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# GERMAN IMMIGRANTS AND THE ARC OF AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP DURING RECONSTRUCTION, 1865-1877

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2009 FRITZ STERN DISSERTATION PRIZE WINNER

My dissertation, “New Citizens: German Immigrants, African Americans, and the Reconstruction of Citizenship, 1865-1877,” explores the influence of German immigrants on the reshaping of American citizenship following the Civil War and emancipation. This project was initially inspired by questions that have long occupied historians of the United States. First, how did African-American men achieve citizenship rights under the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments? In 1867, the Fourteenth Amendment defined American citizens as all persons born or naturalized in the United States. Three years later, the Fifteenth Amendment prohibited states from using racial qualifications to limit citizens’ right to vote. Having inaugurated these measures, however, the federal government retreated from implementing them. My second question therefore became: Why were African-American rights not enforced? American historians have explained Reconstruction’s arc of hope and disappointment in many ways, but they have not investigated the impact of German immigrants.<sup>1</sup> There are many reasons to suspect that these newcomers played a distinctive role in Reconstruction. They made important contributions to the ruling Republican Party, they remained sensitive to European events, and they were acutely conscious of their own status as new American citizens.<sup>2</sup>

1 For a recent historiographical treatment of Reconstruction, see Thomas J. Brown, ed., *Reconstructions: New Perspectives on the Postbellum United States* (Oxford, 2006). Some historians emphasize the limits of white Republicans’ commitment to racial justice. See, for example, William Gillette, *Retreat from Reconstruction, 1869-1879* (Baton Rouge, 1979). The classic study of the era, however, considers Reconstruction a still-born revolution: Eric Foner,

*Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York, 1988). Historians have variously attributed the decline in Reconstruction to the extent of the violent resistance of Southern whites, the economic changes experienced in the North, and white Northerners’ desire to reunite the country. See LeeAnna Keith, *The Colfax Massacre: The Untold Story of Black Power, White Terror, and the Death of Reconstruction* (New York, 2008); David Montgomery,

*Beyond Equality: Labor and the Radical Republicans, 1862-1872* (New York, 1867); Heather Cox Richardson, *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865-1901* (Cambridge, MA, 2001); David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA, 2001).

2 For a compelling case for transnational approaches to Reconstruction, see Mark M. Smith, “The Past >>

>> as a Foreign Country: Reconstruction, Inside and Out,” in *Reconstructions*, ed. Brown, 117-40. Pioneering works addressing transnational connections include Mitchell Snay, *Fenians, Freedmen, and Southern Whites: Race and Nationality in the Era of Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge, 2007), 175; Philip Katz, *From Appomattox to Montmartre: Americans and the Paris Commune* (Cambridge, MA, 1998); David Prior, “Crete the Opening Wedge: Nationalism and International Affairs in Postbellum America,” *Journal of Social History* 42 (2009): 861-87. Historians of whiteness have revealed that the ways European immigrants defined themselves as Americans affected the racial boundaries of citizenship in the United States. See especially David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London, 1991); and Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA, 1999). For a new and contrasting examination of how Irish immigrants and African Americans affected citizenship, see Christian G. Samito, *Becoming America under Fire: Irish Americans, African Americans, and the Politics of Citizenship during the Civil War Era* (Ithaca, 2009).

“New Citizens” recovers the debate over citizenship within the German-language public sphere in the border states of Missouri and Ohio and evaluates its national ramifications. Missouri and Ohio offer variations on the significant midwestern German-American experience. In Missouri, a loyal slave state that determined its own Reconstruction policy, German immigrants were overwhelmingly Republican. In Ohio, Germans were as politically divided as the state as a whole. During the Civil War era, Ohio earned a reputation as a political bellwether. German immigrants made up just 7 to 8 percent of the population in each state, but Anglo-American politicians recognized that they, along with their American-born children, had the potential to become a formidable voting bloc, especially in St. Louis and Cincinnati, which were each considered about a third “German.”<sup>3</sup>

3 U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Abstract of the Eighth Census* (Washington, DC, 1865), 620-23.

4 John L. Brooke, “Consent, Civil Society, and the Public Sphere in the Age of Revolution and the Early American Republic,” in *Beyond the Founders: New Approaches to the Political History of the Early American Republic*, ed. Jeffrey Pasley, Andrew W. Robertson, and David Waldstreicher (Chapel Hill, 2004), 209; Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA, 1989); Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, 1998); Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA, 1991), 109-42; Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*, trans. Peter Labanyi, Jamie Owen Daniel, and Assenka Oksiloff (Minneapolis, 1993); Joanna Brooks, “The Early American Public Sphere and the Emergence of a Black Print Counterpublic,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 62 (2005): 67-92.

German Ohioans and Missourians engaged in Reconstruction politics from within a public sphere segmented by language. Jürgen Habermas has theorized the public sphere as a deliberative arena lying between the state and the individual. Informed by historians who have elaborated and critiqued Habermas’s formulation, I conceptualized a German-language public sphere in which immigrants who had little else in common debated American politics and what it meant to be German-American. Historian John L. Brooke suggests that the concept of the public sphere has the power to bridge the gap between the “the old political history of law and the new political history of language.” He conceives of the public sphere as a communicative space of both authority and dissent, involving both persuasion (the unequal exchange of cultural signals, particularly language, that “set boundaries on the possible”) and deliberation (“the structured and privileged assessment of alternatives among legal equals leading to a binding outcome”).<sup>4</sup> I examine these themes of authority and dissent by reading the editorial sentiment in the German-language press against private correspondence, the political record, election results, and reports of public celebrations and protests. My analysis explicates the interplay between persuasion and deliberation during Reconstruction.

Focusing on the public sphere has allowed me to examine how attitudes took shape without assuming that there was a German-American consensus. The German-language press reflected the fault lines in the German community: German Americans were divided by political affiliation, religious faith, place of residence, and class. In

the 1870s, one German American quipped, “Wherever four Germans gather, you will find five different ideas.”<sup>5</sup> In cities such as St. Louis and Cincinnati, immigrants could choose between daily newspapers presenting Republican and Democratic viewpoints. The debates between competing editors often took on the intimate intensity of a bitter family feud. Even religious publications such as Cincinnati’s episcopally sanctioned Roman Catholic weekly, the *Wahrheits-Freund* (Friend of Truth), were drawn into the fray. Working-class immigrants also founded newspapers to express their interests. Disenchanted with the mainstream press, socialists in St. Louis established the *Volksstimme des Westens* (People’s Voice of the West). The activities of German Americans in rural areas received some coverage in urban dailies and weeklies. After all, entrepreneurial editors hoped to sell them subscriptions through the mail. Yet even quite small centers supported newspapers. The *Fremont Courier* in northeastern Ohio, for example, served a county of fewer than 2,300 German-born residents.<sup>6</sup> Such weeklies reprinted editorials from larger newspapers, appending their support or disapproval. The very structure of the German-language press lends itself to a study of how differences among German Americans textured Reconstruction’s citizenship debates.

Citizenship is an elusive concept. Nineteenth-century Americans agreed that citizenship was a status predicated on membership in a national community and that it conferred a certain set of rights, but the term had various overlapping meanings. I seek to distinguish between the *language* of citizenship and the *law* of citizenship. Citizenship was, in part, a language of belonging. Since the founding of the United States, a sense of shared racial, ethnic, and religious heritage had permeated the language of citizenship. As political scientist Rogers M. Smith has observed, it was widely maintained that “America was by rights a white nation, a Protestant nation, a nation in which true Americans were native-born men with Anglo-Saxon ancestors.”<sup>7</sup> Yet German immigrants exploited the fact that



**Toledo Express, Oct. 14, 1871. The Toledo Express was one of the many newspapers that created a vibrant and diverse German-language public sphere in the Civil-War-era Midwest.**

- 5 *Der deutsche Pionier* 11 (1879): 144.
- 6 U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Ninth Census of the United States, 1870* (Washington, DC, 1872), 1:368.
- 7 Rogers M. Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven, 1997), 3; Rogers M. Smith, “The ‘American Creed’ and American Identity: The Limits of Liberal Citizenship in the >>

the Constitution had defined a community based largely on a civic vision. They stressed that American citizens were supposedly knit together by allegiance to a set of shared political ideals. In claiming citizenship for themselves, new Americans influenced how membership in the American community was imagined, debated, and contested.

The language of citizenship colored binding political and legal decisions. At its core, Reconstruction was a transformation in the *law* of citizenship that sought primarily to define what rights of citizenship should be conferred on the freedpeople, the former slaves. During the mid-nineteenth century, “Suffrage,” as historian Mitchell Snay puts it, “embodied the fullest manifestation of citizenship.”<sup>8</sup> The laws pertaining to naturalized foreign-born men indicated the strong connection between American citizenship and the right to vote, but legally it was not that simple. In several states, resident aliens could vote, but native-born blacks and women—presumably citizens—could not. In legal fact, there were gradations of American citizenship as well as variations among the states. The framers of the Constitution had implied a national citizenship, mandating a federal naturalization policy and entitling citizens of each state to “all privileges and immunities of free citizens in the several states” in the Comity Clause. Yet, America’s fundamental law had left this key status undefined. Prior to Reconstruction, states had taken the lead in determining the rights citizens received.<sup>9</sup> “New Citizens” touches on important complications of gender and federalism, but my main concern reflects that of contemporaries: Would African-American men get to vote?

My dissertation follows an arc that climbs from 1848 to 1870 as Americans strengthened citizenship law before turning downward in the 1870s as their commitment to enforcing the Reconstruction amendments declined. Europe’s Revolutions of 1848 prepared German Americans to fuse nationalism with the era’s liberalism, which promised male citizens civil and political rights. German immigrants, especially those who supported the Republican Party, contributed to the development of a coherent view of American citizenship that included suffrage for men by 1870. That year, however, the immigrants turned their attention to the Franco-Prussian War. Captivated by a less liberal demonstration of national strength, German Americans shifted their political priorities. They emphasized reducing government involvement in the economy, reforming the

>> United States,” *Western Political Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (1988): 225-51. See also Ned Landsman, “Pluralism, Protestantism, and Prosperity: Crevecoeur’s American Farmer and the Foundations of American Pluralism,” in *Beyond Pluralism: The Conception of Groups and Group Identities in America*, ed. Wendy F. Katkin, Ned C. Landsman, and Andrea Tyree (Urbana, 1998), 105-24; and Eric Kaufmann, “American Exceptionalism Reconsidered: Anglo-Saxon Ethnogenesis in the ‘Universal’ Nation, 1776-1850,” *Journal of American Studies* 33 (1999): 437-57.

8 Snay, *Fenians, Freedmen, and Southern Whites*, 163. See also Eric Foner, “Rights and the Constitution in Black Life during the Civil War and Reconstruction,” *Journal of American History* 74 (1987): 867; and Derek Heater, *A Brief History of Citizenship* (New York, 2004), 65-87.

9 James H. Kettner, *The Development of American Citizenship, 1608-1877* (Chapel Hill, 1978), 218-24; Smith, *Civic Ideals*, 115-36.

civil service, and reconciling Northern and Southern whites. When this transition precipitated a German exodus from the Republican Party during the 1870s, it would undermine African-American rights.<sup>10</sup> After briefly tracing the contours of the argument that appears in my dissertation, this essay addresses my reconsiderations of gender as I revise “New Citizens” for publication.

### **Fusing Liberalism and Nationalism, 1848-1870**

From 1848 to 1865, German immigrants helped open opportunities for African Americans by fusing nationalism and liberalism. The German men who became American citizens embodied the potential of individual rights and democratic representation—the civil and political cornerstones of the era’s liberalism. Their lives became emblematic of the twin promises of American nationalism: that American citizenship was predicated on shared political ideals, not background, and that in the United States hard-working individuals unrestrained by feudal institutions could achieve economic independence. The refugees of the Revolutions of 1848 who helped form the Republican Party saw opposition to slavery as the logical extension of the liberal nationalism they carried with them across the Atlantic.<sup>11</sup> Many other German Americans reconciled themselves to the institution of slavery, but the Forty-Eighters came to dominate the German-language public sphere. Wartime nationalism only reinforced their influence. By the end of the Civil War, the German-Republican myth of the freedom-loving German who championed ethnic diversity and opposed slavery had taken hold. Democrats, who retained a slim majority of the German vote, resented the Forty-Eighters’ achievement. In expressing their resentment and accepting the end of slavery, however, German-Democratic editors conceded the power of their opponents.<sup>12</sup>

Between 1865 and 1870, African Americans harnessed the potential of liberal nationalism in their fight for citizenship rights. At specific junctures, German Republicans supported them. I examine the role of the German community in the debate over the Missouri constitution in 1865. In a state where most German immigrants voted Republican, prominent German leaders arrayed themselves behind African-American suffrage. German-born radicals, including viticulturist Georg Husmann, rural sage Friedrich Münch, Karl Marx’s correspondent Joseph Weydemeyer, and the editors of the successful St. Louis *Westliche Post*, argued that the United States could make

10 My argument follows a similar trajectory to that in a significant conceptual synthesis that examines American history in transnational context: Thomas Bender, *A Nation among Nations: America’s Place in World History* (New York, 2006). Given his conclusions, Bender’s omission of German Americans is remarkable.

11 The extensive literature includes James M. Bergquist, “The Mid-Nineteenth-Century Slavery Crisis and the German Americans,” in *States of Progress: Germans and Blacks in America over 300 Years*, ed. Randall M. Miller (Philadelphia, 1989), 55–71; Bruce Levine, *The Spirit of 1848: German Immigrants, Labor Conflict, and the Coming of the Civil War* (Urbana, 1992); Charlotte L. Brancaforte, ed., *The German Forty-Eighters in the United States* (New York, 1989); Carl Wittke, *Refugees of Revolution: The German Forty-Eighters in America* (1952; reprint, Westport, CT, 1970).

12 See, for example, *Milwaukee Banner und Volksfreund*, Sept. 2, 1860; *Cincinnati Volksfreund*, Jan. 15, 1865.

citizens of African-American men in the same way it had transformed European immigrants.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, Forty-Eighter Carl Schurz tried to connect immigrant and African-American rights on the national stage. During 1865, he made a much publicized tour of the South, and determined that African-American men must be granted the vote to protect themselves against the depredations of recalcitrant white Southerners. Schurz penned a series of open letters and a report for the Senate, becoming one of the most visible advocates of black suffrage.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, Schurz appointed himself the spokesman of Germans around the country.

The efforts of German radicals were significant despite the fact that they could not persuade all German Republicans to vote to enfranchise black men in the state referenda held in Ohio in 1867, and Missouri in 1868. When President Andrew Johnson encouraged Southern whites to resist emancipation and Union victory, African-American suffrage became a practical means to cement national unity. Republicans in Congress resolved to support black Southerners, and the radical vision of racially inclusive citizenship gained ground in German-Republican circles. In 1868, German Republicans helped elect President Ulysses S. Grant, who supported the congressional program. Radicals such as Schurz accrued increasing power. Soon after he moved to St. Louis to edit the *Westliche Post*, Schurz was elected to represent Missouri in the United States Senate in 1869. Once more, Democrats revealed the appeal of the Republican message. After Ohio and Missouri Democrats failed to attract voters by pitting immigrants against African Americans, German-Democratic leaders reflected on their approach and subsequently abandoned it. Important German Democrats in the Midwest pioneered the “New Departure,” a strategy that advocated accepting African-American suffrage before the Fifteenth Amendment was even ratified. They claimed overt racism alienated their constituents.<sup>15</sup>

### **Beyond Liberal Nationalism, 1870-1877**

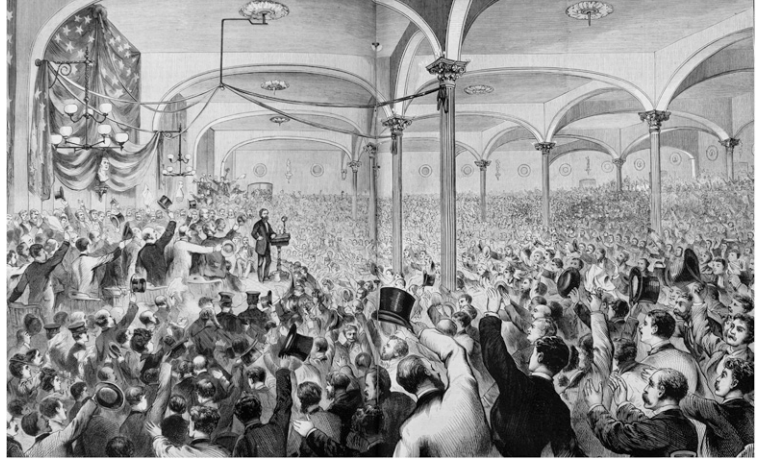
The year 1870 marked a crucial turning point in the United States as well as in Europe. The Franco-Prussian War and German unification brought new strands of nationalism to prominence in the German-American community. German newspapers representing Republicans, Democrats, Protestants, and Catholics enthusiastically supported the “German”—not Prussian—cause. Dissenting voices were initially marginalized in the German-language public

13 *St. Louis Westliche Post*, Sept. 1, 8, 13, 14, 1865; Missouri Constitutional Convention, *Journal of the Missouri State Convention Held at the City of St. Louis, January 6-April 10, 1865* (St. Louis, 1865), 48; *St. Charles Demokrat*, May 4, 1865; *Westliche Post*, Apr. 26, 1865. See also Kristen Anderson, “German Americans, African Americans, and the Republican Party in St. Louis, 1865-1872,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 28 (2008): 39-42.

14 Carl Schurz, *Report on the Condition of the South* (1865; reprint, New York, 1969).

15 See, for example, *Milwaukee Seebote*, March 10, 1869; *Cincinnati Volksfreund*, July 9, 1869. See also retrospective commentary in *Cincinnati Volksfreund*, June 7, 1871.

sphere. Most German-American observers allowed their enthusiasm for German unity to override their misgivings about Bismarck. The new nationalism that circulated in the German-language press was less liberal than the one that had been fostered by the Revolutions of 1848 and the Civil War. Newspapers sometimes described the German *Volk's* triumph over the French in racial terms. They also praised the educational institutions and efficient bureaucracy of the emerging German Empire as “progressive,” while they ridiculed French attempts to instate a republican government.<sup>16</sup>



**Carl Schurz addresses a Liberal Republican convention in Cincinnati. Illustration from: *Über Meer und See: Allgemeine Illustrirte Zeitung* 14, no. 2 (1872): 4-5.**

Between 1870 and 1872, a surprising number of German Americans hoped to express the lessons of the Franco-Prussian War in a new political movement, the Liberal Republican Party. Differences over free trade, civil service reform, and alcohol consumption contributed to the Republican schism, but the central plank of the Liberals' platform became the reconciliation of Northern and Southern whites regardless of the implications for Southern blacks. Historians widely acknowledge that during the 1872 presidential campaign, Liberal Republicans helped turn the tide of Reconstruction, but with the exception of Jörg Nagler, they have left the German role in the movement relatively unexamined.<sup>17</sup> Carl Schurz was the Liberals' most active national leader, and he claimed to have built the third party on the support of German Democrats and Republicans, especially in midwestern states such as Missouri and Ohio. German Americans ensured that the Franco-Prussian War shaped the meaning of Liberal Republicanism. Newspapers and political stump speakers

>> *the Germans*, ed. Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh (Philadelphia, 1985), 1:160-75; Heike Bungert, "Der deutsch-französische Krieg im Spiegel der Wohltätigkeitsbazare und Feiern deutscher und französischer Migranten in den USA, 1870-71," in *Deutschland-Frankreich-Nordamerika: Transfers, Imaginationen, Beziehungen* (Stuttgart, 2006), 152-70.

16 On the dearth of serious studies of American responses to German unification, see Katz, *From Appomattox to Mont-*

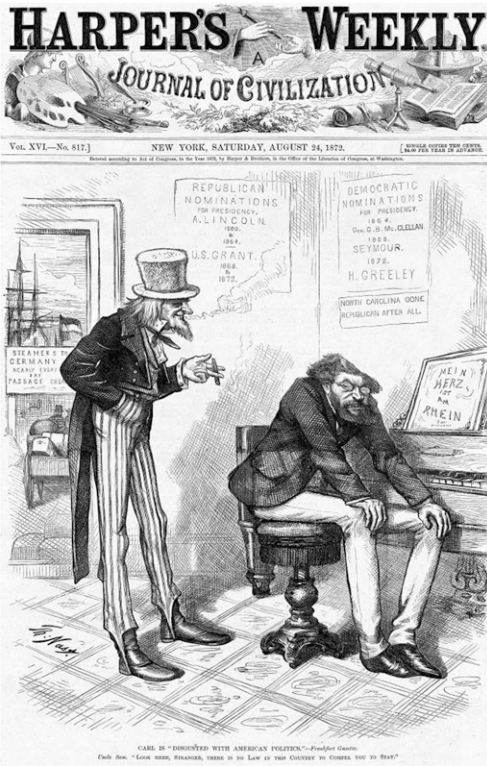
*martre*, 86-89. Exceptions include John G. Gazley, *American Opinion of German Unification, 1848-1871* (1926; reprint,

New York, 1970); Hans L. Trefousse, "The German-American Immigrants and the Newly Founded Reich," in *America and* >>

17 Jörg Nagler, "Deutsch-amerikaner und das Liberal Republican Movement 1872," *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 33 (1988): 415-38.



urged Germans in the United States to unite as their counterparts had in Europe.<sup>18</sup>



Thomas Nast's 1872 cartoon shows Carl Schurz gritting his teeth following the Liberal Republicans' nomination of Horace Greeley, whom German Americans opposed. Uncle Sam reminds Schurz that he is not compelled to remain in the United States. From: *Harpers Weekly*, Aug. 24, 1872, p. 649.

Schurz and other politicians also called on Americans to learn from German examples of administrative probity. Prussia's bureaucratic traditions appeared more successful in creating fair and efficient state agencies than the American practice of distributing plum posts to the supporters of successful political candidates. The desire to eliminate political corruption was not inherently illiberal, but German immigrants who had believed extending the franchise would perfect the United States now hoped to mitigate the influence of voters they considered unfit. Germany also offered a model of compromise. Speaking in the Senate in January 1872, Schurz urged Northern whites to reconcile with Southern whites, just as former German revolutionaries were putting aside their grievances to support Bismarck's emerging German Empire. Schurz hoped that the United States would learn from the "example of wisdom ... set by other nations."<sup>19</sup>

In the end, the Liberal Republicans nominated Horace Greeley, a New York editor who advocated temperance and tariffs, to contest the presidency in 1872. Greeley was unpalatable to most German Americans. Thomas Nast, a loyal Republican, penned a cartoon for *Harper's Weekly* that captured Schurz's chagrin at the choice (see illustration). Nast was himself German-born, but he had come to the United States as a child and did not move in German-American circles. He depicted Schurz as "disgusted with American politics," hunkered at a piano displaying sheet music for "Mein Herz ist am Rhein." In Nast's image, Uncle Sam leans over Schurz, informing him he is not compelled to remain in the country. Outside an open door, steamers advertise fares to Germany.<sup>20</sup>

18 See, for example, Carl Schurz to Horace Greeley, May 6, 1872, microfilm: reel 7, Carl Schurz Papers, Library of

Congress, Washington, DC. *Cleveland Wächter am Erie*, Oct. 26, 1871.

19 *Congressional Globe*, 42nd Cong., 2nd sess., Dec. 15, 1870, p. 701.

20 Thomas Nast, "Carl S. 'Disgusted with American Politics,'" *Harper's* >>

German Americans clearly lost control of the Liberal Republican Party, but they had shaped a movement which signaled that the liberal nationalist energy of the Civil War era was dissipating. Without quite grasping the nature of their compromises, German immigrants encouraged the notion that national reconciliation would come at the expense of constitutional rights and racial equality. Liberal Republicans suggested that North and South would only reunite when Northern Republicans stopped intervening on behalf of black Southerners. Despite their name, the Liberals pitted national unity against the protection of citizenship rights, nationalism against liberalism. The Fifteenth Amendment had written the principle of universal manhood suffrage into the Constitution, but after the 1872 election, the Republican Party gradually became less committed to enforcing it.

Other developments during the 1870s also signaled the eclipse of liberal nationalism. Religious tensions in Europe and the United States created dominant nationalisms that were less tolerant of Roman Catholics.<sup>21</sup> The rise of the labor conflicts associated with intensified industrialization led many working-class radicals to question the importance of voting rights, which had not secured economic justice for workers. At the same time, men such as Schurz showed no reservations about using the power of the state to end strikes and subdue protests, encouraging President Rutherford B. Hayes to use federal troops to intervene in the Great Railroad Strike of 1877.<sup>22</sup> The myth of their opposition to slavery no longer served to unify German Americans. They never totally abandoned it, but religious divisions and class conflict would become much more salient in the decades that followed.

### Reconsidering Gender

Gender was an integral part of both the language and the law of citizenship, but my dissertation only began to grapple with its role in the German-language debate over Reconstruction. As I revise my work, I am devoting more thought to gender and how German-born women impacted American citizenship. My reading of German-language newspapers has already convinced me that female immigrants were not involved in the political controversies of the Civil War era to the same extent as their native-born sisters. Anglo-American women found opportunities in the English-language abolition movement. Based in the Protestant churches of

>> *Weekly*, Aug. 24, 1872, 649.

21 For one exploration, see Ward McAfee, *Religion, Race, and Reconstruction: The Public School in the Politics of the 1870s* (Albany, 1998).

22 James H. Wilson to Carl Schurz, telegram, July 26, 1877, microfilm: reel 18, Schurz Papers, Library of Congress; Philip S. Foner, *The Great Labor Uprising of 1877* (New York, 1977), 165; David T. Burbank, *Reign of the Rabble: The St. Louis General Strike of 1877* (New York, 1966), 21-22. On the rising labor conflict, see Eric Foner, *Reconstruction*; Montgomery, *Beyond Equality*; Richardson, *Death of Reconstruction*, 83-121; Amy Dru Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract: Wage Labor, Marriage, and the Market in the Age of Slave Emancipation* (New York, 1998); Sven Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850-1896* (Cambridge, 2001); Nancy Cohen, *Reconstruction of American Liberalism, 1865-1914* (Chapel Hill, 2002).

the northeastern states, American abolitionism drew women into fund-raising, committee work, public speaking, and writing. Some of them, such as Lucretia Mott and Sarah and Angelina Grimke, lectured to large audiences.<sup>23</sup> Abraham Lincoln even reportedly credited Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of the abolitionist novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, with starting the Civil War.<sup>24</sup> Stowe's work demonstrated the sentimental and feminine sensibility that pervaded English-speaking abolitionists' attempts to elicit sympathy for humans held in bondage. Having achieved an important place in the movement to end slavery, some women began to critique the abrogation of their own rights. In this way, the American abolition movement fostered feminism. After women had been excluded from participating in a London antislavery meeting, Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton planned the famous convention at Seneca Falls New York in 1848. In the Seneca Falls *Declarations of Sentiments*, women demanded equal citizenship, including the right to vote. During Reconstruction, suffragists intensified their campaign for the franchise for black and white women as well as black men. The Fifteenth Amendment divided them: Stanton and her colleague Susan B. Anthony decided that they could not support an amendment that did not prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, while other activists accepted the amendment and continued to identify with the Republican Party.<sup>25</sup>

In contrast, German-American women took a relatively low profile in the sectional controversies of the 1850s and 1860s.<sup>26</sup> As "New Citizens" explains, the antislavery movement in the German-American community developed within male-dominated secular organizations, not in the religious spaces that were increasingly feminized. Ohio and Missouri chapters of the *Turnverein*, for example, integrated antislavery into their staple offerings of masculine camaraderie, physical training, and German cultural nationalism. Ethnic identity was at the center of German-American antislavery. German-born opponents of the peculiar institution contrasted themselves to Anglo-American abolitionists, whom they considered "fanatics." This dismissal did not hinge on their attitudes

23 John R. McKivigan, ed., *Abolitionism and Issues of Race and Gender* (New York, 1999); Julie Roy Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement* (Chapel Hill, 1998); Jean Fagan Yelling, *Women and Sisters: The Antislavery Feminists in American Culture* (New Haven, 1989); Yelling and John C. Van Horne, eds., *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America* (Ithaca, 1994).

24 Charles E. Stowe, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: The Story of Her Life* (Boston, 1911), 203.

25 A useful narrative of the woman suffrage movement remains Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: the Woman's Rights Movement in the United States*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA, 1975).

26 The scholarship on German-American women's increasing activism includes Anke Ortlepp, *Auf denn, ihr Schwestern: Deutschamerikanische Frauenvereine in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1844-1914* (Stuttgart, 2004); Linda Schelbitz Pickle, *Contented among Strangers: Rural German-Speaking Women and their Families in the Nineteenth-Century Midwest* (Urbana, 1996); Christiane Harzig, *Familie, Arbeit und weibliche Öffentlichkeit in einer Einwanderungsstadt: Deutschamerikanerinnen in Chicago um die Jahrhundertwende* (St. Katharinen, 1991); Harzig, "The Ethnic Female Public Sphere: German-American Women

in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago," in *Midwestern Women: Work, Community, and Leadership at the Crossroads*, ed. Lucy Eldersveld Murphy and

Wendy Hamand Venet (Bloomington, 1997), 141-57; Harzig, "Gender, Transatlantic Space, and the Presence of German-Speaking People in North

America," in *Traveling between Worlds: German-American Encounters*, ed. Thomas Adam and Ruth Gross (College Station, TX, 2006), 159-68.

toward the future of slavery, but rather on the cultural tone of each movement. Most Anglo-American abolitionists embraced the causes of temperance and Sabbatarianism and distrusted immigrants, especially Catholics. In turn, German Americans believed that the native-born abolitionists were narrow-minded. In their view, cultural intolerance was inconsistent with the liberalism that underpinned the antislavery movement. After the Civil War, a Cincinnati newspaper submitted that the women's rights movement "originated with Puritans and temperance advocates and with females of every sort from Massachusetts and Maine who are angry that men cannot bear children."<sup>27</sup> Even immigrants who were more judicious must have found it difficult to separate female activism from their objections to Anglo-American antislavery. Women's citizenship thus appeared incompatible with the "freedom-loving" German that the Republican German-language press defined as a defender of immigrant citizenship sensitive to the demands of African Americans.

Noting the opposition of German-American men to female Anglo-Americans who supported temperance does not, however, tell us how immigrant women approached citizenship. Historians recognize that German women had been active in the Revolutions of 1848.<sup>28</sup> Only a few participants, such as Louise Dittmer and Louise Aston, had demanded the right to vote for women, or spoken at mass meetings.<sup>29</sup> Many more had joined street protests, accompanied their husbands into battle, or formed women's organizations to support victims and refugees once the reaction set in. Women also wrote in support of the revolutionary cause. Louise Otto, for example, began publishing the *Frauen Zeitung* in Saxony in 1849. Otto distanced herself from the "emancipated women" who flaunted gender norms by speaking in public, shunning marriage, and wearing trousers, but she still challenged the limitations placed on women and asserted her right to disseminate her ideas in a society where the state limited expression and association. In Otto's newspaper, women articulated a critique of some gender norms, demanded a public audience, and challenged state power.<sup>30</sup>

>> Stanley Zucker, *Kathinka Zitz-Halein and Female Civic Activism in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Carbondale, 1991); Laura Martin, ed., *Harmony in Discord: German Women Writers in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Oxford, 2001); Renate Möhrmann, *Die andere Frau: Emanzipationsansätze deutscher Schriftstellerinnen im Vorfeld der Achtundvierziger-Revolution* (Stuttgart, 1977); Carola Lipp, ed., *Schimpfende Weiber und patriotische Jungfrauen: Frauen im Vormärz und in der Revolution 1848/49* (Moos, 1986).

27 *Cincinnati Volksfreund*, Feb. 20, 1869. See similar sentiments in *Columbus Westbote*, Feb. 25, 1869; *St. Charles Demokrat*, Feb. 11, 18, April 22, 1869, March

3, May 12, 1870; *Westliche Post Wochen-Blatt*, Feb. 10, 17, Nov. 3, Dec. 1, 1869, May 4, June 13, 1870; *Anzeiger des Westens*, May 6, July 1, 1869.

28 Gabrielle Hauch, "Women's Spaces in the Men's Revolution of 1848," in *Europe in 1848: Revolution and Reform*, ed. Dieter Dowe et al. (New York, 2001), 639-82; >>

29 Lia Secci, "German Women Writers and the Revolution of 1848," in *German Women in the Nineteenth Century*, 151-71; Hans Adler, "On a Feminist Controversy: Louise Otto vs. Louise Aston," in *German Women in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: A Social and Literary History*, ed. Ruth-Ellen B. Joerres and Mary Jo Maynes (Bloomington, 1986), 193-214; Dagmar Herzog, "Liberalism, Religious Dissent and Women's Rights: Louise Dittmar's Writings from the 1840s," in *In Search of a Liberal Germany: Studies in the History of German Liberalism from 1789 to the Present*, ed. Konrad Jarausch and Larry Eugene Jones (Oxford, 1990), 55-85; Herzog, *Intimacy and Exclusion: Religious Politics in pre-Revolutionary Baden, 1803-1849* (Princeton, 1996), 140-66.

30 Adler, "On a Feminist Controversy: Louise Otto vs. Louise Aston."

Though not as radical as Mott, Anthony, and Stanton, the efforts of German women to advance liberal reforms and German nationalism in Europe had involved citizenship claims similar to the demands of the American women who were involved in the abolition movement. The question then becomes: What happened to this impulse in the United States?

One female Forty-Eighter who did achieve prominence in the United States suggests at least a partial answer. Journalist Mathilde Franziska Anneke had settled in Cologne just before the upheavals of the late 1840s. She became involved in democratic organizing, inviting like-minded intellectuals and political activists to salons at the home she shared with her second husband, Fritz. The couple edited the *Neue Kölnische Zeitung* together until Fritz was arrested for agitation among Prussian soldiers in 1848. While her husband was imprisoned, Mathilde Anneke continued to write, briefly publishing under the title *Frauen-Zeitung* after Prussian authorities banned their first paper. As revolutionary forces were weakening in 1849, she accompanied her husband to the last stand of the revolutions in Baden. The Annekes fled to Switzerland, and then to the United States, where Mathilde was drawn into the campaign against slavery and spoke publicly on women's rights around the country. While living in Milwaukee during the 1850s, she published a handful of issues of a *Deutsche Frauen-Zeitung*. In the city dubbed the German Athens of North America, she also developed a close friendship with Mary Booth, a native-born abolitionist whose husband helped liberate a fugitive slave from a Wisconsin jail in 1854. Anneke and Booth spent the Civil War together in Switzerland, where the German-born writer turned her hand to antislavery fiction. On Anneke's return to Milwaukee, she opened the Töchter-Institut, an academy that provided bilingual instruction to girls. Anneke became involved in the American suffrage movement during Reconstruction. She spoke at the first convention of the National Woman Suffrage Association in Philadelphia in 1869, aligning herself with the more radical organization formed by Stanton and Anthony and opposing—albeit reluctantly—the Fifteenth Amendment when it failed to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex.<sup>31</sup>

Anneke was exceptional. Her atypical experience, however, illuminates the context in which German-American women operated. Anneke's career straddled the German-American and Anglo-American worlds. Her role as an exponent of German culture was in tension

31 Maria Wagner, ed., *Mathilde Franziska Anneke in Selbstzeugnissen und Dokumenten* (Frankfurt am Main, 1980). See also Annette P. Bus, "Mathilde Anneke and the Suffrage Movement," in *The German Forty-Eighters in the United States*, ed. Brancaforte, 79-92; Charlotte L. Brancaforte, *Mathilde Franziska Anneke: An Essay on Her Life* (Milwaukee, 1998).

with her role as suffragist. She won some German support for her ideas of women's citizenship: A group of *Turner* sponsored her to lecture on women's rights, Milwaukee Freethinkers backed her demands, and she drew strength from socialists after 1870.<sup>32</sup> On the whole, however, German-American men were hostile to her assertion of women's right to the franchise. When she tried to establish her *Deutsche Frauen-Zeitung*, she remarked that "it nearly seems as though there was a conspiracy against this paper on the part of men." She found German-American audiences resistant to the suffrage message when she spoke.<sup>33</sup> A preliminary survey of Anneke's activities and correspondence indicates that Anglo-American women provided the emotional support and organizational networks that made her work for gender equality possible. She did not, however, sever her links to the German community—these connections sustained her as well. She preferred not to speak or write in English, and she continued to speak at German-American venues. At women's suffrage meetings, Anneke urged other women to disassociate their efforts to win the vote from Protestant morality and anti-immigrant sentiment. In 1869, she told her husband Fritz that she would "let loose on religion, the Bible, nativism, and temperance" at the upcoming convention of the National Woman Suffrage Association.<sup>34</sup> Anneke mediated between German immigrants and Anglo-Americans.

Anneke apparently embodied German *Bildung* (learning and cultivation) to many German Americans. Interestingly, German-American newspapers commonly disparaged Anglo-Americans for relegating teaching to women. The feminization of teaching was a sign, they asserted, that Americans did not value education as much as Germans.<sup>35</sup> Yet Anneke's literary and journalistic accomplishments seem to have put her in another category. Heralded by Milwaukee's German-language press, the Töchter-Institut earned an enviable reputation and attracted the daughters of the city's elite. Anneke understood her commitment to female education as a feminist endeavor, but the German Americans who enrolled their daughters at her school insisted that they did not. After Anneke attended the Philadelphia suffrage conference in 1869, a group of parents wrote to Milwaukee's *Banner und Volksfreund* to express their support for Anneke, citing her ability to keep her political opinions out of the classroom.<sup>36</sup> Anneke's temperament apparently endeared her to people who did not share her views, and her talent impressed even her detractors.

32 Rudolph A. Koss, *Milwaukee* (Milwaukee, 1871), 318-19, 381-83; Wagner, ed., *Mathilde Franziska Anneke*, 114-15, 323-24; Ortlepp, *Auf denn, ihr Schwestern!*, 155, 188.

33 Wagner, ed., *Mathilde Franziska Anneke*, 317, 355.

34 Mathilde Anneke to Fritz Anneke, May 4, 1869, microfilm: reel 3, frame 534, Mathilde and Fritz Anneke Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

35 See, for example, *Westliche Post*, Jan. 5, Feb. 10, 1865.

36 Wilhelm Hense-Jensen, *Wisconsin's Deutsch-Amerikaner bis zum Schluss des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, vol. 1 (Milwaukee, 1900), 133.

Despite the unpopularity of woman suffrage among German Americans, the immigrant community respected Anneke because she nurtured German culture. She promoted the cultural pluralism that was so vital to the German understanding of American citizenship. Anneke's work identified her as a *Kulturträgerin* (bearer of the culture). Scholars have identified the middle-class woman's part in child-rearing, music, and conviviality as a socially sanctioned contribution to nineteenth-century German nationalism.<sup>37</sup> In the American context, German-born men and women considered it even more important to preserve the language, family traditions, and mixed-gender conviviality, for which they were renowned. Historian Anke Ortlepp's study of German women's organizations in Milwaukee reveals that these groups shared a commitment to cultural preservation.<sup>38</sup> Female immigrants took on a special role in defending their community in a land where they were a minority.

While German nationalism had led some women to assert their citizenship and defy the state in Europe, it had a different effect in North America. German-born women entered American public life on the terms dictated by the Anglo-American temperance campaign. After the Civil War, women's efforts to win the right to vote were increasingly tied to the crusade against alcohol. When Anglo-American temperance advocates set their sights on immigrant culture, German-American women joined men in defending it. One immigrant, who identified herself only as "M," wrote to the *Westliche Post* in 1865 to speak out against laws to control alcohol consumption. She agreed with Anglo-American temperance activists that drunkenness was a problem, but she denied that it was a particularly German-American one. M wrote that the best remedy for alcohol abuse lay in the hands of women working in their "natural sphere," the home. Political activism would only undermine the special strengths of women.<sup>39</sup> Although further research is required to test the universality of this view, the transplanting of a German community to the United States seems to have channeled women's activism into a defense of ethnic difference. Because the temperance movement clashed with the German penchant for social drinking, German-American women represented their community by eschewing female political activity.

Yet M was taking a public stand on behalf of German Americans, and immigrants accepted much of Anneke's openly public persona. Historians know better than to take M's notion of separate spheres

37 Hauch, "Women's Spaces in the Men's Revolution of 1848," 654-62.

38 Ortlepp, *Auf denn, ihr Schwestern!*, 259-62.

39 *Westliche Post*, May 4, 1865.

at face value. As I assess the gendered nature of citizenship, I intend to explore how women worked to define the German place in the United States from within their families and at informal gatherings, festivals, performances, and celebrations. All of these activities underpinned the assertion that German immigrants could be American citizens while they asserted their cultural peculiarity. Perpetuating and communicating German culture could be very public work. To evaluate women's contributions, however, I must broaden my definition of the German-language public sphere. Few women wrote for German-American newspapers. Still, their letters and the various writings of men recorded women's part in the reshaping of American citizenship during the Civil War era.

At least on initial inspection, it appears that migration, the very experience that led German immigrants to question the exclusion of racial minorities from American citizenship, actually strengthened the exclusion of women. Liberalism already predicated men's citizenship on the subordination of women. Marriage defined women's normative state, and the act of marriage made women dependent while conferring on husbands the necessary independence to participate in government.<sup>40</sup> Having immigrated, men relied on women to provide cultural justification for their claim that being German only made them better American citizens. Since defending the German community required that women confront the Anglo-American suffrage movement, citizenship for German-American men demanded a distinctive subordination of women. The United States produced considerable homegrown resistance to woman suffrage, but German immigrants' version of American citizenship triumphed with the Fifteenth Amendment. The paradoxical relationship between male equality and women's subordination underscores that the liberal nationalism touted by German immigrants was a product of a specific historical context. Liberalism offered solutions to the most pressing problems of the 1860s, but its shortcomings were all too evident in the 1870s, when some women joined workers and Roman Catholics in their critique of an ascendant liberal nationalism that excluded them.

### **Some Tentative Conclusions**

My research suggests a transnational reframing of Reconstruction. Acquiring American citizenship allowed immigrant men to link the arc of Reconstruction to the trajectory of nationalism in Europe.

40 For an analysis of this dynamic in different contexts, see Eve Rosenhaft, "Gender," in *Germany, 1800-1870*, ed. Jonathan Sperber (Oxford, 2004), 212; Herzog, *Intimacy and Exclusion*, 140-66; Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, 1988); Nancy F. Cott, "Marriage and Women's Citizenship in the United States," *American Historical Review* 103 (1998): 1440-74.