Immigrants, Old Stock Americans, Enemy Aliens: Philadelphia’s Germans and the GSP, 1871–1920

The members of the GSP responded to the outbreak of the First World War in very different ways. In 1915, thirteen members resigned from the society; well over one hundred members had left by the end of the war. According to the GSP’s annual report for 1915, one longtime associate had explained bluntly that “as a loyal citizen of the United States it was impossible for him to continue his membership.” This position stood in stark contrast to that of Charles Hexamer, who was then serving as the president of both the GSP and the National German-American Alliance. Writing in the Alliance’s Mitteilungen, Hexamer condemned those who repudiated their German heritage:

We have before us a bitter struggle, and we can wage it successfully only if we are united. . . . Whoever casts aside his German-ism from him like an old glove is not worthy to be spat upon. Such a rascal is a deserter. . . . We have long suffered the preachment that ‘you Germans must allow yourselves to be assimilated. You must merge into the American people‘; but no one will ever find us prepared to descent to an inferior culture.

GSP leaders embarked upon a vigorous defense of Germany, German culture and German-American institutions at the outset of the war. But once the United States entered on the side of Entente powers and all things German came under increasing criticism, the GSP became a bastion of American patriotism. This shift saved the organization, and the toned-down version of German ethnic pride that accompanied it was emblematic of the changing outlook of Philadelphia’s German-American community. To understand the differing reactions to the war, we must examine Philadelphia’s German-American community during the three decades prior to World War I.

Philadelphia’s German Communities

The establishment of a German nation-state in 1871 did not suddenly create ethnic unity among Philadelphia’s German speakers. The city’s Germans may have briefly united to celebrate Prussia’s victory against France (Figure 2), but they did not constitute a single community. Philadelphia was home, rather, to a number of German-speaking communities based upon regional, religious, and class affiliations.

Contemporary observers divided Germans in America into “soul Germans” and “stomach Germans.” “Soul Germans” asserted the supe-
priority of German *Kultur* and the German language; German cultural influence, they insisted, could help make America the greatest civilization on earth. “Stomach Germans,” on the other hand, limited their ethnic identification to partaking of certain culinary delights, engaging in social activities, and perhaps reading a German-language newspaper.⁴

While this contemporary assessment may be rather simplistic, it does highlight the diversity among ethnic Germans in America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As many as one-third of German-speakers in America were not active in any sort of German institution or organization.⁵ The principal institutions that attracted German Americans were churches (above all Lutheran, Reformed, and Catholic) and Vereine (associations). Particularly in the Midwest, *Kirchenvereine*—church-affiliated charitable associations—were sometimes established even before parishes or congregations were organized.⁶ Vereine that were not church-affiliated attracted secularly oriented, mainly urban Germans who were “possessed by an almost missionary eagerness to propagate and spread their particular *Weltanschauung*,” which rested in large measure on the belief that Germans were culturally superior to native-born Yankees.⁷

The GSP was associated with a vocal and visible minority group within the German community. In 1892, the society was just one of 642 German organizations, including nearly 300 mutual-aid institutions and over two dozen singing associations, in the Philadelphia area.⁸ The city was home to approximately 160,000 first- and second-generation Germans, who made up 15 percent of the population.⁹ The GSP attracted middle-class Germans who aspired to be the elite of their ethnic group.
Although the GSP was officially unaffiliated with any religious denomination, its members were more often than not Protestants. A number of Lutheran and Reformed ministers held leadership positions within the GSP over the years; Catholic priests, by contrast, appear not to have been active in the society. Even if German Americans were not directly affected by the confessional tensions aroused by Bismarck’s anti-Catholic Kulturkampf, Catholic Germans in the U.S. tended to avoid German organizations that were not church-affiliated.¹⁰ Joseph Bernt, the GSP’s agent from 1893 to 1916, was a rare example of a German Catholic who held an important position in a predominantly Protestant secular organization and also played a leading part in a Catholic institution at the same time: in addition to his job with the GSP, Bernt edited a Catholic newspaper, the Nord Amerika.¹¹

Philadelphia’s German Protestants, especially Lutherans, were often loyal supporters of the GSP. German- and English-speaking Lutherans in Pennsylvania were long at odds over which language to use for church services and synod meetings. Neighborhood German Lutheran churches thus often became ethnic strongholds where German-language services were anxiously preserved. The German language was closely tied up with Lutherans’ religious identity because they saw Martin Luther as the father of modern German. This view was compatible with some of the GSP’s positions. Indeed, there was a long history of cooperation between the society and Philadelphia’s Lutheran congregations, and it comes as no surprise that all the ministers of the city’s Lutheran churches became GSP members. That holds true to this day.

The GSP aimed to be a neutral ground where the different German ethnic communities within Philadelphia could come together to express, create, defend, and celebrate their Deutschtum. But due to the GSP’s middle-class character and values, working-class Germans rarely set foot within its hall except to apply for assistance or to take advantage of its evening English courses. Working-class Germans appear to have looked beyond ethnicity and were bound to their counterparts of other ethnic backgrounds by their shared class interests. During Philadelphia’s general strike in March 1910, for example, thousands of German workers joined their Irish and Anglo-American colleagues on the picket line.¹² For middle-class Germans, ethnic identity generally remained more important than class consciousness in the decades before World War I. Ironically, the outbreak of war in Europe did more than any of the efforts of organizations like the GSP or the National German-American Alliance to unite Germans in America across class lines.¹³

The GSP was in competition with at least half a dozen other associations engaged in highlighting German contributions to American history, organizing social events, and offering charity to poor Germans. The
Cannstatter Volksverein, for example, was founded in 1873 with the express purpose of providing traditional German entertainment. For most of its history, it could boast a larger membership than the GSP’s. A few prominent German speakers, such as John File and Pennsylvania Governor Samuel Pennypacker, were members of both the GSP and the Cannstatter Volksverein. The family names of nineteenth-century Cannstatter members suggest the great majority came from southwestern Germany and were probably drawn to the organization on account of its regional origins. Part of the Cannstatters’ appeal no doubt stemmed from their three-day festival every September. All Philadelphians were invited to have a good time eating, drinking, and dancing in the city’s parks during the festival. But Cannstatter members were concerned with more than just having a good time. Within seven years of its founding, the organization was contributing more money to charity annually than the GSP.

German associations of all varieties increasingly had to compete with other forms of entertainment and leisure activity in the decades around 1900. Recent scholarship on German-American institutions dates the beginning of their decline to the 1890s rather than the First World War, as had long been assumed. With the proliferation of inexpensive mass entertainment—ranging from sporting events to vaudeville and amusement parks—and the emergence of a new consumer culture, Americans had increasingly less time and money for participation in social or charitable groups. This shift in habits was reflected in the membership figures of organizations like the GSP. In 1911, for example, the GSP lamented a 30-percent decline in its membership since 1902.

Another factor in the decline of ethnic associations was a change in the conception of “race.” By 1900, the once-derided Irish could at last claim to be “white,” for example, but Eastern and Southern Europeans, who were entering the United States in large numbers, could not. In Philadelphia, the percentage of Italians, Russians, and Poles in the city’s total foreign-born population rose from 16 to 33 percent between 1900 and 1910. This period also saw a large migration of African Americans from the South to the Mid-Atlantic region; in the first two decades of the twentieth century, more than 50,000 blacks settled in Philadelphia.

In response to the country’s changing ethnic profile, as Russell Kazal has shown, German Americans adopted a variety of nativism that cast them as “old stock” Americans who were superior because of their “race” and because members of their ethnic group had arrived in North America before the American Revolution. This outlook was reflected in the GSP’s stance on immigration and in its activities. Its 1903 annual report portrayed German Americans as good citizens and Germans as desirable immigrants, and it made clear the GSP’s eagerness to assist in formulat-
ing policies that would ensure “the restriction of undesirable immigration.” Two years later, the annual report argued that a congressional proposal to limit immigration from any given country to 80,000 people per year “was problematic and dangerously liberal” as it applied to “undesirable immigrants.” There is no question that the GSP’s leaders had recent arrivals from Eastern and Southern Europe in mind when they complained of “undesirable immigrants.” The GSP also began at this time to place ever greater emphasis on German contributions to American history. Society leaders highlighted Germans as among the founders of America to instill recent German immigrants with pride in both their ethnic heritage and their adopted homeland. This expression of German cultural chauvinism was not solely a response to the growing numbers of African Americans and immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe in the Philadelphia region, however. It was also a reaction to Anglo-American efforts to exclude “others” from the nation. The GSP’s characterization of Germans as champions of freedom and preservers of the Union stands as evidence of a growing desire among German Americans in the decades before World War I to lay claim to a share in their nation’s history and to celebrate their American patriotism.

The GSP, it should be added, was not alone in praising the virtues of German immigrants. A government-sponsored study undertaken in 1911 seemed to give scientific credence to claims of German superiority. The study looked at rates of crime and literacy, along with much else, among different immigrant groups. Germans came out better than any of the groups of more recent immigrants. This study was widely cited as evidence by those who saw the country created by “old stock” Americans threatened by the “new immigrants” who had played no part in building the nation.

The Monument Movement

It was no accident that a movement to pay tribute to German cultural icons and German American heroes arose in this climate of scientific racism and German chauvinism. The GSP and other German-American organizations eagerly took up the call for monuments to honor figures such as Francis Pastorius and Peter Muhlenberg to reinforce German Americans’ claims to full membership as Americans.

As the leader of three German organizations, Charles Hexamer was instrumental in the movement to erect monuments to notable German Americans in Philadelphia. Since famed Germans like Friedrich Schiller and Alexander von Humboldt had been honored with monuments in the nineteenth century, Hexamer and other German-American leaders argued the time had come to recognize a German-American historical fig-
Monuments, as Hexamer explained, would provide “public visual instruction” in the role of German Americans in the nation’s history. In 1905, Hexamer spurred the GSP to action by pointing out that “the Puritans” had erected a monument in front of Philadelphia’s city hall. “Muhlenberg, who was [GSP] president for many years and who played such an important role in the United States, does not deserve to receive less recognition,” he reminded the society’s board members. They quickly approved a motion to create an organizing committee for a Muhlenberg monument. When it was reported nine months later that Philadelphia’s Germans had not yet donated enough money to build the monument, Hexamer complained “it was regrettable that the local Deutsche did not show any more interest . . . to honor such a deserving German-American.” The fund-raising effort would take another four years. The GSP’s Muhlenberg committee was finally able to report in April 1910 that $7,252 had been collected, enough to cover the cost of the monument. Six months later, the monument was dedicated during the celebration of German Day.

The GSP also became involved in the effort to erect a monument to Francis Pastorius, the founder of Germantown, the first German settlement in the New World. As a committee formed in 1907 to organize the celebration of the 225th anniversary of Germantown’s founding noted, “what Plymouth Rock . . . means to Anglo-Americans, that is Germantown for Americans of German descent: a place consecrated by historical memories.” A Pastorius memorial, in other words, would symbolize German emigration to America and reinforce German Americans’ claims to count their forebears among the founders of the nation.

The National German-American Alliance led the fund-raising effort for the Pastorius monument, but the GSP was closely involved in the design-selection process because Hexamer was president of both organizations. In July 1910, Congress voted to allocate $25,000 for the Pastorius monument under the condition that the Alliance raise the same amount. The final decision on the design of the monument rested with the U.S. Secretary of War, the governor of Pennsylvania, and the National German-American Alliance. By 1912, an advisory jury had narrowed the field to two artists, Otto Schweizer, who had designed the Muhlenberg monument and was a prominent GSP member, and Albert Jaeger, a noted German-born artist based in New York. In January 1913, the jury decided in favor of Jaeger’s design because it gave “by far the best promise of success.” Perhaps to placate the aggrieved Schweizer, the National German-American Alliance agreed to purchase three bronze versions of his design, one of which is still on display in the GSP’s Horner Library today. Schweizer’s design was also in effect a memorial to Hexamer, whom the artist had used as a model for one of the figures.
Although the Pastorus monument was scheduled to be dedicated on October 6, 1914, it was not completed until the spring of 1917, whereupon it was promptly covered over with a wooden enclosure on account of the American declaration of war upon Germany. The monument was finally unveiled in a brief ceremony on November 10, 1920. The modest event, Russell Kazal notes, marked the “virtual erasure of the German-American ethnic presence” that had been so prominent a decade earlier.32

Charles Hexamer and the National German-American Alliance

Charles Hexamer was the son of a Forty-Eighter. Having grown up surrounded by German immigrants of his father’s generation, he became a champion of German Kultur. He joined the GSP in 1883 at the age of 21 and was chosen to serve on its board eight years later. In 1900, Hexamer was elected president of the GSP; 38-years-old at the time of his election, he was one of the youngest men ever to hold that office.33 He was also one of the GSP’s longest-serving presidents, remaining in office until 1916. For decades, Hexamer worked tirelessly on behalf of his German heritage and demanded the same of those around him.34 In 1899, he founded the National German-American Alliance to combat the decline of the Vereinswesen, dwindling membership in German ethnic organizations, and competition from new pastimes. When Hexamer founded the National German-American Alliance in 1899, GSP board members were initially hesitant to join. The Alliance, which lobbied for expanded German-language instruction in public schools, could not avoid political activity, and for that reason, GSP leaders feared possible violations of the society’s charter.35 Soon, however, the two organizations were inextricably linked as GSP board members took on positions within the Alliance.36 The close connection between the two organizations was reinforced in 1911 when the women’s branch of the Pennsylvania Central Alliance merged with the Women’s Auxiliary of the GSP.37

The Alliance never attracted large numbers of nationally prominent German Americans from the worlds of industry, finance, or academia. The psychologist Hugo Münsterberg of Harvard was a notable exception. At the outset of World War I, Münsterberg had grand plans to draw large numbers of the German-American upper class into the Alliance and thereby create a political force that could work “in Washington politics in the interest of a really neutral policy.”38 Nothing came of his efforts, however.

The Alliance was more successful in its efforts to promote German Americans’ identity as “old stock” Americans. In countless speeches and essays, Hexamer highlighted Germans’ contributions to American his-
tory. He was firmly convinced that German Americans had achieved recognition as respected hyphenated Americans. In 1911, for example, he declared that German Day celebrations were “becoming more and more American commemorations, recognized by our population and enjoying more than ever general participation.” The Alliance summed up its understanding of the German-American position in its motto, “Germania our Mother, Columbia our Bride.” When war broke out in Europe in 1914, this motto aptly captured the dilemma German Americans faced: they could not deny their parentage, but nor were they willing to forsake their spouse.

World War I

In response to the situation in Europe, Hexamer led the GSP and the Alliance in the effort to “preserve the prestige of the German name . . . against malice and ignorance.” He called for the creation of press offices in all major American cities that could “react immediately in the English language against spiteful attacks . . . by irresponsible reporters in English newspapers.” He also urged German Americans to organize local aid societies to collect donations for wounded German soldiers and the widows and children of soldiers who died, thereby demonstrating to the American public at large that “blood is thicker than water.”

“[E]very German Verein, every German association, German societies and churches of all denominations everywhere” were exhorted to collect donations on behalf of the National Relief Fund Committee for the Wounded and Destitute in Germany and Austria-Hungary. The appeal was extremely successful: within weeks, well over $100,000 had been collected.

By its own reckoning, the GSP played an instrumental role in organizing aid for Germany. Its 1914 annual report claimed the society had become “the central location for all efforts in the interest of the German cause and the alleviation of suffering in Germany and Austria-Hungary due to the war.” In 1915, the GSP turned the ground floor of its building over to the German and Austro-Hungarian Red Cross for use in coordinating its relief efforts.

The fund-raising and relief efforts undertaken by the GSP and other German-American organizations were seen by many Anglo-Americans as evidence of “extravagant partisanship for Germany” even though they “were not necessarily representative of the masses of German Americans.” Not all German-American organizations followed the GSP and the Alliance in the drive to support the fatherland. The German Society of New York, for example, did not engage in any fund-raising efforts on behalf of German war victims and continued to do “only what it was
founded for.” This stance did not, however, prevent the New York organization from losing members. Indeed, in percentage terms its membership loss over the course of the war—22 percent—was nearly double the GSP’s (12 percent).46

Although the GSP supported the war relief effort on behalf of the Central Powers and its Women’s Auxiliary was active in collecting money and supplies for the effort, the society officially refrained from making explicitly political statements. Ever careful to avoid political entanglements, the GSP was nevertheless a silent partner in the public relations campaign undertaken by other German organizations in Philadelphia. John Mayer, a GSP board member (and later president), was the president of the United Singers of Pennsylvania, which represented over three dozen German singing societies. In October 1914, he wrote a letter to the editor of an English-language newspaper to protest

the calumnies and unwarranted attacks made upon Germany by a part of the American press. In the development of our nation, the educational and cultural mission of the German race has been of vast influence and has been favorably commented upon by the American public and press. The American people therefore owe Germany a debt of gratitude and certainly a favorable remembrance. The studied antagonism, misleading statements and deliberate perversion of truth as shown by certain newspapers can be construed as having only the object of influencing public sentiment against the German government, its army and people. In the maintenance of this struggle no sympathy is asked for or needed by the Germans in Europe or their friends here. An emphatic objection is made, however, to the manner in which the notoriously unreliable news from abroad is presented and prominently featured, and in particular, to the biased and unjust editorials, which appear in our newspapers and are contrary to the American sense of justice and Fair Play.47

Three months later, Mayer, speaking in his capacity as president of the United Singers, called England “a loathsome, damnable country of liars” that had brought this terrible war onto “our old fatherland.”48 In denouncing England, Mayer was echoing the views held by many German Americans during the early years of the war.

Mayer rarely missed an opportunity to rally German Americans to the cause of the Fatherland. In addition to writing letters to newspapers, he organized several mass meetings in Philadelphia and one in Chicago. In January 1915, Mayer reminded GSP members of a meeting of the American Neutrality League at the Academy of Music and asked those present to attend. The meeting was intended, he explained, as “a mass
protest to pressure the U.S. Congress to prohibit weapons exports to the warring European nations.”

Germany came under heavy attack in America’s English-language press for the alleged brutality and savagery of its invasion of Belgium. Although German-American leaders came to the Reich’s defense, and even though some even touted its early victories in the war as proof of German superiority, the criticism of Germany in the English-language press did not extend to German Americans in the early stages of the war. But when a German submarine sank the British ocean liner Lusitania in May 1915, killing more than a thousand people, including 128 Americans, many American newspapers accused German Americans of disloyalty and sabotage. The “ethnocentrism” displayed by the leaders of the National German-American Alliance, as one historian has noted, “contributed mightily to a polarization of popular opinion.” By the autumn of 1915, the concept of hyphenated identity was under attack, and the drive to Americanize immigrants intensified.

In a message to Congress in December 1915, President Woodrow Wilson insinuated that German Americans’ support of Germany was disloyal to the United States. There were, Wilson said, “citizens born under a different flag and admitted and welcomed to the privileges of citizenship and opportunities of this country who have infused into the veins of this country the poison of disloyalty.” Vehemently denying Wilson’s veiled accusations against German Americans, John Mayer challenged the widespread sympathy for Britain in the U.S.:

[W]hat do we as Americans have to do with England? We are no longer an English colony! Anti-English certainly does not mean anti-American. . . . We German-Americans are and remain good American citizens and always anti-English because England has never been a friend of this country.

In the spring of 1916, Mayer, Hexamer, and other German-American leaders from Pennsylvania organized a meeting of German-American societies, Vereine, and newspapers in Chicago ostensibly to voice their opposition to the U.S. government’s position on the war in Europe. The aim of the gathering was, however, to organize German Americans to help defeat Woodrow Wilson in the upcoming presidential election. The participants adopted a resolution proclaiming that “any candidate for the presidency who is not in accord with the views expressed herein is unworthy of the support of a free and independent electorate.”

John Mayer and Sigmund von Bosse, a Lutheran pastor and GSP member, led the effort to rally German-American support for the Republican candidate, Charles Evans Hughes. Hexamer, too, endorsed Hughes, but did so as an individual rather than in his capacity as president of the
GSP and the Alliance. He even paid out of his own pocket for a flyer that proclaimed that “no self-respecting American of German birth or extraction can vote for President Wilson.”

Despite the efforts of Mayer, von Bosse, and Hexamer, German Americans did not line up unanimously behind Hughes. For example, the writer Hermann Hagedorn, a superpatriot outspoken in his support of the Allies, dismissed the Alliance’s defenses of Germany as “pompous drivel” and backed his friend Theodore Roosevelt. German-American newspapers did not uniformly endorse Hughes, and Hughes himself was not expressly pro-German. He actually rebuked German-American support of Germany, but the mildness of his criticism prompted Wilson and Roosevelt to paint him as the German-American candidate. On election day, more German Americans cast their votes for Hughes than for Wilson or Roosevelt and thereby came closer to voting as an ethnic bloc than they had in any previous election. Nonetheless, it would be misleading to speak of a solid German-American vote.

Wilson’s re-election did not slow down the efforts of the GSP and other German-American groups to collect donations for the widows and children of fallen German soldiers. Just before Christmas 1916, for example, the GSP made its hall available for rehearsals for a large benefit concert. GSP officers and members were prominent among the organizers and attendees of a charity event a month later sponsored by the Zentralverband der Veteranen und Krieger der Deutschen Armee, one of many German veteran organizations in Philadelphia.

In its annual report for 1916, the GSP lamented that “more German blood was flowing” in Germany’s “fight for its existence against a world of predatory enemies.” The report expressed the hope that 1917 would “grant the righteous cause victory and with that a lasting peace.” A German victory became steadily less likely, however, as relations between Germany and the United States deteriorated in early 1917. In February, Wilson broke off diplomatic relations with Germany in response to its resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare. On April 2, at the president’s request, Congress declared war on Germany.

The National German-American Alliance, meeting in the GSP’s hall, decided in February 1917 that it would hand over donations collected for the survivors of German war dead to the American Red Cross in the event of war between Germany and the United States. Charles Hexamer announced at the meeting that the Alliance’s three million members would “fight loyally under the command of President Wilson, just as German-Americans had fought in the American Civil War under Lincoln.” Pledging to organize German-American regiments, Hexamer promised, “should there be a call for volunteers, we will prove to the
American people that we are willing to defend the flag and the country.”

Not all German Americans agreed with Hexamer’s stance. The Illinois branch of the National German-American Alliance, dismissing even the possibility of war between Germany and the U.S., denounced Hexamer’s plan to turn the money collected for Germany over to the American Red Cross as “without value and validity” even for legal reasons. Others attacked Hexamer for promising German-American troops to the U.S. military.

Taking account of the changing political situation, the GSP decided in March to limit the use of its hall by other organizations. Mayer, who had recently succeeded Hexamer as president of the GSP, also reported to the board that he had been invited to participate in a meeting of the “Home Defense League” called by the mayor of Philadelphia. The League had issued a unanimous resolution in full support of the American president. When some delegates proposed that special mention be made of German organizations’ support for the resolution, Mayer objected. As he told the GSP board, he had argued against regarding “citizens of German descent as a special class of citizens” since Germans in case of war “were only Americans, Americans first, last and always.”

It had become clear, however, that German Americans were widely seen as a special class, as a threatening postcard the GSP received demonstrates. The postcard had been sent by the Patriotic Sons of America, an anti-Catholic and antiradical organization.

If the sympathy of your Society is with the United States, place the stars and stripes outside of your building, as you did of the German colors. This is a friendly tip. The Society of the Patriotic Sons of America is only one short square from your building on 6th and Spring Garden Streets. So get the flag out at once. If you do not do so and anything happens you know you have been warned.

The head of the GSP House Committee reported that the society had followed this menacing advice. At the same time, the GSP’s board requested that Mayer show the postcard to the mayor and other members of the Home Defense League and ask what protection they would offer the GSP. Two days after the board meeting, Mayer invited the leaders of all the German organizations in the city to meet to discuss strategies for German institutions and to form an advisory committee.

Following Congress’s declaration of war, Mayer issued a statement that was carried in several Philadelphia newspapers. Mayer renounced German Americans’ identity as hyphenated Americans, insisting that “we do not want to be put in a special class and called German-
Americans.” “We protest most emphatically such a term in a crisis like this,” he declared. “We are Americans, nothing but Americans, loyal through and through.” Americans of German descent, he emphasized, “will do their duty.”

Rudolph Blankenburg, who had earlier served both as mayor of Philadelphia and president of the GSP, went a step further and exhorted “all citizens of German birth or descent to declare their unflinching allegiance to the country of their adoption and to show by word and deed that they are true and unaltering Americans”

Our acts will show how we condemn and scorn the ‘hyphen’ so unjustly bestowed upon us as a class. We are not German-Americans, but Americans of German birth or descent, and as Americans we shall live and, if need be, die.

Hexamer, on the other hand, chose to remain silent.

During the early months of America’s direct involvement in the war, the GSP adopted a two-pronged strategy for survival. First, it continued to function as an aid organization for German immigrants. The war in Europe had initially provided a boost to the American economy, and German Americans and German immigrants shared in the benefits of expanded employment opportunities. Following the country’s entry into the war, some employers dismissed workers of German descent. More Germans lost their jobs when Wilson issued an executive order prohibiting German residents who were not American citizens from holding jobs in certain sectors and in certain places. Some of those who lost their jobs turned to the GSP for assistance.

Second, the GSP made gestures demonstrating its patriotism. It went so far, for instance, as to offer the mayor the use of its hall for any event he wanted. The offer was not entirely disinterested: as a board member pointed out, making the hall available to the city would secure “special protection” for the GSP.

Anti-German Hysteria

Before long, everything associated with Germany came under attack in the U.S. In the fall of 1917, for example, the Philadelphia orchestra banned German music from its repertoire. Sauerkraut became liberty cabbage, and the public burning of German books was considered a demonstration of American patriotism in some communities. German Americans in Philadelphia and nationwide became the targets of suspicion and wild accusations. Some were victims of anti-German violence; one German immigrant in Illinois was hanged by an angry mob.

In August 1917, President Wilson signed an executive order requiring the registration of all aliens over the age of 14. They were also barred from transportation hubs and other strategic locations considered vital for the
war effort. Some commercial properties belonging to aliens were confiscated, and thousands of German aliens were interned.\footnote{76} The German-language press came under close government scrutiny, and several socialist German-language newspapers were charged with criminal offenses under the Espionage Act of 1917.\footnote{77}

The GSP endeavored both to aid Germans caught up in the anti-German hysteria and to demonstrate its patriotism. It supplied those in need with job referrals or relief aid, and it did what it could to provide German aliens with legal advice.\footnote{78} The GSP initially also tried to continue its efforts to teach the public about the role of German Americans in the country’s history. With that end in mind, a publicity committee was created in 1917. It was supposed to supply newspapers with articles on German heroes of the American Revolution, such as Christoph Ludwig, Washington’s “honest friend.” But the committee itself realized that “under the current circumstances, the irritability of the American spirit and the mood against everything German, it made little sense to publish such stories,” and the GSP’s board thought it unlikely that English-language papers would be willing to publish the articles.\footnote{79} Although the GSP opted not to call attention to itself—deciding, for example, to cancel its annual German Day celebration in 1917 and forgoing the commemoration of the 400th anniversary of Martin Luther’s posting of his Ninety-Five Theses—it also tried to demonstrate its patriotism. It invested $1,000 in Liberty Bonds; paying 4 percent interest, the bonds were not the best investment, but the purchase was intended to send a signal.\footnote{80} In similar spirit, the GSP’s board suspended its usual Monday evening meetings when the Wilson administration introduced “heatless Mondays” to conserve coal. Noting that it “wished to avoid all possible conflicts with the authorities,” the board decided in early 1918 to turn down almost all requests from other organizations to use its hall. More importantly, the GSP became an intermediary between government officials and Philadelphia’s non-citizen Germans by assisting police officials in cities and postmasters in rural areas to register non-citizen Germans as enemy aliens.\footnote{81}

The GSP’s efforts to adapt to the new situation did not prevent it from coming under suspicion. In April 1918, the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin reported that the GSP’s library held “many books carrying the most bitter form of German propaganda.” When the board met to discuss the allegations, a member of the library committee dismissed the attack, explaining

these pro-German books . . . undoubtedly came to us merely through ordinary commercial channels. They were not specifically ordered. . . . If there is the slightest objection to the circulation of some of the books named in the report, I am sure the
objection would be honored. The members of this society are loyal to America, . . . We have added during the year a large number of books that might be styled intensely anti-German. There has not been the slightest thought of propaganda, and there will not be, in connection with the library.

The board decided to limit library access to GSP members only. Previously, non-members had been allowed to use library materials during business hours.82

Shortly before the GSP’s run-in with the Evening Bulletin, the National German-American Alliance disbanded. The decision came in response to a Senate investigation launched by Senator William King of Utah. The congressional hearings determined that the Alliance had “fostered racial separatism and foreign allegiance among German-Americans” but had done nothing illegal.83 Although cleared of actual wrongdoing, the Alliance could not withstand the animosity bred by anti-German hysteria. On April 11, the leaders of the Alliance voted to dissolve the organization.

The GSP inadvertently became entangled in the investigation of the National German-American Alliance. Some of the Alliance’s records were stored at the GSP, and a reporter told federal investigators that the Alliance’s files contained “a list of German sympathizers within draft age . . . and statistics of value to the German cause.” When a federal agent and the reporter went to the GSP and demanded to see the Alliance’s records, Herman Heyl, the GSP’s longtime treasurer who was serving temporarily as its business agent, denied all knowledge of the matter. A subsequent search of the premises turned up documents belonging to the Alliance in the furnace room. Some allegedly connected the Alliance to Philadelphia liquor interests and Sinn Fein, the radical Irish party.84 Within hours of the search, Heyl and GSP vice-president Franz Ehrlich made their way to the federal investigators’ office on Ninth and Market Streets, just a few blocks from the GSP’s building. In the presence of federal agents, Ehrlich telephoned Adolph Timm, the secretary of the Alliance (and a GSP member). To his embarrassment, Ehrlich learned that Timm and Mayer had indeed stored some Alliance records in the GSP’s basement after destroying others. In a subsequent interview, GSP president John Mayer told a federal agent “that everything had been destroyed and that he had sold the filing cabinets, and that nothing was in the records that would in any way be harmful to the United States.” The agent reported that Mayer “admitted being favorable to Germany before the entrance of the United States into the war, and was active in the affairs of the ‘American Neutrality Society.’”85 This interview appears to have brought the government’s investigation of the GSP to a close.
The investigations of the Alliance and the GSP testify to the prevailing climate of suspicion. The neighborhood around the GSP’s building was swarming with federal agents searching for German spies. One agent, for instance, responded to reports about a German man who lived “alone, with a helmet, some army clothes and various documents” at 728 Green Street, literally around the corner from the GSP. The man’s neighbors had reported that he came and went at all hours and carried a cane that some thought might be a weapon. When the agent found that no one was officially registered as residing at the address and learned that the house had recently been offered, unsuccessfully, at a sheriff’s sale, he decided to turn the matter over to the U.S. Attorney. Although it is not clear who the mysterious man living in the abandoned house might have been, he was certainly not a dangerous German spy.

Anyone of German descent could easily come under suspicion. Long-time GSP board member Frank Sima was accused by his neighbors of celebrating German victories “with beer, wine and German patriotic songs.” Similarly, Harry J. Smith, the Pennsylvania Dutch manager of the Allentown branch of the State Employment Bureau, came under official scrutiny after he sang a German song during a social gathering at the posh Adelphia Hotel. The agent investigating Smith brought the case to a close only after receiving ample evidence of Smith’s patriotism—evidence that ranged from his father’s military service during the Civil War to his own purchase of $800 worth of Liberty Bonds. Even then, the agent cautioned Smith against “engaging in singing any more songs of a German character.”

Some investigations came in response to accusations prompted by personal motives that had nothing to do with politics or the war. An investigation of a woman named Mary Stotz was initiated, for example, after two of her neighbors accused her of having made disloyal remarks. Stotz was cleared only after a young woman acquainted with all three women told investigators that she had “never heard her [Mrs. Stotz] talk one way or another about the war, but that she knew that Mrs. Haines and Mrs. Stotz have had continually . . . personal difficulties and that Mrs. Haines is a woman who would have words with people very quickly and often.” It was not animosity but rather affection that landed one young man in trouble. In the presence of other people, he bragged to a woman that he was a German sailor and had escaped from an internment camp in Gloucester. He had the good luck, though, that the investigating agent quickly saw through his tale and recognized it as “simply a romance originated to impress a girl with German sympathies.”

No accusation, no matter how unlikely or trivial, went unchecked. Investigators were sent out to the Hillside Cemetery just outside of Philadelphia in response to a report that it housed “a life statue of a German
soldier carrying a German flag.” The offending statue turned out to be a
monument honoring the veterans of Germany’s war against France in
1870. The investigators learned that the memorial had been erected at the
turn of century by the German Veterans Association and decided that it
could stay where it was, since most members of the association were
“good loyal citizens with sons with the colors overseas.”

Germans were not, however, the only ethnic group who found them-
selves under scrutiny. In the fall of 1918, a federal agent attended the
meetings of several ethnic organizations in Philadelphia to determine
their attitude toward the war. He reported that the Ukrainian Club’s
public proclamation of loyalty to the U.S. was insincere because many of
those in attendance were “against this country” and had said “Germany
must win this war.” At the Polish Club, located only a stone’s throw away
from the GSP, the agent found the members divided: some were “loyal to
this country” but “others still collect money for Germany.” The situation
was much the same, he reported, at the Lithuanian Independent Club.

The best way for both individuals and organizations to combat alle-
gations of disloyalty was to buy war bonds. Failure or refusal to do so
raised serious suspicion. As the U.S. Attorney in Philadelphia explained,

Of course it is a man’s right to refuse to subscribe to either Liberty
bonds or the War Chest, and there is no legal obligation to sub-
scribe to either. Of course, a refusal to subscribe to the Loan,
coupled with disloyal remarks, might be evidence to be consid-
ered with other matters in determining a man’s loyalty. As this outlook was tantamount to official policy, it is not surprising that
the GSP purchased $3,500 worth of Liberty and Victory Bonds even
though they did not yield as much as its other investments. GSP vice
president Franz Ehrlich proudly wrote to Philadelphia U.S. Attorney
Francis Fisher Kane in the spring of 1918 to report how much money
Amerians of German descent had contributed to the annual war bond
drive. Perhaps tired of the pointless investigations and futile hunts for
German spies, Kane took the time to reply and praised a “splendid show-
ing” that “ought to make German Americans of this city proud of what
they have done.”

Intolerance of everything German in the wake of the American dec-
laration of war on Germany was perhaps an inevitable result of the con-
stant defense of Germany in the German-language press across the nation
up until the U.S. became directly involved in war. That ethnicity was a
matter of emotion rather than politics for most German Americans—an
attachment to certain facets of culture rather than an ideological adher-
ence to the Reich—did not matter to other Americans. The war, as Fred-
erick Luebke has noted, “was the occasion that converted latent tensions into manifest hostility.” The GSP recognized the historic significance of the mounting anti-German sentiment evident even before the American entry into the war. In March 1917, the board decided that the GSP should collect copies of war-related materials—government decrees, newspaper articles, propaganda materials—for its archives. Unfortunately, the assembled documents were never cataloged, some have been lost or destroyed over the years, and the surviving collection is in disarray.

**Picking up the Pieces after the War**

The war and anti-German sentiment took a toll on German-American associations. Some suspended their activities for the duration of the war. Struggling to survive, some changed their names or merged with others. Many were forced by circumstances to close their doors for good. The GSP was among those that tried to ride out the wave of anti-German hysteria by publicizing their patriotic efforts.

The GSP continued to tread a careful path following the armistice of November 1918, tentatively trying to reestablish itself as a visible German presence in Philadelphia while still underscoring its American patriotism. In June 1919, it began to discuss the possibility of organizing relief for Germany; it decided three months later that it would work with the Society of Friends rather than establish a German aid organization under its own leadership. Nothing could be done, however, until the board and members had determined whether a relief effort for Germany was permissible under the GSP’s charter. Taking a narrow reading of the charter, the board was not certain the GSP was permitted to engage in activities outside of Pennsylvania. At a special meeting in early November, the membership voted to authorize the board to undertake a relief action for Germany. Within the next two months, the GSP’s Committee for Famine Stricken People in Central Europe collected more than $7,000.

The GSP was careful in the public image it presented in the early postwar period. At Philadelphia’s Fourth of July parade in 1919, the representatives of all non-German ethnic organizations marched in traditional outfits and carried national symbols; the GSP contingent, by contrast, wore everyday street clothing and waved American flags. Later that year, the all-male social Verein Schlaraffia asked to use the GSP’s building for its weekly meetings; the board turned down the request on the grounds that Schlaraffia opened its meetings by singing the German national anthem. In 1920, the GSP’s school committee decided to offer free classes to prepare German-speaking aliens for naturalization. The GSP’s efforts to Americanize newly arrived German immigrants stand as
evidence of its goal to be 100-percent American. They also reflect the self-perception of the GSP’s leaders; as “old stock” Americans, they saw themselves as fully qualified instructors in what it meant to be American.\textsuperscript{104}

By mid-1920, the GSP board apparently thought hostility toward all things German had abated sufficiently for it to back away from one of its more demonstrative wartime displays of patriotism. It decided to trade some of its Liberty Bonds in order to invest in mortgages that paid one and a half percentage points more than the government securities. Clearly, the GSP no longer considered it necessary to hold war bonds as proof of its patriotism.\textsuperscript{105}

Having survived wartime anti-German hysteria, the GSP found itself confronted with a different sort of challenge in the postwar period. The neighborhood around its headquarters at Spring Garden and Marshall Streets had changed considerably since the GSP had moved there in 1888. German immigrants and German Americans were moving to northern sections of the city. Large numbers of Eastern European and Russian immigrants, above all Russian Jews, had moved into the neighborhood, establishing businesses and religious institutions of their own. Whereas about half the residences and businesses in the area had been German-owned at the turn of the century, only about a quarter were still in German hands by the mid-1920s. Some German organizations and institutions, recognizing the demographic shift early on, had already relocated to other parts of the city.\textsuperscript{106} In 1919, the Slovenic National Society approached the GSP and offered to buy its building; in response, the GSP board formed a special committee to explore the feasibility of a move to “a better area.”\textsuperscript{107} When the Slovenic National Society withdrew its offer, the GSP decided to stay put.

It was not only the GSP’s immediate neighborhood that was changing. The number of German-born Philadelphians was declining and would fall from approximately 40,000 in 1920 to fewer than 28,000 by the end of the decade.\textsuperscript{108} The interwar years would also see an increasing divide between new and recent arrivals from Germany and long-settled German-Americans. During the 1920s, some 400,000 German immigrants entered the U.S., and they felt largely alienated from the majority of Germans who had arrived before 1895.\textsuperscript{109} More recent immigrants had little interest in preserving the Deutschtum and did not like what they saw as an outdated version of German culture cultivated in German ethnic organizations. Those organizations, many already struggling for survival during the war, were dealt a serious blow by the enactment of the Eighteenth Amendment in January 1920: Prohibition not only put an end to the beer-fueled sociability that was a central to many Vereine but also put a core constituency of club life out of work, namely brewery owners and

\textit{Immigrants, Old Stock Americans, Enemy Aliens} 49
workers. Many of the German Americans who had identified themselves as hyphenated Americans before 1914 ceased to do so after the war, opting instead to call themselves “Americans of German descent” or simply “Americans.” Steadily fewer German Americans could speak German or were interested in German culture. The generation of German Americans who came of age between the two world wars was characterized, in the words of Frederick Luebke, by “a sort of cultural amnesia.”

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The GSP had 520 members on its rolls in 1914, a figure that hardly supported Hexamer’s and the GSP’s public pronouncements about the strength of Deutschtum in the United States. Indeed, the GSP’s membership had declined by about a third between 1900 and the beginning of the war. There were other indications of change as well. The once vigorous German-language press was shrinking. Many German newspapers folded or merged, and those that survived had to cope with an ever smaller readership. Schools were cutting back on German courses, and the German language was on the decline in German parishes and congregations, in Vereine and German organizations, and in German-American homes. It was a sign of times that the GSP decided in 1911 to publish its annual reports both in English (in abbreviated form) and German.

The war brought hardship to individual German immigrants and German Americans and to ethnic German institutions and organizations. The National German-American Alliance dissolved under the pressure of public hostility and official suspicion. The already suffering German press was especially hard hit: fully three-quarters of the German-language newspapers published in the U.S. in 1914 did not survive the war. The GSP outlasted the wave of anti-German hysteria. Some of its members were outspoken German cultural chauvinists during the early years of the war; some became American superpatriots after the United States declared war upon the Reich. A few GSP members participated in public political debate. Former GSP president Ralph Blankenburg, for instance, was a leader of the Friends of German Democracy, which advocated the abolition of the imperial crown and the creation of a German republic. Most GSP members, however, seemed to have tried to steer clear of politics, and it appears likely that many of those who quit the society during the war were quietly waiting for the wartime hostility toward all things German to blow over before rejoining. The surviving documents do not clearly indicate how many members left or rejoined the GSP in the years from 1917 to 1922. According to its financial records, the GSP collected only $471 in dues in 1918, which could mean that it had as
few as 115 active members. By 1923, membership had rebounded to 554.115

Not all German-American organizations were as cautious as the GSP in the early postwar years. In 1919, George Sylvester Viereck, a militantly pro-German writer, and a group of like-minded German Americans founded the Steuben Society. Their ambition was to create an umbrella organization that would unite local German societies and clubs, and they hoped ultimately to forge a German-American voting block.116 The Steuben Society never managed, however, to enroll more than 20,000 members nationwide.117

Charles Hexamer, the ardent defender of American Deutschtum, died as the GSP and the German-American community were grappling with the new realities of postwar America. Broken by the war between the two countries he loved, shunned by his friends and neighbors, Hexamer died in October 1921 at the age of 59. His successor as GSP president, John Mayer was also dead when the society honored both men at a special ceremony in May 1922. All the speeches at the event honoring two men who had dedicated their lives to everything German were held in English.118

The society’s new leaders would face the challenges of the roaring twenties, the Great Depression, and another World War started by Germany. They would not be alone in their efforts to cope. Since 1900, the Women’s Auxiliary of the German Society had taken over most of the poor relief work. Together the men and women of the GSP shouldered the burden of being German in a world that seemed to have turned upside down.

Notes

1 GSP Annual Report 1915.
3 The war against France motivated some existing German associations and church groups to organize relief efforts for German war victims. The GSP, however, did not do so. For examples of German associations in Milwaukee that embarked on a war relief effort, see Anke Ortlepp, “Auf denn, Ihr Schwestern!” Deutschamerikanische Frauenvereine in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1844–1914 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2004), 71–82.
5 Historian Frederick Luebke estimates that a third of Germans in America were not affiliated with or were perhaps even outright hostile to both ethnic churches and secular societies. Luebke, Bonds of Loyalty, 44–5.
6 This was true for some Kirchenvereine in Milwaukee, for example. See Ortlepp, “Auf denn, Ihr Schwestern!” 49–54.


See Kazal, 32–34.

Bernt was born in 1841, joined the GSP in 1875, and served as secretary from 1877 to 1893 when he became the GSP’s agent until his death. With his doctorate in law and his work as the editor for the Catholic *Nord Amerika*, he was probably the most educated agent the GSP ever had. See GSP Minutes, September 1, 1916. For his activities as editor, see Kazal, 41.

See Kazal, 146.

Within days of the start of the war, German newspapers, *Vereine*, and churches condemned “the English-American press” for favoring the Allied side.

The Canstatter Volksverein rarely had fewer than 1,000 members and often had more. See Kazal, 99–100.

This fact can be seen from the last names on the late nineteenth-century membership list.

In 1881, the GSP spent $3381.65 on its charity work, which included funding the evening school, while the Cannstatter Volksverein gave $4,250. The following year, the GSP included the agent’s salary in its charitable contribution expenses, which totaled $3,954.83, while the Cannstatter Volksverein spent $4,763. By 1885 and 1886, the Verein spent over $2,000 more on charity work than the GSP. For GSP numbers, see *Jahresberichte der Deutschen Gesellschaft*, 1881–1896, GAC. For the Cannstatter Volksfest Verein numbers, see Cannstatter Volksfest-Verein Annual Reports for 1886. GAC Pamphlet, AE 1265.2 v. 1886.


GSP Annual Report 1911.


Pulled by economic opportunities and pushed by increasing racial violence and agricultural catastrophes such as the boll weevil infestation of the cotton crop, more than 50,000 blacks moved to Philadelphia from 1900 to 1920. Kazal, 214.

GSP Annual Reports 1903 and 1905.

The multi-volume study was the product of the Immigration Commission. See Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 65. See also Kazal, 125.

Charles Hexamer as quoted in Kazal, 135.

GSP Minutes, July 20, 1905.

GSP Minutes, April 19, 1906.

GSP Minutes, April 21, 1910 and October 20, 1910.

“Bericht über das Pastorius Denkmal,” October 5, 1907, GSP box “misc. I”.

Albert Jaeger had also made a monument of Baron von Steuben in Washington, D.C., and created a replica that was sent to the German emperor in 1911. See *Mitteilungen des deutsch-amerikanischen Nationalbundes der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika*, February 1913, Pastorius Monument File, GSP, 2nd attic.
29 Letter from advisory jury to the Secretary of War, the Governor of Pennsylvania, and the President of the German-American Alliance, dated January 10, 1913. Pastorius Monument File.

30 “Agreement” dated February 24, 1913. Pastorius Monument File.


32 Kazal, 197. John Mayer, head of the monument committee before the war, and GSP president from 1916 until his death in 1922, merely attended the dedication ceremony and played no part in organizing it in 1920.

33 Biographical information on Hexamer from Georg von Bosse, Dr. C. J. Hexamer: Sein Leben und Wirken (Philadelphia: Graf & Breuninger, 1922), 5–8. Hexamer had run for the GSP presidency once already in 1899 but received only one vote. A year later, he was elected only after GSP President Wagner and First Vice President Ehrlich refused to accept the nominations. See GSP Minutes, January 1899.

34 For example, when the chair of the GSP school committee, Henry Kind, or his successor, Seward Rosenberger, did not submit a statement for the annual report in 1913, Hexamer charged that these men “showed off as German-Americans to school officials, while they demonstrated absolutely no interest in the efforts of the German Society or German efforts in general,” GSP Annual Report 1913. What Hexamer failed to appreciate was the fact that the number of students at the GSP evening school had declined drastically due to decreased German immigration. In addition, both Kind and Rosenberger were busy, young academics at the University of Pennsylvania with little time to spare, while Hexamer was able to devote his time and energy to the Deutschtum since he took over his father’s engineering and insurance business.

35 GSP Minutes, April 19, 1900.

36 Hexamer is, of course, the prime example: he was GSP president from 1900–1916, president of the Pennsylvania Alliance from 1899 to 1915, and president of the National Alliance from 1901 to 1917. GSP Treasurer Hans Weniger was also treasurer for both the state and national organizations until war broke out in Europe. Adolph Timm, secretary of the National Alliance, was a committee chairman for the GSP. The National Alliance sponsored the German-American Historical Society’s journal, German American Annals, which was edited by GSP member and University of Pennsylvania professor Marion Dexter Learned.

37 GSP Annual Report 1911.

38 Hugo Münsterberg to C.J. Hexamer, December 19, 1914, qtd. in Keller, States of Belonging, 82, footnote 26.

39 President’s Report, National German-American Alliance, annual meeting, St. Louis, Oct. 6–12, 1911, qtd. in von Bosse, Dr. C.J. Hexamer, 57.


41 Von Bosse, 59–61.

42 By the end of 1915, calls for supporting the German Empire by the Alliance together with other German-American organizations had resulted in more than 10 million dollars worth of war loans to Germany. See La Vern J. Rippley, The German-Americans (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), 182.

43 GSP Annual Report 1914.

44 GSP Annual Report 1915.

45 Luebke, Germans in the New World, 34.

47 Letter from the United Singers of Philadelphia to the Editor, signed John Mayer, President, and Fred’k Hausmann, Secretary, October 6, 1914, in “Protokollbuch der Vereinigten Sänger von Philadelphia,” “misc. box”.


49 GSP Minutes, January 15, 1915. Similar leagues existed in cities around the country and brought local Vereine together with Irish-American organizations. Kazal, 159.

50 Luebke, Bonds of Loyalty, 100–101.

51 Theodore Roosevelt was among the most vocal and visible critics of “hyphenated” American identity. He had questioned the loyalty of such immigrants as early as 1894. See Luebke, Bonds of Loyalty, 68–9.


53 Ibid.


55 Qtd. in Luebke, Bonds of Loyalty, 184.

56 Keller, States of Belonging, 234.

57 Luebke, Bonds of Loyalty, 190–2.

58 GSP Minutes, November 27, 1916.

59 Souvinir Program fuer das Wohltätigkeits-Fest am Vorabend des Geburtstages des deutschen Kaisers Wilhelm II, January 26, 1917. “Krieg envelope” (war envelope) in the so-called Giftschrink (poison closet) of the GSP.

60 GSP Annual Report 1916.

61 Charles Hexamer, qtd. in Tageblatt, February 8, 1917. The Alliance handed more than $30,000 over to the American Red Cross. See Tageblatt, April 13, 1918.


63 New York Staatszeitung, February 12, 1917.

64 GSP Minutes, March 26, 1917: emphasis in original.

65 The PSA had been founded in the late nineteenth century in Pennsylvania and became known for its antiradicalism and anti-Catholicism. Nativism and racism were added to their cause after World War I. See Kazal, 237.

66 GSP Minutes, March 26, 1917.


70 In 1917, the agency assisted 90 employers and 180 job seekers, making 101 successful referrals. GSP Annual Report 1917. The following year the GSP helped 98 employers and 99 job seekers and made 71 successful referrals. GSP Annual Report 1918.

71 GSP Minutes, April 19, 1917.

72 Luebke, Bonds of Loyalty, 249.

73 Luebke, Bonds of Loyalty; Kazal, Becoming Old Stock, 176.

74 For a discussion of how the anti-German hysteria affected German Americans in Philadelphia and beyond, see Kazal, Becoming Old Stock, 171–90, and Luebke, Bonds of Loyalty.

75 Luebke, Bonds of Loyalty, 3–24.
Among them was Philadelphia’s left-leaning Tageblatt, which had its second-class mailing privilege revoked and its editor brought to court. Although the GSP did not usually champion the socialist cause, members regarded the editor as an innocent victim who had been attacked essentially only for the Germanness of his newspaper.

Examples include the case of Heinrich Neese, who was interned in New Orleans (GSP Minutes, June 25, 1917), the case of the widow Schrader and her five children, and the case of Paul Winter from Sicklerville, NJ, who had emigrated to the US under a false name (GSP Minutes, December 27, 1917).

The committee cautioned that, “under the current circumstances, the irritability of the American spirit and the mood against everything German, it made little sense to publish such stories.” In addition, the board acknowledged that it was doubtful that English language newspapers would print them (GSP Minutes, October 29, 1917).

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See the article in New York Staatszeitung, September 27, 1917, which criticized the GSP for letting the day pass without acknowledgment. For the decision to cancel a planned Martin Luther celebration and to buy the war bond, see GSP Minutes, October 29, 1917.

See GSP Minutes, January 29, 1918, and February 25, 1918. Eventually, 6,481 German aliens were registered in Philadelphia. Kazal, 181.

The newspaper report appeared in the Evening Bulletin, April 29, 1918. For the GSP board discussion of the report, see GSP Minutes, April 29, 1918.

Keller, States of Belonging, 158.

Historians’ examination of the federal investigation of the Alliance cast doubt upon many of the allegations. Most would agree that the Alliance did have close ties to liquor interests nationwide and was involved in the opposition to Prohibition, as were many other German organizations. Yet there is no evidence the Alliance had any connection to Sinn Fein. The alleged list of names of Germans eligible for the draft was probably a list that the Alliance did compile. However, the list was supposed to demonstrate the patriotic and numeric strength of German Americans for the American military rather than assist imperial Germany.


This anecdote was recorded by GSP member and historian Max Heinrici. See Max Heinrici, “Die ereignisreichen zwanzig Jahre, 1915–1935 der Geschichte der Deutschen Gesellschaft von Pennsylvanien,” unpublished manuscript, page 6, GAC, uncataloged.

R. L. Hagele, Conshohocken, PA, May 31, 1918, Record Group 118, box 39, file 3432 Restricted.


W.S. Carman, Philadelphia, May 21, 1918, and May 27, 1918, Record Group 118, box 39, file 3432 Restricted.

W.S. Carman, Philadelphia, October 31, 1918, Record Group 118, box 39, file 3432 Restricted.

Anthony Amber, Philadelphia, September 18, 1918, Record Group 118, Box 38, folder 7.

U.S. Attorney to Mr. William Clark, October 1, 1918, Record Group 118, box 38, folder 6.

GSP Annual Report 1919.

Ehrlich to Kane, May 21, 1918, and Kane to Ehrlich, May 23, 1918, Record Group 118, box 38, folder 6.

Luebke, Bonds of Loyalty, xiii.

See GSP Minutes, June 30, 1919, and September 29, 1919.

The special membership meeting resulted in unanimous approval of assistance for Germany. It is interesting to note that only twenty-four members attended the meeting.

GSP Annual Report 1919. Between 1919 and 1921, individual German Americans donated more than $120 million to war-ravaged Germany. See Rippley, *The German Americans*, 193.

Schlaraffia was originally founded in Prague in 1859 as an all-male social club that made fun of the aristocracy. The Philadelphia chapter was organized in the 1890s and finally had its Burg at the GSP from the early 1960s until 2002. Since then it has moved to the Verein Erzgebirge in Philadelphia’s suburbs. For the GSP board meeting discussion about Schlaraffia, see GSP Minutes, October 27, 1919.


St. Paul’s Independent Lutheran Church decided to move to Olney after more than fifty years at its Northern Liberties location, for example. Kazal, 217.

GSP Minutes, December 30, 1918, and March 31, 1919.

Kazal, 198.

For a more detailed discussion of the effects of Prohibition on German brewers in Philadelphia, see Kazal, 202–204.

Even George Beichl, GSP president from 1974–1993, whose newsletters are full of almost militant Germanness, did not consider himself German-American during the 1920s and 1930s. See Kazal, 234.


See GSP Annual Reports for 1918–1923. Annual membership dues were $4.


Even George Beichl, GSP president from 1974–1993, whose newsletters are full of almost militant Germanness, did not consider himself German-American during the 1920s and 1930s. See Kazal, 234.


See membership statistics in chapter 3 and Kazal, 82.


von Bosse, *Dr. C. J. Hexamer*, 13.