Coequal Heirs

The Civil War, Memory, and German-American Identity, 1861-1914

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Upon the outbreak of the American Civil War, German-Americans took up arms in defense of their adopted country. The German-American community in 1861 was incredibly diverse, and notions of shared German identity were secondary to religious, regional, and other divisions. Although widely respected by Anglo-Americans because of a perception that they were well-suited for assimilation and enjoyed a generally high level of education and economic success, German-Americans were also marginalized by overriding nativist tendencies. In response to these challenges, German-American Civil War veterans constructed the image of a "freedom-loving German." Mythologized as firm abolitionists and unwavering supporters of the Republican Party, this model took hold among many Germans as an ethnic identifier following the Civil War. This thesis examines the development of the freedom-loving German through experience of the 20th New York Infantry Regiment. After focusing on the stakes German-American soldiers attached to their service at the outset of the war, this thesis traces the development of a pluralistic brand of patriotism which German-Americans developed during the Gilded Age. This brand of patriotism was in constant dialogue with an emerging patriotic culture among all Americans, and was responsive to changes within the German-American community in the latter half of the nineteenth century. As Civil War veterans began to die off at a rapid rate, the National German-American Alliance took upon itself the responsibility of speaking for German America, and framed all of German-American history in terms which were developed by German-American Civil War veterans.

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I dinks I'll go a fitin – outspoke der Breitemann,
It's eighdeen hoonderd fordy eight since I kits swordt in hand;
Dese fourdeen years mit Hecker all roostin I haf been,
Boot now I kicks der Teufel oop and goes for sailin in

- Charles Godfrey Leland, *Hans Breitmann's Ballads*[1]

When German-Americans took up arms in defense of the Union during the American Civil War, they fully understood that their performance in battle and commitment to the war effort would have far-reaching repercussions for the entire German-American community. By the time of the Confederacy's capitulation in 1865, at least 175,000 – a number wholly disproportionate to the number of German-speakers in the North – had donned blue uniforms.[2] Yet the war presented a challenge to the German-Americans who sought to interpret and present the wartime accomplishments of their ethnic group. While the combat record of German-Americans led them to proudly claim credit for saving St. Louis from Confederate control in the opening days of the war, for instance, the blame which German soldiers shouldered for the Federal defeat at Chancellorsville filled German-American leaders and newspapers with dismay.[3]

Historians of German America are quick to emphasize the dizzying diversity of its various parts. The jumble of religious, dialectic, and social constituencies which made up the German community in the United States never lent itself to simple descriptions or

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[1] Charles Godfrey Leland, *Hans Breitmann's Ballads* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1897), 31. The original edition of Leland's work was published in 1871. In Major Thomas W. Hyde's memoirs, he begins his description of the Battle of White Oak Swamp, in which the German-American 20th New York Infantry routed, with another verse from Leland. Breitmann is a fictional composite of many 19th Century German-American stereotypes, and his attitude towards fighting in the Civil War features prominently. Two notes on the quote: "Hecker" refers to Friedrich Hecker, a prominent Forty-Eighter. "Teufel" is the German word for devil.

[2] Dean B. Mahin, *The Blessed Place of Freedom: Europeans in Civil War America* (Washington: Brassey's Press, 2002), 15. Mahin's estimate is on the lower end of estimates of German participation. For more estimates, see Don Heinrich Tolzmann, *The German-American Experience* (New York: Humanity Books, 2000), 208-209.

[3] For German-American reaction to the military campaign for St. Louis in 1861, see Stephen D. Engle, *Yankee Dutchman: The Life of Franz Sigel* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1993), 49-79. For the effect of Chancellorsville on the Northern German-American community, see Christian Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans: Nativism, Ethnicity, and Civil War Memory* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007).

representations. That did not, however, prevent certain groups or individuals from claiming to be representatives of all German-speaking Americans. One group in particular achieved a measure of success in this respect, thanks in no small part to the prominent role they played in the Civil War.

The failed revolutions of 1848 sent a string of idealists and firebrands into exile. A good many of them landed in the United States, where they used their rhetorical and journalistic talents to promote the values for which they had taken up arms in the Old World.[4] The Forty-Eighters, although lacking in ideological unity, did find common ground on the issues of free soil, free labor, and abolition, and tied themselves to the emerging Republican Party. Forty-Eighters' ideas ranged from the unapologetic socialism of Karl Heinzen to the liberal republicanism of Carl Schurz and the uncompromising individualism of Franz Sigel, but all were unified on the great conflicts which divided American society in the years preceding the Civil War. Their willingness to take up arms for their convictions allowed Forty-Eighters to craft the image of, in Allison Clark Efford's words, a "freedom-loving German."[5]

Efford argues that "this idea was mythic because its significance lay not in Republican vote tallies or Union army enlistments, but in its success as a form of ethnic self-identification." I contend that the freedom-loving German could only maintain his relevance as an ethnic identifier precisely *because* of the constant attention German-American veterans drew to their military service in the postwar era. In her book, Efford does not deeply engage the wartime experience of German-Americans. This omission is problematic because, as Stuart McConnell put it, "the Civil War experience hung over the postwar North in a thousand different ways,

[4] Bruce Levine, *The Spirit of 1848: German Immigrants, Labor Conflict, and the Coming of the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 83-110.
[5] Allison Clark Efford, *German Immigrants, Race, and Citizenship in the Civil War Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 54.

which the habitual separation of Civil War scholarship from Gilded Age scholarship has served only to obscure."[6] German-American participation in the American Civil War did not become a footnote which the postwar German-American community could point to as a historical tidbit. German-American veterans actively engaged with the past and made it a living part of their identity as German-Americans.

German-American soldiers married two congruent but separate nineteenth century trends. The first was a desire for a pluralistic society, articulated by immigrant leaders such as Carl Schurz, in which new waves of European immigrants could retain peculiar characteristics while maintaining a cultural exchange with their new neighbors.[7] Using this model, immigrant groups could be simultaneously grounded in American and ethnic culture. For a group such as German-Americans, who generally took great pride in the artistic, military, and scientific achievements of their countrymen, this model was extremely appealing. It also provided a layer of insulation against other ethnic groups when notions of propriety came into conflict, as they did during the ongoing struggle of German-American communities against evangelical temperance.[8]

The second trend with which German-American Civil War veterans engaged was the emerging patriotic culture of the latter half of the nineteenth century. The Civil War wrought fundamental changes in the relationship of the citizen to the federal government. One of the most visible indicators of these changes was the emergence of societies – most prominently the Grand Army of the Republic – which developed patriotic discourse based on allegiance to the nation that is still used today.[9] German-American Civil War veterans embraced the rhetoric and

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[6] Stuart McConnell, *Glorious Contentment: The Grand Army of the Republic, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), XI-XII.
[7] Efford, 53-55
[8] Efford, 46
[9] Stuart McConnell, "Reading the Flag: A Reconsideration of the Patriotic Cults of the 1890s," in *Bonds of Affection: Americans Define their Patriotism*, ed. John Bodnar (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 102-119.

symbols of their non-German comrades, but did so in a way which trumpeted German-American cultural attributes and values.

Christian Keller identified one major stumbling block for German-Americans in the Civil War era. Keller's masterful work on the experience of the heavily German XI Corps at the Battle of Chancellorsville highlights the profound alienation the German community felt after the XI Corps was blamed for the Union defeat.[10] I disagree, however, with Keller's ultimate conclusion that the shock of nativism during the war caused the German-American community to "retreat unto itself and reinforce its own separate identity."[11] Acknowledging the separation between the broader American public sphere and the collection of German-language newspapers, meeting places, and activities which constituted the German public sphere, I argue that postwar commemoration became a way through which German-Americans engaged with American society.

Postwar commemoration did not become a process through which German-Americans "retreated" unto themselves. Instead, such ceremonies allowed them to bring German identity into prominent public and national spaces. By leveraging the patriotic capital which Civil War veterans provided, German-Americans were able to leave cultural markers beyond the boundaries of ethnic enclaves, and acts of commemoration afforded them opportunities to interact with Americans from other ethnic backgrounds. The continued, active process of remembering the Civil War was not an assimilative one, but it did legitimize the place of German speakers in American society, and provided additional opportunities to perpetuate the model of the freedom-loving German to non-German Americans.

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[10] Keller, 76-168
[11] Keller, 167

The first chapter of this thesis analyzes the wartime experience of the 20th New York Volunteer Infantry. Grounding their experience in the New York City community of *Kleindeutschland*, it seeks to discover how the German-American population reacted to the outbreak of war in 1861, and what they thought the stakes of their participation were. The 20th New York is particularly interesting because it drew its members from the *Turnvereine* of New York City and its environs. The Turners counted among their number a collection of Forty-Eighters, and were known for their liberal Republican bent. A tiny political minority in a German community that overwhelmingly voted for Democrats, the Turners were an unlikely symbol of German America, but they were embraced by Kleindeutschland for their service. Their experiences during the war were mixed, and overall fairly unremarkable. A number of prominent incidents stand out, however. Their meritorious conduct at the Battle of Antietam contrasted sharply with their ungraceful flight at the Battle of White Oak Swamp, and the mutiny of two hundred of its members on the eve of the Battle of Salem Church tarnished the legacy of the regiment. The particulars of their service, however, came to matter far less than the commitment they made to the federal government in its time of need.

The process of interpreting and commemorating this mixed record of service is the subject of chapter two. German-American veterans, like all others, erected monuments, held reunions, participated in parades, and joined veterans' organizations after they returned to civilian life. This chapter seeks to determine how a group of soldiers with a dubious wartime record could recast themselves as symbols of German commitment to American values and symbols, and to identify how Republican German-American war veterans, a small subset of the German-American population in the Gilded Age, became the face of German America. Their influence, I contend, was noticeable both within the German language public sphere and in

American society generally. German-Americans' commemorations of the Civil War expanded their physical and metaphorical space in the broader public sphere, and reinforced prewar arguments for pluralism.

The final chapter of this thesis looks at the period after the establishment of the National German-American Alliance in 1901. The National German-American Alliance claimed for itself the responsibility of representing all German-Americans, although it too could not adequately represent the diversity of German speakers in the United States.[12] I maintain that the National German-American Alliance adopted the model of the freedom-loving German not only as it was embodied in prominent politicians and generals such as Carl Schurz and Franz Sigel, but also as it was articulated and developed by German-American veterans in the course of postwar commemoration. As Civil War veterans began to die off, the National German-American Alliance stepped into the role of leading German-American patriotic expression within an explicitly pluralistic framework that was designed to extend beyond the German-speaking community and to reinforce the idea of the freedom-loving German as a common ethnic identifier within it. The National German-American Alliance was short-lived; anti-German sentiment during the First World War spelled its doom, and quashed German-American expressions of culture generally.[13] I argue, however, that for the short life of the NGAA, its patriotic discourse was primarily informed by the model which Civil War veterans had constructed.

The story of German-American commemoration of the American Civil War is not one of assimilation. The patriotic language which veterans used served to reinforce each side of the hyphen equally, simultaneously raising German-Americans' awareness of Germanness and

[12] Charles T. Johnson, *Culture at Twilight: The National German-American Alliance, 1901-1918* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 16-17.
[13] Johnson, 133-162

Americanness. Forty-Eighter Friedrich Kapp would argue in 1884 that "German or American, the German-American is only a transitional figure, which disappears more with every generation."[14] Kapp, however, was in the minority in this view. German-American activities in the postwar period had no difficulty in reinforcing German-Americanness as an entirely valid and potentially permanent identity within a pluralistic society. The strength of this claim lay in the image of the freedom-loving German which Civil War veterans embodied.

[14] Friedrich Kapp, *Die Deutschen im Staate New York während des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts* (New York: E. Steiger & Co, 1884), 229.

Chapter 1

Bully Dutchmen: New York's Germans in the Civil War

On April 18, 1859, an unimposing, bespectacled man stepped before a group of prominent citizens in Boston to deliver a keynote address. The official occasion for the speech was the commemoration of Thomas Jefferson's birthday; the actual reason for Carl Schurz's appearance was the ongoing debate surrounding an amendment to the Massachusetts Constitution which would prohibit naturalized citizens from voting for two years after attaining citizenship. After stating his intention to offer "tribute to Americanism," Schurz's rhetorical and intellectual stature became clear. "I, born in a foreign land, pay my tribute to Americanism? Yes, for to me," explained Schurz, "the word Americanism, *true* Americanism, comprehends the noblest ideas which ever swelled the human heart."[15] The German's vision of Americanism stood in opposition to that of the nativist Know-Nothings, who had pushed the Two Years Amendment through the state legislature. Schurz's vision of the United States, shared by "the thousands of thinking men in the old world," was not one in which immigration was restricted, or where immigrants from different ethnic backgrounds were forced to assimilate into the leading culture.[16] The North American continent was not a "privilege confined to one nationality alone… every people, every creed, every class of society [contributes] its share to that wonderful mixture out of which is to grow the great nation of the new world." While acknowledging that Anglo-Saxon culture will dominate this mosaic, Schurz emphasized the importance of new elements, which "modify each other, and their peculiar characteristics are to be blended together by the all-assimilating power of freedom."[17] In his own published version of the speech, the

[15] Carl Schurz, *Speeches of Carl Schurz* (Philadelphia: JB Lippencott & Co, 1865), 52.
[16] Schurz, 54
[17] Schurz, 57

speaker indicated that his words were warmly received. In a letter to his wife, whom he had left back in his hometown of Watertown, Wisconsin, Schurz reported confidently that he "spoke like a god."[18]

The immigrant remained so proud of the address that he would discuss it at length in his memoirs, and for good reason.[19] The multicultural vision of citizenship presented by Schurz in the True Americanism speech was presented at a time in which citizenship itself – the rights it carried with it, the people to whom it could extend, its permanence – was yet to be defined.[20] Unsurprisingly, Carl Schurz's speech did not represent the views of all Americans, all immigrants, or even all Germans. His perspective stemmed from his upbringing in a time of ideological crisis in the Rhineland, where he was born in 1829.[21] He spent his youth in relative comfort. His father, while not well educated, was a highly intellectual man, and sought to provide his son with opportunities to formally study. The younger Schurz ended up at the University of Bonn, where he picked up radical liberal ideas from his classmates, participated in political agitation, and took up arms after the outbreak of revolution in 1848.[22]

A brutal crackdown led by the Prussian government squelched the revolution in the Rhineland and southern German states, and Schurz almost lost his life. Schurz's dramatic escape from the encircled city of Rastatt and certain execution at the hands of the Prussian army via a sewer tunnel brought him some renown, however. His image was only magnified when he returned to Germany from exile in France and Switzerland to free his imprisoned mentor, Professor Gottfried Kinkel. With the help of associates within Prussia, Schurz journeyed to

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[18] Schurz quoted in Hans L. Trefousse, *Carl Schurz: A Biography* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998), 74.
[19] Carl Schurz, *The Reminiscences of Carl Schurz*. Vol II. (New York: The McClure Company, 1907), 120-126.
[20] Christian Samito, *Becoming American Under Fire: Irish Americans, African Americans, and the Politics of Citizenship During the Civil War Era* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 13-14.
[21] Trefousse, 3
[22] Trefousse, 11-26

Berlin under a false name. Once in the capital, he managed to bribe a guard in the formidable Spandau Prison to aid in Kinkel's escape. On the night of November 6, 1850, Kinkel slipped down a rope to the waiting Schurz, who rode from safe house to safe house until they reached the Baltic Sea and the ship *Kleine Anna*, which carried them away from pursuing authorities and to exile in England.[23]

When Schurz left England for North America in 1852, he was merely one among thousands of refugees who fled to the United States from the German states after the failure of the 1848 revolutions. They represented a wide range of ideologies, ranging from the liberal republicanism of Schurz to the uncompromising socialism of August Willich and Carl Heinzen. The 1848 Revolution had been carried out by a coalition whose interests included both "bourgeois sentiments of liberal nationalism" – meaning civil liberty (*bürgerliche Freiheit*) and economic freedom – and dedication to the "more radical force, the industrial proletariat."[24] The Forty-Eighters did find common ground in several principles, however. Chief amongst these was "liberty," in all of its varied and ambiguous forms, as well as a commitment to a democratic government and a united Germany. Although they failed, they would bring these aspirations with them to the United States.

Many Forty-Eighters, by virtue of their history of political involvement and generally high level of education, threw themselves into the public life of their adopted country. After settling in Wisconsin, Carl Schurz became a member in the blossoming Republican Party, and quickly gained recognition as one of its foremost orators, addressing audiences in both English and German during the major campaigns of the 1850s. When Schurz involved himself in American politics, he applied many of the principles he embraced in Germany to realities in his

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[23] Trefousse, 32-34

[24] Carl J. Friedrich, "The European Background," in *The Forty-Eighters: Political Refugees of the German Revolution of 1848*, ed. A.E. Zucker (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 9.

new country; his defense of the voting franchise in Massachusetts, for example, mirrored the struggle for expanded voting rights in Europe.

Schurz's positions were moderate compared to those of other Forty-Eighters, a fact which made him palatable to American society beyond its German-speaking enclaves. Schurz came to embody what Allison Clark Efford calls the "freedom-loving German."[25] These Germans stood in favor of free labor and abolition, and in opposition to government regulation and temperance. Oftentimes they were accused of being anti-Catholic – Schurz himself, despite being born a Catholic, was occasionally labeled as such – although their opposition was less to Catholicism specifically and more to clericalism generally, which brought them into conflict with devout Lutheran Germans as well.[26] In the Midwest, however, these Germans were embraced by the Republicans. Schurz was credited by the Republican leadership as a key asset in winning the German vote, and quickly rose in the party ranks.[27]

New York's Germans in the Antebellum Period

In the years preceding the American Civil War, New York City had firmly established its place as the nation's largest city and economic center. "This city is one great kaleidoscope in perpetual motion," recorded one South Carolinian observer in 1852.[28] The whizzing scenes in this city were created not only by Americans of English extraction, but also by a motely "congress of nations – the native Chinaman, the Choctaw, the whisky-drinking Celt, the bully

[25] Allison Clark Efford, *German Immigrants, Race, and Citizenship in the Civil War Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 54.
[26] Efford, 66-68
[27] Trefousse, 70
[28] William Bobo, *Glimpses of New York City, By a South Carolinian Who Had Nothing Else to Do* (Charleston: J.J. McCarter Press, 1852), 11.

Dutchman, the Jew, the frisky Frenchman,"[29] all of whom established an identity for themselves in the grand metropolis.

Images of antebellum New York are often saturated with mobs of Irishmen, who served as the most important ethnic power base in municipal politics for decades.[30] Yet by 1860, New York's "Dutch," as nineteenth century Germans were often called, had developed a firmly entrenched ethnic community in the Lower East Side neighborhood of *Kleindeutschland*, or Little Germany. Kleindeutschland was the center of German-American life in the city that boasted the third largest German-speaking population in the world, after Berlin and Vienna.[31] Size did not necessarily translate to power or visibility in the city at large, however. Barriers of ideology and language kept most German-American New Yorkers outside of mainstream life.

Barriers of ideology and language also divided neighbors inside of Kleindeutschland. The patchwork of sub-communities in Kleindeutschland reflected in no small way the national divisions of the yet-to-be-united German states.[32] In the vast majority of cases, Bavarians stayed with Bavarians, Badeners with Badeners, and so on. Sometimes even Old World regional differences persisted across the Atlantic. Prussians from the Rhineland, for instance, would seldom be found living with those from Brandenburg. Usually these regional differences corresponded with religious divisions, but sectarian rivalries created yet another barrier when that was not the case.[33]

National and religious divisions may have driven German New Yorkers apart, but they did find ways to bring themselves together. German-Americans formed associations through aid

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[29] Bobo, 137
[30] Anthony Gronowicz, *Race and Class Politics in New York City Before the Civil War* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 110-111.
[31] Stanley Nadel, *Little Germany: Ethnicity, Religion, and Class in New York City, 1845-80* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 1.
[32] Nadel, 37-42
[33] Frederick Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974), 33-34.

societies, singing groups, and more. One of the most influential in New York City was the Turner Society. Turner Societies, or *Turnvereine*, were founded in Germany by the nationalist Friedrich Ludwig Jahn in the early nineteenth century, and by 1824 Turners expanded to the United States.[34] Officially the Turnvereine were gymnastics organizations that sought to build a healthy mind and body through athletic exercises and intellectual stimulation. In practice, however, they became centers of social organization and political agitation as well as mere gymnastic centers.[35] Imbued with the revolutionary spirit of 1848, they became staunch supporters of the Republican Party, abolition, and free labor. In 1860, the Turners set themselves apart from the rest of Kleindeutschland in organizing rallies for President Lincoln's presidential campaign. As part of this effort, Carl Schurz delivered a speech at New York's Cooper Union in 1860, in which, echoing the national Republican Party platform, he scathingly attacked Stephen Douglas, urged support for free-labor candidates, and denounced the "slave power" that led South Carolina to secede less than four months later.[36] The audience embraced his message enthusiastically; Schurz later wrote to his wife, with characteristic immodesty, "my triumph in New York is colossal… the rejoicing over it is tremendous."[37]

The Turners and their views were decidedly in the minority among the residents of Kleindeutschland, but they enjoyed a high degree of prominence outside of the German-speaking world as models of German identity.[38] This was particularly true in New York City, where the Turners organized public spectacles whose scope and visibility led non-German New Yorkers to

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[34] Richard O'Connor, *The German Americans: An Informal History* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1968), 283-286.
[35] Robert Knight Barney, "Forty-Eighters and the Rise of the Turnverein Movement in America," in *Ethnicity and Sport in North American History and Culture*, ed. George Eisen and David K. Wiggins (Westport: Praeger, 1994), 21-22.
[36] "Die Anklage-Akte Gegen Stephen A. Douglas: Rede von Carl Schurz." *New Yorker Demokrat*, n.d.
[37] Schurz to Maragarethe Schurz, in *The Intimate Letters of Carl Schurz, 1841-1869*. Ed and trans by Joseph Schafer (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1928), 226.
[38] Don Heinrich Tolzmann, *The German-American Experience* (New York: Humanity Books, 2000), 190.

project their image onto all German speakers.[39] This prominent place in the broader public sphere would put the Turners in an ideal position to continue to influence the image of German-Americans during the impending Civil War and beyond. Yet the Turners embraced symbols of their own. Carl Schurz was one of these. Another was a nationally-prominent Republican and Kleindeutschlander, Friedrich Kapp.

Kapp was born in the Rhenish Prussian city of Hamm in 1824, into a highly intellectual family.[40] Although pessimistic about the odds facing the 1848 revolutions, the Marx-influenced revolutionary decided to take part in the Frankfurt Congress.[41] When his fears of the revolution's failure proved true, he, like Schurz, fled to France, then to Switzerland, and eventually to the United States. Unlike Schurz, however, he initially maintained a dim view of his adopted country. While an enthusiastic Schurz dubbed America "humanity when it is free," Kapp was repulsed by the atmosphere of "the war of all against all," and lamented that "whoever does not stay at the top is mercilessly trampled underfoot." [42] Above all, he felt hindered by "ignorance of the languages and the customs of this land, an abundance of unfamiliar conceptions and impressions and the awkwardness of new relationships."

Kapp nevertheless steeled himself against these daunting conditions and, although not himself a Turner, maintained close relationships with them and became one of Kleindeutschland's leading citizens. He spent most of the 1850s as a lawyer and journalist who aggressively fought back against the rising tide of nativism, which peaked in New York in that

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[39] Edward K. Spann, *Gotham at War: New York City, 1860-1865* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2002), 110.
[40] Edith Lenel, *Friedrich Kapp, 1824-1884: Ein Lebensbild aus den Deutschen und den Nordamerikanischen Einheitskämpfen* (Leipzig: JC Heinrichs, 1935), 27.
[41] Lenel, 52-62
[42] Carl Schurz, *Der Erste Eindruck des Neuen Landes // The First Impression of the New Country* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 25. Kapp quoted in Lenel, 73.

decade.[43] Appalled by slavery, he also vehemently attacked the peculiar institution, and exhorted his fellow immigrants to do the same. In 1856, after determining that the Republican Party had distanced itself enough from Know-Nothingism to warrant his support, Kapp became part of the first group of German-Americans to urge his countrymen's support of the emerging party.[44] Consolidating his position in New York, he established bridges outside of Kleindeutschland and became one of the few non-Anglo New Yorkers to take a leading role in the New York Historical Society, where he emphasized the role of immigrants in United States history.[45] He was most firmly rooted among German-speakers, however. As Carl Schurz described Kapp's unique position, "whatever scheme was afoot among Germans, he was consulted. It mattered not whether it was among the downtown bankers, or the uptown journeymen, whatever was planned required his signature to make it effective."[46] Kapp was privately disappointed with the selection of Lincoln as the Republican candidate in 1860, preferring former New York Governor William Seward. Publicly, however, Kapp devoted himself to Lincoln's election.[47]

Historians have debunked the "ethnocultural thesis," which holds that German-Americans were instrumental in the election of 1860, and that their near-universal support of Abraham Lincoln turned the tide of the election.[48] This thesis was a postwar construct, which allowed German-Americans to claim that they had supported Lincoln, abolition, and free labor

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[43] Wolfgang Hinners, *Exil und Rückkehr: Friedrich Kapp in Amerika und Deutschland, 1824-1884* (Stuttgart: Verlag Hans Dieter-Heinz/Akademischer Verlag Stuttgart, 1987), 90.
[44] Tolzmann, 205
[45] Hinners, 116
[46] Schurz quoted in Hinners, 111
[47] Hinners, 144-152
[48] There is (or was) a lively debate on this topic, starting with Frederick Luebke, *Ethnic Voters and the Election of Lincoln* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971), and continued through publications such as Walter D. Kamphoefner, "German-Americans and Civil War Politics: A Reconsideration of the Ethnocultural Thesis," *Civil War History*. 37 no. 3, September 1991, 232-246. Luebke and Kamphoefner argue, and nearly every recent scholar on 19th century German America agrees, that the German-American community was too fractured on a national level to allow for much ideological consistency, and that because of Know-Nothing and temperance elements in the Republican Party, most German-Americans were unable to embrace them. In places like Illinois, where Carl Schurz was employed heavily as a stump speaker, Germans did vote Republican. The New York German vote was overwhelmingly Democratic.

without qualification. New York City's Germans certainly did not proffer universal support for the Republicans in 1860; in spite of the efforts of Schurz, Kapp, and the Turners, Kleindeutschlanders voted against Lincoln by a two-to-one margin.[49] Yet the New York Turners could legitimately claim to have supported Republicans both in sentiment and at the ballot box. Later, this would allow them to cast themselves as archetypal freedom-loving Germans, and to continue their assumed role as spokesmen for German America.

Taking Up Arms

When news of the bombardment of Fort Sumter reached Gotham, all of New York was swept up in feverish excitement, which many observers noted with surprise.[50] Democrats had long exploited the issue of Whig and, later, Republican support for temperance to maintain support in Kleindeutschland. They used the same issue to maintain support among the larger New York Irish community, and strengthened their power base by appealing to a general Irish opposition to abolition.[51] Among elites, commercial ties to the South's cotton economy led to doubts that New York would be committed to bringing the seceded states back into the Union by force. Yet when Confederate soldiers fired on Federal forces, New York City mobilized for war.

In many ways, the recruits who formed the 20th New York Volunteer Infantry were typical of the hundreds of thousands of Northern men who flocked to the colors in the spring of 1861. The average recruit of the 20th New York Volunteer Infantry was twenty-five years of age upon enlistment.[52] 1,130 of the 1,261 men who would eventually serve in the regiment were

[49] Nadel, 136
[50] Ernest A. McKay, *The Civil War and New York City* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 60.
[51] Gronowicz, 135
[52] *Annual Report of the Adjutant-General of the State of New York for the Year 1899* (Albany: James B. Lyon, State Printer, 1900). Digitized by NY State Library. Unfortunately, the digitization's resolution was too low for any PDF software to allow it to copy and paste accurately, and I therefore had to type all of the information into an excel

recorded as having enlisted in New York City, although large numbers were recruited from Williamsburg, Brooklyn, and Poughkeepsie.[53] The 20th New York was also unique in several respects. The nucleus of the 20th New York was the various New York City Turner Societies, which gave the unit its nickname, the "Turner Rifles." On April 29, 1861, the regiment was mustered into New York service. It was transferred to federal service on May 6 – some companies for two years and others for three months, whose terms were subsequently extended to two years – and began its training in earnest.

Swept up in the general patriotic fervor that gripped New York upon the outbreak of the Civil War, it comes as little surprise that so many Turners or friends of Turners were willing to enlist. The regiment, however, completed its recruitment in just two weeks, making it one of the faster regiments to be formed, even by the standards of the spring of 1861.[54] It did have the benefit of using the existing Turner infrastructure to draw in interested recruits and to secure experienced officers to fill its ranks, but given the hyper-localized nature of army recruitment during the war, they were far from the only unit to enjoy those advantages. The German-Americans of the 20th New York were also hindered by a number of common problems, such as a lack of uniforms and supplies, which further delayed their entry into active service.[55] Political and ethnic motivations, however, helped the new soldiers to overcome these obstacles. Friedrich

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spreadsheet in order to compile and sort the information on the soldiers in the regiment. I take full responsibility for any errors in the roster that may appear.

[53] The exact breakdown of recruitment location is likely impossible to determine. All recruits who enlisted as replacements after the regiment left New York state are recorded as having enlisted in New York City, which skews the numbers. However, Phisterer's *New York in the War of the Rebellion* and *The Union Army: A History of Military Affairs in the Loyal States* both point to much greater geographic diversity than is reflected in the *Annual Report of the Adjutant-General*. Part of this may be due to the regiment's muster-in in New York creating confusion as to the actual location of enlistment. Additionally, as Spann indicates (pg 22), New York rapidly evolved into a significant center of recruitment, and enlistees often came there from elsewhere in New York and New Jersey to sign up. If Turners came to New York City from elsewhere before formally enlisting, they would misleadingly (but correctly) be recorded as having enlisted in the city.

[54] Robert A. Selig, "I Enlisted on the First Day: German-Americans and the American Civil War, 1861-1865," *German Life.* 6 no. 3 November 1999: 42-48

[55] "Municipal War Movements: The Twentieth Regiment, United Turner Rifles," *New York Herald*, June 13, 1861.

Kapp, for instance, was instrumental in rallying Kleindeutschland's wealthier citizens to provide the enlistees with adequate uniforms and supplies. Driven by a communal investment in the war, German-Americans rallied around German soldiers.

While many recruits undoubtedly enlisted in the Turner Rifles for a chance at adventure or glory, the Civil War is unique among major nineteenth-century Western wars in that such a large proportion of its participants were motivated by purely ideological considerations.[56] The amateur armies that were being formed identified the conflict being fought as one to preserve the Union, to uphold the Constitution, and eventually to abolish slavery. These were arguments that took on great political and moral resonance. For a group such as the Turners, who were better attuned than were many others to the political climate of the time, the outbreak of war represented an opportunity to publicly affirm their commitment to liberal Republican values and to assume yet again a leading role in putting a positive public face on German-Americans. With these considerations in mind, the recruits of the 20th New York drilled in Manhattan's Turtle Bay Park.[57]

In addition to assembling enlisted men to fill its ranks, the Turner Rifles needed to find officers to lead them. The officers who attempted to turn these citizens into soldiers had, particularly by the standards of the Civil War in 1861, respectable résumés. Primary responsibility devolved upon the commander, Colonel Max Weber. Weber was a Kleindeutschland resident and military leader in the failed Baden revolution of 1848. After arriving in the United States, Weber became popular hotel owner and patron of many poorer

[56] Joseph Allan Frank, *With Ballot and Bayonet: The Political Socialization of American Civil War Soldiers* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 8-17.
[57] "Military and Naval Preparations," *Commercial Advertiser* (New York), May 5, 1861.

German refugees.[58] His efforts and those of his subordinates appeared to the general public to be successful in developing competent soldiers; the pro-slavery and anti-Lincoln *New York Herald* reported approvingly that "the Turners of this city having evinced their patriotism and ardor for the cause of freedom, and the maintenance of the laws of our country… have formed a regiment of riflemen." After effusively praising the qualifications of Weber the other field officers, most of whom were also Forty-Eighters, the *Herald* concluded "the public must appreciate the services of this regiment, and look anxiously forward to their advent in battle. Great things are expected from them, and we can safely assert that they will render a satisfactory record of their doings."[59]

Friedrich Kapp did his part not only to provide for the material needs of the Turner Rifles, but also to give them encouragement and to articulate the reasons for which they were to fight. On June 1, one of Kleindeutschland's various singing societies, of which Kapp was president, presented Colonel Weber with a "splendid gilt cartouch and sword belt."[60] As the *New York Herald* reported, Kapp emphasized that "a twofold responsibility devolves upon the German soldier in the present campaign, for he had to enter not only for the cause of his adopted country, but also for the honor of the German name, and to show the world and history that the German ranks among the first champions of liberty." Upon the conclusion of Kapp's speech and some modest remarks by Colonel Weber, the society serenaded the troops.

Kapp's words reflected the pluralistic vision articulated by Carl Schurz in Massachusetts two years before. Kapp also did not miss the opportunity to tie the conflict to slavery. Abolition would not become a Union war goal for almost two more years, but the idealistic Kapp saw the

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[58] Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 564.
[59] "The Twentieth Regiment United Turner Rifles." *New York Herald*, June 15, 1861.
[60] "Testimonial to Colonel Weber, of the United German Rifles." *New York Herald*, June 1, 1861.

Civil War as intrinsically tied to the existence of slavery, and publicly advocated abolition from the outset.[61] That the Turners and Forty-Eighters were in this respect out of step with American public opinion can be attributed to their identity as revolutionaries. Having been in the vanguard during the fight for suffrage and increased economic rights in Germany, it was only natural that Forty-Eighters would seize upon the Civil War as an opportunity to establish a society free of the ills which they had striven against on two continents. In this context, Forty-Eighters could have been nothing other than enthusiastic supporters of the Union.

Perhaps more importantly, the American Civil War represented to all German-Americans an opportunity to assert their identity as incontrovertible patriots. Germans were aware that risking life and limb for the United States was the ultimate act of devotion, binding both themselves to the state and the state to them.[62] The potential of this group of soldiers to change the perception of German-Americans was real. Although the article correctly named the unit as the "United Turner Rifles" in the text, the title referred to them as the "United German Rifles." In doing so, the Anglo-American *Herald* used the Turners as a stand-in for all Germans, and projected all of their qualities and accomplishments onto the German-American community at large.

The ceremony also provided an opportunity to claim that the less dramatic practices in which German-American communities already engaged likewise marked them as citizens. As the event wound down, Mr. Hugo Wesendonck arose to remind those present of families left behind by the departing soldiers, calling it "a duty of every good citizen to provide for their support and comfort."[63] Wesendonck essentially argued that, naturalization laws

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[61] Hinners, 162-167
[62] Dean B. Mahin, *That Blessed Place of Freedom: Europeans in Civil War America* (Washington: Brassey's, 2002) 13.
[63] "Testimonial to Colonel Weber," *New York Herald*

notwithstanding, German-Americans already *were* citizens. Citizenship was a status determined by positive engagement with one's community, and while taking up arms to defend it from external enemies was one mark of citizenship, simple acts to ensure society's well-being were another. Under this definition, Kleindeutschlanders who were actively and productively engaged in community life had earned citizenship, regardless of the language they spoke or religion they practiced.

Departing New York City

On the afternoon of June 14, the sharply attired and drilled members of the 20th New York assembled into marching columns at Turtle Bay to begin their procession to their transport ships and the war. New York's Germans made sure to see them off in style. Both the appearance of the regiment and the outpouring of support it received made a strong impression on a reporter from the *New York Tribune*, as well as non-Germans along the route, "hitherto knowing nothing of their existence, who awarded them the palm for stout soldierly bearing, among all the regiments that have yet left this city." Once again, the Anglo-American press used the Turners as a symbol for all Germans. The Germans earned the highest praise of the *Tribune* reporter, who described the Turners to his Anglophone readers as "a great social, educational, musiced [sic], gymnastic, and semi-military, popular society, to which every German, of whatever rank, so be he of good moral character, is expected to belong."[64] The outpouring of support from at least a dozen other German-American organizations which accompanied the soldiers suggests that much of the German-American community was also inclined to adopt them as a symbol.

[64] "Departure of the United Turner Rifles – Twentieth Regiment" *New York Tribune*, June 14, 1861.

At City Hall, the troops were presented with flags by a municipal delegation, headed by an Anglo-American councilman, who praised the freedom-loving qualities he attributed to the Turners. "To whom could they more properly entrust [the American flag]," he asked, than to the descendants of the Germans of millennia past, who "amid the verdant forests and sparkling waters of the Fatherland bravely battled for liberty and freedom against the cruel domination of imperious, slaveholding… Rome?" No one present would have mistaken the connection between Rome and the slaveholding South, whose real and imagined machinations to expand slavery in the Americas smacked of imperialism and had driven even pro-slavery Northerners to alarm in the years preceding the Civil War.

"Gallant Germans, friends and brethren! we hail you," he continued, "as fellow-countrymen and coequal heirs of our national destiny... This goodly western continent is not less yours than ours; upon its broad and teeming bosom we stand or fall together. Side by side we now battle for our nation's life." Tying the war to reunify the United States to the desire of Forty-Eighters and Turners to unify Germany, the speaker reminded the Germans that "you left your native land dismembered and disintegrated by long centuries of strife that you might breathe in freedom the invigorating air of one great, united, indivisible republic." The regiment then received a Turner flag and the Red-Black-Gold standard of democratic Germany used during the 1848 revolution.

The send-off of the Turner Rifles represented a remarkable embrace of German identity by the Anglo-American community. German-Americans had been a privileged minority group in the United States before the outbreak of the war, but their drinking habits, isolation, and speech patterns had still left them objects of ridicule and discrimination.[65] When the Civil War broke out, however, characteristics which were mostly true of Turners and Forty-Eighters and

[65] Christian Gellinek, *Northwest Germany in Northeast America* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 1997), 51-59.

assumed by outsiders of all Germans became assets. The martial prowess, desire for unified government, and an ambiguous devotion to "freedom" which Anglo-Americans attributed to Germans as a group made them ideal allies in the fight against secession. The tradeoff of their "side by side" battle, however, was a tacit recognition that German-Americans could be full citizens. German-Americans could be awarded this status without being forced to fully assimilate; as the speaker also noted, they were the offspring of "the land of poetry, song and science, the birthplace of Schiller, and Mozart, and Kepler." If the sentiment echoed Schurz's definition of Americanism, it was because these were easily digestible elements of German culture for Anglo-Americans.

Fortress Monroe and Benjamin Butler

Days later, the 20th New York arrived at Fortress Monroe, a strategically important installation on Virginia's swampy James River Peninsula, and fell under the command of General Benjamin Butler. Butler was a politically influential Massachusetts Democrat, and something of an ironic assignment for a regiment that was mostly Republican and mostly German-speaking. The officers nevertheless tried to build a relationship with General Butler through a display of German culture. Less than two weeks after their arrival, they hosted a ball at the former residence of President John Tyler. The banquet inside this memorial to a prominent figure from American history and symbol of the South's Anglo-American gentry featured such examples of Germanness as German songs and a performance of Turner acrobatics.[66] Butler apparently was quite impressed with the spectacle.[67] Apparently, the officers of the 20th New York were equally impressed with Butler.

[66] "From Fortress Monroe" *Albany Journal*, June 24, 1861.

A possible reason for the Turners' admiration for Benjamin Butler went back to an incident which occurred just before their arrival on the Peninsula. On May 24, a Confederate officer had entered Union lines to demand the return of three escaped slaves.[68] Butler drew on his prewar legal experience to argue that the escaped slaves could not be returned, as they had become "contraband of war." Through this turn of phrase, Butler became a darling of the radical Republicans and the unlikely instigator of informal Northern emancipation policy. At the very least, the officers of the 20th New York admired this stand for abolitionism. Butler reciprocated those feelings; when he later became military governor of New Orleans, he brought Colonel Franz Weiss, the original second-in-command of the Twentieth and briefly its commander, out of forced retirement to help coordinate the recruitment of German troops there, whom he erroneously assumed would share the Turners' enthusiasm for the Northern war effort.[69]

Many of the new soldiers on the Peninsula grew restless and lost discipline during the inactive summer of 1861. The Turner Rifles did not. One thoroughly impressed observer from the United States Sanitary Commission, a quasi-public organization which made recommendations to improve health in camps, noted that although the camp was not laid out precisely according to official regulations and in some respects was "very faulty in cleanliness," the men took personal hygiene into their own hands, and there was "evidence in their personal appearance… that the men are self-respectful and careful in that respect." Regarding their demeanor, the official marveled that the soldiers arranged "evening entertainments – illuminations – music – games – etc. and there is in their movements and in their faces a certain vivacity that I have not observed in other regiments… through the encampment I have observed

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[67] Martin W. Öfele, *True Sons of the Republic: European Immigrants in the Union Army* (Westport: Praeger, 2008), 106.
[68] Robert S. Holzman, *Stormy Ben Butler* (New York: MacMillan, 1954), 41-43.
[69] Andrea Mehrländer, *The Germans of Charleston, Richmond, and New Orleans during the Civil War Period, 1850-1870* (New York: DeGruyter, 2011), 263-265.

several indications that the men are better purposed to make themselves comfortable than any I have yet seen."[70] General Butler similarly praised "the uniform good conduct of the Twentieth Regiment New York Volunteers," held in contrast "to the men and a large portion of the officers of the First New York Volunteers, who under great embarrassments have maintained the discipline and efficiency of this regiment," and, with qualification, awarded "especial praise… to the Ninth Regiment, under Colonel Hawkins, except in a single instance, which the regiment as well as the general sincerely regrets."[71]

The Turners' morale was likely boosted by displays of American and German culture. The *Newark Daily Advertiser* reported that the 20th New York ordered fifty barrels of lager beer as part of their Fourth of July celebrations, celebrating the birth of the United States with a beverage that at the time was associated almost entirely with German immigrants.[72] Laying this explicitly ethnic claim to a national holiday apparently did not sour their relationship with their comrades from other regiments. It was also during this assignment on the James River Peninsula that the German Turners experienced protracted contact with the 99th New York, also known as the Union Coast Guard, which consisted almost entirely of Anglo- and Irish- Americans from the ships and docks of New York harbor. An early incident during which a picket from the Twentieth accidentally fired upon them was apparently forgiven and forgotten; members of the two regiments would remain close enough that in 1897 they would hold a joint reunion.[73]

Triumph and Embarrassment at Hatteras and Clark

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[70] *Reports of the US Sanitary Commission*, New York Public Library, New York, NY
[71] Report of Major General Benjamin Butler, *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Hereafter *OR)*, s. I v. IV, 601-602
[72] "From Fortress Monroe" *Newark Daily Advertiser*, July 3, 1861.
[73] Program of the 1897 Reunion. Grand Army of the Republic records, box 12. New York State Archives, Albany, NY.

After a period of relative inactivity, the 20th New York faced combat for the first time. At the end of August, General Butler ordered the 20th and 9th New York Regiments to again board ships and sail to the coast of North Carolina, where they were to capture Forts Hatteras and Clark as part of the Union blockade effort.[74] The joint army-navy operation was a bungled affair which somehow ended in a Union victory. An amphibious force consisting of parts of the Twentieth and Ninth regiments and a handful of Marines amounted to less than nine hundred strong, compared to the more than one thousand fortified Confederate troops opposing them. Compounding the difficulty, rough surf meant that on the day of the landing a mere 318 soldiers, with Colonel Weber as the ranking officer, actually made it to shore.[75] After a tense night on the beach with no provisions and wet ammunition, Union ships began to bombard the forts, and the equally inexperienced Southerners elected to surrender en masse rather than face battle. Weber's command suffered zero casualties.

According to legend, when President Lincoln was awoken with news of the expedition's success he danced for joy in his nightgown.[76] Apocryphal or not, the victory earned Colonel Weber and the Turner Rifles specific praise from General Butler and a Northern press that had a difficult time finding good news throughout most of 1861.[77] In an article headlined "Brilliant Achievement in North Carolina," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* fancifully recounted how "our gallant troops on shore here rushed into the fort, and raised the Stars and Stripes," although given the general dysfunction of Weber's command, they would have been hard pressed to rush anything.[78] The equally enthusiastic *New Hampshire Sentinel* pronounced that "its success is

[74] Lee Thomas Oxford, *The Civil War on Hatteras* (Charleston: The History Press, 2013), 47.
[75] *OR*, s. I v. IV, 589-590
[76] Holzman, 51-52
[77] *OR*, s. I v. IV, 581-586
[78] "Brilliant Achievement in North Carolina" *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, September 7, 1861.

perfect, and every anticipation of the department fully realized."[79] Throughout the articles published on the expedition, there is no mention of the fact that the invasion force's commander was a German immigrant. The 20th New York was earning national acclaim as an American regiment, fighting for the same goals as all other Northerners.

The Twentieth did draw criticism from some of their fellow soldiers in the weeks following the capture of Fort Hatteras, however. Colonel Rush Hawkins, whose regiment had been criticized for poor conduct in the weeks preceding the expedition, reported to Major General John Ellis Wool, who had replaced Butler at Fortress Monroe, that:

> The conduct of the men and some of the officers of the Twentieth Regiment New York Volunteers has been that of vandals. They have plundered and destroyed. The first night that they were on shore they visited one of the encampments which had been abandoned by the enemy. I am informed that this part was under the charge of three or four commissioned officers; that they first commenced to breaking open trunks left behind by the officers and men who had abandoned the camp… The next day they commenced breaking open private houses and stores, and I saw party after party come in, some of them headed by commissioned officers, loaded down with the results of their plundering. This conduct continued until I was compelled to adopt the most severe and stringent measures… I believe that such creatures as these will do our cause more harm than good, and that they are a disgrace to the arms they bear and the flag which is over them.[80]

Colonel Weber was incensed by the accusations.[81] While not directly denying that looting had occurred, he did explain the procedure for compensated requisition that he claimed the regiment had been following to secure rations and water on the largely-barren barrier islands. Whether looting of civilians was practiced by the Turners or not, there is no record of soldiers being discharged from service in the period immediately following the capture of Hatteras and Clark for any reason other than disability.

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[79] "The Naval Expedition Heard From: Grand Affair on the North Carolina Coast," *New Hampshire Sentinel*, September 5, 1861.
[80] *OR* s. I v. IV, 607-609
[81] *OR* s. I v. IV, 611-612

Regardless of what occurred on Hatteras, the 20th New York was transferred back to the James River Peninsula. There they had their first actual taste of battle in minor skirmishes and suffered their first combat casualties, although none of the engagements were large enough to convey much about the Turners' fighting abilities. They continued to interact with the 99th New York and other non-German regiments, and Colonel Weber sufficiently impressed his superiors to be promoted away from the regiment and be assigned a brigade command – no small feat, given that early in the war German generals were seldom given commands over anyone but Germans.[82] Military actions were, however, minimal. The Twentieth was participating in a sideshow of the Civil War.

Joining the VI Army Corps

The experience of the Turner Rifles changed radically in June of 1862. After playing yet another small role in the recapture of Norfolk, Virginia, the 20th New York was transferred to the third brigade of the second division of the VI Corps of the Army of the Potomac, the main Union army in the Eastern Theater of the Civil War.[83] The regiment now found itself in a brigade featuring men from Maine, as well as three other non-German New York units.[84] In what would become the typical role of the regiment, the 20th New York was kept in reserve for the Seven Days' Battles on the James River Peninsula. While the other regiments of the brigade were involved in heavy fighting, the Twentieth did not directly confront the enemy.

During the first three days of the Seven Days' Battles, the Twentieth was kept on edge by their continuous near-engagements. Each non-battle led to the same pre-combat tension which

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[82] "Telegraphic News," *Evening Star* (Washington), January 4, 1862 and "War Miscellany*," New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette*, January 8, 1862.
[83] Frederick Phisterer, *New York in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865*. Vol. 3. (Albany: JB Lyon, 1912), 1958.
[84] Brian K. Burton, *Extraordinary Circumstances: The Seven Days Battles* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 414.

Civil War veterans often remembered dreading more than the actual fighting.[85] Throughout it all, the VI Corps was withdrawing, playing the role of the exposed rearguard while Robert E. Lee, the newly-installed commander of Confederate forces, hammered the Northern troops backward. Any exhausted soldiers who fell behind, or those detailed off for burial or foraging parties, all too often found themselves prisoners of war.[86]

Before dawn on June 30, 1862, the 20th New York was encamped with the rest of its brigade near White Oak Swamp. Those soldiers whose nerves had not kept them awake jumped up to the reveille of massed Confederate artillery batteries.[87] Brigade commander John Davidson applauded the poise of all but one of his regiments in reforming in a new line in relative order after the initial confusion.[88] Unlike its sister regiments, the 20th New York refused to be rallied. As one officer in the 7th Maine remembered, "the Germans… and their fine array drew a perfect blizzard from [Stonewall] Jackson's smoking guns. This was too much for the Dutchmen. They wore high, conical black hats, and when they broke and ran the plain was dotted far and wide with their hats and knapsacks."[89]

By all accounts, the difference between the 20th New York's inability to rally and the relatively quick reformation of the other units came down to the quality of its officers. The veterans of the 33rd New York recalled that the Turners, "following the example of their leader, rushed back headlong… Exasperated at this conduct, the officers of the Thirty-Third threatened to shoot down the entire Regiment if they did not return."[90] The 33rd New York looked down

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[85] Earl J. Hess, *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997), 23.
[86] David Wright Judd, *The Story of the Thirty-Third NYS Volunteers; or, Two Years Campaigning in Virginia and Maryland* (Rochester: Benton & Andrews, 1864), 135-143.
[87] Frederick David Bidwell, *History of the Forty-Ninth New York Volunteers* (Albany: JB Lyon, 1916), 15.
[88] *OR*, s. I v. XI pt. 2, 480-482
[89] Thomas W. Hyde, *Following the Greek Cross: or, Memories of the Sixth Army Corps* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 73-74.
[90] Judd, 143-145

upon the disgraced Colonel Franz Weiss in particular. "Their Colonel, who so ignobly deserted them, came and sat down among the privates of the Thirty-Third, when one of them said to him, 'don't your regiment need you? We got all the officers we want here.' Upon this he picked himself up and hastened to a hospital near by [sic]." Colonel Weiss's conduct drew similar derision from the 7th Maine. That regiment's second-in-command recorded, "it is tradition in our regiment that… their colonel, who days before was talking about the blood he was going to shed… may not have stopped, for he was never heard of afterwards. There was later a rumor that he was running a beer garden in Cincinnati, but it was never authenticated."[91]

In the wake of the disaster at White Oak Swamp, a dozen men of the 20th New York were killed or wounded, and fifty more were captured.[92] The debacle led some in the brigade, such as the officer from Maine, to pass judgment on Germans generally. Most observers, however, faulted not the mass of enlisted men, but the incompetence of a select number of officers. This assessment was shared by Weiss's replacement, a German-speaking Swede named Ernst von Vegesack who would eventually be awarded Medal of Honor for his actions elsewhere during the Seven Days' Battles.[93] The Twentieth's new commander lamented that it had not "been in the power of the government to procure competent officers." He did, however, hold the enlisted men of the regiment in high esteem, writing that "no army in the world can compete with [the] soldiers' intelligence, strong physiques, and enthusiasm for the cause they have taken up arms to defend."[94] Despite the setback of what the Boston *Daily Evening Traveler* labeled a "celebrated stampede," the men of the Twentieth remained committed to the cause of abolition and Union.[95]

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[91] Hyde, 74
[92] Phisterer, 1958
[93] Robert P. Broadwater, *Civil War Medal of Honor Recipients: A Complete Illustrated Record* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2007), 209.
[94] Quoted in Roger Kvist, "America is, However, the Most Curious Country under the Sun: The Civil War Letters of Colonel Ernst von Vegesack." *Swedish-American Historical Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (July 2003): 134-138.
[95] "The Great Battle of White Oak Swamp," *Daily Evening Traveler* (Boston), July 5, 1862.

The regiment was no doubt better off when, on July 10, 1862, nine officers, including Weiss, resigned their commissions.

The High Water Mark of the 20th New York

The 20th New York would have to wait less than three months for the opportunity to redeem itself. Following the evacuation of the Army of the Potomac from the James River Peninsula to the defenses outside of Washington, the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, fresh off its defeat of another Union force at the Second Battle of Bull Run, decided to invade the North. On September 17, 1862, the 20th New York found itself in Sharpsburg, Maryland, and participated in the Battle of Antietam. This day would come to be known as the bloodiest in American history. The tactically ambiguous result of the battle resembled something close enough to a victory to enable President Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, which declared slaves free in areas then rebelling against the federal government. For the liberal, Republican, and generally abolitionist Turners, it would acquire additional significance as the place where they linked their bloody sacrifice to the ideals which they espoused before the war.

On the previous night, the soldiers of the 20th New York's brigade, temporarily commanded by Colonel William Irwin, were camped seven miles from the battlefield. Hustling towards the sounds of the guns the next morning, "the men made the last half, as much as was possible, on a double-quick, fording Antietam Creek where the water was waist-deep, making it necessary for the men to hold up their cartridge boxes to keep their ammunition dry, and soon after filed in behind a narrow strip of woods near the Sharpsburg and Hagerstown Turnpike."[96]

[96] Bidwell, 20

The Turners led the advance of their brigade "in fine line, General Smith, Colonel Ernest [sic] von Vegesack, and his field officers riding close behind and pushing it on in the most spirited manner, the Confederate skirmishers rapidly falling back."[97] On the left of the Twentieth was the 7th Maine, commanded by twenty-two year old Major Thomas Hyde, who had derided their conduct at White Oak Swamp. Hyde would be awarded his own Medal of Honor for his actions that day, but he never forgot "when [Vegesack] breasted the storm of rebel bullets at Antietam and redeemed the honor of the 20th New York Volunteers."[98]

Irwin's brigade was unsupported by any other units from the VI Corps, but was filling a crucial gap caused by the stalled attacks of the II and XII Corps earlier that morning. With no practical way to continue their advance, the regiments were compelled to hold their position. Hyde's regiment benefited from a cluster of boulders to their front which protected them from the worst of the sustained Confederate fire, but the Turners were less fortunate. Colonel Vegesack and the 20th New York nevertheless refused to withdraw. Hyde feared that the Twentieth's flags were drawing unnecessary fire, and "went over to Colonel Vegesack and told him they were specially singling him out, as his colors were held so high, and advised lowering them a little. 'Let them wave; they are our glory,' said the brave old Swede, and he kept riding back and forth behind the regiment… the most prominent object in the field."[99]

The Twentieth filled the role of stopgap in the Union line for twenty-four hours, during which time they were under constant fire.[100] By the time the battle was over, one hundred and forty-five men from the regiment were killed, wounded, or missing. It was the Turner Rifles' first experience with the type of traumatic combat that has dominated popular memory of the

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[97] Ezra Carman, *The Maryland Campaign of 1862*, ed. Joseph Pierro (New York: Routledge Press, 2008), 305-306.
[98] Hyde, 89
[99] Hyde, 96-97
[100] *OR*, s. I v. XIX, 402-403

Civil War, and it became the event that they chose to commemorate more than any other when the war ended. The memory of that day permanently impressed itself upon all who were there, and rightfully so. The regiment had redeemed itself for the debacle at White Oak Swamp. As Colonel Irwin recorded in his official report of the battle:

> The Twentieth New York Volunteers by its position was exposed to the heaviest fire in line, which it bore with unyielding courage and returned at every opportunity. Colonel Von Vegesack was under fire with his men constantly, and his calm courage gave an admirable example to them. Each of their stand of colors is rent by the balls and shells of the enemy, and their killed and wounded is 145. This regiment was under my own eye in going into action and frequently during the battle, and I take pleasure in strongly testifying to its bravery and good conduct.[101]

Waiting Out the War

The Battle of Antietam was the last significant engagement in which the 20th New York would participate for nearly six months. They escaped the carnage of Fredericksburg, but like their sister regiments they suffered through the bitter weather of December 1862 and January 1863. The conditions were lethal – members of the 49th New York remembered "the weather was cold, and the mud almost unfathomable." On at least one occasion, "several men of the Third Brigade died in the ambulances from cold and exposure. Even those who were well could hardly manage to keep warm. Few men in that vast army slept, and the ringing of hundreds of axes and the falling of trees, which were to be piled on the fires, were heard all night."[102] The desperate search for firewood and lumber to build shelter seemed to be the defining feature of that winter. The 33rd New York's soldiers also remembered "the constant ringing of numerous axes and the crashing and falling of trees around us."[103] Fighting both the Rebels and the weather, morale in the Army of the Potomac sunk precipitously.

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[101] *OR*, s. I v. XIX, 409-412
[102] Bidwell, 25
[103] Judd, 225

The Emancipation Proclamation took effect on January 1, 1863, which compounded the misery for tens of thousands of Union soldiers who felt that the measure inappropriately expanded Northern war aims. For the Turners, however, it signified a triumph. German-American Republican leaders, such as Carl Schurz and Friedrich Kapp, had advocated abolition from the outset of the war; Schurz bombarded President Lincoln with letters during 1861 and 1862, and Kapp played an even more active role.[104] When two Union generals overstepped their bounds and issued emancipation edicts before Lincoln's proclamation, Kapp exhorted the president to confirm the generals' decisions.[105] Although he was unsuccessful, he and other freedom-loving Germans rejoiced when the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect.

As January wore on, morale began to improve. In camp near White Oak Church, "the ground was occasionally covered with snow and battles with snow balls took place, different regiments challenging each other. When the weather was pleasant baseball became popular, and there were many excellent players in the Third Brigade. These games were watched by great crowds with intense interest."[106] As spring approached, the army's morale changed even more dramatically for the better. This was thanks in no small part to the vigorous efforts of its new commander, General Joseph Hooker, who improved rations and sanitary conditions in the Army of the Potomac's camps.[107]

Hooker was keen to get his army into fighting condition quickly. Thousands of his troops had enlisted, like the men of the 20th New York, for only two years. The vast majority of these soldiers' enlistments would be expiring in the late spring and early summer of 1863, and if he

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[104] Trefousse, 105-128
[105] Hinners, 161-165
[106] Bidwell, 28-29
[107] John J. Hennessey. "The Army of the Potomac on the Eve of the Chancellorsville Campaign." In *Chancellorsville: The Battle and its Aftermath*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 10-13.

wanted to bring the greatest possible number of troops to bear, he would have to get his campaign underway immediately. He devised a cunning plan to destroy the Confederate army opposing him and to capture Richmond. The role of the VI Corps in his strategy was to hold part of the Confederate force in place by making demonstrations on the far side of the Rappahannock River from the city of Fredericksburg, while the bulk of his army, including the "Dutch" XI Corps, moved to the west. The men of the 20th New York may have felt they had scored a plum assignment; if they could make it until April 29, the day they had been mustered into New York volunteer service, then they could return home.

Mutiny

On April 28, the VI Corps moved against the enemy. The Twentieth was not engaged, but for that day and the next they could hear the rattle of musketry and the distant thumping of cannons from their position in the corps reserve.[108] While some of the particulars of the incident of the 29th are uncertain, the basics are clear. As dawn broke, the 20th New York and its sister regiments were ordered towards combat across the Rappahannock River. One hundred ninety-nine of the enlisted men of the regiment refused to do so, under the belief that their enlistments expired on that day, and had handed an officer two petitions to that effect.[109]

Through their petitions and testimony, the mutineers articulated a cogent grievance. To the enlisted men of the 20th New York, the refusal of military officials to discharge them represented the latest episode in a history of government duplicity. When the men of the 20th New York enlisted, they believed they were entering a contract – they were to serve the federal

[108] Report Accompanying the Act for the Relief of Certain Enlisted Men of the Twentieth Regiment of New York Volunteer Infantry, 58th Congress, 3rd Session, 1905, HR 1860, 7.
[109] Report Accompanying the Act for the Relief of Certain Enlisted Men of the Twentieth Regiment of New York Volunteer Infantry, 58th Congress, 3rd Session, 1905, HR 1860, 10

government for a limited period of time, in return for pay, bounties, and allowances. The soldiers of the Turner Rifles believed they had upheld their part of the agreement. The problem lay, however, in what they perceived as a pattern of the federal government changing the length of their term of service without their consent. Responding to Lincoln's call for 75,000 volunteers to serve for three months, many had only expected to serve for a brief period of time. When the government extended the term of many of the companies from three months to two years, many of the men complained, but stayed to do their duty. Now, on the day which the Turners expected to go home, they were being retained and forced to risk death in battle.

The roster of mutineers indicates that the actual process of mutiny was uneven, and dependent on individual dynamics within the regiment. No officers were tied to the mutiny, but several long-serving noncommissioned officers were. The mutineers were heavily concentrated in specific companies – fifty-one of them came from Company F alone, for instance, while no one in Companies B or K refused to fall in. Interestingly, the commanders of both of those companies ended up being appointed counsel for the mutineers in their court martial, a testament either to their popularity or to a feeling that they would be impartial. In any event, they made a spirited defense.

The report accompanying a 1905 act of Congress includes a copy of Special Orders no. 84, dated April 20, 1863, which detailed a number of officers of the brigade to meet on April 21, 1863, for "the trial of such prisoners as may be brought before it." This date may be an error, or else the authorities merely decided to convene the court martial whose roles had been designated over a week before. The testimony of both officers and men as recorded in the court martial transcript, which is also included, indicate that higher-ups wasted little time in dispensing punishment; the trial occurred at some time between April 29 and May 5, as an order from that

date from General Albion P. Howe confirms the sentence of "guilty" to the charge of mutiny in the face of the enemy.[110]

The testimony of the officers of the 20th New York indicates that most of them were deeply ashamed of the regiment's conduct. Colonel Ernst von Vegesack, who had commanded the regiment since before the Battle of Antietam, said nothing to put his men in a better light. When asked by the defendants in cross examination if he had informed the men of the regiment that they were in the immediate vicinity of hostile troops, his response was "they were not informed by me, but I am convinced that they knew it."[111] He made his disgust and disappointment clear in a letter to the Swedish minister in Washington, writing "the truth is they were too yellow-bellied to go… Had it been up to me, the whole bunch would have been shot down… My regiment, which was the first in the Army of the Potomac, is now demoted and the only way to restoration is to fight like lions."[112]

An army prosecutor produced a list of the accused in each company. Each company commander was called forward, presented with the list, and, without variation, confirmed that those were the men of his company who had been insubordinate. Despite an earnest and well-reasoned defense by the defendants' counsel and a handful of non-commissioned officers, their arguments fell on deaf ears. They were collectively sentenced to be dishonorably discharged and "to be confined at hard labor in charge of the guard during the remainder of the war."[113] Other members of the regiment either found the prospect of leaving the army on the eve of battle unpalatable, or were intimidated into staying.

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[110] Report Accompanying the Act for the Relief of Certain Enlisted Men of the Twentieth Regiment of New York Volunteer Infantry, 58th Congress, 3rd Session, 1905, HR 1860, 10
[111] Report Accompanying the Act for the Relief of Certain Enlisted Men of the Twentieth Regiment of New York Volunteer Infantry, 58th Congress, 3rd Session, 1905, HR 1860, 7
[112] Quoted in Kvist, 149-150
[113] Report Accompanying the Act for the Relief of Certain Enlisted Men of the Twentieth Regiment of New York Volunteer Infantry, 58th Congress, 3rd Session, 1905, HR 1860, 10

The Battle of Salem Church

The remainder of the 20th New York, still over five hundred men strong, crossed the Rappahannock River with the VI Corps. Along with most of their division, they remained in reserve while the Battle of Chancellorsville raged some fifteen miles away, with disastrous results for the heavily German-American XI Corps. After Robert E. Lee defeated the bulk of the Army of the Potomac at Chancellorsville, he turned his attention to the isolated VI Corps at Fredericksburg.

Shortly before sunset on May 4, 1863, a large Southern force attacked the thin-spread elements of the VI Corps. The Federals were in a relatively strong defensive position, yet for reasons that are unclear were directed to advance into the numerically superior attackers.[114] As one frustrated survivor remembered, the entirety of the 20th New York's brigade was "smashed like a pitcher thrown against a rock, by charging nine rebel brigades."[115] Even the decorated Thomas Hyde, then serving as a staff officer, found discretion the better part of valor, and retreated by the same route as the Turners.

Other accounts of the battle, however, claim that the 20th New York performed worse than its sister regiments. The most damning report comes from Captain James H. Rigby, who was commanding a battery of artillery directly to the Twentieth's rear:

> When [the Confederates] had arrived about 200 yards from the battery, the Twentieth New York Regiment… broke and ran into the battery. They frightened my horses, and created so much confusion that I could do nothing. The rebels were still advancing, and, when they were about 80 yards from me, I gave order to limber to the rear. This was done with considerable difficulty, owing to the confusion created by the broken regiment, which was still hovering around the battery. The horses attached to one of my limbers became unmanageable and ran away, leaving the piece on the field. As soon as I perceived this, I drew my saber, and, by hard blows, forced the infantry to assist in drawing the piece from the field.[116]

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[114] Hyde, 131
[115] Hyde, 133
[116] *OR*, s. I v. XXV, 596-597

The brigade commander who foolishly ordered his troops to attack the Confederates likewise complained about the Twentieth's conduct, noting that they alone among the regiments of the brigade refused to rally after their retreat.[117] The men of the 33rd New York defended their own conduct by insisting that they would not have been compelled to retreat themselves had the fleeing Germans left them vulnerable.[118] The 20th New York did not flee without giving the enemy a fight, however. The Twentieth's losses before Fredericksburg surpassed even those they suffered at Antietam.[119]

Homecoming

The events that transpired three days before Salem Church proved to be the most traumatic the German-American community experienced during the war. The XI Corps had been positioned on the far right of the Union army on the Chancellorsville battlefield, at the opposite end from the VI Corps. The XI Corps included such accomplished German-American commanders as Forty-Eighter Alexander Schimmelfennig, master artilleryman Hubert Dilger, and Major General Carl Schurz, who had leveraged his political value into a fairly successful career as a division commander. When the Confederates launched a surprise attack against their flank, however, the heavily-German corps rolled up instantly, and in the ensuing weeks German-Americans found themselves subjected to constant vitriolic attacks from nativists across the country, who blamed the "Dutch" for the army's failure.[120]

In the absence of any specific evidence, it is hard to ascertain how exactly members of the 20th New York responded to the catastrophe at the Battle of Chancellorsville. In the context

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[117] *OR*, s. I v. XXV, 609-610
[118] Judd, 309
[119] Phisterer, 1958
[120] Christian Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans: Nativism, Ethnicity, and Civil War Memory* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 6-8.

of the regiment's final two chaotic weeks, it may have garnered any range of responses from the three hundred or so men who returned home under their flag. If it was any consolation, the first English-language news reports that came out concerning the 20th New York after their actions around Chancellorsville were not articles about the conviction of their comrades for treason, but, like the one found in the Washington, DC *Evening Star*, tributes to their sacrifices and claims that they "have always received the congratulations of the commanding generals under whom they fought."[121] Three weeks after their return to New York City, the veterans of the Turner Rifles enjoyed a banquet at the Turner Hall in Kleindeutschland. The banquet may have been just as much for the Kleindeutschland community as for the recently returned soldiers; reeling from the sting of anti-German rhetoric, the effusion of simultaneous German and American pride likely had something of a cathartic effect.[122] Regardless, the veterans of the 20th New York decided not to reform the regiment.

Early stories of the mutiny in newspapers lack any significant details surrounding the event, a surprising detail, given how infrequent such episodes were during the war. Boston's *American Traveler* bears just seven lines noting that two hundred men had been sentenced for mutiny, while that in the *Daily Age* was even shorter.[123] It is not clear where these two articles originated, but the same two articles were reprinted in a wide number of newspapers across the country. Almost none of the articles, however, made any reference to the Germanness of the mutineers, and apparently did not point to the case of the 20th New York as further evidence that German soldiers were inferior to their Anglo-American counterparts. The same pattern stood true that fall, when after several months of conscientious service by the convicted men as manual

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[121] "Local News," *Evening Star*, May 8, 1863.
[122] "Military Affairs: Dinner to the Twentieth Regiment New York State Vounteers," *New York Herald*, June 10, 1863.
[123] "War Intelligence," American Traveler (Boston), May 16, 1863. "Rebel Operations in Virginia," *The Daily Age* (Philadelphia), September 3, 1863.

laborers, the Provost Marshal of the Army of the Potomac, Marsena Patrick, lobbied for their release, and they were both pardoned by President Lincoln and commended by General Hooker.[124]

Two months after the Turners returned to New York City, Kleindeutschland was further convulsed by the New York City Draft Riots. The city had voted firmly against Lincoln in 1860, and the patriotic fervor of the spring of 1861 had long since been eroded by the string of defeats the Confederacy had dealt the Army of the Potomac and by the war's mounting death toll. Compounding the discontent of many New Yorkers was the introduction of a draft and its inflammatory provisions that allowed wealthy citizens either to hire a substitute to serve in their place or to pay a three hundred dollar bounty to avoid service. Additionally, the Emancipation Proclamation that had caused so much discontent among front line troops was received equally poorly by many on the home front.[125] When government officials attempted to institute the draft on July 16, 1863, New York's underclass exploded.

Over the ensuing week, over one hundred people were killed, including dozens of free Blacks who were beaten to death or lynched. Irish rioters were by far the most prominent in the frenzy, although the entire spectrum of White New Yorkers was represented in some form or another.[126] German-Americans played a largely passive role in the riots. They were not the main targets of the rioters, notwithstanding their reputation among other New Yorkers as being both slightly more inclined to vote Republican and generally wealthier than the other immigrant groups. In one of the few instances of a German being attacked in the riot, brothel owner

[124] "Arrival and Departure of Troops," *Evening Star* (Washington), September 3, 1863.
[125] Iver Bernstein, *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 1-5.
[126] McKay, 200.

Heinrich Strückhausen watched as his business was destroyed by an angry mob. The next target, however, was a similar establishment owned by a Mr. John Smith.[127]

The greatest role filled by Kleindeutschland's residents, including the recently returned veterans of the 20th New York, was that of peacemakers. German workers' decision to return to work on the day after the strike may have put them at odds with their Irish counterparts, but it also helped to restore parts of the city to a normalcy which would not be seen elsewhere for nearly a week.[128] Many other German-Americans took a direct stand against the rioters, and provided a power base for authorities seeking to ease tensions elsewhere.[129] In several instances of outstanding physical and moral courage, groups of German-Americans sheltered Black families who had fled their neighborhoods in the face of marauding bands of rioters, and one group of German grocers even intervened to stop a lynching in progress.[130]

Veterans of the 20th New York returned from an experience in which they had suffered horrible blows to their sense of honor, lost hundreds of comrades on the field of battle, and saw two hundred more imprisoned by the government they had sworn to protect over a seemingly legitimate misunderstanding. In the eyes of many Americans, the characteristics – particularly the martial characteristics – of all German men had been impugned by the actions of the XI Corps at the Battle of Chancellorsville. Upon returning home, the Turners saw their city erupt in a shameful display of anti-Black and anti-Republican violence, and as a group that was both abolitionist and Republican, it would have been impossible not to feel further alienated from the

[127] Bernstein, 33
[128] Bernstein, 34
[129] Bernstein, 23 and 41
[130] Bernstein, 31 and 66

majority of New Yorkers, who were lower-class immigrant Democrats and who at least sympathized with the aims of the rioters, if not the riot itself.

The ex-soldiers could respond to these challenges in a variety of ways. It is easy to see how a number of these points could make them feel less connected to American society and reinforce a conception of a German, rather than a German-American, identity. Their moral stand on slavery and affiliation with the Republican Party would, however, position them on the right side of the history of the Civil War that would be written in the ensuing decades. Their actions during the draft riots, particularly when held in contrast to those of the Irish, could provide them with reasonable arguments that they were more legitimate members of American society than other groups. Navigating these issues and answering these questions would occupy the veterans of the 20th New York for the rest of their lives.

Chapter 2

Children of the Banner: The 20th New York and Civil War Commemoration

Before Confederates troops had opened fire on Fort Sumter, Friedrich Kapp was hard at work researching and writing a biography of Johann de Kalb, a German-American general during the Revolutionary War. In it, Kapp established military service grounded in devotion to personal liberty as the paradigm of ultimate patriotism. When it was sent to print in 1862, Kapp addressed the work to General Franz Sigel. "Dear Sigel!" the newspaperman wrote, "I dedicate to you the following pages… [you], as the first and best of eighty-thousand Germans, who here fight for civil liberties and against slavery… You have five million likeminded Germans behind you."[131] By placing German-Americans behind a military leader, rather than political one, Kapp conceded the leadership of German America to its warriors. The Forty-Eighters who wrote newspapers and delivered stump speeches took a back seat to the Sigels, Schurzes, and Blenkers who were actively leading troops in the field.

German and non-German Civil War veterans, from the lowliest private to the most prominent general, took the lead in grinding and polishing the lens through which the memory of the conflict would be refracted. German veterans' status as symbols of martial prowess and masculinity, coupled with a sense that they had fulfilled a patriotic duty to the new Fatherland, placed them in a position to become the public face of German-American virtue. Through institutional and personal contact, they formed a unique veterans' culture, grounded in patriotic ritual, symbolism, and a clearly articulated vision of the war's meaning. They shared this vision with each other and their communities, and grafted their understanding of the war and their culture of remembrance onto ethnic identity itself.

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[131] Friedrich Kapp, *Leben des amerikanischen Generals Johann Kalb* (Stuttgart: Cottascher Verlag, 1862), 1-3.

German-American Community in the Postwar Era

In latter half of the nineteenth century, the United States experienced rapid industrialization and unbridled economic growth. The effects of this change were dramatic and far-reaching, and its political and social implications touched Americans from all backgrounds. German-American communities were affected not only by the rapidly evolving conditions of their adopted homeland, but also by a set of circumstances peculiar to Germans. When German-American war veterans wove their story into the fabric of German-American consciousness, they responded to the changes wrought by the Gilded Age.

For German-Americans, the most notable change in the period between the Civil War and the turn of the twentieth century was in the composition of new German-speaking arrivals. German immigration had surged in the 1840s and 1850s, but the outbreak of war and the uncertain economic conditions of the 1870s discouraged more from coming. The 1880s, however, brought both renewed prosperity in the United States and increasing economic desperation in the newly-united German states, and resulted in the largest surge of German immigrants America had yet seen.[132] This new generation of immigrants brought with them a different set of expectations for their participation in American society. Although they, like their other German-speaking predecessors, were generally better educated, more likely to have been trained as skilled laborers, and viewed by Anglo-Americans as prime targets for assimilation into a strictly Anglophone definition of Americanism, the boundaries of their citizenship were uncertain. Often confined to the German language public sphere by their inability to speak English, members of the new generation were excluded from claiming full equality as citizens.

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[132] Frederick Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974), 29.

Not all new German immigrants were unthreatening to Anglo-Americans, however. Two brands of radicals – socialists and anarchists – made their own way through American ports, much to the alarm of both the Anglo-American establishment and the majority of German-Americans.[133] These radicals constituted only a tiny fraction of the masses of German-speakers who arrived in the 1880s and 1890s, but they were vocal, and were far more prolific publishers of newspapers and pamphlets than were other groups.[134] Their foreign ideas and foreign origins were enough to scare conservatives, and to incite a resurgence of nativism among many Anglo-Americans.[135]

A convergence of forces, including a desire to distance themselves from German immigrant radicals, drove older German-Americans to become more conservative as the nineteenth century progressed.[136] Economic success led German-Americans to believe, in Mischa Honeck's words, that "America's rising glory did not spring from the radicalism of a few but was dependent on the honest work of the many and, above all, the defense of property rights and free competition." Even the Turners, paragons of radical idealism before and during the Civil War, became part of the conservative element in German-American society.[137] Fearing that government interference in the private sector would only benefit the extremely wealthy, many followed the example of Carl Schurz and shifted party allegiance whenever the banner of free labor and economic non-intervention changed hands.

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[133] For the influence of German-American socialists, see Dorothee Schneider, *Trade Unions and Community: The German Working Class in New York City, 1870-1900* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994). For German-American anarchists, see Tom Goyens, *Beer and Revolution: The German Anarchist Movement in New York City, 1880-1914* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007).
[134] Goyens, 20
[135] Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 63
[136] Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 43
[137] Mischa Honeck, *We Are the Revolutionists: German-Speaking Immigrants and American Abolitionists after 1848* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 177.

All of these developments took place amid conflicting articulations of the rights of citizenship and the groups of people to whom could be offered. The Civil War and the 13th and 14th Amendments brought the federal government into the lives of citizens as a guarantor of the privileges afforded to American citizens.[138] While the legal implications of this new role were never perfectly clarified in the nineteenth century, the federal government, rather than individual states, became recognized as the guardian of American ideals and individual liberty.[139] Union veterans in turn claimed to be the saviors of the federal government. As such, they demanded not only suffrage, but also a debt to be paid back in the form of public recognition and, eventually, pensions.

The second debate – what the appropriate marks of an American citizen were, and how ethnic minorities fit in – was taken up by German-American veterans in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Responding to a shifting German-American landscape and rejecting a conception of citizenship that restricted access to native-born Americans or to those assimilated into Anglo-American culture, German-American Civil War veterans forwarded a pluralistic model of citizenship and patriotic expression that allowed German speakers to claim absolute equality as citizens of the United States. Offering a direct rebuttal to nativists who had reemerged in response to increasing German immigration, German-American Civil War veterans made aggressive assertions of ownership of the state in ethnic terms that necessarily claimed to speak for all German-Americans.

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[138] Laura Edwards, *A Legal History of the Civil War and Reconstruction: A Nation of Rights* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 95.
[139] Edwards, 106-110.

Camaraderie

Veterans' efforts to present a unified image of German-America began with efforts to unify themselves. The former members of the Turner Rifles, like countless veterans across the United States, formed their own regimental association.[140] Formally incorporated on March 22, 1878, the stated intention of the *Veteran Verein of the Twentieth Regiment of N.Y. Vols.* was "the visiting of the sick and burying of the dead, the promotion of social intercourse and friendly feeling… the extending of aid to them… [and] the advancement of their interest generally." Few records exist of the Verein itself, but its charter indicates that it was similar to the innumerable unit-based associations which sprouted up throughout the North in the first two decades following the war.[141] The timing of the organization's formation is also typical of the trends of veterans' organizations in the first decade after Appomattox. For ten years following the Civil War, formal veterans' organizations and activities were characterized by their absence.[142]

As time went on, however, veterans' organizations took on expanded roles as coordinators of commemoration. The organizational structure they provided allowed veterans to arrange reunions; to organize, compile, and share written memoirs; and to raise funds for the erection of monuments, which were usually placed at sites of particular importance to the unit.[143] The Veteran Verein performed many of these functions for the Turners. When the veterans of the 20th New York undertook a journey to Antietam, Gettysburg, and Washington, for instance,

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[140] *Certificate of Incorporation of the Veteran Verein of the Twentieth Regiment N.Y. Vols*. State of New York, Office of the Secretary of State. 22 March 1878. Courtesy of Gary Kappesser, originally digitized by the Patchogue-Medford Public Library, Patchogue, New York.

[141] Brian Matthew Jordan, *Marching Home: Union Veterans and their Unending Civil War* (New York: Liverwright, 2014) 81-82.

[142] Caroline E. Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 73-102. See also Earl J. Hess, *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997), 160.

[143] Hess, 160-164

they did so under the auspices of the Veteran Verein.[144] The drive for funding for a monument on the Antietam battlefield sprang from the energies of the Veteran Verein's leaders after a commemoration of that battle in 1886, which was likewise organized by the Verein.[145]

Unit-specific organizations could also interact with each other. In 1881, the veterans of the Twentieth were one of dozens of groups, both German and non-German, which marched in a Decoration (now Memorial) Day parade in New York City.[146] When the Anglo- and Irish-Americans of the 99th New York formed their own veterans' association and held their first reunion in 1892, the original commander of the 20th New York, Max Weber, was among the guests of honor.[147] The men of the Ninety-Ninth clearly had great respect for the Forty-Eighter; at the 1902 reunion, for which remarks were published, one member effusively praised Weber's actions on the night of August 28, 1861, when the beleaguered, wet, and hungry command passed a nervous night on the sand by Forts Hatteras and Clark. Their embrace of the German officer highlights the extent to which many veterans placed emphasis on mutual service and shared suffering, rather than ethnic divisions.

When the 99th New York and the 20th New York held a joint reunion on June 13, 1897, it became an occasion for both groups to reinforce hyphenated Americanism. The invitation assured veterans of the 99th New York that the event would be "such an interesting occasion," and promised the attendance of General Weber, provided his war wounds did not prevent him from coming.[148] The gathering was held at Mount Pleasant Park in Carlstadt, New Jersey, just across the Hudson River from Manhattan. The proprietor of Mount Pleasant was a former

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[144] Lehigh Valley Railroad, *Tour of 20th (Turners) Regiment of the City of New York,* (1906) from the New York Public Library, courtesy of Gary Kappesser.
[145] "On the Warpath Again: German Veterans Going to Antietam to Erect a Monument." *New York Herald*, September 16, 1887.
[146] "Decoration Day: Honoring the Memory of the Martyred Dead." *New York Herald*, May 28, 1881
[147] Philip Corell, *History of the Naval Brigade: 99th NY Volunteers, Union Coast Guard, 1861-1865* (New York: Regimental Veterans' Association, 1905).
[148] Corell, *History* inset

member of the 20th New York, Christoph Niederer.[149] A Bavarian immigrant and true *Vereinsdeutscher*, Niederer's home hosted the local Turnverein, a bowling club, and a drum corps. A "popular man, genial, courteous and obliging," Niederer was also a proud veteran, having been one of the principal founders of and a longtime officer in Custer Post 17 of the New Jersey Grand Army of the Republic.

Niederer was also one of the men who mutinied in the spring of 1863. Evidently, his questionable military record was not necessarily grounds for exclusion from veterans' organizations and veterans' culture. The particular circumstances of the Twentieth's mutiny and their subsequent pardon must have aided in keeping him a member in good standing in both the Veteran Verein and the greater veterans' community. The specifics of the mutiny may also explain his enthusiasm for veterans' culture. When members of the Twentieth refused to go into combat, they were objecting to what they considered unfair and duplicitous behavior by the government. Niederer, along with other mutineers who participated in veterans' activities, evidently felt that under these conditions their actions did not negate their right to citizenship. Perhaps these men felt that their devotion to the government, including their conscientious performance of their duties while forced to serve as laborers after the mutiny, made them even better representatives of the model citizen that veterans from all ethnic backgrounds attempted to personify.

The decision to host the event in Mount Pleasant Park was a calculated one. The establishment was not merely a green patch of land. It was a definitively German location, which included a beer garden, dance hall, and shooting range.[150] These three amenities marked it

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[149] James M. Van Valen, *History of Bergen County, New Jersey* (Philadelphia: Bowers Printing Company, 1900), 377.

[150] Catherine Cassidy, "Christoph Niederer," in *New Jersey Goes to War*, ed. Joseph G. Bilby (Hightstown, NJ: Longstreet House, 2010), 91.

as a space to maintain German culture, yet there was no conflict in also making it a space for patriotic expression, which events such as veterans' reunions necessarily became. In using Mount Pleasant Park as their venue, the veterans of both the 99th New York and the 20th New York affirmed their belief in the compatibility of patriotism and ethnic identity.

The most compelling proof of this sentiment can be drawn from the prominent inclusion in the event's program of a poem by Charles G. Halpine.[151] Halpine was an Irish immigrant who had served in the famed "Fighting 69th" New York Regiment of the Irish Brigade.[152] As a New York City Irishman and lifelong Democrat, Halpine was an unlikely friend of the Turners. Yet his words echoed the vision of patriotism to which the Turners subscribed:

> Comrades known in marches many / comrades tried in dangers many / comrades bound by memories many / brothers ever let us be.
>
> Wounds or sickness may divide us / marching orders may divide us / but whatever fate betide us / brothers of the heart are we.
>
> Comrades known by faith the clearest / tried when death was near and nearest / bound we are by ties the dearest / brothers evermore to be.
>
> And, if spared, and growing older / shoulder still in line with shoulder / and with hearts no thrill the colder / brothers ever we shall be.
>
> By communion of the banner / crimson, white, and starry banner / by the baptism of the banner / children of one Church are we.
>
> Creed nor faction can divide us / race nor language can divide us; / still, whatever fate betide us / Children of the Flag are we.

With the inclusion of this piece, both the 99th New York and the 20th New York embraced a vision of patriotism and citizenship which did not require them to assimilate into Anglo-American culture. While emphasizing that allegiance to the state was more important than allegiance to ethnic identity, Halpine explicitly leaves room for creed, faction, race, and language

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[151] Pamphlet included *in History of the Naval Brigade: 99th New York Volunteers, Union Coast Guard 1861-1865*. Grand Army of the Republic Records, New York State Library, Albany, New York. Box 12.
[152] Edward K. Spann, *Gotham at War: New York City, 1860-1861* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2002), 118

to be distinguishing features. This message would have resonated with the heavily Irish 99th New York, whose largely Catholic background left them on the margins of society during the nineteenth century. It assured Germans, who were prevented from fully integrating into the public sphere by a language barrier and opposition to temperance, that their commitment to the nation was more important than any other feature. Using this model, both communities were able to integrate themselves into patriotic culture, regardless of cultural idiosyncrasies.

The GAR and the Emergence of Patriotic Culture

The unifying element in Halpine's poem is the American flag, although he was far from the first to embrace the flag as a symbol. Halpine's emphasis on the "communion of the banner" was a product of the "flag cult" which developed in the decades following the Civil War. The primary force behind the development and perpetuation of the flag cult – and of most of the shared beliefs and activities found among Civil War veterans – was the largest organization of former Union soldiers, the Grand Army of the Republic.[153] The Grand Army of the Republic was an essential force in articulating and spreading ideas about patriotism during the Gilded Age, and asserted that, as the defenders of the federal government during its time of greatest peril, veterans owned a unique claim to establishing the proper standards of patriotic expression.[154] Thanks in part to an aggressive program of "patriotic instruction," the organization succeeded in spreading its views.

Veterans of the 20th New York were in constant contact with this brand of patriotism. Stuart McConnell points to domination of native-born Americans and assimilationist rhetoric as

[153] Stuart McConnell, *Glorious Contentment: The Grand Army of the Republic, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 228-231.
[154] McConnell, 222

evidence that Germans and other foreigners were marginalized in the GAR.[155] Yet German-Americans did participate in the day-to-day activities of the GAR, albeit with a degree of self-segregation. Christoph Niederer was an enthusiastic member, whose ties to the GAR became a major part of his public identity. In Manhattan, German-Americans joined Post 192, among others. Post 192 was named for Forty-Eighter Adolph von Steinwehr, giving it an explicitly German character. Its charter members included Polish-born Wladimir Krzyzankowski, who was a prominent figure among German speakers and a former general in the XI Corps, and Adolph Reimann, who enlisted as a nineteen year old in the 20th New York at the outset of the war and was wounded at Antietam.[156] Four other veterans of the Turner Rifles were also members of the post, including Emil Ney, who had mutinied alongside Christoph Niederer. The post's location on 56th Street – far north of Kleindeutschland – may account for the low numbers of Turner veterans, although the post itself was fairly large.

McConnell argues that because elements of the GAR's patriotic culture were "backward-looking, preservationist, and faintly evangelical," Germans and other foreigners were driven away.[157] The veterans of the 20th New York did not have to adopt Grand Army ideas in their entirety, however. At any rate, as German America became generally more conservative, they would have had fewer problems responding to a "backward-looking, preservationist" vision, although evangelicalism and nativism would undoubtedly have been barriers. With these considerations in mind, German-Americans took elements of the GAR's patriotic lore and recast them with a uniquely German flavor. As German-Americans would argue, their devotion to the government and to democratic institutions despite their foreign birth made them particularly

[155] McConnell, 209
[156] *Descriptive Book of Adolph von Steinwehr Post 192*. Grand Army of the Republic Records, New York State Library, Albany, New York. Box 73.
[157] McConnell, 223

appropriate embodiments of patriotism and, based on their wartime service, they claimed legal citizenship and ownership of the nation for all those of German extraction.

One element of postwar veteran culture which the veterans of the 20th embraced without qualification was abolition. During the war, the majority of Northern soldiers originally enlisted exclusively to preserve the Union. The Emancipation Proclamation added another element to the mix when it was announced in late 1862. Upon its release, a torrent of complaints came back from soldiers who felt that they had been misled into fighting a war against slavery. As time went on and Union armies pushed south, however, opposition waned, and those who did not regard slavery as a moral wrong at least came to view abolition as a military necessity.[158] Northern veterans subsequently embraced the destruction of slavery as an unqualified good, particularly when looking back on the conflict decades later.

As the 1860s turned into the 1870s and beyond, many veterans even presented themselves (with varying degrees of truthfulness) as prewar abolitionists. The 99th New York offers a particularly egregious example of this trend. The regimental history of the 99th New York pointed to "that love for the cause of the Union and the Nation that was the leading spirit of the war, whose successful termination re-established a government as broad in its construction as the universe itself, 'and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.'"[159] These veterans were in a poor position to claim that they had fought for human equality, given that many men in the regiment were reported to have made a handsome profit by acting as slave catchers for local plantation owners while they were stationed at Fortress Monroe.[160] In contrast, the Turners, and all of those who fit the model of the freedom-loving German, were able to look

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[158] James McPherson, *The Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 688.
[159] Corell, 15
[160] *Free at Last: A Documentary History of Slavery, Freedom, and the Civil War* ed. Ira Berlin et al (New York: The New Press, 1992), 109-110.

back upon a well-documented record of abolitionist thought to demonstrate that they had been fully committed to emancipation long before it had become an official part of the Northern cause.

The emphasis on emancipation as a war aim and recognition of slavery as a cause for secession created a barrier to reconciliation with the south. In 1895, a joint reunion at the Chattanooga battlefield was soured when Alabama governor and Confederate veteran William C. Oates, tired of Northerners' speeches extolling the virtues of their cause, launched into an invective against the "aggressive fanaticism" which "caused an ocean of tears to be shed, drenched the land in blood and sacrificed the lives of a million men and untold millions in treasure."[161] The recalcitrance of many southern veterans colored the picture of Civil War commemoration and underscored the legitimacy of German-American citizenship. Clearly men who had fought and died for the Union and emancipation had a strong claim to citizenship, even if they spoke with odd accents and drank beer. Their claim was even more valid in the postwar era when held up to the legions of Anglo-American Southerners who gave every indication of remaining rebels at heart.

Patriotic Discourse on the Battlefield

As the people who had marched off in the spring of 1861 as teenagers grayed into middle age, movements to preserve battlefields, erect monuments, and host reunions gained steam. Throughout the 1870s and 1880s, many battlefields became destinations. Although most were not yet protected government land, their popularity exploded. By 1886, one Gettysburg guide

[161] Oates quoted in Janney, 197

book noted that the little Pennsylvania town had become a "National Mecca."[162] Most of this traffic was generated not by morbid tourists, however, but by veterans themselves.

Twenty-five years after the guns at Antietam had fallen silent, armies descended upon it once again.[163] The fields north of the town of Sharpsburg, which had been the site of some of the bloodiest fighting, were filled now with the campfires and tents of men who had bivouacked in the same space a quarter century before. The local *Hagerstown Herald & Torch* reported on the bounteous feast of "regulation hard tack, bacon, and bean soup" which the veterans indulged in, and vividly illustrated the patriotic décor that dominated the scene. Despite the horrors that the men had experienced there, the Antietam battlefield now saw "bands of music and dancing" and "entertainment for those inclined to such diversion."

What drew Antietam's veterans back? Stuart McConnell compellingly argues that Civil War veterans felt deep personal attachments to the ground over which they fought. This developed out of the idea that battles of the time could be viewed "as an accretion of local actions by small units of known individuals."[164] The men who gathered at Antietam from far corners of the United States to remember the battle shared the experience of being veterans of the Civil War, but each person knew a particular spot on the battlefield which held a memory that was known only to him and the comrades who immediately surrounded him. Each unit constructed their own memory of the battle, and cherished it in their own way. Perhaps most importantly, veterans could identify a certain spot as the place where the goals of emancipation and Union had been secured, and attach fixed location to their accomplishments.

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[162] J. Howard Wert, quoted in Janney 107
[163] "Twenty-Fifth Anniversary at Antietam." *Hagerstown (MD) Herald & Torch*, 23 September 1887.
[164] McConnell, 21.

The surviving veterans of the 20th New York flocked to Sharpsburg in larger numbers than most other units to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary.[165] Approximately one hundred and twenty five of them assembled on the morning of September 17, 1887. Their purpose was to dedicate a monument to their regiment – one of, if not the, first at Antietam. The *Herald & Torch* described the ceremonies surrounding the dedication as "the principal feature of this day," drawing not only the men of the Twentieth itself but also several bands, the local Grand Army of the Republic chapter, and "all the veterans of the camp."[166] The experience of the 20th New York, unique to them though it may have been, was offered up as an opportunity for unified national remembrance.

Many of the veterans who attended and had not served in the 20th New York must have been thoroughly confused. All of the speeches by the Turners themselves were in German, to the befuddlement of many in the audience and of Maryland GAR official Colonel G.W.F. Vernon, a guest speaker at the event. Vernon was unfazed, however, and announced that "while he did not understand their language, he was always ready to take off his hat to the German soldier, who was proud of the land of his birth, but prouder of the land of his adoption," and declared that "every true American recognizes the Germans as among our most thrifty and industrious citizens."[167]

Vernon's words echoed in many ways those of the New York City official who had seen the Turner Rifles off from New York City in June of 1861. While recognizing ethnic differences existed, both nevertheless emphasized the achievements that those of German extraction had made towards the security and prosperity of the United States. Each also recognized that German-Americans bore a dual allegiance to the Fatherland and to their adopted nation, but both

[165] "Twenty-Fifth Anniversary at Antietam." *Hagerstown (MD) Herald & Torch*, 23 September 1887.
[166] "Twenty-Fifth Anniversary at Antietam." *Hagerstown (MD) Herald & Torch*, 23 September 1887.
[167] "Twenty-Fifth Anniversary at Antietam." *Hagerstown (MD) Herald & Torch*, 23 September 1887.

chose to assume that when held against each other, German-Americans would support America over Germany. Neither speaker indicated that the full rights of citizenship were something that German-Americans had yet to earn. While Germans were recognized as a distinct group, they had their place in society, and even if their culture was separate from that of Anglo-Americans, they had secured a position in the United States.

Undoubtedly the men of the Twentieth were proud of their service. The *Herald & Torch* reporter was either able to understand German or managed to obtain a translation of the main speeches made at the 1887 monument dedication; in any case, the speeches made by Joseph Unger, Lieutenant Henry Roehr, and Conrad Thoenges, are revealing of the attitudes the 20th New York felt towards their wartime service. Roehr recounted the regiment's role in the battle in great detail, lamenting the loss of so many "sons of the Fatherland."[168] Their deaths were not in vain, however. Echoing the words of Carl Schurz in his True Americanism speech of 1859 and invoking the image of the freedom-loving German, Roehr emphasized that the war secured the place of "humanity and the love of equal rights, as opposed to slavery." Speaking of their love for the United States, Roehr claimed that "patriotism alone prompted us to shoulder the musket… pride for our regiment did not die with our muster-out."

The decision to conduct all of the speeches in German is a curious one. The ceremony was apparently organized from the outset with the understanding that there would be Anglophone Americans in attendance. Why, then, would the ceremonies be in a language that would be incomprehensible to a substantial number of observers? The ceremony was not intended merely to serve as an occasion to remember fallen comrades, but as an assertion of German-American identity and their pluralistic brand of patriotism. Roehr concluded his speech by saying that "this monument, however, is not intended alone to mark the resting place of

[168] "Twenty-Fifth Anniversary at Antietam." *Hagerstown (MD) Herald & Torch*, 23 September 1887.

members of a German regiment, but is to appeal to our posterity, should the need ever arise… to follow the example of their fathers of the Turner Rifles."[169] The example set by the veterans of the Turner Rifles was not merely to answer the call of their adopted country in a time of distress. The ceremony served as a self-confident assertion of the equality of German-American and Anglo-American identity. By making German the language of choice for the proceedings, it set it on equal footing as a language appropriate for use in the broader public sphere and patriotic expression. The invocation of the Turners' posterity affirmed a perpetual claim for Germans to a place in the American nation. Perhaps when Roehr referred to the war being waged for "humanity and equal rights," he was speaking not so much of equality between Blacks and Whites, but of equality between German-Americans and Anglo-Americans.

The monument itself further supports this statement. The front of the monument bears the following inscription:

20th Regiment,
NY Vols.,
Turner Rifles,
3d Brig., 2d Div.,
6th Corps

Photograph by author

[169] "Twenty-Fifth Anniversary at Antietam." *Hagerstown (MD) Herald & Torch*, 23 September 1887.

Directly below is the carved image of an owl holding a torch, with the motto *Gut Heil*, a colloquialism which loosely translates to "good health."[170] Both are symbols of the Turnverein. The symbols of the Turnverein give the front face a personal touch, which contrasts to the somewhat drab and unfeeling statement of the regiment's place in the military hierarchy. Atop the statue is a stone military drum, draped in a canteen, leather cartridge box, belt, and scabbard. Perhaps in a reflection of the Turners' status as volunteers (as opposed to army regulars), these martial accoutrements lie in a jumbled, decidedly unmilitary fashion. A wreath resting against the drum and trappings of war lends a peaceful tone and complements the cemetery landscape.

Barbara Lorenzkowski wrote in her examination of the German-language public sphere that "sound demarcated space, but also transformed it."[171] If the use of spoken German in patriotic addresses could transform a national space, so too could orthography. The left face of the monument reads:

Zum Andenken
an unsere
Gefallenen Kameraden
errichtet von den
Ueberlebenden des Regts

On the right side is the English translation:

Erected in memory
of our
fallen comrades
by the
Survivors of the Regt.

[170] *Landmark Designation Report: Vorwaerts Turner Hall*. City of Chicago Commission on Chicago Landmarks. 9 September 2009.
http://www.cityofchicago.org/dam/city/depts/zlup/Historic_Preservation/Publications/Vorwaerts_Turner_Hall.pdf
[171] Barbara Lorenzkowski, *Sounds of Ethnicity: Listening to German North America, 1850-1914* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010), 8.

Photograph by author

The translation of the German message serves the obvious practical purpose of being accessible to any non-German visitor who might happen upon the monument. Yet the layout of the text also serves an important symbolic purpose. The symmetry of the text connotes a sense of equality between the two inscriptions, and between the two languages, though difference is again recognized. The English letters are carved in a standard English font, while the German is in the Gothic typeset used by German publications of the era. Neither is necessarily valued above the other. Through both spoken and written word, German is established as an entirely legitimate language – although not the only language – in which to remember those who lost their lives in the service of an English-speaking nation.

The physical location of the monument is similarly important. The marker is one of only a handful located inside of the Antietam National Cemetery, one of the great wartime burial grounds that had been established during the Civil War to honor the memory of those to whom

Abraham Lincoln famously referred as the "hallowed dead" who had given the "last full measure of devotion" in support of the Union.[172] By placing a marker of local, ethnic memory inside of a site of larger, national memory, the veterans of the 20th New York claimed a portion of a physical space dedicated to national commemoration, and ensured that the contributions of German-American soldiers would not be overlooked by those who came to visit the battlefield. Even the orientation of the stone aids in this effort. The German text faces the main cemetery path, ensuring that anyone who stumbles upon the monument will recognize its Germanness before being able to read the English.

Taken altogether, the ceremonies surrounding the 1887 dedication of the 20th New York's monument at Antietam point to a sense of both ethnic and national pride among the former members of the Turner Rifles. This pride stemmed from an acute ethnic consciousness. Rather than feel ashamed of their difference, the 20th New York's veterans embraced the ways in which their Germanness set them apart, and argued that their ethnicity did not diminish the contributions they had made to the nation in its time of crisis. Moreover, the unabashed use of German in patriotic speech and on patriotic inscriptions points to a sense among these veterans that German ancestry was as legitimate and as compatible with American identity as Anglo heritage. In the decades following the dedication of the regiment's first Antietam monument, they would embrace the entirety of the history of the Civil War as their own, despite the outbursts of anti-German nativism in 1863 which had alienated much of the German-American home front and the fact that their own enlistment expired halfway through the war.

Antietam offered another opportunity to reinforce the idea of the freedom-loving German. Although the 20th New York had actually incurred higher losses at the Battle of Salem Church, Antietam held greater symbolic significance. The tactical result of the battle was

[172] "Antietam Monuments," National Park Service, http://www.nps.gov/anti/historyculture/

somewhat ambiguous, but it resembled enough of a victory to allow President Lincoln to announce the Emancipation Proclamation. The German-Americans of the 20th New York tied their history to the moment when emancipation became a Union war aim. For those men who viewed their wartime experience as a part of a great struggle both to end slavery and to keep the Union intact, the erection of a monument at Antietam tied them to the triumph of the North and made a clear argument to any visitor about the meaning of their sacrifice.

Fusing Patriotism and Ethnicity

German-Americans who did not fight in the Civil War did not need to follow their fathers and grandfathers to the Antietam battlefield to witness the ethnically colored expressions of patriotism which Civil War veterans established. The veterans of the 20th New York participated in and acted as a driving force behind patriotic activities within New York City. These events tied German ethnicity to patriotism and patriotism to Germanness. One could not embrace German-American culture without embracing the freedom-loving German and the German-American Civil War experience.

One of the great traditions of the American Turners was the series of parades and all-day picnics of which various Turner branches took charge. In the decades following the Civil War, these retreats often took on an explicitly patriotic character. In July of 1891, for example, the *New York Herald* recalled an impressive spectacle organized by New York's Turners. Forty-two Turner chapters turned out for the event, which was kicked off by a parade of nearly eight thousand people.[173] Leading the parade were not the business or political leaders of New York's German communities, but the veterans of the 20th New York, who marched in formation, as did

[173] "Turners Struggling for Prizes; Athletic Exercises at Ridgewood Park after the Grand Parade." *New York Herald*, 21 July 1891

the old soldiers of the heavily-German GAR Post 122. The Twentieth's old commander, Max Weber, was the only featured speaker listed by the *Herald.*

The day's festivities also featured acrobatic competitions between various Turner groups, as well as a great deal of feasting and beer drinking.[174] These activities marked the event as one typical of the New York Germans in the nineteenth century. Similar events were long considered both inside and outside of the German community to be peculiarly German activities. Even the South Carolinian observer, William Bobo, snidely reported having seen "on the great German festival, St. (some one's) Day, fifteen thousand Dutch" parading around.[175] The Turners used these events as opportunities to impress non-members with their athletic prowess and acrobatic skills. Yet this event was differentiated from any prewar occasion by the prominent place which German Civil War veterans were given in the marching order. Such displays reinforced the position of Turners and war veterans as guardians of German-American culture.[176]

The visible role of Max Weber and the participation of so many Civil War veterans shifted the focus of the parade from one of ethnic solidarity to one of support for cultural pluralism within the United States. Weber, as a moderate Forty-Eighter, fit the mold of the freedom-loving German. The modification of the parade to include so many veterans was in many ways an adoption of mainstream patriotic culture, which made Civil War veterans the guardians of an emerging national consciousness. The injection of patriotic discourse into everyday German-American life reinforced an American identity. More importantly, however, the place of the Turner veterans in leading a parade literally placed men who had fought for abolition and the maintenance of the federal government at the fore of a German cultural activity. Younger German-American observers could accept the history of the men in front of them as the

[174] "Topics in New York: Festival of the Turners." *Baltimore Sun,* 21 Jul 1891.
[175] Bobo, 184
[176] Efford, 23-31

history of all German-Americans. The explicit self-association of Germanness with the warriors of abolition provided a lens through which German-Americans could evaluate their past. This marriage of patriotic expression and activity with German traditions grafted patriotism onto the definition of Germanness in the United States.

That the message these Civil War veterans tried to convey had some resonance in the German-American community becomes clear in a number of other ways. Friedrich Kapp emphasized to one enthusiastic audience at a postwar ceremony that the "Sängers and Turners were first" to enlist in United States service, and were present "on almost all battlefields of the colossal war," indicating a degree to which the image of eager, faithful volunteers who stuck out the conflict to defeat treason and slavery had taken hold in the broader German-American imagination.[177] To be sure, most Kleindeutschlanders went on with their lives without actively seeking out discussions on the Civil War and its legacy, but the signs of its continued importance were all around.

The parade was significant in extending this display of German-Americanness outside of the German sphere, as well. The extensive reporting by English-language newspapers on the event, both within New York and elsewhere, is by itself evidence of the attention the Turners drew to themselves. Equally important, however, is the parade's line of march, which physically brought them out of an isolated German space and into contact with the rest of New York's diverse population. The Turners intentionally made the day's events into a spectacle designed bring German-American culture into contact with non-Germans. The decision to do so represents a self-confident assertion of the legitimacy of their model of pluralistic patriotism and a sense of belonging in the greater public sphere in the United States.

[177] Kapp quoted in Keller, 161

Justice for the Mutineers

When the model of the freedom-loving German took hold, its effects were legal as well as social. This was the case in 1905, when Congress passed the *Act for the Relief of Certain Enlisted Men of the Twentieth Regiment of New York Volunteer Infantry*.[178] At stake were the pensions for the 199 men and their families who had mutinied on the eve of the Battle of Salem Church. The effort demonstrated that the vision of pluralistic patriotism the 20th New York's veterans supported had practical consequences for them and their dependents, and Congress's favorable ruling represented an acceptance of their arguments for German equality.

The court martial in the spring of 1863 sentenced the mutineers to be dishonorably discharged and confined to hard labor for the duration of the war. Although they were pardoned after only a few months, the pardon did not undo their discharges, and for all intents and purposes the 199 men were still ex-convicts. It was not until 1866 that the War Department issued an order which converted their discharges from dishonorable to honorable. This conversion had immediate practical implications. For those veterans whose ability to earn a livelihood had been impacted by wounds or disabilities sustained in service, it made them eligible for federal pensions.[179] While not a significant factor in 1866, dishonorable discharges were also problematic because they made veterans ineligible for GAR membership.

Only three of the 199 mutineers had been wounded during their term of service, and they each healed sufficiently to return to active duty by May of 1863. The relatively robust health of the mutineers explains why the issue of their discharges and eligibility for benefits did not come to a head until the 1890s – until then, most of the mutineers would have had no expectation of

[178] Report Accompanying the Act for the Relief of Certain Enlisted Men of the Twentieth Regiment of New York Volunteer Infantry, 58th Congress, 3rd Session, 1905, HR 1860, 2.
[179] Larry M. Logue and Peter Blanck, *Race, Ethnicity, and Disability: Veterans and Benefits in Post-Civil War America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 20.

receiving a pension and no reason to apply. In 1890, the federal government passed a new pension law, which effectively extended pension eligibility to all veterans and their dependents and widows.[180] Ninety-two percent of German-Americans or their families applied, and an astounding 76% were actually awarded pensions, a proportion that was even higher than that of native-born Americans.[181] The staggering number of German-Americans who applied for pensions indicates the strength of the idea that the soldiers had earned full rights of citizenship and that the government continued to be indebted to them for their service.

One of the rejected claims was submitted by the widow of Private Philip Weber, Company F, 20th New York.[182] In response to her application for a pension of April 22, 1895, Mrs. Weber received word that a decision on veterans with Weber's status had been made the previous autumn. A family member of another mutineer had written to confirm that the relative's discharge had been converted from dishonorable to honorable. The Commissioner of Pensions referred the matter to the Acting Secretary of War, and together they decided that the discharges could never legally have been converted to honorable discharges "based on the well-established rule that there can be no revocation or modification of a court-martial sentence that has been lawfully carried into execution, no matter how unjust or unmerited this sentence may be deemed to have been." Because the War Department never had the legal authority to convert the status of discharges, the Acting Secretary of War concluded "the dishonorable discharge is a thing done which can not be undone," and the 1866 order of the War Department was "void ab initio and entirely without effect."[183]

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[180] Theda Skocpol, "America's First Social Security System," in *The Civil War Veteran: A Historical Reader*, ed. Larry M. Logue and Michael Barton (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 184-186.
[181] Logue and Blanck, 94-99
[182] Report Accompanying the Act for the Relief of Certain Enlisted Men of the Twentieth Regiment of New York Volunteer Infantry, 58th Congress, 3rd Session, 1905, HR 1860, 5.
[183] Report Accompanying the Act for the Relief of Certain Enlisted Men of the Twentieth Regiment of New York Volunteer Infantry, 58th Congress, 3rd Session, 1905, HR 1860, 6.

The repercussions of this were significant. While the threat this posed to disabled and elderly veterans and their dependents was obvious, the greater issue this decision presented was a rejection of the claims the 20th New York's veterans had made to citizenship and belonging in the United States. The GAR had led efforts to lobby for pensions by asserting that the federal government owed a debt to former soldiers. The men of the 20th New York used this same line of reasoning when they claimed ownership of national spaces and championed a pluralistic American identity. By refuting the claim that the mutineers made to pension rights, the Commissioner of Pensions and Acting Secretary of War also challenged the privileged position which these German-American veterans had established.

It took until 1905 for Congress to legally reverse the decision and formally convert the dishonorable discharges to honorable discharges. Notably, the primary supporter of the Turners in this endeavor was not a New York representative, but a Republican from Michigan, Senator Russell Alger. Alger was an ideal figure to push through the law for the relief of the mutineers. A member of the Committee on Military Affairs, former governor, and an instrumental force in the election of President William McKinley, Alger was an imposing political presence.[184] More pertinently, Alger was a former national commander-in-chief of the Grand Army of the Republic and a Civil War veteran with an impeccable service record.

Senator Alger was responsible for compiling the documents which were included in the *Report Accompanying the Act for the Relief of Certain Enlisted Men of the Twentieth Regiment of New York Volunteer Infantry*. He also prefaced the report with a recommendation of his own. Emphasizing, as the mutineers did, that the 20th New York's term of service should have ended on April 29, 1863, he also implied the charges were trumped up. Alger noted in his

[184] Patricia Majher, "The Later and Sometimes Illustrious Careers of 12 Civil War Figures," *Michigan History Magazine*, no. 95 (Nov/Dec 2011): 48, Academic OneFile, accessed April 2, 2015.

recommendation that the Turner Rifles "had not been informed" that they were in the face of the enemy, a condition which heightened the severity of the mutiny charge. He ignored the testimony of numerous officers who claimed that there was no way the soldiers could not have known, given that they were issued campaign rations, ammunition, and could hear the sounds of battle nearby.

Alger's greatest emphasis was on the continued service of the mutineers to the federal government after they had been convicted. Highlighting the reports of General Marsena Patrick, who found "their behavior was so good that they were almost immediately put on parole," he painted the mutineers as an obedient, unhostile group. In closing his summation of the mutiny and its aftermath, Alger stressed "all of them served the full term of their enlistment. They took their punishment like men, and were punished enough."[185] In doing so, Alger presented the mutineers as models of both service and masculinity. This depiction of the mutineers tied them directly to the patriotic culture which Alger had forwarded as commander of the GAR and which the veterans of the 20th New York had promoted within the German-American community.

The 1905 law that vindicated the mutineers was grounded both in a sense of practical justice and in a belief that the 20th New York's reluctant fighters were not shirkers, but embodiments of American ideals. While Alger noted at the beginning of his report that the men were "mostly Germans," this was not a barrier to their inclusion in a patriotic culture that emphasized service to the federal government. From a purely legal standpoint, the *Act for the Relief of Certain Enlisted Men of the Twentieth Regiment of New York Volunteer Infantry* gave the veterans of the 20th New York and their descendants access to material relief from the federal government. But on a deeper level, the act represented the acceptance of the model of pluralistic

[185] Report Accompanying the Act for the Relief of Certain Enlisted Men of the Twentieth Regiment of New York Volunteer Infantry, 58th Congress, 3rd Session, 1905, HR 1860,1-2.

patriotism which freedom-loving Germans had built in the preceding decades. Without commenting at length on the soldiers' ethnicity, it recognized the equality of German-Americans in both law and patriotic culture.

Beyond Blue and Gray

The infusion of patriotic rhetoric and activity into German-American communities by German-American veterans fundamentally transformed German-American self-perception. By 1900, the model of the freedom-loving German was the dominant image which most leaders in the German-American world wanted to project. Yet Civil War veterans could not control patriotic discourse forever. As time went on and the men who had striven to legitimize a pluralistic brand of patriotism began to die off, the freedom-loving German needed a new standard bearer.

Chapter 3

Kulturförderer: The Freedom-Loving German After 1900

On May 14, 1906, Carl Schurz, the most prominent German-American of the nineteenth century, died in New York City.[186] His contemporaries marked his passing with an outpouring of grief. On June 8, a committee of prominent national figures, including former President Grover Cleveland, Booker T. Washington, and a number of German and German-American leaders, went about organizing an appropriate memorial service.[187] On Wednesday, November 21, New York's German singing societies were joined by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra in performing German music, including Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*, for the crowds which filled Carnegie Hall to pay their respects. When Joseph Choate, chairman of the Carl Schurz Memorial Committee, rose to deliver the first of many speeches, he began by vindicating the vision of American society which Schurz had put forth in his *True Americanism* speech almost six decades previously.

Carl Schurz, as Choate described him, "was himself the choicest example of that splendid host of Germans who have enriched and strengthened and fertilized our native stock, to produce that composite creature… the New American."[188] Choate described Schurz as the archetypical freedom-loving German. "With an inherent instinct for freedom," he continued, "he was at one with Lincoln… When the war broke out, and it became manifest that the Gordian knot of slavery could be cut only by the sword… on many a bloody field – at Manassas, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and Chattanooga – with dauntless skill and courage he fought for freedom here as he had fought for it at home." Choate's conclusion was unmistakable. Carl Schurz, a man of

[186] Hans L. Trefousse, *Carl Schurz: A Biography* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998), 295.
[187] Carl Schurz Memorial Committee, *Addresses in Memory of Carl Schurz, Carnegie Hall, New York, November 21, 1906* (New York: Irving Press, 1906), 6.
[188] Carl Schurz Memorial Committee, 7-8

foreign birth who tied himself to notions of personal liberty and economic freedom and who devoted himself to serving the United States in both war a peace, was a model citizen.

The next speaker, Grover Cleveland, also embraced Schurz as a freedom-loving German. Demonstrating a full embrace of German-Americans as fellow citizens, the former president declared "in our Republic the death of such a man is a direct loss to good citizenship and a hurt to our nationality – a loss more irreparable than kinship can suffer."[189] The Anglo-American continued, in slight rebuke of his native-born countrymen, "those of us who boast that we are Americans by heredity should not forget that he who thus wrought for the betterment of our nation's political ideals and practice… never allowed his loving memory of his fatherland to fade," but, far more importantly, "added lustre to the patriotism of his nature by unreserved devotion and fidelity to his American allegiance." In closing, Cleveland told his audience, "all of us to should take to heart the broad and impressive lesson taught to every American citizen by the life and career of Carl Schurz." Schurz, the prototypical freedom-loving German, was a model citizen.

The Last Shriek on the Retreat

In the decade before non-German leaders publicly embraced the image of the freedom-loving German at Carnegie Hall, many German-American leaders feared the model was losing its resonance among the German community itself.[190] German America after 1900 was as diverse as ever, and German socialists, anarchists, some Catholics, and many rural communities explicitly rejected the image which groups such as the Turners projected. Uncompromising emphasis on personal and economic liberty, secularism, and staunch opposition to temperance

[189] Carl Schurz Memorial Committee, 11
[190] Charles T. Johnson, *Culture at Twilight: The National German-American Alliance, 1901-1918* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 2

were positions which either disinterested or offended large swaths of the German-American population, many of whom were increasingly emphasizing their Americanness instead of Germanness.

At the turn of the century, German America was undergoing an increasingly rapid process of absolute assimilation.[191] While most German-Americans still maintained ethnic markers, the dual emphasis on the German and American characteristics of German-American identity which freedom-loving Germans had championed and the certainty of belonging in the United States as German-Americans began to fade. The children and grandchildren of German immigrants, many of whom felt little direct connection to the Old World, left German America in what David Detjen describes as a state of "cultural schizophrenia."[192] While groups such as the Turners continued to champion the image of the freedom-loving German, the effects of assimilation undercut their message.

Further weakening the image of the freedom-loving German were the deaths of many of its strongest supporters and embodiments. As the nineteenth century turned into the twentieth, increasingly fewer Civil War veterans remained alive. Those who did were, by virtue of their advanced age, hardly in a position to continue the same vigorous level of social engagement and public visibility which had allowed them to spread the idea of the freedom-loving German from GAR halls to ethnic enclaves. Even those German-American veterans robust enough to continue to march in parades and participate in public ceremonies would have had a harder time conveying their message, as German-speaking ethnic enclaves began to dissolve around 1900.[193]

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[191] David W. Detjen, *The Germans in Missouri, 1900-1918: Prohibition, Neutrality, and Assimilation* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985), 20.
[192] Detjen, 23
[193] Frederick Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974), 31.

Despite the apathy of younger generations, German-American Civil War veterans cherished the image of the freedom-loving German until the end of their lives, as obituaries in the German-language *New-Yorker Staatszeitung* indicate. The *Staatszeitung* filled its front page with the top global and national news items, with plentiful space devoted to local stories and an extended section devoted to news "From the Old Homeland." Whenever a prominent member of the German-American community died, the paper devoted ample space to his obituary. Around 1900, these figures were almost invariably Civil War veterans, and their wartime exploits were extolled more than any other aspect of their lives.

Philadelphia's Victor Kald, who died in April of 1900, provides one such example. His death was announced under the large headline "Philadelphia in Mourning." While his service in his local Turnverein was greatly emphasized, a disproportionate amount of space was devoted to his three years of military service. The writer of the obituary even felt the need to explain why he did not enlist earlier in the war than he did, noting that "upon the outbreak of the war Kald enlisted in the volunteer regiment which was raised here in 1861," but the regiment was not accepted into federal service. After a brief sojourn to the Berlin Turnfest that year, he "went through with his decision to become a soldier and enlisted on September 8, 1862" and "took part until the end of the war and the Reconstruction of the South."[194] This tribute to Kald emphasized his qualities that made him a freedom-loving German.

One week later, the *Staatszeitung* printed the obituary of John Ernst Winter. His was even more devoted to his Civil War exploits, with three quarters of the article devoted to stories from his wartime experience. Readers were expected to be impressed by his patriotic stand in Memphis at the beginning of April, 1861. Winter, so the story went, was roused from his slumber in a steamboat cabin by a Confederate Vigilance Committee, which sought to "compel

[194] "Philadelphia in Trauer," *New-Yorker Staatszeitung*, 7 April 1900

him to swear loyalty to the Confederate flag. Winter explained that he knew only one flag, the stars and stripes, and with a revolver in his hand drove the interlopers from the steamer."[195] Winter – or his descendants – chose to place his identity as a Civil War above anything else, identifying him from the outset as "one of the foremost German veterans of the Civil War," and his defense of the flag in the steamship anecdote conveniently served to tie him to the freedom-loving German's brand of pluralistic patriotism and the flag cult. Whether he actually was one of the foremost German-Americans who served is a debatable assertion. What cannot be questioned, however, is how important he considered his service to the United States to be.

Kald and Winter were both leading citizens who prominently displayed their status as veterans within the German community. The strong emphasis on their wartime service in their obituaries would seem to indicate that their devotion to the image of the freedom-loving German trickled down to the friends or relatives who wrote them. In this sense, obituaries represented the last testament of German-American veterans to their own patriotism and sense of belonging within the United States. Yet even as Civil War veterans made their last, posthumous attempts to broadcast their brand of pluralistic patriotism to the German-American community, German-Americans were becoming less responsive. At the turn of the century, German newspapers still resembled the most robust foreign-language media in the United States, but their prominence and circulation began to decline as second- and third- generation immigrants opted for English.[196]

While the unresponsiveness of many German-Americans to the freedom-loving German posed an internal threat to the image's viability, the escalating crusade for temperance represented an external one.[197] German-Americans remained a relatively favored minority group, but tensions escalated between German-speaking beer drinkers and Anglo-American

[195] *New-Yorker Staatszeitung*, 14 April 1900
[196] Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 45
[197] Detjen, 27

evangelical advocates of prohibition. The debate actually served to bring many German-speakers closer together. Even German-Americans who were barely committed to maintaining German culture were often offended by efforts to restrict the sale of beer, and in various places they rallied to defeat local and state temperance ordinances.[198]

Yet shared language was often not enough to overcome ideological differences, as the relationship between freedom-loving Germans and German Catholics proved.[199] The largest single religious denomination of churchgoing German-Americans, Catholics counted more than eight million Germans among their number by 1916.[200] Catholics tended to view themselves, in Charles T. Johnson's words, "as Catholic first, American second, and German third."[201] While many German Catholics were willing to join anti-temperance crusades, a good deal were not. This division serves to highlight the significant fractures between large segments of the German-American community. Heavily assailed from without and frequently ignored within, the freedom-loving German could not endure without a major rehabilitation effort. That effort was provided by the National German-American Alliance.

Forming the National German-American Alliance

The National German-American Alliance sprung from the same culture which produced the 20th New York and the freedom-loving German. On April 16, 1899, representatives from German societies across Pennsylvania gathered in Philadelphia.[202] Among them were a number of *Turnvereine* and like-minded societies which represented the upper- and middle- strata of German-American society. Together, they formed the *Deutsch-Amerikanischer Zentralbund von*

[198] Detjen, 21
[199] Johnson, *Culture at Twilight* 46-48
[200] Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 35
[201] Johnson, *Culture at Twilight*, 11
[202] Johnson, *Culture at Twilight*, 5

Pennsylvanien, or the German-American Central Alliance of Pennsylvania. Later, this would become the nucleus of the *Deutsch-Amerikanischer Nationalbund* – the National German-American Alliance.

The Central Alliance of Pennsylvania was expected to play that role from its inception. Its creation stemmed from the energies of Dr. Charles Hexamer. Hexamer was born in Philadelphia on May 6, 1862, to German immigrants.[203] His father, Ernst, was a Forty-Eighter who impressed upon his son the value of German culture and provided him with an outstanding education. The young Hexamer also developed a strong commitment to personal liberty and appreciation for the liberal principles of the 1848 revolutions. After taking a position at his father's engineering firm, Charles began to commit himself to efforts to preserve German culture in Pennsylvania.

The stated purpose of the German-American Central Alliance of Pennsylvania was to coordinate cultural promotion among its various members.[204] That entailed encouraging German-language instruction in public schools; publicizing the accomplishment of past and present scientists, artists, and leaders of German descent; and encouraged active German-American participation in the American political process, which included aiding new German-speaking arrivals in their quests for citizenship. The influence of the Turners showed itself in the Alliance's stated commitment to higher education and physical activity.

Like the veterans of the Turner Rifles, the Alliance did not view German and American identity as incompatible; on the contrary, it claimed to be a proudly American organization. Above all, the group was grounded in the principles that the freedom-loving German had been

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[203]Charles T. Johnson, "Dr Charles Hexamer: Forgotten German-American Leader" in *American Multiculturalism and Ethnic Survival*, ed. Renate von Bardeleben, Sabina Matter-Seibel, and Klaus H. Schmidt (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012), 68-69

[204] Johnson, *Culture at Twilight*, 8

emphasizing since the Civil War, arguing for the legitimacy of German identity within American culture and pledging fealty to the United States government.

On October 6, 1901, Hexamer and the German-American Central Alliance of Pennsylvania succeeded in forming the National German-American Alliance.[205] The founding of the NGAA brought together thirty-nine delegates from various local and state organizations, including a substantial number of Turners. It drew its founding principles heavily from the Central Alliance of Pennsylvania. In practice, its national character meant that the activities it undertook were often incredibly diverse, dependent as it was on local and state organizations to actually carry out any of its missions. It did, however, establish a national constitution, which took its emphasis on personal freedoms, dual German and American identity, and pluralistic patriotism directly from the culture which Civil War veterans had created.

The first provision of the National German-American Alliance's constitution, which was drafted in German, disclaimed any involvement in politics.[206] Its second disavowed any religious affiliation, reflecting the anti-clerical roots of the NGAA's members and the noticeable absence of large numbers of Catholics among its number. The third provision, mirroring the efforts of the 20th New York's veterans to establish equality between English and German at their monument dedication in 1887, committed the NGAA to support the teaching of German in public schools. Both English and German deserved equal status, given that they were spoken by "pioneers of civilization, of trade, and of commerce." While it did not cast the German language in the explicitly patriotic terms which Civil War veterans used, it did tie its importance to the cultural and economic development of the United States which had brought the country international importance.

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[205] Johnson, *Culture at Twilight*, 9-10

[206] Max Heinrici, ed. *Das Buch der Deutschen in Amerika* (Philadelphia: Walther's Buchdruckerei, 1909), 782-783

In the next section, the constitution declared "a healthy spirit should live in a healthy body!" To this end, the NGAA announced that "the alliance seeks the implementation of systematic and useful gymnastic program in public schools." Attempts to increase German-language and physical education in schools represented a conscious effort to strike a blow against assimilation. By inserting elements of German culture into American society, it resumed efforts to legitimize German-American identity and to fulfill the promise of Carl Schurz's vision in *True Americanism*, in which the "best elements" of various ethnic groups could be included in the American composite. German-Americans were not merely supposed to adopt Anglo-American characteristics; they were supposed to inject some of their own into mainstream culture.

The constitution proceeded to "call upon all Germans to acquire citizenship, as soon as legally possible, so that they can take part in public life" and fulfill their "civic obligations." In doing so, the National German-American Alliance called upon German-Americans to continue to exercise citizenship rights that had been legitimized by Civil War veterans in the preceding decades. This vision of citizenship rights relied on constantly maintaining an active role in public affairs, one of the strongest legacies of the Forty-Eighters. Furthermore, the NGAA swore to push for liberal immigration policies, except in the cases of sick immigrants, "convicted criminals, and anarchists." This stance echoed that of the Turners and veterans of the 20th New York in the latter half of the nineteenth century, who became less radical and shunned the new breed of anarchist and socialist revolutionaries. The strongest echo of the freedom-loving German, however, resounded in the ninth provision of the constitution, which opposed any law which "inhibits free trade or curtails personal liberties."

The constitution of the National German-American Alliance articulated a vision of German America which aligned with the earlier vision of Kleindeutschland's Turners. The influences of both the Turners and the Forty-Eighters are clear through the language of the Alliance's founding text. The personal connections which many of its founding members had to both *Turnvereine* and Forty-Eighters confirm that the echoes of their voices were real in the National German-American Alliance. The voice of German-American Union soldiers, although harder to pinpoint, also resonated through the vision of citizenship and patriotism which the Alliance would advocate in the ensuing decade.

Like the Turners and the Forty-Eighters, the National German-American Alliance could never honestly claim to speak for all German-Americans, although it frequently attempted to.[207] It did, however, do an effective job at synthesizing and mass-distributing Civil War veterans' interpretation of German-American identity and German-American citizenship. By grounding this articulation of German-Americanness in the same terms as earlier generations of German speakers in America, however, the NGAA was not creating a brand new interpretation of German-American identity, but developing the tenets of pluralistic patriotism which Civil War veterans had established. In the course of this effort, they drew attention to the military contributions made by German-Americans in all wars, but the language through which German-Americans' justification for belonging in the United States was articulated originated in German-American Civil War veterans.

The National German-American Alliance was aware that it needed to base its claims of German-American legitimacy and reasoning for German-American pride in history. To this end, it presented, with often a significant amount of exaggeration, a version of history which emphasized the contributions of German speakers to the physical and ideological security of the

[207] Johnson, *Culture at Twilight*, 3-4

United States. A major tool in effort was the German Historical Society, established on December 10, 1901.[208] While the NGAA would later be accused of only performing anti-temperance agitation for most of its existence, the establishment of the Historical Society a mere two months after the formal founding of the organization proves that the primary motivation behind the NGAA's creation was the maintenance of German-American culture.[209] The NGAA did so most directly through their own publications, but they also directly influenced and were influenced by the like-minded works of German-American writers such as *New-Yorker Staatszeitung* editor Georg von Skal, Wilhelm Kaufmann, and others.

Rewriting the Freedom-Loving German

Throughout the first half-decade of the twentieth century, the National German-American primarily confined its activities to cultural promotion, but it did occasionally dabble in anti-temperance campaigns.[210] Between 1901 and 1905, the NGAA used congressional hearings, speeches at national conventions, and occasional commentaries on national issues to articulate their version of German-America. In 1903, the Hepburn-Dolliver Bill, which attempted to block interstate trade of alcohol, caused a stir of discontent among German-Americans. The response of the NGAA leaders was to argue that the bill represented an infringement of individual liberties, and therefore violated constitutional protections. The fact that these German-Americans were comfortable objecting on these grounds can be attributed to the legacy of Civil War veterans, who through postwar commemoration asserted the right of all German-Americans

[208] Johnson, *Culture at Twilight*, 17
[209] Johnson argues that while the Alliance may have engaged in cultural education at the beginning, its raison d'être eventually changed to wholesale agitation against temperance. Clifton James Child argues in *The German-Americans in Politics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1939) that were it not for the temperance issue, the NGAA may have even ceased to exist.
[210] Johnson, *Culture at Twilight*, 22-30

to citizenship and the protections citizenship offered. The next year, when Major General Arthur MacArthur made inflammatory remarks about the existence of a pan-German conspiracy to overtake the globe, the NGAA published an open letter defending the patriotic record of Germans in America and highlighting the service of German-American soldiers, who had taken up arms to defend the United States.[211] In doing so, the NGAA continued earlier efforts of German-American Civil War veterans to bring attention to German military service.

The story told by Charles Hexamer in an address delivered on August 1, 1907, is typical of the version of German-American history which the NGAA continued to disseminate even after it started receiving accusations of being too involved in politics. Given at the Jamestown Exposition, the speech was full of bold (and often exaggerated) claims of the importance of Germans in American history. After describing the NGAA as a "patriotic American organization," Hexamer proceeded to trumpet the alleged accomplishments of German-Americans since before 1776.[212] Crediting Germans of the Pennsylvania Rifles for saving Washington's army at the Battle of Long Island, Hexamer continued to immodestly extoll the virtues of "those Burgers from the Rhine, better far than the Pilgrims who landed at Plymouth, better even than the Quakers who established a city of brotherly love, [who] stood for that spirit of universal toleration which found no abiding place save in America." Bold-facedly asserting that "their place in the councils and armies of the country is so important that we may assert with absolute truth that there would have been no… United States of America, but for the patriotism of the Germans of the colonies," Hexamer additionally claimed that the defenders of Fort McHenry were primarily of German extraction. Coming to the American Civil War, Hexamer invoked the freedom-loving German:

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[211] Johnson, *Culture at Twilight*, 24

[212] National German-American Alliance, *Reports of the National German-American Alliance of the United States of America* (Philadelphia: the Alliance, 1907)

> Then came the struggle for the abolition of slavery, and, naturally, the race which, before all others… had protested against the crime of holding fellow-men in bondage, did more than its share in fighting for the cause of freedom. It was to preserve our nation's banner inviolate that thousands of men of German blood gave up their lives. They died that not one star should be torn from the field of blue and that the stars and stripes might continue to wave yet intact.

If Hexamer's description of the role of German-Americans in the history of the United States was excessively filiopietistic, it nevertheless stemmed from the patriotic culture established by German-American Civil War veterans. Like those veterans, Hexamer tied German-American citizenship and belonging to a willingness to fight for notions of personal and economic freedom. The freedom-loving German's conception of personal freedom corresponded to those articulated by America's Founding Fathers, and allowed post-Civil War generations to project the model into the years before 1861. While Friedrich Kapp depicted Johann de Kalb similarly in his 1862 biography, it was not until after the Civil War that the freedom-loving German image gained a meaningful degree of acceptance among German-Americans.

Hexamer's claims that Germans were the defenders at Fort McHenry and his assertion that German-Americans served in the Civil War fought so that "not one star should be torn from the field of blue and that the stars and stripes might continue to wave" tapped into the flag cult which veterans developed. By 1907, the flag cult had spread far beyond the posts of the Grand Army of the Republic and into the American consciousness. This spread, however, was greatly aided by German-American veterans, who not only sanctioned the flag cult by publicly embracing it in commemorations, but also launched direct efforts through GAR activities to spread appreciation for the American flag throughout German-American communities.

In explicitly marginalizing the accomplishments and attributes of non-German-Americans, Hexamer perhaps justified the accusations of cultural chauvinism which were often

levied against him.[213] This emphatic rejection of non-Germans' contribution, however, was largely out of step with the rest of the National German-American Alliance's members and supporters. When Georg von Skal of the *New-Yorker Staatszeitung* lent his pen to the freedom-loving German in his 1908 *History of German Immigration in the United States and Successful German Americans and Their Descendents*, Skal stated his comparatively modest intention to "show the part that the American citizen of German blood has taken in the making of these United States."[214] Without belittling the accomplishments of other ethnic groups, Skal noted that "it goes without saying that so large a part of the total population of the country," which he estimated at 25%, "must necessarily have exerted considerable influence upon the formation of the character of the American people."[215]

Georg von Skal had used his *Staatszeitung* to effusively praise the work of the NGAA since its inception, calling it a "positive force in promoting German-American culture in the United States."[216] Skal was similarly committed to casting the historical accomplishments of German-Americans in the light of the freedom-loving German. A member of the Carl Schurz Memorial Committee in 1906, he dedicated his *History of German Immigration* to the late statesman and general, "who, a steadfast and loyal American, remained true to German ideals, and devoted his life to the betterment of his adopted country, never forgetting or belittling the gifts he had received from the land of his birth."[217] With such a mindset, it should come as no surprise that Skal, like Hexamer, extended the freedom-loving German model to the pre-Civil War period.

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[213] Johnson, *Culture at Twilight*, 144-146
[214] Georg von Skal, *History of German Immigration in the United States and Successful German Americans and Their Descendants* (New York: FC and JT Smiley, 1908), introduction
[215] Skal, 7
[216] "Rechte der Deutschen," *New Yorker Staatszeitung*, 7 October 1901, quoted in Johnson, *Culture at Twilight*, 15
[217] Skal, title page

Skal claimed that the first martyrs for individual liberty in North America were Germans. Recounting the story of colonist Jacob Leisler, Skal wrote that the young man was jailed by the English governor for being "foremost among the defenders of equal rights and justice for all."[218] The newspaperman did not miss an opportunity to claim that another German, Johann Peter Zenger, was the first person in the colonies to be jailed for attempting to exercise the freedom of the press. Skal, however, stops well short of crediting Germans with the founding of the United States, limiting his description of their role in the American Revolution with the summary that "the Germans did their full part – and perhaps more – to win independence for this country. They did then, as always afterward, prove their loyalty and devotion, their trustworthiness and their right to receive full and complete justice."[219] In this framing, German-Americans did not, as Hexamer implied, own a unique claim to ownership of the nation, but a coequal one.

Attributing the uptick of nativism in the 1850s to the threatening, unbridled idealism of the Forty-Eighters, Skal's ultimate assessment of the refugees was positive, saying that they "became most valuable citizens of the republic, as soon as their honest, but, under the circumstances, purposeless enthusiasm had changed into the sober endeavor to secure an existence by hard work and industry."[220] Given the general development of conservatism among Turners and Forty-Eighters in the decades following their arrival, Skal's observation was astute. Skal explicitly praised the Turners as well, noting approvingly that "they laid the foundation for the development of athletics in this country through the numerous "Turner" societies… which now spring up everywhere."

After crediting German-Americans with the election of Lincoln, Skal heaped praise upon German-American Civil War veterans. Singling out Max Weber, former commander of the 20th

[218] Skal, 11
[219] Skal, 24
[220] Skal, 29

New York and leader of a brigade at the Battle of Antietam, as a singular example of German valor, Skal lamented that "Max Weber was killed at Antietam at the very moment when he was ready to break through the enemy's center, an advantage that would have routed the Confederates but was lost through the death of their leader."[221] Skal's account of Weber's alleged death at Antietam is mystifying, given that Max Weber resettled in New York after the war and took an active role in public life until his death in 1901.[222] Weber was indeed grievously wounded at the head of his command at Antietam, but returned to active duty before the end of the war. In any event, the invocation of Weber's wartime experience is notable in that it highlights the sacrifices of German-American veterans, and makes an archetypical freedom-loving German the embodiment of that sacrifice.

Wilhelm Kaufmann gave another positive appraisal of the role of the German-American Union soldier. Although he downplayed the role of abolition in German-Americans' motivations for fighting the war, Kaufmann highlighted the ways in which German-American Civil War veterans were representatives of German virtue.[223] Kaufmann had immigrated to the United States in 1868 as a twenty-one year old. While living in Cincinnati, he became acquainted with Carl Schurz, and became a great admirer.[224] As the longtime editor of a Republican-leaning German-language newspaper in Cleveland and an intimate correspondent with and student of many prominent Forty-Eighters, Kaufmann clearly embraced elements of the freedom-loving

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[221] Skal, 33

[222] Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 564.

[223] Wilhelm Kaufmann, *Germans in the American Civil War War*, trans. Steve Rowan, ed. Don Heinrich Tolzmann, Werner D. Mueller, and Robert E. Ward (Carlise, PA: John Kallmann, 1999), 5-9. Kaufmann emphasized, as many modern historians do, that while Northerners generally disliked "slave power" and while Confederate leaders explicitly cited the defense of slavery as their motivation for leaving the Union, "this does not mean that the North drew its sword for the *liberation* of slaves [emphasis original]."

[224] Don Heinrich Tolzmann, Werner D. Mueller, and Robert E. Ward, "Editors' Introduction," in Wilhelm Kaufmann, Germans in the American Civil War War, trans. Steve Rowan, ed. Don Heinrich Tolzmann, Werner D. Mueller, and Robert E. Ward (Carlise, PA: John Kallmann, 1999), iv-viii.

German, even if he did not go so far as to describe all German-American Civil War veterans as fundamentally anti-slavery.

While Kaufmann was researching the role of Civil War veterans for his full-length book, *The Germans in the American Civil War*, he was asked by the National German-American Alliance to contribute a chapter to the German-language *Book of Germans in America.*[225] Kaufmann obliged, and contributed thirty pages which, like the rest of the *Book of Germans in America*, shamelessly extolled the real and imagined contributions of Germans in the United States. Kaufmann was explicit in arguing that German-American soldiers were an essential figure for all German-Americans' identity. "The work of the soldier is directed towards destruction," Kaufmann allowed, "but when this work succeeds in laying the foundation of the reconstruction of the Republic, when through this work a dreadful poison is cut out of the national body… then can one also view the accomplishments of the soldier as supporting culture."[226] "Through the outcome of the Civil War," Kaufmann continued, "the decay of the Republic was prevented, and through this blood- and fire- baptism it is newly erected and consolidated on hopefully indestructible supports." In crediting German-American soldiers with playing a substantial role in this process, Kaufmann, like the ever-decreasing number of German-American Civil War veterans, tied the contributions of German-American soldiers to the continued existence of the United States. This emphasis also presented them as an essential fiber in the American fabric.

Kaufmann's propensity to overemphasize the numerical, tactical, and strategic contributions of German-Americans to the Union war effort and simultaneous tendency to downplay or outright ignore the contributions of Germans in the Confederacy reflected a deep-

[225] Wilhlem Kaufmann, "Der deutsche Soldat im Bürgerkriege," in Max Heinrici, ed. *Das Buch der Deutschen in Amerika* (Philadelphia: Walther's Buchdruckerei, 1909), 122-152.
[226] Kaufmann, "Der deutsche Soldat," 124

seated desire to leverage German-American war service into greater recognition and social standing for all German-Americans. "The role of Germans in the repression of the rebellion," argued Kaufmann, "was far more important and decisive [than they had previously been given credit for], as the count of German-born soldiers and their wartime accomplishments prove." To this end, Kaufmann cited the disproportionate service he claimed that Germans and their descendants had given to the federal government, even among those residing in seceded states.[227] Kaufmann was so preoccupied with proving this point that he claimed in his foreword to *The Germans in the American Civil War* that "while the native-born Americans and the members of all other immigrant peoples split into two hostile camps, we find Germans *only* on the side of the Union."[228]

Kaufmann was also preoccupied with recounting the deeds of German-American soldiers who fought in German-only units. He ends his chapter in the *Book of Germans in America* in 1863, dismissing the remainder of the war by writing "the last war years do not need to be handled further, because our countrymen made their mark less in German commands than before."[229] In *The Germans in the American Civil War*, Kaufmann does discuss 1864 and 1865, but he devotes nearly three chapters to discussing heavily-German units and commands such as Ludwig Blenker's division and the XI Corps. This emphasis represents a categorical rejection of the Civil War as an assimilative experience. Rather than demonstrate ways in which Civil War service brought Germans and non-Germans together, Kaufmann emphasizes the peculiarly German experiences of the war. In doing so, Kaufmann asserts the coequality of German-Americans and others. The accomplishments of specifically German-American military units provide an opportunity to unambiguously demonstrate German contributions to the war effort.

[227] Kaufmann, "Der Deutsche Soldat," 124-126
[228] Kaufmann, *Germans in the American Civil War*, 1
[229] Kaufmann, "Der Deutsche Soldat," 152

Looking at the experience of German-Americans in mixed units – in which the majority of German-American Civil War veterans served – would require Kaufmann to parse out the specific achievements of Germans within those regiments. This would have been not only a challenging task for Kaufmann as an author and researcher, but also would open his findings to debate about the exact role German-Americans played relative to their non-German comrades.[230]

The narrative of American history which Charles Hexamer, Georg von Skal, and Wilhelm Kaufmann spun represented a consistent effort on behalf of German-American leaders to recast history in a light which emphasized the contributions of Germans in American history. This process was sometimes comprehensive, as represented by the National German-American Alliance's 974-page *Book of Germans in America*. For the most part, however, this was an informally connected process that represented not so much a craftily orchestrated campaign by the NGAA as it did a common intellectual movement and worldview. This worldview was the essential force in the foundation of the NGAA and the continuation of its cultural activities. When Civil War veterans faded into the background, German-Americans lost a public voice. The National German-American Alliance stepped into the void, and when it spoke, it adopted the story told by German-American Civil War veterans, which presented German-Americans as loyal citizens who earned their right to belong in the United States because of their willingness to take up arms in defense of American ideals. Although Civil War veterans were disappearing, writers such as these sought to ensure that the image of the freedom-loving German would survive.

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[230] Christian Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans: Nativism, Ethnicity, and Civil War Memory* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 28-30.

Back to Antietam

In the days leading up to the forty-eighth anniversary of Antietam, Union veterans swarmed through Sharpsburg's streets and fields once again. This anniversary was larger than most; the Society of the Army of the Potomac, a veterans' organization consisting only of former members of that fighting force, decided to hold its annual reunion there, before many of the veterans continued to New Jersey for the Grand Army of the Republic's yearly encampment.[231] The event was typical of many large-scale veterans' reunions. After attending to organizational business on Friday, the veterans held a ceremony in the national cemetery. On Saturday, groups of aging men could be seen wandering the battlefield, reminiscing and looking for sites of personal importance.

The veterans of the 20th New York had found their own spot a few days before. On September 13, 1910, the survivors of the Turner Rifles returned to dedicate a second monument, this time at the site of their charge of September 17, 1862.[232] Over one hundred elderly veterans, accompanied by friends and family, managed to make the trek to the small Maryland farm town. In many ways, the dedication was typical of the commemorations which the 20th New York's veterans had practiced in the decades following Appomattox. When two former members of the regiment were done speaking, Miss Marie Lamarche, who had accompanied the Turners down from New York, unveiled the monument as the Star Spangled Banner blared. No transcript of the proceedings exists, and the reporter from the *Baltimore American* did not specify if the speeches were delivered in English or German, but his observation of "the regiment having been made up of Germans" indicates that there were outward signs of ethnicity at the ceremony.

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[231] "Union Troops at Antietam," *Baltimore American*, September 11, 1910.
[232] "To the Turner Rifles: Handsome Monument Unveiled at Antietam," *Baltimore American*¸ September 14, 1910.

There were also outwards signs of ethnicity on the monument, although overall the 1910 monument is muted compared to its 1887 counterpart. The 1910 monument still conveys a deep engagement with pluralistic patriotism, but is decidedly less ornate and less aggressive in asserting German-American identity. Grounded more in veterans' culture than ethnic culture, the 1910 monument perhaps reflects the increasing assimilation of German-American veterans and their families, although it stops short of abandoning Germanness.

Photograph by author

The 1910 monument, like so many others which dot the Antietam battlefield, is an obelisk. The popularity of obelisks, as Colonel J.W. Knowlton explained at the dedication of the

14th Connecticut Infantry's monument at Antietam, came from their aesthetic qualities. Obelisks evoked a sense of permanence; "these tons in granite, wrought in graceful lines, with marvelous skill," Knowlton imagined, "will stand through the varying vicissitudes of storm and sunshine, telling the grim story [of the Battle of Antietam] to men of every clime."[233] The obelisk also conveyed a sense of pride and strength. As Knowlton told his former comrades, "…this shaft stands as an enduring emblem – symmetrical, as your manly qualities; firm, as your fidelity to your country; and its solidity is a fit symbol of your unswerving loyalty."[234] The 20th New York's veterans must have felt confident that their monument would lead visitors to draw similar conclusions about their own regiment.

Although by 1910 obelisks were common sights at Antietam, the veterans of the 20th New York were sure to include features which would make the monument unique to them. Two of the most visible are the owl and torch, the symbols of the Turners which were also used on the 1887 monument. Situated halfway up the obelisk's 18-foot shaft, the owl and torch occupy a central place among so many other details that silently aim to tell the story of the Turner Rifles. On the right face of the monument, the inscription reads:

The 20th Regiment N.Y. Vols.
was organized by the New York Turn - Verein
Mustered into U.S. Service
May 6, 1861
and Mustered out June 1, 1863

By noting that the regiment was formed by the Turnverein, the 20th New York's veterans explicitly acknowledged their ethnic identity. Even though the inscriptions are entirely in English, Anglophone visitors to Antietam National Battlefield in 1910 likely would have recognized the Turners from the organization's actions in their own cities. In that case, the

[233] Walter J. Yates, *Souvenir of Excursion to Antietam and Dedication of Monuments of the 8th, 11th, 14th and 16th Regiments of Connecticut Volunteers* (New London, CT: Darrow, 1894), 16.
[234] Yates, 17

Turner veterans may have actually thought their ethnicity was best conveyed and supported by writing all of the text on the monument in the language of the leading culture. Unlike the 1887 monument, which had ample space for inscriptions, the 1910 monument's base was necessarily limited by the structure of the obelisk. The Turner veterans were not necessarily rejecting German as a language of patriotic expression. If the primary purpose of their monument, like that of the 14th Connecticut, was to spread the memory of their deeds to "men of every clime," this mission would be more easily accomplished by using the language which the majority of Americans spoke.

The overwhelming emphasis which the 1910 monument places on the unit's sacrifice lends some support to this interpretation. The left face of the monument gives a tally of the regiment's losses at the Battle of Antietam, the rear face lists the engagements in which the 20th New York participated, and the front face offers the most vivid reminder of the trauma which the veterans of the Turner Rifles endured. A bronze engraving illustrates the charge of the 20th New York from decades before, offering visitors a literal picture of the chaos which had occurred where the monument now stands. Prominent in the engraving are the dead and dying of the Turner Rifles, while the remainder of the regiment carries on with grim determination. Colonel Vegesack is distinctly visible among the abandoned canteens, shattered caisson, and other equipment strewn on the ground. The 1887 monument relied on its location amid the graves of fallen Union soldiers to underscore the loss the 20th New York suffered during their term of service. The 1910 monument, on the other hand, attempted to drive home the reality of the regiment's suffering by presenting visitors with an actual image of what happened at Antietam.

Photograph by author

Draped over the top of the monument is a carved American flag. A product of the veterans' continued adherence to the flag cult, the banner serves to reemphasize the meaning of the 20th New York's service. The Turners' death and wounds, their actions at other battles, and the nightmarish scene depicted in the bronze engraving are worth remembering, but the position of the flag suggests that all of these sacrifices were necessary to keep the flag held high. The 1910 monument tells a narrative of German-American service to the federal government, and, like the 1887 monument, ties German-American veterans to existing notions of patriotism that were also prevalent outside of the German-American community. The absence of German in the 1910 monument marks it as a less assertive testament to the freedom-loving German than the 1887 monument, but it succeeds in both identifying the members of the 20th New York as German-Americans and in demonstrating their dedication to the service of the United States.

Carrying the Freedom-Loving German Forward

By the time of the 20th New York's 1910 monument dedication, German-American veterans were no longer the most prominent figures in the German-American community. Their ever-decreasing numbers made coordinating a pluralistic model of patriotic expression beyond their ability. The image of the freedom-loving German they created, however, did not die with them. The National German-American Alliance further developed the freedom-loving German and projected it backwards through all of American history, including upon Germans who lived long before the Civil War era. The NGAA mass produced and mass distributed the freedom-loving German, and stimulated a wide variety of publications by unaffiliated or loosely affiliated authors which helped to forward the same message.

In this sense, Wilhelm Kaufmann was correct when he referred to German-American Civil War soldiers as "supporters of culture." Civil War veterans were mythologized by others in the German-American community, but they were mythologized on their own terms. As the originators of the freedom-loving German image, German-American Civil War veterans created an element of ethnic identity which the NGAA and others were eager to embrace. The Forty-Eighter-influenced Turners were not representative of all German-Americans in the same way that the NGAA could never actually speak for all German-Americans, but both articulated a resonant and cogent image of German America which was embraced by a substantial portion of the German-American community.

As the ceremonies surrounding Carl Schurz's death indicate, the freedom-loving German took hold outside of the German-American community as well. It is clear from the rhetoric of Anglo-Americans in Carnegie Hall that Anglo-Americans not only accepted the freedom-loving German, but also assumed that its strongest proponents were the leadership of the German-

American community. The existence of so many German language publications extolling the virtues of the freedom-loving German discounts any notion that the primary cultural goal of the NGAA was to share the freedom-loving German exclusively with non-Germans. In the end, however, German-American Civil War veterans and their ideological successors in the NGAA were successful in building the ethnic symbol of the freedom-loving German both inside and outside of the German-American ethnic community.

Conclusion

The freedom-loving German was a mythological figure, but it was a figure with a basis in historical truth. Carl Schurz, Max Weber, and Christoph Niederer could never legitimately represent every German-American. The commonalities between German America's disparate parts were too few to ever allow any single element to speak for them all. Yet the image of the freedom-loving German they presented did achieve success among portions of the German-American population as an ethnic identifier. That it did so is directly attributable to the efforts of German-American Civil War veterans, who provided a version of the conflict's meaning which was grounded in abolition, free labor, and defense of the Constitution. Because groups such as the Turners actually existed, it allowed German-Americans to view them as accurate representations of the entire German-American community.

The National German-American Alliance's efforts to extend the freedom-loving German throughout all of American history were extreme, but they pointed to the resonance the freedom-loving German had among German-Americans who wanted to define German-American identity. Their efforts were greatly aided by Civil War veterans, who provided them with a basic framework and set of rhetoric with which to cast all Germans as committed to maintaining individual liberty and devoted to the defense of the United States government. Despite accusations that the NGAA was sidetracked by the struggle against temperance, its success in synthesizing, expanding, and mass-distributing the freedom-loving German signaled a victory for their original goal of spreading German culture in the United States.

The freedom-loving German was particularly important as a bridge between the German public sphere and the leading Anglo-American culture. In a period when the Anglo-American establishment felt threatened by radical aliens and waves of immigration from new areas of Europe and Asia, the image of a foreigner who was committed to the maintenance of the

American government and preservation of American values was comforting. German-American veterans were able to leverage this status into full legal equality and recognition, as the Turner Rifles veterans' successful efforts to obtain pensions indicated. A select group of German-Americans were able to bring the image of the freedom-loving German into the Anglo-American sphere, and in doing so raised the status of all German-Americans.

The embrace of the freedom-loving German by Anglo-Americans was not to last, however. Escalating tensions between the United States and the German Empire after 1900 fed fears of a German conspiracy in the United States. The situation grew worse after the outbreak of World War I, and the American entry into the conflict effectively ended the use of the freedom-loving German as a bridge between the German-American and Anglo-American communities. No event better summed up the finality of this development than Congress's decision to dissolve the National German-American Alliance in 1917.

The National German-American Alliance had sought and obtained a Congressional charter in 1907, feeling that federal incorporation would give the organization more legitimacy as a nationwide institution.[235] During the wave of anti-German hysteria which drowned most German-American expressions of culture during World War I, many Anglo-Americans pushed for this charter to be rescinded. To this end, the Senate Committee on the Judiciary selected three of its members to head the hearings on Senate Bill 3529, *A Bill to Repeal the Act Entitled "An Act to Incorporate the National German-American Alliance."*[236]

The passage of the bill can be most directly credited to a paranoid Swedish-American Toledo lawyer named Gustavus Ohlinger, who outlined seven ways in which the National German-American Alliance had violated its charter. This argument served to provide the legal

[235] Johnson, *Culture at Twilight*, 37-40
[236] United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary, *Hearings Before the Subcommittee of the Committee on the Judiciary*: Sixty-Fifth Congress Second Session. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1918),1-2.

grounds on which Congress could revoke the charter, but the meat of his arguments lay elsewhere. Ohlinger had written *Their True Faith and Allegiance*, an alleged exposé of the role the National German-American Alliance played as part of a vast conspiracy to make the United States subservient to Berlin.[237] Instead of serving as a patriotic and cultural organization, Ohlinger claimed that the NGAA was formed with the intent to "destroy the national spirit of America, so that the organization of any national spirit back of the Army would be absolutely impossible." Ominously, he concluded, "A few years more and there would not have been enough… to count for anything against the idea of 'Deutschland über Alles;' and that is the real meaning of this National German-American Alliance."[238] The media went into a frenzy over these accusations, the NGAA was ordered to disband, and the strongest advocate for the freedom-loving German disappeared.

If a 1917 article from the *Pueblo Chieftan* is to be believed, elderly German veterans were indignant about the destruction of the freedom-loving German and the privileges it afforded former soldiers. The *Chieftain* published a letter to the *Vossische Zeitung* which had allegedly been written a Civil War veteran who had returned to Germany after the war. Angered over the loss of his pension, the author complained that "during the Civil War various volunteer regiments, notably the Seventh, Eighth, and Twentieth New York, consisted only of Germans. These, with their leaders, Schurz… Sigel, and others, contributed much to the victory of the North."[239] Although a German and not a German-American, this veteran nevertheless demonstrated a degree to which the contributions of German speakers were marginalized and the debt owed them by the federal government disavowed through the outbreak of Germanophobia that accompanied World War I.

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[237] Committee on the Judiciary, 9
[238] Committee on the Judiciary, 41
[239] "German Who Fought in Civil War Makes Complaint," *Pueblo Chieftain* (Colorado), May 3, 1917.

Given the ultimate destruction of the freedom-loving German alongside most forms of German-American ethnic identifiers, it is easy to forget its reach and significance. But between the Civil War and World War I, the freedom-loving German served as a way for German-Americans to both reinforce a pluralistic vision of American citizenship and to close the gap between German-Americans and Anglo-Americans, rather than widen it. Cultivated by Civil War veterans, the freedom-loving German served to break barriers of citizenship, to engage the leading culture on standards of American identity, and to stake a claim of German-American belonging as coequal heirs of the United States' national destiny.

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