



German Village

Churches and Schools of the Village

Historical Context and Overview

Germany did not exist as a political entity until the end of the 19th century, so Germans arriving in the United States could have come from anyone of over 250 small duchies, imperial cities, kingdoms, or German-speaking enclaves. Many of these political entities had been created during the Reformation and reflected what had been the religion of the ruler. This meant that Christian Germans might be Lutheran, Catholic, or independent Protestant (leaning toward Calvinism).

What Germans had in common was language. Therefore, the written word—especially the works of the poet Schiller and the writer Goethe—were especially important as was the learning of the German language (this also meant singing was important). Schools and religion were paramount to the community. While the Christian German community was divided in theology and customs of worship, there were also divided opinions about schools. Catholic families were not pleased that in a predominately Christian Protestant (and Anglo Saxon) country the Protestant version was the standard. Nor did they appreciate paying local taxes to have their children subject to Protestant readings—and worse yet, in English. Public schools were frequently known as Protestant schools, even into mid-20th century in Columbus in Little Germany.

The Germans of Columbus lived closest to the Ohio legislature and carried their demands for separate German schools to be established within the public school system. They were so successful that their demands went beyond schools. For almost 70 years, every law passed by the legislature was published in both English and German, creating a bilingual legislative mandate that ended only with the start of World War I. Germans created several public schools where only German was spoken and taught. In addition, Catholic schools were additional options for education.

In the 1840s, Lutherans worshipped at St. Paul's (now gone) on South High Street. In a dispute over English being used in the church services, many left St. Paul's to form a German-only church (Trinity). Originally, the Lutheran influence was strong enough to support the beginnings of a seminary that developed into Capital University.

Standards Alignment

Ohio's New Learning Standards: K-12 Social Studies

Grade 3, Content Statement 3: Local communities change over time.

Grade 4, Content Statement 14: Ohio's location and its transportation systems continue to influence the movement of people, products, and ideas in the United States.

HS American History, Content Statement 12: Immigration, internal migration, and urbanization transformed American life.

Learning Objectives

- Describe the religious communities established by the Germans in Columbus.
- Explain the role churches in the lives of German immigrants in Columbus.
- Discuss the importance of schools and churches to the German community.
- Analyze the contributions of Germans to the education community in Columbus.

Discussion Questions

1. What churches were established by the Germans in Columbus?
2. What role did St. Mary's play for the German Catholic community?
3. How did churches and schools both divide and unite the German immigrants in their new home?
4. How did the Germans in Columbus demonstrate their commitment to education? What educational institutions were established by the Germans?

Extension Activity

Using contemporary Franklin County maps and historic maps listed in the Additional Resources, students can create a new map which superimposes the size of the German community in late 19th century with the German Village boundaries. Areas that have been lost should be noted. Churches and schools still remaining should be noted as well.

Additional Resources

Teaching Columbus: German Village - <http://teachingcolumbus.omeka.net/collections/show/14>

Samuelson, Robert, Pasquale Grado, Judith Kitchen, Jeffrey Darbee. Architecture: Columbus. Columbus Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, 1976

German Village Society, South Third Meeting House, additional information, including videos, have been created by the Society. <http://germanvillage.com/>

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