



## THE GERMANS OF ATCHISON, 1854-1859: DEVELOPMENT OF AN ETHNIC COMMUNITY

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**I**N 1854 the Kansas territory was opened for settlement by American emigrants, marking a significant leap forward in the American Western frontier. The year 1854 was also a peak year of German immigration to the United States, symbolic of a major shift in the European population movement. In the 1850's Germany replaced Ireland as the primary European source of immigrants, and for the next four decades Germans predominated in the movement of peoples from the old world to the new. Understandably, Germans have always comprised the largest foreign ethnic component in the state of Kansas, and because Kansas was opened to settlers in a systematic way, its

history allows us to observe the development of the immigrant community on the frontier.<sup>1</sup>

There are still questions to be answered about this development. Frederick Jackson Turner theorized that the frontier was the crucible, blending foreign and American-born alike into a "composite nationality." Yet John Hawgood, the foremost historian of this era of German immigration, insisted that "a determined and conscious resistance against assimilation or Americanization" was a "significant 'German' peculiarity." Milton Gordon, who

Title-page sketch: This sketch of Commercial street in Atchison by William M. Merrick appeared in *Harper's Weekly*, July 28, 1866. The picture was drawn on the scene between Second and Third streets and shows brick structures and cottonwood shacks with a plank sidewalk along the dirt street which is full of people and animals. First settled in 1854, the town was located at a natural gateway for overland traffic to Utah, Oregon, and California. A German-language abolitionist newspaper founded at Atchison in 1857 encouraged German settlers to come to Kansas and helped integrate that group in the territory into a recognizable ethnic community.

1. United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, 1789-1945* (Washington, D. C., 1949), pp. 33-34. German immigration in 1852 was 145,818; in 1853 it was 141,946, and in 1854 it reached 215,009. In 1856 it fell off sharply to 71,918. It reached peaks of 205,630 in 1883, and 119,168 in 1892. During the 1850's Germans comprised 35 percent of the persons immigrating from abroad, and took the lead away from the previously dominant Irish. Although other immigrant groups cut into the German numerical lead in subsequent years, Germans continued to immigrate in larger numbers than any other nationality until the wave of "new immigration" from southeastern Europe at the turn of the century.—Carroll D. Clark and Roy L. Roberts, *People of Kansas: A Demographic and Sociological Study* (Topeka, 1936), p. 51.

laid much of the groundwork for our current understanding of assimilation, offered a compromise position. According to Gordon, new entrants into an established society may accommodate themselves to the cultural patterns of the dominant group, but they retain the structural characteristics of their native society, such as marriage patterns and religious affiliations. The resultant society is therefore not an amalgamation, but a collection of subcultures, separate in structural forms, but interacting in areas of mutual concern, such as economic and political interests. An examination of the German immigrants in Kansas affords an opportunity to observe more closely the initial contacts along the frontier, and to understand what actually occurred there.<sup>2</sup>

Germans came to America with high expectations. Generally, they had received a better basic education than most other immigrants and many Americans. Those who could afford the trip to America were usually professionals, skilled artisans, or independent peasants proficient in village trades and hungry for the low-cost lands of the American West. They also looked forward to a more compatible political climate. This outlook was summarized by Rev. W. F. Bogen, writing an immigrant's guidebook for his German countrymen in 1851:

A great blessing meets the German emigrant the moment he steps upon these shores. He comes to a free country; free from the oppression of despotism, free from privileged orders and monopolies, free from the pressure of intolerable taxes and imposts, free from constraint in matters of belief and conscience.

Everyone can travel, free and untrammelled, wither he will, and settle where he pleases. . . . Before him lies the country, exhaustless in its resources, with its fruitful soil, its productive mines, its immense products, . . . its countless cities, and villages, where flourish industry, commerce, and wealth.

The industrious farmer is invited by the "Far West," even by the whole country, to furrow its bosom and reap its treasures. The skillful and active craftsman readily finds a livelihood in the country and the cities, with but little effort. The scholar is welcomed with his attainments. . . .

2. Frederick J. Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," *Annual Report of the American Historical Association* (1893), pp. 199-227, see especially pp. 215-216; John A. Hawgood, *The Tragedy of German America* (New York, 1940), pp. 55-67; Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins* (New York, 1964), pp. 117-121. See, also, David F. Bowers, ed., *Foreign Influences in American Life: Essays and Critical Bibliographies* (Princeton, N.J., 1944), and Richard Hofstadter and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds., *Turner and the Sociology of the Frontier* (New York, 1968).

"Help yourself," is the American proverb, and God will help you.'

Yet even while seeking this new opportunity in America, Germans were reluctant to abandon entirely their continental past. Reassuring customs and cultural traditions gave them security and a sense of identity in the new world, and they sought out the earlier settlements of their countrymen and communicated with each other through a burgeoning German-language press. Although most immigrants, including the earlier multitudes of Irish, had sought similar contacts, the Germans were the first nationality group sufficiently large and differentiated by language to endow this natural practice with a somewhat negative cast. Americans disliked this exclusivity and expected the newcomers to adjust. Thus Bogen warned his countrymen that they must avoid "an obstinate reliance on . . . *German habits and customs*:"

It is true, we can enjoy many happy hours in associating with estimable German brethren; we can derive instruction and entertainment from German books and newspapers; but are we in Germany, and are Germans the only people in whom we are now interested? . . . That man alone can enjoy, to their full extent, the rights of an American citizen, who understands and speaks English; and as long as we do not accomplish this, so long we neither appreciate nor enjoy the whole freedom and independence which this land has in store for us. We are *half Germans* and half Americans, but no real Germans any more.'

3. F. W. Bogen, *The German in America: or Advice and Instruction for German Emigrants in the United States of America; Also, a Reader for Beginners in the English and German Languages* (2d ed., Boston, 1851), pp. 7-9, 33 (emphasis original). This interesting handbook serves two purposes. By providing its introduction to America in both German and English, it also serves as a reader with which immigrants can begin to learn the English language.

For an examination of the educational practices in 19th century Germany, see Peter Lundgreen, "Industrialization and the Educational Formation of Manpower in Germany," *Journal of Social History*, v. 9, no. 1 (Fall, 1975), pp. 64-80. For an excellent history of German emigration see Mack Walker, *German and the Emigration, 1816-1885* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964). A penetrating analysis of the many factors which stimulated German emigration in midcentury is provided in Theodore S. Hamerow, *Restoration, Revolution, Reaction: Economics and Politics in Germany 1815-1871* (Princeton, N.J., 1958), especially pp. 75-93, and 199-237.

4. Bogen, *The German in America*, p. 17 (emphasis original). In 1764 German settlers in Philadelphia founded the German Society of Pennsylvania in order to help their countrymen deal with the hardships of immigration. It was successful in effecting the passage of a law to regulate terms of immigrant passage on ships docking in Pennsylvania. Similar organizations were founded in Charleston, S. C., Baltimore, and New York City before the revolution. In the following century German organizations of this type were established in Boston, Cincinnati, Birmingham, Ala., Hartford and New Haven, Conn., Rochester, N. Y., Allentown, Pa., Pittsburgh, Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, Minneapolis, St. Louis, Kansas City, New Orleans, San Francisco, Portland, Ore., Spokane, and Seattle.—Rudolf Cronau, *Denkschrift zum 150. Jahrestag der Deutschen Gesellschaft der Stadt New York 1784-1934* (1934), pp. 70-71. For information on the German-language press, see Karl J. R. Arndt and May E. Olson, *German-American Newspapers and Periodicals 1732-1955* (Heidelberg, 1961); and Carl Wittke, *The German-Language Press in America* (Kentucky, 1957).

Many aspects of this cross-cultural conflict were present to affect the Germans of Atchison county during the territorial period, 1854-1861. However, in order to understand them we cannot rely solely on the traditional demographic records which reflect the group patterns in established communities. The period under study is too brief, and the population too fluid for these records to give us real insight. Instead, we will pay particular attention to the contemporary press. Although newspapers are frequently used as an historical source for events and editorial opinions, they can also provide the social historian with other, less authoritative, but equally valuable data. For an examination of the cross-cultural relations between ethnic groups, it is also rewarding to look at the secondary materials of the press, the column fillers, witticisms, and commercial puffery which fleshed out the pages of these journals. In particular, we can observe expressions which reveal the expectations of each group about the other, as well as their reaction to the events of daily life together. In this regard the press functions as an actor in society, reflecting and influencing latent attitudes which could either facilitate group interaction or contribute to the formation of stereotypes and prejudices. Availability of the English-language *Squatter Sovereign/Freedom's Champion*, and the German-language *Kansas Zeitung*, all published in Atchison during the territorial period, facilitates the examination of the initial German experience in Kansas.<sup>5</sup>

The opening of the Kansas territory was not marked by a land scramble which might have set group against group on the frontier. There was ample government land to go around in Kansas, and under the terms of the Preemption act of 1841, settlers could purchase up to 160 acres at the rate of \$1.25 per acre before the land went for public auction. However, the Kansas frontier was the setting for an intense political struggle which frequently erupted into violence and earned the territory the epithet of "Bleeding Kansas." Under the terms of the Kansas-Nebraska act of 1854, residents

5. This study was made possible through the support of the University of Kansas General Research Fund, and greatly assisted by the cooperation of the Kansas State Historical Society, which retains extensive holdings of Kansas newspapers.

Leavenworth, another Missouri river city, attracted more Germans than Atchison. It did not begin publishing a German-language newspaper until after the inauguration of the *Kansas Zeitung*, however, and in any event too few issues of the Leavenworth paper have been preserved to afford a systematic study.

# Squatter

A WEEKLY NEWSPAPER DEVOTED TO POL

STRINGSFELLOW & KELLEY,

"The Squatter of

VOL. 1.

ATCHISON.

## The Squatter Sovereign.

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A. H. STRINGSFELLOW & R. A. KELLEY,  
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Building, No. 3, Atchison Street.

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## The Poet's Column.

CANT DO WITHOUT A PAPER.

What do without a paper? Oh,  
It's tried it to my sorrow.

## Miscellaneous.

### Negro-Slavery. No Evil.

—OR—  
THE NORTH AND SOUTH.

THE EFFECTS OF NEGRO-SLAVERY, AS  
EXHIBITED IN THE CENSUS, BY A  
COMPARISON OF THE CONDITION  
OF THE SLAVEHOLDING  
AND NON-SLAVEHOLD-  
ING STATES.

CONSIDERED IN A REPORT,

MADE TO THE  
Platte County Self-Defensive Association,  
By a Committee Through  
R. F. STRINGSFELLOW, Chairman.

In obedience to a resolution adopted by the Platte County Self-Defensive Association, we proceed to lay before the public the immediate causes which led to the formation of the Association; to explain its purposes, and to suggest the means, which seem to us proper to be adopted by the citizens of the Slaveholding States, to defeat the designs of the abolitionists.

In adopting this resolution, the Association was not influenced by any desire to defend itself at home, against the abuse and false reports of its action and purposes, which have been so widely circulated by abolitionists and free-soilers; for at home no defence is necessary; the members of the Association are too well known, to need defence against any charges, which Abolitionists might bring against them. We do not just to the Association, when we say, that it is composed of men, who for industry, moral worth, orderly conduct, intelligence and patriotism will favorably compare with the members of any association of the kind in the country. Of those who originally composed the Association, there were a few markedly exceptional—such must be the case of all associations.

The security of our slaves involves danger. The last, who induces criminal of far us than the house-robber,—his crime than that of the least, with that of To induce a slave merely to the man of that amount of in its train for us Other slaves are like attempts; a whom they beg persons, is thus 100 is followed by

events have vital not without funds and mercies at least were ag money so much they would, for t trade, encourage

There were as low of free negro of best character; places of resort t to meet, and tai them, entice thei their facilities fo About this tim made their escap horhood of West and free papers, their note, were

Abolitionists u their efforts to the from Kansas, bu at work in "abol scori. The law, ish, was whely i crime. It was individual efforts be needed to aid of our rights, i property.

The security o not alone involv danger. The last, who induces criminal of far us than the house-robber,—his crime than that of the least, with that of To induce a slave merely to the man of that amount of in its train for us Other slaves are like attempts; a whom they beg persons, is thus 100 is followed by

The first newspaper in the little town of Atchison was the weekly *Squatter Sovereign*, founded in February, 1855, by the city fathers as an outspoken advocate for slavery. In this first issue the front page was devoted to a report of a Platte county, Missouri, committee which presented the thesis, "Negro Slavery—No Evil." The report was continued on the first page of the second

# Sovereign.

ARTICLES, LITERATURE, AGRICULTURE, MERCANTILE AFFAIRS AND USEFUL READING.

...the same Sovereignty in the Territories that he possessed in the States."

EDITORS & PROPRIETORS,

N, KANSAS TERRITORY, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1855.

NO. 1.

ated, that our fears were  
ation, that among our tra-  
ts: there were those who  
just us, others who loved  
more than their country,  
a gain from the abolition  
to come among us. Some  
ing us, too, a large num-  
ber, most of them, as usual,  
their homes, the natural  
of abolitionists, at which  
per with slaves, corrupt  
to run away, and furnish  
escape.

a large number of slaves  
; three, from the neigh-  
bor, were taken in Iowa,  
with full instructions as to  
found upon them.

re not content to confine  
expansion of slaveholders  
were evidently already  
"slavery" in Mis-  
sion sufficient to pro-  
sufficient to prevent their  
-sistent, that the active,  
of all good citizens would  
the law in the protection  
the preservation of our  
one slave-property was  
our very lives were en-  
-slavery-thief, the abolition  
a slave to run away, is a  
ree dangerous character  
maker, or the highway-  
of a far higher grade  
inequity—it ranks, at the  
of the midnight assassin.  
to escape, involves not  
ster the loss of that slave,  
property; but it brings  
re serious consequences,  
hereby induced to make  
sated for their masters,  
a regard as their op-  
-entment, and this, too, of-  
-sion, and murder.

proclaiming principles which tend to induce  
our slaves to escape, to lead them to insur-  
rection and rebellion.

Though we fully recognize the duty of  
all good citizens to obey the law, to rely  
upon the law; where there is no law, the  
right of self-defense requires that we should  
resort to the strong hand for self-protection.  
We have no law by which the expression  
of abolition sentiments is made a penal  
offense, and yet it is a crime of the highest  
grade. It is not within even the much  
abused liberty of speech; for in a slave-  
holding community, the expression of such  
sentiments is a positive act, more criminal,  
more dangerous, than kindling the torch of  
the incendiary, mixing the poison of the  
assassin. The necessity for a law punish-  
ing such a crime, has not, until now, been  
felt in Missouri. Until such a law is en-  
acted, self-protection demands that we  
should guard against such crimes.

Such are the means we propose to adopt  
for the immediate protection of our prop-  
erty. We have thus fully stated them, not  
to excite our actions, but to awaken our  
friends in other portions of our slavehold-  
ing territory, to the dangers which will en-  
large surround them, if we are over-  
come to arouse them to the necessity of coming  
to our aid, and thus keep the enemy from  
their borders.

There is another measure which we have  
proposed, which may be deemed local and  
personal, and which has been grossly mis-  
represented by the abolitionists and their  
sympathizers. We have been charged with  
pledging ourselves to assist in the expulsion  
of all settlers who go to Kansas from  
the non-slaveholding States. This, like  
most other abolition statements, is purely  
false. On the contrary, the only pledge  
we have given touching the expulsion of  
any person from Kansas, is one which we  
expect ere long to be called upon to re-  
deem by the good men who have gone to  
Kansas from the non-slaveholding States.  
That pledge is, that we will, when called

aided arm. Dwellings must be built,  
of stone, or of timber, framed at a heavy  
expense; fencing of plank, or hauled to a  
great distance.

In the timber, the poor man with his  
own strong hand can build his cabin with  
his axe, cut fell his trees, and with his one  
horse plough, can put his little field in cul-  
tivation. There is no such land in Kan-  
sas! It will require money to build his  
house; to break prairie, six yoke of cattle  
are necessary; fencing will be too costly  
for small fields. To the man of capital,  
to him who can command labor alone, is  
Kansas desirable. To such, it is easiest  
and cheapest to make a farm in the prairie.  
The soil is adapted to the culture of hemp,  
the raising of stock. Its climate peculiarly  
healthy to the negro. Nature intended  
it for a slaveholding State; necessity will  
force it to be such, unless our friends val-  
idly stand up to those who cannot occu-  
py it.

Our friends can thus see that to them  
the land is worth a struggle. Were there  
no other laborers at stake, they will be  
paid for doing their duty.

We have now shown the immediate  
evils to which we are exposed the means  
by which we propose as far as practicable  
to meet those evils; we have shown, that  
we are now in that condition to which, if  
the abolitionists succeed, other slavehold-  
ing States will ere long be driven. We  
propose now to consider that which lies at  
the foundation of all these troubles—op-  
-sion in negro slavery.

To slaveholders, we will first address  
ourselves.

With all due deference to the wisdom of  
the great and good men who have so long  
governed the councils of the slaveholding  
States, though it may seem presumptuous,  
we yet feel that we are justified in saying,  
that experience has shown the error of  
their course. In degrading discussion, in  
sneering to admit negro-slavery an evil to  
be borne, not an institution to be defended,

abolitionists would then capture in the  
wilds of Africa. Though it has been  
wisely suggested, if this were done, abo-  
litionists would give us no further trouble,  
they would as did their fathers, become  
slave-catchers, and thus being able to make  
a profit of slavery, would cease to hate  
slave-owners; would forget their mock  
love of the negro in their real love of mon-  
ey; though it may easily be shown that  
slavery has done more to civilize and chris-  
tianize the African, than all the schemes of  
all the pious missionaries; yet our sym-  
pathies for the African are not such as for his  
good to induce us to bring among us a  
hoard of savages, by bringing them into  
our families. We are now reaping the  
benefits of our fathers' good works; we have  
the civilized Christian man, in place of the  
rude, vicious, and degraded heathen.

We propose to consider slavery as it ex-  
ists in our country; to test its effects on  
the white race and on the negro; to try it  
not by bold assertion, but by facts and fig-  
ures, about which there can be no dis-  
pute.

We assert that negro-slavery, as it ex-  
ists in the United States, is neither a moral  
nor a political evil, but on the contrary,  
is a blessing to the white race and to the  
negro.

This broad proposition will doubtless  
cause the abolitionists to snarl—it will  
strike as bold, the good men of the north  
who have been so long deceived; it may  
even seem hard of proof to those in the  
slaveholding States who have feared to in-  
vestigate the subject; but we have the evi-  
dence at hand. A good lesson has been  
taught us, and we have profited by it. No  
long and so oft had it been proclaimed from  
the pulpit that slavery was a violation of  
God's law, men began to doubt whether a  
slaveholder could be a Christian. Men of  
the world, too little trained in the teachings  
of the Bible, feared to investigate the  
question. Our Divines, misled by their  
text-books, took for granted the dogmas of

So far, then, as the condition of the slave  
can be contrasted with that of his tribe in  
Africa, to the negro slavery is an evil!

But we go further and say that, wher-  
ever the negro has been the slave of the  
white man, his condition has been better,  
not only than that of his race in the deserts  
of Africa, but better than when freed from  
the control of the white man, in whatever  
land the emancipation be made. Whether  
we look to his condition in St. Domingo,  
the slave of the light-hearted Frenchman  
in Jamaica, of the energetic Englishman  
in the United States, of the indolent Cre-  
ole of the South, or of the enterprising  
Keweenawian, as a slave, the negro has  
been better and happier than when free.

In St. Domingo and Jamaica, which  
were contained a population prosperous and  
wealthy, the masters kind and indulgent,  
the slaves joyous and happy, with their  
light lands yielding abundant harvests,  
robbed of the care, protection and fore-  
thought of the white man, we see them first  
sinking to the stering miserable condition  
of wretched savages.

In our own country, with the advantage  
of the white man's example before them,  
with all the watchful care of their friends,  
the abolitionists to aid them, the condition  
of the free negro is far worse than that of  
the slave. Politically their condition is  
worse than that of the slave, for as to all  
the honors and offices of government, the  
privileges of a citizen, freedom is to the  
free negro worse than an empty name.—  
Subject to the lawless, they are even by  
the abolitionists deprived of the benefits  
of government. They who so love the slave,  
that they will steal him from the care and  
protection of his master, will exclude the  
unhappy free negro from a home in their  
State. Unlike the slave, they have none  
to protect them. To the slave, the master  
is the government, a ruler with limited  
powers, whose interest is identical with  
his subject. To the master slave does the  
slave owe allegiance.

issue and concluded in the third number. In it abo-  
litionists were likened to "midnight assassins," who not  
only threatened the property of slave holders, but  
endangered their lives when slaves, encouraged to  
rebel, committed "arson and murder." Negroes were  
"better and happier" as slaves than as free men either  
in their native Africa or in the northern states, according

to the article. Hence, slavery was neither a moral or  
political evil, but "a blessing to the white race and to the  
negro." Addressed primarily to the American emigrant,  
the paper mainly gave recognition to the Germans as  
comical characters in ethnic jokes that the editors used  
as fillers.

of these two prospective states would exercise "popular sovereignty" to determine whether they would enter the Union as free or slave states. It must never be forgotten that this controversy was as much a part of the frontier life as any physical obstacles of the rugged and unfamiliar territory. All immigrants to Kansas, American or foreign-born alike, were forced to take a stand on this issue and to deal with the events caused by that struggle.

The first Kansas residents came mainly from Missouri. They were proponents of slavery and people who were generally accustomed to the rigors of the undeveloped frontier. They tended to cluster around the river and territorial border, and the towns of Atchison and Leavenworth bore their initial stamp. They hoped to establish a numerical superiority in Kansas for the Proslavery factions. But Eastern abolitionists also wished to control the future state, and were urging Antislavery settlers to develop the territory. The New England Emigrant Aid Company was particularly active in Kansas, assisting the movement of many emigrants. Lawrence was established with its help. The slavery factions vigorously opposed this emigration and denounced the company for sending in paupers and "Hessian Mercenaries." Thus the earliest settlers identified Germans with the Free-State cause, and were hostile to their immigration. This political bias therefore lessened the early prospects for voluntary interaction which could lead to assimilation.<sup>6</sup>

The main tide of immigration into Kansas came from New England, the Ohio valley and the upper Midwest. These emigrants were mainly white Americans, generally opposed to slavery, moving west to increase their economic opportunities. They came overwhelmingly from settled areas already fully integrated into the dominant political processes and social patterns of America. Because these areas also coincided geographically with the so-called "German Belt" of settlement, these emigrants would bring with them attitudes determined by previous experiences with Germans. These Americans held generally positive

views of Germans, although they disapproved of the German's fondness for beer.<sup>7</sup>

John Hawgood maintained that "the German was not a pioneer except in isolated cases or in exceptional circumstances," and it is true that there were not many Germans in Kansas at first. The territorial census of 1855 identifies only 115 individuals of German birth. There were 94 males, 21 females, and only 18 family units among this initial group. Almost half, or 55 of these immigrants had already been naturalized, however, a sign not only of familiarity with the American system, but of a desire to become active in it. Another 13 had declared their intention to become citizens. The largest contingent had gone to Leavenworth, an established settlement and military outpost on the Missouri river. Tiny Atchison was a mere hamlet, and only three Germans and one Swiss-German were recorded in its vicinity.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the town's small size, the city fathers inaugurated its first newspaper, the *Squatter Sovereign* in February, 1855, as an outspoken advocate for slavery. Its major concern was to win adherents to its political viewpoint, and it addressed itself primarily to the American emigrant. Nevertheless, there was a definite awareness of Germans from the beginning, and five of the first seven issues referred to the immigrants. There were factual tidbits, such as the item noting that seven of the 13 foreign-language newspapers in New York City were German. Another item reported admiringly that, "The New York Board of Emigration estimate that \$20,000,000 in money have been brought into this country, in the last year, by German emigrants." But more common were

7. In a special study of state or territory of birth of the native population of Kansas in 1860, it is indicated that 55,002 residents came from New England, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and the upper Midwest, 27,472 from the confederate states, including 11,556 from Missouri, and that 10,997 had been born in the Kansas territory.—Clark and Roberts, *People of Kansas*, p. 208. Hawgood discusses the "German Belt" on pp. 80-90.

8. Hawgood, *The Tragedy of German America*, p. 26, Territory of Kansas, Census of 1855. Hawgood observed that Germans preferred to settle on developed land, near established markets and navigable rivers (p. 23). Carman's study of Europeans in rural Kansas during the territorial period tends to refute this in part. He identified 26 German settlements reaching well into the interior sections of the territory. It is true, however, that with only five exceptions, all were located on rivers.—J. Neale Carman, "Continental Europeans in Rural Kansas, 1854-1861," *Territorial Kansas: Studies Commemorating the Centennial* (Lawrence, 1954), pp. 164-196.

Atchison's early days are described in Peter Beckman, "Overland Trade and Atchison's Beginnings," *ibid.*, pp. 148-163. Beckman places the town's population at 400 in 1858, with an increase to 2,616 by 1860 (p. 154). A. T. Andreas and W. G. Cutler, *History of the State of Kansas* (Chicago, 1883), v. 1, p. 373, placed Atchison city's population at about 500 in 1859.

6. Samuel A. Johnson, "The Emigrant Aid Company in the Kansas Conflict," *The Kansas Historical Quarterly*, v. 6, no. 1 (February, 1937), p. 25. In an examination of the first six parties brought to Kansas by the Emigrant Aid Company, Louise Barry includes only nine individuals of probable German origin.—Louise Barry, "The Emigrant Aid Company Parties of 1854," *ibid.*, v. 12, no. 2 (May, 1943), pp. 115-155.

the ethnic jokes at the expense of the foreigners. The following are typical examples:

A Dutchman thus describes the New Yorkers: "Fine peebles; dey go about der streeets all day, cheating each oizzer, and day call dat piziness.

An honest Dutchman, on being asked how often he shaved; replied—Dree dimes a week effery other tay put Sunday—den I shafe effery day. [The paper liked this one so much it repeated it two years later.]

When a German stops flute-playing, he is either out of wind or drinking a large beer."

The elements of these column fillers are worth analyzing. The "Dutchman," on the one hand, is successful in making money, neat, and apparently well educated. Yet, withall, as the careful reconstruction of the accent indicates, he is comical in his speech, and incapable of grasping the subtleties of the language. Moreover, he drinks beer! There was, despite a grudging recognition for these foreigners, no real basis for friendly communication or social interaction. It was preferable to find them amusing and slightly simple. Yet these five items also reflect an ambivalence not seen in the paper's attitudes toward other nationality groups. For each of them, there was a consistent stereotype. For example, the French were portrayed as sophisticated but supercilious:

What a strange thing it is remarked a Frenchman, after making a tour of the United States, that you should have two hundred different religions and only one gravy.

Like the Irish, the French were frequently viewed with negative humor:

An Irishman and a Frenchman were to be hanged together. Monsieur was considerably troubled about it, while Paddy took the matter quite coolly, telling his companion to "be aisy, for sure it is nothing to be hanged at all, at all." To which poor Francaise replied, "Ah, be gar, de grand deeference is, dat you Irishmen are used to it!"

The Irish were also funny in their superstitions:

A dying Irishman was asked by his confessor if he was ready to renounce the devil and all his works. "Oh your honor," says Pat, "don't ask me to do that; I'm going into a strange country, and I don't want to make myself enemies."

Other jokes alluded to the Irishman's fondness for drink and for fighting. These well-formulated images are not surprising, given the long interaction of Irishmen and Frenchmen with Americans over the years. It is also significant to notice here that in almost every

instance the stereotype was personified with a name, as if to complete a familiar portrait. There was a certain degree of familiarity in calling the Irishman Pat or Paddy, the Frenchman, Francois. The black was also named, usually either Sambo or Julius. But the Germans were treated differently. In only two stories did the *Sovereign* attach a name to an individual portrayed in a German joke, and one involved a father calling to his son. The German, therefore, appeared more remote than the others, alien, and identified mainly by his comical language.<sup>10</sup>

The *Sovereign* did not appear to consider the Germans a significant political force on the frontier, and made only an occasional effort to convert them to the Proslavery side. In one instance it tried to link the abolitionists to the Know-Nothing party which was beginning to emerge in the East. Epitomizing anti-Catholic and antiforeign bigotry, in 1855 the Know-Nothings had successfully passed a law in Massachusetts requiring naturalized immigrants to spend an additional two years in residence before they could exercise their rights as citizens of the state. In an article entitled, "A 'Nigger' Better Than an Irishman or Dutchman," the *Sovereign* marveled that the abolitionist state would refuse to enforce the Fugitive Slave law, on the one hand, yet also reject the constitutional rights of naturalized citizens on the other. "Such is 'law and order' practiced by Abolitionists in Massachusetts," it censured; "What think Irishmen and Dutchmen of 'law and order men' here?" On another occasion the *Sovereign* reprinted a brief item from the *Michigan Expositor*, reporting that the "Border Ruffians" (the epithet for Missouri raiders in Kansas) were "shooting all the Germans they can get sight at in Kansas, because the Germans are in favor of freedom." The *Sovereign* replied:

Such are the low and despicable means resorted to in the Eastern States to prejudice the foreign population against the nominees of the Democratic party. Although there are many Germans in Kansas, we have yet to learn of the first one who has been harmed in the least, by the "Border Ruffian." They are here, as in the States, a peaceable, law-abiding people, and are not only willing to submit to the laws, but actually have assisted in enforcing them. If

9. *The Squatter Sovereign*, February 20, 1855 (and January 13, 1857), March 6, 13, 20, 27, 1855.

10. *Ibid.*, February 26, July 1, 29, 1856, February 17, 1857.

**Appeal to the American People.**

The "KANSAS ZEITUNG," a German weekly FREE STATE PAPER, will appear regularly every Wednesday in Atchison, K. T. The main object of this paper is, (besides helping to build up Kansas a Free State, to diffuse knowledge, and political news among the German settlers, mechanics and business men, throughout the Territory) to give the millions of German citizens in the States, and the emigrants who come to our shores from Europe, a vivid and true picture of our land so blessed by nature, to show them that here is a broad field and a speedy reward for their labor, and that they will find all conditions for future happiness, which an energetic, intelligent, and industrious population under a new and liberal government can afford. Not committed to any political party—we will support all measures which bear the stamp of the broad, liberal and true Jeffersonian Democracy. We appeal in our precarious and costly undertaking to the generosity of American citizens to give us their support by taking our German Kansas Pioneer paper.

Atchison, K. T., July 15, 1857.  
 Dr. CHS. F. KOB,  
 Editor and proprietor of the "Kansas-Zeitung."  
 P. S. All papers in the Territory and elsewhere, are requested to copy this appeal, and those who wish to exchange, to send us their paper.

When the New England Emigrant Aid Company founded the German-language abolitionist newspaper, *Kansas Zeitung*, in Atchison in July, 1857, it hired Dr. Charles F. Kob as editor. Born and trained as a surgeon in Germany, Kob set high journalistic standards for the paper. Early issues led off with a serial critique of the social system which included discussion of the major philosophical schools. In this "Appeal to the American People," in the July 22, 1857, issue, he stated his objectives for the paper: building a free state, boosting the territory as an ideal place for settlement, and promoting the German element as a "major component" in the "viable and strong character" of Kansas.

supporting the law and order party in Kansas favors "freedom," then can all the Germans be placed on the list."

However, the *Sovereign* soon returned to drawing comical characterizations of Germans. The following item was typical of its subsequent references:

Vonce, a long vile ago, I vent out in my apple orchard and climbed a pear tree to get some peaches to make my vrow a plum paddin' mit, and when I got to the toppermost branch, I fell from the lowermost limb, with one leg on both sides of the fence, and like to stove my outsides in."

From 1854 to 1857, Atchison was dominated by the proponents of slavery. However, the tides of both sentiment and emigration were running against them, and abolitionist forces were growing consistently stronger. The Emigrant Aid Company, in its ongoing effort to

develop the territory, took the significant step of founding a German-language abolitionist newspaper in Atchison in order to draw German settlers to Kansas. As editor it hired Dr. Charles F. Kob, born and trained as a surgeon in Germany. Emigrating from Massachusetts, Kob inaugurated the *Kansas Zeitung* in July, 1857. The early issues set a high standard of journalism, leading off with a serial critique of the social system which included discussions of the major philosophical schools. The regular content included news from Europe, mixed news items from the United States, and a serialized novel. The objectives of the paper were spelled out in English and German. To his English readers Kob proclaimed:

The main object of this paper is, (besides helping to build up Kansas a Free State, to diffuse knowledge and political news among the German settlers, mechanics and businessmen throughout the territory) to give the millions of German citizens in the States, and the emigrants who come to our shores from Europe, a vivid and true picture of

11. *Ibid.*, June 26, 1855, October 14, 1856. Alice Felt Tyler, *Freedom's Ferment: Phases of American Social History From the Colonial Period to the Outbreak of the Civil War* (New York, 1962), pp. 374-396, describes the development of the Know-Nothing movement.

12. *Squatter Sovereign*, February 17, 1857.

our land so blessed by nature, to show them that there is a broad field and a speedy reward for their labor, and that they will find all conditions for future happiness, which a congenial and healthy climate, a fertile soil, and an energetic, intelligent, and industrious population under a new and liberal government can afford.

However, his German readers were reassured that they would not be lost out on the frontier, because Kob would promote:

... German spirit, German customs, German culture, affording them their honorable recognition and preservation, so that out of the heterogeneous elements which will form this state, a viable and strong character will be developed in which the German element will be one of the major components.<sup>13</sup>

Kob pursued his goals vigorously. Besides being outspokenly in the Free-State camp, the *Kansas Zeitung* published numerous articles boosting Kansas as an ideal place for settlement and refuting its detractors. In addition to preparing a guidebook for emigrants, Kob wrote articles explaining the voting system, clarifying land sale procedures, and making suggestions on how to farm in this new terrain. Noting progress toward the recognition of the German element in the territory, he reported that the Free-State committee had voted to distribute 30,000 copies of its proposed constitution in English, and 5,000 copies in German.<sup>14</sup>

Like the *Squatter Sovereign*, the *Kansas Zeitung* was intensely political; it did, however, reflect some of the other attitudes and actions of the Germans throughout the territory. In so doing it served as a means for their mutual communication and thus helped to integrate them into a recognizable ethnic community. It increasingly bore witness to the German presence. Kob himself ran for county coroner, although he lost the election. A German Free-State Club was formed in nearby Wyandotte, and local Germans were urged to follow suit. Germans and Americans joined to form a city choral society in Atchison, while in Leavenworth the *Turnverein*, a typical German social and sport club, formed a militia unit and managed to capture several cannon from the Border Ruffians. In February, 1858, the Germans formed a cooperative insurance society. In April the Turners from neighboring Sumner

and Leavenworth joined for a gala day of music and sport, topped off by a grand ball. Meanwhile, Kob helped promote new German settlements in Humboldt and Bunker Hill, and soon moved to Leavenworth to further his developing business interests.<sup>15</sup>

The *Kansas Zeitung* was also aware of the American community, however, and before long began to give evidence that the Germans were not impressed with all the facets of the dominant culture. In September, 1857, it voiced strong criticism of American family life. Americans tended to ignore the basic institutions such as the family, it complained. By overstressing individualism, Americans made marriage simply a contractual arrangement, characterized by laxness in child-rearing and easy divorce. European marriages were far sounder, being sanctified by church, state, family, and custom. The *Zeitung* reprinted this article from another German-language paper, indicating that the attitude was probably widely held among the Germans in America. There were other indications as well. The Germans tended to look down on less educated Americans, and in one item the *Zeitung* pointed out that 10 American students were now at the University of Berlin, ". . . yet another sign," it concluded, "of how intelligent Americans value German Culture."<sup>16</sup>

Social interaction with Americans was judged unpleasant. In February, 1858, the paper complained:

On Monday the insurance association held a ball for its members in the Melodeon Hall. The intention appeared to be to make money, not to entertain the guests, or at least the German guests, because not one of the Germans had so much fun there as they had had at their *exclusive* socials during the winter. Germans and Americans have such different ideas of what is enjoyable, that any attempt to entertain them together inevitably ends with boredom for both.

One major source of friction was the difference of opinion over the consumption of alcohol. In the spring, 1858, the *Zeitung* complained:

As a result of the new Sunday Laws, almost all of the German population of the city and surrounding areas met at the Missouri River, in part to enjoy the beauties of nature, but also to enjoy a rest after six days of hard work without being smothered by the puritanical sabbath laws.

A considerable amount of money is spent away from this city for relaxation and recreation, and sooner or later the

13. Russell K. Hickman, "Speculative Activities of the Emigrant Aid Society," *The Kansas Historical Quarterly*, v. 4, no. 3 (August, 1935), p. 238n; *Kansas Zeitung*, July 22, 1857 (emphasis original).

14. *Kansas Zeitung*, July 29, August 19, 26, September 2, 30, October 7, 1857.

15. *Ibid.*, September 2, 16, 30, 1857, January 20, February 24, April 10, 17, 1858.

16. *Ibid.*, September 30, 1857.



local tavern owners are going to feel the pinch, especially since they have to pay \$100 for a license to serve beer, and they are prohibited from operating on their best day.

These laws restricting the Sunday sale of beer were branded pointless and antiprogressive, and Germans were urged to unite in proposing candidates for the local election so that "we can elect whom we want." However, on this issue a compromise was reached. A German petition to modify the Sunday law was approved in May, 1858, and henceforth beer could be dispensed on Sundays except when church services were being held. The *Zeitung* vigorously applauded this successful exercise of political influence.<sup>17</sup>

Early in 1858 the conversion of Atchison to the Free-State cause was completed when the Emigrant Aid Company acquired the majority stock in the town company and placed an abolitionist editor in charge of the *Squatter Sovereign*. As a result of this more congenial political atmosphere, immigrants came in greater numbers to Atchison, and the city's population grew rapidly. Symbolically, the *Squatter Sov-*

17. *Ibid.*, August 26, 1857, February 24, May 1, 8, 1858 (emphasis original).

*ereign* was renamed the *Freedom's Champion* in February, 1858. Its new editor, Johnathan Martin, also initiated a positive editorial attitude toward the Germans. Although the humorous jabs at all ethnic groups continued, ethnic jokes involving Germans declined, and those which did appear placed Germans in more positive situations. Martin promoted the sale of the *Zeitung* and spoke positively to his English-language readers about German contributions to the Free-State cause. His outlook is epitomized by the paper's lead editorial on April 24, 1858. Entitled "The Germans of Kansas," this statement was repeated in various forms in a number of subsequent issues of the paper:

It is estimated that there are now over ten thousand Germans in Kansas, and of this very large number there are not, we venture to say, over one hundred pro-slavery men. The Free State Germans are among the most zealous, ardent and earnest anti-slavery men in the Territory, and to their devotion to the good cause—to their courage and their steadfast faith in the principles of Freedom, more than to any other, do we owe the Liberty of Kansas. Had it not been for their emigration in such vast numbers, Kansas would long ago have been lost to Freedom, and her soil groaning beneath the curse of slavery. We honor the Free State Germans of Kansas. . . . They have felt the



This photograph of Atchison's Commercial street was taken around 1860, about five years after the town was incorporated. In its first issue, February 3, 1855, the *Squatter Sovereign* outlined the town's "advantages and prospects." In a subsequent issue a building boom was reported. To this growing city came immigrants, including a large group of Germans. Surviving the initial hostility of the Proslavery faction and winning the support of Republican abolitionists, they eventually prospered.

galling yoke of tyranny in the Old World, and they bring with them to the New a warm, enthusiastic love of Liberty, which the darkest night of trouble cannot extinguish.<sup>18</sup>

As Martin's appraisal recognizes, the German community was growing prosperous, and becoming increasingly stable in its new environment. The 1860 federal census identified 379 Germans in Atchison county, almost evenly divided between the city and the rural townships. In the city they listed 29 occupations, in which merchants, carpenters, laborers, saloon-keepers, and domestics predominated. In the rural townships Germans worked mainly in the areas of agriculture and construction as farmers, laborers, masons, smiths, and carpenters, although 17 other occupations are also mentioned. Of the total German population, nearly 52 percent listed gainful employment, and 78.5 percent of those worked in occupations which required either skilled training or initial capital investment. Roughly 70 percent had immigrated in family units. The growing German population attracted the Benedictine Order of the Roman Catholic Church to the city, and a German-language protestant service was conducted every second Sunday by the Episcopal Reverend Staudenmeyer. In July, 1859, the men in the community established a *Turnverein*, a characteristic social center of German-American activities.<sup>19</sup>

Even this brief glimpse of territorial Atchison through the eyes of its press provides valuable insight into the immigrant experience. For one thing, it demonstrates that Hawgood underrated the ability of the Germans to adapt to the rigors of the American frontier. By their skills and stability, pioneering Germans managed to prosper economically, to survive the hostility and ridicule of the Proslavery factions, and to win the support, and even admiration of Republican abolitionists. They were able to establish their presence politically, and used their influence to win certain social goals,

as in the case of the beer petition. Together with the Free-State Americans, Germans helped to determine the political future of the territory and, to a certain extent, fulfilled Editor Kob's wish that German interests form one of the major building blocks of the state.

But it is evident that while these experiences may have assured the survival of Atchison as a viable community, they did little to reduce the immigrants self-awareness as Germans, or to develop fully the "composite nationality" which Turner concluded was a major product of frontier life. The resistance which Hawgood identified is demonstrated by the attitudes expressed in the *Kansas Zeitung*, the development of the strongly German Roman Catholic churches and schools, and the ultimate foundation of the *Turnverein* as a separate and culturally unifying social center. All of these cultural structures developed into permanent institutions which prospered and survived well into the 20th century. They prove the long-term existence of a thriving German-American subculture within the greater Atchison community. Not until the identity crisis by World War I was this desire for separation relinquished.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, although Hawgood said that cultural resistance was a peculiarly German trait, it is apparent from the American comments that there was resistance on both sides. Neither ethnic community felt it had much in common with the other, except in their political outlook and economic cooperation. Thus, although we can accept Turner's premise of the "composite nationality" on a strictly political basis, at the more sensitive cultural and social levels we must recognize with Gordon that the two communities functioned as separate subcultures. Both sets of immigrants carried with them to

20. Although the *Kansas Zeitung* apparently ceased publication in 1859, it was followed by a number of other German-language newspapers in Atchison, including: *Die Fackel* (1866-1868); *Der Atchison Courier* (1874-1881); *Atchison Banner* (1878-1879); *Kansas Staats-Anzeiger* (1879-1915); *Kansas Telegraph* (1880-1881); *Wöchentlicher Telegraph* (1880); and the *Atchison Volksblatt* (1880-1881).—Arndt and Olson, *German-American Newspapers*, pp. 151-152.

<sup>19</sup> See Beckman, *Kansas Monks* for the development of the Benedictine church and schools.

<sup>18</sup> The *Freedom's Champion*, July 2, 1859, announced the foundation of the *Turnverein*. The records of the Atchison *Turnverein* are in the collection of the Kansas State Historical Society and include lists of active members through 1903.

The impact of World War I on the German-Americans is summarized in Frederick C. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German Americans and World War I* (DeKalb, Ill., 1974). See Herbert Pankratz, "The Suppression of Alleged Disloyalty in Kansas During World War I," *The Kansas Historical Quarterly*, v. 42, no. 3 (Autumn, 1976), pp. 277-307; and James C. Juhnke, "Mob Violence and Kansas Mennonites in 1918," *ibid.*, v. 43, no. 3 (Autumn, 1977), pp. 334-350, for evidence of this crisis in Kansas.

18. *Freedom's Champion*, February 20, March 6, April 24, 1858; Frank A. Root, "Early Reminiscences in Atchison in 1859," *Atchison Daily Champion*, February 20, 1880.

19. Kansas Territorial Census, 1860, v. 1, Atchison and Doniphan counties, pp. 1-200; *Freedom's Champion*, August 21, 1858. For details of the establishment of the German-influenced Catholic church see Peter Beckman, *Kansas Monks: A History of St. Benedict's Abbey* (Atchison, 1957), pp. 44-50. Reverend Staudenmeyer was "a German of middle life, florid, unmarried, who had come to Atchison in the spring or summer of 1857. . . . He resigned in 1860 to go to Carolina, being one of the few Germans with Proslavery inclinations.—See Francis S. White, *The Story of a Kansas Parish* (Atchison, n.d.), pp. 5-6. Information on the role of the *Turnverein* in German-American society is provided in Heinrich Metzner, *A Brief History of the North American Gymnastic Union*, transl. by Theor. Stempfer (Indianapolis, 1911).

the frontier attitudes that were not overcome by their mutual experiences. It is clear that from their earliest contacts, Germans and Americans in Kansas wished to keep a certain distance, establishing a firm basis for cultural pluralism and the tradition of the hyphenated American.

A few final examples serve as epilogue. In 1858, in Leavenworth and Sumner, the two biggest towns in the area, the Turners played prominent roles in the July 4 Independence day celebrations. In Sumner they marched down the main avenue, demonstrating their athletic prowess, and carrying a new flag donated by local merchants and seamstresses. "God Bless the Germans," wrote the editor of the local paper, "They are true to freedom." Germans participated enthusiastically in these patriotic celebrations thereafter. On the other hand, in November, 1859, the German communities everywhere gathered for a major celebration of the centennial anniversary of the birthday of their great German poet, Schiller. In Atchison a magnificent banquet and ball were held at Holthaus Hall, "the finest and largest then in the city," owned by baker and

*Turnverein* president Julius Holthaus. Well into this glorious evening, the festivities were interrupted by some American soldiers, out on the town, who tried to crash the party. The German doorkeeper resisted, and his fellows came to his aid. There were fist fights and shots fired, and one of the guests was wounded in the shoulder before order was restored. The Germans made no complaint, and nothing came of the incident. Nevertheless, Martin, of the *Freedom's Champion*, scolded his readers and tried to explain to them the importance of Schiller to the Germans. The disturbance illustrates the differing outlooks of the two subcultures. To the pragmatic Americans, geared for the stress and excitement of the frontier, it was probably inconceivable that anyone could seriously celebrate the birth of a poet. Yet, for the immigrant Germans, the birthday commemoration demonstrated that even in the foreign wilderness their spirit and tradition would survive and flourish.<sup>21</sup>

21. Cora Dolbee, "The Fourth of July in Early Kansas (1858-1861)," *ibid.*, v. 11, no. 2 (May, 1942), p. 138; Root, "Early Reminiscences."