstone was placed the History, Constitution and membership lists of the congregation, Young People's Society and Frauenverein, a photograph of the pastor, copies of Church Journals and of local newspapers and a number of coins of various denominations from the Philadelphia mint

bearing the date, 1898. Near the close of the service, Pastor Frederick Doerr of St. Stephen's Church of Wilmington (organized 1888) exhorted the congregation not to cast away that glorious jewel of the German people, our best inheritance from the father; namely piety and religion. That same evening Pastor Wischan, who twenty-five years before had preached at the re-dedication of the French Street church brought an interesting and edifying message.

The building operations proceeded rapidly. While the blasting of rock was a retarding factor, an unusually mild winter made up for it. The following comprised the Building Committee: Peter Abner, Chairman; Leonhard Heiss, Treasurer; George J. Finck, Secretary; Gottlob Seidle, Gotthold Yaeger, Daniel Krapf, Sr., Theodore Fueckel, Friedrich Hilbiber, Henry Snyder, Jacob Snyder, Daniel Maier, Harry Stoeckle, Frank Gradwohl, and Pastor Isenschmid. The building is in the Romanesque style and measures fifty-two feet by eighty-six feet. It cost \$16,999 to erect. From the sale of the French Street Church to Temple Adas Kodesch, a Jewish Synagogue, \$5,500 was realized. A debt of \$5,699 remained.

The appraised value of the church when completely furnished was \$28,000. Among some of the larger gifts in

money were \$2,500 from the Frauenverein, and \$1,000 from the Young People's Society. The pulpit, the altar, the font, the paraments, the sacramental vessels, the offering basins, the lecturn, the pews, the carpet, the hymn boards, the pulpit bible, the altar service book, and the artistic windows were all given as memorials or special gifts.

On June 26, 1898, the day of dedication, the entire congregation met at the old church for a farewell service and then marched under a scorching sun through the streets of the city to the new edifice. Pastor Walz, who fifty years before had founded the congregation, was present at the service of dedication, of which Pastor Isenschmid was the liturgist and Pastor J. J. Euendig the preacher. At the evening service Dr. Adolph Spaeth spoke; on Monday at a Young People's gathering, Pastors William J. Finck and H. Meyer; on Tuesday, at a Community Night Service, Pastors F. Doerr and Carl J. Hirszel; and on Wednesday on Frauenverein Night, Pastors F. Wischan, H. Pohle and H. Offerman.

From 1898 to 1908 the congregation grew steadily. In 1908, however, there was a major crisis. Debts on the church property had to be liquidated, the young people were joining other churches, the Sunday School membership was falling off and growing competition (with English speaking churches) was beginning to endanger the future of Zion. Behind the crisis

lay a failure to meet the needs of the Young People by holding services in the language which they understood best of all -- English.

When finally English was introduced, it was received with joy by the younger element who could now remain faithful to the faith of their fathers.²

In February, 1913, the Rev. S. G. Von Rosse, a seminary student, was called as assistant to Pastor Isenschmid. He accepted, entering upon his duties on June 1, 1913, and serving until June 1, 1921. His

² The language question, it appears, was first broached almost thirty years before. On June 3, 1879, the Young People's Society was permitted to hold an evening service in English and during dedication week in 1898 a service was held in English for those in the city who did not understand German. But it was not until 1912, when membership had decreased alarmingly through defections to English churches, that a majority vote could be mustered for the change.

The most formidable obstacle to making the change was the Constitution which expressly forbade the holding of services in English. On February 2, 1912, in a special meeting, the Constitution was altered to permit the holding of evening services in English. On March 25, a Committee of five was authorized to hold five evening services in English to test the sentiment in favor of the change. One hundred English hymnals were presented by the Young People's Society. The services were held, with seminary students as preachers. They were very successful in attendance and offering, and the Committee was empowered to conduct all evening services in the future in English.

policy was:

"To throw my energy into holding what was to be held of the German element, letting the English growth of the Church proceed step by step as the needs of the Church required",

and so, while due consideration was shown to those who preferred German in the services, English-speaking organizations were soon found¹ in keeping with this sound principle.

An English Sunday School was organized on September 21, 1913. Three years later there were two hundred and fifty pupils in both Sunday Schools, while in 1913 only sixty were enrolled. A German Language School, meeting on Saturdays and with a peak enrollment of seventy-five, was organized in 1913.³

In 1913, the first Girl Scout Troop in America, "Lily of the Valley," was organized at Zion and the following year a Boy Scout troop.

Desiring to further social and inner mission work, thirty women of the church met on October 3, 1913, and organized the Willing Workers Society. It has proved itself worthy of both its name and purpose. It played an important

³ This was the last of the many German language schools organized by German societies and churches.

part in the purchase of the parsonage in 1914 and in cancellation of indebtedness in 1915. Its "Sunshine Work" among the sick and aged is especially praiseworthy.

In February, 1914, the first social group for men, the Lutheran Society of Delaware, was organized. One of its aims was to sponsor the Zion Messenger, the church bulletin. The first issue appeared on Easter Day of 1914, with a picture of the church on the first cover, and contained sixteen pages of reading matter in both languages without advertisements. It was intended "to bind the members ... more closely together by telling them of the work and activity of their Church."

At a meeting of the congregation held April 5, 1914, the resignation of Pastor Paul Isenschmid, to take effect on August 1st, was received and regretfully accepted. Pastor Isenschmid had labored faithfully in Zion for more than forty-three years and was compelled to retire because of failing eyesight. At the same meeting he was made Pastor Emeritus and a monthly pension of \$50 was granted him. On August 1, 1914, Pastor von Bosse succeeded him as pastor.

When on May 31, 1914, the Forty-fifth Anniversary of Pastor Isenschmid's ordination and the first of Pastor von Bosse's was celebrated, the church was declared out of debt.

Early that same year the congregation bought the property at 1016 West Eighth Street for \$4800 to be used as a parsonage, the first to be owned by Zion Church.

On April 1, 1915, the official English liturgy of the General Council was introduced and during 1916 the Constitution was revised and translated into English.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GERMAN BAPTIST CHURCH

In 1855 a German bookmaker came to Wilmington, Delaware with his wife and family. He was Jeremias Grinnell, a religious refugee of Baptist faith, from Marburg, in Hesse Germany who was banished from his birth-place because of his religious beliefs.¹ Mr. Grinnell was a devout Baptist and although he earned his living as a bookbinder, he spent a great deal of his time seeking converts to the Baptist faith.

After opening a small bookbindery in his home at Fourth and Pine Streets, he began to contact German friends in the city. He invited a number of them to his home for a religious meeting which proved so successful that it was decided to continue weekly. In a few months the group increased to the extent that the Grinnell home no longer sufficed as a meeting place. Mr. John Schwager, a brother-in-law of Jeremias Grinnell offered

¹ Jeremias Grinnell was born in Marburg, Germany, January 25, 1809. He was converted to the Baptist faith in 1835 and as a result was the object of much bitter persecution. Until 1848, he was forced to spend much of his time in prison. In 1851 he and his family came to America and devoted himself to spreading the Baptist faith. He laid the foundation for the German Baptist church in Brooklyn, New York before coming to Wilmington. Two of his sons became ministers. One was Pastor of the German Baptist church in Buffalo, and the other, of the church which he founded in Brooklyn, The German Baptist Church of Williamsburg. Richard B. Cook, The Early And Later Delaware Baptists, (Philadelphia, 1880), 107.

the use of his basement for future meetings which the group readily accepted. They met here for a short period until they were able to rent a room in the schoolhouse of the Second Baptist Church of Wilmington which was then located at Fifth and Walnut Streets. In the meantime, Reverend Conrad Fleischmann, Pastor of the First German Church in Philadelphia commuted to Wilmington to serve as minister to the small group.

Meetings were held in the Second Baptist church house until the early part of 1856 when the congregation built a new church and rented the old buildings out. This left the German Baptists without a home and for a time they moved back into the cellar of John Schwager. At the end of nine months, seven persons of the original group had been converted to the Baptist faith and these were baptized in the new church of the Second Baptist congregation at Fourth and French Streets, by Reverend Fleischmann. Two weeks later five others of the group were converted and baptized in the same place.

In late March 1856, the old building of the Second Baptist church was put up for sale. A wealthy member of its congregation, Miss Anne Semple who was also a friend of Jeremias Grimmel and interested in the German Baptists, effected the purchase of the old church for three thousand dollars of which sum she donated a large share.

Shortly prior to the purchase, the Germans had been worshipping in the parlor of the Semple home.²

Until this time a church had not been officially organized, however, on the 17th of April 1856, almost a year after the first meeting, a council was called by Pastor Fleischmann for this purpose. Later in the day with Pastor Fleischmann officiating, and in the presence of several ministers and deacons of Wilmington, the congregation framed a confession of faith for the new church. The name of the new institution was Die evangelische Gemeinde Gläubig getaufter Christen. The following were the original constituents of the First German Baptist church, as it was later called.

Jeremias Grimmell	John Schwager
Margareta Grimmell	Elizabeth Schwager
Edward Austermühl	Peter Braunstein
John Mühlhausen	Susanna Braunstein
Sophia Mühlhausen	Frederick Neutze
Theresa Hirzel	Elizabeth Kaiser

Katherine Braunstein

Shortly before this Jeremias Grimmell was ordained and licensed to preach.³ Until a regular minister could

² Ibid., 111.

³ In 1857 Rev. Grimmell moved to Buffalo, New York where he assisted his son in organizing a German Baptist Church. He died April 4, 1871. Scharf, op. cit., II, 723.

be obtained he was made first pastor of the new church. The first officers which were elected on the same day were: John Schwager, and John Muhlhausen, Deacons; Edward Austermühl, secretary; and John Schwager, David Austermühl, Louis Kaiser and Jacob Karch, trustees.⁴

After the dedication ceremony, the congregation moved into the school house of the church once more and rented the church proper out. This was done in order to lighten the financial burden and get funds for the redecoration of the church. By the next year enough money had been saved by this arrangement to redecorate the church and by April 1857 the congregation moved into the church building. At the same time Miss Anne Semple had the school house torn down and built two houses in its place, one of which she donated to the church as a parsonage.

In the fall of 1856 the church called its first minister, the Reverend F. A. Bauer. Pastor Bauer took over his duties in late 1856 and stayed with the church until June 1858. During his ministry a number of people were baptized and taken into the congregation, however, the church did not

⁴ Three of these men were not members of the church. It was the policy to name some men as trustees who were not part of the congregation.

grow as it should have for, as a result of the indiscreet behavior of the pastor, the faith of the members was somewhat undermined.

The second Pastor J. C. Haselhubn was called in September 23, 1858. During this time the church united with the North American Conference of German Baptists and the Philadelphia Baptist Association. Unlike the last minister, Pastor Haselhubn was extremely popular according to the church records. In February 1862, the Pastor left the church to become editor of the religious periodical of the German Baptists of the North American Conference, Der Sendbote.

During the next year from February 1862 to 1863, the church was without a minister and during this period Brother Edward Austerndhl became acting pastor. On February 21, 1863, the Reverend E. Trumpp answered the German Baptists call for a pastor. In the year between pastors over thirty-five new converts were brought into the congregation and one of the first acts of Pastor Trumpp was to baptize them. Up until that time it was the largest group ever baptized at one time in Wilmington. During his ministry, Pastor Trumpp organized a tract society and numerous tracts were prepared by the members and distributed among the Germans of Wilmington. In the autumn of 1865, the congregation for

the first time had the honor of entertaining the German Conference of North American Baptists. Pastor Trumpp stayed in Wilmington until May 1867. After his departure the church again found itself without a pastor, this time however, it was for a period of nine months. Reverend Rudolph Piepgrass was minister from February 1868 until January 1869. Six months after the departure of Reverend Piepgrass, Reverend J. Fellmann filled the vacancy in August 1869 and remained in Wilmington five years. His ministry reports the church history was a special time of spiritual and physical growth.

From the fall of 1874 to 1875 the church was without a minister and Brother Austeruhl once more became the leader of the congregation. In November 1875 H. Höfflin became pastor. One of his first acts was to baptize a number of people who had been converted in the absence of an ordained minister. At this time the congregation numbered over fifty. In 1880, the church had a period of revivalistic meetings which undoubtedly accounted for the establishment of a Mission Sunday school in south Wilmington. The mission was supported by the church for a number of years afterward. In 1881 the Reverend Höfflin resigned. He was followed by H. W. Geil. Mr. Geil was still attending the German seminary at Rochester, New York, however, it was arranged

that he should preach in Wilmington during the summer and during the winter another theological student, G. H. Gunther would serve as pastor. In September 1882 Reverend Gill was ordained and served the church until August 1888, the longest ministry of any pastor in the history of the church at that time. Reverend Gunther who had since been ordained took over the pastorate and he remained until 1894. His ministry was quite successful, twenty-eight members were added to the congregation and another Mission Sunday school was opened across the Eleventh Street bridge.

In 1889 faults were noticed in the foundation of the church structure which was at the time one hundred and fifteen years old. A meeting was called of the congregation and it was decided to build a new church rather than repair the present building. A committee was appointed to raise money and a building fund was started. J. H. Muhlhausen, the funds chairman, contributed the first dollar. By 1890 \$1255 was contributed. The final task of building the church fell to another, however, as Pastor Gunther left Wilmington in 1894. His successor was A. P. Kihn.

In May 1896 the congregation, now numbering one hundred and five, passed a resolution to build a one-story church. A building committee was appointed which consisted of the

pastor and seven of the congregation. They were: J. Bennett, A. Kern, J. H. Muhlhausen, H. Link, L. Walter, L. Kaiser and H. Ludwig. Plans for the new church were submitted to contractors and the cost of the building was estimated at \$12,000. Since there was only \$308¹/₂ in the building fund it was decided to tear down the old church and build a new one in its place and thus save the expense of purchasing new property. On the fourteenth of June 1896, the last service was held in the old church, with Pastor Miha, the Reverend L. Marks of the Hanover Presbyterian Church, and others officiating at the closing ceremonies. While the new church was being built, the congregation held its services in the Calvary Baptist Church.

The corner stone of the new church was laid on August 16, 1896 by the pastor, A. P. Miha. At this service a temporary floor had to be laid in the unfinished church and chairs brought in for the congregation. The Reverend George Knobloch and Professor Louis Kaiser of the German Theological Seminary at Rochester, New York made speeches in German and the Reverend F. G. Merrill spoke in English.

The dedication services were held on January 17, 1897 in the new church. The Reverend J. C. Grimmell, son of the founder Jeremias Grimmell, officiated at the ceremonies, and preached the dedication sermon in German. In the afternoon a Sunday school rally was held with David Kaiser,

J. A. Schultz and Reverend F. Briggs taking part. The exercises were continued until Wednesday when the Pastor, A. P. Mihm delivered an address.

During the year the church was being constructed, over \$6000 was added to the building fund. This money, partly contributed by the congregation, was, in the most part, solicited from other churches and interested citizens of Wilmington. To finance the balance of the cost, a \$3000 mortgage was taken.

In August 1899 Pastor Mihm resigned. The next pastor was Reverend Karl Roth, however, he only stayed in Wilmington for fourteen months as he had a call to become a missionary among the Germans in Brazil.

H. C. Baum succeeded Karl Roth as pastor. Through Pastor Baum's able leadership, steps were taken to retire the debt on the church. During September 1902 at the conference of German Baptist Churches which was being held at the German Baptist Church in Wilmington, the mortgage was officially burnt.

In 1906 the fiftieth anniversary of the church was celebrated. The membership at this time was approximately one hundred men and women. During the existence of the church, three hundred and thirty-one people were connected

with it; of this number two hundred and twenty-one were converts and received by baptism.

After 1914 the church ceased to grow for like the Lutheran Church the German Baptist Church had its difficulties with language. The young people, no longer able to understand German began to attend English speaking services in other institutions and the congregation began to decrease in the absence of new blood.

It was not until 1930, however, that German ceased to be the language of the German Baptist Church. In 1947 the church moved to Elsmere, Delaware and it is now known as the First Baptist Church of Elsmere.

CHAPTER IX

SACRED HEART, THE GERMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

As early as the 1850's the German community of Wilmington was large enough to attract the attention of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. In 1857, the Bishop of Philadelphia sent a priest, Father Stenzel recently from Germany, to provide church facilities for German Catholics, many of whom, at that time, were living in Wilmington.¹ Rev. Reilly then head of Wilmington's St. Mary's College offered them the use of the college Chapel until such time as a church could be constructed. This arrangement was shortlived for a year later Father Stenzel was transferred and the German Catholics were again without services in their language. Although the number of German Catholics increased considerably during the next few years, it was not until 1873, fifteen years later, after the diocese of Wilmington had been created, that Wilmington's first bishop, the Rev. Pecker, who was of German descent himself, invited the Rev. Wendeline M. Mayer to collect the scattered German Catholics and give

¹ Scharf, II, 727.

them a mission at St. Mary's Church.² Father Wendeline Mayer, Order of St. Benedict, was particularly qualified for the job since he had recently arrived from the Benedictine Monastery at Meten, Germany, at the Mother House of the Benedictine Order in America, St. Vincent's Abbey in Pennsylvania, when he was invited to come to Wilmington by Bishop Becker. The mission was quite successful and Father Mayer saw at once that there was a great field for a German Catholic Church in Wilmington. Not long after, permanent facilities were provided for when Father Mayer and the Germans of his faith established a church to make it possible for Germans who had come to Wilmington and were of that faith to worship in accordance with what had been their custom in the homeland.

Little time was wasted. In August of 1874, a few months after the arrival of Father Mayer, a lot, 236 by 300 feet, was purchased from Father Reilly for \$16,500 (less \$2,500 which Father Reilly donated) as the site of

² Frank R. Zebley, *The Churches of Delaware* (Wilmington 1947), 77. The Rev. Thomas Becker, first Bishop of Wilmington was born near Pittsburgh, Pa. in 1832. His parents were German Lutherans and he was reared in the Presbyterian Church. He studied at the University of Virginia and during this time took instructions in the Catholic religion. At 21 he became a Catholic. His parents then sent him to Rome where he continued his studies and was ordained on July 18, 1859. He was consecrated Bishop of Wilmington, August 23, 1868 and served until 1886.

the new German Church called Deutsche Herz Jesu Kirche.³

Work was begun immediately. The day of ground breaking was one never to be forgotten by German residents of the city, declares an old undated clipping from the Wilmington Star:

"Men of affairs, mechanics, laboring men, all joined with picks and shovels and started the foundation of what was eventually to be one of the finest and richest churches in the city of Wilmington".⁴

Although the cornerstone was laid as early as August 16, 1874, at ceremonies in which the Bishop Becker presided, it was not until the next year that construction had progressed to the point where the building was complete enough to house the activities of the congregation. At this time only the basement was complete enough to hold services in. As plans were made for the edifice during the depression which followed the panic of 1873, Father Mayer and his congregation were at times severely criticized particularly since the church was to cost \$60,000 and to

³ In English, The German Sacred Heart Church. The first trustees were: Engelbert Newmeyer, Frank Schneider, Alfred Schmelzer, Charles Rickta, A. J. Kooch, Harry Esser, Louis Held, Harry Mayer, John Spahn, Max Koblynski, Robert Brinkheide, Joseph Beste.

⁴ This clipping is in the possession of the Pastor of the Sacred Heart Church.

be built in a cornfield at that!

Since the majority of the members were not only devoted Catholics but also skilled craftsmen, building was able to proceed despite the depression. Sacred Heart is unique in this respect for it was built almost entirely by the members of the parish who worked after hours, Saturdays, and holidays, many even giving time from their regular jobs to erect it. Nor were the sacrifices all on the part of the congregation for Father Mayer travelled extensively up and down the Atlantic coast giving lectures to raise money for lumber and supplies so necessary to keep the construction moving along. During this time services were temporarily held in St. Mary's and later on in a former Protestant Church building which the congregation rented.

The basement of the unfinished church held the activities of the parish from August 1875 until September 1883 when the church was dedicated by the Bishop of Wilmington. The services were preceded by a large parade of Catholic societies after which the Bishop celebrated Pontifical High Mass in the new edifice. The Very Rev. Father Gerad preached in German followed by a talk by the Bishop, first in German and then in English. Vesper services were held in the evening.

Ironically enough, the man who was most responsible for the new church was not present, for on August 27, 1881, Father Mayer had died at Cape May, New Jersey. His death came as the result of injuries received when his horse and buggy ran away.⁵ After the death of Father Mayer, Rev. P. Corbinian Gustbuhl became pastor on September 10, 1881. The responsibilities were heavy, for although the church was begun in 1874, it was by no means completed. The tower was still unfinished and the plastering and decorating of the interior still remained to be done. Money was still scarce and interest payments had to be met on the \$40,000 mortgage. The new pastor's skill was equal to that of his predecessor, however, and during his seven years in Wilmington the completion of the church progressed steadily. Money raised by means of a fair was used to pay the \$5,000 bill for the plastering and interior decorations including twenty-eight stained glass windows. Contributions during

⁵ Rev. Wendeline Mayer was born at Neuhausen, Wurtemberg Germany in 1832. He was ordained in May 28, 1857. He wrote a prayer book in English and German, which was approved by the Bishops of the Church. It is interesting to note here a discrepancy in the events concerning his presence in New Jersey at the time of his death. Scharf's History of Delaware claims that he was at Cape May for his health, while a clipping from the Wilmington Sunday Star declares that he was in Cape May by reason of a sick call. Upon his death he was buried in the Benedictine Cemetery at Newark, New Jersey.

this time were numerous, the high marble altar, costing \$1500 was a gift of Joseph Eising, and Hermann and Herbert Lang, his nephews. The late F. A. Drexel of Philadelphia gave one side altar and John and Eva Fuchs of Wilmington, the other. Other additions were made including the Brandywine granite stone steps leading to the church door at a cost of \$2300, the chandelier at \$500, three bells for the steeple worth \$1300 and weighing 2700, 1200 and 750 pounds respectively. Soon after the completion of the parish house, a parochial school was organized and classes met there. The growth of the church was quite rapid during this time, however, and the school soon outgrew the parish home. Evidence attesting this fact is born out by the records which show the number of families belonging to the church as forty in 1881, by 1888 it had increased to over one hundred. The school then moved into the basement of the church but the attendance increased so rapidly that plans had to be formulated for the erecting of a separate school building. In October 1883 the pastor opened an academy for boys to be educated for the priesthood as well as for business, which was given the name of St. Bedes. Rev. Father Mellitus, O.S.B., and Rev. Father Dominic Block, O.S.B., both eminent educators from St. Vincent's in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania took charge and the school was, for a time, well attended by some of the

best known men in Wilmington. The school, although very successful in attendance, was shortlived. It eventually had to be discontinued because of the heavy expense. In a report to his superior in 1886, the pastor mentioned that

"the continuation of St. Bedes High School for Boys is not bright. The people are too poor to support it". 6

Not long after that in 1886 the school was officially discontinued. After seven years of hard but productive labor, Father P. Corbinian Bustabihl was transferred and his place was filled by Rev. Father Ambrose and two years later by Rev. Father Sylvester. Father Sylvester was pastor from 1890 to 1894 and from all evidence of his stay he was a very popular addition to Wilmington as well as to the German community. Like most Germans he was a great lover of music but more than that, an accomplished musician himself. He gathered about him thirty well-known local musicians and formed Wilmington's first and only German orchestra. He directed the church choir as well, and under his supervision it attained a high degree of excellence. Through his efforts a fine organ was built into the church and a fund of over \$6,000 was collected for the proposed new school to be located at Tenth and Monroe streets. Succeeding him in 1894 was Rev. Father

6 excerpt from a letter in the files of the Sacred Heart Church.

Hugo Paff, O.S.B. whose long and successful administration finally saw the completion of the church.

By 1896 the drive for funds to build the parochial school was ended and on April 3 of the same year the corner stone was laid by Bishop John J. Monaghan. The event was celebrated by a procession lead by a band from the church to the new school site. On September 11, 1896 the school was dedicated by Father Hugo. Eight years later the Convent of the Sisters of St. Benedict was erected and dedicated in 1906. During this time the tower of the church was finished at a cost of \$12,000, a metal ceiling was installed in the auditorium and paintings were purchased for the sanctuary. Church windows, were ordered which were painted by one of the best known art firms in Innsbruck, Tyrol, Switzerland, and installed at a cost of \$5,000.

Father Hugo was one of the best known German Americans. He was loved and respected by Catholic and Protestant alike. A conscientious priest, he was also a liberal in his views concerning general conduct in public affairs. During the local option contest in 1910, he was a strong and outspoken opponent of prohibition. His public debates with a dry colleague of his raised widespread comment throughout

Wilmington.⁷ In 1911 during his administration as pastor, the debt on the church was finally retired and a great celebration was held commemorating the seventeenth anniversary of Father Hugo's pastorate and the burning of the mortgage.

Near the close of the century a memorial to the founder and first pastor Father Wendeline Mayers was constructed in the basement of the church under the tower in the form of a vault and a chapel.⁸ His body was removed from the Benedictine Cemetery in Newark, New Jersey and was placed in the vault. The second interment was a public affair and all the Catholic Societies in the city took part in what is supposed to be the greatest funeral procession ever held in Wilmington. Buried with Father Wendelin Mayer are scores of crutches and braces donated by crippled persons

⁷ It is noteworthy that, in these local option contests which were held in this vicinity at this time, referendums which as the name implies were local in character and that the decision was left to the voter whether or not liquor and beer licenses should be extended. The Germans rarely entered politics as a united group, however, this seems to be the one instance in Wilmington politics where they presented a united front. All German organizations which made up the German American Alliance campaigned against the no license provision.

⁸ See page five of this chapter.

who were, it is claimed, cured by his intercessory prayers.⁹

The German Catholic Church not only provided its members

⁹ See page 77 Zebley's History of Delaware Churches. In the Journal Every Evening of December 19, 1938 there appeared an article on Father Wendeline Mayer. The following is an abstract:

Sacred Heart Church reopens shrine of the Founder.

Father Wendeline's canonization may follow with proof of miracles sought. During the forty years Father Wendeline's shrine was open to the public, scores of crutches and other means of aid to the incapacitated were left there by persons aided through the intercession of Father Wendeline. Father Innocent, pastor, said that evidence of miracles at the shrine will be carefully observed and recorded in the future. As another step in Father Wendeline's candidacy for canonization, a detailed biography will be prepared ...

On December 20, 1938 the following editorial appeared in the Wilmington Morning News:

Inauguration of a movement which may lead to the canonizing of Reverend Wendeline Mayer, founder of Sacred Heart Church, directs attention to the faithful service of a pastor whose chief interest obviously was the well being of others. The record of his service here shows extensive manifestations of benefactions attributed to his teachings and ministrations.

It was sixty-four years ago that Sacred Heart Church was established by Father Wendeline. The purpose was to provide the church facilities for German Catholics many of whom were living in Wilmington. This made it possible for Germans who had come to Wilmington and who were of that faith, to worship in accordance with what had been their custom in the homeland, and in their own language. The satisfaction at being able to do that was apparent.

The foundation thus laid by Father Wendeline has been fruitful these many years. The program he mapped out not only served its original purpose well but also resulted in a church which ever since had exerted great influence in the community. Father Wendeline was a worthy pioneer. He built a monument which continues to live and honor his memory.

with religious services but social as well. It was the scene of many of the numerous social functions of the German American Community in Wilmington and was the home of two of a long list of German Societies which flourished before the First World War. The first of these was the St. Benediktus Unterstuetzungs Verein, founded in 1875, a beneficial society with a membership of one hundred and twenty-seven at one time. The second the Father W. M. Mayer Council No. 256 of the Catholic Benevolent League founded in 1889 which at its peak in 1908 had forty-seven members. After the first World War the German characteristics gradually disappeared and twenty years ago there were few if any traces left as the German language was dropped from the services.

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