

THE GERMANS
IN RHODE ISLAND
PRIDE AND PERSEVERANCE,
1850—1985

By
RAYMOND L. SICKINGER
and
JOHN K. PRIMEAU



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Rhode Island Ethnic Heritage Pamphlet Series

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Rhode Island Ethnic Heritage Pamphlet Series
Dr. Patrick T. Conley, *General Editor*

EDITOR'S FOREWORD

In 1975 and 1976, on the eve of the bicentennial observance, in my capacity as chairman of Rhode Island's celebration (ri76), I established eighteen ethnic heritage committees, consisting of recognized leaders of this state's major ethnocultural groups. One purpose of this move was to involve in bicentennial activities those ethnic communities whose contact with this country did not extend as far back as the Revolutionary era. I urged such groups to observe and commemorate the contributions they had made to the American and Rhode Island experience from the time of their arrival down to the bicentennial year. A much more important reason for establishing the ethnic heritage program, however, was to allow each group to present its unique contributions, customs, and folkways to its neighbors from other cultural backgrounds. Formulated under the premise that knowledge promotes understanding and understanding begets brotherhood, the program was designed to break down the ethnocentric barriers and antagonisms that hindered us from achieving that lofty motto and goal—*E pluribus unum*, one out of many.

The one task assigned to each group upon its formation was to write a brief interpretive account of its Rhode Island experience—its motives for migration, areas of settlement, cultural survivals, and economic, political, and social activities—together with an assessment of its contribution to the development of our state. Though some efforts are more sociological, subjective, anecdotal, or selective than the neat, precise historical narrative that I envisioned, each of these pamphlets in its own way makes a valuable statement to all Rhode Islanders and provides a useful self-evaluation for the group that is the subject of analysis.

After the bicentennial's expiration, the concept of an ethnic heritage pamphlet series was kept alive by the Rhode Island Heritage Commission and its tireless chairman, Robert J. McKenna. Albert T. Klyberg of the Rhode Island Historical Society, Dr. Hilliard Beller of the Rhode Island Publications Society, and, especially, the authors of the various essays have also labored to bring this project to fruition as their contribution to the 350th anniversary of the founding of the state. No historical enterprise could be more appropriate for this 1986 celebration than a recounting of the toil and the triumph of our diverse peoples: From American Indians to Southeast Asians, we are Rhode Islanders all!

Patrick T. Conley



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
EXECUTIVE CHAMBER, PROVIDENCE

J. Joseph Garrahy
Governor
TRICENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY OF GERMAN SETTLEMENT IN AMERICA DAY
BY J. JOSEPH GARRAHY
GOVERNOR

WHEREAS, October 6, 1983 is the 300th anniversary of German settlement in America at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, This date marks the beginning of the immeasurable human, economic, political, social and cultural contributions to this country by millions of German immigrants over the past 3 centuries; and

WHEREAS, The German people of Rhode Island have played an important role in our state's history. Between 1850 and 1895 some 7 thousand came to Rhode Island, and presently there are some 20 thousand; and

WHEREAS, The Germans who came to Rhode Island made significant contributions in the jewelry industry. Speidel Corporation was a German-based firm where skilled craftsmen, toolmakers, machinists and hub and die cutters were responsible for the production of quality finished products; and

WHEREAS, The German Dramatic Society in Providence is the home of the men's and women's chorus, the Schubert and Lorelei, which has won regional and national competitions and sponsored its own sangerfest competitions; and

WHEREAS, The German community has contributed to the athletic and sporting heritage of our state. The Turner Club has sponsored gymnastic programs for children and some of the state's finest gymnasts started at the Turner Club; and

WHEREAS, Today, our nation and the Federal Republic of Germany continue their close friendship based on the common values of democracy, guaranteed individual liberties, tolerance of personal differences, and opposition to totalitarianism; and

WHEREAS, It is fitting that this historic event be commemorated in such a manner as to celebrate German-American friendship and to focus on the democratic values that bind us together,

NOW, THEREFORE, DO I, J. JOSEPH GARRAHY, GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS, PROCLAIM

OCTOBER 6, 1983, AS

TRICENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY OF GERMAN SETTLEMENT IN AMERICA DAY



IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the State to be affixed this eighth day of September, in the year of our Lord, one thousand nine hundred and eighty-three, and of Independence, the two hundred and seventh.

J. Joseph Garrahy
GOVERNOR

By the Governor

Suzanne F. Foster
Secretary of State

PREFACE

This story of the German people who came to Rhode Island has been eight years in the making. Since 1976, when the Ethnic Heritage Series was conceived by Patrick T. Conley, pieces of information and pictures of events have been collected. It was, however, not until the Year of the Germans—1983—that our collaboration began and a tremendous effort was made to complete the full historical tapestry of people and events. The present work represents the proud product of that collaboration and effort. Though from start to finish the text of this book is truly the product of two people working closely together, we can say that sections on religious groups and business were the special interest of Dr. Sickinger and the sections on clubs and neighborhoods were the special interest of Dr. Primeau.

Such a work demands the cooperation and help of many different people. We would like to thank in a very special way Roger Desautels, Vilma Gagnon, Paul Richards, and Daniel Howley of the Providence College Audio-Visual Department. All four helped to make the illustrations possible, and it was Paul's skills which produced some fine prints from some poor originals. We would like to express gratitude to Providence College and to its committee to aid faculty research, which provided monetary aid to complete this project.

We would also like to thank those who helped in the typing and preparation of the manuscript, especially Sylvia White, Phyllis Cardullo, Theresa Evans, Maureen Quinlan, and Joan Sickinger. Thanks must also be given to Konrad Schulz of the Rhode Island Heritage Commission, the Heritage Commission itself for its support and encouragement of this project, and the Rhode Island Historical Society for making its collections available to us. We would also like to thank the Rhode Island Publications Society and its editor, Dr. Hilliard Beller.

Last but not least, we must express our gratitude to all the individual people and all the German clubs and organizations who welcomed us and provided valuable information—*danke schön*.

Providence College
August 5, 1984

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INTRODUCTION

A recent survey conducted by the U.S. government has shown that approximately 50,000,000 Americans consider themselves to be of German ancestry. These Americans have good reason to be proud of their heritage, since people of German background have played an active role throughout the history of the United States, making substantial contributions to its economic, political, cultural, educational, and religious development. In fact, it was a German cartographer, Martin Waldseemuller, who was first to assign the name America to the North American continent.

Very few Germans traveled to North America before 1683. Those that did tended to settle in New York, Maryland, or Virginia. However, once Pennsylvania was founded in 1681, this new colony was attractive to many Germans because its founder, William Penn, tolerated different religious groups and beliefs. Thirteen Mennonite families from Krefeld, Germany, decided to move as a group to this tolerant colony and arrived on October 6, 1683. Their leader was Franz Daniel Pastorius (1651-1720), a dynamic, intelligent, and devout young lawyer and religious scholar. Under his guidance the group from Krefeld landed in Philadelphia and then proceeded to establish its own settlement outside the city limits. This area is still known today as Germantown, and October 6 is still celebrated as German Day. The first organized group of German settlers also became one of the first to oppose slavery and the slave trade. As early as 1688, Pastorius composed an official statement condemning this inhumane practice.

Some of the descendants of these first Mennonite settlers and other similar German pietistical groups have remained faithful to both the religious principles and practices of their ancestors. Some continue to live exactly as their forebears lived in former centuries. Today the Pennsylvanians of German extraction are commonly known as the Pennsylvania Dutch, a name they received because *Deutsch* (German) was misinterpreted as *Dutch* by English-speaking Americans.

Between 1683 and 1776, other Germans—many from the Rhineland area, which was devastated by war and plagued by persecution—made the decision to come to America. New York, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania welcomed the immigrants. Perhaps the most famous among them was Johann Peter Rockefeller, who settled in New Jersey and whose family became extremely wealthy and successful in succeeding generations. By the time of the American Revolution, approximately a quarter of a million Germans lived in the American colonies. Because many were skilled craftsmen, who were in short supply in the New World, German settlers made both an immediate and a strong contribution to the growth and development of the American economy, especially in the areas of trade and industry.

During the American Revolutionary War, many Germans favored the American cause and did not support sending German troops to aid the British forces. In fact, after the conflict was concluded, 40 percent of the soldiers who saw action during the war remained in America as permanent settlers. Some were even encouraged to do so by their officers, who were impressed by the American spirit.

Germans contributed to the American cause in more direct ways. One example was the retired Prussian officer Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, who volunteered his services to General Washington and became inspector general of the Continental Army. Another example was Mary Ludwig Hays McCauley, a descendant of a German immigrant named Hass. Known to history as Molly Pitcher, this heroine not only carried pitchers of water to soldiers in battle but replaced her husband as muzzle leader in the artillery when he suffered from heat prostration during the Battle of Monmouth (June 1778).



These two proud German children stood for this picture on the steps of their home in Germany on the very day they left their homeland to travel to the U.S.A. and Rhode Island. Their father left Germany in the 1930s to come to work for Speidel in Providence and to seek a better life. The two children are Gerhard and Lotte (Liselotte), son and daughter of Erwin and Ida Sickinger of Cranston. *Courtesy of Gerhard Sickinger and Lotte (Sickinger) Hohlmaier.*

Although German immigrants came to America before the nineteenth century, it was during the 1800s that the greatest number of German people emigrated to this country. The nineteenth century was a time of great trouble in German countries—the time of the Napoleonic Wars, economic problems, agricultural failures, and political revolutions. At mid-century (1848) all of these problems exploded in a series of revolutions that rocked not only Germany but all of Europe. Most of these European revolutions failed and the participants were severely repressed, especially those in German lands. Consequently, many Germans left the fatherland for the shores of America—the land of liberty. Certainly, some left because the home soil could no longer support a family, but others came to America to find political freedom and opportunity.

Most of these nineteenth-century emigrants went to the Midwest, but there were those, many of them skilled workers, who settled on the East Coast. Some of these made the decision to establish themselves in the smallest, most fiercely independent state in the Union—Rhode Island.

From its early history, Rhode Island has had an interesting connection with Germany. Captain John Luther, one of the first people to settle in Rhode Island, was German. In 1661 a German physician named Felix-Christian Spöri stopped in the colony and performed a much-needed, and fortunately successful, operation upon a prominent official's son. In the years before 1700 the only German writer to publish in America—Christian Lodowick—made Rhode Island his home.

However, Germans came to Rhode Island (and to the United States) in substantial numbers only in the second half of the nineteenth century. Between 1850 and 1895, some 6,700 Germans arrived in the Ocean State. By the time of the 1980 census there were 62,345 Rhode Islanders who claimed at least partial German ancestry. Thus, although the Germans have never been among the very largest ethnic groups in the state, they have been a significant segment of the population, and since their nineteenth-century influx their contribution to Rhode Island life has been considerable.

This contribution has taken many forms. It is with these—the culture and the achievements of the German people in Rhode Island—that the following pages of this history will deal.

GERMAN NEIGHBORHOODS

According to the first *Providence City Directory* (1824), there were scarcely any German immigrants among the 15,000 inhabitants of Providence. By 1873, however, the directory listed a handful of artisans, silver workers, cabinetmakers, and jewelers. The jewelers came from Hanau and Pforzheim, the great German jewelry-manufacturing center, and silver-smiths were often recruited in New York City by the Gorham Company, then located on North Main Street at the foot of College Hill. At the time, cabinetmakers were also brought from New York City by the firm of Potter and Dennison; these German artisans were in great demand for their superior craftsmanship.

In 1860 Providence had a population of approximately 48,000. However, in the directory for that year, which contained 15,722 names, there were only 80 which might be linked with German ancestry.

Five of these Providence Germans were engaged in the professions. The most prominent was Dr. William von Gottschalk, a leading homeopath who originally had his office at 27 North Main Street and later located at the corner of Mathewson and Weybosset streets. Another professional was Dr. J. Henry Lautenberger, who was listed as a "German Surgeon" with an office at 107 Wickenden Street.

There were also two German clergymen in this early population—the Reverend Phillip Rommel, pastor of the German Moravian Church at the corner of Chapel and Snow streets, and the Reverend John C. Wirz, pastor of the German

Lutheran Church. Rommel was selected as pastor in 1860, two years after the Moravian church was founded. His house of worship was later converted into a gymnasium and used as a turnverein by young German gymnasts until it was destroyed by fire. In 1860 Wirz conducted services for German Lutherans in a church at the corner of Pine and Page streets, where the Outlet Company was later situated.

The post-Civil War period found the Germans in Providence engaged in several trades, the principal ones being cabinetmaking, boot- and shoemaking, jewelry manufacturing, cigarmaking, brewing, and baking. By 1910 there were approximately 13,200 Germans in Rhode Island, 6,700 of whom were residents of Providence, making more than one-half of the Germans in the state residents of the capital city. The Eighth Ward in the Olneyville section had one-sixth of the city's German population and was the most heavily populated German section in Rhode Island.

In 1910 there was a flourishing German community in downtown Providence. A number of German hoteliers and restaurateurs were prominent in this area. Among the German establishments downtown were George Kulz's Rochester Hotel, 138 Page Street; John Scheminger's Hotel Dresden, 119 Snow Street; J. Hermann Otto's Weinstube, 647 Westminster Street; Robert J. Gerstenlauer's Munich Cafe, 18-20 Page Street; and the Schneider Brothers' Pilsner Inn, 15-17 Peck Street.

German merchants tended to reside in the northern part of the South Providence area because it was close to their businesses, which were located primarily in the Pine-Friendship Street and the Broad-Weybosset Street districts. The heaviest concentrations of German businesses were on Page, Pine, Orange, Snow, and High streets (High Street became Westminster Street in 1890). In addition, there were a scattered number on North Main and South Main streets. Many of the skilled workers and the independent middle-class merchants and artisans who owned these establishments lived in a handsome residential area along Pine Street. The northern part of South Providence was developed as the residential fringe of the West Side business district, with most homes

within walking distance of the downtown area, because of the lack of public transportation. Therefore, the area north of the intersection of Lockwood and Pine streets, which was approximately one mile from Market Square, became the most heavily settled. The Germans in this neighborhood did their shopping at Otto and Henry Gerlach's Germania Grocery at 263 Weybosset Street on the corner of Snow Street.

In the 1870s and 1880s various singing, gymnastics, and mutual-aid societies were established by the local German population. Their functions were held in club halls in the downtown area. Many of the organizations met at 98 Weybosset Street. Both the Germania Lodge, No. 266, and the Cherusker Lodge, No. 315, of the German Order of the Harugari (a mutual-aid society) held meetings there. The Providence Liederkrantz Singing Society, formed in 1857, met in the Liederkrantz Halle at 27 Market Square, and in 1889 there was also a turnhalle (gymnastics hall) located at 28 Weybosset Street.

The German community in downtown Providence produced two German-language weekly newspapers. One of these was the *Providence Herald*, which was published by Max Wyner from 1897 to 1899 and had a circulation of approximately 500. The other, the most important German-language newspaper in Rhode Island, was the *Providencer Anzeiger*, published from 1876 until July 1918. This newspaper was located at 87 Weybosset Street until 1908, when it moved to the Speidel Building at 70 Ship Street. Its circulation varied from 300 to 500 copies per week. It was edited by Karl Petermann (1876-1880), C. C. Heintzmann (1881), F. Rueckert (1881-1884), Gustav Saacke (1885-1891), and Felix Hamburger (1891-1918).

In the 1880s and 1890s many of the upwardly mobile German craftsmen and artisans moved from the downtown area into the Elmwood section of Providence. A large number of these Germans worked in the city's jewelry shops. Moreover, around 1890 the opening of the Gorham Elmwood plant, which employed German silversmiths, also contributed to the growth of the German population in this area.

The Providence Turnverein, a gymnastics and social

society founded in 1852, decided to build a large clubhouse and beer hall on a site in Elmwood at Niagara Street and Atlantic Avenue. This was a grand event for the German community, and the laying of the cornerstone for the edifice was reported in the *Providence Journal* on August 5, 1889. Opened in 1890, this building became the center of activity for many German societies, the most prominent being the Einklang Singing Society. In 1898 the Providence Turnverein reorganized and renamed itself the Deutsche Gesellschaft (German Society). As a result of anti-German hysteria, which reached its height in this country in 1918, the hall was renamed the Niagara Club. It was put out of business in 1920 during the Prohibition era, at a time when Elmwood's German community, which was never very large, was losing its cultural identity.

Perhaps the most bustling commercial and residential area for German immigrants in the 1890s and early 1900s was the Olneyville area of Providence, especially around Olneyville Square. Many Germans worked in the breweries scattered in and near the area. Textile mills in the Sunset district of Olneyville also provided employment for many of the German immigrants who had formerly worked in the textile industry in Europe.

The thriving German community of Olneyville built several German halls around Olneyville Square in the 1890s, including the German Hall at 79 Manton Avenue, Meyer's Hall at 62 Hartford Avenue, and Springer's Hall at 295 High Street. The Deutsch-Dramatischer Verein (German Dramatic Society), organized in 1888, met originally in the club hall on the corner of Bell and Eiswald streets but moved to a new location at 4 Avery Street in the Shoo-fly district (so named because of its close proximity to the railroad tracks and the sound of the trains that whistled by the club hall). The Gesangverein Lassalle (Singing Society Lassalle) was very active in the 1890s, meeting in the German Hall at 79 Manton Avenue. The Providence Turners (gymnasts), organized in 1896 as the Turnverein Vorwärts, met on Bowlett Street, which was in the town of Johnston until the 1898 annexation.

A number of German establishments were concentrated along High Street (Westminster), which seemed to be the

heart of "Germanville." Among these were Fred G. Nielsen's Cigar Store; A. P. Possner's Grocery, where German wurst (sausage) could be obtained; J. Lorey's Butcher Shop; and one of the earliest German bakeries, J. H. Althans. At 1915 Westminster Street, Olneyville Square, was the Banspach Brothers Bakery, established in 1894 by F. Henry Banspach. The Banspachs had become one of the first German families to settle in Rhode Island when Christian Banspach arrived here in the 1850s.

In the 1950s and 1960, when the ethnic imprint of many German neighborhoods was essentially lost, Toegemann's Market at 79-81 Manton Avenue was still providing the German population in Rhode Island with homemade German wurst and German-style luncheon meats. It was the last of the markets in the state that catered to German immigrants, and it continued this tradition until it closed in the 1970s.

The Wanskuck section of Providence had a small contingent of German immigrants who worked primarily in the Wanskuck Company Mill on Douglas Avenue. Owned by Jesse Metcalf, who founded the company in the 1860s, this mill was a notable manufacturer of worsted goods. In 1896 Metcalf and his son-in-law Gustav Raedeke built the five-story brick Metcalf Building at 158 Pine Street in downtown Providence. This attractive building housed a number of small jewelry manufacturers, many of whom were skilled German immigrants.

The German hall in the Wanskuck area was known as Concordia Halle and was located on Douglas Avenue. In 1881 the Concordia Gesangverein (singing club) was established, and it was actively involved with other German singing societies until the turn of the century, when it went out of existence.

In October 1873 the German Co-Operative Land Association, composed of 100 German artisans, mechanics, and professional men from Providence and its vicinity, purchased the northern portion of the James S. Pidge farm in North Providence. This land—now in Pawtucket—consisted mainly of a gentle southerly slope on East Avenue and other land bounded on the south by Pidge Avenue.

The association had been formed in 1872 in order to

accumulate a fund by weekly contributions from its members to purchase land at advantageous prices and then improve it. The corporation's office was in Providence, and its operations were to be carried on within eight miles of Market Square. The German language was to be used at all meetings. Every German had the right to become a member upon payment of an initiation fee of fifty cents; other nationalities could be admitted only by vote of the membership. A share in this corporation cost \$125, and every member had to buy at least two shares and could acquire no more than six.

The Germans who settled in the Pidge-East Avenue area were very industrious. They laid out their own streets and established both grades and a sewerage system before building at least fifty houses. In October 1873 the *Providence Journal* commended them for the "scientific" manner in which the work was done and for saving the city great expense by planning and completing the streets and sewerage systems. This section of Pawtucket became a mecca for German festivities and later came to be known as *deutsches Land* or German Country.

In 1875 a small group of singers in the neighborhood decided to form a lodge and join the German Order of the Harugari. The singers adopted the name Theodor Koerner Lodge, No. 371, for their organization. In 1900 they built a lodge hall at 258 Glenwood Avenue. This building, sometimes lovingly referred to as "Sauerkraut Hall," was a magnet for German activities until the 1950s, when it was razed and replaced by an apartment complex.

The area in the vicinity of this hall was heavily settled by Germans as a result of the land association's influence. German families could be found on Pidge Avenue, Glenwood Avenue, East Avenue, and Germania Street. The names of several streets in this area—Schiller Street and Germania Street, for example—give testimony to the German character of the neighborhood. Two houses of note that were built by Germans in this section of Pawtucket are the Frederick Scholze House (c. 1874) and the Louis Kotzow House (c. 1875), located respectively at 625 and 641 East Avenue.

The Darlington section of Pawtucket was also heavily

populated with German immigrants, attracted by the area's textile mills. Many were recruited to work at the Royal Weaving Company, founded by Joseph Ott, himself a German immigrant. There were also a number of other textile companies in Pawtucket within walking distance of Darlington.

The German immigrants who came to Pawtucket joined a number of small fraternal clubs in which the German language and culture were maintained. In 1896 the Gesang Verein Eintracht (Eintracht Society) was formed by combining several of these clubs. Its first home was in the old Carpenter Block on East Street; eight years later it built a new club hall at 78 Carter Avenue in Darlington. The organization had a very active singing society and gymnastics group. The German Club, once a focal point for social and cultural events of the German population in the neighborhood, still exists at the corner of Carter and York avenues, though it is now used primarily as a dance hall rather than as a meeting place for any organized German society.

Around 1900 the Hand Brewery was built in Darlington at 70 Mendon Avenue. A large two- and four-story brick building in the Queen Anne style, it served the local residents for a number of years. Many a young German boy was sent to this brewery to fetch his father's daily beer, which was run off into buckets of various sizes. Today the building is owned and occupied by the Apex Company.

The principal place of worship for Germans in Pawtucket was St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church, built in 1892 at the corner of Prince and Greene streets in the vicinity of the Royal Weaving Company. The popular places to shop were Neuwirth's Market at 167 Mendon Avenue and Joseph Schnitzler's butcher shop at 25 Newport Avenue in South Attleboro, where Germans could procure homemade German-style sausage and meat products. Schnitzler also owned a farm in South Attleboro where traditional German picnics were often held. The Otto Arns Market at 18 Cross Street in Central Falls served not only the Germans in Pawtucket but also those who lived in the Central, Broad, and Cross Street sections of Central Falls, which were within walking distance of the

German church, the Eintracht Club, and the Royal Weaving Company in Darlington.

Natick, in the Pawtuxet Valley, also had its own German Club. Founded in 1899, the club was intended to be a singing society for Germans who worked in the textile mills in West Warwick. When the German population of Natick declined, meetings were no longer held in German. In fact, during the 1960s the club president brought the bylaws of the club to a German professor at Providence College to be translated properly, because the bylaws were to be revised and no one in the club could read the original copy. Today the German Club of Natick boasts 200 members, but though some German traditions have been retained, its membership is no longer ethnically German.

The Arlington section of Cranston, located along Cranston Street just south of the Providence line, was originally the site of a granite quarry at Fenner's Ledge. Later Arlington became an important part of the metropolitan transportation network, servicing first the horsecar street railroad and then the trolleys. By the late nineteenth century, brewing had become one of the most important industries there. In fact, one of the first breweries in Rhode Island was erected on the shore of Spectacle Pond by N. D. Kelley in 1859. It was later acquired by Nicholas Molter and Andrew Woefel, two German immigrants. Eventually Molter became sole owner of this brewery, and although it was later called the What Cheer Brewery, it continued to be popularly known by the Molter name. The area around Spectacle Pond was called Molter's Park and was the scene of many jovial picnics and fairs conducted by the German societies in Arlington.

In 1890 a group of German immigrants established another brewery in Arlington. This was the Narragansett Brewing Company, which was later to become the largest lager brewery in all of New England.

A popular gathering place for Germans in Arlington was the Germania Hall at 50 Birch Street, within easy walking distance of the Narragansett Brewery. It was also the meeting place for a branch of the Germania Lodge, No. 266, the oldest Harugari lodge in the state. The Einklang Singing Society was

one of the major German societies that used the Germania Hall as a home club.

The Edgewood section of Cranston, although never heavily settled by German immigrants, nevertheless became a popular neighborhood for some wealthy German businessmen. One of these, Herman G. Possner—founder of the Providence Dairy Company, the Narragansett Dairy Company, and the Sure-Lock Paper Clip Company, and cofounder of the Narragansett Brewery—built the stone "castle" at 1332 Narragansett Boulevard, perhaps the most unusual building in Edgewood. Another Edgewood resident was Edwin Speidel, founder of both the Speidel Company and the equally famous Desitin Company, who constructed a home on Glen Avenue which was so elegantly built and so tastefully decorated that it was one of the finest homes in the area.

The Germans who settled in Rhode Island were generally a thrifty and industrious group. There were not many who could be considered wealthy, but there were a large number of homeowners and quite a few manufacturers and merchants. By 1910 Germans owned realty in Providence conservatively estimated at about \$4,250,000, which, with personal holdings, placed the Germans at the \$5,000,000 mark as taxpayers.

Germans were deeply committed to Rhode Island's cultural development. When the Providence Symphony, organized in the 1870s, became inactive, it was reorganized and incorporated in 1891 with Hans Schneider, a German immigrant, as codirector. When this orchestra also became inactive, Schneider formed his own string orchestra in 1897. Within two years Schneider's group became the Providence Philharmonic Orchestra—the finest of its kind in Rhode Island.

In 1883 Germans organized the Zitherklub Edelweiss to promote zither music. The idea for founding such a club was John Brand's, and Brand became the group's most active member. The club sponsored concerts, which were enthusiastically attended by the local German population, and held meetings every Friday at 52 North Main Street.

The early Germans attempted to maintain their native culture as well as fluency in their native language. In addition to

private evening classes for adults in the English language, there were also Saturday morning classes in German so that the children of the German-American residents of Providence would have an opportunity to become bilingual. One of the most ambitious attempts to achieve this goal was the establishment of the German School, a free school maintained partly by the city and partly by the German School Society, a cultural organization organized in 1874 and incorporated by the General Assembly in 1885. The school occupied rooms in the old schoolhouse on Richmond Street, and instruction was given only on Saturdays. With children of any nationality permitted to attend, many Rhode Islanders of non-German descent took advantage of the opportunity to have their children instructed in the German language. There were seventy pupils under the tutelage of the principal, Miss Ella L. Senft, and her assistants.

It was also in Providence that Maximilian Berlitz founded his famous language school. Berlitz was born in 1852 in Wurttemberg in the Black Forest. In 1872 he came to Rhode Island, where he was a private language teacher in Westerly before accepting a permanent position as a teacher of French and German at the Warner Polytechnical College in Providence. Berlitz later purchased the school, and with the assistance of a young Frenchman, Nicholas Joly, he developed the Berlitz method of teaching language. He eventually opened schools all over the country and abroad.

German Rhode Islanders were not always active in politics, but those who were had a deep interest in good government. Dr. William von Gottschalk was mayor of Central Falls in 1896-1897. He was the son of Dr. William von Gottschalk, a German immigrant homeopathic physician who located in Providence in 1854 and practiced there for thirty-four years. The elder Dr. Gottschalk and fellow countryman C. C. Heintzeman, a Union army veteran, were leaders in the equal rights movement of the 1880s, which was intended to remove real estate qualifications for voting in the state.

John L. Remlinger of Providence was a member of the Rhode Island House of Representatives (1894-1902), and Fred Rueckert was another Providence German who served in that

body (1891-1892). Judge Rueckert was one of the few German lawyers in Providence. He was appointed clerk of the Sixth Judicial District Court in 1895 and became a judge in 1905. He was also president of the Providence School Committee.

Carl Wendel represented District Three in Pawtucket for twelve consecutive years, from 1906 to 1918. As a representative he helped bring into existence a celebration called German Day, which was held in June for several years at various amusement parks. Another representative of German descent was William Hoffman, who came from the Fifth Ward in Pawtucket, the area popularly known as German Land located near Pidge Avenue.

Prosit, deutsche Landsleute!

„Princess Ale“ .. „What Cheer Lager“
und *Motter's*



Deutscher Tag, Montag, 17. Juni 1907,
in Boyden Heights.
Anfang 1 Uhr Nachmittags.

Narragansett

„Select Stock“ Lager und „Banquet Ale“.

Man trinke es von freiem Hader.

In the early 1900s the Germans celebrated an annual *Deutscher Tag* (German Day) at such amusement parks as Vanity Fair, Crescent Park, and Rocky Point. German singing, gymnastics, and dancing societies performed at these festivals.

With the beginning of the First World War in 1914, many German-Americans abandoned hope of any influence in the

political sphere. The anti-German hysteria that engulfed the country at the start of the conflict was particularly evident in Providence, where John R. Rathom was editor of the *Providence Journal*. Rathom, allegedly a British agent, was virulently anti-German and attempted to use his newspaper to convince President Woodrow Wilson that he should change his stand on neutrality. He published reports of German spies and agents in influential positions throughout the country until the *Providence Journal* acquired a national reputation for its disclosures. Although Rathom had to retract many of his statements in a subsequent grand jury inquiry, his attempts to question the loyalty and patriotism of German-Americans made Germans in Rhode Island reluctant to be associated with any kind of German society.

During the war the study of the German language was banned in almost all local schools, and the German press in America was severely curtailed because copy had to be translated into English and then submitted to the appropriate governmental authorities. This requirement created such a financial hardship for small German-language weeklies that most went out of business. One of these was the *Providencer Anzeiger*, the most prominent German-language newspaper in Rhode Island.

GERMAN SOCIETIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

SINGING AND GYMNASTIC SOCIETIES

Liederkrantz

The Providence Liederkrantz was formed in 1857. It first met at the home of Dr. William von Gottschalk (the elder) and later used a hall at 27 Market Square. Officially organized in 1861, it became noted for excellent singing. Jacob Brug was its first president. In June of 1866 the society brought a number of prominent German-American societies from throughout the Northeast to Providence, where they participated in a Sangerfest (singing contest) and vied for the coveted prizes. The big contest was held at Harrington's Opera House, where 1,000 voices were heard in the grand choral finale. Although the event was an artistic success, it placed a tremendous financial burden on this fledgling society. Because of this ambitious project, the Liederkrantz was indebted for years and went out of existence in 1890. Its place was quickly taken by the Einklang Singing Society, founded on October 7 of that same year.

Einklang Singing Society (Gesang Verein Einklang)

Originally called the United Glee Club, the Einklang was organized with twelve young men by Gustav Saacke to promote friendship and amusement among the German residents of

Providence. In 1890 this choral group made one of its first public appearances at the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Gesangverein Frohsinn in North Attleboro, Massachusetts. Encouraged by the favorable reception of the audience, the members made plans for the future. They adopted the name Einklang and began to hold regular meetings at the Providence Turnverein's new hall (Deutsche Halle) at 155 Niagara Street, which had been built with the intention of providing a common gathering place for German clubs in the city.

In September 1894, at Lawrence, Massachusetts, the Einklang was awarded the first-prize trophy in competition with other singing groups of the New England States Federation of Singers. It was given a silver cup—the Wander Prize—as a tribute to its virtuosity. This prize cup was also awarded to the Einklang both at the Worcester Singing Festival in 1897 and at the Singers' Festival sponsored by the Arbeiter Turnverein of Roxbury, Massachusetts, in 1899. Because the society had won this highly sought-after prize three times, it became the Einklang's permanent possession. The chorus continued to participate in competitions, singing at festivals in Manchester (1901), in Clinton (1903), and again in Lawrence (1905). It also performed at the Rhode Island Art Club, the Falstaff Club, Butler Hospital, Rhode Island Hospital, and various clubs and schools throughout Rhode Island.

While the Einklang Singing Society was enjoying success, most other German singing groups suffered financial losses. Immigration from Germany had passed its peak, and it was difficult to find new members. In fact, many societies competed with each other in order to maintain their own existence. Some were forced to disband.

The Einklang Singing Society continued to give annual concerts until it finally disbanded in the 1950s. Many of its former members then joined the Schubert Chorus.

Gesangverein Eintracht

The Darlington section of Pawtucket contained several clubs in which the German language and culture were maintained. These clubs combined to form a single



The Einklang Singing Society met at the German Hall at the corner of Atlantic Avenue and Niagara Street in Providence. The hall was built by a German Turner (gymnastics) club in 1890.

organization in 1896. The new group, with Hugo Walter as its president, made its first home in the old Carpenter Block on East Avenue.

In 1904, because its financial situation had greatly improved, the club constructed a new home. Two pieces of land on Carter Avenue were bought for \$600. While the hall was being built, the society was incorporated and a committee decided upon the official name—Gesangverein Eintracht. The organization's purpose was to promote song, music, dramatic events, gymnastics, and the German language. On Labor Day of 1904 a parade was held from the old hall on East Avenue to the club's new home on Carter Avenue. The members of the Eintracht Society were joined by Mayor James Higgins, and together they marched to the new quarters.

To attract the younger Germans in the community, an Eintracht gymnastics society was organized in the early 1900s. At first it was only for males, but later a section for young ladies was also established. The gymnasts had a great deal of success, and as a result the group flourished.

In 1911 a milestone in the history of the Eintracht Society was reached when it was selected to host the Tenth Singing Festival of the New England States Singers Federation. The festival was held from July 1 to July 4 to coincide with the celebration of the national holiday. The singing groups also participated in the grand Fourth of July parade organized by the city of Pawtucket. Despite the tremendous heat wave that prevailed during this festival, it was a great artistic success.

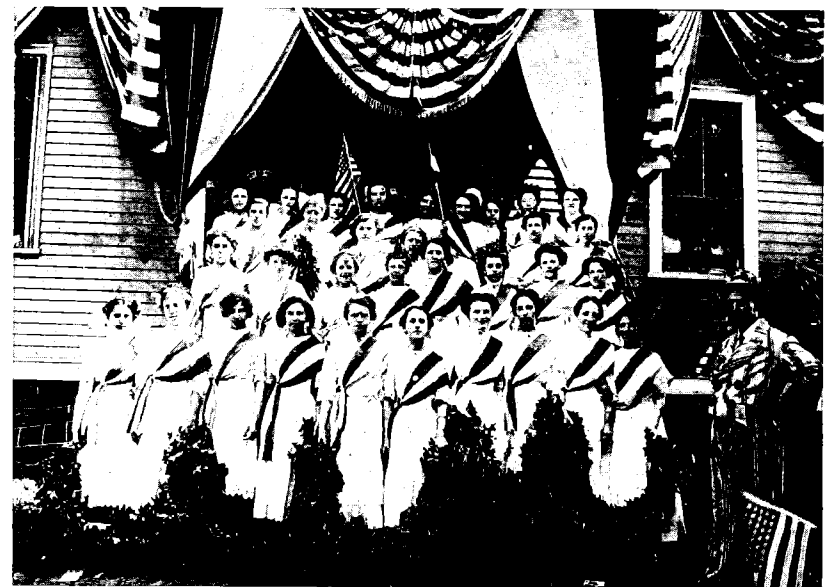
After this historic event, club life returned to its normal routine of song, musical skits, and gymnastics. The members took part in other singing contests in New York, Philadelphia, Newark, New Haven, Hartford, Fitchburg, Lawrence, and Clinton. In most cases their efforts were rewarded with one of the top prizes. Their choir director was Professor Carl Hermann Droz, a very talented music teacher, who had studied music in Germany and who was also organist for the Trinity Methodist Church.

On January 2, 1927, the club suffered a severe setback when a fire destroyed the entire hall. A building committee set to work immediately, and a new hall was quickly built. It was

dedicated on Memorial Day in 1927, but it languished until Richard Alberg became director of the chorus. Under his masterful leadership, music again filled the hall and dramatic productions again became an integral part of the society's cultural life.

The Eintracht Society was selected as the host club for the Fourteenth New England States Singers Festival, held in Pawtucket in September 1933. This festival was a triumph and ended with a concert of over 500 voices in the Pawtucket Senior High School auditorium. Alfred Ritschel and Richard Alberg conducted the choir and orchestra respectively.

The Gesangverein Eintracht continued its singing tradition until the early 1960s, when interest waned and the hall was rented out for weekly dances. It continues to be used for this latter purpose, and it has come to be called the German Club.



The Tenth Singing Festival of the New England States Singers Federation was held July 1-4, 1911, at the Eintracht Club on Carter Avenue, Pawtucket. The society participated in the Fourth of July parade organized by the city of Pawtucket. *Courtesy of Anna (Wendel) Walker.*

**Deutsch Dramatischer Verein
(German Dramatic Society—Schubert Chorus)**

The German Dramatic Society of Olneyville was incorporated in June 1888. Established to promote singing, gymnastics, and theatrical performances, the club was originally located in a hall on the corner of Bell and Eiswald streets in Olneyville. However, shortly after it was established, the members moved to another hall at 4 Avery Street.

Because of the First World War and the Prohibition era that followed, it became increasingly difficult to maintain a large membership. In 1931 the singing section of the German Turnerschaft joined with the German Dramatic Society to become its singing group. This singing section had actually been founded a year earlier by eleven young men who belonged to the Johnston Soccer Club. Two years after joining the German Dramatic Society, the singers chose the name Schubert Chorus for their group after Franz Schubert, the famous German composer.



The German Dramatic Society was founded in 1888 in the Olneyville section of Providence. In 1931 the Schubert Chorus became part of this organization. The Schubert Chorus (pictured here) and the women's Lorelei Chorus still participate in singing competitions with the Connecticut Sängerbund.

Karl Umbach was the first director of the Schubert Chorus. He was followed in 1936 by Richard Alberg, who directed it for thirty-two years. Alberg had previously been the director of the Eintracht Singing Society of Pawtucket, and he

also conducted the forty-six piece Pawtucket Philharmonic Orchestra.

In 1936, in Lawrence, Massachusetts, the singers participated in their first competition and were awarded first prize for their efforts. From this time on, the chorus flourished, and under Alberg's skilled direction it scored many triumphs in competitions. Among its early accomplishments: first prize, Bridgeport, 1941; first prize, Waterbury, 1946; first prize, Hartford, 1947; second prize, Bridgeport, 1948; first prize, New Britain, 1950; second prize, Springfield, 1952; first prize, Bridgeport, 1954; second prize, Bridgeport, 1956; and first prize, Hartford, 1958. The chorus has continued to enter and to win singing festivals up to the present day.

In 1950, when the German Dramatic Society was informed by the city of Providence that the hall at 4 Avery Street would be demolished to make room for the Huntington Expressway, the society found a new home nearby, a former church building that it set about renovating and converting into a club hall. After arduous work and a considerable financial outlay, the new building, located at 687 Harris Avenue, was dedicated on February 24, 1951.

The first ladies' chorus of the German Dramatic Society dates back to 1898. These women not only sang but also performed short plays. Later a second group was organized, which continued to perform dramatic skits in the late 1930s. It was called the Edelweiss after the popular white Alpine flower of the same name. Its musical leader was Ida Schaller. Eventually the Edelweiss members became more interested in sponsoring social activities than in singing events.

In November 1970 several female members of the society decided to form another ladies' chorus. In that month the Lorelei Chorus, consisting of twelve women, met for the first time under the direction of the ubiquitous Richard Alberg. (According to German folklore, there was a maiden named Lorelei who would enchant sailors with her beautiful voice and lure them to their deaths along a rocky cliff on the Rhine River, a cliff today called the Lorelei.) The Lorelei Chorus engaged in the competitions of the New England Sängerbund in the ladies' second-class division. The first year it entered (1973), the

chorus took first prize, a notable achievement in competition with groups who had been active for twelve or more years.

In January 1983 a dance group called Schuhplattler and Gebirgstrachten Verein "Alpenblumen" was formed as a section of the German Dramatic Society. Founded by Kurt van Dexter, the S.G.T.V. Alpenblumen presently has twenty-five active members and has performed at various celebrations throughout the East Coast. In February 1984 another dance group was organized, this one composed of sixteen children between the ages of four and thirteen. It made its dancing debut at the society's fifty-eighth annual German picnic.

The German Dramatic Society celebrated its ninety-fifth anniversary in 1983, making it the oldest active German club in Rhode Island. The current president of the society is Erich Schmidt; the chorus director is Richard F. Alberg, who succeeded his father in this capacity. Presently there are 175 members in the German Dramatic Society.



Mr. Alfred Schoene was president of the German Dramatic Society for many years, as well as a member of the Schubert Chorus.
Courtesy of Alfred Schoene.

Providence Turners (Turnverein Vorwärts)

The first Turner society was established in 1811 in Berlin, Germany, by Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852). It was formed both to impart to German youth the benefits of physical training and to create a nucleus for political action against Napoleonic rule in Germany.

The first Turner society in America was founded in 1848 in Cincinnati, Ohio. Other Turner organizations quickly followed. At the 1855 Turner convention in Buffalo, New York, the members passed the following resolution: "The Turners are opposed to slavery and regard this institution as unworthy of a republic and not in accord with the principles of the free." The Turners staunchly supported Abraham Lincoln for president. So zealously did they campaign for him that the Turners' hall in Baltimore was burnt down and many Turners had to flee for their lives. When Lincoln traveled to his inauguration, set for March 4, 1861, eighty-one Turners in the U.S. Army's Eighth Battalion formed Lincoln's bodyguard during the entire trip from Springfield, Illinois, to Washington, D.C.

The Providence Turners organization was formed in 1896 as the Turnverein Vorwärts. Club headquarters were on Bowlett Street, which was then in the town of Johnston (in 1898 this part of Johnston was annexed to the city of Providence). The first president was Leopold Schulze.

As membership increased, the quarters on Bowlett Street became inadequate and the society sought a more spacious location. In December 1909 a new hall was dedicated on Merino Avenue (now Glenbridge Avenue) in Providence. This brick structure was designed and built by Adolf Kurze, Sr., himself a Turner. During the dedication it was decided to change the name of the society to Deutsche Turnerschaft.

From its beginning in 1896, the Turner society participated actively in all the athletic events of the New England Turner District and garnered many prizes at gymnastic meets in Clinton, Fitchburg, Holyoke, Springfield, and Providence. In 1902 the Turners founded a band, later

popularly known as the German Band, which played at many of the traditional German functions around the state.

The name Deutsche Turnerschaft was eventually changed to Providence Turners. The organization is one of the few German societies to survive in Rhode Island. Although it originally restricted membership to those of German ancestry, now all nationalities are admitted, as evidenced by the fact that Benjamin V. Petrone is the current president of the society.

FRATERNAL SOCIETIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Order of the Harugari

The Germania Lodge, No. 266, and the Cherusker Lodge, No. 315, were lodges of the Order of the Harugari, a German-American organization which extended throughout the United States. The order was involved in charitable and benevolent activities similar to those of the Odd Fellows and the Freemasons. It was founded in 1847 in New York City, at a time when emigration from Germany began to assume extensive proportions. The organization spread rapidly, promoting its twin goals of assisting members in times of sickness and adversity and of providing for the widows and orphans of deceased members. Another aim was to preserve German language and culture in America.

The Germania Lodge, No. 266, the first Harugari lodge in Rhode Island, was organized in Providence in 1871, followed by the Cherusker Lodge, No. 315, organized in 1874. Sister lodges rapidly sprang up in Pawtucket, Woonsocket, and Newport, and a state Grand Lodge was formed in October 1875. These lodges proved to be very beneficial to German-Americans in Rhode Island by faithfully observing the order's motto—"Friendship, Love, and Benevolence."

The Providence Germania Lodge held its meetings in Fletcher's Hall, Westminster Street. Membership grew from 50 to 125 until the Cherusker Lodge, No. 315, was founded in 1874. Many Germania members transferred to this new organization. However, the Germania Lodge continued to exist

until the 1960s, meeting at the Germania Hall at 50 Birch Street in Cranston.

In February 1875 a small group of singers in the Pidge Avenue area of Pawtucket formed a lodge and joined the German Order of the Harugari as the Theodor Koerner Lodge, No. 371. Membership in this lodge increased from 19 in April 1875 to 140 by April 1900.

In 1897 a women's mutual-aid society was formed. As the first German women's lodge in Rhode Island, the Augusta Victoria Lodge, No. 107, quickly found support for its activities. In one year membership grew from 21 to 95 members. The lodge held its meeting at 98 Weybosset Street.

Order of the Sons of Hermann (Hermannsöhne)

This fraternal and benevolent society was formed in the United States in the late nineteenth century to improve and to elevate the social condition of its members and to afford German-speaking citizens of America an opportunity to protect their material and spiritual interests. The goals of the society were to assist the sick, to bury the dead, and to give support to the widows and children of the deceased. The motto of the organization was "Friendship, Love, and Faithfulness."

By 1901 there were eight lodges located around the state. Four were in Providence: the Walpurga Lodge; the Thusnelda Lodge (sister lodge), No. 1; the Karl Marx Lodge, No. 1; and the Teutonia Lodge, No. 2. Two lodges were in Pawtucket: the Fortuna Lodge (sister lodge), No. 3, and the Humboldt Lodge, No. 3. The remaining two lodges—the Germania Lodge and the Brunnhilde Lodge (sister lodge)—were in Newport.

CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church

The Reverend Martin Tirmenstein was the original pastor of the first Evangelical Lutheran congregation in Providence. Born in Dresden, Germany, in 1838, he was brought by his parents to the United States in the same year. After growing up in Louisiana, studying in Missouri, and ministering upon ordination to a flock on Staten Island, the Reverend Tirmenstein accepted a call from a congregation in Providence in 1866.

The first service of St. Paul's Lutheran Congregation was held in the former New Church Temple at Pine and Page streets on Sunday, October 21, 1866. In 1871 St Paul's joined the Missouri Synod, though the congregation was not officially mentioned in the Mission Boards Report until 1891.

The expenditures of the congregation for January 1871 give wonderful testimony to the character of the times and the nature of the problems facing the flock of worshipers:

Gas	\$ 3.20
2 ton coal	\$17.00
17 baskets of wood	\$ 4.00
Snow shoveling	\$ 1.75
Pastor's monthly salary	\$45.00 (paid in varying amounts)

January of '71 must have been a severe winter month!

From August 1895 to 1899, German services were held at the Methodist Episcopal Tabernacle in Olneyville, rather than at Pine and Page streets. On September 19, 1895, St. Paul's German Evangelical Church came into being. The word *German* was retained in the congregation's name until 1932, when legal steps were taken to change it to St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church. This new St. Paul's congregation of 1895 was received into the synod in 1897.

The congregation naturally wanted its own house of worship, and consequently it purchased a piece of land at the corner of Union and Huntington avenues. Building began in January 1899 and was completed by springtime. In a beautiful dedication ceremony, the combined choirs of St. Paul's and St. Matthew's Lutheran sang the stirring German hymn "Wie heilig ist diese Staette" (How Holy Is This Place), and the Sunday school children sang in German "Unser Herrscher, Unser Koenig" (Our Lord, Our King). The industrious German Lutherans of St. Paul's acquitted themselves of their debt by 1905. A mortgage-burning ceremony took place with great joy on September 24 of that year.



In 1899 St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Providence moved from its Pine and Page Street location to a bigger, newly constructed church building at the corner of Union and Huntington avenues. The industrious congregation acquitted itself of the mortgage in just six years. *Courtesy of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church.*

Early in 1907 the property adjoining the church was acquired for the building of a parsonage. A new pipe organ was also purchased to enhance the quality of the church services. One year later a Young People's Society was formed, subsequently renamed the Walther Society after the founder of the Missouri Synod. Well established by 1908, the congregation continued to expand steadily over the next twenty years.

In 1929 St. Paul's began to offer an English service as well as a German one, and in the next year the records of the voters' assembly meeting were written in English. In 1932 the word *German* was legally dropped from the official name of the church, though some type of German service has continued to be offered at St. Paul's to the present day.

The congregation expanded to such a large size that construction of a new and more spacious building became the most important project for the 1930s. A fund was initiated, and in 1937 it was decided to purchase a property at Elmwood Avenue and Carter Street. Groundbreaking ceremonies took place on May 5, 1938, and the building was dedicated on February 26, 1939. In a formal ceremony, the doors of the church were opened to public worship by Christian Kilguss, Sr., the president of the congregation.

Beginning in 1937, the constitution of St. Paul's was translated into English for the first time and was both reviewed and revised. Although the tendency was to move away from the German language, the German roots of St. Paul's were never completely removed, nor could they be, because of the continuing influence of Martin Luther. In fact, in August 1959 the Reverend Frederick Burmeister of Pforzheim, Germany, delivered the sermon at a Sunday service. He had come in part to thank St. Paul's for contributing to the construction of the Martin Luther Church in Pforzheim.

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church has continued to flourish. It now boasts an excellent elementary school as well as a fine church.

A list of the pastors who served St. Paul's:

Rev. Martin Tirmenstein (1866-1869)

Rev. Carl W. Ernst (1869-1872)

Rev. Paul Loeber (1895-1905)

Rev. Henry F. Burke (1906-1909)
Rev. Henry A. E. Schaefer (1910-1930)
Rev. Henry Ebelke (1929-1940)
Rev. Karl F. Graesser (1941-1961)
Rev. Paul G. Littmann (1962-)

St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church

The Lutheran Church in America has always concerned itself with missionary activity. In the late nineteenth century, it was disturbed by the fact that there were only seven Lutheran churches in the New England area. One of the states included on the list for missionary work was Rhode Island, and the Reverend Carl Ohlinger was given the assignment. Arriving in the summer of 1891, he quickly discovered German Lutherans in Providence (St. Paul's), Newport, Natick, and Pawtucket. Perhaps inspired by the summer heat and humidity, Ohlinger decided to begin his work in Newport. But when September arrived, most of his newly formed flock dispersed, for many of the churchgoers were servants of New York and Philadelphia families vacationing in Newport.

Pastor Ohlinger moved to Pawtucket. Its central location and its sizable German population made the industrial city a promising area for the establishment of a church. On September 20, 1891, forty Germans worshiped together in the old YMCA hall on Broad Street in Pawtucket. By October regular weekly services were conducted, and an official constitution was written for the congregation by December 1891. Seventeen German men composed the group who founded the Evangelische Lutherische Sankt Matthaeus Gemeinde on December 6.

Once organized, the members of St. Matthew's soon developed long-range plans for constructing their own house of worship. Two lots located on Greene Street in the Pleasant View section of Pawtucket were selected for the future site at a cost of \$1,200. Although this area is heavily populated today, at the time of the purchase most of the area was open fields.

Before any construction could begin, St. Matthew's was forced to vacate the YMCA building and to conduct its services at the "Swedish" (Swedenborgian) church on Elm Street. For

many years Germans in Providence, Natick, and other parts of the state used this location and the services of St. Matthew's Church for the baptism and confirmation of their children. It was not until June 19, 1892, that the cornerstone of the original St. Matthew's Church was laid. Only two months were required to finish the structure, and three festival services were held in the last week of August to celebrate the happy event. This church served its congregation for the next sixty-six years.



St. Matthew's Lutheran Church of Pawtucket was founded in 1891. The original church (shown here) was on the corner of Prince and Greene streets in Darlington. Later a new church was built on Newport Avenue. *Courtesy of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church.*

During the years immediately after 1892, one of the most pressing problems for the members was finances. Most of the communicants were from immigrant families whose incomes and financial resources were limited. With patience and perseverance, however, the church's members met their financial obligations.

From 1891 on, the church sponsored a Jungfrauen Verein. This Young Women's Society was responsible for planning and preparing many of the social functions of St. Matthew's.

In 1905, when Pastor Ohlinger's ill health forced him to resign, the congregation sent an invitation to the Reverend August Pechthold, who accepted the call and served as pastor for twenty-three years. Under his direction the facilities of the church were expanded, its debt was eliminated, and a monthly English service was introduced. Because English services actually attracted more people, German was dropped as the church's official language in 1933, although the mother tongue was still used in some devotions until 1945.

St. Matthew's Church maintained a stable congregation and even added some new members. It also engaged in local missionary activity through preaching stations. Many families from the Berkeley section of Cumberland began to attend St. Matthew's in the 1930s. Formerly they went to a preaching station at which biweekly devotions were conducted. By 1934 there was no longer a need for these services because most of the people had linked their fate and faith to the Pawtucket church.

Six years later a search began to find new property on which to build a larger church. It ended successfully in 1944 with the purchase of a site on Newport Avenue. Unfortunately, World War II and rapidly rising postwar costs delayed the construction until 1957. During the intervening years, St. Matthew's began the Pawtucket Christian Day School, which was intended to serve the Christian churches and congregations in the Blackstone Valley region. At first the enrollment was small and the facilities cramped, but in late October of 1952 a new school building was completed and dedicated.

Five years later St. Matthew's was able to realize its goal of a new church building on the Newport Avenue properties which

it had purchased over the years. The dedication was held on March 9, 1958, amidst great celebration.

Although St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church still conducts services, its official membership never exceeded 300 people because of the small influx of new German immigrants into Pawtucket.

A list of the pastors who served St. Matthew's:

Rev. Carl Ohlinger (1891-1905)
Rev. August Pechthold (1905-1928)
Rev. Frederick Thomae (1928-1945)
Rev. Arthur Hawlicheck (1945-1961)
Rev. Edward Strebe (1961-1973)
Rev. Walter Larson (1973-1979)
Rev. Terence Reynolds (1979-)

German Catholics

Some of the German people who came to Rhode Island, especially those from southern Germany, were Roman Catholics. A survey on religion in Rhode Island in 1905 indicated that 22 percent of the total Rhode Island German population were Catholics. Both Patrick Conley, in his excellent work on Rhode Island Catholicism, and Father Colman J. Barry, an authority on German-American Catholicism, emphasize that this percentage was substantially lower than the national average of 35 percent.

The Catholic Church was alert to the spiritual needs of the German people. In 1871 Bishop McFarland assigned Father Joseph A. Schale to this ministry. Under Father Schale's leadership the St. Boniface Society was founded (the society was named for the patron saint of Germany). Since many of Rhode Island's Germans were located in the Olneyville and Manton sections of Providence, Father Schale would regularly come to St. Mary's Church on Barton Street to conduct a liturgy in German. In 1872, however, Father Schale was called to Connecticut, where he was instrumental to the formation of St. Boniface national parish in New Haven. For six years no German priest served the spiritual needs of the Rhode Island German Catholics.

In 1878 a young man from Langbrücken, in the grand duchy of Baden, Germany, assumed this ethnoreligious mission. His name was William Stang, and he became a curate at the Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul. By holding regular services at the cathedral, Stang was able to serve all of Rhode Island's German Catholics. Eventually Stang, who became both pastor and rector of the cathedral, was appointed first bishop of the new Fall River diocese in 1904. During the years that Schale and Stang ministered to the German Catholic community, no parish was ever formed. Though several reasons—such as rapid assimilation of the Germans—help to explain why this was so, the major reason, as Patrick Conley emphasizes, was "the relatively small size of the local German community" in general and of the Catholic German community in particular.

German Jews

From 1850 to 1880, the Jewish community in Rhode Island was formed primarily by Jewish immigrants from Germany and Austria. Many of them settled in Providence and found work in the cloth trade. In 1854 Providence's first synagogue was founded, but the Jewish community remained small (150 families as late as 1880). By the 1870s a group of Jewish people referred to as the "Deutschen" formed the upper crust of the Jewish community. They were generally German-speaking Reform Jews. It was not until after 1880, when a sizable influx of Jewish people from eastern Europe occurred, that the Jewish population, especially in Providence, increased dramatically.

GERMAN BUSINESSES

Many Germans who arrived in Rhode Island settled in the capital city of Providence or its immediate suburbs. Of the 13,112 Germans in Rhode Island in the first decade of the twentieth century, 6,684 (51 percent) were residents of Providence. Naturally, Providence became the center for German laborers, craftsmen, and businessmen. From 1850 until the First World War, the capital city witnessed the influx of many German artisans, mechanics, silver workers, cabinetmakers, and jewelers. Most of the jewelers came from Hanau and Pforzheim in Germany. However, German silver workers and cabinetmakers were also enticed to Providence from New York by the Gorham Manufacturing Company and the Potter and Dennison Company. Their skills were in great and constant demand. According to an October 1910 article in the *Providence Board of Trade Journal*, in almost every case the German people "worked industriously, lived upright, were desirable citizens, and they and their children made good in the common effort for the upbuilding of Providence."

Few people know that Providence was the oleomargarine center of the eastern seaboard and that it was an enterprising German—Herman G. Possner—who made it such. With the aid of two other Germans, John Fehlberg and Augustus Borchardt, Possner started the Providence Dairy Company about 1880. The plant was located in the Hope Foundry Building at 273 Eddy Street, and from this center margarine was shipped to all parts of the United States. In 1890 the company produced 20,000 pounds of margarine daily. By 1910 it produced

1,673,632 pounds annually for shipment outside the country and 11,242,172 pounds for domestic consumption. This made Providence one of the leading margarine-manufacturing centers in the United States.

Possner left the dairy company to found the Narragansett Brewing Company with several other partners, but in 1905 he returned to the oleomargarine business when he and his two sons, Albert W. and Howard E. Possner, established the Narragansett Dairy Company at 500 South Main Street.

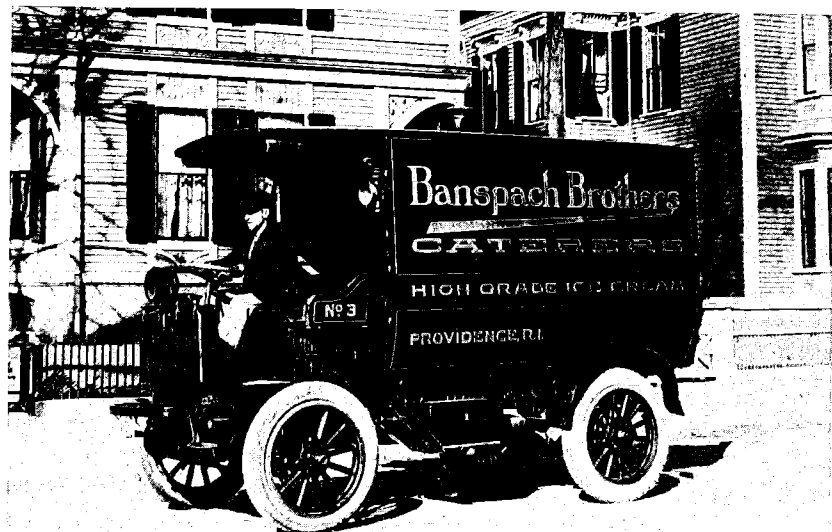
Although the oleomargarine industry was perhaps the most unusual business started by Germans, there were many other firms with German connections. Most of these were located in and around Providence, and some have continued to operate until the present.

One of the most famous and successful German bakery companies was the Banspach Brothers Bakery, located at 1915 Westminster Street in Olneyville Square. From 1894 to 1939 the Banspach brothers produced fine baked goods in the most efficient manner. This Olneyville bakery prided itself on its three huge brick ovens, which were fired by coal and coke. In fact, during the 1938 hurricane Banspach was called upon to supply all hospitals and most other state institutions requiring bread, since competing bakers could not operate their oil-burning ovens because of a general power failure. In 1939 the Westminster Street plant was destroyed by fire, and Banspach relocated at 114 Delaine Street in the center of Olneyville. The Banspach Bakery continued to operate until the 1960s, when it sold its facilities to a larger firm.

The tradition and techniques of brewing beer were not left in Germany by those who came to settle in Rhode Island. The first brewery in Rhode Island was established at Spectacle Pond, Cranston, where the Twin Oaks Restaurant now stands. It was named The What Cheer Brewery in 1897, but it was generally referred to as Molter's Brewery after Nicholas Molter, who purchased an interest in the company just after the Civil War.

The genial and generous Molter was a leader among the early German residents of Providence. Before becoming a brewery owner, he manufactured German wurst (sausages) at

Norfolk (now Hill) and Pine streets. He was also one of the founders of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church. In 1884 Molter sold the brewery to his sons, Henry T. and John N. Molter, who continued the brewing techniques which their father had taught them. When Nicholas Molter died in 1896, he was an honored and highly respected member of the Rhode Island community.

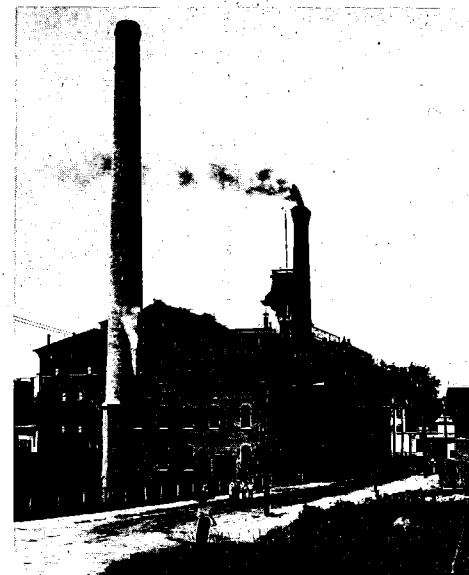


In 1894 F. Henry Banspach established the Banspach Brothers Bakery on Westminster Street in Olneyville Square. The bakery later served the Providence area with a catering service, using motorcars to deliver goods to customers. *Courtesy of Fred Banspach.*

The most famous of all local breweries, and the only one which still stands, is the Narragansett Brewing Company, situated in the Arlington section of Cranston near Providence. Organized in 1890 by six Germans—John H. Fehlberg, Augustus F. Borchardt, Herman G. Possner, George M. Gerhard, Constant A. Moeller, and Jacob Wirth—the Narragansett Brewery became synonymous with progress and efficiency. George Wilhelm, a brewmaster with an established reputation in Germany at the Berlin Tivoli Brewery, was hired as the company's expert brewer. The company employed all the latest

techniques and equipment, and it was situated near the tracks of the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad line for easy transport.

Narragansett produced its first brew in December 1890. The original brewhouse could produce 50,000 barrels annually. In 1898 the company added an alehouse with a capacity of 70,000 barrels, and by 1910 Narragansett's output reached 225,000 barrels. In 1914 the brewery could boast that it owned forty-two acres of land, huge refrigerating machines, and a stable and a garage for local delivery equipment (which included seventy horses, fifty wagons, and fifteen motorized vehicles). It was the most hygienic operation of its kind. The plant not only had its own German Bierstube for visitors but employed a goodly number of German laborers.



The Narragansett Brewing Company was established in Cranston in 1890 by a group of German immigrants. By 1910 Narragansett was producing over 225,000 barrels a year. *Courtesy of the Providence Journal.*

During the Prohibition era the brewery managed to survive by producing ginger ale, near-beer, and other nonalcoholic beverages. It was acquired by the Haffenraeffer family in 1933. By the end of World War II, 600,000 barrels

were brewed annually, and by 1952 this figure was increased to 1,250,000, making Narragansett the largest brewery in New England. In 1965 the Haffenraeffers sold the firm to the Falstaff Brewing Company. The brewery operated until recently and may resume production soon.

The Providence Brewing Company began operation in 1893 on Harris Avenue and Eagle Street in Providence. It became famous for its fine Bohemian beer, with its plant reaching a capacity of 200,000 barrels in 1910. One of the company's founders, John Scheminger, and its secretary-treasurer, Gustav F. Mensing, were of German ancestry.

Besides baking and brewing, Germans were also active in the making of textiles. One such German was A. Albert Sack. Sack was born in Hansfelde, Germany, in 1843. He was trained in the woolen manufacturing business in his native Germany, but in 1867 he came to America. Before establishing his own business in Rhode Island, he was employed as a designer by Edward Harris of Woonsocket, who owned and operated one of the finest woolen mills in New England. After holding several other positions with different companies, Sack became superintendent of the Owen and Clark Worsted Mill of Providence in 1873. Six years later he purchased the North Providence Mill, renamed it the Geneva Worsted Mill, and made it a huge success.

In 1884 Sack sold his interests, and with this capital he organized the Lymansville Company, located on the Woonasquatucket River in the Lymansville section of North Providence. It became one of the largest textile plants in the state. In 1888 the firm was able to open salesrooms in eight large cities, including New York. By 1901 this mill produced 1,200,000 pounds of yarn, manufactured 1,000,000 yards of cloth, and employed 600 people.

The Woonsocket Dyeing and Bleaching Company was owned and operated by Gustave Adolf Friedrichs (1876-1928), who invented a new process for dyeing cloth. In fact, in 1915 he received a patent for the first wool-dyeing top made in the United States. Born in Belgium, Friedrichs was familiar with German dye patterns, which were better developed than those in the United States, and it was this knowledge that he used to

improve American dyeing methods. The Woonsocket plant is still in operation today on Allen Street.

The Jaeger family was associated with the textile business in Barmen, Wuppertal, Germany, as early as 1407. In 1912 the family came to the United States and settled in New England. Albert F. W. Jaeger was born in Massachusetts but eventually focused his attention on Rhode Island, where he worked for Thies Dyeing Mills (West Warwick) and later established Jaeger Dye. Unfortunately, rising costs and labor difficulties forced Jaeger Dye, like many textile operations, to leave Rhode Island for the South. Today Albert Jaeger conducts a business in North Carolina similar to the one his family began in Germany.

Adolf Walter Ploettner, a textile designer of exceptional ability, came to the United States in 1870 and settled in North Seekonk. He was associated with Stillwater Mill in Harrisville, Rhode Island. (A remarkably talented man, he also taught German at MIT.) Ploettner had a particular knowledge of the use of dyes and patterns. Some of the remaining samples of his work attest to his abilities. His son, Walter V. Ploettner, became a fine chemist and was associated with Acme Finishing (Green and Daniels Hill) and Arnold Hoffman's I.C.I. Organics.

One of the most important German businessmen in Rhode Island was Joseph Ott, who established the Royal Weaving Company. Ott's firm was well known for the manufacture of quality cotton, silk, and worsted fabrics. In fact, in 1936 it was referred to as "the largest silk-weaving mill in the world under one roof." Its floor space was nearly twenty-one acres, and its annual production was approximately 1,500,000 yards. The plant, located on Central Avenue and Sabin Street in Pawtucket, employed over 2,000 people in 1936.

Ott was born in Trochtelfingen, Germany, in 1861. Working for Goeritz Brothers in Chemnitz, one of Germany's largest silk manufacturers, he acquired a detailed knowledge of the operation of the silk industry. In 1884 he arrived in New York City. He knew no English, was unfamiliar with American customs, and had only \$1.50 to his name. He worked for several mills in different parts of the United States, but finally he

linked his fate to Pawtucket, working at the city's Slater Cotton Company.

Ott was interested in silks, and since there was no silk weaving in the state, he became a pioneer in the Rhode Island silk-weaving industry. His first plant was located in the old Hicks Building near East Avenue in Pawtucket. When this enterprise prospered, Ott was joined by two partners, Daniel G. Littlefield and Darius Goff, and together they established a mill at the American Hair Cloth Company on the corner of Mill and Cross streets in Central Falls. Later the firm moved to a new factory across the street from this building.



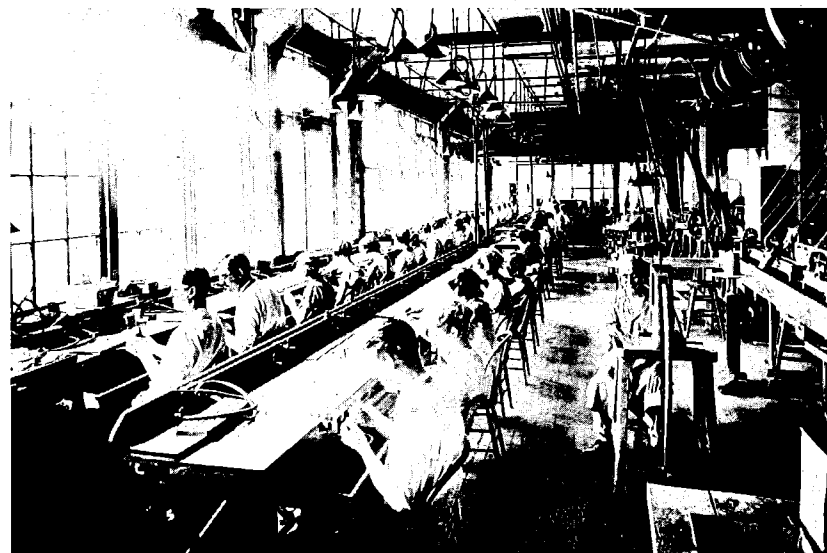
The Royal Weaving Company at the corner of Central Avenue and Sabin Street in the Darlington section of Pawtucket was built around 1900. By 1936 the plant was the largest silk-weaving mill in the world under one roof. *Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Pacelt.*

Ott and his partners soon outgrew these new quarters, and a more spacious plant—the one on Central Avenue and Sabin Street—was planned, constructed, and officially opened in 1900. The products of the Royal Weaving Company were so fine that they were awarded the Grand Prize at the St. Louis Exposition and the Gold Medal at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition.

In 1902 Ott married Amelia Molter, the daughter of the well-known German brewer Nicholas Molter. Their son,

Joseph, Jr., began his early business years in his father's firm. In 1937 the Royal Weaving Company was sold, and the young Ott formed his own firm, still known as the Joseph M. P. Ott Manufacturing Company of Pawtucket. He was one of the earliest manufacturers to recognize the importance of fiberglass products.

Of all Rhode Island firms, the Speidel Corporation has achieved the greatest national reputation. This firm has a solid connection with Germany and people of German ancestry. Begun in the German jewelry center of Pforzheim in 1868 by Friedrich Speidel and his wife, the original Speidel Company established a sound reputation as a manufacturer of fine neckchain. In 1904 Friedrich decided to expand into the American market. Rhode Island was selected as the proper location, and a branch of the Speidel Chain Company was begun in a brand-new building at 70 Ship Street, Providence (interestingly, the building was the first reinforced concrete structure in the state of Rhode Island).



The Speidel Corporation was established in Providence in 1904 as a branch of a company in Germany. Located at 70 Ship Street, Speidel was primarily a producer of neckchain, but later it became more famous for its line of fine watchbands. *Courtesy of the Speidel Corporation, a division of Textron.*

Just before the outbreak of the First World War, Friedrich's brother Edwin came to Providence and established his own firm, the Automatic Chain Company. The siren call of Providence also proved too seductive for a third Speidel brother to ignore. Not long after the second Speidel Company came into being, Albert Speidel joined Edwin's firm but then formed his own business, known as Speidel Brothers. During the postwar depression era, the Speidels in Germany and in Providence agreed that merger was the soundest course of action. The new Speidel Corporation's first president was Albert Speidel.

Although the Speidel Corporation at first relied upon its neckchain for profit, the company became most famous for its superb watchband line. With wristwatches becoming increasingly popular after the First World War, in 1924 the Speidel firm in America enticed a young German named Carl Augenstein to design watchbands in its Providence plant. By 1925 this German craftsman had developed an expansion watchband, which became Speidel's first entry in the watchband market.

The year 1939 proved to be a crucial date for the company, with Speidel, U.S.A., and Speidel, Germany, dissolving their formal business relationship. In the United States manufacture of watchbands ceased as the Providence plant geared up for the war effort. But although the war ended the close link between the two firms, it did not end the influence of German people and German ideas on Speidel in Providence.

A designer named Karl Stiegele, from Pforzheim, Germany, invented for a German firm an especially flexible and long-lasting watchband. This firm informed the Speidel company of Rhode Island about the revolutionary band. Speidel's executive vice president and treasurer, Paul Levinger, was one of the first to recognize the value of this product. Securing the rights to manufacture, Levinger brought both automated production and the famous Twist-O-Flex band to Speidel. By 1957, after some aesthetic changes in the original Stiegele design, the new product line proved to be an enormous success.

Although it is not generally known, the Speidel

Corporation also produced the famous ointment Desitin. This ointment was similar to one first produced in Oldenburg, Germany, in 1912. In 1925 Edwin Speidel became convinced of Desitin's value, and he agreed to become the sole distributor of the ointment in the United States. Speidel's Desitin was widely recognized by physicians and used by many hospitals. In fact, Edwin Speidel received special recognition from Harvard University because of his contributions to the advancement of medicine.

Since the 1960s the Speidel Corporation has continued to diversify. Currently owned by the Textron Corporation, the company plans to move in the near future to a more spacious plant in Smithfield, Rhode Island.

The Armbrust Chain Company was formed in 1920 by Gottlob Armbrust, who had been trained in the German jewelry capital of Pforzheim. A talented young man, Armbrust had been employed by the German firm of Hamm and Duer and sent by this company to Providence in order to train workers on its new machinery. While he was performing his duties at the S & B Ledger Company of Providence, Germany entered into war, and soon the whole world was in conflict. Armbrust was unable to return home, and he turned for help to Edwin and Albert Speidel, who had established reputations in the jewelry industry. With their encouragement, Armbrust organized his own chain company.

The Armbrust Chain Company began in a tenement located on Richmond Street in Providence, but by the time Armbrust stepped down as president in 1963, it had become a thriving company and a recognized leader in the chain industry. One major reason for its continued success was the skill and resourcefulness of its German founder. Until the beginning of World War II, chain machines were generally built in Germany and shipped to the United States. During the first days of the war, however, a shipment for Armbrust was lost at sea, and further shipments became doubtful. Because Armbrust refused to be stymied, his company developed and produced its own fine machines. Such innovative ability and determination to succeed have always marked the German craft tradition.

Not all Germans who came to Rhode Island became

involved in brewing, jewelry, or textiles. Some were skilled cabinetmakers and upholsterers. The most famous of these were the Morlocks. William Morlock came to New York from Württemberg in 1857, settling in Providence six years later and working in that city for ten years before he formed his own business, which in 1876 became the Morlock and Bayer Company. This partnership specialized in interior work, fitting buildings from the ground floor up. Many old Providence homes still bear testimony to the talents of Morlock and Bayer. In fact, it was this firm that was responsible for the design and workmanship at such notable sites as the Pendleton House of the Rhode Island School of Design, the Providence County Courthouse, the Marsden J. Perry Mansion (John Brown House) on Power Street, and the Union Trust Company Building. In 1908 the Morlock and Bayer Company was dissolved, and Morlock's sons, C. Albert and Herman F. Morlock, split the business. C. Albert Morlock manufactured and designed furniture and cabinets, while Herman F. Morlock specialized in upholstering and restoring furniture. Both sons applied the same strict standards of sound workmanship that characterized their father's products.

Another prominent German businessman, Christian G. Brunnckhow, was born in 1860 in the town of Grabow in the German state of Mecklenburg-Schwerin. He was trained in Germany in the manufacture of copper and galvanized iron. Brunnckhow came to America and eventually established a metallic building-products firm in Providence. He found many opportunities for his business, both inside and outside Rhode Island. Among the buildings in which Brunnckhow's handiwork appeared were the new State House, the Rhode Island Normal School, the Union Trust Building, twenty-five Providence schools (including Mount Pleasant High, Messer Street School, and West Side High), the Brown University gymnasium, most of Pawtucket's schools, and the Narragansett and several other breweries.

The Reiner Drug Company, a successful business begun by Nicholas Reiner in 1906, was located at the corner of Westminster Street and Washington Row. It developed the reputation of being one of the most trusted pharmacies in the

city of Providence. In 1910 Reiner opened another pharmacy on the corner of Washington and Dorrance streets near City Hall. The grand opening featured free boxes of candy for patrons and a dazzling display of fireworks.

Bordered by Ontario, Niagara, Broad Street, and Lexington Avenue in the Elmwood section of Providence was a circular track one-sixth of a mile in circumference. The wooden colosseum-like structure was operated by a German, Colonel Felix Wendelschaefer, who also managed the Providence Opera House at the corner of Pine and Dorrance streets. The track could accommodate approximately 10,000 people and was designed specifically for bicycle racing. Unfortunately, the Colosseum, as it was called, failed just two years after it opened, closing in September 1903. The site was eventually flattened and became part of the residential neighborhood of Elmwood.

Besides these businesses, a significant number of firms based in Germany have elected to open branches in Rhode Island. Among the most famous are American Hoechst, Papst, and Windmoeller-Hoelscher.

Though the number of German firms has by no means been exhausted in this brief treatment, the reader can begin to appreciate the sizable contributions of the industrious Germans of Rhode Island.

CONCLUSION

The famous German writer Goethe once wrote:

All that is past of us
Was but reflected;
All that was lost in us
Here is corrected;
All indescribables
Here we descry . . .

These lines make an appropriate ending for our survey: the past efforts of the German people of Rhode Island have been reflected; their accomplishments have been delineated; and what once was little known has now been confirmed for posterity. Since the 1850s, when Germans first came to Rhode Island in significant numbers, they have been an active and vital part of the life of this state. Though their number has remained small in comparison with other groups of Rhode Islanders, their contribution to the state has been immense. These proud and independent German immigrants and their descendants have indeed been responsible for helping to make Rhode Island economically prosperous and culturally diverse.

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