"In the city at our feet, here and there, quick puffs of steam and great steady columns of smoke indicate the positions of our great furnaces and forges, and work-shops and factories of innumerable kinds. And then the beauty of the city; but I will not dilate on that. We rest content with stating that the main features of this wondrous picture are the growth of less than fifty years, and that no cause of that growth has ceased to act; that each and every cause of it is now acting, and must act for ages with increasing power."

CHAPTER V.

THE GERMANS OF BUFFALO.


GERMAN immigration to America since the beginning of the present century has been a powerful element in the growth and prosperity of the country. From no other foreign land has there come to us a class of people possessed in so great a degree of the characteristics necessary to render them peaceable, loyal and intelligent citizens of a free country. Industry, thrift, economy, patience in the toil necessary to procure for themselves homes, sociability, general temperance and intelligence above the average of our citizens—these are the marked features of the German character that is so numerously represented in all of our large cities; they readily adapt themselves to our form of government, adopt our language, connect themselves with our institutions while perpetuating their own, take an active and intelligent part in our politics, and by the general exercise of the traits of character above noted, soon gain a foothold and occupy a position of prominence wherever they make their homes. Wherever they settle in any considerable numbers, the Germans are prompt in the building of churches, the founding of useful societies and the patronage of schools, while the ratio of their increase in numbers, as compared with any given number of American families, is greatly in their favor.

There are few Northern cities where the German element forms a larger proportion of the population than in Buffalo. In 1880, the
The Germans of Buffalo.

nationality of the parents of all the pupils registered in the public schools of the city, was as follows:—

American.................................................. 4,612
German.................................................... 9,088
Irish....................................................... 2,834
Other Nationalities.................................. 2,072

In 1882, these proportions stood as follows:—

American.................................................. 5,450
German.................................................... 10,301
Irish....................................................... 2,533
Other Nationalities.................................. 2,293

At the present time it is probable that the Germans of Buffalo number more than 75,000 (50,000 of whom were born in this country,) little less than one-half of the entire population of the city, while the other figures we have quoted indicate that the German families who send children to our public schools, equal in round numbers, not the American school patrons alone, but all other nationalities combined. Whoever walks the streets of Buffalo, or reads the list of business firms and of the directors of our financial and other institutions, will not fail to be struck with the frequently recurring, well-recognized names of our German citizens; they are numerous, prominent and valuable constituents in the composition of the commercial and business structure of the community.

The early settlers of Teutonic descent in Buffalo came almost entirely from Alsace (then under French rule) and southern Germany. This is accounted for by the fact that those sections of the Fatherland had been devastated by wars and were ruled in despotism and ruinous extravagance, which tended to drive the industrious peasantry to seek homes where their labors would be justly and permanently rewarded. Although northern Germany was at the same time under rigid despotic rule, it was of a vastly more humane and intelligent character. In Prussia especially, the peasantry were made to feel a strong confidence in their government and contentment with their position. As a consequence the settlers of Buffalo who came from northern Germany were later arrivals than their more oppressed southern brethren.

The first considerable body of Prussians who came to Buffalo to settle were the old Lutherans; they reached here in 1839, under care of their persecuted ministers, Johann Andreas, August Grabau and L. F. E. Krause, from Erfurt, province of Saxony, having been driven from their native land on account of their religion.

The Mecklenburgers constitute another important element in the north German emigration. The Seventh ward is largely populated by them, and they form an intelligent and successful class in the community.

Alsace contributed largely to the earlier emigration from southern Germany. The Alsatians have allied themselves, in the broadest sense,
with the great mass of the German population of the city, and were foremost in the establishment of German churches and schools, in organizing societies, and in other ways fostering the welfare of their countrymen.

These different foreign elements, all essentially one people, combining the qualities necessary to success in life to which we have before referred, comprise within their ranks strong representative men—men who have not only been influential in developing resources in trade and manufactures which have paved the way to remunerative employment, and resulting competency and contentment for their less prominent countrymen, but have, at the same time, taken an enviable position in politics, in social affairs, and the general advancement of the city's interests.

The first German settler in Buffalo, was John Kuecherer, who came from Pennsylvania in 1821. He became a somewhat noted character, and is now well remembered by old residents as “Water John,” a title that was bestowed upon him on account of his business of carrying water for washing and other purposes, to the inhabitants of the village who were not otherwise supplied. Of Kuecherer's early history, and that of his antecedents, little is known. His daughter still lives in the city, but she is unable to throw much light upon the subject. It is supposed that he left Germany in one of the caravans that was driven from their homes to England during the last century, and was thence shipped to America. Kuecherer died in Buffalo, at the age of eighty-eight.

In 1822, Jacob Siebold, the second German settler in Buffalo, arrived. He came from Wurtemberg and afterwards became a successful and prominent business man. He was extensively engaged in the grocery business and had a store on Main street next door to the Hayden building. He was also one of the founders of the Buffalo Board of Trade, and a director in the Buffalo Savings Bank. Few business men in the community have inspired a greater degree of respect than Jacob Siebold. His wife and children still reside in Buffalo.

Following Siebold, Rudolph Baer came from near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and settled in Buffalo in 1826. He was originally from Switzerland and came to America in May, 1814. He engaged in keeping the hotel at Cold Spring, and soon after built a brewery and gave the Buffalonians their first taste of beer made at home. It may not have been a beverage of very high quality, but Baer's brewery was the foundation of a business in Buffalo, that has reached enormous proportions, and is still largely in the hands of Germans. Rudolph Baer died in
1836, in the house now occupied by his son, Augustus Baer, No. 1503 Main street.

About the time of Baer's arrival here, Philip Meyerhoffer also settled in Buffalo. Little is known of him except that he was a teacher of languages in 1827, and officiated at German divine service in 1828, in a room over 533 Main street.

Godfrey Heiser, who now lives at 209 Seneca street, came to Philadelphia from Germany in 1819 and to Buffalo in 1828. He first engaged in the lime business on Exchange street, when it was "woods nearly all around him." He afterwards began the first pottery business in Buffalo, on the site of his present residence, where his son also conducts a grocery business. At a still later date Mr. Heiser was engaged in brewing at the same location, in connection with his brother. He retired from active business seventeen years ago.

Although the first Buffalo directory, published early in the year 1828, and supposed to contain a record of the names of the inhabitants at that time, gives no other distinctively German name, it is more than probable that others had settled here before that date. Mr. E. G. Grey, who is now the oldest German resident of Buffalo, is positive that when he arrived here in the spring of 1828, there were about seventy Germans in the village. If such was the case, however, there is little now remembered of them; a small body of Germans arrived late in the year 1827. Christian Bronner, who died in April, 1881, was one of them. He has descendants now living in Buffalo.

In the year 1828, German immigration increased rapidly. In that year the venerable E. G. Grey came; he is now the oldest German resident. Mr. Grey has been a successful grocer and a respected citizen in all that the term implies. Jacob Schanzlin also arrived in 1828; he brewed the first lager in Buffalo and kept a "Wirthschaft" on Main street where it is crossed by Scajaquada Creek, which was once a popular resort. Dr. Daniel Devening came to America in 1827, and a year later settled in Buffalo, being then 17 years old. He has enjoyed a successful career as a physician and was the first German elected to the Assembly from Buffalo. He still resides here, an honored representative of his countrymen.

Michael Mesmer emigrated from Alsace in 1829 and settled in Buffalo. He was for thirty years engaged in the grocery, flour and feed business, and later was a member of the well known firm of furniture manufacturers and dealers, Weller, Brown & Mesmer. Other prominent Germans who settled here in 1828-29 were Jacob Roos, a successful brewer, Philip Beyer, George Goetz, George Metzger, Michael Hoist, George Hoist and Chistopher Klump; the last six named were the first Germans who purchased homes of the Holland Land Company. Besides Mr. Mesmer, there arrived from Alsace in 1828-29,
Joseph Haberstro, whose son was afterwards sheriff, Anthony Feldman, George Gass, George Lang, Joseph Suor, Sebastian and Friederich Rusch, George Urban, George Pfeifer and others. Many of these early settlers are dead.

In 1830 Dr. Frederick Dellenbaugh settled in Buffalo, and still lives here. He was honored with a seat in the Aldermanic Board in 1839-'40, the first German city official elected in Buffalo. His career as a physician has been a most successful one, and he is now a hale, well preserved and intelligent gentleman.

Of the Germans who settled in Buffalo in 1831, it may not be out of place to mention the names of Mr. John Greiner, Dr. John Hauenstein, and Dr. F. C. Brunck; while of the old Lutherans before referred to as having immigrated in 1839, Dr. Carl Weiss, who still lives here, Dr. Baethig, deceased, Carl Gruener, who died in Europe, all of whom arrived in Buffalo about 1848-'49, and doubtless others might properly be mentioned as having left the impress of their individuality upon the city. But it will be seen that to follow in detail the tide of German immigration to this city during the past forty years is not only impossible, but undesirable; all the prominent names could not possibly be mentioned, and to select from them would be invidious. It must suffice to state in a general way that the increase in the German population of the city has kept pace with her growth in other respects. Between the years 1850 and 1860, immigration decreased somewhat, and it was further diminished by the War of the Rebellion. In that struggle, as is well known, the Germans of America took a prominent part. In the long roll of honor on which are inscribed the names of those of the heroes of Buffalo who risked or lost their lives to preserve the country as a unit, will be found so large a proportion of Germans, that all of that nationality may look upon it with pride and satisfaction.

The general advancement of German social and business interests in Buffalo has been most effectively promoted by the early establishment and later wide extension and able conduct of the German press—an institution that could not fail to exert a powerful influence, especially during that earlier period before the German element had become so generally familiar with the language of their adopted country. In the columns of the press printed in their own familiar tongue, they read and learned of the government under which they came to dwell; of the growth and prosperity of a country of free institutions; of the character and social and business habits of the people with whom they found themselves associated; the political issues of the time and the laws by which the people were governed, and thus sooner became active, intelligent constituents of the city's living structure, and prosperous, loyal American citizens.

The first German newspaper published in Buffalo was called Der Weltbuerger, the initial number of which was issued December 2, 1837.
It was published by Mr. George Zahm, who also kept a German bookstore. Its editor was Mr. Stephan St. Molitor. Its brief salutatory, which smacks a trifle of apology for its appearance, contained the following announcement:—

"The number of the German population of Buffalo has increased largely during the last four or five years, and the commercial as well as the political circumstances of this city have become of such great significance for the Germans living here, that the appearance of a newspaper in the German language has long been felt as an urgent need. Its aim is the instruction of the Germans in the politics of this country, and the communication of the most important American and European events. As this instruction will be one of its main purposes, it will advocate no special party, but try to develop independently and impartially those principles which are necessary to the preservation of the Constitution. On the more important political questions both parties will be presented, in order to enable the readers to form their own judgment."

It is clear that the first German newspaper started out in life upon a broad and independent policy. Der Weltbuergler was Democratic in politics and in a leading editorial, counseled its readers to ally themselves with one or the other of the great parties, that they might thus retain their influence as citizens. The paper was a neat appearing sheet for that period, 19 by 23 inches in size and was fairly patronized with advertisements of the business of the village. Der Weltbuegler remained under control of George Zahm until the fall of 1844, when he was killed at a hickory-pole raising in Cheektowaga, by the falling of the pole. The paper was then edited by Jacob M. Zahm until the fall of 1845, being published by the administrators of George Zahm's estate. At the latter date it was purchased by Dr. F. C. Brunck and Jacob Domedian, who began its issue as a semi-weekly on a small sheet, at the same time enlarging the weekly. In 1848 the second German weekly was started by Mr. Carl Essinger, and called the Demokrat. When it was a year and a half old, it was purchased by Carl De Haas and Mr. ——— Knapp, who began its publication as a daily—the first in Buffalo in the German language. In 1853 Der Weltbuegler and the Demokrat were consolidated and Mr. Knapp's interest bought by Mr. Fred Held, the new firm being Brunck, Held & Co. Der Weltbuegler was continued as the weekly edition, while the daily still appeared as the Demokrat; the same policy is still in force. The entire establishment is at present in the hands of Mr. Held, Carl De Haas having sold his interest in 1859 and Dr. Brunck, June 1, 1875. The Demokrat wields a powerful influence among the German population and is one of the leading papers printed in that language in the State.

The next effort at German journalism in Buffalo was not so successful. In 1840 Mr. John M. Meyer issued a campaign paper called the Volksfreund; it was started in the Whig interest and its publication abandoned soon after the close of the campaign. January 1st, 1843, the
same gentlemen, with Mr. Alexander Krause, issued the Freimuethige, and it, too, died in the summer of 1845. In that year H. B. Miller established the Telegraph as a weekly, and in 1854 it was issued as a daily, by Miller & Bender. Philip H. Bender afterwards bought his partner's interest and then sold out to Mr. F. Geib, in whose hands the paper died in 1873. The Telegraph was first a Whig and afterwards a Republican organ.

In 1850 Mr. I. Marle began the publication of the Luegenfeind, a small sheet devoted to the interests of the Free Christian congregation. It lived about two years. In 1855, its successor was started in the Lichtfreund, by Joseph Egenter, but its life was likewise short.

The Freie Presse a small sheet, was first issued in 1855, by Fred Reinecke. It lived seventeen years as a weekly, and was transformed into a daily in 1872. Reinecke, Zesch & Baltz followed Fred. Reinecke as its publishers; it is now in the hands of Reinecke & Zesch. The Freie Presse is an influential paper, Republican in politics.

Die Wachende Kirche is a religious journal which was started in 1856, and was published by Rev. J. J. A. Grabau; it is now issued semi-monthly, by Rev. J. Lange.

In 1857 the Buffalo Patriot was started as a daily by Messrs. Young & Vogt; it lived but a few days. The Buffalo Union, another Republican daily, started in 1863, by Messrs. Reinecke & Storcke, survived but two days. The Buffalo Journal, first issued the same year, by Messrs. Nauert, Hansman & Co., was soon after its establishment, purchased by Dr. Carl De Haas and Fr. Burow and afterwards passed into the hands of Philip Bender; it was subsequently merged with the Buffalo Telegraph. The Journal was afterwards re-established by a Mr. Nether and lived through one political campaign. In 1868 a paper of a mixed religious-political character, was established by the German Printing Association; it was named the Volksfreund, and was devoted to the interests of the Roman Catholic church and Democracy. This journal is still living and is an ably conducted sheet.

On the 16th of October, 1875, the Daily Republikaner, was first issued by Mr. I. S. Ellison, as an uncomprising Republican organ. On the 1st of January, 1878, its proprietary rights were transferred to the German Republican Printing Association, Mr. Ellison continuing as its editor until November 11th, 1879; a week later the Republikaner was consolidated with the Freie Presse.

In 1878 another politico-religious paper was established, to be devoted to political independence and the interests of the Protestant Church; it was called the Evangelische Gemeindezeitung, but its name was soon after changed to Volksblatt fuer Stadt und Land. This paper was afterwards converted into a daily, but its success was not sufficient to make it permanent, and it was suspended on the last day of January, 1860.
There are two other German weeklies, both of which are devoted to Roman Catholic literature—the Aurora, published by Mr. C. Wieckmann, since 1858, and the Christliche Woche conducted by Rev. Joseph Sorg, since February, 1875.

In September, 1875, the first German Sunday paper was established in Buffalo, by Messrs. Haas, Nauert & Klein; it was called the Sunday Herald, it lived but a few months. In January, 1876, the second Sunday journal made its appearance in the Tribune, it was established by a number of striking printers, and during the fall of 1877, under the influence of the great railroad strikes, it was issued as a daily. Its unpopular policy and incompetent management compelled it to suspend in April, 1878, as a daily. The Sunday issue is still continued by the German Republican Printing Association, and is widely read.

In the summer of 1878, the Arbeiterstimme am Erie was started; it advocated communistic principles and quite properly died before the anniversary of its birth.

Die Laterne was established February 21, 1880, by Emil C. Erhart. Its name was changed to Das Banner, August 14, 1880, and it at the same time passed into the hands of P. Eby and C. Stienke. After the beginning of its second year, it was continued by a stock company, and collapsed February 10, 1883. It was a Greenback organ.

The Buffalo Wecker, was started October 30, 1880, by Emil C. Erhart, and continued a precarious existence for seven weeks.

This completes the list of German publications in Buffalo. Those of them that are still in existence are creditable alike to their publishers, editors and the German speaking portion of the community that supports them.

Scarcely less than the influence of the press upon the Germans of Buffalo, has been that of the numerous societies that have been organized among them. Foremost among these is the German Young Men's Association of Buffalo. On the 10th day of May, 1841, nine young men who saw the need of fully acquainting themselves with and preserving the literature of their native land, joined together to found a society for the accomplishment of that laudable object. Their names* were: F. A. Georger, now president of the German Bank; Dr. John Hauenstein, a prominent German physician; Jacob Beyer, ex-policeman commissioner; Stephan Bettinger, Karl Niedhardt, George F. Pfeifer, Wilhelm Rudolph, and Adam Schlagder. The object of the society, as set forth in its incorporation act, is:—

"To propagate the knowledge of the treasures of the German literature, and to cause the preservation of the German language, and the growth of the German spirit and self-conscience."

* Of these, one, Mr. Bettinger, was born in Lorraine; two, Messrs. Hauenstein and Rudolph, came from Switzerland; five, Messrs. Beyer, Niedhardt, Georger and Pfeifer, were Alsaitians, and only Schlagder, was from Germany proper, the Palatinate.—Mr. Ellison's Paper.
The name first adopted by the society, was the "German and English Literary Society." Meetings were held weekly, and the proceedings were made up principally of debates and discourses or declamations given alternately in the German and English languages. The society rapidly increased under its wise counsels and persistent activity, and the nucleus of its present splendid library was soon gathered.

On the 11th of September, 1841, the name of the society was changed to that of "The German Young Men's Association of the City of Buffalo." It employed a librarian, and recording and corresponding secretaries.

At the end of the year 1845, the number of members had increased to one hundred and twenty-two, and the library to four hundred and thirty volumes, and it was resolved to apply for its incorporation, which was effected by act of the Legislature of the State of New York, May 12, 1846. In this act, by which the name of "The German Young Men's Association of the City of Buffalo," was retained, it was said:—

"And by that name (the Association) shall have succession for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a library, museum, reading rooms, literary and scientific lectures, exercises and debates, and other means of promoting moral and intellectual improvement, with power for such purposes," etc.

This worked a complete transformation of the Association. Its object now was:—Improvement in the knowledge of the treasures of German and English literature, co-operation in the cultivation of the mind, and promotion of the arts and sciences. The meetings, which heretofore had been hours of exercises, for which every member had to prepare himself, and in which the one was the teacher of the other, now became literary seances. The principal aim now was to make additions to the library, and by its books and their circulation among the members, prosecute the object of the Association. The restriction as to age of members was done away with, and instead of weekly meetings, monthly business meetings were held, at which every member had a right to be present; and also annual meetings, for the purpose of rendering statements of work performed and the election of officers. Debates, lectures and discourses were now held only from time to time, and non-members, as well as members of the Association, were engaged for lectures and other exercises, and the general public admitted. The use of the German language became more general, and special attention was paid to the increase of German books in the library, while other libraries in this city directed their attention almost exclusively to English literature and contained but few German books.

In 1857, regular monthly meetings were discontinued and the whole management entrusted to the officers of the Association, and a governing committee of ten members. This change caused dissatisfaction among the members, and many gave up their membership; so that, on the 3d of April, 1861, the Association numbered only fifty-four members.