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## Weihnachten in Industrialized America: Christmas and the Making of German-American identity in Philadelphia, 1880-1920

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*Weihnachten* in Industrialized America:

Christmas and the Making of German-American identity in Philadelphia, 1880-1920

Chloe Hanrahan

Senior History Honors Thesis

Eric Morser

April 21, 2024

This work is dedicated to my *Oma*,<sup>1</sup> who brought *Weihnachtsstimmung*<sup>2</sup> with her. My mother, who embodied Christmas magic and kept our traditions alive for the next generation. And my father, who made me stop at every plaque and helped me fall in love with history.

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<sup>1</sup> Grandmother

<sup>2</sup> Christmas Spirit

**Foreword:**

Christmas in my home has always been infused with German traditions and memories; whether it was my *Oma* (grandmother) sifting flour for *Spätzle* or the angel on the top of our tree, we have always had a German holiday in America. My grandmother's immigration to the United States in 1959 created a home which would always hold multiplicities of identity. My motivations behind this research are rooted in my own personal experiences; I never noticed my holiday was German until studying the origins of Christmas in the United States. The rarely explored story of the Germanic influence on American Christmas deserves a space to be recognized and explored. While investigating these origins, what truly piqued my interest was how the blending of Germanic and American cultures resulted in the creation of German-American identity. This identity tells both a story of assimilation and strong resistance. I tell this story because I hope that readers learn that when they play *Stille Nacht* (Silent Night) or decorate their tree, they are engaging with cultural traditions and remember who brought them to the United States.



**Figure 1:** *Walther Family Private Archive*, est. early 1940s. This image depicts my grandmother as a young girl celebrating *Weihnachten* with her family in 1940s Germany. Left to right: my great-grandmother (Maria), grandmother (Marianne), great-grandfather (Richard), and great-aunt (Annalise).

Bells chiming, presents adorned with glistening wrapping paper under a rich green tree, red ribbons on doors, and warmth radiating from a home as snow softly falls into mounds outside; the image of Christmas is one of traditions and nostalgia. Christmas in the United States has been heavily influenced by immigrant communities. Whether it is the character of Santa Claus, or the music played around the holidays, immigrants have had a key hand in curating American Christmas. German-immigrants specifically have had a major impact on Christmas in America, as they brought with them an extensive history with Christmas and its motifs, emotions, and traditions. Christmastime in America at the turn of the 20th century, reveals a larger story of German immigration, assimilation, and also resistance to the loss of cultural markers. These German immigrants came to the United States as a segmented, nationless, ethnic group, and through the avenues which a celebration like Christmas highlighted, created their own unique identity through the adoption of American ideals and symbols and the retention of important Germanic traditions.

Philadelphia provides an excellent case for exploring this history. At the turn of the 20th century, the German population in Philadelphia supported upwards of three German-language newspapers into the end of the 19th century,<sup>3</sup> demonstrating the robust numbers of German Americans settling in this city. The sheer numbers in Philadelphia allow the city to demonstrate the distinct ways in which German communities developed during this time. These newspapers included the *Philadelphia Tageblatt*, *Philadelphia Demokrat*, and the *Philadelphia Freie Presse*. Philadelphia was a city home to “Old Immigration” from Germany, England, and Ireland, and during the mid-1800s welcomed a wave of German immigrants.<sup>4</sup> There were also many deeply

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<sup>3</sup> Nathaniel Burt and Wallace E. Davies, “The Iron Age 1866-1905” in *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History*, ed. Russell F. Weigley (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982), 488.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 488.

German neighborhoods throughout Philadelphia complete with theaters, gymnastic societies, singing groups, and Christmas trees.<sup>5</sup>

Both early German immigrants and this new wave brought with them holiday traditions which reflected their homeland. During the 1700s, German immigrants retained many darker, winter traditions akin to the non-commercialized homeland holiday; German immigrants would participate in *belsnickling* which was a tradition to celebrate the arrival of *Pealz Nichol*. Participants would blacken their faces, wear furs, and give out nuts and cakes to the good children and bring whips for the bad.<sup>6</sup> However, the mid-century immigrants brought tamer ideas about the winter holiday, and thus were apt to accept some American symbols and traditions. German immigrants and their children and their grandchildren were not only finding their own American identity, but their German identity as well. As Russell A. Kazal writes in *Becoming Old Stock* there are separate worlds being loosely linked through German identity.<sup>7</sup>

Many of these mid-century immigrants were Catholics and Jews, both who may have celebrated Christmas in their homeland. It was not uncommon for German Jewish people to celebrate Christmas as a marker of their German cultural identity rather than a religious experience.<sup>8</sup> Christmas acted as a unifying center of the many Germanic identities throughout what would come to comprise modern day Germany.<sup>9</sup>

The wave of mid-19th century German migration was undertaken by a population without a united homeland but connected through a shared identity despite the varied cultures.

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<sup>5</sup> Russell A. Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> Judith Flanders, *Christmas: A Biography* (New York, NY: Thomas Dunne Books, 2017), 68.

<sup>7</sup> Kazal, *Old Stock*, 18.

<sup>8</sup> Joshua Eli Plaut, *A Kosher Christmas: 'Tis the Season to Be Jewish* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 19.

<sup>9</sup> Christian Marchetti "Situating German *Volkskunde*'s Christmas Reflections on Spatial and Historical Constructions" in *the Public Work of Christmas: Difference & Belonging in Multicultural Societies*, ed. Pamela E. & Monique Scheer (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), 93.

Many immigrants at this time saw the United States as a place full of opportunity, open to self-recreation. Like other immigrant groups, Germans brought with them their own cultures and traditions as well as an eagerness to adopt new American-influenced customs. Because Germans arrived as both a connected and segmented immigrant group, the development of their identities as German Americans grew from their ability to be particularly open to new ideas in an effort to create a thriving community for themselves. German-immigrants defined themselves by comparing themselves to other German immigrants' class or religion.<sup>10</sup> This allowed for cohesion but also varying definitions of German-American to arise. Germans were considered to be of "Old Stock" when descending from the first German settlers of Pennsylvania, but by 1900 55 percent of German Americans were considered "foreign stock" as they were first- and second-generation immigrants.<sup>11</sup> This influx of new German-immigrants yet again reshaped German-American identity. Germans were searching for ways to define themselves as a cohesive group and assimilate to the larger American society without losing their individual customs and cultures.

Philadelphia acts as a unique Americans celebrated Christmas. Philadelphia enables me to explore how German Americans combined their nationalities to create the German-American identity. Philadelphians did not celebrate Christmas only in a German way, rather many European traditions influenced holidays in Philadelphia.<sup>12</sup> In 1850, 29.7% of Philadelphians were foreign born.<sup>13</sup> By the late 1800s, the "Old Stock" in Philadelphia was composed of Germans, Irishmen, and the English describing their earlier waves of immigration and connoting a "race"

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<sup>10</sup> Kazal, *Old Stock*, 213.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>12</sup> Flanders, *Christmas: A Biography*, 179-180.

<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth M. Geffen, "Industrial Development and Social Crisis 1841-1854" in *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History*, ed. Russell F. Weigley (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982), 309.

of original inhabitants,”<sup>14</sup> while the “New Immigration” included Russians, eastern Europeans, and Italians.<sup>15</sup> Germans in Philadelphia interacted with many different groups of people and were able to define themselves based on these interactions.

By 1900, the number of first-generation German Americans outnumbered the population of German immigrants.<sup>16</sup> These German Americans grew up in an American context, but with strong German roots; however, the origins of traditions and ritual began to become lost within this next generation.<sup>17</sup> As Germans adopted more English usage and American characters, the customs they celebrated no longer were German but rather familial in their importance. Families gathered to create music as a household, drank imported wine, and lit candles on a Christmas tree, not because it is what Germans did, but instead because it is what their mothers and fathers had taught them to do. Christmas became a holiday unique to each family with unifying traditions across German and American households.

The German-language newspapers were an important aspect of the German-American community in Philadelphia; this was where a large part of the German-American population retained its news and also their consumer identities. Advertising within newspapers became a large part of not only the Christmas holiday, but business plans in general; these ads outpaced even window displays by the 1900s as a means of promoting business.<sup>18</sup> One impressive businessman, which we will discuss later on, was John Wanamaker who relied heavily on his unique advertising to entice readers into his department store. Advertisers knew that German Americans retained traditions of gift-giving and elaborate holiday celebrations, and thus would

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<sup>14</sup> Kazal, *Old Stock*, 123.

<sup>15</sup> Nathaniel Burt and Wallace E. Davies, “The Iron Age 1866-1905” in *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History*, ed. Russell F. Weigley (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982), 488.

<sup>16</sup> Kazal, *Old Stock*, 80.

<sup>17</sup> Flanders, *Christmas: A Biography*, 180.

<sup>18</sup> Patricia Bradley, “John Wanamaker’s ‘Temple of Patriotism’ Defines Early 20th Century Advertising and Brochures,” *American Journalism*, no. 2 (April 1998): 19.



pull on these well-known ideas such as *Weihnachtsstimmung* (Christmas Spirit) or alcohol consumption or music-making as a means of familial gathering while also incorporating American imagery such as Santa Claus into advertisements for the German population. This coalescence of German and American experiences helped German-American peoples define themselves and the ads which they were seeing; this identity building was a symbiotic relationship between advertiser and consumer. Newspaper readers trusted their newspapers to be providing them a resource for their own good rather than the reality of newspaper owners and advertisers focused on their own profits.<sup>19</sup>

German-language newspapers struggled to survive through the Americanization of German immigrants. These papers were important community markers and worked to provide their communities with papers accessible in their mother-tongue. By the 1890s, readership declined; the oldest German-language daily, *Philadelphia Demokrat*, lost half of its readership between 1870 and 1915,<sup>20</sup> and as German Americans adopted more and more American qualities, including English usage, the need for the papers declined. German Americans both lost and gained markers as they transitioned from German immigrants to German-American citizens. The *Philadelphia Tageblatt* was the United German Trades' official paper and was a socialist paper;<sup>21</sup> instead of focusing on different European nation states, they referred to different groups as *Völker* (Peoples).<sup>22</sup> This newspaper represented the varying ties German-immigrants held and their different viewpoints within the world. The German-language press was important to German Americans because it unified them and because it allowed advertisers to speak directly

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<sup>19</sup> Bradley, "John Wanamaker's 'Temple of Patriotism,'" 16.

<sup>20</sup> Kazal, *Old Stock*, 79-80.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 17, 84.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

to a singular community; advertisers would translate their ads so that German consumers would be able to access the information.

The investigation of German-American identity building through the avenues of Christmas and advertising have yet to be explored by other scholars. There have been many histories of Christmas in America and Germany, many of German-American identity, and extensive histories of the turn of the twentieth century. However, scholars have yet to unify these areas of study and discover their interconnectedness. Stephen Nissenbaum writes a persuasive and informative history of Christmas in America entitled *The Battle for Christmas: A Cultural History of America's Most Cherished Holiday*. He engages ideas regarding German influence on American Christmas but focuses more heavily on the English roots. Additionally, Nissenbaum fails to articulate how German Christmas in America affected the German immigrants themselves. Russell A. Kazal examines German-American identities in Philadelphia during this time extensively in his book *Becoming Old Stock* and provides readers with immense context as to how immigrants moved through late-19th century and early-20th century Philadelphia. However, although Kazal utilizes newspapers in some of his arguments, he does not focus heavily on what advertisements reflect about the German-American community.

Using both Nissenbaum and Kazal's important works paired with other scholars' research and German-language newspapers as primary sources, this thesis argues that Christmas advertisements in German-language newspapers illuminates the work of German-American identity curation. It explores the ways in which American businesses pulled on the unifying markers of the Germanic identity and Christmas while introducing American figures and ideals to create German-American identity. The first section of the thesis examines the history of Christmas in "Germany," followed by a section focused on the emotional ties German

Americans and Germans have with Christmas. The thesis next demonstrates how the central American figure of Santa Claus became embedded in German-American Christmas, and the significance of his adoption into the cultural practices. What follows these establishing sections are two investigations into the practices of businessmen themselves, G.A. Schwarz and John Wanamaker. This exploration highlights how businessmen who were a part of the German community market this nostalgic Christmas and how those outside the community understand the needs and desires of their new German customers. Finally, the thesis investigates music and alcohol consumption two practices embraced by German households during Christmastime, and how they were both transformed and reinforced through American commercialization. Ultimately, by focusing on German Americans in Philadelphia at the turn of the 20th century, the thesis asks us to reconsider how the celebration of Christmas reflected the way in which identity itself was built during a time in which material culture allowed heritage to be commodified, bought, and sold.

## The Transplanted Past of German Christmas

Christmas, as we know it today, was a relatively new invention at the turn of the 20th century despite beliefs that Christmas in Germany had been rooted in “Teutonic tribes” and “the Christian celebration of the birth of Jesus.”<sup>23</sup> Many theologians and ethnographers attempted to explain the German essence of the holiday through connections to winter solstice and Nordic tribes,<sup>24</sup> even “British folklorist Clement Miles noted that ‘many people, indeed, maintain that no other Christmas can compare with the German *Weihnacht*.’”<sup>25</sup> Instead, Christmas was created intentionally to bring together the “‘spiritual experience’ of being German.”<sup>26</sup> Germany retained many traditions from older societies, but the German Christmas of abundance and sparkling trees came from capitalists utilizing the holiday season as a commercial opportunity and scholarly figures attempting to create a unifying cultural holiday through the 19th and 20th centuries. By understanding how these traditions were created in the German-speaking world, as Germany was not a fully cohesive country until 1871, it will become clear that Germanic traditions were easily malleable and thus recreated in new ways through immigration to the United States.

The 19th century and the turn of the 20th gave way to new ideas of identity, unity, and industry which allowed Christmas to develop into a private, communitarian holiday rather than a public, religious festival. After the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, many Germans began utilizing a holiday once used to manage social and economic dynamics to uplift familial and private life.<sup>27</sup> This refocusing allowed for the holiday to become more integrated into domesticity and attach itself to other important celebrations within families. Family structures

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<sup>23</sup> Joe Perry, *Christmas in Germany: A Cultural History* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 1.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

were reinforced during this time of year. The holiday was no longer about blowing off steam in the form of things like the British “wassailing,”<sup>28</sup> but instead about bringing warmth and light into the bourgeois home. In reality, mothers and fathers each had their role to fulfill in the prep for the season, and as such often were unable to spend much time with the children they were now supposedly focused on.<sup>29</sup> The upper-classes were the first to experience the new type of Christmas holiday, symbolized by even the smell of *Tannenbaum* (Christmas Tree). As it was considered ‘perfumes of intimacy’” by the upper-class women.<sup>30</sup> The Germanic Protestant middle-class truly grew and spread the family-centric Christmas throughout the social-strata.<sup>31</sup> The traditional dark folk figures of the winter festival and the religious St. Nikolaus were transformed into secular characters such as *Gabenbringer* (Gift Bringer). While the holiday became a private celebration, it was also a collective experience for German-speaking peoples despite the lack of national identity.<sup>32</sup>

Even non-Christian communities in Germany adopted this new notion of Yuletide cheer; Jewish Germans celebrated Christmas in a secular way beginning in the 19th century.<sup>33</sup> German Jews even allowed the Christmas tree to enter their homes as a symbol of their German identity.<sup>34</sup> Although there was controversy and varying opinions around the adoption of this Christian holiday into the Jewish home, many German Jews saw this celebration as a way to connect to their protean nation rather than their faith. In the 19th century, Christmas became a

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<sup>28</sup> Stephen Nissenbaum, *The Battle for Christmas: A Cultural History of America's Most Cherished Holiday* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1988).

<sup>29</sup> Perry, *Christmas in Germany: A Cultural History*, 25.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 27.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>33</sup> Plaut, *A Kosher Christmas*, 15.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

way for the Western world to reconcile the new nature of the modern nation-state and the consumer culture sparked by rapid industrialization.<sup>35</sup>

If consumerism was about providing a tradition for a family instead of purely financial motivations, there was a sense of morality behind the hyper-consumerism. Joe Perry in *Christmas in Germany: A Cultural History* discusses that “by 1900 a vibrant commercial culture and an ever-expanding mass media had appropriated and standardized the feelings and customs of German Christmas and sold them back to broad sectors of the German population.”<sup>36</sup> The 19th century focused on creating these traditions and refocusing German consumers towards this new type of celebration, while by the 20th century, this custom was fully standardized among Germanic people. This “family festival” aided in the shaping of the German collective identity by allowing all people despite their class to come together through the Christmas season.<sup>37</sup>

As many Germans crafted the Christmas tradition into a personal holiday celebrated with friends and family, consumer-industrialized culture was also on the rise in Germany. To celebrate Christmas in the now “traditional” emotive way, Germans *required* the right items within their homes. They needed the perfect tree, gifts, and a trimming to achieve this “nostalgic” Christmas feeling, and so German merchants utilized this desire to sell their products through new advertising methods. During the early 20th-century, stores began to set up “elaborate displays both inside the stores and in the large plate-glass windows on the ground floor... [to] attract[] passersby.”<sup>38</sup> It became a tradition to participate in “Christmas strolls” through the cities to see extravagant decorations and purchase gifts for the impending holiday.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Perry, *Christmas in Germany*, 2.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-8.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

The *Weihnachtsbaum*, or Christmas tree, gained popularity through Germany much to the thanks of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, a prolific writer and thinker.<sup>40</sup> Stephan Nissenbaum cites “a careful reading of the German sources” in his assertion that during a visit to Strasbourg in 1771, Goethe discovered within the city and associated with the tree itself, a new sense of the ‘German’ identity, that again did not come from nationhood yet. Despite Goethe’s experience in the 18th century, the Christmas tree truly became a household staple for Germans during the 1830s.<sup>41</sup> The perfect Christmas tree was so extravagant, complete with blown glass ornaments, marzipan, and a banner, that not many families could afford such a tree.<sup>42</sup> The Germans able to achieve the perfect tree were limited to those of the upper echelon. It was not only the tree and decorations that created a perfect holiday. Music took on a huge role in the festivities; music “embodied the ‘essence of Germanness,’ through family carols and Christian hymns.”<sup>43</sup> All of these products would be wrapped together to create the *Kauflust* (propensity to buy) of the season.<sup>44</sup>

German-speakers also had unique words to express their Christmas feelings, and through examining these words, themes of German Christmas can be better understood. The German language has many words that evoke emotions which cannot fully be translated into English. To the best ability of an English speaker, it is important to understand these words in relation to Christmas as they unlock the personal way the holiday is experienced through the lens of German-speaking individuals. For Germans, Christmas seemed to represent family bonds first. During the privatization of Christmas in the 19th century, the “emotional charge of sacred

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<sup>40</sup> Nissenbaum, *The Battle for Christmas*, 197.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>42</sup> Perry, *Christmas in Germany*, 33-34.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

observance was transferred to sentimental feelings of family love” through a “tamer set of rituals.”<sup>45</sup> Through the privatization of these emotions, Germanic people engaged in a collective experience as a culture. The German holiday became a part of “‘*Gemütlichkeit*,’ or domestic comfort and coziness, and the *Gemütlichkeit* itself was a character trait that was typically German.”<sup>46</sup> *Gemütlichkeit* directly translates to *coziness*, but it meant more than the feeling under a warm blanket; for German speakers, this feeling embodied the experience of being inside a warm house filled with those you hold most dear while a snowstorm passes outside. Which connected to another feeling “*Innerlichkeit*, or inwardness, that enveloped the family on Christmas Eve.”<sup>47</sup> These feelings are particularly German as there are no words in the English language that fully express their significance. The holiday produced emotional responses for German-speakers that cannot be fully understood outside of the linguistic and social context. Even German Jewish individuals noted that “Christmas ‘was not a Christian but rather a German holiday,’”<sup>48</sup> and many participated in the celebration as Germans despite not being Christian.<sup>49</sup> Christmas grew through the 19th century to mean more as a signifier of a cultural identity rather than a religious one for many German-speakers.

*Weihnachten* (Christmas) has undergone a profound transformation in the German speaking world from a winter solstice festival to a religious holiday to a private family matter. Christian Marchetti notes in his chapter for *The Public Works of Christmas* that “most of the elements of the Christmas season that were not obviously Christian had been readily attributed... [to the] ‘Indo-Germanic’ historical stratum.”<sup>50</sup> Germans association with the holiday bore such

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<sup>45</sup> Perry, *Christmas in Germany*, 15.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>50</sup> Marchetti, “Situating German *Volkskunde*’s Christmas Reflections on Spatial and Historical Constructions” in *the Public Work of Christmas: Difference & Belonging in Multicultural Societies*, 95.



validity that when a tradition's origin could not be found, the label of German was assumed. The journey Christmas took in Germany through different social classes and iterations is imperative to understanding what is brought to the United States by German-speaking immigrants and how this nostalgic iconography is utilized and transformed through Americanization. Germanic immigrants arrive in the United States with a holiday that unites them as "Germans," and that will enable them to transform into German Americans. Christmas both helped shape and was shaped by the German-American experience in this new world.

### ***Weihnachtsstimmung*: Germans Discovering Their Emotive Holiday in a New World**

To begin to understand German-American Christmas, it is imperative to recognize how German peoples celebrated the holiday in their homelands. German Americans retained, through their assimilation to American culture, many of the particular feelings and emotions unique to the German language. *Frohe Weihnachten* translates directly to Merry Christmas, but the feelings associated for German-speakers and the Germanic peoples with this phrase differs from English speakers because Anglo-Americans are unable to feel *Weihnachtsstimmung*. Simply translating to “festive cheer - with regard to Christmas,”<sup>51</sup> *Weihnachtsstimmung* evokes an emotion connected to the particular German way of celebration. German Christmas celebrations were heavily influenced by a Protestant notion of universal German community, despite no unified nation existing until the late 19th century and discourse between German Catholics and Protestants.<sup>52</sup> This holiday came to represent a time which united all classes, regions, and religious sects of the Germanic world, despite its Protestant influence. The history of emotions and feelings is hard to discover through documents and material objects, but advertisements and publications in German-language newspapers reveal that many German-speakers maintained their connections to German specific experiences and through the creation of the German-American identity.

The history of *why* emotions occur is harder to uncover than investigating the history of material traditions themselves; many have tried to explain as Ida Wylie describes it “the history of sense and emotions, and their power to define and reproduce social norms and identities,”<sup>53</sup> but it is a history harder to explore as the evidence is not physical. The practices shared by

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<sup>51</sup> Trans. Leo GmbH

<sup>52</sup> Perry, *Christmas in Germany*, 9.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

German speakers allowed them to form emotional bonds with one another, and Christmastime specifically as it represented the connection between Germans across social and class boundaries; these collective feelings were desirable as the Germanic world had yet to unite as a nation.<sup>54</sup> However, the vast majority of feelings associated with this holiday refer to the personal and familial feelings.

*Weihnachtsstimmung* is a word akin to the word *Heimat* which directly translates to “home, homeland, native country”<sup>55</sup> because it is specifically hard to truly define and explain to non-German speakers. *Heimat* encompasses more than the land from which an individual originates; *Heimat* refers to the culture, heritage, history, society, language, family, town, and even the home a person grows up in. English is devoid of a word which evokes all these associations, just as English speakers do not have an equivalent for *Weihnachtsstimmung*. Joe Perry claims in his book *Christmas in Germany* that “Christmas was somehow naturally German” explaining that Germans felt this feeling “during semisacred moments of family festivity.”<sup>56</sup> This feeling is connected to the specific way in which Germans celebrated the holiday and, as Perry notes, occurs during specific moments throughout the holiday.

German Christmas took on a heterosocial nature; the young and the old came together to celebrate the holiday. There would be mulled wine (*Glühwein*) to drink and cookies (*Kekse*) to be enjoyed by all the young men and women while children ran through the house and the older generations cooed over a new child (*Kind*). The multigenerational co-ed celebration within the German tradition would come to influence mass culture as consumer-identities spread throughout the United States.<sup>57</sup> *Weihnachtsstimmung* may not be something that can be fully

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<sup>54</sup> Perry, *Christmas in Germany*, 4.

<sup>55</sup> Trans. Leo GmbH

<sup>56</sup> Perry, *Christmas in Germany*, 4.

<sup>57</sup> Kazal, *Old Stock*, 275.

defined by words and definitions, but the use of the word has lasted to modern day denoting its lasting importance to Germanic cultures and experiences.

In the late 19th century, German language newspapers in Philadelphia were promoting a German Christmas feeling without using the word, *Weihnachtsstimmung*. In 1890, the *Philadelphia Demokrat* published a large composite image of feasts, markets, coats, all adored with holly; this image evoked the feeling of abundance, see **Figure 3**. The caption reads in German, “When the veil of Christmas Day (*des Christtags Schleier*) lifts itself, every wish will be fulfilled.”<sup>58</sup> This sentence indicates that this imagery is not only intended to evoke a holiday spirit, but also a consumer culture encroaching on the *Weihnachtsstimmung*. Kazal writes that entering these consumer-based spaces “could mean leaving behind an older ethnic world” and gaining a new consumption-oriented identity.”<sup>59</sup> The challenge in this assertion is that Christmas and German identity already contained its own consumer culture. As noted previously, the commercial culture in and the growing industrialization of Germany pulled on the customs of German Christmas and commodified them to fit a growing marketplace.<sup>60</sup> This commercialization of Christmas was an on-going process throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries; the tension between a traditional *Weihnachtsstimmung* and a modern presents-based holiday occurs in both Germany and German-America—and continues to be a debate at many family tables to this day.

However, despite the continual commercial nature of the holiday, the industrial marketplace of the 19th and early 20th centuries allowed for businesses in Philadelphia to pull on the idea of “‘Christmas as it was,’ even if it had never really been that way,”<sup>61</sup> and sell that ideal

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<sup>58</sup> “Wenn des Christtags Schleier sich enthüllt, Zeige so sich jeder Wunsch erfüllt!”

<sup>59</sup> Kazal, *Old Stock*, 104.

<sup>60</sup> Perry, *Christmas in Germany*, 5.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

back to consumers. German Americans brought with them a feeling only experienced within their community, and the commodification of this emotion standardized it, and aided German Americans in creating a shared identity—a homeland emotion coupled with American capitalism.



**Figure 3:** *Philadelphia Demokrat*, 12.25.1890, HathiTrust - German Society of Pennsylvania Historical Newspaper Collection

*Weihnachtsstimmung* connoted specific images and experiences for the German-speaking population; one important aspect of the nostalgic Christmas was the cold, snowy weather outside countering the warm interior, familial world Germans created. Philadelphia's German-language newspapers recognized this and issued different publications which pulled on the feelings of *Heimat*, or homeland, that this a time of year which brought alive at the turn of the century. In 1907, the *Philadelphia Demokrat* published an advertisement entitled "*Weihnachtsstimmung*," see **Figure 4**. This publication was followed with the tagline "Lively swirling of flakes reminds us of the approach of Christmas (*die Nähe des Festes*). The first proper winter day. From now on, snow and ice (*Schnee und Eis*) will no longer be rare guests --- a very mild November."<sup>62</sup> The following paragraphs discuss snow, or *Schnee* in German, as a key element to the holiday celebration. This first appearance of the word *Weihnachtsstimmung* demonstrates that the word has maintained its importance to the German communities, and that this particular type of weather evokes the emotion itself. This advertisement was alerting the Germanic readers that the German feeling of Christmas was connected to "swirling flakes" of snow and that as snow and ice increase in their frequency the holiday will arrive. Snow became an alert that the holiday season had begun.

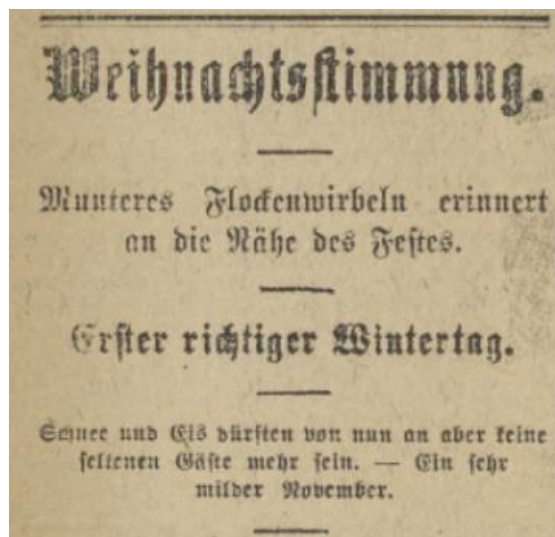
Many German Americans retained their winter traditions as they joined American society. For example, the Cannstatter Volksfest-Verein that was founded in 1873, recreated a Schwäbisch harvest festival in Philadelphia. These men also sponsored a winter ball and other festivities,<sup>63</sup> and continue to do so to this day. The Verein are one example of the many ways German-speakers brought their cultural traditions with them to the United States. This

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<sup>62</sup> "Munteres Flockenwirbeln erinnert an die Nähe des Festes. Erster richtiger Wintertag. Schnee und Eis dürften von nun an aber keine seltenen Gäste mehr sein – Ein sehr milder November."

<sup>63</sup> Kazal, *Old Stock*, 99.

*Weihnachtsstimmung* publication shows how simple, yet important these associations can be. The use of weather as a determiner of time and tradition aided German immigrants in connecting their *Weihnachtsstimmung* to their new home in the United States. The snow in Philadelphia may not be the same as in Berlin or Köln or Stuttgart, but the snow nonetheless alerts these immigrant communities to a time of year that holds such importance for their home country.



**Figure 4:** *Philadelphia Demokrat*, 12.04.1907, HathiTrust - German Society of Pennsylvania Historical Newspaper Collection

One element that continued to embody *Weihnachtsstimmung* in the United States after German's migrated was the glamorous *Weihnachtsbaum*, or Christmas tree. German immigrants brought this tradition with them as they entered America and helped build a unified German identity for new Americans. The Christmas tree acted as a way Germans spread their culture throughout the United States via consumer culture. The tradition itself was not an old German tradition; it was a relatively new invention at the beginning of the 19th century originating in a small area of Strasbourg.<sup>64</sup> One of the first legends surrounding the Christmas tree in America

<sup>64</sup> Nissenbaum, *The Battle for Christmas*, 195-196.

was in 1835 when Charles Follen, a German immigrant, put up a tree in his drawing room.<sup>65</sup> Although a relatively new invention in the German homeland itself, Follen brought the tradition with him during the mid-19th century as a piece of home. There are no noted occurrences of a Christmas tree in Pennsylvania dating earlier than 1810s; the mid-century is when the tradition from German-speaking lands to United States soil began to take ground. The explosion of Christmas trees as a product occurred during this time because a desire for a nostalgic holiday and the new consumer culture coincided at the perfect moment.<sup>66</sup>

The Christmas tree demonstrated *Weihnachtsstimmung* as a community builder as more German neighborhoods put up their own trees around the city in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1916, *The Philadelphia Tageblatt* published a *front-page* image of a beautiful tree covered in snow or tinsel with the caption “*Der Weihnachtsbaum von Frankford*” (**Figure 5**).<sup>67</sup> A German Christmas holiday is incomplete without an adorned tree—full of products of the industrial world like ornaments and candles.<sup>68</sup> Frankford was a neighborhood in Philadelphia and with this publication readers can see how the *Weihnachtsstimmung* was making its way into the neighborhoods and remaining a part of the German-American Christmas. Here, Frankford presented a simpler tree but still showcased how the Christmas tree was at the center of this German neighborhood’s festivities. German-American identity embodies a cultural pluralist narrative which allowed there to be fluidity in the definition of being a German-speaking immigrant.<sup>69</sup> Christmas celebrated *Innerlichkeit* within the family unit, but as this

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 178-179.

<sup>66</sup> Nissenbaum, *The Battle for Christmas*, 195.

<sup>67</sup> The Christmastree from Frankford

<sup>68</sup> Perry, *Christmas in Germany*, 15.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 133.



public display of German-Christmas shows, there was community building happening through *Weihnachtsstimmung*.<sup>70</sup>



**Figure 5:** *Philadelphia Tageblatt*, 12.24.1916, HathiTrust - German Society of Pennsylvania Historical Newspaper Collection

German-language newspapers continued to publish announcements and advertisements connected to the traditional German Christmas feeling through the 20th century. As readers begin to turn from immigrants themselves to the children and grandchildren of immigrants, readership changes. These new readers are German Americans from birth and grew up within the cultural influence of both worlds, and so the continuation of the German language and culture became more difficult and increasingly important to the communities. In 1907, the *Philadelphia Demokrat* reminded its readers in a publication titled “*Unter’m Weihnachtsbaum*” or “Under the Christmas Tree” to remember the charitable spirit of Christmas writing: “The Christmas holiday is being celebrated today in a traditional, dignified way. Don’t forget to do good and praise it.

<sup>70</sup> Perry, *Christmas in Germany*, 15.

The poor and unfortunate (*Der Armen und Unglücklichen*) will be thought of a lot — Happy Christmas at home and hearth (*Fröhliche Feste am häuslichen Herde*).<sup>71</sup> This printing drew more to the biblical understanding of Christmas and “good-will” towards men during the holiday season as well as the invented ancient German holiday. Kazal explains in his book that “Germandom was to be preserved ‘through [immigrants’] children.’”<sup>72</sup>

The second generation of German Americans were beginning to enter adulthood at this time. Charles J. Hexamer, second-generation German-American and president of the German-American Central Alliance of Pennsylvania (a federation of ethnic Germans), charged this new generation in 1909 with maintaining German identity, and thus the traditional Christmas; the publication perceived German Americans to be celebrating in the traditional, pious way, however as explored earlier, Christmas in Germany was an invented unifying commercial holiday. This invented tradition is completed with the imagery of a *Herd* (Hearth); the advent reinforces the idea that a German Christmas was to be spent at home by the hearth while thinking of those less fortunate.

The poor and unfortunate were not the only group of people that Philadelphia German Americans were encouraged to remember during the holiday season; advertisers used Germanic peoples’ lasting connections with their homeland as a marketing tool. The *Philadelphia Tageblatt* in 1916 published an advertisement from a Bank enticing German Americans to send cash to “*die Lieben in der alten Heimat*” (The loved ones in the old Heimat). This encouragement reveals both that German Americans continued to stay connected to the relatives they had left and that they financially supported these people. This ad used the holiday time to

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<sup>71</sup> “Auf althergebrachte, würdige Weise wird das Christfest heute gefeiert werden. Wohlzuthun und mitzuthemen vergesset nicht. Der Armen und Unglücklichen wird in reichem Maße gedacht werden. — Fröhliche Feste am häuslichen Herde.”

<sup>72</sup> Kazal, *Old Stock*, 134.

reinforce the connection between homeland and the new world German Americans crafted. Using the emotional, nostalgic feelings attached to Christmas to encourage consumers to send money to their far-away relatives pulled on the *Weihnachtsstimmung* and turned its purpose into a consumer, material meaning. No longer was *Weihnachtsstimmung* a pure feeling, but rather something that could be commodified and used to market a change in identity. This may not be a completely negative affect; although no longer based singularly in new emotive traditions, *Weihnachtsstimmung*'s authenticity was preserved through the industrialization and commodification of the feeling. The desire for a "German" Christmas specifically grew through the selling of the goods associated with this label, and thus the holiday itself both created and was created through this interaction. As businesses utilized this created ideal, the German populations can unite through this holiday, and its particular evocative feelings.

The desire to celebrate Christmas and maintain a connection to German culture began to undergo opposition as the First World War took off. During the First World War, there was a mass push to reject any hyphenated identities for a purely American label. The *Evening Bulletin* wrote in 1914 that "Loyalty to the United States does not require disloyalty to the fatherland," but it was expected that these people would not bring their country of origin's interests into the American political sphere.<sup>73</sup> Although referring to immigrants en masse, the main opponent of the United States during this war was Germany, and so German Americans faced persecution. Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson both spoke out against hyphenated identities; Wilson warned newly naturalized Americans to not think of themselves in groups or they would not

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<sup>73</sup> Kazal, *Old Stock*, 162.

become “thorough Americans.”<sup>74</sup> The rise of American nationalism in the 1910s led to a push to deny ties to homelands and instead adopt purely American traits.<sup>75</sup>

Despite these fervent calls for a rejection of the German homeland, German Americans retained their connections to the old world’s people and its traditions even after world war erupted, as demonstrated through publications in German-language newspapers such as articles and imagery in support of the German soldiers using the German Christmas motifs. In December of 1916, the First World War had been underway for about a year and a half. The United States had yet to enter the war, but Germans had long been a part of the fighting. During that holiday time, the *Philadelphia Tageblatt* published images of soldiers in the snow celebrating Christmas with an evergreen tree and a poem alluding to prayers these soldiers are offering (see **Figures 6**). The poem ended with the line “*O herr lasse recht bald frieden werden*” which translates to “Oh Lord, let there be peace soon;” this plea for peace was coming from German Americans, but it was not for their fellow Americans, instead for their German brothers and sisters. This depiction of *Kriegsweihnachten*, or Wartime Christmas, showcased the enduring bonds between German Americans and their roots back home. Through the depiction of German soldiers celebrating Christmas in a truly *Weihnachtsstimmung* way in a German-American newspaper, it was clear that this profoundly German feeling of Christmas continues long after the mass migration of the mid 19th century, and that the connections to the traditional homeland and its culture were not lost.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Kazal, *Old Stock*, 164.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

<sup>76</sup> The European war “heightened the ethnic consciousness and unity” so claims Kazal in *Becoming Old Stock*, and through the study of Christmas wartime the validity of this statement is revealed.



Germans enjoyed a Christmas stroll (*Weihnachtswanderung*) to see all the beautiful city lights and store displays during the 19th and 20th centuries; this new tradition evoked a sense of *Weihnachtsstimmung*.<sup>77</sup> Although a new invention, this tradition connected to the unique German emotion and was welcomed to the holiday season in Germany. It is not hard to imagine German Americans developing their own tradition of walking through the streets of Philadelphia during a snowy day in December; hundreds of miles from their homeland, and yet the same emotion could be evoked as traditions followed German Americans. The multiplicity in German identity was united around this shared holiday and emotional experience which was reinforced through the new material culture of American society.<sup>78</sup> Despite the push to lose the hyphen, German Americans had already carved their own mark onto American culture through the sharing of their *Weihnachten*.<sup>79</sup> German immigrants were eager participants in identity building through these avenues and brought with them a specific feeling associated with what was becoming America's favorite holiday.

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<sup>77</sup> Perry, *Christmas in Germany*, 151.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

<sup>79</sup> Christmas

## The Adoption of American Santa Claus into the German Thought-World

Germanic peoples brought to America their specific Christmas traditions and feelings, but also quickly adopted the usage of Santa Claus, the most important American Christmas figure, demonstrating their coalescence of German and American identities. Beginning in the 1840s, German-American people relinquished their homeland figures and embraced the American consumer-culture figure instead. Advertisers utilized the image of Santa Claus in German-language newspapers through the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Santa Claus is a name almost any American knows; whether one pictures the jolly man in a red suit in Coca-Cola ads or Tim Allen in *The Santa Clause*, Santa has become synonymous with Christmas in the United States. Santa Claus himself is descended from many different figures throughout Europe but is a product of a distinctly American Christmas.<sup>80</sup>

Santa's predecessors are many different figures and creatures throughout Europe. Germanic peoples have multiple different interpretations of the gift-bringing figure who appears in December. These ideas range from baby Jesus himself, to half-man half-beasts, to simply a man named *Gabenbringer*, meaning gift bringer. Depending on where a particular Germanic immigrant came from (north or south, rural or urban) during the mid-19th century, they would have a different figure in mind. *Christkind* delivered to Protestant girls and boys after Martin Luther's decision to deter Germanic peoples from believing in the less humane creatures such as *Klabauter*,<sup>81</sup> who was a nocturnal creature akin to *Knecht Ruprecht*, the satanic doppelgänger to *Gabenbringer*,<sup>82</sup> who was a mythical spirit that visit parents.<sup>83</sup> As one can see, there were many characters being debated and tossed around as different parts of the Germanic world connected to

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<sup>80</sup> Gerry Bowler, *The World Encyclopedia of Christmas* (Toronto, Ontario: McClelland & Stewart, 2000), 200.

<sup>81</sup> Flanders, *Christmas: A Biography*, 34.

<sup>82</sup> Perry, *Christmas in Germany*, 34.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

different ideas. But one thing was for sure, as the holiday moved more indoors, and more into a familial space, there was a push to transform the more uncomfortable figures into something palatable to middle-class Germans.<sup>84</sup> By the 1880s, in Germany, the *Christkind* and *Weihnachtsmann* dominated the general celebrations.<sup>85</sup>

While Germans celebrated a variety of Christmas figures, Americans standardization of Santa Claus into a singular figure occurred relatively quickly. The usage of Santa to portray the Christmas message would become an American tradition throughout films, stories, and advertisements. In the early 1800s, John Pintard wrote in his journal frequently about a character named St. Claas who would deliver presents to children, and Washington Irving popularized the character in the 1820s alongside Clement Clarke Moore, who wrote *A Visit from St. Nicholas*. By the 1840s, Santa Claus was a commercial icon and used by many different store owners to attract the attention of customers, and German Americans began to recognize and adopt this idolization as well. Santa Claus' character whose imagery was solidified over the course of eighteen years in the late 19th century by Thomas Nast's transformation of a plebian figure smoking a short pipe to an old, fat, jolly man smoking a long pipe.<sup>86</sup> While Nast would not draw the Santa known today until 1862, Santa Claus' personhood had already begun to take shape, and these were the men that popularized him.

At the turn of the 20th century, advertisements from a multitude of companies in Philadelphia used Santa to sell and market holiday gifts to the masses. In German language newspapers, there were many mentions of Santa beginning in 1890 whereas the German equivalent, St. Nikolaus, was not mentioned at all in their advertisements. This can be

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<sup>84</sup> Perry, *Christmas in Germany*, 36.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>86</sup> Nissenbaum, *The Battle for Christmas*, 65.



understood as a result of American vendors selling to a German-American audience, but also demonstrated the German-American understanding of the figure and their adoption of what he symbolized into their mythology. This largely evokes the trans-cultural growth of Christmas in America.

*Weihnachtsmann* is the secularized version of St. Nikolaus descending from a German Protestant idea; he is defined as “an old man walking in a long robe with a peaked hood or winter cap; he carries a bag or basket of presents for the good children and switches for the bad.”<sup>87</sup> But the *Weihnachtsmann* is never named in the publications in German-language newspapers, “Santa Claus” is always the name used. Advertisers used Santa as a way to entice consumers to purchase Christmas gifts for their loved ones, and thus combined the emotional, magical aspects of Christmas with a consumer-based model targeted at German migrants and their children in Philadelphia, just as advertisements used the German specific *Weihnachtsstimmung* to persuade consumers into buying gifts.

St. Nikolaus does not appear in advertisements in German-language newspapers like Santa Claus does. The usage of the American symbol demonstrates how even though some advertisers made the conscious decision to translate their ads to German for accessibility to this community, they did not do the same in regard to this cherished character. The adoption of Santa Claus seems to be a sign of Americanization. Unlike the tradition of *belsnickling* brought by the “Old Stock” German immigrants, which was a remnant from their homeland, this wave of German immigrants during the mid-1800s experienced a different, tamer version of these folk characters in their homeland which allowed them to adopt Santa Claus as the symbol of the holiday much easier. Choosing not to pull on the idea of St. Nikolaus or other folk figures shows

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<sup>87</sup> Bowler, *Encyclopedia of Christmas*, 245.

how pervasive Santa Claus was, and even though these are German communities, they are American as well. It is not ridiculous to perceive that German Americans recognize the symbol of Santa and are enticed by his presence in these ads. Santa remains an important aspect of Christmas advertisements throughout the turn of the 20th century.

Santa Claus' frequent appearances demonstrated how Philadelphian advertisers observed that this character remained functional in their translated advertisements, thus concluding that many German Americans had likely adopted him into their thought-world. The appearance of Santa in consumer media comes from all areas of industrial vendors. Whether it is the Hart Cycle Co depicting images of bicycles (**Figure 7**) or Snellenburg reminding customers that "Santa Claus has arrived." (*Santa Claus ist Angekommen*) or Adolph Heller acknowledging that "Santa Claus is here" (*Santa Claus [ist hier]*); vendors constantly reminded their German-American patrons that December was the month of Christmas and Santa. Even when publishing advertisements in German, these businesses did not utilize St. Nikolas as the name for Santa Claus, instead Santa retained his name because the two figures, although connected, began to reflect different intentions and connotations. It was like Santa Claus had a way of covering the consumer nature of mass-gift giving simply by existing.<sup>88</sup> Whereas St. Nikolaus was connected to the German *Weihnachtsstimmung* and reflected the Germanic culture ties of the newspapers' readers, Santa Claus demonstrated how German language newspapers were using American images to help their readers fit into the culture of the United States and become German Americans.

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<sup>88</sup> Nissenbaum, *The Battle for Christmas*, 172.



**Figure 7:** *Philadelphia Demokrat*, 12.06.1890, HathiTrust - German Society of Pennsylvania Historical Newspaper Collection

Newspaper advertisers continued to try and reach a population of Germans Americans who had begun to adopt, or already had, Santa Claus during the early 20th century. Advertisers used Santa to sell what he traditionally brought to the homes of all good boys and girls — toys. In 1907, the *Philadelphia Demokrat* published Harry H. Kurtz’s ad that depicted images of Santa and the words “Dolls, doll furniture (*Puppen, Puppen-Möbel*)... Bring your children (*Kinder*) here... the prices are the lowest in Philadelphia” (**Figure 8**). Kurtz utilized the imagery of Santa coupled with low prices and the word *Puppen*, meaning dolls, to entice parents and children alike into the store on Girard Ave and Marshall Street. Using the imagery of Santa embedded a well-known figure into an advertisement promising low prices; whereas Santa brought toys for free, parents could have the lowest prices in Philadelphia. Santa was a singular image that conveyed a supreme notion; as Judith Flanders writes in *Christmas: A Biography*, Santa “[fostered] an immediate link **in** the customers’ minds between the man and the gifts that he might bring if only

the customer would enter their shops.”<sup>89</sup> The instruction seems to almost have come from Santa himself through the utilization of his image and the call out to parents and children specifically.

Bringen Sie die Kinder hierher, um Kurtz's große Spielwaren-Ansicht-  
lung zu sehen und beachten Sie, daß  
die Preise die niedrigsten in Phila-  
delphia sind.

**Puppen**  
Sonderheit von Puppen nach neuester  
Mode gefertigt. Alle haben elegante  
Öhre, mit kunstvollstem Besatz, der zum  
Kostüm paßt. Wir setzen einen Vorzug-  
ten und großen Vorrath zu \$1.00.  
Gefüllte-Puppen, 10 C. und aufw.  
Puppen, 35 C., 75 C., \$1.25, \$2.00  
und darüber.  
Puppen, die „Papa“ und „Mama“  
sagen, 75 C.  
Kleber-Puppen, 50 C. und darüber.  
Süßes gefüllte Puppen, 50 C., 75 C.,  
\$1.00, \$1.50, \$2.00, \$3.50, \$4.00 und  
\$5.00.  
Diese Puppen können entziffern und  
zum Schreiben gebraucht werden, sie haben  
intelligente Augenwimpern.

**Puppen-Möbel**  
Vollständige Puppen-Güter; Parlor  
Zuhrs. Ausgezeichnete. Teller, mit Pup-  
penstücken darauf.  
Eine Garnitur Teller, 25 C., 35 C.,  
50 C., 75 C. und darüber bis zu \$2.50.  
Messingene Puppen-Schlappbetten, 50C.  
Puppen-Stoffe, 50 C. und darüber.  
Kleider, \$1.00 und bis zu \$6.00.  
Puppen Ge-Garis und entzifferte Pe-  
namburgen, \$1.50 bis zu \$14.00.  
Miniaturn-Bücher, Gracery Stiers und  
Zielfernrohr von 65 C. an.

**Verchiedenes.**  
Automobil von \$4.50 bis \$25.00.  
Laterna Magica, \$1.25 bis \$5.00.  
Bewegliche Bilder - Maschinen, \$4.00,  
\$6.00 und \$8.50.  
Gepreßene, Pferde, Kühe, Kanonen,  
Soldaten-Uniformen, Miniaturn - Ställe,  
Blas Sack, Hornet und Trommetn aller  
Arten. Schachbret, Schachbret, Schach-  
bret, Wandtafel, Pferdegebanne  
aller Arten, Sumpt-Zampity, Hirtens,  
große und kleine Schützen, Spiele aller  
Art. Miniaturn-Säge mit Geleisen, Lan-  
nen, Telegraphen-Platten, Stationen,  
Wägen, Schwebel und Eisenen, von  
25 C. bis zu \$10.00.  
Spielplanen aus Gifen und mechanische  
Spielplanen aller Arten.

**Harry H. Kurtz,**  
(INCORPORATED)  
Girard Ave. and Marshall Street  
STORE OPEN EVERY EVENING  
UNTIL 9 P. M.

**Figure 8:** In *Philadelphia Demokrat*, published on December 18, 1907, Harry Kurtz's advertisement called out to children to come visit the store and utilized Santa Claus as a design element to catch the eyes of German-American readers. HathiTrust - German Society of Pennsylvania Historical Newspaper Collection

Kurtz was not the only vendor to utilize Santa's personhood in an effort to sell toys to German-American parents in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Philadelphia. The *Demokrat* published an advertisement page in the same year with imagery of Santa surrounded by toys and ribbons with the tagline, in German, “*Wo Sie Ihre Weihnachts Einkäufe machen sollten*” which translates to “Where You Should Do your Christmas Shopping” (**Figure 9**). This display featured multiple stores with their top items, locations, hours of operation, and prices. This page in the *Demokrat* allowed consumers to look at their options without even leaving the comfort of their own home;

<sup>89</sup> Flanders, *Christmas: A Biography*, 133.

they were able to browse through what different businesses could provide them and their families.

The use of holiday imagery embedded a larger consequence into this ad—no longer was this simply a page of businesses to peruse, but instead the infusion of American iconography which symbolized the creation of a blended German-American identity. Buying gifts to fulfill the spirit of Santa was offered to German-American consumers; no longer were St. Nikolaus' chocolates enough, not when Santa brought clothes and ribbons and toys. The choice to use the imagery of a jolly, fat man with a beard and a fuzzy suit instead of St. Nikolaus who reflected an imagery akin to a saint or bishop was a way to distinguish the American consumer act of gift giving from a religious duty. Santa became a way to transform German cultural ties into German-American consumers.



**Figure 9:** *Philadelphia Demokrat*, 12.11.1907, HathiTrust - German Society of Pennsylvania Historical Newspaper Collection

Santa remained in use in German-language newspapers into the 1910s. In 1913, the *Philadelphia Tageblatt* published an advertisement from Confidential Convenient Credit which showcased Santa holding an oversized ring and a pocket watch with a large moon in the background (**Figure 10**). This ad told readers to not forget *Niemanden*, or no one, this year. The usage of large objects of value, a diamond ring and a pocket watch emphasized the value of

items expected at Christmas time and the heightened level of consumer culture. In the same year, the *Tageblatt* published a section from Delaware House Furnishing Company titled, in English, “Christmas Gift Suggestions” adorned with two wreaths of holly and a Santa poking through each. The usage of holly and Santa displays how deeply embedded these images were into the holiday spirit and the consumer culture behind it; whether pulling on the tradition of the advent wreath in Germany or the American wreath on the front door, the Furnishing Company attempted to use these pictures coupled with their advertisements in German to draw the attention of a German-American viewer. The usage of Santa was found in German-language newspapers in Philadelphia from the late 19th century into the 20th; it was not new to use these holiday images as a technique to sell more gifts to consumers, but it did show how no matter the immigrant community’s culture or history around the holiday, once in American consumerism, German Americans learned the symbols and adopted them.



**Figure 10:** *Philadelphia Tageblatt*, 12.07.1913. HathiTrust - German Society of Pennsylvania Historical Newspaper Collection

Santa Claus' appearance in advertisements targeted at German Americans during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries illustrates the notion that these immigrants were adopting American iconography and culture into their communities. The commercialization of Santa Claus exists from his conception in America. No Coca-Cola ad would be complete without the jolly man in red suit, but this is in no way new to today's winter advertisements. From the late 19th century, many companies employed this image in different papers, with different products. The usage of Santa Claus highlights that German Americans understood this character's association with Christmas time in America despite him not traditionally being a character in German Christmas mythology. Santa *is* the gift giving aspect of Christmas in the United States. St. Nikolaus was not utilized by advertisers in German-language papers nor was there a special holiday message on St. Nikolaustag in early December. By the 1880s, Santa had a fixed identity and purpose for the American merchant; he was intrinsically connected to the American department stores that began to arise and placated the sensitivity of consumers towards the new mass-industrial sphere.<sup>90</sup> Santa Claus becomes the most important Christmas figure in the American celebration, and through the adoption of this jolly man German Americans grow more akin to their generational American neighbors.

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<sup>90</sup> John Storey "The Invention of the English Christmas" in *Christmas, Ideology and Popular Culture*, ed. Sheila Whiteley (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 22.

### **G.A. Schwarz, A Forgotten Man Sells An Identity To His Community**

Santa Claus was the image associated with Christmas materialism, but without Philadelphian merchants purchasing ads and selling their products a Christmas complete with presents and parties would not come to fruition. The merchants' advertisements reflect how German identity was perceived and responded to by business-owners. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many advertisements in Philadelphian German-language newspapers for clothing, toys, music, or alcohol came from non-German businesses. However, one German-immigrant ran a business that demonstrated how those within the community understood the psyche of their compatriots; his name was Gustav A. Schwarz, and his toy store would become prolific for a time.

The brothers Gustav A. Schwarz, Frederick August Otto Schwarz, and Richard Schwarz all took after their father, Henry, and entered the toy business after the family arrived in the United States around the Civil War. The Schwarz family came from a part of what is now modern-day Germany, *Westfalen*. Henry established his store in Baltimore around 1862, Richard in Boston, and Frederick's toy store in New York City would become one of the most famous in the world—FAO Schwarz. There is not much history written or documentation available on the Schwarz family, but what is known allows readers to understand the Schwarz family to have become pillars of their communities.<sup>91</sup> It can be understood that G.A. Schwarz's store was a well-known business in the German-American community as most of their advertisements even during the holiday season were simple and non-descriptive. The importance of G.A Schwarz toy store was demonstrated by the fact that the inside of their business was captured as an albumen

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<sup>91</sup> Ed Sandford, "Gustav A Schwarz, Aka G.A. Schwarz, Aka FAO Schwarz's Philadelphia Toy Store.," Antique Toys.com, July 7, 2020, <https://www.antiquetoys.com/gustav-a-schwarz-aka-g-a-schwarz-aka-fao-schwarzs-philadelphia-toy-stoy/?v=7516fd43adaa>.



on stereograph mount. G.A. Schwarz demonstrates how German Americans crafted their new identities around industries and utilized American capitalism to carve a space out for themselves.

Before Schwarz could rely on simply his name to sell Christmas toys, he experimented with the usage of both German and English to best access the German-American consumers that he sought. In 1877, Schwarz used German and published a large ad with lots of descriptions in the *Philadelphia Freie Presse*. Schwarz noted that his business was a “*Große Ausstellung*,” meaning Large Exhibition, of Christmas goods with extremely low prices (**Figure 11**). Schwarz pulled his consumers into the business by utilizing the German language and affordable prices. He noted the store's location at 1006 Chestnut Straße,<sup>92</sup> again using a German word, and published under his name of Schwarz. All of this together would indicate to readers that he was a member of their community. In 1882, Schwarz again used the same ad as he had in 1877, but he employed more artistic fonts and spoke directly to consumers, writing: “You are politely invited to view it” (*Sie sind höflichst zur besichtigung derselben eingeladen*). Schwarz used his membership within the German-American community to speak directly to readers and invite them to his store. His more decorated advertisement also showcased a development into learning how to entice the new German-American customer. G.A. Schwarz may be a part of the German-American community, but as a merchant in late 19th century America, he was still learning how to sell his products to this new developing German-American consumer and what words worked best on them.

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<sup>92</sup> Street



**Figure 11:** *Philadelphia Freie Presse*, 12.10.1877, HathiTrust - German Society of Pennsylvania Historical Newspaper Collection

In 1886, Schwarz continued to rely heavily on his name to draw people into his toy emporium and utilized both English and German in his attempt to bring German Americans into his store. In the *Philadelphia Freie Presse*, Schwarz published an ad in English titled “Christmas Chimes / Grand Christmas Opening of TOYS and Holiday Presents.” All of this was printed on a single large bell (**Figure 12**). The exact same ad was printed in 1890 in the *Philadelphia Demokrat*. The continued usage of this straightforward ad in English illustrates the ability of Schwarz to simplify his advertisements and stay reliant on the same holiday ad year after year. It is a short and simple advertisement which allows readers to know exactly what to expect at 1006 Chestnut Street. Printed on a trading card in 1880, Schwarz invited readers to the 21st Christmas Exhibition at his toy store. Relying simply on his name demonstrated that Schwarz’s toy store was a strong and trustworthy business. Additionally, Schwarz’s choice to print his ads in English instead of German, even when marketing to his own community, demonstrates both that the

community understood and used English proficiently and that Schwarz was a strong enough name that the English print was not off-putting for German consumers. Schwarz's name itself was trusted enough in the community to carry the weight of his marketing strategy.



**Figure 12:** *Philadelphia Freie Presse*, 12.01.1886, HathiTrust - German Society of Pennsylvania Historical Newspaper Collection

After the turn of the century, Schwarz maintained his simple ads, but embellished them with minimal slogans and encouragement. Schwarz's ads started to appear in German with taglines like "Christmas Exhibit" (*Weihnachtsausstellung*) and adorned with festive frames such as pieces of holly (**Figure 13**). Schwarz's increased marketing effort within his ads indicates that he may have faced a decline in sales or new attitudes of German Americans which resulted in his need to improve his simple advertisements to full-fledged publications. By 1907, when the "*Weihnachtsausstellung*" ad appeared, Schwarz had been celebrating the Christmas exhibition for 48 years, and this may have come with a need to refresh and entice new people to his store. The return of German to Schwarz's ads also aligns with when the German-American community in Philadelphia was becoming predominately first and second generation Americans instead of immigrants; the older generation of German Americans pushed for a return to the German

language among younger generations, so Schwarz may also be following the trend within his community.<sup>93</sup> Schwarz's maintained status in the community allowed for the reliance on purely his name and being a part of the German-American community allowed him to understand its linguistic trajectory as an insider.



**Figure 13:** *Philadelphia Demokrat*, 12.04.1907, HathiTrust - German Society of Pennsylvania Historical Newspaper Collection

In 1913 and 1916, Schwarz returned to simpler advertisements, but he maintained the usage of both of the languages German-Americans recognized. In 1913, the ad was in English, and in 1916, Schwarz published an ad in German. Unlike other companies, Schwarz's use of English and German did not show a steady trend; instead, Schwarz used both almost interchangeably. The words "toys" and "Christmas" can be understood to be recognized as much as the words *Weihnachten*<sup>94</sup> and *Spielwaren*<sup>95</sup> because of Schwarz's ads (**Figure 14**). Perhaps by this point, language was not a factor in advertising anymore; enough time had passed where the second generation of German Americans who had grown up in an English-speaking world were the ones picking up these newspapers and for them language barriers may have no longer been

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<sup>93</sup> Kazal, *Old Stock*, 40.

<sup>94</sup> Christmas

<sup>95</sup> Toys

an issue. Schwarz was able to rely on his name and these simple words to draw consumers into his store because German Americans developed a symbolic and linguistic proficiency in American consumer culture.



**Figure 14:** *Philadelphia Tageblatt*, 12.03.1913 HathiTrust - German Society of Pennsylvania Historical Newspaper Collection

G.A. Schwarz relied on his good German name, the usage of both English and German, and the consistent appearance of his advertisements in German language newspapers to pull consumers into his store. His story represents a trajectory of German Americans adapting to American society while still reinforcing their individual identities as German-Americans. G.A. Schwarz knew the community he was marketing to because he was a part of it; his marketing techniques reveal the greater understanding of the desires of German Americans and how to market to this specific group of immigrants.

### **John Wanamaker, An American Meeting and Creating German-American Consumers**

While Schwarz demonstrated how one German-American businessman in Philadelphia understood his community, John Wanamaker, a generational American and Quaker, demonstrates how outsiders understood German Americans and their continuous identity building during the Christmas season. Wanamaker tailored his incredibly successful advertising techniques to the German-American consumers who he desired to draw into his store. John Wanamaker was an icon to commercialization and the advertising world. His crafted imagery and slogans created eye-catching advertisements that changed modern advertising.

Wanamaker was an outsider to the German-American community; he was a patriotic Quaker and not an immigrant himself. Wanamaker was not looking to service specifically the German community, but rather all communities so that his business could garner the most customers. As such, Wanamaker had to learn how to adjust his advertising style to capture the attention of German Americans and over the years experimented with using both English and German in the text of his advertisements. Wanamaker had a larger impact on the wider history of Philadelphia, but his importance to this thesis is that through his use of both traditional and modern Christmas imagery, a multiplicity of language, and a new style of advertising, he demonstrated how generational Americans (Americans whose family had been in the United States for generations) understood the new identity which the German Americans were building.

In 1861, Wanamaker established his men's clothing store in Philadelphia which would grow to be a legendary department store, so large that in 1911, he had to open an even bigger location.<sup>96</sup> Wanamaker himself had a unique career as a businessman, but it was his department store that would grow to notoriety in the minds of many Philadelphians. His store was more than

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<sup>96</sup> Dorothy Gondos Beers, "The Centennial City 1865-1876" in *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History*, ed. Russell F. Weigley (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982), 444.

simply a location to buy the finest goods, but also “a unique public institution and powerful symbol of Philadelphia’s commercial vitality.”<sup>97</sup> His specific column style advertisements utilized stories and imagery to sell his products instead of simple ads with catchy slogans.

During the age of industrialization and the rise of consumerism that was the late 19th and early 20th centuries, department stores were a new development that gained immense popularity; Wanamaker took this innovation to new heights. This time in American history came with new found disposable wealth for many consumers and shopping itself became a leisure activity.<sup>98</sup> Wanamaker took advantage of this moment by developing his establishment from a men’s clothing shop to a full-fledged department store which provided for a person’s every need.<sup>99</sup> The new location opened complete with a 1,500-seat auditorium and a radio studio which broadcasted Wanamaker organ music overseas.<sup>100</sup> The new store’s importance to Philadelphia was confirmed when President William Howard Taft delivered the dedication speech for the new store.<sup>101</sup>

Wanamaker’s had grown to be an institution important to daily life within Philadelphia and much of its popularity was due to Wanamaker’s prioritization of advertising. Wanamaker’s success running daily ads through the 1880s and 1890s influenced other businesses to follow suit; Wanamaker was so committed to advertising that he spent over a quarter of a million dollars on newspaper advertising in 1890<sup>102</sup> which amounts to over \$8 million in 2024.<sup>103</sup> Wanamaker

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<sup>97</sup> Sarah S. Malino, review of *John Wanamakers: Philadelphia Merchant*, by Herbert Ershkowitz, *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 2001, 147.

<sup>98</sup> Peter Huff, review of *Wanamaker's Temple: The Business of Religion in an Iconic Department Store*, by Nicole C. Kirk, *Journal of Unitarian Universalist History*, January, 2018, 175.

<sup>99</sup> Bradley, “John Wanamaker’s ‘Temple of Patriotism,’” 18, 23.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>101</sup> Lloyd M. Abernethy, “Progressivism 1905-1919” in *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History*, ed. Russell F. Weigley (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982), 526.

<sup>102</sup> Bradley, “John Wanamaker’s ‘Temple of Patriotism,’” 28.

<sup>103</sup> Estimated: \$8,427,087.91 by <https://www.officialdata.org/us/inflation/1890?amount=250000>

was the hallmark for a savvy businessman during the early 20th century; his department store led the way for many that followed. The specific focus on advertising as a way to draw people in remained true across many different publishers and languages.

Wannamaker understood that German migrants and their children would be valuable customers during the Christmas season, so he was attuned to the advertisements that these populations responded to and manipulated the language of his ads to service German Americans. In 1882, the *Philadelphia Freie Presse* published an advertisement from Wanamaker for his department store in German. The slogan reads “A new bargain for every individual day (Sunday excluded) until the 30th of December.”<sup>104</sup> Wanamaker alerted the German-American readers by advertising in German that there was a bargain to be found at his store. It is clear here that there is an understanding that the best way to reach the German-American community is to use their mother tongue instead of English. Due to the increase in immigration during the mid-1800s, by the 1880s, it was likely that readership included both immigrants from the Germanic world and their children, the first generation of German Americans born in the United States. This entire ad is written in German and includes a mass paragraph discussing costs and benefits of the products.

However, in 1886, in the same newspaper, Wanamaker published an advertisement completely in English. Wanamaker adopted a similar single-column format to his advertising which became a hallmark of a Wanamaker ad. The 1886 advertisement included lines such as “Holiday hints. We would print the whole paper full of them if the Editor would allow and we thought you would read. But you wouldn’t. Advertising without readers don’t pay. Therefore, hints here and there” (**Figure 15**). These ads often included single paragraphs, imagery of the goods, and the address of where each product could be found within the store, and of course the

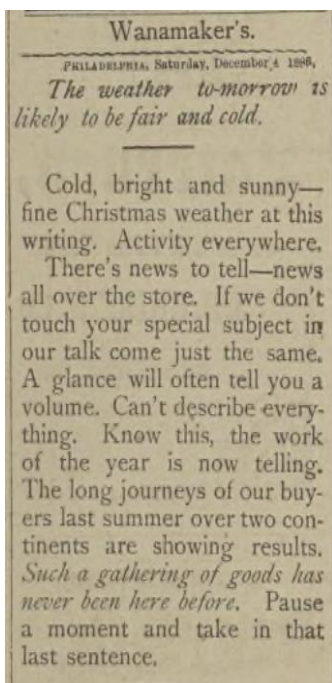
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<sup>104</sup> Ein neuer Bargain für Jeden Einzelnen Tag (Sonntag ausgenommen) Bis zum 30. Dezember.



Chestnut Street address at the bottom.<sup>105</sup> Wanamaker was making his advertisements simple to read and understand, but also rich in information.

Wanamaker's choice to switch to English later in the decade is interesting. It raises the question: what language becomes most accessible for this community? As readers transition from primarily being immigrants to first-generation Americans, there may have been a larger group of German Americans that could understand English and prefer reading it. This showcases the Americanization of not only German Americans' culture, but also the anglicization of their community's language and publications.



**Figure 15:** *Philadelphia Freie Presse*, 12.07.1882, 12.04.1886. HathiTrust - German Society of Pennsylvania Historical Newspaper Collection

Wanamaker's advertisements in the German-language press, however, did not remain in English; in 1890, readers could find the same style ad (columns and imagery as in 1886) in the *Philadelphia Demokrat* in German. This advertisement is published throughout December and

<sup>105</sup> Bradley, "John Wanamaker's 'Temple of Patriotism,'" 26.

features different imagery in each ad. There is one with a young girl playing with dolls and another of Santa Claus holding a sign which reads “I go to Wanamakers for Toys.” Wanamaker is using his new style of advertisements and telling a story throughout the holiday month while returning to the language of the German community. Wanamaker is using American imagery, Santa, and English coupled with the German language and conveying an emotive trigger to encourage German-American readers to visit his store (**Figure 16**). Wanamaker is providing a break from the reality of consumption through these elegant ads which distract readers from the true motivation behind every merchants’ advertisements—profit. The use of German once again may be due to the community’s push for German literacy among their new generations.<sup>106</sup>

But Wanamaker continued to use English in the imagery and introduced the usage of Santa as a selling factor. He now combined the American imagery with the German-language to make his ads and thus his products accessible to the new identity of German-American. Wanamaker reminded the German readers of his advertisements that “The prices are far below other prices that have been offered before”<sup>107</sup> and that his store is “Open evenings for Christmas,” or *Offen Abends für Weihnachten*. Wanamaker’s usage of the iconic single-column adverts remained consistent across different newspapers, and thus different communities.<sup>108</sup> Despite translating the advertisements for German consumption, the technique remained the same revealing that German Americans responded to the same type of ads that their Anglo-American counterparts did, but through their own language. By marketing his store and its products using the German language, Wanamaker combined his larger strategy of advertising and individualized it by translating his ad into German for the German-American community.

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<sup>106</sup> Kazal, *Old Stock*, 83-84.

<sup>107</sup> Die Preise sind weit unter allen preisen die je zuvor [offeriert] worden.

<sup>108</sup> Bradley, “John Wanamaker’s ‘Temple of Patriotism,’” 28.

**Wanamaker's.**

Philadelphia, Freitag, 5. Dezember 1890.

**Das Wetter wird heute voraussichtlich schön sein.**

**Puppen.** Kindliche Dinge, aber welch Leben bringen sie in's Haus. Die ganze Jugendchaar findet Freude an Puppen. Puppen sind so univiersell, wie die Zivilisation, ohne Puppen kein echtes Weihnachten. Der Franzose Juvenau ist weltberühmt nur wegen seiner Puppen. Die arme Waise theilt mit den Dämchen der höheren Schulklassen das Interesse an Puppen. Geben Sie einmal Acht auf die Kleinen, die bewundernd vor einem Puppen-Schauenspieler stehen. Man kann da etwas lernen.

Unsere große Puppen-„Verodfierung“ umfasst alle Sorten, von der niedlichen kleinen, unbelledeten Puppe zu 1 Cent bis zu der Luxus-Puppe zu \$40. Die Puppen gehören verschiedenen Klassen an, aus Papier und Papiermache, der neueste Triumph der Erfindungskunst; aus Glaceleder, aus Muslin und aus Porzellan; mit Gelenken und steif; verchiedenes Haar, bald ist es gemalt, bald glöck, bald ächt; einige haben gemalte Augen, andere Glasaugen und in der Größe variiren sie von kaum zollgroßen bis zu solchen zu drei Fuß vier Zoll großen.

**Wanamaker's.**

Philadelphia, Mittwoch, 24. December 1890.

**Das Wetter wird heute voraussichtlich schön sein.**

Store offen heute Abend.


Heute thun wir in diesem Jahre zum letzten Male der Weihnachtsfeierlage in unseren Laden-Neuigkeiten Erwähnung. Ehe Sie die nächsten Items in dieser Spalte lesen, sind die Strümpfe gefüllt und geleert, die süßen alten Legenden werden in der kindlichen Einbildungskraft ihre Pflicht gethan haben, die Musik der Lobgesänge wird verstummt sein, die Kraft der Springluft im Metall-Geschäft ist gebrochen und wird der gewöhnlichen Ebbe und Fluth Platz machen.

Heute ist der letzte Tag vor Weihnachten 1890. Hunderttausend von Dingen sind noch zu erledigen. Einer, der's versteht, hält, daß mindestens 80,000 oder 90,000 Transactionen heute hier stattfinden werden — schon an sich ein riesiges Geschäft. Wir sind immer noch bereit — gerüstet mit den Waaren und stets zu prompter Behienung bereit, Ihrer Befehle gewärtig.

Einige wenige Rathschläge mögen von Nutzen sein.

Sie kennen den einen Platz in der ganzen Stadt für Spielzeug. So ist es auch mit Santa Claus. Die Schränke und Counters beweisen Das. Aber trotzdem sind Sie hier noch so viel Sachen, wie Sie in einem gewöhnlichen Laden finden.

**Es'st Wanamaker's für Sie!**



**Figure 16:** *Philadelphia Demokrat*, 12.05, 24.1890, HathiTrust - German Society of Pennsylvania Historical Newspaper Collection

Wanamaker was a clever businessman and is remembered that way throughout Philadelphia. Through his publication in the German-language press, it is clear outsider businesses learned how to best access the German-American consumer through trial and error, using different languages, images, and styles of ads. Wanamaker, although prolific in Philadelphia, acted as one example of non-German stores and businessmen reaching into the German-American community to access more consumers. Wanamaker's store was one of a kind in its ingenuity and ability to connect to those across the city, and it left a legacy as one of the

greatest department stores in the nation.<sup>109</sup> Wanamaker's pull on specifically American holiday imagery along with the community specific language showcases how the cultures became intertwined, and the duality of German Americans still retaining their separate cultural identity while adopting new American traits.

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<sup>109</sup> Burt and Davies, "The Iron Age 1866-1905" in *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History*, 486.

## Choirs and Records: The Building and Deconstruction of Community Through Sound

Wanamaker and G.A. Schwarz demonstrated how businessmen understood marketing to the German American community, but what German Americans were being sold reveals another narrative about German-American consumers and identity in Gilded Age America. Many business owners began to pull on the German communities' ties to music as a way to sell new products to the German Americans during Christmas. Music had always been a major aspect of the Christmas holiday even predating the advent of the carols of today. Ethnic practices like that of music making often unified German Americans despite class differences.<sup>110</sup> The music and musical traditions Germans brought with them as they immigrated to the United States were unique and spread outside of the boundaries in their communities.

Through the course of the nineteenth century, a multitude of Christmas songs sung today were composed,<sup>111</sup> and different Christian denominations in the Germanic world utilized the new availability of these songs in the mid-1800s to control the leisure activities of a growing population and focus celebrations on festivities at home.<sup>112</sup> “*Stille Nacht*,” or better known as “Silent Night,” is one of the most iconic Christmas songs of all time; this song was originally a poem written by Austrian Josef Mohr in 1816.<sup>113</sup> In 1818, Franz Xaver Gruber converted the poem into a song and performed in Salzburg as a celebration of the Christmas holiday.<sup>114</sup> The piece would be translated into over 300 languages.

Just as “*Stille Nacht*” would make its way into the common American population through translation, modern technology made its way into the German-American community which

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<sup>110</sup> Kazal, *Old Stock*, 144.

<sup>111</sup> Juliane Brauer, “‘Stille Nacht’ Time and Again: Christmas Songs and Feelings” in *the Public Work of Christmas: Difference & Belonging in Multicultural Societies*, ed. Pamela E. & Monique Scheer (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2019), 62.

<sup>112</sup> Storey, “The Invention of the English Christmas” in *Christmas, Ideology and Popular Culture*, 100.

<sup>113</sup> Bowler, *Encyclopedia of Christmas*, 206.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

advanced the consumption and spread of German Christmas music. Specific companies and businesses utilized new words like “*Sprechmaschine*” to market their products to German Americans.<sup>115</sup> Music acts as a cultural marker that has always been consumed, but with the advent of industrialization and consumer culture, some Philadelphia companies co-opted it to sell products during holiday times in ways that helped shape German-American identity.

German-immigrants brought their connection with live music to American culture and built a city full of music. Before music devices like the Grafonola were introduced in the early 1900s, the German-American community in Philadelphia often enjoyed live concerts from their community’s choirs and ensembles. The earliest Christmas music was religious in nature and often composed by churchmen for theological purposes;<sup>116</sup> Germans often preferred these religious carols and found that collective singing became one of the most important aspects of German Christmas.<sup>117</sup> Many of them carried this tradition with them when they migrated to Philadelphia. The city had a large music scene during the 1800s which included the Germania Orchestra, a Männerchor, a Beethoven Society, and a Philharmonic Society.<sup>118</sup> Apparent in the names, many of these organizations had a German influence; the Germania Orchestra was the predecessor to what would become the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1900.<sup>119</sup> The German community itself had two separate choral federations: United Singers of Philadelphia for the middle-class and the United Workers’ Singing Societies for the working class. German Americans retained their tradition of music making and imparted it onto other Philadelphians.

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<sup>115</sup> A word referencing the first invented machine which replicated spoken word.

<sup>116</sup> Flanders, *Christmas: A Biography*, 30.

<sup>117</sup> Marchetti, “Situating German *Volkskunde*’s Christmas Reflections on Spatial and Historical Constructions” in *the Public Work of Christmas: Difference & Belonging in Multicultural Societies*, 64.

<sup>118</sup> Beers, “The Centennial City 1865-1876” in *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History*, 451.

<sup>119</sup> Burt and Davies, “The Iron Age 1866-1905” in *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History*, 516.

German Americans kept their ritual of musical community gatherings during the holiday time and published advertisements welcoming the German-American public to join. In 1877, the *Philadelphia Freie Presse* published an advertisement for the “Men’s Choir Hall, Christmas market” (*Männerchor-Halle, Weihnachts-Bazar*) which ran from the 17th of December until the 31st in celebration of the holiday season; in the advertisement, it notes that an orchestra of 15 men and the Philadelphia Opera will be performing on *Eröffnungs Abend*, or Opening Night (**Figure 17**). The *Weihnachts-Bazar* is not only an example of a tradition that was brought from Germany to the USA, but also the aspect of live music blended into this traditional space reflects the embedded nature music had within the holiday season for German Americans. Outside of the holiday period, choirs were important community builders for German Americans, and so it is unsurprising that this practice continued and was heightened during this major period of familial, cultural, and communal connections.



**Figure 17:** *Philadelphia Freie Presse*, 12.10.1877, HathiTrust - German Society of Pennsylvania Historical Newspaper Collection

Beginning in the 1890s, Philadelphia’s German language newspapers featured advertisements not only for musical events but for instruments themselves. M. Scherzer

published an advertisement in the *Philadelphia Demokrat* for pianos instructing readers “For Christmas buy a piano” (*Für Weihnachten kauft ein Piano*) (**Figure 18**). Scherzer listed all of his prices which range from \$125 to \$250.<sup>120</sup> His pianos had a range of costs indicating that pianos were a luxury but one that could be made accessible to more consumers. Collective singing was a common cultural practice of the bourgeoisie in the 19th century Germanic world; these pianos allow for this tradition to continue as German Americans transition to life in the United States.

Schomacker also had an ad in the 1890 *Demokrat* for Pianos with “Extraordinary (*Außerordentliche*) Bargains” to appeal to a wider audience with affordable prices for his pianos. Schomacker used a German word, *Außerordentliche*, paired with an English word, *Bargains*, showcasing the ways in which the marketing strategies are advancing to using both English and German for German Americans. Schomacker and Scherzer are making their products available to a wider market and utilizing the holiday season to market their pianos. By encouraging the purchase of these instruments because it is Christmas time and through using the German language, these merchants are connecting the cultural tradition of holiday music to the consumer based *Feiertag* (Holiday) now being celebrated in the States.



<sup>120</sup> Estimated \$4,213.54 to \$8,427.09 by <https://www.officialdata.org/us/inflation/1890?amount=250>



**Figure 18:** *Philadelphia Demokrat*, 12.16.1890, HathiTrust - German Society of Pennsylvania Historical Newspaper Collection

The holiday may have begun to Americanize, and its connection used to sell merchandise, but German Americans retained their love of holiday music as a community. On the 25th of December 1907, the *Philadelphia Demokrat* published on the front page a large image of a Christmas tree with St. Nikolaus and angels above a passage with the title “*Das Weihnachtslied*,” meaning “The Christmas Song.” The entire display was written in German even with the inclusion of Santa Claus and referenced long held traditions. Under this image and title are song lyrics describing the peacefulness of the Christmas night such as “Quiet, quiet, like the angels (*Engel*) are flying.” This publication demonstrates the importance of music to the Christmas holiday for Germans. The image is grand and showcases not only the traditional angels but also the American Santa Claus imagery (**Figure 19**). Together, this image reveals the growth of the German tradition with the American holiday; Germans can retain their cultural markers and grow to include American ones as they become German-Americans. The lyrics reference the voice which comes from a choir once a year to sing the “*holde Melodie*,” or lovely melody. This publication was not only a song itself, but one that recognized the brilliance of the holiday choir. By the early 1900s, Christmas carols had become an important part of the American commercial holiday market,<sup>121</sup> and so the inclusion of both secular and religious imagery here is yet another example of how advertisers perceived German Americans to be blending their identities to create harmonies which honored all parts of who they were becoming. This publication demonstrates how important music remained to German immigrants and their

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<sup>121</sup> Flanders, *Christmas: A Biography*, 213.



The *Philadelphia Tageblatt* published multiple ads for the same store, the Dannemann's Deutschen Laden, throughout the month of December and marketed their *Sprechmaschine*;<sup>122</sup> this machine allowed German-American families to record the music played at their family gatherings. They took out full page ads, changed their taglines, and encouraged people to buy their products with slogans like “Why you buy your Christmas *Sprechmaschine* (*Weihnachts-Sprechmaschine*) at the best and cheapest (*besten und billigen*) in Dannemann's Deutschen Laden?” (**Figure 20**). Dannemann's knew that their customers would like to not only record their music, but listen to it as well, so they paid for an ad marketing their Grafonola: “Columbia Grafonola is the most beautiful Christmas Gift (*Weihnachts-Geschenk*)... with it, you can delight the family: big and small, young and old.” Their marketing strategy of changing their ads constantly allowed their store to be eye catching and endearing to the consumers reading the newspaper. The *Grafonola* was a major item for the Dannemann store, and their machines and records were major parts of their marketing strategy. Germans no longer had to wait to see holiday concerts, they could buy both the machine and the vinyl to listen from the comfort of their own home; as Dannemann said, *es wird ein gut Geschenk für jede Person* (It would be a great gift for anyone.)

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<sup>122</sup> One of the first recording machines

Eine Sprechmaschine COLUMBIA GRAFONOLA ist das schönste Weihnachts-Geschenk.

mit dem Sie Ihre Familie, Freie und Gäste, Jung und Alt, das ganze Jahr hindurch erfreuen können

Die besten aller Zeiten sind

\$10, \$25, \$35, \$50, \$75, \$95, \$100, \$110, \$150, \$200

50c die Woche.

Diese Records fallen in keiner anderen  
deutschen Familie herein:

Soeben eingetroffen: E 2977 John Bull's Klageleid,  
Des deutschen Mittel's Zukunftsraum,  
Gesungen von John Bräuer.

**Dannemann's**  
**Deutscher Laden**  
Deht 1501 1/2 GERMANTOWN AVE. DEHT  
N.O. ECKE JEFFERSON ST  
Prof. Jakob & S. Dannemann, Eigentümer

**Figure 20:** *Philadelphia Tageblatt*, 12.20.1916, HathiTrust - German Society of Pennsylvania Historical Newspaper Collection

The Dannemann store was not the only business advertising and selling *Sprechmaschine* to German Americans that illustrates how businesses were reaching out to customers using German language and culture to sell products. The Philadelphia Talkingmachine Co. also advertised their store under the idea that “Now is the best time to secure your Christmas *Sprechmaschine*” (Figure 21) The Philadelphia Talkingmachine Co. utilized the season of Christmas as the motivation for consumers to purchase their products because with the advent of consumer culture and industrialized products being associated with the holiday season, it was easier to sell products naturally. The Dannemann Deutlicher Laden continued marketing music machines; their ad in 1916 featured a dog, a *Sprechmaschine*, and the tagline “A beautiful, long-

lasting Christmas gift for the whole family – Victrola *Sprechmaschine*.”<sup>123</sup> These new machines pulled on the same Christmas feeling and German cultural markers that other products during the same time did, and they gave Germans a new way to listen to their favorite holiday music once only available to them through live musicians and to establish a German-American culture.



**Figure 21:** *Philadelphia Tageblatt*, 12.01.1916, HathiTrust - German Society of Pennsylvania Historical Newspaper Collection

However, there was a loss with the advent of the Grafanola; German communities which once gathered together to listen and create music were now able to remove the social component from their holiday experience. Singing is a physical act which requires “emotion management” and involves a more active participation than listening to records;<sup>124</sup> the rise in Grafanola ads connected to the American sense of individualism, rooted in the ideals of its founders, and threatened Germanic collectivism, developed through shared customs despite no national bonds. This experience did not go away; by the 1920s, more and more households were purchasing

<sup>123</sup> “Ein herrliches immer währendes Weihnachts-Geschenk für die ganze Familie Victrola Sprechmaschine.”

<sup>124</sup> Brauer, “‘Stille Nacht’ Time and Again: Christmas Songs and Feelings” in *the Public Work of Christmas: Difference & Belonging in Multicultural Societies*, 66.

radio sets to listen to their favorite holiday tunes,<sup>125</sup> and even today, people can walk through the world with small headphones on and listen to a million songs without anyone around them knowing. The new technology brought music easily into the homes of German Americans, but it also called into question the necessity of large performances and collective-singing when one could just put a record on instead which in turn may have undermined a shared German identity.

German-speaking people engaged in community building when in 1877, Robert Tagg paid for the advertisement regarding the choir and orchestra performance to be published to the *Philadelphia Freie Presse*, but it is clear that by the beginning of the 20th century, and as the individualism of American consumerism began to invade, the rise of machine ads rather than concert ads took over. This demonstrates the purchasing power of German-American consumers and their shift in priority of purchase. The tradition of music as a part of the Christmas holiday remains important to German Americans through the turn of the century; this is seen through their purchasing of machines to record music created within the home and family. However, the community no longer needed to come together to experience the music; instead of seeing a choir perform “*Stille Nacht*,” German Americans could now simply listen to a record on their Grafanola. German Americans were able to retain their tradition, but the community engagement lost some of its prominence and thus the tradition itself changed.

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<sup>125</sup> Flanders, *Christmas: A Biography*, 213.

### **Drink With Me To A Community Bonded Through A Glass**

Music was not the only community builder for Germans or German Americans during Christmastime; alcohol played a key role in unifying German-American culture as it had always been an important aspect of unique German mixed-sex familial and holiday gatherings.<sup>126</sup> Germanic peoples were not the only culture that placed alcohol within important connections and traditions. The English tradition of wassailing from as early as the 15th century included going through a town with a cup in exchange for money, food, or a drink.<sup>127</sup> Germans did not leave behind the idea of connection over drinks when they migrated to Philadelphia in the nineteenth century, and this is reflected in the advertisements which both pulled on American and German tastes and the calls-to-action during Prohibition which appeared in many of the city's German-language newspapers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Just as German-immigration increased in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, abstinence movements gained momentum. Christmas had a carnival-esque history when it came to alcohol consumption and drunkenness was an issue in many European countries.<sup>128</sup> Anglo-Americans and German-Americans began to clash over the German consumption of alcohol as Anglo-Americans began to develop temperance ideals.<sup>129</sup> By the mid-1840s, Philadelphia banned the selling of alcohol for a time,<sup>130</sup> and although Christmas had historically been a time of consumption, there were no exceptions to be made. In 1888, due to the anti-alcohol movement, the Cannstatter Volksfest-Verein were forced to cancel their annual festival and the alliance blamed the state law which raised liquor license prices for a substantial drop in their membership.<sup>131</sup> This early resistance to

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<sup>126</sup> Kazal, *Old Stock*, 88.

<sup>127</sup> Flanders, *Christmas: A Biography*, 26.

<sup>128</sup> Bowler, *Encyclopedia of Christmas*, 72.

<sup>129</sup> Kazal, *Old Stock*, 40.

<sup>130</sup> Nissenbaum, *The Battle for Christmas*, 104.

<sup>131</sup> Kazal, *Old Stock*, 40-41.

prohibition ideals informs later publications in German-language newspapers, and different organizations' reliance on this community's reluctance to the American morals on abstinence. Germanic people faced a difficult question in regard to their cultural practices: continue to share drinks as a means of connection with other German Americans or relinquish this tradition to align with the growing American movement.

The advertisement of certain drinks and imported liquors reinforced the idea that German Americans maintained the cultural connection of alcohol consumption even as they assimilated into American culture at the turn of the twentieth century. This may have been most apparent at the time of year dedicated to familial gatherings—Christmas season. Christmas festivities gave way to a time of year when families congregated and shared a Yuletide drink. Focusing on how alcohol is sold and fought against during this heightened time of consumption gives way to a greater understanding of its cultural impact. Alcohol ads and anti-prohibition messages reflect the maintained cultural tradition of alcohol consumption, and its lasting connection, regardless of the country in which these German-speaking peoples resided. As the prohibition movement reached Philadelphia in the early twentieth century, there were calls for action in the newspapers; the Pennsylvania State Brewers' Association posted pleas to the German community during the holiday season in German-language newspapers reflecting their faith in the community's continued support through the new century.

The holiday season was a time of family gatherings and full of folklore characters for the Germanic peoples and advertisers utilized this history to market their goods to German-American populations in Philadelphia. Alcohol maintained its importance throughout the year for German cultural practices, but during the holidays, advertisements featuring small elf or gnome-like creatures began to appear. Elves are traditional figures of North Germanic mythology, even



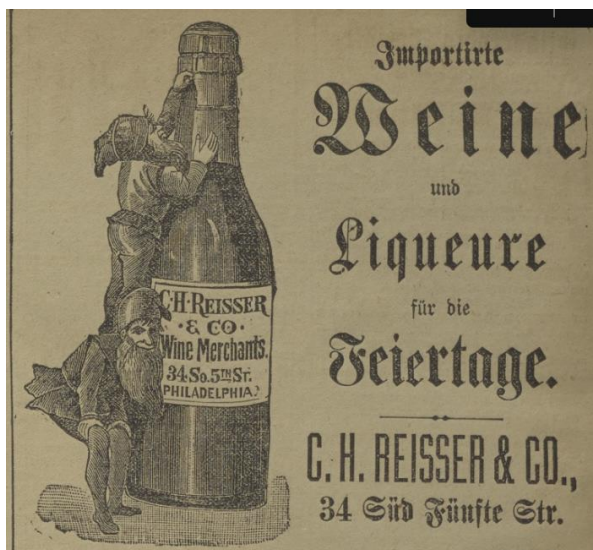
Snorri Sturluson's *Poetic Edda* includes elf figures.<sup>132</sup> CH Reisser & Co published an ad in the *Philadelphia Demokrat* in 1890 which displays a large bottle of wine with elves climbing the bottle; in 1886, the same company published in the *Philadelphia Freie Presse* an advertisement with the tagline "Wine and liquor (*Weine und Liquöre*) for the holiday (*Feiertage*) by the bottle, box or gallon." Reisser made a specific decision to incorporate both a reference to the upcoming Christmas holiday and imagery from the holiday's mythology. Reisser used the holiday time and traditions to market their products to the German-American community; as savvy business people they would be conscious of the cultural connections German Americans had to alcohol consumption, especially during the holiday season. Even St. Nikolaus receives an alcoholic beverage for his sleigh ride in Germany rather than the milk Americans leave out.

Reisser maintained the usage of old German folklore imagery in the following years and began emphasizing the important products the store sold. CH Reisser's captioned their 1890 advertisement, "Imported wines and liquors (*Weine und Liqueure*) for the holiday," indicating a specific desire to have imported wine and liquor for Christmas. The specification that the alcohol would be coming from abroad is important to note because it reveals that either the consumer and the distributor determined that this criterion was so important when buying bottles of liquor that they chose to pay to have this caption printed as well as the image of the bottle and elves (**Figure 22**). This could be the older German-American generation desiring a taste of the homeland or the younger generation looking for something that tastes like what their grandparents drank; the distinction that this alcohol would be for the holiday shows how valued these imports were. These drinks would not be consumed on just any day; the cost or the scarcity may be the reasoning behind the sanctity of the drink. Reissers ads reveal how Philadelphia

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<sup>132</sup> Irina-Maria Manea, "Elves & Dwarves in Norse Mythology," World History Encyclopedia, March 8, 2021, <https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1695/elves--dwarves-in-norse-mythology/>.

businesses used German cultural makers to appeal to customers in the city during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries without blending American cultural markers and language into the advertisement.



**Figure 22:** *Philadelphia Demokrat*, 12.12.1890, HathiTrust - German Society of Pennsylvania Historical Newspaper Collection

Into the 20th century, there continued to be advertisements in German language papers utilizing the holiday season to sell and promote their businesses and alcoholic products that reflected the importance of the holiday season in terms of communal gatherings. In 1907, the *Philadelphia Demokrat* published an ad from Alfred Nordlinger, a Wholesale Liquor Händler, which read “Free free free... a gorgeous seven piece wine set special - Offer for the holiday.”<sup>133</sup> Nordlinger’s advertisement specifies that this offer was for the holiday in particular, (**Figure 23**). This special was not a regular promotional event occurring throughout the year; Nordlinger decided to provide this deal on *Wein* (Wine) glasses during the holiday season because of the holiday season’s benefit. The holiday season, much as it is today, was filled with family gatherings and parties; for German Americans, this meant sharing a drink. People may have been

<sup>133</sup> “Frei Frei Frei... Ein prachtvolles Wein-Service von 7 Stücken Spezial - Offerten für die Feiertage.”

more inclined to take advantage of Nordlinger's offer, if it was Christmas specific. The *Demokrat* also published an ad from Huey & Christ for "Bailey's Reiner Rye"<sup>134</sup> which read "this Christmas box (*Weihnachts-Kist*) for home or friend should only include the purest whiskey"<sup>135</sup> Interestingly here, Huey & Christ are not advertising a German beer or wine, they are marketing Bailey's Rye Whiskey which is a type of whiskey that can be produced almost anywhere. Unlike the ad from Reisser in 1890, which specifically calls out the importation of the wine and liquor, Huey & Christ are marketing Baileys as something to be gifted on Christmas, or *Weihnachten*.

The change in focus of how to market and what to market may reflect the German community's shift away from what traditionally immigrants and first-generation German Americans may have been drinking to the new younger generations' more Americanized tastes. The new generations have grown up exposed to both their parents' perhaps more German tastes in alcohol for things like beer or wine, but also the American preference for things such as whiskey. These two ads display the ways in which the alcohol tastes changed during the turn of the 20th century but maintained the usage of holiday kinship from earlier years thus demonstrating the blending of cultural markers and growth of the German-American identity.

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<sup>134</sup> "Bailey's Clean Rye"

<sup>135</sup> "Jene Weihnachts-Kiste für's Haus oder Freund sollte nur den reinsten Whiskeh enthalten."

**Frei!  
Frei!**  
Ein prächtiges Wein-  
Service von 7 Stunden  
Spezial - Offerten  
für die  
**Feiertage:**

**Set No. 1**  
\$1.50 für Wein, wenn nicht \$2.50.  
1 Cassel Wein, 1 Glas ..... .75  
1 Cassel Wein, 1 Glas ..... .75  
1 Cassel Wein, 1 Glas ..... .75  
Regulärer Preis ..... \$2.50

**Set No. 2**  
\$2.00 für Wein, wenn nicht \$3.75.  
1 Ct. Keller (das ist das Beste) ..... 1.25  
1 Ct. sehr feiner Wein, Importiert ..... .75  
1 Ct. sehr feiner Wein, Importiert ..... .75  
1 Ct. Wein, 1 Glas (das ist das Beste) ..... \$1.00  
Regulärer Preis ..... \$3.75

**Set No. 3**  
\$3.00 für Wein, wenn nicht \$4.75.  
1 Ct. Keller (das ist das Beste) ..... \$1.25  
1 Ct. Importierter Wein ..... \$1.00  
1 Ct. Importierter Wein ..... \$1.00  
1 Ct. Importierter Wein über dem Meer ..... \$1.50  
Regulärer Preis ..... \$4.75

**Spezial Feiertags-Preise**  
**\$1.50**

**Spezial Feiertags-Preise**  
**\$2.00**

**Spezial Feiertags-Preise**  
**\$3.00**

**Alfred Nordlinger, Wholesale Liquor Händler,**  
2512 Kensington Ave.  
Zwischen Cumberland und Gunnington Straße. Weinhandels-Geschäft für jeden Monat.

**Figure 23:** *Philadelphia Demokrat*, 12.13.1907, HathiTrust - German Society of Pennsylvania Historical Newspaper Collection

Alcohol within the Germanic cultural context intended to bring together family and friends and bonded peoples across class-boundaries, but in the United States, the perspective on alcohol consumption was beginning to decline. Temperance movements divided classes and communities as the upper-class members of society began to look down upon the middle and lower class that still maintain their usage of alcohol.<sup>136</sup> Many German Americans still looked for ways to unite themselves around the common cause of anti-prohibition; they used their newspapers and language during a time of year where families would come together over a bottle of wine to call to action a multi-generational pushback.

As the prohibition movement gained momentum in the early 20th century, calls to action from many different worker groups were published in the *Philadelphia Tageblatt*. In the 1910s, the United Brewery Workmen and the Pennsylvania State Brewers' Association both published in the *Tageblatt* calling for German Americans to stand against Prohibition. The holiday season

<sup>136</sup> Nissenbaum, *The Battle for Christmas*, 104.

did not stop these rallies from being published in papers; throughout the month of December, these advertisements could be found. It was as if Christmas time was an opportunity to remind readers of the consequences of prohibition; were prohibition to be enacted, German Americans would lose the cultural practice of a shared drink which was incredibly important to their mixed-sex gatherings.

The United Brewery Workman pulled on the foremost American idea of personal freedom of choice but translated the phrase into German. The choice for the union to employ an American ideal but utilize a “foreign” language indicates how deeply connected the identities of German and American were becoming; it also demonstrated that German Americans could understand the language on the page, as much as they could understand the cultural context of “Personal freedom (*Persönliche Freiheit*) in the choice of your drinks (*Getränke*)” (**Figure 24**). The Brewers’ Association utilized both English and German in their plea, but used German for the body of their text and English only in statistical additions. The Association reminded readers in 1916 of the risks associated with Prohibition economically: “Prohibition, if Enforced, Would Undoubtedly Cause Poverty // Farmers of US Receive About \$200,000,000 Yearly from Liquor Interests // Liquor Interests and Allied Trades Pay \$300,000,000 Wages Annually.” The long, full page, describing the “*Thatsachen gegen Trugschlüsse*,” or “Facts against false claims,” is reinforced by the smaller off-shoots of English, showcasing how the two languages and cultures are blending and informing one another.



**Figure 24:** *Philadelphia Tageblatt*, 12.01.1916, HathiTrust - German Society of Pennsylvania Historical Newspaper Collection

Not only do prohibition call-to-actions reveal the belief that this audience may be sympathetic to the cause, but also that the German newspaper would allow the ad to run. This is especially apparent given that these anti-prohibition pleas ran throughout the month of December; this was a premium time of year for advertisers to market their goods, and so it is not a significant assumption that these publications were not cheap to purchase. The petitions were important enough to anti-prohibition groups to spend money paying for the ad during the holiday season, and for the editors of the newspapers themselves as they allowed these appeals to run during an important time of year. Another group, the National Alliance, led by the middle-class, did not publish ads in the newspapers, but sought to unify German Americans as a whole through the fight against prohibition. Their goal at the beginning of the 1900s was “to awaken and to promote a feeling of unity in the population of German origin in America.”<sup>137</sup> They pulled on subsidies from the brewery industry to help finance these anti-prohibition campaigns.<sup>138</sup> The prohibition writings exhibit how German Americans retained their cultural heritage but also grew to understand and associate with American ideals as well.

<sup>137</sup> Kazal, *Old Stock*, 132.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

Advertisements for liquor and wine reveal so much more about German Americans than that they simply enjoyed alcohol. While there is a cultural tie to the consumption of alcohol as Germans, these ads express the generational shift between older German immigrants and their descendants. German Philadelphians prided themselves on their familial and mixed-sex sociability which threatened the bounds established by Americans previously, and alcohol at the center of these festivities further enforced the American apprehension to accept these cultural differences.<sup>139</sup> The holiday season offers a specific lens on this topic of cultural coalescence because it is an important time of year that gives way to loads of ads which utilize both references to older traditions and modern ideas as well as family time. The rise of anti-prohibition rhetoric in the 1910s disclosed the community's trajectory and belief system. During the 1920s, Mayor J. Hampton Moore became Philadelphia's first mayor to enforce the Eighteenth Amendment (prohibition) and required his patrolmen to take on the burden of policing alcohol consumption in addition to a police officer's regular duties.<sup>140</sup> Brewerytown, once full of German breweries, lost all but one of the original businesses due to the new amendment; many tried creating “near beer... soda, yeast, or ice ” unsuccessfully.<sup>141</sup> Prohibition changed how German Americans were able to come together during Christmas and the businesses that they owned. Utilizing the holiday season, it becomes clear how important these drinks and their availability were to the German-American community, and how they tried to maintain these traditions in the face of prohibition. German Americans resisted the Americanization of their drink because of its importance in regard to community building and their favorite holiday.

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<sup>139</sup> Kazal, *Old Stock*, 88.

<sup>140</sup> Arthur P. Dudden, “The City Embraces ‘Normalcy’ 1919-1929” in *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History*, ed. Russell F. Weigley (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982), 568.

<sup>141</sup> Kazal, *Old Stock*, 202-203.

## Conclusion

Christmas in Philadelphia during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries offers a chance to examine the ways in which German immigrants and their children built their new identities as German Americans through the process of combining German and American cultural markers. Coming from a place with varying, rich cultures, Germanic peoples brought with them the weight of their German identities. German Americans confronted American ideals and figures in popular culture and began to adopt some parts of these aspects into their world and practices. The variation in culture sometimes made it difficult for different subsectors of the German-American population to come together, but nonetheless, the shared identity of German-American took shape in the Gilded Age. This is highlighted through advertisers keying into cultural markers of Germanic peoples and utilizing these different emotions and experiences to repackage and sell German and American culture to Germanic people. Christmas was a time of year of high importance to the German-speaking people which allowed for it to be a time perfect to observe how identities have been maintained and transformed because of immigration. German-American identity was both shaped by and helped shape the Christmas many Americans celebrate today.

The study of German-American Christmas enables an exploration into how mid-19th century immigrants assimilated and resisted Americanization through material culture. It is difficult to separate these topics when they are all unified around the German experience of familial Christmas. The history of Christmas in Germany enlightens what transpired in the United States; *Weihnachtsstimmung* reveals an inner-felt experience in relation to German Christmas; Santa Claus acted as bridge between the German and American cultural markers; Schwarz and Wanamaker reveal how the German-American community was perceived and as a



result received hybrid publications with German and American symbols and language; and music and alcohol highlight specific familial traditions retained by German immigrants that were impacted by American commercialization and culture. The history of the German-American identity is tied up in moments of both important assimilation and deep opposition to American customs and values.

Moving farther into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the rejection of the hyphen and German identity strengthened. German-language newspapers saw further loss of readership; the *Philadelphia Demokrat* and the *Morgen Gazette*, another German-language newspaper, merged in 1918, and merged again with the *Tageblatt* in 1940.<sup>142</sup> The dwindling of German-language papers in Philadelphia reflected the declining German comprehension as language teaching and cultural maintenance was suppressed; by 1918, Philadelphia had unanimously decided to discontinue the study of German language in schools, and Mayor Thomas B. Smith suspended all city advertising in German-language newspapers.<sup>143</sup> German Catholics also began marrying outside of their culture, particularly to Irish-Americans, and saw the decline of their names and culture through cultural mixing.<sup>144</sup>

With the Second World War, there was even more outward opposition to German identity. German language schools were shut down, people changed their names, and non-naturalized German Americans were interned alongside other Americans with ties to enemy nations.<sup>145</sup> During a study in the mid-1980s, about a third of generational Americans in Albany, New York, claimed a German ancestry, but only 20 percent claimed an identity.<sup>146</sup> The

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<sup>142</sup> Kazal, *Old Stock*, 200-202.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 225-226.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 179-181.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 262.

differentiation here powerfully shows the loss between the first and third generation Americans. By the 1980s, the descendants of immigrants only two or three generations back disconnected from their cultural past. German identity richly impacted American culture, and because of the horrific events during the early 20th century, much of these roots have been ignored; Americans have missed the opportunity to better understand their cultural heritage and largest holiday because of the loss of identities.

The distinctly German feeling of Christmas is still popular today. The markets in major cities, trees in every home, the foods on family tables, and the carols sung all represent this particularly nostalgic Christmas feeling. However, the roots of these traditions are not celebrated in the same ways as others. Joe Perry beautifully described in his book *Christmas in Germany: A Cultural History* that “German Christmas past continues to haunt the Christmas present.”<sup>147</sup> The draw to a Christmas of the old times complete with warm candles and beautiful green trees is unattainable in some ways, but these ideas are so important as they helped craft the German-American identity and both Germany and America’s favorite holiday. There is an ongoing battle, not unique to German Americans, between a material and an emotional Christmas and how much to assimilate or not; there is no right way to celebrate this holiday, but through the study of German-American Christmas one learns that this struggle has always existed and that there is a rich history of German-American culture in the United States. German immigrants brought with them a plethora of traditions, some modern, some historical, and built from their cultural practices exemplified in the Christmas holiday, an unique identity of assimilation and resistance.

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<sup>147</sup> Perry, *Christmas in Germany*, 288.