



Germans

IN PHILADELPHIA

When the first German immigrants came to the British colonies of North America, they sought an opportunity to exercise religious freedom and escape laws which limited their ability to own land in their home country.

LEFT: The Philadelphia Christmas Village held each year around City Hall and in Love Park gives visitors a bit of German Christmas cheer.

Many of these early arrivals were Mennonites, a much-persecuted wing of Europe's Protestant Reformation. Under the leadership of Franz Daniel Pastorius, the first group of 39 settlers came from the town of Krefeld in the lower Rhine River area. They arrived in Philadelphia in 1683 and founded Germantown.

During that time Europe also experienced several disruptive wars, and taxes to support these wars weighed on many. Economic opportunity and religious freedom motivated many Germans to immigrate to America in the late 1600s. By 1710, German immigration to Pennsylvania was steadily increasing and, between 1727 and 1775, approximately 65,000 Germans settled in the Philadelphia region.

German immigrants to Philadelphia tended to come in family units and were often artisans or farmers. Farming required a strong labor force, and though most colonial agricultural labor was performed by slaves, some early Germans played a leading role in opposing slavery. In fact, in 1688 the first Mennonite and Quaker immigrants from Krefeld, along with Franz Daniel Pastorius from Frankfurt, created and signed the first declaration against slavery in this country. This dedicated activism is not surprising, as some of the German leaders in the American abolitionist movement were political refugees who had fled the many failed European revolutions of 1848.

The history of Germans in America is not so different from that of immigrants from other countries. All came, and still do, for various reasons during the more than 335 years of Germans in America. Regardless of whether they sought economic opportunities, religious freedom, or escape from political suppression, they came for a kind of individual freedom that they could not find in their home country. The desire to come to this land of opportunity and freedom was greater than their fear of the unknown.

In the 1990 U.S. census, 58 million Americans claimed to be solely or partly of German decent. A realistic picture of German culture today



ABOVE: Mayor Jim Kenney and Councilman Al Taubenberger at a Juneteenth celebration in Germantown with descendants of its first settlers. At left is a replica of a late 17th-century banner used by early German-Americans in their campaign against slavery. Juneteenth is an African-American holiday that celebrates the end of slavery, and Germans were among the earliest abolitionists in America.

differs in many ways from that presented in the popular media. Beer mugs, sausage, sauerkraut, Lederhosen, and Dirndls are certainly part of German heritage, but modern Germans and German-Americans are a diverse group.

The photos on the following pages show contemporary Germans in Philadelphia and their influence on the culture and economy of the city. There are nearly 30 German-American organizations in the Philadelphia area. The oldest such group in the United States, the German Society of Pennsylvania, was founded in 1764 "for the relief of distressed Germans" who traveled to Philadelphia to start a new life. This organization has supported German-Americans and German culture in Philadelphia with special programs for over 250 years, and will continue to do so.





LEFT: Congregants at Immanuel Lutheran Church in north Philadelphia, founded in 1792 in the Frankford section of the City.

ABOVE: Young Bucks County musicians perform German Christmas carols at the annual Christmas Village in Philadelphia.



LEFT: The 36-foot-long, 12-seat German Tricentennial Bicycle was built and used in 1983 in Krefeld for the tricentennial celebration of Germans in America. It was later shipped to Philadelphia, where it is now used by Germans for cultural celebrations or events, like this 2017 Steuben Parade.

RIGHT, ABOVE: Some young Americans of German decent or with an interest in German language and culture form organizations at the City's universities.

RIGHT, BELOW: Germany Netzwerk Philadelphia is a German community networking group that meets to socialize and maintain their German heritage and culture. Here they meet at a *Stammtisch* (reserved table) in Media, PA.





ABOVE: German families at heritage events. Many German parents work to pass on a sense of cultural pride to their children.



ABOVE: Many German events offer commemorative pins; this gentleman's hat bears witness to a long history of attendance.





Offbeat sporting competitions are part of the entertainment at German-American Day.

LEFT: Participants in the “Lift That Liter” contest endeavor to hold up a full stein of beer for a longer time than their competitors. It’s serious business; winning times are determined by the hundredth of a second.

ABOVE: A referee sets up a new round of arm wrestling.



LEFT: A German cultural festival event at the Cannstatter Volkstheater, one of many German cultural clubs in the Philadelphia area. This photo shows the Fruchtsäule (Fruit Column), a traditional German artwork composed of beans and other vegetables and depicting rural scenes.

ABOVE: A closer view of one of the Fruchtsäule images.

RIGHT: Philadelphia City Councilman Al Taubenberger and Tony Michels, the President of the German Society of Pennsylvania, at an unveiling of a piece of the Berlin Wall that is on display at the Society's outdoor Joseph Leidy Terrace on Spring Garden Street. This historical reminder helps Germans keep their cultural history in perspective.







LEFT: The Flying Deutschman, started by German immigrant cook Stirling Sowerby, can be found at many local events, German or not.

BELOW: Some Philadelphians may not know that it was actually the Germans who “invented” the soft pretzel.





ABOVE: *Fußball* (soccer) is the national and most popular sport in Germany. There are numerous German sports clubs in the Philadelphia area that serve as both cultural centers and sports venues. The Vereinigung Erzgebirge club alone has nearly a dozen soccer fields on its large property.

RIGHT, ABOVE: German athletes during the opening ceremony of the 2016 Philadelphia International Unity Cup soccer tournament.

RIGHT, BELOW: Youth play soccer at the Danube Swabian sports club. Philadelphians of German descent are introduced to the game at an early age.





LEFT: A German oompah band at the Vereinigung Erzgebirge social and sports club. Oompah bands have strong brass sounds, providing a thumping rhythmic accompaniment to the melody.

RIGHT, ABOVE: Accordion music adds to the atmosphere at Brauhaus Schmitz on South Street. This traditional German instrument was invented in 1822 in Berlin.

RIGHT, BELOW: This group of dancers performed at a event at the German Society on Spring Garden Street. The German community in Philadelphia has many dance groups for young and old.







LEFT: The beer stein is a 14th-century German invention familiar to many Philadelphians. The hinged cover for the mug was designed to protect against the spread of disease.

ABOVE: Marcus Rieker, son of Reiker's Prime Meats founder Walter Rieker, joins other immigrant employees in crafting a German dish at their Fox Chase store. Rieker's has been a trusted source of German foods since the store opened in 1972.

OVERLEAF: Frankford Hall, in the Fishtown section of the City, is a traditional German beer garden. Beer gardens are bar/restaurants where families can gather at outside picnic tables; the longer tables encourage groups to mix and talk. The availability of table games like ping pong makes it easy for families to bring their children.







ABOVE: Sausage making is a German tradition that dates back to the early 14th century. The name *Bratwurst* is derived from *Brat* (finely chopped meat) and *Wurst* (sausage).

ABOVE, RIGHT: Mrs. Ruth Dietz Eni (Mama Dietz) and her son Chris Eni (Operations Director) at Dietz & Watson Foods share a light moment during one of her visits to the facility. Gottlieb Dietz, a German immigrant to the City, started this company in 1939. Today, Dietz and Watson is a nearly \$250M company with almost 700 local employees, many of them new immigrants.

RIGHT: A recent German immigrant, who was employed as a cook at an American military base in Germany, works at Brauhaus Schmitz on South Street.

