On October 6, 1933, 15,000 German Americans gathered at the Pastorius Monument at Vernon Park in Germantown to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the first German settlement in America. This elaborate, three-day commemoration of German Day was among the few occasions since the Great War that had brought Americans of German descent together in such large numbers. [Figure 5] Anti-German hysteria during and immediately after World War I had limited public demonstrations of German-American ethnic pride. But now, eight months after Hitler had taken control of the Reich, Germans in America celebrated their ancestry publicly, proud of Germany for its reemergence from the ravages of war and because it seemed to be weathering the storm of the worldwide economic depression better than the U.S. Sponsored by well-established cultural organizations such as the United Singers of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Turngemeinde, as well as the German Society of Pennsylvania, the event was also supported by a new, right-wing Nazi organization, the Friends of the New Germany.  

1 Adolf Hitler and President Hindenburg sent telegrams.  

2 The German Ambassador Hans Luther, however, canceled his appearance because organizers had refused to raise the swastika flag. In response to the absence of the highest-ranking diplomat from the German Reich, GSP board members resolved to send him a letter expressing their “sentiment.” In it, they objected to the organizers’ lack of
“decency and tact” that had prevented the ambassador from speaking at the event.³

While the GSP continued its dedication to German literary and musical culture during the 1930s, some leaders and members became key figures in the American Nazi movement. One board member was even convicted of conspiring to spy on behalf of Hitler’s regime. It is difficult to know exactly what most GSP members thought about the Nazis, yet some outspoken Nazi sympathizers seem to have set the tone at public events. At the annual charity ball, for example, the swastika flag was raised. GSP President Louis Schmidt, who led the society from 1923 to 1942, was well-liked; he had united members during the 1920s after the crisis of World War I. Yet in the last ten years of his presidency, he did not exert much power.⁴

Through action and inaction, the GSP found itself on a treacherous path in this decade, and it alienated many of its members. Jewish members were put off by anti-Semitic reading material in the library, for example, as well as by more covert hostility. In 1938, the society did publicly condemn Hitler for his military aggression, but the GSP still had lost a substantial number of its members by the time the U.S. entered World War II in late 1941. The GSP also heeded the government’s call to purchase war bonds as a patriotic duty, and so its investments yielded much lower returns. With reduced membership contributions and low investment returns, the GSP was more or less ruined financially at the end of the war.

Although German Americans overall did not experience the kind of anti-German hysteria they had suffered during the previous war, the GSP emerged from the Second World War severely weakened. Had it not been for the renewed influx of German immigrants after the war and a large monetary bequest to benefit the library, the organization might have collapsed. New German immigrants who joined the GSP after 1945 allowed the organization to focus on the plight of German refugees rather than the German war atrocities or the society’s own fascist sympathies before the war. The continued problem of declining membership after the war and through the 1960s can, in part, be explained by the society’s failure to address this past both among its membership, as well as in German history generally.

The GSP during the 1930s

As discussed in chapter three, the 1930s began under the shadow of the Great Depression. Large numbers of Philadelphians were unemployed, and many people had difficulty meeting basic needs. Philadelphia was the third largest city in the country with a population of almost 2 million:
1.36 million were native born, 370,000 were foreign born, and 220,000 were African Americans. German-born inhabitants made up a little more than 10 percent of the city’s foreign-born population (about 37,000), and 94,000 people had at least one German parent. 50 percent of the city’s residents were Catholic and 15 percent were Jewish. Philadelphia was also one of the largest Jewish cities in the U.S.; it had 82,000 Yiddish speakers.

When the Great Depression began, the GSP had finally reached pre-World War I membership levels again, with around 640 members. Despite Prohibition, which was opposed by virtually all Germans, “associational life was in relatively good condition.” The library enjoyed record readership. Although lectures and other GSP events were not as well attended as the board might have liked, the explanation apparently lay not in a general decline of interest in the GSP by German Americans, but rather in “the rich calendar of events of the local Deutschtum, distractions through radio and movie theaters and the increasingly unfortunate location” of the GSP. In 1930, after a fifteen-year interruption, the society revived its traditional annual charity ball held at the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel, which came to be heralded as the “highlight of German-American social life” in Philadelphia by 1934. The ball was held annually through 1941.

Despite this successful annual event, GSP membership declined over the course of the decade, decreasing steadily from 520 in 1932 to 411 in 1940. The membership records of GSP agent Henry Hoffmann indicate that at least 300 members resigned or simply stopped paying their dues between 1929 and 1940. In addition, more than 100 members died during this period.

While it is difficult to determine why individual members withdrew from the society, five major reasons for the general decline are apparent. First, participation in ethnic organizations lessened in general during the 1930s due to the expansion of alternatives for inexpensive, ethnic amusements. Radio shows and movies offered in German, for example, gave German Americans opportunities to use their language without joining a Verein. Second, the economic hardships of the Great Depression might have made it difficult for some GSP members, especially those who were small business owners, to pay the annual dues. Third, some German Americans, remembering the anti-German hysteria of World War I, left the society by the late 1930s out of fear that their affiliation with the GSP, or anything German for that matter, would become a liability once again. This fear became especially pronounced when Hitler’s aggression led to war. Fourth, the Treaty of Versailles had raised hope among Jews that they would have their own state in Palestine. This Zionist hope caused a
split between German Gentiles and Jews everywhere. Increasing anti-Semitism in Germany and in Philadelphia, as displayed in Philadelphia’s German-language daily, the *Herold*, led some German Jews to distance themselves from anything German and from the GSP, where Nazi propaganda was readily available in the library. Lastly, some non-Jewish GSP members may not have been comfortable associating with pro-Nazi members.

The fact that a few GSP leaders and members were among the most prominent Nazi sympathizers in Philadelphia no doubt deterred new Jewish immigrants from becoming members. Nearly half a million Jews entered the U.S. from Austria, Germany, and Czechoslovakia between 1933 and 1945, some of whom stayed in Philadelphia. This number could have been larger had not both the Hoover and Roosevelt administrations implemented tighter immigration restrictions, motivated by notions of alleged “Nordic” superiority, growing isolationism, and xenophobia in general. Acculturation for the Jewish refugees fortunate enough to make it to the U.S. was quick: almost all of them conducted their religious, social, and cultural activities in English soon after arrival. In short, as historian Herbert Strauss puts it, “these immigrants had few, if any, organized connections with the German-American community during the Third Reich and for a considerable time thereafter.”

Strauss’s assertion also held true for the GSP, as confirmed by anecdotal evidence from interviews with members. Some Jewish members were allegedly told around 1933 that they were no longer desirable members. On the other hand, former longtime GSP President George Beichl, who did not join the society until 1964, recalls rumors of Jews using the GSP library during the 1930s and ‘40s. Considering the amount of Nazi propaganda on display at the library, it is doubtful the Jewish readership was large. The surviving records unfortunately fail to shed any light on Jewish membership.

Throughout the 1930s, many German Americans celebrated the newly emerging, stronger Germany. Pride in the new Germany continued into the late 1930s among Philadelphia’s German Americans. As many as 1,500 German Americans gathered there to celebrate the *Anschluss*, Hitler’s annexation of Austria, on March 13, 1938. They sang not only the *Deutschland Lied*, but also the *Horst Wessel Lied*, the Nazi Party anthem. Sigmund von Bosse, a Lutheran pastor and prominent GSP leader, gave a rousing speech, and almost everyone in the audience gave him the Hitler salute at its conclusion.

Demonstrators increasingly protested these celebrations with anti-German rallies in Philadelphia and elsewhere. Protestors feared a newly aggressive Germany, but German Americans rejected such fears as remi-
niscent of World War I anti-German hysteria. Most of the celebrations ceased once Hitler invaded Poland, but Pennsylvania’s extreme right did not disappear completely.

The GSP reacted to the rise of anti-German sentiment in the 30s first with stoicism and later with a kind of siege mentality. As early as 1933, after Hitler had come to power, the Women’s Auxiliary and the German Society complained about the “increasing distress for people of German descent,” in part due to “anti-German tendencies” in Philadelphia. The men and women of the GSP vowed to be steadfast and to “preserve the respect of their fellow citizens through model behavior.”\(^{23}\) By 1936, newspaper headlines about Germany’s territorial aggression, militarism, and national chauvinism increased Americans’ hostility toward Germans in Philadelphia. Harry Pfund, head of the events committee, voiced his fervent hope that the community would “remain faithful to itself” at a time when the Deutschtum needed to “draw closer together” for self-preservation.\(^{24}\) When war broke out in September 1939, Pfund remarked that he was reminded “of the gray days of 1914, except that this time the slow burning fire of hatred by the press and certain circles against everything German burst into flames already much earlier.”\(^{25}\)

Although largely only a bystander in world events, the German Society may have contributed to the anti-German sentiment Pfund perceived. As we have seen, GSP board members sided with the German ambassador in his desire to have a swastika flag flying at the German Day celebration in 1933. They also unanimously voted to send a congratulatory telegram to the German Führer in 1935 when the Saarland plebiscite returned the area from French to German rule. They believed this indicated “the victory of German faithfulness in spite of all insidious attacks.”\(^ {26}\) Notwithstanding this public outburst of German patriotism, board members were cautious when they merely acknowledged an invitation to a joint Hitler-Bismarck birthday celebration extended by the Friends of the New Germany in the spring of that year and did not attend as a group.\(^ {27}\)

Sigmund von Bosse, however, may have persuaded some of his fellow GSP board members to join in this revival of Pan-Germanism. Although von Bosse never officially joined the Friends of the New Germany or its successor, the German-American Bund, he was widely known as “an open sympathizer” and “a leading figure in later Bund activism.” He was also the last President of the National German-American Alliance.\(^ {28}\) Right-wing German groups had already emerged in the 1920s and gained momentum after 1933 when the Association of Friends of the New Germany was founded in Chicago. When some of its members voiced concern in 1936 that the organization was too German and thus could be
deterring potential supporters from joining, the name was changed to German-American Bund. Hitler’s rise to power in Germany, one scholar argues, permitted “some Americans of German descent to feel their homeland was being restored to its proper dignity.”29 Von Bosse was merely one among several GSP members who felt this way.

Overall, the German-American Bund never had more than a few thousand members in the entire United States, and these were concentrated in the Mid-Atlantic region.30 The Philadelphia chapter of the Friends of the New Germany thrived quickly: it had over 220 members by the end of its first year in 1933.31 The organization had strong ties to New York Nazis such as Heinz Spanknoebel and sang the *Horst Wessel Lied* at the end of its meetings. New members were also required to pledge that they were Aryans without Jewish or black blood. Like the Nazis in Germany, Bund members joined forces with members of other associations to form uniformed paramilitary groups that even conducted regular drills. In Philadelphia, for example, the hall of the Liedertafel Sängerbund on Sixth Street, not far from the society’s building, served as the drill room.32

As an American-born man, von Bosse was in the minority among Bund sympathizers, as well as members, who consisted mostly of post-World War I German immigrants.33 Nevertheless, his involvement was not limited to attending the organization’s gatherings. He also gave passionate speeches at several meetings. The most famous was the Bund rally at Madison Square Garden in February 1939, where 22,000 Hitler supporters cheered him and other speakers on. Ostensibly held in honor of George Washington’s birthday, the rally was, in reality, a glorification of Hitler. In his speech, von Bosse explicitly linked the two men: “if Washington were alive today, he would be a friend of Adolf Hitler, just as he was of Frederick the Great.”34 Within days of war breaking out in Europe, von Bosse used Aryan racial ideology to call “upon all our racial fellows to stand behind the neutrality proclamation of the President 100 percent,” although he knew it would be difficult “due to the vicious propaganda” that was being circulated in the press.35 Less than a month later, the pastor chaired the German Day celebration, which still drew a crowd of 2,300. Although overt symbols of Nazism such as the swastika flag were not on prominent display, highlights of the speech were greeted with an enthusiastic “Heil” cheer from the audience.36 Later that year, von Bosse became the head of the Pennsylvania Zentralbund. In this capacity he became part of the isolationist movement after Germany invaded Poland. Like other leaders of the movement, von Bosse called for American neutrality, framing his argument in anti-Communist, or rather, anti-Jewish, terms: Jews were generally considered to be radical Communists. He said, for example, “the main lineup is not democracy versus fascism, but fascism versus Communism and here our choice is clear.”37
To be sure, Sigmund von Bosse was not representative of GSP members, although he seems to have found sympathy in the organization. In 1935, within a year of his election to the board, GSP leaders commended von Bosse for his work as the society’s secretary and for his accomplishments on behalf of “the Deutschum in general.” A number of GSP members were associated with the conservative Pan-German movement. R.T. Kessemeier, who joined the GSP in 1930, was a “leading figure in the Association of the Friends of the New Germany” and later also a Bund member. As manager of two German steamship lines in Philadelphia, Kessemeier offered free passage to German Americans, especially to sympathetic academics, so that they might see German progress first hand. Quite a few German-American college professors from Philadelphia-area schools traveled to Germany through this offer. Theodore Martin, head of the Philadelphia Bund, was also a GSP member for at least part of the 1930s. Another prominent Bund sympathizer, Fred C. Gartner, had joined the GSP in 1923. The largely German population of Northeast Philadelphia elected him to the Pennsylvania State Legislature in 1933 as a Republican representative and then to the U.S. Congress for one term in 1938. Reverend Erich Saul, pastor of the German Seamen’s Home in Philadelphia from 1912 to 1942 and GSP member from at least 1923 to 1937, was also a Nazi sympathizer. In addition, in the late 1930s the German Society lost several members who returned to Germany. These so-called Rückwanderer had followed Hitler’s call for all Volksdeutsche to come home to the German Reich. Many of these same members had been active in the Bund.

By the early 1930s, the 19-member GSP board was dominated by German-born men and included some recent immigrants, at least one of whom had served on the German side during World War I. But regardless of their place of birth or length of time in the United States, all board members viewed Germany as the victim of the Versailles Treaty. The provisions of the treaty had been very hard on Germany, not least because Germany was held to be solely responsible for the war, as dictated in its war guilt clause. Under its provisions, Germany was forced to pay reparations, it permanently lost possession of its colonies, the French occupied the Saarland for fifteen years, and the Ruhr/Rhine River area was demilitarized. Like most Germans in Germany, GSP board members believed in the so-called Dolchstoßlegende, or the “stab in the back” theory, according to which Germany had lost the war because of internal strife, primarily brought about by Communist agitators and Jews.

There were two indicators of this mindset. First, in early 1931, the board unanimously resolved to purchase five copies of a Thomas St. John Gaffney’s recently published book, Breaking the Silence. Discussion about the book itself was unusual: typically reading material acquisitions
were not discussed in detail at board meetings. The librarian merely submitted a written report including the number of visitors and books loaned. Written by the former American consul to Munich and based on his personal experiences, the book is an indictment of the Wilson administration for not preventing the war and for getting the U.S. involved in it. Moreover, Gaffney condemns the Treaty of Versailles for a long list of atrocities. Among them were “the annexation of German provinces and colonies to the territory of racially heterogeneous and inimical peoples . . . [and] the occupation of German territory by tens of thousands of vicious African blacks.”

Secondly, Conrad Linke, a prominent GSP member and artist, left the society several folders of newspaper clippings and his own writings, which show that he was a leading proponent of the Germany-as-victim view among GSP members.

Periodically, the library sent new book lists to local newspapers or enclosed them in the GSP annual report. These records reflect the conservative, middle-class character of the society. They also illustrate a slant toward a Heimatliteratur that idealized Imperial Germany in much the same way that “Lost Cause” writings glorified the antebellum American South after the Civil War. Moreover, the lists reveal that the GSP library contained more pro-Nazi literature than works by exiled writers by the 1930s. In 1930, the GSP acquired Adolf Hitler’s Mein Kampf. The library had already purchased a collection of Hitler’s speeches in 1924 within months of its publication. Over the course of the 1930s, the GSP library made a variety of Nazi literature available to its readers, ranging from Julius Streicher’s notoriously anti-Semitic weekly Der Stürmer and the SS publication Das Schwarze Korps to the more serious, less overtly anti-Semitic periodical Volk im Werden, published by the pedagogue Ernst Kriek.

At least some Nazi propaganda came to the GSP through the Volksbund für das Deutschttum im Ausland (League for Germandom Abroad), which is listed among the donors of reading material in library reports of the 1930s. Apparently these were “very welcome” additions to the library. When the Nazis acceded to power in Germany, they increased their effort to reach all Volksdeutsche, that is, Germans outside of the Reich. They created the League to send propaganda abroad as part of this effort. Collections for Volksdeutsche in Germany’s public schools partially financed this propaganda campaign. At the same time, it is clear that the GSP ordered books by Joseph Goebbels or Alfred Rosenberg, who had helped to create Nazi ideology, and subscribed to American pro-Nazi periodicals like the Herold. The Herold was published by the same company that printed the anti-Semitic, Nazi paper, Deutscher Weckruf, whose front-page slogan called for a unified Deutschttum everywhere.
The GSP also established close connections to the German Reich in the 1930s. The Volksbund für das Deutschtum im Ausland contacted the GSP to request material for an exhibit on Germans outside of Germany to be held in Bremen in 1936. The GSP responded by appropriating funds and selecting and sending photographs. In the wake of the 1936 Olympic games in Germany, a representative of the German Olympic press committee brought a German film about the games for GSP members to enjoy. The GSP also aimed to update members on the latest views in Germany by hosting lectures mostly by pro-Nazi speakers. One was a lecture in 1936 by Colin Ross, who offered a self-professed National-Socialist view of Germans’ role in American history in his book *Unser Amerika*, published in Germany. German Americans, Ross explained, had “experienced their own Versailles and the heavy weight and humiliation of defeat.” But just as in Germany, Germans in America had emerged, he argued, “with enormous pride and undefeatable strength.” Harry Pfund, head of the events committee, later approvingly remembered Ross’s lecture as a “brilliant speech defending today’s Germany” and as “an attack against all powers whose aim it is to prevent an understanding of the true situation in the Third Reich through false and distorted reports.”

By January 1938, however, the GSP publicly disavowed its Nazi sympathies. Twenty-two German-American associations in Philadelphia including the GSP joined the German-American league of Culture at this time, whose purpose was to “expose the dangerous roles the Nazis [were] playing in numerous organizations throughout Pennsylvania.” Within a year, the number of German Vereine in the league had increased to nearly 100. Led by Raymond Ruff, who had begun to publicly denounce Hitler and his policies as early as 1936, the league clearly opposed the “theory of militarism and racial hatred” of the Nazis without relinquishing their “pro-German” ideals. Ruff called on the member organizations to advertise “the dominant role Germans have played in the development of this country,” which was, of course, something the society had already been engaged in for at least fifty years. Yet it was hard for pro-Nazi members to break old habits. At the GSP annual charity ball in February 1938, only a month after the society had joined the league, Ruff personally tore down a swastika flag. This awkward situation was not mentioned, of course, in the glowing account of the event in the society’s annual report.

Nazi sympathizers now came under attack in Philadelphia. Protestors marched in large demonstrations by the thousands, picketed German-American Bund meetings, and some even beat up Bund members. Two Nazi sympathizers in the GSP also came under attack. The home of Dr. Richard Gerlach, GSP director and physician for the German Consul-
ate, was bombed in September 1938. No one was injured in the blast, but
damage to the front of the house was severe. Anti-Nazi protestors had
recently demonstrated outside the German Consulate against Hitler’s
plan to annex the Sudetenland. Yet Gerlach refused to acknowledge that
there could be any connection between the two occurrences. Another
GSP member, William Graf, the publisher of the Herold and the Bund’s
Deutscher Weckruf, reported that his print shop on Germantown Avenue
had been bombed.

In this climate of anti-Nazi violence, the German-American Bund
basically became defunct and then officially dissolved after the Japanese
attack on Pearl Harbor. The Bund’s disappearance was more a strategic
move than a real indication that it had lost all support. New organiza-
tions, such as the America First Committee, which led the neutrality
campaign in which some GSP members were involved, were much more
effective at a time when overt Nazism and its symbols had become un-
tenable. While most German Philadelphians appear to have rejected
Hitler by 1939, some continued to work covertly for the German cause.
For example, the Kyffhäuserbund, a German veterans’ association with
Nazi connections, called for charitable contributions to assist German
POWs held in Canada. Instead of going to German soldiers imprisoned in
Canada, however, the money collected was diverted through a German
steamship company and went to Germany in support of the Nazi re-
gime.

Although there is no evidence that there was a united “Fifth Column”
as Roosevelt and others warned, there were some suspicious explosions
at various defense plants in the Mid-Atlantic region that suggest that
some German Americans sought to undermine American forces in the
war. The most sensational sabotage story was a plot that was never
carried out. In the summer of 1942, eight German agents who had landed
by submarine in Florida and on Long Island were arrested for conspiring
to destroy several military installations and strategic logistical support
stations. The plan was named “Operation Pastorius” in honor of the
founder of the first German settlement in America—an honor the GSP as
well as other German-American Vereine could have done without.

After 1938, the GSP avoided overt connections with Nazis abroad.
This does not mean, however, that it repudiated Nazi sympathizers
within its ranks. Prominent society members who were also Philadelphia
Bund supporters, such as Sigmund von Bosse, Fred Gartner, and Kurt
Molzahn, remained very popular among members even as late as 1939.
Von Bosse was approvingly characterized as “an undaunted man,” Gart-
ner was the guest of honor at the society’s 175th anniversary celebration,
and Molzahn continued to be a valued director of the poor relief pro-
gram. At the same time, the society invited an exiled German writer for
a lecture in 1940. Although not overtly political, Hamburg novelist Joachim Maass left Germany in 1939 and found employment as a lecturer through the Carl Schurz Foundation. His brother Edgar Maass, author of the World War I novel Verdun, also lectured at the GSP that same year.66

In the political arena, however, the GSP did not get involved in any way during the summer of 1940 when German aliens were required to register under the Alien Registration Act.67 After the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and Germany declared war on the U.S. a few days later, the fear of subversive aliens suddenly became so great that thousands of them across the country were arrested overnight. Few Americans noticed at the time that 10,905 German legal resident aliens were interned during World War II, and since then, the government, the general public, and most scholars have forgotten.68 Some GSP members had their homes searched, and a few were arrested and interned.69 INS facilities at Ellis Island housed hundreds of detainees, and the immigration center closest to Philadelphia, Gloucester, New Jersey, became the temporary home of dozens of Germans suspected of subversion. FBI officers interrogated suspected Nazi sympathizers. They often asked detainees whether they would be willing to shoot their brothers or other close relatives fighting for Germany and used photographs of Hitler and other Nazi paraphernalia as evidence of their un-American activities.70 The GSP did not officially receive any pleas for legal assistance from Germans affected by FBI investigations in the 1940s, as it had during World War I. GSP board member Kurt Molzahn, however, did visit some internees in Gloucester in his capacity as a clergyman.71

A Nazi Spy?

Pastor Kurt Molzahn was a man whose German nationalism turned into fascism in part because of his experiences during World War I. After four years of fighting on the Russian front in the German cavalry, Molzahn attended the Kroop Seminary to pursue his lifelong dream of becoming a minister. He then emigrated to the U.S. in 1923. Soon he was able to send for his fiancée, and by 1929, he was appointed as the minister at St. Michael’s and Old Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, the oldest German Lutheran congregation in the country.72 Within weeks of arriving in the city of brotherly love, Molzahn joined the GSP, and his wife became a member of the Women’s Auxiliary.73 He also quickly became involved in other German organizations and preached in his capacity as a clergyman and German war veteran to a gathering in commemoration of the armistice of World War I veterans from both the American and the German sides.74 Although the speech had nothing to do with his GSP member-
ship, the GSP annual report for 1930 favorably noted Molzahn’s involvement. A year later, he was elected to the GSP board of directors and served until his arrest for conspiracy to commit espionage in 1942.

By 1937, Molzahn had become an indispensable leader not only for the GSP but also as an overt propagandist of the Nazi regime. He had reportedly “done everything in his power to win over the people in his congregation for the Third Reich.” The Volksbund für das Deutschtum im Ausland sent materials to Molzahn, and he was in close contact with officials in Berlin through the German Consul in Philadelphia, Arno Mowitz. According to numerous scholars, the pastor had become a German secret agent. He allegedly “had recruited several V-men for the Abwehr [German intelligence service], and, after the outbreak of the war in September 1939, he worked as a producing spy under registry No. 2320.” Molzahn was allegedly “one of the most energetic and productive agents in the United States.”

Supposedly, he became involved with Gerhard Kunze, a Philadelphia Bund member and Abwehr agent, in an effort to raise money and to devise a way to communicate secretly with Berlin, so that German officials could find ways to pay known Bund members indirectly.

By 1938, Molzahn allegedly had found a reliable source of funds in Count Anastase Andreyevich Vonsiatsky, the leader of a Ukrainian anti-Communist exile group. In December 1940, Kunze supposedly arranged for Molzahn and the Ukrainian Count to meet in Chicago, where they agreed on “an operations plan for sabotage of war installations.” Although it is not clear whether the plan ever resulted in any real damage, the group did collect sensitive information about US military fortifications on both coasts, which Molzahn allegedly delivered to a man at the German embassy. The spy ring was discovered when Vonsiatsky confided in a supposedly reliable fascist priest, Alexei Pelypenko, who turned out to be an FBI agent. On June 10, 1942, a federal grand jury indicted Molzahn, and he was arrested the next day. While three of his co-defendants pleaded guilty “to conspiracy to transmit to Germany and Japan information relating to the national defense,” and the Ukrainian count was declared mentally ill, Molzahn did not. A three-week trial, however, resulted in a guilty verdict and a ten-year prison sentence.

The pastor was released after three years due to heart disease.

In a church trial after his release, Molzahn was deemed fit for the ministry despite his criminal conviction. He became an associate pastor at a Philadelphia church and headed his own congregation at Germantown’s St. Thomas Lutheran Church by early 1949. In 1956, President Eisenhower pardoned Molzahn fully and unconditionally. The legal effect of a pardon is to eliminate both the punishment and the guilt asso-
ciated with the crime. Although it might be a little surprising to people in the twenty-first century that the president of the United States would thus remove the stigma from a felony conviction for spying, it was a strategic move in 1956: the U.S. needed all the allies it could get in the Cold War against the Soviet Union and Communism at home. Perhaps granting a pardon to a former Nazi spy seemed harmless and ultimately meaningless in a world that was faced with a new foe. Pastor Molzahn was, of course, relieved.

In his biography published in 1962, Molzahn denied all charges. Refusing to acknowledge his public propaganda activities on behalf of Germany’s Nazis, Molzahn claimed that he “tried to maintain a neutral position” during the 1930s. Molzahn devoted most of the book to the story of how he survived prison, but he did address his arrest and conviction as well. His version of events suggests that an overly paranoid FBI concocted a fantastic tale. Molzahn claimed that he had never heard of the Ukrainian Count Vonsiatsky, although he acknowledged that he met Wilhelm Kunze several times. Still, he “had not seen or talked to him since 1938—before he became headline material as national leader of the Bund.” Molzahn did admit to a visit by the Ukrainian priest Pelypenko but placed the encounter in a harmless, albeit convoluted, context. Molzahn also differentiated between knowing about a conspiracy and actually participating in it. Molzahn’s son suggests that his father was aware of Kunze’s and others’ activities and plans but did not participate in the plot.

Upon his arrest, the Lutheran minister and his wife disappeared overnight from the records of the German Society without any explanation or comment. Most people in his congregation, which included some GSP members, did support Molzahn for a while and raised $25,000 for his bail. They only hired a new pastor when Molzahn’s last appeal was denied in June 1943. His wife Nina and their three children stayed in the parsonage until December 1942. They relied on the $30 a week Nina earned working for the American Friends Society, as well as the proceeds of a Friday night poker game friends donated every Saturday morning. However, most German-American friends and acquaintances, among them many GSP members and leaders, stayed away from the Molzahn family. Associating with the relatives of a convicted spy could only bring suspicion upon them. Once the pastor was released from prison and transported by ambulance to Lankenau Hospital, the staff initially refused to treat the man who had once been a member of its board of directors.

But life for the Molzahns improved quickly thereafter. Within months of Molzahn’s release the family bought a house “with the help of generous friends.” He did not appear again in official GSP records until 1954,
when he gave the benediction at the Pastorius Day celebration at Vernon Park in Germantown. It must have been quite strange for Molzahn and other society members to be at the monument again twenty-one years after the jubilant celebration of 1933. In 1957, Molzahn’s name appeared in GSP records listed among the guests at its Herrenabend (Gentlemen’s Evening). His wife Nina frequented the GSP library and was a member of the Women’s Auxiliary for at least part of the 1950s. Although longtime society members recall seeing Molzahn at various other Society events, he never rejoined the GSP officially before he died in 1979.

The GSP Beyond World War II

By the time Molzahn was arrested for espionage, the GSP had already drastically reduced its cultural programming. To save money, the GSP decided to publish its annual report in 1941 in abbreviated form. Then it did not send out an annual report again until 1950. By the spring of 1942, President Louis Schmidt announced that the war prevented the society from planning “many events.” But he hoped that if members continued to work “in the same patriotic ways as in the previous 177 years,” they would be able to preserve what they had inherited from their predecessors.

At the same time, the GSP attempted to publicize its patriotism. In January 1943, the board ordered agent Henry Hoffmann to buy a “Service flag” to demonstrate GSP patriotism. Intended to have 150 stars (in the end the flag only had 120 stars, one for each service member associated with the society), the flag was to be installed “on the stage or at the window of the hall.” Eugene Stopper, the new president, urged society members to remain active and to work hard to ensure that the society would survive the war. He warned that “any organization that closes its doors now will never open again.” Stopper spurred members on to attract new members and to publicize members’ and the society’s involvement in the war bond drive. As part of this demonstration of patriotism, the GSP also invited a former member’s daughter to give a lecture on Thomas Jefferson from her recently published book. Beyond the issue of American loyalty, however, the society recognized that members wanted to help loved ones in Germany. Thus, members were reminded that donations to the Red Cross would also benefit German POWs. The GSP donated $1,000 to the Red Cross, an amount unmatched by any other German-American organization in Philadelphia.

But the society had problems beyond the war. In 1943, the board acknowledged that a real divide existed between the leadership and the general membership, evident in dwindling enrollment and the small number of people attending quarterly meetings. In an attempt to solve
the problem, the board decided to publish a newsletter every two months. To dispel any suspicion, the newsletter was written in English. In the first issue, the GSP announced that most lectures and other activities would also be held in English, ostensibly to attract younger people. In the next *Postilion*, longtime board member Ferdinand Mostertz took up the language issue again. He noted that all the worries about using German could be solved by using “tact and common sense.” While acknowledging that it would be “unwise during these wartimes to speak German in public places,” Mostertz advised that people simply had to “use discretion as to where to use it and where not to use it.” A stern reminder not to anglicize German names followed in the next issue. Although Mostertz was ready to refrain from speaking his native language in public, he had no sympathy for those who changed their names.

The limited use of the German language in the GSP did not end with the war. The newsletter served to inform members about GSP history and internal issues. It tried to instill pride in the past accomplishments of Germans in the U.S. by including short biographical sketches of eighteenth-century GSP heroes such as society founder Heinrich Keppele, founder and printer Henrich Miller, and Revolutionary War hero von Steuben. The *Postilion*, however, never addressed fascism, the Holocaust, or any other events in Europe. Perhaps because of this omission, it did little to bring people into the society. President Stoppers recognized this and asked members to suggest other ways to improve sociability in the organization at the annual membership meeting in 1944.

Attendance at meetings did not improve until the society came under official attack. In 1944, federal officials told the GSP that it was not contributing enough to charitable causes to qualify for tax-exempt status, even though members had contributed to five war bond drives in less than three years and had broken all records as an ethnic group and organization for effort. The society also came under investigation for un-American activities. Thirty-five members were present at a meeting to hear updates on the situation instead of the usual twenty or sometimes fewer than fifteen. The struggle to regain tax-exempt status took over three years and required the society to submit financial records from 1933 to 1945. In the end, the society temporarily merged its charitable contributions with those of the Women’s Auxiliary. In addition, the GSP was required to sell its real estate mortgages and to invest the money in federal treasury notes at much lower returns.

**Picking up the Pieces**

The financial losses were felt immediately. By the spring of 1945, the German Society had invested half of its cash assets in $25,000 of war
bonds. The sharp decline in investment returns by early 1946 caused the society to operate at a deficit.\(^{103}\) The fiscal situation did not improve until 1950, when the GSP finance committee sold the last of the war bonds and invested in the booming stock market instead, resulting in a balanced budget for the year.\(^{104}\)

A bequest by Joseph P. Horner in 1946 could not have come at a better time. It was not immediately clear how much money the society would receive, or when it would receive it, but it was apparent that the sum would be substantial.\(^{105}\) In 1962, the GSP at last received an endowment of $388,000. Horner, a member of the Philadelphia orchestra and a longtime GSP member, had requested that the interest income be used for general expenses and the library.\(^{106}\) The $3,600 annual income from the Horner estate saved the GSP from running a substantial deficit.\(^{107}\) Apart from the endowment the value of the society’s cash assets had dropped to less than $21,000 in 1965 and continued to decline.\(^{108}\) At the annual membership meeting in January 1967, outgoing President Hermann Witte rightly reminded everyone that Horner’s bequest was “the ‘life-safer’ of the Society.”\(^{109}\)

In 1946, the society also participated in the bicentennial celebration of the birth of Peter Muhlenberg, the German-American Revolutionary War hero. In a remarkable display of revived German-American pride, members began a campaign to have Muhlenberg’s statue moved from City Hall to Independence Square, where they felt it “belonged.”\(^{110}\) Although the effort failed, it is significant that the GSP felt strong enough as an organization in 1946 to attempt the transfer. By then, the GSP had begun efforts to help war-torn Germany. In the summer of that year, the Women’s Auxiliary began to meet regularly to mend donated clothing, a warehouse had been rented for storing collected items, and good progress had been made in obtaining governmental permission to collect money towards the cause.

Society members’ engagement with aid for Germany helped them to distance themselves from the recent past by allowing them to focus on Germans and German Americans as victims rather than perpetrators. Harry Pfund had shaped this focus in 1944 when the board of directors asked him to write a short history of the society in celebration of the tercentenary of William Penn’s birth. In twenty-one pages, Pfund painted a glowing picture of the society’s history but characterized the last three decades as “the most tragic” period.\(^{111}\) Concentrating on cultural highlights such as a Goethe celebration at the Academy of Music in 1932, the chair of the library committee left out any reference to the Third Reich and Nazis in the U.S. or abroad. Pfund instead focused on Germans as the victims of events in both the New World and the Old. Germans everywhere, he wrote, were “distressed by the sufferings of one’s kith and kin,
of those of the same blood, the same language and the same cultural heritage,” and members of the German Society had borne “this grief in silence.” Pfund’s essay set the stage for the society’s silence about the Third Reich.

After the 1940s, the GSP became more American. The society no longer insisted that most events be conducted in the German language. Initially due to the war, the society made English its official language, to the chagrin of some, although there were some exceptions. Later this policy was continued because fewer people spoke German. The society also focused on offering more social events to restore a sense of German Gemütlichkeit to its members, as well as prospective ones, and therefore sought permission to serve alcoholic beverages. In early 1954, the GSP acquired a liquor license, which it carefully guards to this day, especially because serving alcohol is an important part of almost all events.

Lastly, a special committee urged the society to move to the northeastern section of Philadelphia, “where the bulk of our present and future members live.” Lacking money and decisiveness, the board failed to act on this recommendation and three years later decided to stay put. The idea of moving recurred periodically over the next twenty-five years.

In the meantime, after a twenty-year interruption, GSP services for immigrants, ranging from employment referrals to English and citizenship classes, were once again in demand. Increasing numbers of German refugees were entering the United States. Conrad and Marion Linke, two longtime GSP members, were instrumental in effecting a change of status for incoming Germans. They had moved Congress to revise the Displaced Persons Act so that new Germans, who were classified as Expellees and were ineligible for emigration, became refugees. Of the nearly 600,000 Germans entering the United States between 1946 and the late 1950s, thousands came to the Delaware Valley. Although many refugees established their own organizations, a sizable number of the most active and dedicated GSP members today are former refugees and their children. These expatriate families had endured terrible hardships and had little interest in dealing with German atrocities or questions of culpability. Instead they focused on their own ordeals, which helped to shape the society for the next sixty years.

It was around the time that German war refugees came to the U.S. in increasing numbers that the German Society decided to keep all Nazi periodicals and books in a dark and dirty storage room on the third floor of the building. By the late 1970s, this closet became known as the Giftschrank. This mysterious space is not a closet full of presents, as the English word “gift” would suggest, but a poison cabinet, because “gift” means “poison” in German. It is not clear how this forbidden closet came into being, who named it, or who filled it with “undesirable” materials.
from the 1930s: bundled stacks of Nazi periodicals, envelopes containing small fascist pamphlets, and books written by Hitler, Goebbels, and Alfred Rosenberg, for example. What is clear is that the “gift” is a poison that the society decided to keep apart from the rest of its library collection. By literally and figuratively putting their recent past in a closet, society members bestowed a general amnesia on the organization.

Instead of addressing their own recent past, longtime GSP leaders of the 1950s, together with the new postwar refugee members, carefully resumed their programs celebrating German-American contributions to American history. Without any reference to the war or the Holocaust, about 1,000 German Americans gathered in 1951 at the Pastorius Monument on October 6, 1951, to celebrate “Pastorius Day” instead of the usual “German Day”. Perhaps organizers intended to acknowledge the recent war or to distance themselves from the German nationalism that had led the world to disaster by renaming the celebration. The speeches for the occasion, however, seamlessly picked up where prewar celebrations had left off – with the society’s perpetual lament that German-American contributions to American history were being ignored.123

Conclusion

The GSP did not turn into a quasi-Nazi organization during the 1930s. However, some leading American Nazi sympathizers were influential society members and might have contributed to the decline in membership. While the GSP tried its best to demonstrate its American patriotism during the war, it was put on the defensive when the U.S. government investigated it. With a declining and aging membership, financial problems, and a divide between leadership and rank-and-file members, the GSP emerged from World War II with less resolve and support than after World War I. Only the influx of German refugees, a fortuitous monetary bequest, and the challenge of sending aid to Germany made it possible for the society to survive this crisis. New and old members alike, however, cast themselves as victims of Soviet brutality in World War II and Cold War politics in the 1950s rather than perpetrators, and this framing of recent history shaped the society for years to come. Some Americans of German descent may have been put off from joining the organization because of its failure to address Germany’s and its own recent past. Perhaps this partially explains low membership numbers through the early 1970s. Yet the GSP’s troubles now extended far beyond the membership in its walls: postwar economic and social changes radically altered the landscape and politics of Philadelphia and other urban centers, transforming the neighborhood in which the GSP was located and, therefore, the GSP itself.
Notes


2 *Philadelphia Record*, October 7, 1933.

3 GSP Minutes, October 19, 1933.

4 Louis Schmidt continued to be well-liked among GSP members during the 1930s, however. The GSP held a festive dinner in honor of his seventieth birthday. See photo of “Testimonial Dinner in honor of Capt. Louis H. Schmidt to celebrate his Seventieth Birthday, September 29, 1938, Bellevue Stratford Hotel,” uncataloged.


6 GSP Annual Report 1930.

7 GSP Annual Report 1936.

8 GSP Annual Report 1934.

9 The German Society stopped publishing membership numbers on a regular basis after 1929, but membership in the following years can be determined by counting member names printed in the annual reports. Membership in the intervening years was 461 in 1934, 437 in 1936, and 421 in 1938. Numbers derived from the annual reports of 1932, 1934, 1936, 1938, 1940.

10 “Mitglieder vorgeschlagen seit Amtsantritt des Geschäfts-Agenten Henry Hoffmann, 1923,” GAC uncataloged. The GSP was not the only German organization experiencing difficulties. The German Club was forced to dissolve due to “the bad times” and donated its furniture to the GSP. See GSP Annual Report 1937.


12 Several resignation letters from before and after the war broke out in Europe reveal that some members did not wish to be associated with a German organization. Some members were rather vague about their reasons for resigning. Rudolph Huebner to Herr Hoffman, October 12, 1938. But others, such as Rudolph Stüven, explicitly stated that “owing to conditions abroad which have a certain bearing on me in my community, I find it expedient to sever for the present at least my connection with the Society.” Rudolph Stüven to GSP, April 26, 1939. Two more letters that gave no explicit reason for the resignation were William Hellmann to GSP, May 19, 1939, and J.M. Snyder to GSP, December 11, 1939. Gesangsverein Harmonie, Box 450, file “Handed over to FBI & returned.” All of these letters are unusual since few members officially resigned over the course of the GSP’s 240-year history, and even fewer resignation letters seem to have survived.

13 For a discussion of the Treaty of Versailles’s role in this, see Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 322.


16 Strauss, 261.

17 Based on my interview with Dr. George Beichl at his home on January 26, 2006.
Decades later, when the film “Germany’s Road to Israel” was shown at the GSP to a Jewish audience, a Philadelphia newspaper stated that “most Jewish members resigned during the Hitler era.” The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, May 11, 1967.

Longtime GSP director and attorney Arno Mowitz was among those rewarded for his German nationalism when he was appointed Philadelphia’s German Consul in 1932. However, union leaders of the American Federation of Hosiery Workers charged that Mowitz, as the Hosiery Manufacturers’ attorney, was bringing Nazi influence and Hitler’s anti-unionism to the factory. See “Warns Workers of Nazi Trend in Hosiery Industry,” Evening Bulletin, June 6, 1934.

The Bund meeting celebrating the Anschluss ended in a riot when anti-Nazi protestors stormed in. For a description, see Timothy J. Holian, The German-Americans and World War II: An Ethnic Experience (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 31–2.

Philip Jenkins, Hoods and Shirts, 145.


GSP Annual Report 1933.

GSP Annual Report 1936.

GSP Annual Report 1939.

GSP Minutes, January 17, 1935.

Bismarck and Hitler were both born in April, yet this joint celebration was unique to the German-American community and occurred just once. Celebrating both men together might also indicate how some German Americans viewed Hitler and his place in German history. With Bismarck as the father of imperial Germany, Hitler seems to have been seen as the heir of that legacy rather than as the brutal dictator he was.

Kazal, Becoming Old Stock, 263–4.

Jenkins, 136–7.

New York Congressman Samuel Dickstein estimated that Pennsylvania alone had a Bund membership of 20,000–30,000. See Evening Ledger, March 24, 1937.

Active support and membership in right-wing organizations, such as the movement led by Catholic priest Father Coughlin, Italian Fascists, and the Ku Klux Klan, numbered more than 20,000 in Philadelphia between 1938 and 1941. Estimate based on Jenkins, 13. When the Klan reemerged with new vigor during the 1920s, the GSP was actively involved in opposing new immigration quotas. Thus, it stood in direct opposition to Klan views. However, the Klan was also a part of the Protestant movement fearful of “new immigration” from Eastern and Southern Europe, as well as Asia. Although German-born men were not permitted to join the Klan, naturalized German Protestants did join the American Krusaders, a Klan affiliate. In part, many German Americans got involved because more recent immigrants had begun to encroach upon employment territory traditionally reserved for older immigrant groups from Germany or Great Britain, such as the steel, coal, and textile industries, but also white-collar industries like retail. Nevertheless, the boom of the Klan in Pennsylvania was short-lived: after 1925, record membership numbers of at least 250,000 dropped to 20,000 and less than 5,000 by 1930. Only the pronounced concentration of members in Philadelphia prevented the Klan from disappearing altogether. White Protestants, especially, many of them of German descent, reacted defensively to a large influx of African Americans and Jews in Pennsylvania by joining the Klan. Germantown and also German neighborhoods in Philadelphia, such as Olney, had hundreds of Klan members. See Jenkins, 73–77. New York Congressman Samuel Dickstein estimated that Pennsylvania alone had a Bund membership of 20,000–30,000. See Evening Ledger, March 24, 1937.
Jenkins, 143–4.

For a discussion of why most Bund members were German-born immigrants who had arrived after 1918, see Susan Canedy, America’s Nazis: A Democratic Dilemma (Menlo Park, CA: Markgraf Publications Group, 1990).

Qtd. in Geoffrey Smith, To Save a Nation: American Countersubversives, the New Deal, and the Coming of World War II (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 148. Philadelphia held a similar, though smaller, rally on the same occasion. Scores of uniformed men from many different organizations, especially veterans’ groups, came to hail the swastika flag, sing Nazi songs, and chant “Heil Hitler.” GSP board member and German consul Arno Mowitz was among those present. To be sure, some mainstream city officials were also at the gathering, which legitimized the proceedings. Yet those who attended more than one such celebration were more sympathetic to the right-wing cause than they later cared to remember. Jenkins, 147–8.


Jenkins, 151.

Qtd. in Jenkins, 199. Blaming Jews and Communists for the outbreak of the war was a mainstream conservative view. Philadelphia’s chapter of America First was led by prominent and respected figures like Isaac Pennypacker, a prominent GSP member and the nephew of the former Pennsylvania governor, Samuel Pennypacker. But even more conventional meetings, such as the widely anticipated speech by Charles Lindbergh at an America First event in May 1941, were somewhat discredited when extremists such as Sigmund von Bosse, or Klan leader Frank Fite, showed up. Philadelphia Record, May 30, 1941, and Jenkins, 203. According to Klaus Molzahn, son of Kurt Molzahn, von Bosse fled to Mexico sometime in the early 1940s. Interview with Kurt Molzahn, March 25, 2006, Hanover, PA.

A comparison of GSP and Bund membership records still needs to be done.

GSP Minutes, January 17, 1935.

Later, when real and suspected acts of espionage dominated newspaper headlines, the managers of these steamship companies “were often accused of espionage and the importation of contraband or propaganda into the United States.” They worked closely with the German consulate under the leadership of GSP board member Arno Mowitz. Jenkins, 122, 140, 155.

He signed his letters to German sailors during the 1930s with “Heil Hitler” or variations of the “German Salute.” See Erich Saul, Scrapbook 1903–1952, GAC AM2073. It is interesting to note that Saul left the GSP sometime in 1938, perhaps because the GSP was at least publicly denouncing Nazism at that time.

GSP Annual Report 1938.

The GSP archive contains a thick file of documents relating to the French occupation of Germany’s industrial area. See Manuscripts Collection, box 501 Deutsch-Americana I; World War I and Post, Nr. 2. “Didactic Literature—French Occupation of Ruhr and Rhine Districts.”


GSP Minutes, January 16, 1931.


Conrad Linke folder #1, “Scrapbook with items pertaining to the lead-up to WWII, ca. 1917–1940, bulk 1939,” Manuscripts Collection.

I am indebted to Frank Trommler for sharing his expertise on twentieth-century German literature with me.

GSP Annual Reports, 1924, 1930.
Acknowledgement of these donations ended after 1938, although subscriptions to *Der Stürmer* and *Das Schwarze Korps* continued until at least 1939.

My father Klaus Pfleger, born in 1932, recalls being asked regularly to bring money to school in support of the Volksbund für das Deutschtum im Ausland.

William Graf, the owner of a Germantown small business where the *Deutscher Weckruf* was printed, later tried to disguise his political sympathies by pointing out that he merely printed what he was paid for. Graf was also a GSP member and appeared on the membership lists as early as 1923, the first year the GSP resumed publishing them again after 1917. Jenkins, 152–3.

GSP Minutes, April 16, 1936.

GSP Annual Report 1937. The report does not mention if the film was the famous Leni Riefenstahl film *Olympia*.


GSP Annual Report 1937.

GSP internal documents do not explain why or how this shift came about. The annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland occurred later in 1938 and therefore could not have triggered the society’s change of heart.

“German Americans in City Unite to War on Hitlerism,” *Philadelphia Record*, January 17, 1938.

As described by Jenkins, 160.

In 1940, Erich Windels, the new German consul in Philadelphia, received threats by mail. “German Consul is Threatened,” *Philadelphia Record*, June 20, 1940.


Members of several German churches and other organizations responded enthusiastically, including Lutheran pastor and GSP board member Kurt Molzahn. Jenkins, 162. “Reich Vets in U.S. Send $32,000 Home,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 14, 1940.

Jenkins, 211–2.

GSP Annual Reports 1939, 1940.


For a recent, impressive, multi-volume project that records this part of German-American history, see Don Heinrich Tolzmann, ed., *German-Americans in the World Wars*, Vols. 1–4 (Munich: K.G. Saur, 1995).

Interview with Doris McPherson, February 10, 2006. She recalls that her family’s home was searched during the war, and her father was required to have the short-wave capability of his radio removed.


All biographical information based on Molzahn, *Prisoner of War*, 1–18.

GSP Annual Report 1929.

GSP Annual Report 1930.
75 Qtd. in Jenkins, 154–5.


78 Farago, 517. The meeting was allegedly recorded by the FBI. Higham, American Swastika, 128.

79 Higham, 132. See also Jenkins, Hoods and Shirts, 157.


81 Molzahn, Prisoner of War, 23–48. See also Philadelphia Inquirer, August 21, 1942, and August 29, 1942.

82 “A pardon reaches the punishment prescribed for an offence and the guilt of the offender . . . if granted after conviction it removes the penalties and disabilities and restores him to all his civil rights. It gives him a new credit and capacity . . .” Ex Parte Garland (1866) 71 U.S. 333. I am grateful to my friend Gerald Shelley, a lawyer, for bringing this legal definition and citation to my attention.

83 Francis Fisher Kane, who was Philadelphia’s District Attorney during World War I and oversaw the baseless prosecution of hundreds of Germans due to the anti-German hysteria, volunteered to defend Molzahn after his arrest in 1942. Kane was also instrumental in obtaining the pardon for the pastor. Based on my interview with Klaus Molzahn, Kurt Molzahn’s oldest son, who was a teenager at the time, Hanover, PA, March 25, 2006.

84 Molzahn, Prisoner of War, 250.

85 Molzahn, Prisoner of War, 27.

86 Interview with Klaus Molzahn, March 25, 2006. Without access to the FBI records on Molzahn, it is impossible to verify Molzahn’s guilt or innocence. In another interview, Klaus Molzahn said that he has obtained the FBI records and the trial documents of his father’s case. He is currently working on a book about his father. He does not recall that his father was an overt Nazi. However, after a trip to Germany in 1935 sponsored by Kessemeier, the elder Molzahn did express his admiration for Hitler’s success in Germany. The younger Molzahn also spoke of Molzahn’s relationship with Kunze. Kunze’s father was the organist at a nearby church and had almost daily contact with Molzahn. Klaus Molzahn phone interview, February 12, 2006.

87 Otto Schweizer, a sculptor and GSP member, however, testified on behalf of Molzahn at his trial. Based on my interview with Klaus Molzahn, March 25, 2006.

88 Molzahn, Prisoner of War, 236.

89 Pastiorius Day Program, September 12, 1954, unmarked, uncataloged.

90 GSP Minutes, May 2, 1957.

91 GSP Minutes, April 27, 1942.

92 GSP Minutes, January 21, 1943. The Women’s Auxiliary donated the funds for the flag.

93 GSP Minutes, April 15, 1943.

94 GSP Minutes, March 23, 1943.

95 April 16, 1943, Red Cross event held at the GSP.


97 Postilion, Dec. 1943, vol. 1, issue 2. It is interesting to note that former GSP president George Beichl does not recall any negative repercussions as a result of speaking German in wartime Philadelphia. Interview with George Beichl, January 25, 2006. Doris McPherson, president of the Women’s Auxiliary, on the other hand, remembers that she refused to speak
German as a child, in part because she was afraid to be perceived as unpatriotic. Interview with Doris McPherson, February 10, 2006.

98 Postilion, March 1944, vol. 1, issue 3.
99 GSP Minutes, January 20, 1944.
100 GSP Minutes, April 13, 1944.
101 GSP Minutes, January 18, 1945.
102 Further research into the charge of un-American activities is needed. The surviving GSP records do not address the matter.
103 GSP Minutes, April 29, 1945, and January 17, 1946.
104 GSP Minutes, April 20, 1950.
105 The bequest was first announced in October 1946. See October 17, 1946, GSP Minutes.
106 GSP Minutes, September 6, 1962.
107 GSP Minutes, January 17, 1963.
108 GSP Minutes, March 1, 1965.
110 GSP Minutes, October 17, 1946.
112 Ibid.
113 Periodic grumblings about the use of English instead of German appear in the records repeatedly. See, for example, GSP Minutes, January 16, 1947.
114 GSP Minutes, January 28, 1954.
115 GSP Minutes, April 17, 1947.
116 The issues surrounding the GSP location will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.
117 See GSP Minutes, September 27, 1949. In 1950 the GSP once again appointed an immigration committee, and in 1956 the GSP offered English and citizenship courses.
119 In 1955 there were some concerns within the GSP that newly arriving Germans were not joining “the old associations” and thus constituting a loss for “the established German-American movement.” Speech by former GSP President Louis Schmidt at the Pastorius Celebration, October 2, 1955, GSP box 1957–58.
120 Decorations in the Ratskeller of the German Society are a good example of how World War II refugees shaped the society’s image of Germany and its past. A huge map in the hallway to the Ratskeller, for example, depicts “Deutschland in den Grenzen von 1937,” which does not recognize the post-war borders of Poland or the existence of the GDR from 1948–1989. The map itself was drawn by Wilhelm Neufeld and Martin Kornrumpf and published by the Müller & Kiepenheuer Verlag, 1953, 1954. It is not clear when the map was put up by the GSP.
121 Harry Pfund, head of the library committee in 1949, asked whether he should return “certain books that had been held back during the war and in recent years” to the shelves. The board decided he should wait before doing so. See GSP Minutes, April 26, 1949. Frank Trommler, a member of the library committee from 1978 to 2000, knew about the closet and
remembers open discussions about its contents. Nothing, however, was ever done with the stacks of Nazi literature, as with so many other library materials at the GSP.

I am grateful to Bettina Hess for telling me about the Giftschränk and for helping me locate some materials. The Giftschränk might have been named after a similar “closet” in Michael Verhoeven’s 1989 film Das Schreckliche Mädchen [The Nasty Girl]. This film tells the story of a young woman’s quest to uncover the history of her hometown during the Third Reich. Many of the pertinent records are located in the so-called Giftschränk of the city archive.

Gazette Democrat, October 7, 1951.