

PREFACE

There has been a German presence in Philadelphia almost as long as there has been a Philadelphia. In 1683, thirteen families from Krefeld under the leadership of Daniel Francis Pastorius arrived in the city, which had been founded only the year before. Philadelphia soon became the primary port of entry for German emigrants to Pennsylvania and the British colonies in North America generally.

The German Society of Pennsylvania was founded in Philadelphia in 1764. Initially dedicated to helping newly arrived immigrants from Germany, the German Society came to play an important role in fostering the German cultural tradition and, with time, in preserving memory of the German contributions to the making of the United States. It is the oldest and most prominent organization of its kind in the country.

Like all ethnic organizations in the United States, the German Society of Pennsylvania has been subject to the vagaries of demographic, social, and cultural change. The society has adapted its programs and redefined its mission over the centuries in response to shifting patterns of immigration and to the transformation of the German-American community. Declining German immigration and waning interest in the German cultural tradition in the mid-twentieth century posed a major challenge to the German Society—a challenge greatly exacerbated by the hostilities and suspicions engendered by two wars that pitted Germany and the United States against one another. Thanks, though, to the dedication of its members and leaders, the German Society survived several difficult decades and has experienced a revival since the 1960s as it has reached out to local young people and to all with an interest in the German-American experience.

The German Society of Pennsylvania is home to an unparalleled scholarly resource, the Joseph P. Horner Memorial Library. The library was begun in the early nineteenth century to serve the needs and interests of the German Society's members and their families. As a *Volksbibliothek*, it offered all manner of both recreational and serious reading materials – from popular novels and cookbooks to German literary classics and works of scholarship. The collection now contains over 70,000 volumes, including many rare titles that, in some instances, are not to be found anywhere else. The Horner Library also houses the German Society's collections of manuscripts, pamphlets, and newspapers. These holdings offer rich source material on topics ranging from the social problems facing newly arrived immigrants to the transformations of American communal life over the past two and a half centuries.

Ethnicity Matters: A History of the German Society of Pennsylvania and its companion publication, *The German Society of Pennsylvania: A Guide to Its Book and Manuscript Collections* by Kevin Ostoyich, aim to bring attention to the German Society of Pennsylvania and to the wealth of research material contained in its Horner Library. The library's catalog is accessible on the German Society's website (www.germansociety.org), which also includes information on the society's current programs.

Ethnicity Matters: A History of the German Society of Pennsylvania is a joint project of the German Historical Institute, Washington, DC, and the German Society of Pennsylvania. The two organizations want to voice their deep appreciation to Birte Pflieger for the fine job she did in setting the history of the German Society in its broader social and cultural context. We hope this publication will awaken interest in a scholarly resource that deserves to be better known.

Christof Mauch
Director
German Historical Institute

Hardy von Auenmüller
President
German Society of Pennsylvania

Dirk Schumann
Deputy Director
German Historical Institute

Frank Trommler
Professor of German and
Comparative Literature
University of Pennsylvania