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Portrait of an Immigrant Society: The North American *Grütli-Bund*, 1865-1915

In 1889 Adelrich Steinach, a medical doctor in New York City, published an extensive work in German, entitled *Geschichte und Leben der Schweizer Kolonien in den Vereinigten Staaten von Nord Amerika, unter Mitwirkung des Nord-Amerikanischen Grütli-Bundes*.¹ It is a puzzling book. Its pages list hosts of immigrants of all walks of life and describe countless meetings and festivals organized by Swiss singing, sharp-shooting, gymnastic, and support societies. The work undoubtedly deserves the label filiopietistic.² It wants to show

under what difficulties and strains the first settlers had arrived in the colony; under what deprivations they had to struggle for survival during the first years . . . how they achieved, however, a secure livelihood, at times even prosperity, under the guidance of a severe taskmaster, experience, and by courage and industry.³

But there is more to the book than mere ancestor worship. It typifies the outlook of the association called *Nord-Amerikanischer Grütli-Bund*, a national league of Swiss immigrant societies and the focus of this essay. The study intends to offer a portrait of the league by sketching, first, its organizational evolution in the United States, then its main activities and Swiss prototype and, finally, the socio-economic traits of its 1915 membership. This will reveal not only the basic features of the *Bund*, but also illustrate how a particular group of German-speaking newcomers balanced old attachments with new loyalties.

I

On June 13 and 14, 1865, seven Swiss immigrants assembled in the *Schweizerhalle* of Cincinnati, Ohio, as delegates from seven *Grütli-Vereine* that had been established previously in St. Louis (1849), Cincinnati (?), Chicago (1856), Tell City, Indiana (1858), Louisville (?), Rochester (1861), and Buffalo (1862).⁴ On the prompting of the St. Louis association they were engaged in founding a national league of Swiss immigrant

associations dedicated to mutual support, and in drafting a constitution and by-laws for the organization. The document's Article One reads in translation from German as follows:

- ¶1 The *Grütli-Bund* of the United States of North America aims to unite all Swiss support societies into a closer friendship—and brotherly league and to further education and fellowship among the members.
- ¶2 The *Grütli-Bund* consists of the united Swiss support societies of North America whose members are Swiss or descendants of Swiss.

The delegates proposed that an affiliated society was to have at least twenty members. Every two years one of the local associations was to be elected *Vorort*, administrative seat of the national organization. Five especially elected members of that chosen association were to constitute the *Bundsvorstand*, the league's executive board. The main purpose of the proposed national association was to be "benevolent" in the sense of Article Nine:

Member societies are founded to grant each member [of the *Bund*] help and assistance in every accident of life and to consider and treat each as if he were one of their own.⁵

The seven local organizations ratified the proposals of their delegates, chose appropriately the St. Louis *Grütli-Verein* as *Vorort*, and designated July 1, 1865, as the starting date of the *Bund*. The executive board, led by a Jacob Brandenberger, had a thousand copies of the constitution printed and distributed special membership cards for those on journeys. In 1867 two important local societies joined the league, the *Grütli-Verein* of Washington, D.C., with 40, and that of Newark, New Jersey, with 60 members. This brought the total membership to 556 people.⁶

Cincinnati was chosen next to serve as *Vorort*. Within a year local Swiss societies in Nashville, Syracuse, Brooklyn, Utica and Pittsburgh with a total of 133 members joined the organization which concentrated its activities during those first years on creating an effective support system for the sick, widowed and orphaned, and for defraying burial costs. Table 1, which lists the 1867/68 assets and 1868/69 disbursements of the *Bund*, shows the scope of these efforts.⁷

The entry of the Washington and Newark *Grütli-Vereine* led to a shift in basic orientation. Their members claimed that the constitution was in need of thorough revision and argued that the focus of the *Bund* should be shifted from supportive to patriotic and educational activities. Newark's proposal put it succinctly:

A unified organization of all Swiss associations [in the United States] shall be envisaged. Besides [providing] sick benefits and support of widows and orphans, such endeavors shall become central that aim for the further education and moral and intellectual elevation of the country's Swissdom.⁸

Whereas the founders of the *Bund* had viewed the creation of a support system for times of financial distress as primary and "the moral and

TABLE 1

1867/68 Assets and 1868/69 Disbursements of the North American *Grütli-Bund*
(in dollars)

Location	Assets 1867/68	Disbursements 1868/69				Per Capita
		Sick	Widows & Orphans	Burials	Total	
Cincinnati	2,755.00	246.00	74.50	86.00	406.50	3.68
Louisville	2,399.40	379.00	25.00	87.00	491.00	6.29
St. Louis	1,492.29	383.00	32.75	52.00	467.75	3.89
Chicago	1,100.00	51.80	122.00	—	173.80	2.80
Buffalo	795.00	97.00	240.00	80.00	417.00	9.06
Newark	773.00	132.00	—	45.00	177.00	2.45
Rochester	770.00	12.00	4.00	—	16.00	0.44
Washington, D.C.	757.00	70.00	33.00	—	103.00	2.64
Nashville	620.00	50.50	—	—	50.50	2.10
Tell City	461.70	96.00	—	—	96.00	4.17
Brooklyn	172.25	5.00	—	—	5.00	0.10
Syracuse	127.85	?	?	?	19.35	0.79
Totals	12,223.49	1,522.30	531.25	350.00	2,422.90	3.20

Source: [S. Meier], *Nord-Amerikanischer Schweizer-Bund*, p. 12.

intellectual elevation of the membership as merely a nice addition," the newly joined groups hoped to reverse these priorities.

On April 12, 1869, delegates from member societies of the East Coast gathered in New York City without authorization of the central board, then stationed in Cincinnati, in order to lay the groundwork for that shift. John Hitz (1828-1908), the unsalaried representative of Switzerland in Washington, D.C., was to play a leading role in this endeavor.⁹ He served as chairperson of the meeting that made the following proposals: The city of Washington should be chosen as permanent seat of the *Bund*; a formal convention as provided by the constitution should be held for the purpose of its thorough revision; the recently established weekly, *Der Grütliener*, then a private venture, was to be purchased by the *Bund* as its official organ. Most important was the request that all Swiss societies, regardless of purpose, should be able to join the league which would then become the true representative of all Swiss living in the United States. Sigbert Meier, who sketched the history of the *Bund* for its fiftieth anniversary publication, viewed this ultimate goal as utopian; it would founder on traditional Swiss localism on the one hand, and on socio-economic differences on the other, especially in the United States "where in mockery of all democracy," he thought, "social extremes are far more pronounced than in the most feudal state of Europe and where those social extremes are reflected also among the Swiss."¹⁰

Local societies, especially of the East Coast, gave these proposals much support and were instrumental in choosing Washington, D.C., as the next *Vorort*. John Hitz was chosen president of the executive board who defined the primary goal of the *Bund* to gain "respect and honor for

genuine Swissness and the Swiss name" in the United States. He concluded his appeal to Swiss societies outside the league with these words:

May no one be ashamed of his old homeland! If the honor of the Swiss name is at stake, each shall view himself as equal, be he high or low, rich or poor. . . . In whatever form you will join—as sharpshooting, gymnastic, singing, social, benevolent or support societies—you will always find faithful brethren, ready to support you in your endeavors, in defense of Swiss interests, in honor of the Swiss name, for the protection of everyone. Let all enter with the slogan of our fathers in the *Grütli*: "One for All, All for One."¹¹

The revision of the constitution in the spirit of the New York proposals turned out to be difficult because many local societies preferred the original form of the *Bund*. By mid-September 1873 a compromise had been worked out that all member societies were willing to accept. The *Vorort* would change every two years as before, however, a burial fund on a national scale was to be organized.¹² Furthermore, the league's overall goal received a strongly patriotic and assertive trait as expressed in Article One of the new document:

- ¶1 The North American *Grütli-Bund* aims to unite all existing Swiss associations within the territory of the United States into one league, to further among its Swiss an active life of the mind, to nourish and nurture the love [for], and attachment to, the old fatherland, and to gain respect for the Swiss name in our new homeland.
- ¶2 This goal shall be reached
 - a. By supporting the sick, widowed and orphaned, or those otherwise in need.
 - b. By instruction, establishment of libraries, written and oral presentations, and stimulating discussions.
 - c. By furthering sharpshooting and gymnastic endeavors.
 - d. By the cultivation of song, the celebration of patriotic festivals, and intensified fellowship.
 - e. By lively contacts and exchange of views with societies in Switzerland whose principles approximate ours.
- ¶3 Thus the North American *Grütli-Bund* includes the following associations:
 - a. Support- and benevolent societies.
 - b. Singing-, music-, and fellowship [*Geselligkeits-*] societies.
 - c. Literary and educational societies of all kinds.

Any local society was welcome to affiliate with the league if it consisted exclusively of Swiss and their descendants, counted at least ten members, and "had chosen one of the aims" listed in Article One as its life's task."¹³

Local *Grütli-Vereine*, even if they did not affiliate with the *Bund*, adopted this outlook. The constitution of the San Francisco *Grütli-Verein*, published in 1875, stated for instance that "the association intends to awaken an intellectually active life among the Swiss of the city" and quoted the declaration of intent of the *Bund* nearly verbatim. But it set its priorities differently:

¶3 This goal shall be reached by:

- a. Instruction;—creation of a library;—written and oral presentations, and stimulating discussions.
- b. Cultivation of song and noble fellowship;—celebration of patriotic festivals.
- c. Creation of an employment office for the best of the membership and newly arrived Swiss.
- d. Mutual support and benevolence, if possible in cooperation with other Swiss societies of that kind in the area.¹⁴

This association, then, put intellectual pursuits first, patriotic edification second, help in finding employment third, and mutual support last. Many other societies however, perhaps a majority of them, clung to the earlier preoccupation with matters of mutual assistance and benevolence.¹⁵

Between 1869 and 1874 the *Bund* flourished under the dynamic leadership of John Hitz. Membership nearly doubled and the number of societies that entered the national organization rose substantially. From 1874 to 1877 St. Louis served again as *Vorort*, but without distinction. The *Grütli-Verein* of Cincinnati with 140 and that of Philadelphia with 285 members withdrew from the league. In 1877 Louisville, Kentucky, was chosen *Vorort*, a disastrous choice as the next years were to reveal. The executive board seems to have been dominated by men with a penchant for petty disputes with member associations. Especially the financial and corresponding secretary, named J. Russenberger, minced no words in his memoranda and annual reports. As a result thirteen local associations, among them Washington, Newark, and New York, left the *Bund*. Luckily the next choice of *Vorort* turned out quite differently. Although the *Grütli-Verein* Buffalo had won the election with only a narrow margin and was thought too limited in resources to serve effectively, the years between 1881 and 1885 reversed the destructive trend. With great tact and patience many of the alienated associations were won back and the league resumed its growth at a fairly steady pace.¹⁶ Table 2 features the increase in sections and members for selected years between 1865 and 1915: during the first eight years the *Bund* grew steadily, then declined due to strife; in 1885 growth resumed to reach a plateau around 1900.

The fiftieth anniversary celebration of the *Bund* revealed a well-managed and financially sound organization. The later years of World War I, however, demanded much circumspection and resulted in the destruction of records. "It seems," reminisced Fred Eidenbenz in 1940, "that most of the papers [of the *Bund*] were done away with during the war years of 1917-1919; for two reasons. Paper dealers everywhere were collecting old paper stocks. Also, since German text papers were not popular in those war times, it was wiser to dispose of them in order to avoid trouble."¹⁷ Despite the immigration quotas of the 1920s the *Bund* continued to grow. In 1925 it had 92 member societies with a total membership of 8224. The onset of the depression, however, signaled the start of a steady decline during the next decade, as graph 1 demon-

TABLE 2
Number of Member Societies and Size of Membership of the North American
Grütli-Bund for Selected Years 1865 to 1915

Year	Sections	Members
1865	7	409
1867	9	556
1868	14	689
1871	20	943
1873	32	1309
1884	29	1520
1886	37	1843
1887	39	2185
1891	49	3620
1896	65	3662
1902	70	3744
1905	71	4890
1913	72	5716
1915	72	6012

Source: [S. Meier], *Nord-Amerikanischer Schweizer-Bund*, passim.

strates. The 1931 membership of 7641 had shrunk to 4522 by 1938 and to 3749 by 1940. Bad economic times brought unusual demands for support and by 1938 threatened the fiscal base of the organization.

At a convention in 1938 the groundwork was laid for a thorough transformation of the *Bund* into a fraternal life insurance organization and its name was changed to North American Swiss Alliance in 1940. The new definition of purpose shows important shifts, partly under the pressure of World War II:

The North American Swiss Alliance is a strictly NON-POLITICAL fraternal organization and has no other affiliations or commitments. It fosters loyalty to our adopted country, the United States of America, and urges full observance of its laws.

Only after this declaration of loyalty are the other goals mentioned: The consolidation of "the separate efforts of all the various Swiss societies into one great group"; the protection of "members in time of need and in case of death"; the promotion of "cultural relations and goodwill between the United States and Switzerland"; and, finally, the preservation of "the traditions and cultural heritage of the old Fatherland."¹⁸

In actuality the Alliance had become little more than a life insurance organization along ethnic lines; the profession of the other goals was to remain largely an echo of times long past.

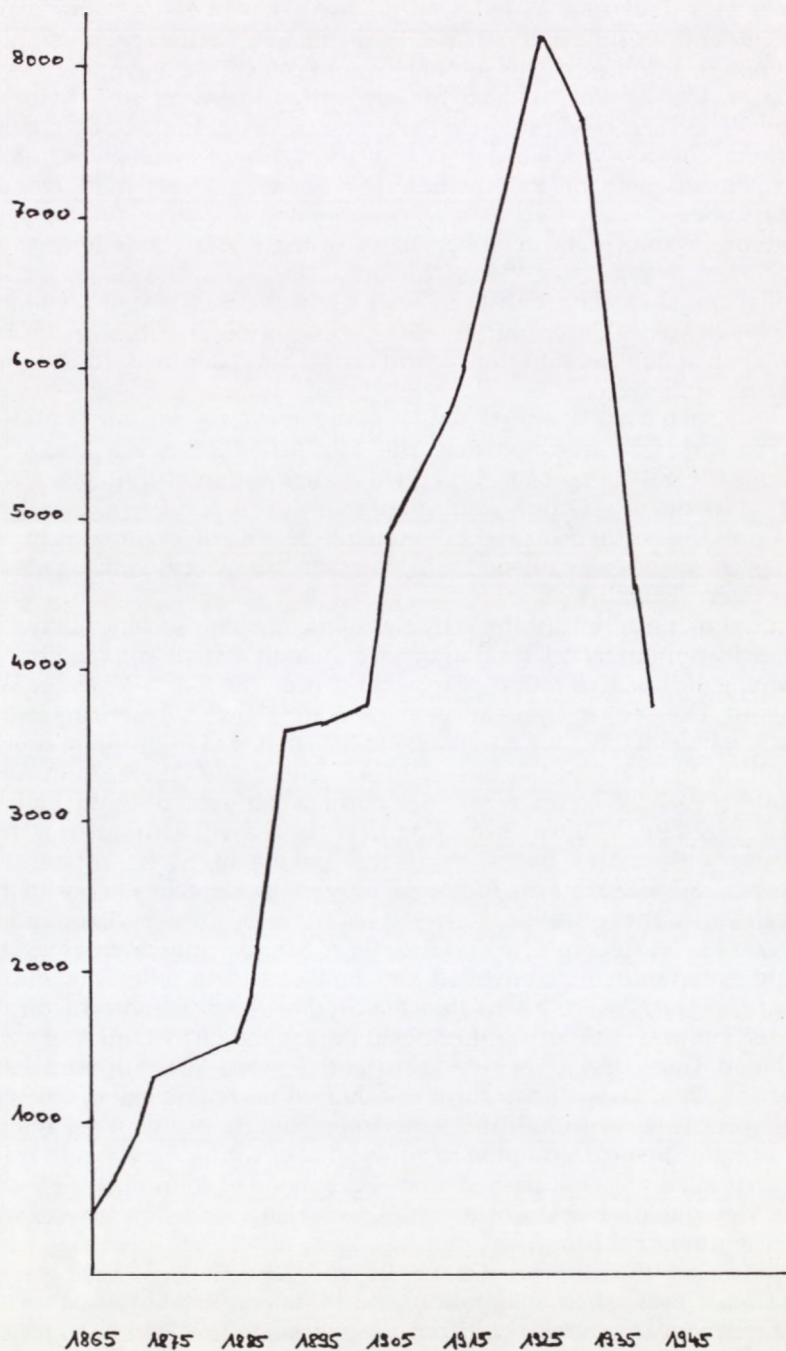
II

The activities of the *Grütli-Bund* centered in its local associations which often cooperated with independent Swiss organizations of a given area. The efforts of the *Grütli-ianer* of Rochester, as reported by Adelrich Steinach and Sigbert Meier, may serve as a typical example.¹⁹ In 1880 about a thousand Swiss were living in Rochester among about

GRAPH 1

Growth and Decline of North-American *Grütli-Bund* Membership 1865-1940.

Members



90,000 inhabitants. By 1888 they had formed five different organizations. The oldest was the *Schweizer-Verein*, founded in 1861 and one of the first local associations that had joined the *Bund* in 1865. It held monthly meetings dedicated to fellowship, discussion of issues, and management of the society's affairs. It maintained a library of some 160 volumes, celebrated the annual *Grütli-Festival* on November 17, and had in 1888 \$3,488 in assets for support and benevolent activities. On July 4, 1888, it celebrated the American national holiday by commemorating the 500-year anniversary of the Battle of Näfels²⁰ by a special "costumed pageant [that included] Swiss heroes, horsemen, cross-bow marksmen, twenty-two girls whose different costumes symbolized the cantons," that is the member states of the Swiss Confederacy. "Live pictures" represented Swiss historical scenes.²¹ The *Schweizer-Verein* collaborated closely with the Swiss Club, the Swiss Men's Choir, the Helvetia Men's Choir, and the Swiss Sharpshooters Club. In 1884 both choirs helped celebrate the *Grütli-Festival* and later merged to form the Harmony Society.

Steinach's book reports similar efforts for numerous other places. In New York City, for instance, the Men's *Grütli-Singing Society* performed in 1874 a specially designed dramatization outlining the course of Swiss history. Other performances included plays or musicals with patriotic Swiss themes. The 127 members also made excursions to places such as Fair View, College Point, Eckstein's Brewery, and Kern's Farm on Staten Island.²²

Another example of the activities of the member societies in the *Bund* was the centennial celebration of 1876, held in Philadelphia to honor the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The *Grütli-Verein* of Washington, D.C., took the lead in organizing a Swiss-American People's Day in Philadelphia for August 26 and 27 that was to commemorate the Battle of St. Jakob at the Birs of 1444.²³ The aged General John August Sutter (1803-1880), on whose Californian possessions gold had been discovered in 1848, was presiding over the festivities that had attracted nearly a thousand Swiss. A festive parade of Swiss organizations opened the celebration, followed by various speeches. One of them dealt with the question "why a community like Switzerland had preserved its freedom for so long."²⁴ A banquet, much singing, and a light entertainment concluded the first day. The following morning more speeches were heard that featured aspects of Swiss history and Swiss cultural traditions. One speaker discussed "The Duties of a Swiss Abroad Towards His Native Land and Toward His Adopted Fatherland." "Be citizens," the speaker exhorted his countrymen, "be genuine men, true Swiss, faithful Americans, and do not yourself diminish your rights by neglecting the *one* duty, that of voting."²⁵ Later in the day formal motions were passed that recommended joining the *Bund* and the vigorous promotion of its goals, especially "ideal endeavors in the sense of rational progress."²⁶

Such sentiments were not wholly new; local *Grütli-Vereine* as well as the *Bund* drew their inspiration and basic organizational pattern not from American models, but from an association that had been founded

on May 6, 1838, in Geneva, the French-speaking city of Calvin's fame.²⁷ Since 1836 some German-speaking Swiss, mainly young single journeymen from the cantons of Appenzell and Glarus, had gathered on the last Sunday in April to re-enact the *Landsgemeinde*, that is the legislative annual open-air meetings of their respective states. They marched in solemn formation to their chosen meeting place where they elected a *Landamman* or governor, then discussed and voted on the very matters that were before the actual gatherings then taking place in their home cantons. In 1838 the group decided to establish a formal organization and to name it *Grütli-Verein* on the suggestion of Johannes Niederer (1779-1843), a reformed minister, theologian, and close collaborator of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827). "You shall be called *Grütli-ianer*," the respected Dr. Niederer is supposed to have exclaimed at a meeting of May 20, 1838, "because I foresee that from this fraternal organization of Swiss, regardless of cantonal differences, something magnificent will emerge, just as free Switzerland emerged from the *Grütli*."²⁸ That name refers to the meadow where, according to the old chronicles, representatives of Uri, Schwyz, and Unterwalden had secretly assembled in the late fall of 1307 to reaffirm the original Swiss League by a solemn oath of mutual support and loyalty in the face of the designs of Hapsburg nobles.²⁹

A constitution was drafted that stated the goal of the association in these words:

The society seeks the free mutual exchange of ideas, enlightenment and general education, especially as to patriotic matters.³⁰

Swiss of good reputation, who were at least seventeen, were able to join. Meetings were held weekly where such questions were debated as the establishment of uniform weights and measures, the management of orphanages and poorhouses, the founding of a national university and teachers' college, and the freedom of the press. True to Alpine democratic traditions, a vote was taken only when a basic consensus seemed to have emerged.

In the mid-1840s the association promoted vigorously the transformation of the Swiss League of States into a Federal Nation State. The organization's central purpose had been defined more sharply in the main paragraph of the revised constitution of 1840:

The *Grütli*-Association honors the principle of cantonal and national sovereignty as adopted in the *Grütli-Bund* of 1307. Its purpose is to preserve the integrity of democracy in the spirit of its founding and progressive development. To achieve this purpose it seeks as much as possible the enlightenment and education of its members as people and citizens by

- a. free discussion
- b. written communication
- c. public readings.³¹

The main influence on the *Grütli-Verein* in the 1840s emanated from Albert Galeer (1816-1851), the son of a German political exile living in

Switzerland. After Albert Galeer had completed his studies in philosophy and philology at the University of Heidelberg, he became ever more involved in the liberal movements that culminated in the 1848 revolutions. He was also closely associated with Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-1872) and had embraced many of his views. Galeer transformed the *Grütli-Verein* into a "Männerschule," that is a school for young men. They were to meet almost daily for lessons in history, languages, geography, and song and to debate important questions of the day. Discussions were not to be followed by common political action, however. The *Grütli-Verein* was to be an instrument for continuing education that prepared the young men for independent enlightened political activity.³²

In the first years the organization grew only moderately. By the mid-1840s it had sections in cities like Geneva with 120, Lausanne with 40, Bern with 50, and Paris with 80 members. After 1848, when the Swiss Confederation had adopted its present shape, the ever-growing number of *Grütli-Vereine* vigorously promoted other political and social reforms. They opposed the continuation of the foreign military service; furthered the founding of cooperative stores and the establishment of a national Sick Benefit and Burial Fund; fought for the passage of a national factory law, the creation of a Federal Labor Bureau, the free distribution of school materials, and the adoption of federal regulations of primary education.³³

In the later decades of the nineteenth century the *Grütli-Verein* adopted ever more vigorously the causes of labor and social justice. It supported the founding of the Second International, but rejected the Moscow International as "undemocratic and un-socialist."³⁴ It reached the height of its influence at the turn of the century. By 1903 the association counted 298 sections and a total of 8912 members. The emergence of strong trade unions, of politically neutral gymnastics, singing, and sharpshooting societies, and of a vigorous social-democratic party led to a slow decline and, in 1925, to a merger with the latter.³⁵ Relations with the North American *Grütli-Bund* were only sporadic,³⁶ but ceased altogether with the growing commitment of the Swiss national *Grütli-Verein* to social democracy.

Like its American offshoot, the Swiss *Grütli-Verein* was an organization of transition. It fostered a strongly patriotic, but pluralist nationalism, especially after 1870, when the unification of Germany and Italy seemed to threaten Switzerland's survival. Before unification these states had been divided into separate or only loosely affiliated territories and many of them were of a size comparable to that of the Swiss Confederacy. After 1870, however, the latter was surrounded by large nations that hoped to absorb eventually all people speaking their respective language. Thus the *Grütli-Verein* fostered a national unity based on an idealized common historical experience and unique cultural traditions that, according to the association, had welded Switzerland's four language groups into a genuine state.³⁷

The Swiss *Grütli-Verein* focused also on the socio-economic transformations of its day, symbolized in the rise of industrial mass-production,

wage-labor, and the formation of corporations. The organization tried very consciously to unite people from all walks of life—artisans, tradesmen, small businessmen, professionals, and laborers—in the name of the higher unity of the nation, its idealized past, and unique mission. Some of the local *Grütli-Vereine* of the United States, especially those of Washington, D.C., and Toledo, Ohio, seem to have shared some of that orientation;³⁸ most others, however, remained aloof from questions of labor and social justice and stressed total independence from the Swiss organization. In 1911 the North American association changed its name from *Grütli-* to *Schweizer-Bund* in order to symbolize its separate perspective.³⁹

Both national networks of organizations, then, had started in culturally alien surroundings and strove to shape the future by preserving the substance of the past. The Swiss *Grütli-Verein* helped easing the transition of Switzerland from a league of states to a nation state, and from an economy based on crafts and guild traditions to one of industrialized mass production. The North-American *Grütli-Bund*, in turn, contributed effectively to the transformation of Swiss immigrants to ethnics by nurturing cohesion, mutual support, and the celebration of an idealized past that could serve as a guide to the future.

III

After the sketch of the history of the North American *Grütli-Bund* and its relationship to the Swiss parent society, the question remains what kind of immigrants had joined the organization. The publication celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the *Bund* permits at least a partial answer.⁴⁰ It contains an alphabetical list of the member societies with dates of their founding and entry into the *Bund*. In addition each society listing offers an alphabetical roster of members including the year, place, and canton of birth as well as profession and year of entry into the local association. These data allow the construction of a numerical profile of the membership as to geographic origin, place of residence, age, occupation, and social status.⁴¹ The resulting profile features, however, not only the membership of the *Bund*, but also the 1915 Swiss presence in the United States for which it may serve as a fairly representative sample.

As to geographic origin the data show that five sixths of the *Grütli* were born in Switzerland, most others in the United States, a few in countries such as Germany, Austria, or France.⁴² Table 3 indicates the general distribution; nearly nine tenths of the men were Swiss-born, but not quite two thirds of the women.

Table 4 divides the Swiss-born membership of the *Bund* according to canton of birth and compares the data with the total of Swiss emigrants for the years 1906 to 1915 and with the 1910 total of the Swiss resident population. The comparison does not reveal specific patterns. Data for some areas are fairly in balance, other regions are significantly over- or under-represented. French-speaking Swiss from cantons such as Neuchâtel, Vaud, and Geneva, however, as well as Swiss from the Italian-

TABLE 3
**Distribution of the *Grütli-Bund* Membership According to
 Region of Birth and Gender**

Region	Total		Men		Women	
	Absolute	Percent	Absolute	Percent	Absolute	Percent
Switzerland	5,009	83.3	4,430	88.3	579	58.1
United States	654	10.9	528	10.5	126	12.6
Other	188	3.1	56	1.1	132	13.3
Unknown	161	2.7	2	0.1	159	16.0
Total	6,012	100.0	5,016	100.0	996	100.0

Source: [S. Meier], *Nord-Amerikanischer Schweizer-Bund*, pp. 93-218.

TABLE 4
**Distribution of the 1915 Swiss-born *Grütli-Bund* Membership
 According to Swiss Cantons of Origin and in Comparison
 with their 1906-1915 Emigrant and Resident Population Totals**

Region	1915 <i>Grütli-Bund</i> Membership		1906-1915 Total of Cantonal Emigrants		1910 Swiss Resident Population Total	
	Absolute	Percent	Absolute	Percent	Absolute	Percent
Bern	1,648	32.9	9,778	20.2	645,877	17.2
Zurich	530	10.6	6,661	13.8	503,915	13.4
Aargau	488	9.7	1,711	3.6	230,634	6.1
St. Gall	367	7.3	3,697	7.7	302,896	8.1
Schaffhausen	249	5.0	498	1.0	46,097	1.2
Schwyz	240	4.8	1,558	3.2	58,428	1.6
Thurgau	152	3.0	1,095	2.3	134,917	3.6
Appenzell-A.R.	151	3.0	64	0.1	14,659	0.4
Grisons	140	2.8	1,140	2.4	117,069	3.1
Solothurn	139	2.8	937	1.9	117,040	3.1
Luzern	116	2.3	1,264	2.6	167,223	4.5
Basel-Land	115	2.3	980	2.0	76,488	2.0
Valais	114	2.3	1,447	3.0	128,381	3.4
Glarus	106	2.1	624	1.3	33,316	0.9
Basel-Stadt	84	1.7	2,865	5.9	135,918	3.6
Uri	72	1.4	404	0.8	22,113	0.6
Obwalden	71	1.4	508	1.1	17,161	0.5
Ticino	54	1.1	5,901	12.2	156,166	4.2
Neuchâtel	46	0.9	1,963	4.1	133,061	3.5
Nidwalden	30	0.6	118	0.2	13,788	0.4
Vaud	26	0.5	1,920	4.0	317,457	8.5
Zug	24	0.5	458	1.0	28,156	0.8
Fribourg	20	0.4	349	0.7	139,654	3.7
Appenzell-I.R.	17	0.3	593	1.2	57,973	1.5
Geneva	10	0.2	1,641	3.4	154,906	4.1
Total	5,009	100.0	48,174	100.0	3,753,293	100.0

Source: [S. Meier], *Nord-Amerikanischer Schweizer-Bund*, pp. 93-218; *Statistisches Jahrbuch der Schweiz 1915* (Bern 1916) p. 68; Statistisches Bureau, *Die Ergebnisse der Eidgenössischen Volkszählung vom 1. Dezember 1910* (Bern 1918), p. 61.

speaking canton Ticino had joined the *Bund* in proportionately smaller numbers, German-speaking emigrants from cantons like Bern, Appenzell-A.R., and Schaffhausen in proportionately larger groups. Just as the *Grütli-Verein* of Switzerland, also its North American counterpart seems to have been most popular among German-speaking Swiss and especially of those three cantons.

Of the 654 Swiss who were born in the United States and members of the *Grütli-Bund* in 1915, 132 (20.2%) hailed from Ohio, 69 (10.5%) from New York, 66 (10.0%) from Missouri, 60 (9.2%) from Pennsylvania, and 55 (8.5%) from Kentucky. One hundred eighty-eight of the 1915 *Grütli-Bund* members were born in other countries; of these 142 Swiss came from Germany, 20 from Austria, and 10 from France.

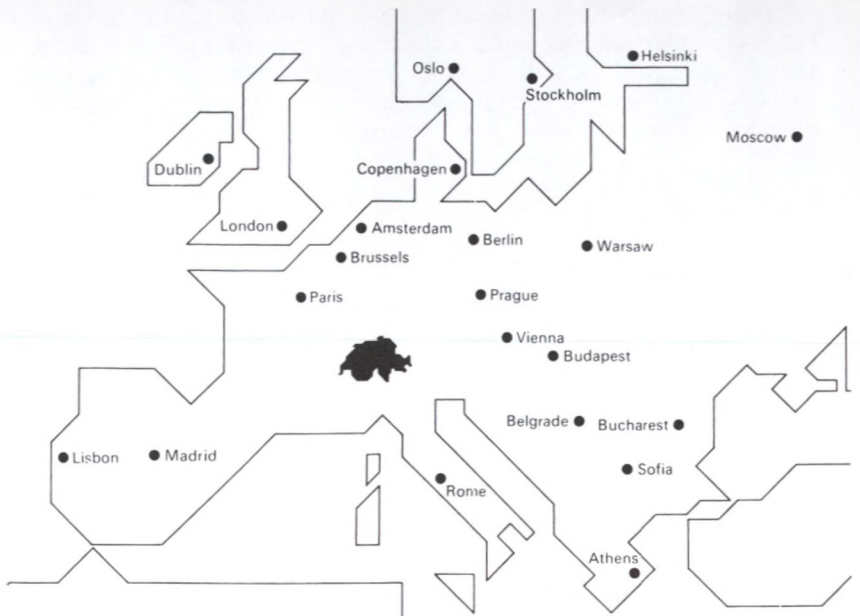
The member societies of the *Grütli-Bund* were quite dispersed over the United States (see map 1), but mostly found in urban centers of the Northeast and the Great Lakes region. The list of those fifteen societies with more than one hundred members and representing nearly two thirds of the total membership illustrates this point (Table 5).

If one compares the 1915 *Grütli-Bund* membership with the 1910 Swiss presence of those states of the Union with more than two thousand Swiss-born, no clear pattern of distribution emerges. While rural states such as Illinois, Wisconsin, and Ohio had comparable numbers of Swiss-born, Wisconsin counted far fewer *Grütli* than Illinois, whereas Ohio was overrepresented by more than five percent. Relatively high proportional representation in the *Bund* by states such as Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Missouri confirms that Swiss in urban centers favored the organization. Table 6 shows these proportions.

The membership of the *Grütli-Bund* was predominantly male in conformity with its early designation as *Männerschule*, a school for men. In 1915 it counted 5016 men and 996 women, a proportion of 83.4 to 16.6 percent. The distribution as to age groups is featured in Table 7 and in Graph 2.

The data show that the age group 45 to 49 years of age was the largest for the total membership, closely followed by those aged 50 to 54. The latter group was the largest for the male membership whereas the age group 40 to 44 was largest for the women, closely followed by the age group 45 to 49; together the latter two represented 41.6 percent of all women members. The age groups between 17 and 34 years were 21.9 percent smaller than one would expect, the age groups above 60 years 15.5 percent larger. The male membership was heavily concentrated in the group of higher middle age. In contrast, 58 percent of the women were between 35 to 49 years of age, and only 9.7 percent 60 years or older.

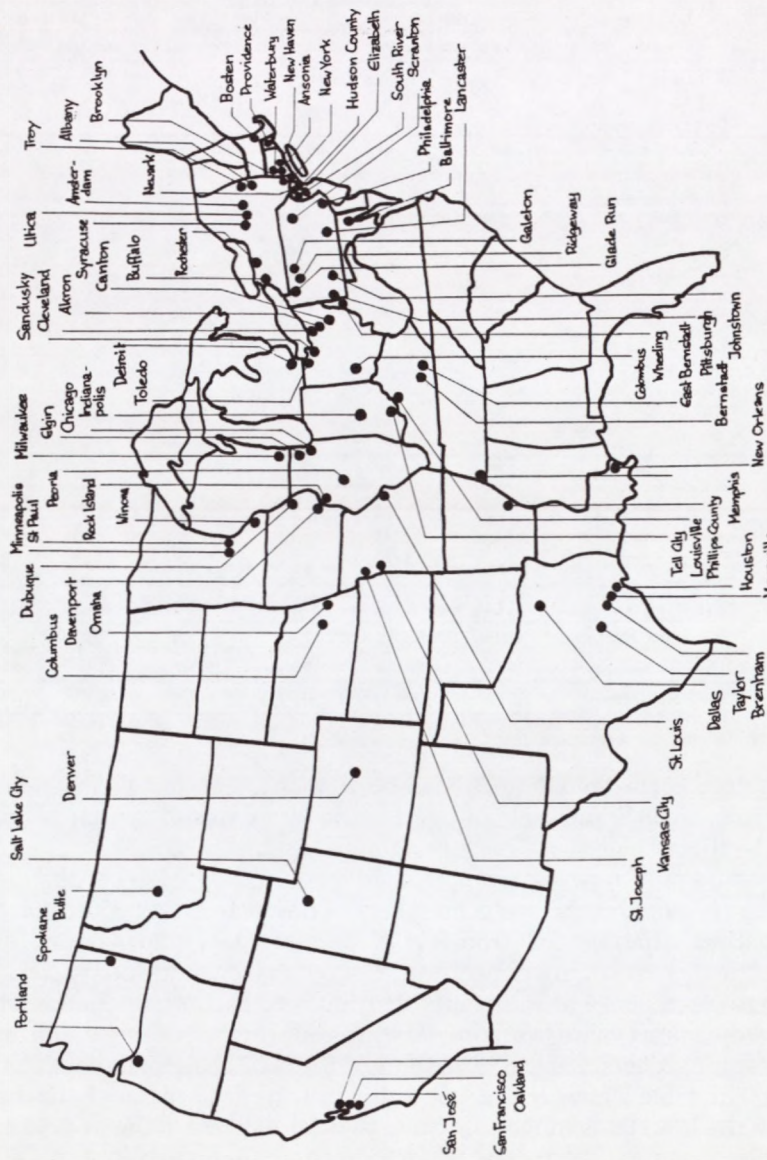
The median age distribution of the 1915 *Bund* membership is featured in Table 8. The Swiss-born men were with a median age of 48 significantly older than the U.S.-born *Bund* members with 29.6. The data seem to confirm E. P. Hutchinson's findings that Swiss-born immigrants were among those groups with highest median ages. In 1940, the only year for which data for Swiss-born in general are available, the Swiss-born median age was 56.1, surpassed only by Swedish-born with



Map 1: Switzerland's Position in Europe



Map 2: The Swiss Cantons



Map 3: Geographic Distribution of Grütli-Bund Associations in the United States in 1915.

TABLE 5

Member Societies of the North American *Grütli-Bund* with More Than 100 Members in 1915 According to Size and Gender Distribution

Rank	Location	Membership					
		Total		Men		Women	
		Absolute	Percent	Absolute	Percent	Absolute	Percent
1	St. Louis, Missouri	518	8.61	403	8.03	115	11.54
2	Hudson County, New Jersey	445	7.40	379	7.55	66	6.63
3	Chicago, Illinois	389	6.47	389	7.75	--	--
4	San Francisco, California	365	6.07	263	5.24	102	10.24
5	New York City	310	5.16	292	5.82	18	1.81
6	Cleveland, Ohio	299	4.97	298	5.94	1	0.10
7	Portland, Oregon	280	4.66	262	5.22	18	1.81
8	Toledo, Ohio	233	3.87	185	3.69	48	4.82
9	Milwaukee, Wisconsin	170	2.83	152	3.03	18	1.81
10	Ridgeway, Pennsylvania	160	2.66	96	1.91	64	6.42
11	Scranton, Pennsylvania	144	2.40	138	2.75	6	0.60
12	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	135	2.24	93	1.86	42	4.22
13	Akron, Ohio	123	2.04	99	1.97	24	2.41
14	Dallas, Texas	117	1.95	84	1.68	33	3.31
15	Buffalo, New York	110	1.83	87	1.74	23	23.10
	15 Largest Societies	3798	63.16	3220	64.18	578	58.03
Totals	Other 57 Societies	2214	36.84	1796	35.82	418	41.97
	All 72 Societies	6012	100.00	5016	100.00	996	100.00

Source: [S. Meier], *Nord-Amerikanischer Grütli-Bund*, pp. 93-218.

58.0, Norwegian- and North Irish-born with 56.3, and German-born with 56.6; in 1910 the median age for the latter was 47.3, that is quite close to that of the Swiss-born *Bund* membership of 47.7.⁴³

Because only very few women listed an occupation, the occupational analysis centers on the male members. They listed over 350 different occupations that ranged from drover, candymaker, loan fixer, and varnishmaker to trimmer, beerbottler, covemaker, and loom fixer. In order to get a sense of the status distribution, each occupational label received a status value from one (low) to four (high).⁴⁴ Table 9 indicates the resulting general status distribution for 5007 male members of the *Bund*. The table shows that a good third of the 1915 membership held jobs in the low status range; not quite two thirds were in the middle and superior category, and only three percent had occupations of high status.

Over a fifth of the occupational identifications consisted of generic labels such as employee, worker, examiner, manager, technician, and capitalist. Most of the others were sufficiently specific to allow their

TABLE 6

Distribution of the 1915 *Grütli-Bund* Membership in U.S. States with More than 2000 Swiss-Born in 1910

U.S. State	1915 <i>Grütli-Bund</i> Membership			Swiss in U.S. States with More Than 2000 Swiss-Born in 1910			
	Rank	Absolute	Percent	Rank	Absolute	Percent in <i>Bund</i>	Percent Swiss-Born
Ohio	1	846	14.1	3	10,988	7.7	8.8
New York	2	750	12.5	1	16,312	4.6	13.0
Pennsylvania	3	630	10.5	7	7,484	8.4	6.0
Missouri	4	609	10.1	8	6,141	9.9	4.9
New Jersey	5	598	10.0	6	7,548	7.9	6.0
California	6	490	8.2	2	14,520	3.4	11.6
Illinois	7	398	6.6	4	8,660	4.6	7.0
Oregon	8	280	4.7	9	3,853	7.3	3.1
Wisconsin	11	170	2.8	5	8,036	2.1	6.4
Nebraska	12	129	2.1	16	2,150	6.0	1.7
Indiana	14	104	1.7	15	2,765	3.8	2.2
Michigan	16	90	1.5	14	2,780	3.2	2.2
Kansas	17	86	1.4	13	2,853	3.0	2.3
Minnesota	18	66	1.1	12	2,992	2.2	2.4
Iowa	25	20	0.3	10	3,675	0.5	3.0
Washington	29	8	0.1	11	3,447	0.2	2.7
Totals		5,274	87.7		104,204	5.1	83.5
All		6,012	100.0		124,847	4.8	100.0

Source: [S. Meier], *Nord-Amerikanischer Schweizer-Bund*, pp. 93-218; Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, Abstract* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), pp. 205-209.

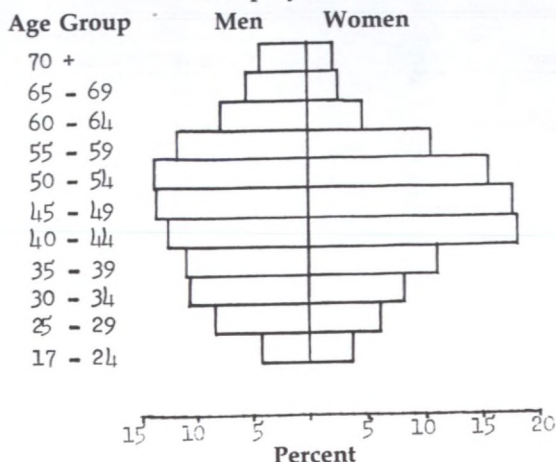
TABLE 7

Distribution of 1915 *Grütli-Bund* Membership According to Age Group, Age Group Rank, and Gender

Age Group		All		Gender Distribution	
Years of Age	Rank	Absolute	Percent	Percent of Males	Percent of Females
17-24	10	242	4.1	4.1	3.7
25-29	7	462	7.8	8.1	6.0
30-34	6	594	10.0	10.3	8.3
35-39	5	640	10.8	10.7	11.1
40-44	3	778	13.1	12.1	17.9
45-49	1	824	13.8	13.2	17.4
50-54	2	817	13.7	13.4	15.6
55-59	4	674	11.3	11.5	10.3
60-64	8	412	6.9	7.3	4.7
65-69	9	292	4.9	5.3	2.9
70+	11	218	3.7	4.0	2.1
Totals		5,953	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: [S. Meier], *Nord-Amerikanischer Grütli-Bund*, pp. 93-218.

GRAPH 2
Distribution of 1915 Grütli-Bund
Membership According to Age
Group by Gender



grouping into occupational classes. Table 10 gives them in descending numerical order and divides them also according to status level.

These data not only confirm but also complement E. P. Hutchinson's comment that in 1900 "immigrant males from Switzerland were most numerous in manufacturing and in domestic and personal service . . . [and] especially found among servants and waiters, saloonkeepers and bartenders, and in the textile industry except for cottonmills."⁴⁵ The many varied and quite specific subdivisions of occupational designations used by the male membership seems to indicate, furthermore, that these immigrants viewed their occupations as crafts or specialized skills rather than as mere forms of wage labor. The wide range of occupations shows, finally, that the *Grütli-Bund* was fulfilling at least one major ideal of the founders of the Swiss *Grütli-Verein*, that is the gathering of people from all walks of life into one organization that was to pursue their mental and physical welfare regardless of occupation and status. The common laborer, blue collar worker, farmer, banker, and professional could cooperate in fostering economic well-being and an enlightened patriotism that strove not only to preserve the accustomed traditions and values, but also to nurture new attachments to the adopted country. Thus, the occupational inclusiveness, combined with the compatibility of Swiss and American traditions, enabled the North American *Grütli-Bund* to serve as a bridge that effectively united the old with the new and significantly eased the burden of immigrant life.

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 Zug, Switzerland

TABLE 8

Median Age of 1915 North-American *Grütli-Bund* Membership According to Birth Region and Gender in Comparison with 1910 U.S. White Population

Group	Category	Number of Cases	Median Age
Total <i>Bund</i> Membership	Men	5016	46.2
	Women	996	45.4
	All	6012	46.0
Swiss-Born <i>Bund</i> Membership	Men	4430	48.0
	Women	579	45.5
	All	5009	47.7
U.S.-Born <i>Bund</i> Membership	Men	528	29.6
	Women	126	33.3
	All	654	30.2
Other-Born <i>Bund</i> Membership	Men	56	38.5
	Women	132	46.4
	All	188	43.0
1910 White U.S. Population	Native Parentage	49.489	22.0
	Foreign or Mixed Parentage	18.898	20.0
	Foreign Born	13.346	37.2
	Total	81.732	24.4

Source: [S. Meier], *Nord-Amerikanischer Schweizer-Bund*, pp. 93-218; E. P. Hutchinson, *Immigrants*, pp. 3, 15.

TABLE 9

Distribution of 1915 Male *Grütli-Bund* Membership According to Status Level of Occupation

Category	Absolute	Percent
Low	1714	34.2
Middle	2197	43.9
Superior	945	18.9
High	151	3.0
Total	5007	100.0

Source: [S. Meier], *Nord-Amerikanischer Schweizer-Bund*, pp. 93-218.

TABLE 10
**Distribution of 1915 Male *Grütli-Bund* Membership According to
 Nature and Assigned Status Level of Occupation**

Nature of Occupation	Total		Low		Middle		Superior		High	
	Abs.	Percent	Abs.	Percent of Total	Abs.	Percent of Total	Abs.	Percent of Total	Abs.	Percent of Total
Generic	1023	20.4	799	16.0	34	0.7	136	2.7	54	0.1
Services	541	10.8	329	6.6	209	4.2	2	0.0	1	0.0
Agriculture	498	9.9	19	0.4	55	1.1	423	8.4	1	0.0
Innkeeping	431	8.6	41	0.8	170	3.4	210	4.2	10	0.2
Woodworking	405	8.1	20	0.4	380	7.6	2	0.0	3	0.1
Food, Drink, Tobacco	383	7.7	51	1.0	303	6.1	21	0.4	8	0.2
Textiles	333	6.7	94	1.9	239	4.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
Metalworking	298	6.0	76	1.5	181	3.6	38	0.8	3	0.1
Dairying	229	4.6	184	3.7	42	0.8	3	0.1	0	0.0
Construction	183	3.7	11	0.2	136	2.7	19	0.4	17	0.3
Baking	169	3.4	0	0.0	169	3.4	0	0.0	0	0.0
Leatherworking	104	2.1	10	0.2	92	1.8	2	0.0	0	0.0
Color Trades	93	1.9	15	0.3	75	1.5	3	0.1	0	0.0
Professions	59	1.2	0	0.0	11	0.2	25	0.5	23	0.5
Printing and Bookbinding	51	1.0	0	0.0	35	0.7	16	0.3	0	0.0
Artistic Pursuits	48	0.9	0	0.0	34	0.7	14	0.3	0	0.0
Healthcare	43	0.8	2	0.0	0	0.0	15	0.3	26	0.5
Railroad	37	0.7	22	0.4	15	0.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
Mining	35	0.7	25	0.5	2	0.0	8	0.2	0	0.0
Glassworking	23	0.5	10	0.2	9	0.2	4	0.1	0	0.0
Banking	12	0.2	0	0.0	5	0.1	2	0.0	5	0.1
Varia	7	0.1	6	0.1	1	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	5007	100.0	1714	34.2	2197	43.9	945	18.9	151	3.0

Source: [S. Meier], *Nord-Amerikanischer Schweizer-Bund*, pp. 93-218.

Notes

¹ *Geschichte und Leben der Schweizer Kolonien in den Vereinigten Staaten von Nord Amerika, unter Mitwirkung des Nord-Amerikanischen Grütli-Bundes* (New York: T. Bryner, 1889). A. Steinach was born April 26, 1826 in Uznach, Canton St. Gallen. He studied at the Universities of Freiburg (Germany), Munich, Paris and Strasbourg. In 1855 he moved to the United States and practiced medicine. He authored the two-volume work *System der organischen Entwicklung* (Basel: Benno Schwabe, 1886). For biographical sketches see Steinach, *Geschichte*, p. 355 and *Prominent Americans of Swiss Origin* (New York: James T. White, 1932), pp. 134-35.

² For a discussion of the term see Edward N. Saveth, *American Historians and European Immigrants 1875-1925* (1948; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1965), pp. 202-15.

³ Steinach, *Geschichte*, pp. 3-4; all translations are those of L. Schelbert, if not mentioned otherwise.

⁴ [Sigbert Meier], *Nord-Amerikanischer Schweizer-Bund 1865-1915* (Union Hill, NJ: Michel and Rank, [1916]), p. 6.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁹ *Ibid.*: John Hitz was "identified with the American Fröbel Society, the Kindergarten Association, and the Industrial Home School." He succeeded his father, John Hitz, Sr. (d. 1864), a mining engineer, as consul of Switzerland, in 1864 and served until 1881; for biographical sketches see: Steinach, *Geschichte*, pp. 137-40, especially valuable as to his family background; *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (1904), xii, 62; on his consular activities see Heinz K. Meier, *The United States and Switzerland in the Nineteenth Century* (The Hague: Mouton, 1963), pp. 126-30.

¹⁰ Meier, *Schweizer-Bund*, p. 10.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹² The Winkelried Foundation was an attempt to create a national burial fund; success was only limited, however; *ibid.*, pp. 18-20.

¹³ *Constitution des Nord-Amerikanischen Grütli-Bundes* (Newark, NJ: J. Schläpfer, 1873), p. 1; copy provided by courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

¹⁴ *Constitution des Grütli-Vereins San Francisco* (San Francisco: M. Weiss, 1875), p. 3-4; copy in Bancroft Library, University of California. Special thanks are due to Consul Alphons Frey, Swiss Consulate General, San Francisco, for his kind assistance in securing a copy.

¹⁵ This becomes evident from Steinach, *Geschichte*, *passim*, and also S. Meier, *Schweizer-Bund*, *passim*.

¹⁶ S. Meier, *ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

¹⁷ Fred Eidenbenz, *75th Anniversary Jubilee Book of the North American Swiss Alliance* (New York: Community Press of Yorkville, 1941), p. 98.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁹ Steinach, *Geschichte*, pp. 61-63; Meier, *Schweizer-Bund*, pp. 77-78.

²⁰ In April 1388 the peasants of Glarus, almost unaided, destroyed the Austrian forces at Näfels, sent to reconquer the Glarus valley; see Edgar Bonjour, et al., *A Short History of Switzerland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 100.

²¹ Steinach, *Geschichte*, p. 62.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 3-35.

²³ "At St. Jakob an der Birs . . . , 26 August 1444, the Swiss, outnumbered by ten to one, and by professional soldiers at that, fought [the French] until they . . . were wiped out almost to a man"; Bonjour, *Short History*, p. 117. The heroic resistance led France to recognize the independence of the Confederacy.

²⁴ Steinach, *Geschichte*, p. 91; in the following years a few more such *Volksfeste* were organized.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.

²⁷ For the early years see J. K. Wilhelm, ed., *Der moralische Volksbund und die freie schweizerische Männerschule, oder der Grütliverein. Eine vertrauensvolle Rede an das Schweizer-volk, vornämlich an die Jüngern. Von Albert Galeer. Nebst einem geschichtlichen Abrisse* (Bern: Konrad und Allemann, 1864); valuable surveys provide: William Harbutt Dawson, *Social Switzerland* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1897), pp. 69-77; P. Brandt, "Grütliverein," in *Handwörterbuch der schweizerischen Volkswirtschaft, Sozialpolitik und Verwaltung*, Naum Reichesberg, ed. (Bern: Verlag Encyclopädie 1901-1911), II, 451-58; R. Seidel, "Grütliverein (Schweiz)," *Historisch-Biographisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, 3 (1926): 778-79; Erich Gruner, *Die Arbeiter in der Schweiz im 19. Jahrhundert* (Bern: Francke, 1968), pp. 468-504. A partisan description of the struggle within the organization after 1910 is [Hans Müller], *Grütliener-Manifest* (Zürich: Schweizerischer Grütliverein, [1917]).

²⁸ Wilhelm, ed., *Volksbund*, p. 72; *ibid.*, pp. 183-99, a description of the first celebration of the Grütli-League, November 17, 1839.

²⁹ The first formal alliance had occurred in 1291; the 1307 gathering of the confederates on the Rütli involved "a secret oath to drive out their oppressors"; Bonjour, *Short History*, p. 79; *ibid.* 79-81, a discussion of the controversies concerning the validity of sources. For a delightfully mischievous treatment of the story see Max Frisch, *Wilhelm Tell für die Schule* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1971).

³⁰ Wilhelm, ed., *Volksbund*, p. 73.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

³³ R. Seidel, "Grütliverein," p. 779.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ See, for instance, "Allgemeiner Bericht," *Jahresbericht des schweizerischen Grütlivereins 1871-1872*, p. 5: The hope is expressed that *Grütlivereine* abroad might become more closely affiliated with the Swiss organization; then special reference is made to Consul Hitz and to the fact that the North-American "*Bund* has quite close ties to the Swiss Central Organization [*Centralverband*]" ; the contacts between the two national associations need further methodical investigation.

³⁷ Gruner, *Arbeiter*, p. 470.

³⁸ Meier, *Schweizer-Bund*, p. 18, calls John Hitz "the soul of all progressive ideas in the *Bund*"; p. 25: Discussions in the weekly *Grütli* "seemed finally to end up in social-democratic waters"; p. 27: "Some feared Toledo might influence the *Bund* social-democratically."

³⁹ Ibid., p. 25: The change "occurred in taking account of the fact that the Swiss *Grütli-Verein* had become a political party with a definite tendency, and one did not want in our circles that the *Bund* would be mistakenly identified with political tendencies."

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 93-218.

⁴¹ In the context of the 1980 Newberry Institute of Family History, directed by University of Illinois at Chicago Professors Richard Jensen and Daniel S. Smith, the authors created the basis for an electronic data analysis. They gratefully acknowledge the generous assistance of the staff of the Institute as well as of James Mott, Ph.D. candidate and University of Illinois at Chicago Data Archivist.

⁴² Swiss citizenship is independent of the locality of birth; it generally derives from juridical membership in one of the Swiss communes and extends from there *ipso facto* to the canton and the nation; see "Gemeinde," *Historisch-Biographisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, 3 (1926), 428-30.

⁴³ Edward P. Hutchinson, *Immigrants and Their Children, 1850-1950* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1956), p. 17.

⁴⁴ Space limitations do not permit the inclusion of a complete listing of the occupations and the assignments of status levels; the classification "Dairy Trades" may serve as an example, however: "Dairyman, milker, milkman," 183 cases, status level 1 (low); "milk-seller, cheese-maker, buttermaker, dairy-store," 45 cases, status level 2 (middle); "cheese merchant," 3 cases, status level 3 (superior).

⁴⁵ Hutchinson, *Immigrants*, p. 180.