BEER TO STAY: BREWED CULTURE, ETHNICITY, AND THE MARKET REVOLUTION

by

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For my wife and son
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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation traces the brewing industry’s development in Chicago and Cincinnati to examine how German immigrant participation, both as producers and consumers, helped their respective communities negotiate the economic and ethnic terms of American citizenship. Between 1840 and 1880, lager beer in the United States became a transnationally-constructed immigrant product with significant ethnocultural implications for German brewers and drinkers. Serving as both a cultural handhold connecting immigrants to their European roots as well as a means of economic engagement within a transitioning American economic landscape, beer became an immediate and distinctive feature of coalescing ethnic neighborhoods in urban centers throughout the antebellum North. Lager beer’s place within German festive culture linked its status and popularity in broader American society to that of German immigrants as a population. Their overwhelming participation hybridized the burgeoning American brewing industry such that beer represented a hyphenation of German and American culture.

By examining beer as an arena in which both German immigrants and adversarial nativist and temperance factions pursued their desired cultural, political, and economic ends, this study asserts the utility of beer as a category of analysis for investigating German ethnicity, economic life in the antebellum and postbellum North, and the cultural implications of the market revolution. It further demonstrates the significance of mid-nineteenth century brewing in shaping the industry’s capitalist and cultural development throughout the pre-Prohibition era.
INTRODUCTION

On September 3, 1905, Rufus Smith addressed the German Societies of Cincinnati about the influences of German immigrants on the institutions and everyday life of the United States. Smith himself was not of German descent but he offered high praise to the prolific numbers of immigrants and their descendants, whose urban communities now rivaled Berlin, Hamburg, and Frankfort themselves. He lauded past German immigrants’ opposition to slavery, their commitment to the separation of church and state, and their defense of “political independence,” claiming “no class of American citizens has been more unwavering in the support of this principle.” He then commended them for the numerous “wholesome” personal and social virtues they nurtured in American culture including industriousness, economy, thrift, honesty, and fairness. Germans’ promotion of education, personal fitness, philosophy, art, and music now benefitted all Americans yet, Smith added sagely, “while the German is a man of peace, he will fight for his rights, and when he takes up arms he illustrates the truth of the old saying—‘beware the wrath of the patient man.’”

Few non-Germans in the United States would have paid such compliments—or even acknowledged German immigrants as citizens—fifty years before. Fewer still would have said what Smith said next. The traits which most distinguished Germans from other people, he said approvingly, pertained to their attitude toward social life. Germans, he described, felt jovial comradeship toward the world in general, venerated recreation and the celebration of holidays, and did “not believe that whatever is pleasurable is sinful…in this respect his ideas differ from those which our Puritan ancestors were much inclined to advocate.” Smith specifically applied this idea

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to alcohol and “certain sumptuary laws,” particularly those pertaining to Sundays. Puritan notions, as he called them, considered any consumption of alcohol on Sundays to be sinful while the German considered “the moderate drinking of light wine and beer…a harmless pleasure…and it is impossible for him to understand why recreation on Sunday is a sin.” Luckily German influence had gradually triumphed over prior proscriptions on beer consumption and Sunday recreation, and Smith considered it a good thing, saying “the limit of these laws is reached when they infringe on the personal liberty of the citizen to eat and drink and amuse himself in such a manner as he chooses, so long as he does not injure himself or his neighbor.” Smith’s remarks were generous but also simplified. Contests over beer consumption, on Sundays or otherwise, relied not only on comparing ideological merits but also on transnational evolutions in American economic life and German-American ethnicity, the development of the American brewing industry, and the outcomes of concerted political and cultural debates which defined German immigrant citizenship. Beginning around 1840, German producers and consumers of beer used their desired product to exert direct agency over their status in an adopted home and contributed to the immigrant negotiations of American society that Smith later celebrated.²

This dissertation traces the brewing industry’s development in Chicago and Cincinnati to examine how German immigrant participation, both as producers and consumers, helped their respective communities negotiate the economic and ethnic terms of American citizenship. Between roughly 1840 and 1880, lager beer in the United States became a transnationally-constructed immigrant product with significant ethnocultural implications for its German brewers and drinkers. Serving as both a cultural handhold connecting immigrants to their European roots as well as a means of economic engagement within a transitioning American economic landscape.

beer became an immediate and distinctive feature of coalescing ethnic neighborhoods in urban centers throughout the antebellum North. It gained newfound popularity among immigrant and American imbibers as Germans transformed beer’s taste, production, and sociability, but it also attracted strong resistance from nativist and temperance reformers who incorporated lager beer into their anti-immigrant and anti-alcohol rhetoric. Germans’ contentious integration into American society, then, was actively reflected in and influenced by the political economy surrounding the brewing industry.

Although North American beer production, including by German immigrants, began well before this period, the mid-nineteenth century experienced significant and simultaneous shifts in American economic and cultural life, German immigration, and alcohol consumption which coalesced to alter the brewing industry radically. The market revolution, referring to the process by which impersonal market forces came to exert greater control over American lives, was in full swing by 1840. Bolstered by transportation and communication advancements that allowed goods and information to traverse the landscape more quickly, the market revolution effected not only economic changes in commerce, banking, and credit but also cultural shifts in racial and ethnic identity, religion, public life, and attitudes toward prosperity. Such changes naturally generated uncertainty and anxiety about the future of the nation, manifesting in part through moral reform efforts. One such effort, the temperance movement, sought to ameliorate social ills like crime and poverty by linking them to alcohol consumption. Temperance reformers embraced capitalist virtues like hard work and self-control but also combined them with a nostalgic affinity for communal support structures and traditional societal visions that conveniently ignored the historically central place of alcohol within them. Political nativism, another response to the changes wrought by economic development, also influenced the brewing industry via German
participants. Responding to the dramatic increase in U.S. immigration rates after the 1830s, nativist sentiment sought to limit immigrants’ political and economic power in order to safeguard American citizenship and prosperity from a perceived external threat. Despite creating its primary opponents, the landscape of the market revolution also encouraged beer production by removing many of the former barriers to large-scale commercial brewing, discouraging competing sources of alcohol like cider (through economic changes) and whiskey (through temperance opposition), and bringing in thousands of German immigrants both with a strong preference for the beverage and capable of producing tastier, less alcoholic, and more stable versions of it—lagers.3

Germans, who came to dominate American brewing, comprised the largest individual immigrant population prior to the Civil War, settling primarily in the antebellum North and choosing urban areas by a factor of two to one. Although they arrived from disparate portions of what eventually became Germany, with equally variant religious beliefs and socioeconomic backgrounds, German immigrants nevertheless formed tight-knit and mutually supportive communities. In addition to establishing religious congregations, aid societies, and athletic clubs (Turnverein) among other organizations, Germans engaged in a regular celebratory and recreational public displays such as concerts, parades, and outdoor picnics. Such festive culture, at which beer nearly always flowed in copious amounts, displayed distinctly ethnic traits that often transcended Germans’ internal divisions, providing personal and social fulfillment that Germans considered integral to their humanity. German-American ethnicity also responded heavily to

external forces in both Europe and the United States. The German Revolutions of 1848 and the later national unification of Germany, for example, shaped immigrants’ political economy toward beer production and consumption by undergirding German interpretations of nationalism as well as the association between brewing, drinking, and citizenship. German ethnicity was similarly defined from without as native-born Americans reacted to their agency. Immigrant communities might be drawn together via common cultural practices, including beer consumption, as well as via external threats or criticism from other parts of American society. As much as German-American ethnicity depended on distance, a shared immigrant experience, and European shifts in nationalism, then, it was also externally bounded or even created by oppositional forces. Beer provided an arena for the reification of German ethnicity in the United States.4

Within the context of the market revolution, the temperance movement, and German immigration, alcohol consumption underwent radical changes during the early and mid-nineteenth centuries. Americans on average consumed more alcohol per capita during the early republic period than any time before or since. Distilled liquors and cider constituted the majority of this early consumption while beer accounted for a tiny fraction. The meager commercial brewing industry produced heavy ale styles with little appeal outside specific urban areas such as Albany, New York, and Philadelphia; however, it began to expand and radically transform as the market revolution subdued cider production, the temperance movement curbed overall alcohol consumption, and German immigration created both lighter German styles of beer as well as demand for them. The westward diffusion of both Germans and their beer after the 1840s created

new sites of production and consumption that gradually tied the commercial brewing industry to
the highly visible festive culture in which it was consumed, inviting attention as well as challenge
from wider American society.\(^5\)

German brewers mixed products and production methods rooted in their European
homeland with American business practices and new technologies. The popularity of lager beer
first in immigrant neighborhoods and later among other Americans allowed breweries to prosper
and grow, incorporating specifically German architectural styles and technological implements
(especially natural and artificial refrigeration methods) into their effort to navigate the American
economy. Precarious business relationships, uncertain flows of capital, and later negotiations with
groups ranging from saloon owners to the federal government affected the structure and
community of German brewers, who by the mid-1860s had taken ideological and financial control
of the brewing industry itself. These developments allowed German brewers to embrace the
coming Gilded Age such that by the mid-1870s, large brewers operated out of complexes spanning
multiple city blocks, with dedicated rail lines and stables. Hundreds of workers produced hundreds
of thousands of barrels of beer per year, while also taking political action in defense of their
interests. Such tremendous growth relied heavily on the ethnic character of the industry and the
immigrant community that spawned it.

Lager beer likewise amounted to more than an economic product for the German
community. It featured in most aspects of German social life, was considered nourishing and
healthy, and governed the very sites of its consumption. Beer gardens, shady outdoor spaces
typically with bench seating, commonly featured not only at early lager breweries but also behind

tiny beer saloons over thirty years later. Beer halls and saloons blended German and American
drinking cultures, prioritizing dark wood and male clientele but also music, games, and
conversation. As lager beer gained popularity among non-German consumers, product proved
inseparable from consumption. In the 1870s, native-born lager brewers constructing a saloon
which catered to native-born clientele still felt the need to replicate the sociability of German beer
gardens in their space. Beyond consumption, however, the politics surrounding lager beer became
synonymous with the German community itself.

Lager beer became so ubiquitous in German immigrants’ public lives that the two rose and
fell together. Starting in the 1850s, nativist reformers attacked German immigrants through beer
while temperance reformers attacked beer through the immigrants. Forming a coalition based on
this common ground led to temporary success at the ballot box, but it also led to violent altercations
with the German communities in both Chicago and Cincinnati who viewed temperance measures
as an attack on their very presence. The Civil War and German-American service in the Union
Army both altered their perceived citizenship as Americans and helped popularize lager beer. The
war further forced temperance agitation to shift focus, though nativist rhetoric never fully
separated from its opposition to beer. They ridiculed lagers as intoxicating, destructive, and even
poisonous, pressed harder for Sunday bans and liquor license fees, called for prohibition, and
protested at breweries and saloons. Beer was hardly the singular target of the temperance
movement, but reformers adamantly refused to abide any distinction between its potential for harm
and that of any other alcoholic beverage. The German-led brewing industry, for its part, used its
growing financial clout to counter temperance rhetoric, as well as any perceived threat to economic
prosperity. Forming associations at both the local and national level, German brewers resisted
prohibitive laws and touted lager as a moderate, harmless drink which did more to promote
temperance than any reform organization ever could. German immigrant communities at large likewise reacted to temperance reform by unifying against it, allowing the issue to override other political concerns at both local and national levels. By the end of the 1870s, lager became more than a cultural connection between immigrants—it represented a force for ethnic reification within the German-American community, influenced as much by external attack as internal deliberation.

Chicago and Cincinnati each combined dramatic urbanization, economic growth, proportionally high German populations, and large concentrations of immigrant brewers during the mid-nineteenth century, and thus serve as ideal sites to observe this process. Cincinnati’s population rose from under ten thousand in 1818 to over two hundred thousand by 1870 while Chicago, founded in 1833, grew to over one hundred thousand citizens by 1860. Though the millions of German immigrants during the same period altered the ethnic composition of numerous American cities, they comprised around twenty and twenty five percent of Chicago’s and Cincinnati’s populations respectively, while the German population in New York’s and Pennsylvania’s largest cities averaged fourteen and nine percent. A strong German presence meant that each city saw several dozen breweries of varying size and success between 1840 and 1880, some lasting the entire period while others closed after a year or two. Ale brewers never fully disappeared from the landscape but they consistently gave ground to lager beer, such that by 1872 they accounted for less than four percent of Cincinnati’s output. Both cities, but particularly Chicago, further contributed to the general prosperity of the industry through participation in the nationally-focused United States Brewers Association and trade publications which advanced a favorable political agenda, as well as contributions to architectural and technological advancements.\(^6\)

Brewing and Economic Historiography

Much of the historiography surrounding beer and brewing as an industry focuses on the later nineteenth century with the rise of large brewers producing millions rather than thousands of barrels of beer annually. These studies, therefore, tend to center on famous national brewers such as Anheuser Busch or Pabst while suggesting, implicitly or explicitly, that large firms represent the beginning of brewing’s significance in American history. This significance is defined by national distribution networks, managerial and advertising infrastructures to match, utilization of advanced mechanization and industrial techniques (bottling, pasteurization, distribution, and refrigeration), staggering production volume, victory over competing smaller firms, and increasing influence over prices, sales, saloons, government, and society before the forces of Prohibition overpowered them temporarily.  

Taken together, these themes center on the political and business aspects of the industry while lacking significant cultural analysis. While other studies have argued against an overemphasis on these national brewers (which despite their size contributed less than ten percent of total domestic production at the end of the nineteenth century) in favor of regional equivalents, concentrations on the late nineteenth century and beyond remain common among investigations.

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of American brewing. This pattern also holds for the majority of historiography devoted to the brewing history of specific cities, states, or firms. Incorporating cultural and ethnic investigations into nineteenth century American brewing reclaims the importance of the early decades of German involvement by illustrating how German immigrant relationships and reactions to broader American society determined the trajectories of the brewing industry’s development.

In addition to better explicating the causal relationship between nineteenth century brewing and German immigration, as well as contributing to transnational and ethnic studies as clarified below, this dissertation interfaces with ongoing scholarship examining the cultural implications of evolving American economic life. Many recent investigations focus on slavery’s exploitation of African Americans and other vulnerable populations in order to highlight the fundamental links between American capitalism and slave labor. Walter Johnson, Sven Beckert, and Seth Rockman, three leading scholars in this subfield, have gone so far as to suggest that any history of American capitalism that does not address its connections to American slavery is fundamentally ahistorical.

See, for examples, Stack, “Local and Regional Breweries in America’s Brewing Industry, 1865-1920;” Maureen Ogle, Ambitious Brew: The Story of American Beer (Harcourt, 2006); Mittelman, Brewing Battles.


The leading explorers of capitalism’s connection to slavery have pointedly criticized previous historiography on American capitalism for erroneously assuming, or outright claiming, that slavery was not a capitalist enterprise and that attempts to explain the market revolution without it amount to ahistorical idealism. Walter Johnson, for example, writes that “a materialist and historical analysis—a focus on what happened, rather than on how what happened was different from what should have happened...begins from the premise that in actual historical fact there was no nineteenth-century capitalism without slavery. However else industrial capitalism might have developed in the absence of slave-produced cotton and Southern capital markets, it did not develop that way. Extracting the history of industrial development (whether in Great Britain of the Northern United States) from the historical context of its entanglement with slavery, itemizing its differences from the economic field from which it had been artificially separated, labeling it “capitalism” in pure form, and then turning around and comparing it to the slavery upon which it subsisted in order to judge the latter ‘precapitalist’ or ‘noncapitalist’—this way of proceeding conscripts historical analysis to the service of ahistorical ideal types.” Such criticisms are directed first at previous scholarship which has sidestepped the capitalism of southern slavery and second at scholarship which, implicitly or explicitly, separates northern or European capitalism from areas affected by southern capitalist markets. See Walter Johnson, River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom (Harvard University Press, 2013), 254. For a historiographical discussion of recent scholarship on the capitalism of slavery, see Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman, eds. Slavery’s Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).
Nevertheless, no matter how intimately dependent the American economy as a whole relied on slave-based productive sectors (and their post-bellum legacy), many actors in the so-called middle period comfortably saw themselves as operating outside (or even above) the peculiar sins of the southern labor system. German immigrant brewers and beer drinkers, predominately subscribers to liberal middle-class dreams of enterprise and democracy, typically opposed slavery politically prior to the Civil War but did not directly use their establishment of the lager brewing industry to address the peripheral (in their perception) evils of southern slave labor. They instead regarded apparent conflicts between capitalism and democracy within the free labor northern marketplace to be far more compelling. Except for the crisis of the Civil War itself, midwestern German-American communities experienced the challenge of the market revolution as it intersected with evolving ethnocultural practice, notions of individual liberty, and economic opportunity. As such their experience laid bare certain aspects of the impact of capitalism on social relations that complement but do not contradict scholars’ conclusions about the parallel experience between enslaved workers and their oppressors.  

Further, this study connects to ongoing explorations of the cultural effects of the market revolution as well as its transition into post-Civil War social relations. German involvement in brewing represents a significant link between ethnically distinct immigrant communities and industrial development both before and after the war, allowing not only for further examination of the economic transition from small, market driven proprietorships to the managerial and industrial complexes of the Gilded Age but also adding a transnational vector to such investigations.

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11 It must be noted that German-American opposition to slavery and advocacy for African-American rights waned following the Civil War as Otto von Bismarck’s illiberal nationalism in Germany and full acknowledgement of their American citizenship at home eroded their opposition to racial hierarchy. See Efford, German Immigrants, Race, and Citizenship. For an excellent investigation of efforts to reconcile northern free labor and market relationships with African-American emancipation, see Amy Dru Stanley, From Bondage to Contract: Wage Labor, Marriage, and the Market in the Age of Slave Emancipation (Cambridge University Press, 1998).
Studying this process also adds to an exemplary vein of scholarship exploring how changes in economic behavior also affected slavery, race, class, ethnic, religion, and labor relations.\footnote{Studies of the market revolution do not always extend their coverage to the Civil War or beyond. Some scholars, such as John Larson, connect the market revolution to the postwar abolition of slavery and the rise of “contractual freedom.” Others works, such as Charles Sellers’ \textit{The Market Revolution}, limit their consideration to the Jacksonian era. See Larson, \textit{The Market Revolution in America}; Charles Sellers, \textit{The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America 1815-1846} (Oxford University Press, 1994); Martin, \textit{Cultural Change and the Market Revolution}; Douglas Egerton, “Markets Without a Market Revolution: Southern Planters & Capitalism,” \textit{Journal of the Early Republic}, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Special Issue on Capitalism in the Early Republic, Summer 1996): 207-221; Nathan Hatch, \textit{The Democratization of American Christianity} (Yale University Press, 1989).}

**Ethnicity and Place**

Ethnicity has been defined by scholars in both objectivist and constructivist terms. Henry Shapiro, for example, related ethnicity to the concept of race in that membership results from ancestry rather than choice. He describes ethnicity as a force which “unites persons of common ancestry into groups whose coherence is founded on members’ possession of common traits and their acknowledgement of a common ancestry,” forming “barriers that cannot be crossed.” The United States, in this view, forces a precarious balancing act upon citizens who wish to combine membership in a specific ethnic group with national citizenship. Other scholars take a constructivist approach to ethnicity, asserting its multilateral and localized creation as well as impermanent boundaries. Rogers Brubaker argued that “ethnicity, race, and nationhood are fundamentally ways of perceiving, interpreting, and representing things in the social world. They are not things \textit{in} the world, but perspectives \textit{on} the world.” Ethnicity likewise manifests not only in political and nationalist rhetoric but in everyday interactions, cultural practices, social cues, community networks, and institutional forms over which a given ethnic group will not exert total control. Instead, Brubaker stresses negotiated “reification”—public perceptions of ethnicity form not only via the evocation and practice of customs but also through their (mis)characterization by
others, which impose external boundaries on a community. In this theoretical framework, narratives can create their own reality, particularly through dramatic or violent events.\(^{13}\)

Historian Kathleen Neils Conzen re-interpreted German festive culture not as a superficial symptom of ethnic community sentiment but rather as a vital contribution to its very creation. Criticizing some scholars’ tendency to interpret ethnicity in “primordial terms” (that group identity necessarily derives from a shared monolithic culture and commitments to preserve it), Conzen points to the heterogeneous class, religious, social, and ideological origins of German immigrants and argues that festive culture helped reify a more unified German-American ethnic identity in the United States. She further asserts that German displays of festive culture, many of which included beer, contributed to a larger reorientation of American public life during the mid and late-nineteenth century. Sabine Meyer, in her recent analysis of temperance debates in Minnesota, continues such approaches by arguing that ethnic groups might continually reinvent themselves in response to internal changes in their communities, within the broader host society, or even between other ethnic groups. She further asserts that drink acted as a “marker of ethnic identity” for both German and Irish populations.\(^{14}\)

Alongside ethnicity, Meyer’s analysis of temperance debates in a midwestern location argues for the significance of place in historical inquiry. Civic identity readily mixed both national and local (and, this dissertation argues, transnational) facets in influencing public conversations, thus preventing any single community from operating the exact same way. Meyer highlights the Midwest as a region where place takes on particular significance during the nineteenth century.


when “Midwestern territories and states emerged as political units and underwent intense processes of regional identity formation, which pitted competing interests and visions against each other.” Kristin Hoganson has similarly argued that the Midwestern states, though not always on literal peripheries, could nevertheless take on characteristics of a borderland by connecting multiple relational parts of a given culture.15

This dissertation adopts a constructivist framework regarding German ethnicity and affirms the significant role of the German-led brewing industry in its construction. Just as the mid-nineteenth century stages of the American brewing industry have gone understudied by scholars in that field, the role of beer in German ethnic identity has been neglected. As a consistent feature in the many components of German festive culture, as a distinct form of economic engagement virtually conquered by German brewers, and finally as a political and cultural arena where immigrant communities asserted their version of American citizenship, beer represented a space where ethnically German attitudes melded with American economic and cultural structures to help forge a new, hyphenated German-American identity. This process depended in part upon place; local idiosyncrasies in German neighborhoods, past events, and brewing communities influenced German immigrants’ commitment to lager beer on both local and national platforms.16

16 Indeed, Meyer writes that “although food and drink are closely related to each other, the role of drink, in particular alcohol, in such processes of identification and cultural differentiation has long been neglected or inappropriately subsumed under the heading of food.” See Meyer, We Are What We Drink, 203; Further, many analyses of German ethnicity make reference to beer consumption without devoting significant attention to the topic. See, for examples, Conzen, “Ethnicity as Festive Culture”; Bruce Levine, “Community Divided: German Immigrants, Social Class, and Political Conflict in Antebellum Cincinnati,” in Henry D. Shapiro and Jonathan D. Sarna, eds, Ethnic Diversity and Civic Identity: Patterns of Conflict and Cohesion in Cincinnati since 1820 (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Christian B. Keller, Chancellorsville and the Germans: Nativism, Ethnicity, and Civil War Memory (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007); Efford, German Immigrants, Race, and Citizenship.
Transnationalism

German immigrants came to the United States with established political, social, and economic identities, indicating that their participation in American society cannot be understood on domestic terms alone. Scholars such as Bruce Levine have investigated the ways in which German populations not only participated in but negotiated American life based on their own experiences with political and economic hardship in Europe, arguing that “a focus on immigrants is too narrow…it obscures the larger historical processes that uprooted them and helped decide their destination, that shaped the ways in which they affected, and were affected by, life in their new homeland.” Recent transnational scholars such as Donna Gabaccia have taken immigrant experiences much further, asserting that “perspectives of immigrants differ from, conflict with, and diverge from…other Americans” and that “almost all immigrants remain connected to the people and places they supposedly left behind when emigrating,” while Alison Efford has already begun applying transnational approaches to nineteenth century German immigration. Because German immigrants bridged their European and subsequent American lives, an investigation of American brewing during a period of such direct German influence cannot, therefore, avoid transnational perspectives. American lager beer became a transnationally-constructed immigrant product not only because of the technical skills and drinking customs its purveyors transplanted across the Atlantic, but also because it injected into American conversations ethnically German attitudes about politics, economics, and culture. Visible festive culture, German-inspired

17 Levine, The Spirit of 1848, xi, 1-4, 82-83.
architecture, and changing national alcohol consumption spurred conversations about the rightful
place of lager beer, and by extension German-Americans themselves, in American society. Immigrants kept one eye on Europe whenever asserting their right to American citizenship. When beer was linked to crime and public disorder, Germans pointed to Bavaria as evidence of German drinking culture’s positive social benefits. German nationhood caused German-Americans to alter their conception of ideal political institutions and thus changed their responses to regulatory and temperance forces which restricted beer. Finally, U.S.-based trade publications fostered international networks of exchange sharing news, technical information, and political rhetoric. The repeated use of lager beer as a site of contention over immigrant citizenship contributes to an interpretive lens that regards German immigrants as a transnational faction whose cultural and economic participation in the market revolution injected originally German notions into inherently American developments.

While this dissertation is therefore transnational in scope, the conceptual focus remains on immigrants and beer as an endpoint for transnationally-constructed ideas, products, and sensibilities which impressed themselves upon broader American society. Kristen Hoganson’s *Consumer’s Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity*, which examines late nineteenth century middle class American households as contact zones injecting foreign influences into American domesticity, demonstrates how transnational scholarship can utilize primarily domestic source bases. Lager beer can be similarly viewed as a manifestation of transnational forces and their interpretation by multiple parties within American society. In this case, exchanges and translations centered on a specific product.19

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19 David Thelan has described such approaches to transnational histories as, in general terms, focusing on “interactions, exchanges, constructions, and translations that people [such as migrants] made as they engaged each other across national borders.” See Thelan, “The Nation and Beyond,” 973; Kristen Hoganson, *Consumer’s Imperium:*
Dissertation Structure

Chapter 1 establishes the economic and cultural trajectories of the German-led brewing industry within the context of early American alcohol consumption, the practical realities of the early brewing industry, and transitory spaces occupied by the initial waves of German immigration. Although beer, with firm roots in English and Dutch brewing and tavern traditions, maintained a continuous presence in North America during the colonial and early republic periods, the economic and technological realities of the commercial industry precluded brewers’ abilities to produce stable and palatable products on a large scale. Combined with the relative cheapness and potency of rural cider production and distilling, beer represented a tiny portion of early American alcohol consumption. Despite precarious business partnerships, however, Chicago and Cincinnati each supported fledgling brewing industries by the 1830s which benefitted from the technological and transportation developments of the market revolution.

With increasing rates of German immigration after 1830 came an increasingly visible immigrant community which experienced both internal diversity and external bounding by native-born American society. Beer, as a subset of German festive culture, played a significant role in both stages. It helped provide immigrants the ethnic and ideological means to express their humanity, but it also drew ire from nativists and reform-minded temperance advocates, themselves respondents to the changes of the market revolution, who objected to Germans’ public conduct, especially on Sundays. German breweries, manufacturing newly possible lager beer, closely shadowed the rise of German neighborhoods and presented a significant path of immigrant

economic engagement within both Chicago and Cincinnati. This chapter demonstrates how many economic, ethnocultural, and political developments within and around the mid-nineteenth century brewing industry (and its increasing German contingent) found root in the 1840s introduction of lager beer.

Chapter 2 cements Chicago and Cincinnati as exemplars of the brewing industry’s general expansion during the 1850s as well as its decidedly German character. As economic development revolutionized urban spaces and their constituent cultures, German brewing and beer culture showed growth and acceptance disproportionate to the overall industry. Both existing German brewers and newly established firms reflected the political and cultural outlook of Forty-Eighters, a revolutionary wave of immigrants politically defined by radical democracy and a commitment to economic liberalism. Transnationally-constructed lager beer featured prominently in burgeoning German neighborhoods looking to fully define their place within an adopted home. It served as both cultural handhold and means of economic engagement as Germans solidified wider societal relationships. Beer became a process of hyphenation between German and American practices as evidenced in saloons, beer gardens, and other sites of consumption, as well as brewers’ gradual embrace of technological and market-driven growth.

This chapter further examines continued resistance to German-led beer production and consumption practices by nativist and temperance factions, who during the 1850s embraced each other’s rhetoric in pursuit of common goals. As each group gained political traction through the Know-Nothing Party and Maine law campaigns respectively, they also benefitted from localized political partnerships in both Chicago and Cincinnati which specifically targeted German immigrant communities via their beer consumption and festive culture, culminating in an election riot in Cincinnati and Chicago’s Lager Beer Riot, both in April 1855. This chapter, then, reveals
beer as a shared ethnocultural practice that German immigrants used to blur potential religious and regional differences as well as a conduit for external bounding by adversarial native-born factions.

Chapter 3 examines how the Civil War and its aftermath fostered multiple economic, cultural, and technological opportunities for the German-led brewing industry. By the late 1850s, the rise of the Republican Party, antislavery agitation, and mounting sectionalism engulfed political nativism and suppressed temperance politics. Simultaneously, German service in the Union Army helped solidify lager beer’s popularity in American society while immigrant brewers utilized technological and architectural advancements to enlarge their operations and adopt more distinctly German facades. Their effort served an ever-increasing demand for beer in the United States during the 1860s. Further, a wartime federal tax on beer led to the founding of the United States Brewers Association, a new organization tasked with negotiating the industry’s interests at the national level.

Chicago and Cincinnati played integral roles in these developments, which contributed to a growing acceptance of both German beer and the festive culture which defined its consumption. Chicago-based architects helped brewers incorporate German forms into new buildings while lager beer in both cities transformed from a curiosity of German neighborhoods to a preferred form of alcohol which steadily crept into everyday public life. When temperance debates resurfaced following the war, they faced a more prosperous, organized, and popular resistance from brewers and drinkers alike. This chapter illustrates how the status of German beer in broader American society connected to that of German immigrants themselves—beer was a critical arena where their citizenship and ethnocultural practices could be debated.

Chapter 4 discusses how the economic and cultural tensions of the previous three decades coalesced during the 1870s to produce a powerful, economically developed, and newly acceptable
German brewing industry. By mid-decade lager styles dominated the industry, with Germans comprising most of its labor and ownership, and were steadily becoming the preferred alcoholic beverage among Americans. The respective brewing communities in Chicago (its tragic 1871 fire notwithstanding) and Cincinnati embraced industrialization, constructing ever-larger complexes which integrated emerging technologies and intricate supply networks to meet demand. In turn, they further created new managerial structures to oversee operations and looked to cooperative organizations to advocate their interests, not just at the national level via the USBA but also through local iterations. In these ways German brewers fully embraced burgeoning Gilded Age evolutions in American business and even helped shape them, contributing to the immigrant community’s negotiation of economic life in the United States.

Economic developments connected intricately to simultaneous evolutions in German ethnicity and its engagement with native-born American society. With Germany’s unification in 1871 came a reconceptualization of nationalism and race among German immigrants in the U.S. which particularly stressed laissez-faire capitalist policies that suited industrialization but also strong nationalist attitudes that reconceived German immigrants’ ethnocultural worldview as essentialist and innate. This reformed approach to ethnicity drew them together as a community and in opposition to forces seeking to externally define them, particularly the temperance movement. As lager beer’s growing popularity helped reconceive it as a hybrid product that might no longer be wholly German, brewing industry advocates (both organized and informal) sought to interpret the product, and by extension its original ethnic community, not as German or American but rather as something fully hyphenated: German-American.
CHAPTER 1. ESTABLISHING A FOOTHOLD

On July 13, 1830, the *Olympia* departed Le Havre, France bound for the United States. On board were numerous Alsatian, Swabian, and Bavarian immigrants, including George M. Herancourt. As a descendent of French Huguenots who had migrated to Muehlhofen, Bavaria at the end of the seventeenth century, Herancourt did not much care for the Protestant Swabians, whom he described as “the most base people in all Germany.” Germany was hardly a unified nation, nor the citizens of its many states and principalities a homogenous culture. The closer Herancourt sailed to his destination, however, the more such distinctions blurred. Shortly after his first glimpse of the U.S., Herancourt remarked: “nature, and everything else convinces me, that this is a new world.”

Herancourt left a financially prosperous family in Germany both out of an infatuation with democracy and a desire not to work on his father’s farm. Once in the United States, he hoped to apply his training in brewing and distilling to the manufacture of beer, and he perceived a ready space for his expertise, writing:

in America there is not too much good stuff to drink. Mostly they serve mixed, and panshed [sic], spoilt and unhealthy liquids. Ale and porter is the best kind of the 5 sorts, they have here…. You find no conversation in any inn in America. One enters, not even saying: How do you do, orders something, drinks while standing, and leaves immediately again, this is customary in the whole country.

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1 Entries on July 13, August 8, and August 30, 1830, Diary of George Herancourt, trans. unknown, Mss VF 3555, Cincinnati History Library and Archive (hereafter referred to as CHLA); “The Late Geo. M. Herancourt, Cincinnati,” *The Western Brewer: The Journal of the Barley, Malt, and Hop Trades*, Vol. 5, No. 7 (July 1880), 698.
2 Entry on September 5th, 1830, Diary of George Herancourt, trans. unknown, Mss VF 3555, CHLA; Robert J. Wimberg, *Cincinnati Breweries* (Cincinnati, OH: Ohio Book Store, 1989), 60, 62.
The brewing industry in America did not match his expectations, however. Like in Germany, brewing was a seasonal profession that began in October, so no brewer would hire him before then. When October came, Herancourt visited dozens of breweries in New York and Philadelphia, only to find that every job was promised already to a laborer from the previous year or else another German immigrant expected to arrive soon. In November Herancourt found temporary work substituting for a maltster who was sick, but the maltster soon resumed his duties and Herancourt was let go. His luck did not change.  

In March 1830 Herancourt found work trading small items along a westward route which took him to Columbus, Ohio. Supplemented by work in the music and jewelry business, he partnered with other German immigrants to establish a brewery in Columbus in 1836. In 1844, he settled in Cincinnati to strike out on his own. Bolstered by the city’s rising German immigrant population and the gradual diffusion of lager beer around the nation, Herancourt helped found Cincinnati’s fledgling community of German brewers. Herancourt was an early ambassador of the ethnocultural shift that German immigrants would sow in both the brewing industry and the country as a whole.  

German immigrant participation revitalized a downtrodden manufacturing sector. Prior to the 1840s, Americans made much of their beer at home in domestic kettles. Commercial brewers produced small quantities of haphazard quality which suffered in competition with stiffer intoxicants. At a very low cost, rum and whiskey delivered far more alcohol per ounce and did not

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3 Entries on September 8th, October 1st, October 2nd, and November 20th, 1830, Diary of George Herancourt, trans. unknown, Mss VF 3555, CHLA.

spoil like beer. Early American predilections for beer, when they drank it at all, mirrored English and Dutch traditions focused on ales and porters consumed in taverns.

Rising rates of German immigration after the 1830s inaugurated a transformation in American brewing practices and consumption patterns that quickly gained momentum. Immigrants originated from several German-speaking regions of Europe and arrived with a diverse array of economic means, political leanings, and moral predilections; nevertheless they shared a foundational ethnicity that manifested in part through beer. As a path to economic engagement and capitalist prosperity for producers and an everyday consumptive practice for drinkers, beer helped reify a distinctive German ethnicity in the United States which proved less heterogeneous than the diverse German states and cultures that existed in Europe. Beer served as a constructivist force by which German immigrants and their American hosts, through their interactions, jointly created a German-American community.5

Immigrant interest in Germanic lager styles of beer created new commercial potential as well as technological imperatives to accommodate their production. Competition with traditional English styles of beer proved lagers to be robust, favorable products first among German-Americans and eventually among American imbibers generally. The requirements of lager production eventually transformed the structure of U.S. breweries. Germans dominated the brewing industry culturally, economically, and technologically such that by the 1880 census, four fifths of those working in the United States brewing industry claimed “German” as their primary ethnic heritage.6

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Transformative German participation in the brewing industry took place at multiple levels—as brewery owners and operators, as employees, and as consumers. They utilized community and familial networks, at times stretching across the Atlantic, to acquire the skills and capital necessary to establish breweries. Consumers readily supported brewers and beer styles ethnically similar to themselves and flocked toward lager breweries as quickly as they diffused westward. Although lager production (like the rest of American brewing) remained small during the 1840s and ‘50s compared to later decades, midcentury interpretations and manipulations of American beer established an economically ambitious and culturally distinct trajectory. German immigrants would neither replicate nor replace the cultural distinctiveness of American brewing but instead renegotiate it to suit their ethnic vision, participate in American capitalism, and solidify their inclusion as American citizens.

Cultural conceptions of beer consumption, public festivity, and public life common among German immigrants were endemic to this renegotiation. Beer contributed to broader assertions by German-Americans of a frequent, ritualistic, and jovial approach to public life defined by parades, outdoor picnics, and other celebrations typically laden with food and beer. Such rituals, designed not only to conceive and reinforce their communities along ethnic lines within broader American public life, became increasingly common after the 1840s as immigration rates swelled and German associations (Vereine) proliferated. Boisterous public displays celebrated both folk customs and high culture, allowing Germans to construct what historian Kathleen Conzen has described as “a temporary world where they could again be culturally whole, an ethnic world where they could again feel true kinship with their fellows, a liminal world where they could gather the strength to return to the challenges of their American lives.” A cornerstone of a common emphasis on sensuous leisure (known as Gemütlichkeit) among Germans, beer featured regularly in these
displays throughout the middle and late nineteenth century; the permeation of beer into broader alcohol consumption habits contributed a significant German influence into the evolution of American public life.7

**Whiskey, Cider, and Early American Consumption**

The original economic and cultural landscape from which a distinctly German-American brewing industry emerged accommodated staggering amounts of alcohol, if little beer. Between 1770 and 1830, Americans aged fifteen and older drank more alcohol than at any time before or since, consuming between six and seven gallons of absolute alcohol per capita each year.8 Distilled spirits and fermented ciders represented the vast majority of consumption while beer accounted for as little as one tenth of one gallon.9 Americans chose alcohol readily over other sorts of beverages which they deemed undesirable or unsafe. Water lacked nourishment and was the drink of livestock. Benjamin Franklin joked that people had been endowed with an elbow specifically

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9 William Rorabaugh and Downard (who cites Rorabaugh for his data) may underestimate the level of early American beer consumption and acknowledge that information from before 1850 is scarce. Rorabaugh considers U.S. beer consumption to be negligible due to low production levels listed in the 1810 and 1840 censuses and competition from cider. Small beer consumption, however, may represent an omitted source despite low alcohol content, though lack of hard data makes verifying this claim difficult. Further, Patrick O’Bannon argued in his examination of Philadelphia brewing before 1840 that beer sales may be underrepresented in tavern account books, since beer was less likely to be purchased on credit. Records pertaining to alehouses, which were restricted by law to the sale of beer, are far less common than account books from tavernkeepers who could sell multiple types of alcohol. Finally, domestic brewing required no specialized equipment, which likely conceals its rate of consumption. See W.J. Rorabaugh, The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 9, 229, 232-233; Downard. Dictionary of the History of the American Brewing and Distilling Industries, 227; Patrick W. O’Bannon. “Inconsiderable Progress: Commercial Brewing in Philadelphia before 1840,” in Judith A. McGraw, ed. Early American Technology: Making & Doing Things from the Colonial Era to 1850 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 152-153.
so they would not follow suit, and instead drink wine with ease. Tea was an unpatriotic luxury outside of New England and subject to stiff import duties. Coffee was less stigmatized but expensive before temperance reformers persuaded Congress to remove its import duty in 1830. Americans readily drank milk when they could procure it, but transportation and refrigeration barriers kept supplies limited and prices erratic. Alcoholic beverages were by comparison abundant, cheap, and considered safe.¹⁰

All social classes drank, and drank constantly. Borrowing in part from their British forebears, who considered strong drink “connected with every phase of life,” colonists and early Americans considered alcoholic beverages to be healthy, nourishing, and energizing. Americans began drinking as soon as they awoke each morning, perhaps with rum or brandy. Alcoholic beverages were included at every meal, and sometimes mixed with the food itself. The workday was punctuated by midmorning and midafternoon breaks, during which more spirits were consumed. Taverns were frequented each evening. Beer was commonly ingested at one or more of these; colonists might dip their toast in it, blend it with stronger spirits in a variety of colloquial “cocktails” (though the word did not yet exist), or ingest a glass of it at evening meals. Such ubiquitous drinking practices in colonial America carried significant precedent.¹¹

High consumption rates during the early republic period were rooted in alcohol’s historic entanglement in the cultural, political, and economic fabric of North American colonial societies as well as their European predecessors. Seventeenth century Dutch and English tavern customs sanctioning the moderate consumption of alcoholic beverages, as well as the legal structures

designed to govern them, crossed the ocean largely unaltered. The English believed that drink provided intellect to the upper classes, comradery among the lower classes, and congeniality for all. The Dutch thought that strong drink protected them from diseases associated with untreated water. Beer in particular enjoyed a nearly sacred status whose production and consumption could not easily be challenged, no small feat in the face of Dutch Calvinism. Public houses, alehouses, and taverns were numerous in both countries—Amsterdam recorded 518 licensed alehouses in 1613, one for every two hundred people. Drinking establishments provided an important venue for political and social interactions as well as public meeting spaces where religious observances, social functions, mass meetings, and commercial business could be carried out. Inevitably, the central cultural space occupied by taverns and alcohol consumption invited attempts at control.

In both countries, proper regulation of drinking and tavern behavior was deemed necessary to preserve moral order, and engendered attempts to codify social, economic, and religious relations. Laws established who taverns must accommodate, what beverages and services they might provide, where they could be located, their hours of operation, and how matters like credit lines or business transactions must be handled. These regulations amounted to statements about socioeconomic status, public versus private spaces, and cultural inclusiveness along ethnic and gender lines. Ubiquitous over the years were efforts to curtail drunkenness and disorder, particularly among the lower classes. Throughout the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, English lawmakers associated lower class drinking with social issues like crime, poverty, and immorality. Controlling alcohol provided a significant pathway to controlling society at large.

English and Dutch drinking patterns crossed the Atlantic with colonial migrants while perennial regulatory concerns—such as government sanction of profit from alcohol sales, attempts to prohibit drinking on the Sabbath, or observed links between consumption and social ills—
fostered early American debates which initiated the temperance and prohibition movements. Yet in transplanting European drinking norms, colonists further adopted means of challenging them. Taverns were subject to regulation and proscription by elites but they were also sites where social relations could be resisted or redefined. Relationships between colonial authorities and the citizenry were negotiated, in part, over drinks.12

European traditions combined with economic shifts and environmental necessities, forcing North American drinking habits to take on a life of their own. The raw ingredients for traditional styles of alcohol, including beer, were less abundant. When they could not manufacture conventional libations, colonists fashioned alcoholic beverages from molasses, cherries, pumpkins, spruce, tree chips, parsnips, or whatever else was available. In 1800, Cincinnati’s *Western Spy and Hamilton Gazette* published a recipe using the shells of green peas to make beer. By a wide margin, however, Americans during the colonial and early republic periods turned to fermented apple ciders and distilled spirits.13

Fermented ciders, typically six to eight percent by volume, represented the largest single source of American alcohol prior to 1800. Subsistence farmers, particularly in New England, dispersed apple trees throughout pastures and rocky hillsides while devoting their fields to food crops instead of fermentable grains like barley. Cider gradually became “the main point of every apple tree north of the Carolinas,” each of which could produce five or six barrels per year. Americans aged fifteen and over consumed over thirty gallons of cider per year during the eighteenth century, and New England was able to export cider as far as the West Indies.14

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Cider consumption dropped significantly during the 1830s, however, diminished by the same socioeconomic forces which would stimulate the brewing industry. Cider production proved cheap and simple for rural domestic use but did not adapt well to revolutionizing markets. As developments in transportation and communication allowed depersonalized capitalist forces to exert more control over American economic life, apple cultivation shifted from a supplemental crop harvested for domestic use to an agricultural commodity prepared for the marketplace; but it was plagued by high transportation costs, spoilage, and unprofitable margins. While the cider mill was a prominent destination for commercial apples alongside retail sale as fresh fruit, the same reform impulse that commercialized agriculture also spawned the temperance movement. Publications like Cincinnati’s Western Observer attacked cider production as immoral profit from drunkenness as well as a waste of apples’ utility elsewhere (such as feed for hogs) and urged farmers to cut down their orchards rather than promote intemperance. Though it is unlikely that many farmers actually did so, many abandoned their orchards to fade naturally into the landscape. Early American hard cider, in other words, fell prey to the cultural and economic forces of the market revolution.\(^\text{15}\)

Although cider consumption statistically predominated before 1800, increased distillation of liquors throughout the eighteenth century caused a shift in colonial drinking habits that would not fade. Economic pressures from British trade relations and difficulties moving grains to eastern markets allowed western distillers to manufacture whiskey cheaply and easily. As the price of

distilled spirits dropped, tavern sales throughout the colonies, both on premises and out the door, showed a massive spike.\textsuperscript{16}

Distilled liquors allowed drinkers to reach their desired level of intoxication more quickly compared to beer or cider, which agitated colonial leaders who associated the shift with increased alcohol abuse and social disorder. By the early eighteenth century, proscriptive laws sought to enforce social order among lower social classes, due in no small part to the rise in liquor consumption. Individuals could be punished for drunkenness (the definition of which varied immensely) or for spending too much time in a tavern. Certain classes or groups—unfree laborers, blacks, Native Americans, women, or lower class white men—could face sanctions for drinking at all. Governing elites employed licensing laws, restrictions on credit lines, taxation, and regulation of deviant activities (such as gambling or prostitution) to encourage drinking establishments to conform to specific visions for social order. Such limitations rarely applied to the upper social and economic classes, who were presumed to be above such vices. Nevertheless, attempts to stymie liquor consumption in these ways often failed to achieve systematic reform. Hard liquor consumption continued to increase, and the social ills most attributed to drunkenness—crime, poverty, and disorder, among others—did not disappear.\textsuperscript{17}

North American colonists traded and consumed rum heavily before the American Revolution, but whiskey dominated American liquor consumption during the early republic period. In the words of one observer, “the vast quantities of grain which are produced by their fertile lands, beyond the necessary consumption, cannot be so well disposed of in any way as in pork and whiskey. Hence we already find Tennessee and Kentuckey whiskey in our [eastern] seaports, and

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\textsuperscript{16} Ian Tyrrell, \textit{Sobering Up: From Temperance to Prohibition in Antebellum America, 1800-1860} (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 25-26; Rorabaugh, \textit{The Alcoholic Republic}, 54, 61, 64. \\
\textsuperscript{17} Salinger, \textit{Taverns and Drinking in Early America}, 51, 83-90, 121-181, 194-195; Rorabaugh, \textit{The Alcoholic Republic}, 27-36.
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it is generally preferred to that made nearer home.” Numerous Scottish, Irish, and Scots-Irish grain distillers immigrated to the U.S. during the late eighteenth century and found favorable supplies and conditions for their trade. Technological advancements increased yield and quality while cutting expenses and labor during the early nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{18}

Whiskey represented a viable use for grain which farmers could not otherwise bring to market profitably. A bushel of corn held one fifth the value of the whiskey it could produce, while the reduced bulk dramatically lowered transportation costs per unit of grain. The stability and high perceived value of whiskey led to its use as currency west of the Appalachians. While periodic fluctuations like the Panic of 1819 affected production in the short term, per capita consumption nearly tripled in volume between 1710 and 1830, peaking at over four gallons, and would represent the overwhelming majority of American consumption as ciders faded.\textsuperscript{19}

In 1829 the Secretary of War estimated that three quarters of the nation’s laborers drank at least four ounces of liquor daily. Colonial traditions of drinking at every meal and throughout the workday followed men into urbanizing centers as the market revolution drew their labor away from the household; women and children, in turn, consumed a fifth of what men did. Many white parents believed that early exposure to alcohol encouraged moderation over abuse and taught their sons to drink small amounts of alcohol regularly from as young as one year old. Unlike women, who were heavily discouraged from drinking in public due to perceived female fragility and pressure to maintain a virtuous façade, young men coveted visits to local taverns as a sign of manhood. Alcohol further pervaded early American masculinity regardless of class distinctions. Clergymen, middle class professionals, southern planters, western farmers, and wealthy elites all

\textsuperscript{18} Harrison Hall, \textit{Hall’s Distiller, ...Adapted to the Use of Farmers as Well as Distillers...}(Philadelphia: John Bioren, 1813), 12, as quoted in Tyrrell, \textit{Sobering Up}, 26; Rorabaugh, \textit{The Alcoholic Republic}, 61, 64-73.

joined the urban working class in drinking steadily, readily, and daily. Anne Royall, a traveler, complained in 1830 that “when I was in Virginia, it was too much whiskey—in Ohio, too much whiskey—in Tennessee, it is too, too much whiskey!”

**Early American Beer**

Beer remained relatively subdued during this period of inebriation. Prior to German influence the brewing industry was neither large nor particularly lucrative. In 1810, the aggregate output of all 132 commercial breweries in the United States reached 185,000 barrels while a single prominent brewery in London, the Anchor, totaled 235,100 barrels in the same year. Imports from Europe supplemented domestic production, but per capita consumption of beer remained low (around one gallon) and was concentrated around a few urban centers—primarily New York and Philadelphia, but also Albany, Pittsburgh, and Cincinnati. Women regularly brewed small beer, a low-alcohol beverage (one to three percent by volume) serving as a replacement for water, in the home from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, although comprehensive statistics regarding its consumption do not exist.

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Neither societal indifference nor economic absence caused low rates of beer consumption. Brewing and importation of beer in North America dates back to the initial establishment of English colonies and continued uninterrupted. After diminishing with the rise of distilled liquors in the early eighteenth century, upper class commentators who wished to steer the public away from spirits touted beer as a desirable choice. Doctor Benjamin Rush argued that while spirituous liquors and related drinks inflicted societal and physical damage, moderate beverages like beer, wine, and cider promoted health and prosperity. The 1780s and 90s saw several efforts to promote the beer industry at individual and state levels, providing tax exemptions and guides designed to encourage growth in the brewing industry. In 1791 Alexander Hamilton, as Secretary of the Treasury, recommended an import duty on beer to promote the domestic industry. And in 1810 an English-born brewer named Joseph Coppinger wrote to President Madison proposing a national brewery “to improve the quality of our Malt Liquors in every point of the Union. [sic] and to counteract the baneful influence of ardent spirits on the health and Morals of our fellow Citizens.”

The letter eventually reached Thomas Jefferson, who did not reply until Coppinger inquired again in 1815. Jefferson agreed with the ends but not the means:

I have no doubt, either in a moral or economical view, of the desirableness to introduce a taste for malt liquors instead of that for ardent spirits. the difficulty is in changing the public taste & habit. the business of brewing is now so much introduced in every state, that it appears to me to need no other encouragement than to increase the number of customers. I do not think it a case where a company need form itself on patriotic principles meerly [sic], because there is a sufficiency of private capital which would embark itself in the business if there were a demand.

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Jefferson’s optimism was ultimately unfounded. By 1820 the American brewing industry fell below its already meager 1810 levels. In the wake of the Panic of 1819, breweries around the country reported poor business and imports far exceeded domestic production. Despite its boosters, early American brewing struggled.²⁴

A general understanding of the brewing process is required to fully explicate the difficulties faced by early nineteenth century brewers as well as subsequent advancements resulting from German-American influence. Late nineteenth century contemporaries defined beer as food product or, more specifically, as “a beverage produced by the alcoholic fermentation of a saccharine liquid, called wort, which is produced by the saccharification of starchy material obtained from grain, usually by means of diastase, which substance is formed in the grain by the germination (malting) of the same.” They divided the brewing process into three distinct phases: preparation of the malt, preparation of the wort (mashing), and fermentation of the wort.²⁵

During malting, raw grain such as barley or wheat is steeped in water, drained, and re-steeped periodically. Exposure to water activates enzymes capable of breaking down insoluble starches, proteins, and simple carbohydrates, stimulating germination (the production of a new plant). In the early nineteenth century, brewers commonly spread wet grains over stone or cement floors to better facilitate this process, which lasted as long as twenty-one days, though methods varied. Germination produces malt sugars, soluble starches, and other nutrients consumable by yeast. The “green” malt is then dried in a kiln, at temperatures high enough to halt germination

²⁴ Baron, Brewed in America, 123-124.
²⁵ One Hundred Years of Brewing: A Complete History of the Progress Made in the Art, Science, and Brewing in the World, Particularly During the Last Century (Chicago: H.S. Rich & Company, 1901), 30-32.
while preserving nutrients and rendering the enzymes dormant. Variations on this process yield specific flavors, and malted grain can then be stored for months.\(^{26}\)

During mashing, the crushed malt is mixed with water to render its various nutrients soluble, forming a sweet fermentable syrup called wort. There are several methods of mashing, but early American brewers utilized an English method called infusion which involved adding the malt to hot water (typically sixty-five to seventy degrees Celsius during that period, though temperature measurements were imprecise) which eventually cooled to a specific target temperature (typically fifty-six to sixty degrees). Hops might be added at this stage depending on recipe and brewer preference.\(^{27}\)

Fermentation, which most differentiates ale from lager brewing, is the process by which yeast converts the nutrients and other saccharine matter of the wort into alcohol, carbon dioxide, and heat. Fermentation was a somewhat mysterious process until the latter half of the nineteenth century, when scientists fully recognized the association between yeast and the production of alcohol (as well as the effects of other microorganisms on beer quality and flavor). Numerous yeast varieties (\textit{Saccharomyces cerevisiae}) both cultivated and wild are known to exist today, but during the early nineteenth century strains were generally categorized into two groups: top-fermenting yeasts which floated in the fermentation tank and produced ales, and bottom-fermenting yeasts which sank and produced lagers. Early nineteenth century brewers manufactured ales exclusively and thus used top-fermenting yeasts. Temperature control and sanitation are both critical to prevent unintended flavors from developing during fermentation. Before artificial refrigeration (which


refers to cellars and icehouses as well as the mechanical refrigerators invented later in the century), the cool temperature requirements for fermentation were the primary factor limiting early American brewing to northern climates and colder months during the year.\textsuperscript{28}

Pre-industrial brewing naturally required significantly more manual labor, entailing long and hours and “almost superhuman” physical demands. Over a fifteen to seventeen-hour day, the “hauling, dipping, pumping, breaking, stirring, and boiling were tiresome work for the laborers…making the brewer’s occupation one of hard toil and almost unbearable labor.” The intense effort required was due, in no small part, to a lack of innovation within the industry during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The design and complexity of early nineteenth century breweries often resembled those of a century before. The core materials necessary for operation were grain or malt, hops, fresh water, and fuel for heat. Malting either took place onsite in a separate malt house, or else purchased through third party maltsters (sometimes paid for in beer). Other ingredients were typically purchased in small quantities through numerous sellers. Most breweries were small structures no more than two stories tall, employing a pump to raise water to a reservoir at the highest level of the brewhouse, then relying on gravity as much as possible to move ingredients through the brewing process. Water was typically boiled in a kettle before descending to a mash tun, where brewers wielding oars mixed it with malt to form a syrupy wort which was subsequently pumped into a kettle and boiled with hops. The wort was then cooled, sometimes via placement in large and shallow pans, until yeast could be added. The beer was then stored in a cool place to ferment for two to six days before it was finally placed in barrels. Designs varied, and naturally adjusted as new technologies and brewing techniques were explored.


Technological stagnation combined with economic and demographic limitations to hamper the early brewing industry. Breweries required thousands of dollars in initial capital and skilled labor that was difficult to train and retain. Likewise, beer was expensive and unwieldy compared with other alcoholic beverages. In Cincinnati, eighteen cents could buy a single bottle of beer or half a gallon of whiskey, but the high price did not translate into profits for brewers. It was bulky to store and difficult to transport, lacking not only the refrigerated rail cars of later decades but
even the canals and railroads which soon revolutionized transportation in the United States. The beer also spoiled quickly—taverns rarely sold an entire sixteen gallon keg or thirty-one gallon barrel before the contents turned sour and flat. These obstacles lowered the rate of return well below those of other avenues for investment, including distilling.\textsuperscript{30}

American brewers faced another problem which contemporaries could not fully explain—the English-style ales and porters they brewed often took on unintended bitter flavors, cloudiness, and other unappetizing traits. Contemporaries argued that the North American climate caused these unintended characteristics, or else that the ale yeasts used by brewers, which floated near the top of the open-air vats during fermentation, were corrupted by exposure. In hindsight, the latter seems likely—various wild yeasts and other naturally occurring microorganisms (known by brewers today as “beer spoilers”) could easily cause contamination which, though non-lethal, altered the taste and color of a beer. A lack of sterile conditions could introduce infection at multiple stages of the brewing process, but top-fermenting ale yeasts in association with the relatively higher temperatures required for ale brewing (which are friendlier to micro-organisms) were likely the primary cause of infection in early American brewing. German lager brewing would avoid these unseen pitfalls through its reliance on lower temperatures and utilization of bottom-fermenting strains of yeast, but the requisite yeasts themselves would not immigrate to the United States until around 1840.\textsuperscript{31}

Cincinnati’s and Chicago’s Early Transitions

Cincinnati hardly eschewed the early trajectory of American brewing, but its formative local trade looked more and more prophetic by the 1830s. The city’s inaugural brewers were predominantly of English and Irish descent, but ale brewers slowly made room for the city’s burgeoning German immigrant population and soon German brewers as well. This shift foreshadowed the German influence that would define the city’s pre-Prohibition brewing industry both economically and culturally. If Cincinnati’s early brewers did not eventually cede their firms to German proprietors, or simply close outright, popular demand would force many to begin producing lager beer in the latter half of the century.

Cincinnati’s local commercial brewing trade may have begun with unnamed brewers listed in city directories as early as 1805, or with a brewery owned by James Dover in 1806 (of whom little else is known). But the first significantly documented commercial brewer in Cincinnati was Davis Embree, who in 1811 placed several enterprising appeals to grain farmers in local newspapers, anticipating a need for several thousand bushels of barley per year (his firm probably dates back to 1809). Business was good in the Miami Valley, for within five years Embree’s brewery produced around five thousand barrels annually, grinding over a hundred bushels of malt per day in a horse-powered mill. Though versatile enough to weather both water supply problems and his initial competitor, William Floyd, Embree’s early business expansion likely depended on the lack of imported English beer during the War of 1812. The restoration of trade and correlated economic downturn after 1819 harmed Embree’s business and his brewery closed in 1825, ironically just as Cincinnati was securing its favorable trade position in the west. In the following
decades, Cincinnati’s population surged from 9,120 in 1818 to 46,338 by 1840. The brewing industry surged along with it.\textsuperscript{32}

In 1826, a Scottish-born machinist named John Walker received a small brewery on Sycamore Street as payment for a debt. Failing to sell it, Walker instead began brewing small quantities of ale and porter profitably through 1836, when Walker’s brewery employed five men and used a steam engine to pump water. Though Walker himself perished in a wagon accident at his brewery in 1853, the brewery continued under various owners until 1912. Gradual success producing ales and porters in the 1820s and 30s accelerated through the midcentury until 1878, when popular demand forced them to begin producing lager as well.\textsuperscript{33}

Several early Cincinnati brewers alternated through partnerships, at times leaving one brewery to found another. Bleak economic conditions prompted Thomas Wood to partner with William Metcalf in 1825. Four years later Metcalf partnered with an English immigrant and skilled brewer named William Attee to form a brewery, producing between fifty and sixty barrels per week. Attee left the partnership in 1834, but Metcalf continued growing his firm with the help of a new partner, William Disney, Jr. Attee went on to partner with William Lofthouse, another English immigrant who had founded his own brewery in 1830. They formed the Eagle Brewery, which grew to produce seventy barrels of ale per week and employ nine men. When Attee died in 1843, Lofthouse continued as a sole proprietor until his own death in 1850, at which time his wife leased the Lofthouse facilities to a pair of fledgling German brewers, Joseph Schaller and Johann Schiff.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{32} Wimberg, \textit{Cincinnati Breweries}, 34; Baron, \textit{Brewed in America}, 162; Downard, \textit{The Cincinnati Brewing Industry}, 8-10; David Thomas, \textit{Travels Through the Western Country} (New York: David Rumsey Printer, 1819), 107.


Through the late 1830s and early 1840s, Cincinnati claimed between eight and ten breweries, collectively employing dozens of workers while the city’s population and economy expanded. Though the industry suffered during the Panic of 1837, the city demonstrated a consistent taste for beer. One scholar has argued that Cincinnati’s brewing industry during this time had a “decidedly non-German character,” citing the numerous English, French, and Irish owned breweries alongside a production rate which suffered through the early 1840s despite a massive influx of German immigrants, who comprised twenty five percent of the city’s population by 1840. On the contrary, ethnically German brewers made up three out of eight brewers listed in an 1844 city directory for Cincinnati. These brewers made a significant impact on early Cincinnati brewing and in many ways prepared the city for its eventual Teutonic shift.35

Friedrich Billiods, an Alsatian born in 1798 near the border with Württemberg, was such a brewer. Arriving in Cincinnati in 1822, he worked as a cooper for ten years before partnering with Peter Jonte, a native of France, to open a brewery. They produced common beer and ales “in the Strassbourger style,” employed Swiss and French Alsatians, and were well-reputed. The partnership ended in 1835, however, when Billiods left to establish the Lafayette Brewery in Over-the-Rhine. Their early brewery emulated much of what would soon define German-American drinking culture. The building was “a very unpretentious frame…not much larger than a cottage, and was not anything like what is understood to-day by a brewery. It stood in the midst of a grove of trees, and under these were the benches for customers…[who] were brought the mugs laden

35 Downard, when making this claim, names Conrad Schultz as the only German brewery proprietor in Cincinnati in 1844. This study, in contrast, considers Friedrich Billiods and John Kauffman (listed ‘Coffman’ in the directory), as immigrants from German-influenced portions of the historically contested Alsace-Lorraine region, to be German for the purposes of this study. This adjusted definition removes a contradiction on Downard’s part, as Conrad Schultz was born in Strasbourg, France. See Downard, *The Cincinnati Brewing Industry*, 6, 11; R. P. Brooks, *The Cincinnati Directory for the Year 1844* (Cincinnati: R. P. Brooks, 1844), 16-17; Wimberg, *Cincinnati Breweries*, 139.
with unfermented [i.e. ale] beer for the thirsty citizens who went there every night as regularly as they ate their suppers.”

Another early German brewer was Conrad Schultz, a native of Strasbourgh who was already over sixty years old when he founded the Washington Brewery with his brother Johann in 1830. Within four years they employed nine men and, with the help of a steam engine, produced one hundred barrels of ale each week. By 1840, a city directory considered the Washington Brewery to be “one of the most extensive establishments in the West,” listing it as a reference point for dozens of personal and business entries. It lauded Schultz’s ale for being “considered by judges to be equal to the imported article,” and claimed that “constant and increasing demand” made it impossible to fill every order. By 1843 Schultz had retired and his sons operated the brewery, employing five brewers—all German immigrants.

Firms like the Washington Brewery mirrored the business structures of their predecessors but also helped foster networks through which German immigrants found employment and gained valuable professional skills which might allow them to strike out on their own. George Klotter, for example, left his native Baden in 1831 following years of family and economic strife. Unable to find work in Philadelphia or Baltimore, Klotter traveled to Cincinnati in 1832 to become an apprentice for Conrad Schultz. Four years and one marriage later he used his savings to open the Rising Sun Saloon at the corner of Main and 13th Streets. German-style lager beers had not yet crossed the Atlantic, but the Rising Sun nevertheless became a hub of German culture in the city. In 1839 local Germans founded the Liedertafel, Cincinnati’s first singing society, and began holding regular meetings. Beer took a prominent role these early proceedings—the singers sat

36 Louis J. Hauck Scrapbook, Mss f X H368, CHLA; Wimberg, Cincinnati Breweries, 76, 87-89.
37 David Henry Shaffer, Shaffer’s Advertising Directory for 1839-1840 (J.B & R.P. Donogh, 1840), 93, 213, 397, 506; Wimberg, Cincinnati Breweries, 138-139.
themselves around a table and prop their song book beside a quart. Klotter himself was a member but also a businessman; he mandated that the singers purchase enough drinks to cover the cost of the oil lamps they used for lighting. In 1845 Klotter partnered with another German immigrant, Johann Sohn, to found the Hamilton Brewery, and would eventually start his own in 1867.38

The city of Chicago, officially founded in 1833, developed its brewing trade much later than Cincinnati, but both the city and its brewing industry grew rapidly. Ale production would last longer in Chicago compared to Cincinnati, due in large part to the staying power of its most prominent early firm, Lill & Diversey. In the long run, however, lager beer would dominate Chicago’s landscape. In the beginning, Elijah Wentworth’s Wolf Point tavern and Samuel Miller’s Forks Tavern operated on opposing banks of the Chicago River, just inland from Fort Dearborn. Both brewed ale on site. The area’s first fully commercial brewery appeared when William Haas and Konrad (Andrew) Sulzar, two German migrants, arrived from New York in 1833 with one hundred and fifty barrels of imported ale and sufficient equipment to establish a small brewery. Purchasing a lot north of the Chicago River, on the corner of Chicago Avenue and Pine Street (later Michigan Avenue), Haas and Sulzar erected a forty by eighty-foot building (a “little tenement building”) capable of producing around six hundred barrels of ale per year. After three years, Sulzar sold his interest in the brewery to William Ogden, the prominent local businessman soon-to-be Chicago’s first mayor. Haas likewise sold his interest in 1841 to an English immigrant named William Lill, who brewed while Ogden handled finances. Due to a joint need for ice, they shared their brewing space with a dairy operated by an Alsatian immigrant, Michael Diversey. In

38 The Liedertafel, though the first singing society, was not the first musical society. Precedents such as the “Apollonian Society” existed during the 1820s if not earlier. Early Apollonian meetings were held in outdoor gardens described as precursors to proper German beer gardens. See Max Burghem, Cincinnati in Wort und Bild: Nach authentischen Quelled Bearbeitet und Zusammengestellt von Max Burghem (Cincinnati, OH: M. & R. Burghem, circa 1888), 88, 341-342; Wimberg, Cincinnati Breweries, 10-11, 131.
1841 Diversey purchased Ogden’s share of the business. Reorganized as Lill & Diversey (also called the Chicago Brewery), this partnership developed into Chicago’s largest antebellum brewery.\(^{39}\)

At least three other brewers entered the early Chicago market. William Crawford successfully petitioned the city government in 1837 to operate a brewery on public grounds along the Lake Michigan shoreline, though little other information exists about his operation or success. James Carney, a grocer, established a small brewery in 1840 which operated for twenty years, and Mathias Best, a Bavarian immigrant, started brewing beer on a small scale in 1844. Neither these firms nor establishment of the city’s first lager brewers in the late 1840s, however, would challenge Lill & Diversey’s leading position for some time.\(^{40}\)

The presence of German immigrants in both Chicago and Cincinnati during the foundational stages of their local brewing industries reflects the many thousands of German immigrants who had immigrated to North America before 1840. Their efforts began the process of ethnocultural negotiation to which a deluge of German immigration during the next two decades would contribute. German brewing gave this transformation amplified force.

**Formative German Communities**

German immigration to North America dates back to the seventeenth century and represented the second largest colonial-era migrant group after Africans. Between 1700 and 1775,


around 84,500 immigrants to the thirteen colonies originated from German-speaking regions (out of 585,000 total immigrants), ninety percent of whom settled in relatively segregated communities in Pennsylvania. The 1790 U.S. census recorded that nearly nine percent of the U.S. population was of German origin or parentage, but immigration rates remained low. During the 1820s the annual number of German immigrants to the U.S. was well under one thousand. Rates finally rose during the mid-1830s, when tens of thousands began arriving annually. By the latter half of the 1840s, the number was over fifty thousand, with the majority coming from western and southwestern German states—Baden, Württemberg, Westphalia, Prussian Rhineland—as well as Bavaria.⁴¹

German immigrants who arrived during the 1830s, such as George Herancourt, were eventually referred to as Dreissiger ("Thirty-ers"). Historians have traditionally focused on the elite minority of prosperous merchants, landowners, and other professional Dreissiger who formed the core of liberal and intellectual leadership within their respective communities. Cincinnati was home to several influential Dreissiger who found ready spaces for a classically liberal ideology that had gained little traction in Germany. They engaged politically by founding newspapers such as the Democratic Volksblatt, ran for public office, and helped newly arrived immigrants establish themselves. In 1834, they helped found the first German Society in the west. Modeled after successful earlier iterations in New York and Philadelphia, the Society promised “through

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⁴¹ These statistics include immigrants from regions such as Switzerland and Alsace. See Aaron S. Fogleman, “Immigration, German Immigration and 18th-Century America,” in Eberhard Reichmann, LaVern J. Rippley, & Jörg Nagler, eds., Emigration and Settlement Patterns of German Communities in North America (Indianapolis: Max Kade German-American Center at Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, 1995), 5, 13-17; Frederick C. Luebke, Germans in the New World: Essays in the History of Immigration (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 157-161; Bruce Levine, The Spirit of 1848: German Immigrants, Labor Conflict, and the Coming of the Civil War (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 16.
reciprocal aid” to “mutually assure ourselves of a better future, to assist those in need, and to secure generally those charitable aims which are impossible to the single individual.”

Dreissiger liberals, despite their leadership roles, did not always enjoy support from the German immigrant communities they purported to serve. These intellectuals were a tiny minority of immigrants and mostly came from prosperous families in Europe. Peasant farmers, laborers, and artisan craftworkers made up the majority of German immigrants during the 1830s and the proportional numbers of these groups increased in the 1840s and beyond. Conservative Catholics, who made up nearly two thirds of Cincinnati’s German population during the 1830s, also proved resistant to the Dreissiger liberal ideology. In 1837 they founded the nation’s first German-language Catholic newspaper, the Wahrheitsfreund (“Friend of Truth”), as a direct counter to the Volksblatt. Eventually, the restrained Dreissiger ideology faced opposition from a new wave of German immigration with radical conceptions of democracy and liberalism.

Through the nineteenth century, German-Americans balanced their need to engage productively with American society with a commitment to their ethnocultural distinctiveness. Most German-American homes were bilingual by the end of the eighteenth century, speaking German at home and English in public. Organizations like the German Society sought to carve a political and societal place for Germans in broader American society, yet successive waves of immigration kept their native language prevalent through the early twentieth century. German neighborhoods, or “Little Germanies,” swelled with ethnically distinct church congregations, social clubs, trade groups, bands, products, food, and eventually beer, providing abundant

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connections to their European homeland as well as a cushioned transition to American life. Often, when established immigrants departed these safe ethnic spaces for more heterogenous locales, fresh newcomers replaced them. German immigrants used these neighborhoods as negotiation spaces, where they could regulate what cultural influences belonged in their lives.\footnote{Günther Moltmann, “‘When People Migrate, They Carry Their Selves Along’—Emigration and Settlement Patterns of German Communities in North America,” in Reichmann, Rippley, & Nagler, \textit{Emigration and Settlement Patterns}, xxxviii; Luebke, \textit{Germans in the New World}, 160.}

In Cincinnati, that neighborhood was Over-the-Rhine, characterized by Vine and Race streets and bounded on the north by McMicken Avenue, which runs along the base of rocky hillsides that brewers later excavated to construct lager beer cellars. During the 1830s, Cincinnati’s German population exploded from 1,250 people (five percent of the population) to 14,163 (twenty-five percent). By 1850 that number doubled. Though they had previously lived in various sections of the city, after 1842 German immigrants clustered north of the Miami & Erie Canal’s Cincinnati connection and nicknamed it the “Rhine.” Crossing into the German section of the city came to be known as going “over the Rhine,” and the area became a physical manifestation of German ethnicity. Immigrant craftsmen and storekeepers built little frame and brick houses, fencing their backyard vegetable gardens and flowerbeds with latticework. German foods such as apple dumplings, sauerkraut, smoked sausage, and even pig’s feet were common in Over-the-Rhine households. One English observer noted the ubiquitous German language “inscribed on doorways, and so frequently heard spoken, that one almost feels as if he were in Hamburg.”\footnote{As quoted in Cayton, \textit{Ohio}, 144.} As late as 1890, a visitor reported that the air in the neighborhood had “a savory odor of Limburger, the aroma arising from a wienerwurst can, [and] the vapors…from…sidewalk drains,” and carried the
“tortured strains of murdered Strauss, Offenbach, or other composers.” Ethnic expression, however, was no exercise in isolation.\textsuperscript{46}

For all these internally practiced and externally bounded iterations of German culture, immigrants viewed themselves as in a state of transition from German immigrant to German-American. An Over-the-Rhine resident wrote in 1848:

It is a peculiar thing with us Germans here: we seek and find outward independence, a free, solid life, unlimited industrial trade—political freedom, in short; to that extent we are Americans. But we are Americans, Germans. We build for ourselves American houses, but within glows a German hearth. We wear American hats, but under them are German eyes looking out from a German face. We love our wives with German fidelity…; the good Lord keeps a private German ear for our church services; the American Catawba translates itself into German dreams in our brains, and flows from out babbling tongues in comfortable German tones. We live according to American habits but we hold fast to German morals. We speak English, but we think and feel in German. Our minds speak with the words or the Anglo-Americans, but our hearts understand only the mother tongue. While our gaze hovers over an American horizon, the old German heavens still arch over our souls. Our entire inner life is, in a word, German, and whatever is to satisfy the needs of the inner man must appear before him in German garments.\textsuperscript{47}

Chicago likewise enjoyed a significant German presence from its initial founding in 1833, with about two hundred documented German citizens by the end of the 1830s and over eight hundred (over ten percent of the city’s population) by 1843. The area north of the Chicago River and along the Lake Michigan shoreline soon developed into a quiet, upscale neighborhood for the

\textsuperscript{47} St—o [Probably J.B. Stallo], in \textit{Cincinnati Volksfreund}, November 13, 1848, as quoted in Conzen, “Ethnicity as Festive Culture,” 51.
city’s wealthy families, but as one traveled west of Dearborn Street the population grew steadily German. Although communities formed on both the north and south sides of the city as the immigrant population proliferated, the Nord Seite would become the chief locus of German culture in the city. In 1846 the city’s first German newspaper, the Chicago Volksfreund, was founded and joined two years later by the influential Illinois Staats-Zeitung, whose political tone eventually aligned with the Republican Party.48

There was never unity among German Chicagoans. Though connected by common cultural ties and treatment by the local community, Chicago’s Germans faced religious, generational, political, and ethnic differences that affected their engagement with the city at large. By 1846 there were two principal Catholic churches for Germans, one on the south side and one on the north, as well as evangelical and Lutheran congregations. Generational gaps augmented religious differences, particularly between established immigrants from the Dreissiger era and new waves of politically radical Achtundvierziger, or Forty-Eighters. Conservative “moss-backs” and radically liberal “green-horns,” as they were locally called, clashed over political issues such as slavery. Newly arrived immigrants sometimes scorned established neighbors as too American, mocking that moss-backs would be perfectly happy “if some native American would clap them on the back and hail them as ‘Jack’ or ‘Charley.’”49

Despite their numbers, many German Chicagoans felt unwelcome in local political life. Although some held public office as aldermen and even a police constable in the early 1840s, a general feeling of exclusion developed within the immigrant community by mid-decade. In March 1846, thirty-four Germans complained in the Chicago Daily Democrat when the city refused to

appoint their own Charles Baumgarten as street commissioner, alleging discrimination. Feelings of animosity between immigrant groups and the city’s native-born population grew over time and helped German Chicagoans cement common cultural ties when interacting with broader society. In 1853, for example, the German Aid Society of Chicago was founded to provide monetary aid to immigrants and prevent them from exploitation.\textsuperscript{50}

**Beer in German Festive Culture**

In neighborhoods like Over-the-Rhine and the *Nord Seite*, Germans’ public lives complemented their varied religious denominations, food, and reputation for thriftiness in broader society. Their festive culture distinguished immigrant communities—sometimes even alienating them—from American society. Leisure activities, particularly on Sundays, were both peculiar and highly visible to native-born Americans.\textsuperscript{51}

By the late 1840s, German brass bands and militias often paraded down Chicago’s streets on Sundays, passing church services on their way to outdoor picnics where “conventionalities were forgotten and the beer flowed in streams.” In their enthusiastic moments, marchers would shout “*Grad’ wie in Deutschland*” (“just like in Germany”). Later commentaries tied this largesse to the boisterous and independent mindset attributed to Forty-Eighters who wanted to show native-born Americans what a “free German” was. A variety of celebrations joined the parades, including singing festivals, speeches, or May Day celebrations, all of which allowed German immigrants to build communal bonds and maintain a sense of connection to their homeland. Even without specific cause or theme, Germans eagerly held picnics in outdoor beer gardens (often maintained by local breweries) on Sundays where families gathered to play music and games, watch


\textsuperscript{51} Conzen, “Ethnicity as Festive Culture,” 53-54.
sharpshooting demonstrations, and consume copious amounts of food and beer. Germans contrasted their behavior with an American culture they found too stiff and sober. The “rest of Sunday” was equated with the “rest of the tomb,” which neglected the full cultivation of the individual.  

Patronizing saloons and beer halls became a similarly important practice that occurred day to day. Immigrants, mostly male, sought recreation in these increasingly numerous spaces by playing pinochle and euchre over conversations and beer, “ever and again shaking it around their glasses with the peculiar circular motion which none but the German can impart to the beverage he loves.” Skilled professionals—journalists, doctors, lawyers, professors, and artists—reportedly spent their ample free time lounging around saloons, drinking and arguing about topics both local and across the Atlantic. By 1860, Cincinnati reportedly contained over two thousand places where a person could buy a drink.

Many discussions of nineteenth century German festivities attribute their motivation to concepts like Gemütlichkeit (cheerful sociability or conviviality) or the belief that “it is a good thing to have a good time.” While these notions, like the semi-translatable term itself, are rooted in distinctive cultural norms, they tend to oversimplify how German festive culture, and beer in particular, could be foundational manifestations of German ethnicity. According to Kathleen Conzen, Germans believed that one’s nationality determined modes of thought and generated undeniable basic needs. In their case, these needs included sociability and festivity, such that “[German] immigrants could be American in their workaday world, but…if they were to maintain the integrity of their personalities, they saw no option but to remain German in their leisure time.”

Festive culture and the diverse associations, or Vereine, which coordinated it were not a symptom of ethnicity but a fundamental characteristic of it: a “shared need for celebration and the communitas it generated brought German-Americans together, the forms of celebration that they adopted helped them to conceptualize their commonality in ethnic terms, and in defense of their festive culture they entered as a group into American public life.” This process, often lubricated by lager beer, advanced despite religious, class, and intellectual differences within the German community. These ethnocultural underpinnings also provided a common ground upon which the immigrant community could stand against external criticism or threats.\textsuperscript{54}

German festive culture further derived from philosophical assumptions and practices that had originated in Germany. Germans believed that people lived jointly in worlds of practicality and of art, learning, and friendship. Fully preparing a person for both required the cultivation of Geselligkeit, or voluntary sociability. This perspective not only encouraged social interaction and associations but placed renewed value on traditional folk customs such as beer consumption. Festivals, according to German nationalists, were “a public inalienable human right” which generated social cohesion. Within this paradigm, public celebrations of German culture amounted to vital expressions of German ethnicity.\textsuperscript{55}

German influence on American beer production and consumption contributed to this process in that it expressed an ethnically German perspective that relied on traditions already established across the Atlantic. German brewing practices and regulatory traditions date back to the Middle Ages, when cloistered brewers required special charters to operate. Further laws regulated who could legally sell beer as a legitimate tavern- or innkeeper as well as what ingredients could be used in its production (such as the famous 1516 Reinheitsgebot). Distinctive

\textsuperscript{54} Morgan. \textit{Over-the-Rhine}, 33; Conzen, “Ethnicity as Festive Culture,” 48, 53-54.

\textsuperscript{55} Conzen, “Ethnicity as Festive Culture,” 49-50.
styles of beer varied according to region and season. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the German brewing industry (like the American) would respond to changing market forces, first by replacing older craftworkers organizations with rigid brewers guilds and later with consolidation and industrialization. Whereas Munich, for example, contained fifty-four breweries in 1814, by 1865 there would only be eighteen within the city.⁵⁶

Beer consumption was similarly engrained in Germanic festive culture. Medieval and early modern iterations of taverns often invited nobles and other prominent guests into the keeper’s home while lower class patrons were served jugs of beer outside. Poorer revelers were forced to provide their own food and often danced while they drank, giving rise to the concept of the beer garden. The concept developed as demand for beer grew in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; many German brewers (especially in Bavaria) began digging underground cellars to store larger quantities of beer throughout the year, and planted trees above the cellars to help regulate moisture and temperature. These shady spots became the sites of beer gardens themselves, characterized as open-air spaces with plentiful beer and lively activity.⁵⁷

As Germany began to modernize during the early nineteenth century, beer retained a significant position in German societies. Urbanization brought thousands of poor rural citizens into Munich, for example, whose population climbed disproportionately through the 1840s, and antiquated systems of political and economic control struggled with evolving societal structures. Demand for inexpensive and high-quality beer remained high due to its ubiquitous perception as a required source of nutrition and sustenance. In the words of a Munich physician, beer was not

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drunk so much as “eaten,” with Bavarian men consuming an average of 165 liters annually, twice that of his northern counterparts. When the local police director was asked to explain why Munich’s lower classes considered beer so important, he replied:

*The Bavarian Volk...is
Extremely loyal to its king
and dynasty...Only in one area
of his life can the Bavarian
be wounded. Specifically, the
Bavarian really enjoys eating –
good food – and a lot of it...
The Munich citizen especially
Insists upon good and healthy beer.*

Southern Germans demonstrated their sensitivity to threats against their coveted beer in May 1844, when thousands of lower class men stormed Munich’s streets in protest of an eight percent increase in the price of summer beer (from six to six and one half Kreuzer). After three days of rioting and damage to dozens of breweries, the city government restored the price.

*Lager Bier*

The German shift toward lager beer transformed its brewing industry and, via immigrants, that of the United States. Lager beer, whose name derives from the German verb *lagern* (“to store”), required a different approach to brewing even though the technical and chemical differences between lagers and ales were not fully understood at the time. Two marked characteristics distinguished the production of one versus the other. First, its bottom-fermenting yeast interacted

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59 As quoted in Carpenter, “‘Sechs Kreuzer Sind Genug Für Ein Bier!,’” 1, 57-58.
little with the air, unlike the ale yeasts whose propensity for spoilage had plagued German and American brewers alike. Second, lagers took much longer to brew, living up to their name by requiring several weeks or months of extra cold storage (at temperatures ranging from fifty degrees to as low as thirty-five degrees Fahrenheit) to facilitate secondary fermentation, a maturation process which removes byproducts from primary fermentation and imparts significant flavor changes in the beer. Although not all German beer utilized bottom-fermenting yeast, the quality and longevity of Bavarian lager placed it in high demand throughout the German states. One beer expert commented in 1840 that “English, French, and most German beers spoil when they come in contact with air; this does not happen with Bavarian lagers; they can stay in full and half-filled kegs without becoming sour and without compromising their character at all.” Overall, lagers were lighter and less bitter than other options, which appealed to palates both in Germany and later the U.S.60 Other technological innovations, such as thermometers and saccharometers (which measure sugar content in a solution), helped proliferate lager brewing in German-speaking regions and allowed breweries to operate more like mechanized factories than artisan businesses. Immigrants who trained in Germany transplanted such practices to the United States.61

60 As quoted in Carpenter, “‘Sechs Kreuzer Sind Genug Für Ein Bier!,’” 72-73; Lager brewing in Germany dates back to the fifteenth century and proliferated in correlation with the increased use of lager cellars and, eventually, harvested ice. See Buttrick. “Secondary Fermentation,” 723; Seidl, “Beer Gardens,” 109-111; Eymold, Bier. Macht. München, 32; One Hundred Years of Brewing, 73-74; Baron, Brewed in America, 175; Rorabaugh, The Alcoholic Republic, 109.

61 Some sources claim that Gabriel Sedlmayer and Anton Dreher, two brewers and entrepreneurs from Munich and Vienna respectively, traveled to England to study industrialized brewing techniques and returned in 1832 to introduced thermometers and saccharometers to brewing in Germany and Austria. According to Mark Benbow, this story may be false, though production of lager beer did significantly increase in Germany starting in the 1830s. Further, recent scientific research has traced original lager yeasts well outside of Europe. Evidence of near-identical yeast strains has been found in both Argentina and Tibet. See Mark Benbow. “German Immigrants in the United States Brewing Industry,” in Immigrant Entrepreneurship: German-American Business Biographies, 1720 to the Present, vol. 2, edited by William J. Hausman. German Historical Institute. Last modified February 01, 2017. http://www.immigrantentrepreneurship.org/entry.php?rec=284; Jian Bing, Pei-Jie Han, Wan-Qui Liu, Qi-Ming Wang, and Feng-Yan Bai, “Evidence for a Far East Asian Origin of Lager Beer Yeast,” Current Biology, Vol. 24, Issue 10 (May 2014), R380-R381; Eymold, Bier. Macht. München, 33-34.
The exact arrival of lager beer in the United States is not definitively known and allegedly required improvements in shipping technology to allow it to survive the transatlantic voyage. Though other claims have been made, a Bavarian brewer named John Wagner likely brought the first lager yeast to Philadelphia around 1840 for use in his small brewery. Reportedly, Wagner’s brewery was a personal venture rather than a business, meant to supply local German immigrants with a taste of home. Even if Wagner was not particularly interested in business, others certainly were, and German immigrant communities provided a ready market for this new kind of beer.62

Producing lagers instead of ales in the United States required Teutonic production methods. Though brewing ales had long been restricted to the winter months, for example, the colder temperatures required for lager brewing prompted immigrant brewers to retain typical German brewing timelines. In Bavaria the proper lager brewing season corresponded with annual Christian festivals and was codified in law, lasting from the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels (September 29th) to St. George’s Day (April 23rd). In practice, this led to the creation of distinct “summer” beers (brewed from December through February) and “winter” beers (brewed October-November and March-April). Only top-fermenting beers were permitted to be produced outside the designated brewing season. Regardless of its religious connections, the cold calculus of this brewing season led to its adherence by lager brewers in the U.S. until the 1870s, when improved cellar construction and artificial refrigeration technologies allowed lager beer to be produced year-round.63

62 Timothy Holian cites reports allegedly placing the origin of American lager beer in Cincinnati. Karl Ludwig Fleischmann reportedly brewed small amounts of lager at his brewery on Main and Abigail (later Twelfth) Streets as early as 1834, but Holian acknowledges that there is little evidence to support these accounts. Maureen Ogle names the first lager brewers in America as Alexander Strausz and John Klein, German immigrants who settled in Alexandria, Virginia and began brewing, allegedly, in 1838. This claim is likely the case of a mistaken date, as other sources list the founding of Strausz and Klein’s brewery as 1858. See Holian, Over the Barrel, 39; Maureen Ogle, Ambitious Brew: The Story of American Beer (Harcourt, 2006), 14; Baron, Brewed in America, 175-176; Benbow, “German Immigrants in the United States Brewing Industry.”
63 One Hundred Years of Brewing, 74.
German brewers in the U.S. further utilized decoction, a method of mashing used primarily by Bavarian, Austrian, and Czech brewers, instead of the English-style infusion method common among earlier American brewers. In decoction, the principal mash is held at a temperature of forty-five degrees Celsius while a portion is transferred to a separate cooker and boiled for a short time. The boiled mash is then stirred back into the remaining mash to raise the overall temperature of the mixture. This process may then be repeated as desired, and small quantities of hops might be added at one or more intervals depending on brewer preference. German immigrant brewers in the United States utilized decoction methods of mashing through the mid-nineteenth century, before industrial brewers gradually superseded them with an updated method of infusion designed to shorten the mashing process, better integrate with machinery, and reduce the amount of necessary labor.\textsuperscript{64}

Lager beer, for all its entrenchment in tradition and mounting traction in an industrializing Germany, did not immediately displace ale styles in the United States. Despite brewing’s diminished position in American alcohol consumption, new immigrant brewers still needed to contend with established participants in the market and carve out a space for their product. They did, however, closely shadow the rapid westward diffusion of fellow German immigrants. Following Philadelphia’s leadership, German immigrants subsequently founded small lager breweries in St. Louis (1840), Milwaukee (1840), New York City (1844), Cincinnati (1844), Boston (1846), Chicago (1847), and Pittsburgh (1849). Cincinnati and Chicago, as representatives of this trend, incorporated lager beer into their burgeoning economic milieus in ways that reflected

\textsuperscript{64} One Hundred Years of Brewing, 61-62; Buttrick, “Mashing,” 576-578; Cochran, The Pabst Brewing Company, 14-15.
their distinct ethnic origin. The insistent German influence on American brewing after the 1850s began in isolated lager breweries of small stature and large potential.65

Chicago and Cincinnati Lager

Early German brewers in Cincinnati, like Conrad Schultz, were prevented technologically from producing lager beer, but subsequent immigrants transferred the immigrant product to the city. Several Cincinnati brewers would claim to be the first lager brewer in the city with varying credibility, but by the mid-1840s there were multiple local sources of German-style beer. 66

Like their predecessors, these brewers drew on varying levels of experience, diverse business models, and precarious partnerships. In 1841 Francis Fortmann, a Swiss immigrant and saloonkeeper, partnered with an Alsatian named Conrad Muentzenberger to brew lager beer that was “very clear...to the extent that one feared that there was nothing in it.” By May 1845, however, their partnership dissolved and Fortmann purchased his partner’s share of the firm, which was subsequently renamed the Bavarian Brewery. Friedrich Billiods’ Lafayette Brewery continued to sell beer by the pound until fire destroyed it in 1848. By then, Billiods was wealthy enough that he was able to rebuild, investing around $110,000 to replace his former cottage-sized operation with a large brick facility, coupled with lager beer cellars carved like tunnels into the nearby hillside. Revitalized, Billiods switched focus from onsite sales in a beer garden to supplying local retailers. 67

65 Baron, Brewed in America, 184-187; One Hundred Years of Brewing, 158, 159-166; Holian, Over the Barrel, 39.
67 Der Deutsche Pionier: Erinnerungen aus dem Pionierleben der Deutschen in Amerika, Vol. 4 (Cincinnati: Der Deutschen Pionier-Verein, 1872), 27; “Dissolution of Copartnership,” Francis Fortmann Collection, MSS qF 743 RM, CHLA; Wimberg, Cincinnati Breweries, 40, 87-89; Louis J. Hauck Scrapbook, Mss f X H368, CHLA.
George Herancourt’s first visit to Cincinnati coincided with a deadly cholera epidemic, but he returned in 1844 looking to combine his German training and experience as a brewery partner in Columbus to Cincinnati’s burgeoning Over-the-Rhine neighborhood. He opened the Philadelphia Brewery (recalling his emigration from Germany) in 1847 and produced six hundred barrels in his first year. Herancourt brewed according to perceived demand, producing ales during his early years but switching to lager beer in 1851. Even so, Herancourt served as a pillar in Over-the-Rhine, and in the brewing community in particular. His nephew, another Bavarian native named John Hauck, would later become another of Cincinnati’s prominent German brewers, and got his start in Herancourt’s firm.68

Two more German brewers, Peter Noll and the Glossner brothers, played a noteworthy role in popularizing lager beer in Cincinnati. Peter Noll founded the Cincinnati Brewery in Over-the-Rhine in 1848 and operated a “truly German-style” brewery and beer garden for approximately two years before moving to Louisville. Although short lived, contemporaries credited his operation with popularizing specifically Bavarian brewing styles within the city. His relative success caused the city’s larger brewers to realize that their lager products, though lighter than previous American ales, were still too strong and bitter. Besides lacking that certain “sweetness,” the beer was simply too expensive and intoxicating for daily consumption. They tried Noll’s approach and produced a lighter variety of lager called Schenkbier, which was soon emulated by smaller immigrant brewers around the city.69

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69 There is slight contention regarding Noll’s influence, as the Pionier suggests Noll’s beer was a protean version of “actual” lager beer. They credit that creation to Münzenberger, though he was likely brewing lager before Noll’s firm was established. See *Der Deutsche Pionier* Vol. 4, 27; Wimberg, *Cincinnati Breweries*, 110; Holian, *Over the Barrel*, 39, 43.
The Glossner brothers, who trained in Nuremburg, founded a small brewery and beer garden on Vine St. the same year as Noll. Though they initially brewed a conventional, stronger style of beer, the construction of lager beer cellars allowed them to brew lighter, sweeter lagers that soon became beloved throughout Over-the-Rhine. Their beer garden made the brewery a “center of social life” within the community, but their use of small bottles over barrels made the delivery of their beer to other retail locations impossible without sacrificing the “freshness in the glass” that made the beer so popular. Though the Glossners seemed content with onsite sales, efforts to replicate their superior product led other brewers to better combat warm summer temperatures (which hindered secondary fermentation in lager beer) by deepening and improving their beer cellars. This was prophetic of coming decades, as the necessity for cold temperatures would mean that the quality and size of a lager brewer’s cellars bounded their quality and brewing capacity, and thus their success.\(^70\)

Chicago’s youth and relative size again meant that its initial lager brewers in the 1840s, like its early brewing trade, needed time to catch up with a more established city like Cincinnati. John Huck founded the city’s first lager brewery in 1847 just two blocks from Lill & Diversey’s cream ale brewery. Contemporaries considered his operation to be a pioneer and inspiration for the region’s brewing industry. Huck’s incorporation of German-style beer into the immigrant community made him an instant hub for local recreation, association activity, and festive culture. Huck, a native of Baden, received extensive training as a brewer but emigrated from Germany without any measurable wealth with which to establish himself. After working for a brewer in Canada for a year, Huck arrived in Chicago in 1846, where he met a future partner and fellow immigrant, Johan Schneider. They rented a city block on the city’s north side and constructed a

\(^{70}\) Der Deutsche Pionier Vol. 4, 28; Wimberg, Cincinnati Breweries, 49.
brewery as well as Huck’s personal residence. Their small operation left ample space and many
trees on the premises, which were converted into the city’s first outdoor beer garden and a favored
meeting place for German clubs and societies. Huck may have been joined in 1849 by a second
lager brewer, Adolph Mueller, and Mathias Best constructed a small brewery in 1850 to satisfy
the growing demands of the German population, complete with a “summer garden attachment.”
Several more brewers would follow suit in the next few years.71

Reaction and Opposition

As lager beer production and German-American communities grew, the attention their
presence gathered caused native-born Americans to form assumptions and stereotypes in response.
German immigrants were portrayed with heavy beards of mustaches and wore soft felt hats.
Germans were believed to be particularly competent and reliable in certain professions, such as
pharmacies, and made dependable workers. But not all perceptions were so benign. However
thrifty and diligent Germans were in the workplace, many native-born Americans, considered their
behavior and leisurely festive culture to be shiftless and crude. They smoked and drank, often to
excess, and their command of the English language left something to be desired. To Chicago
residents, their “Dutch” neighbors (as they were erroneously called) sounded like “cackling geese”
when talking amongst themselves.72

The most problematic German-American habit during the mid-19th century was their
alleged desecration of the Sabbath. Their boisterous highly visible revelry during picnics defied
the pious rest that Americans expected on Sundays. Germans, in turn, criticized the blandness of

71 Mueller’s operation is listed in one source but not corroborated by others. See Seeger, Chicago: The Wonder City,
115; One Hundred Years of Brewing, 162-163; “German Industry and its Results: A Visit to the Brewery of John A.
72 Wittke, “Ohio’s Germans,” 340; Conzen, “Ethnicity as Festive Culture,” 54; Hofmeister. The Germans of Chicago,
53.
American public life as vacillating “between the market and the church,” and joked that native-born celebratory parades were difficult to distinguish from funerals. German perceptions of Sundays as opportunities to cultivate the artistic side of life were not a mere clash of cultures, however, and ran afoul to two political and reform movements that were gaining momentum around the country.\footnote{73 “Here and There,” *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, Aug 30, 1853; Conzen, “Ethnicity as Festive Culture,” 51-52.}

With the increases in U.S. immigration during the 1840s came an increase in nativist sentiment that opposed foreign arrivals for one reason or another. Though less politically organized than during the 1850s, earlier nativist partisans might reject “alien” influences within the country on cultural grounds, as religious outsiders (particularly Catholics), as competition for labor, for intemperate behavior, or for their desecration of the Sabbath. Nativist might also oppose mounting political power among immigrants. In 1840, Germans were a minority in every Cincinnati ward, but by 1850 their concentration into Over-the-Rhine gave them a majority in several wards. Similarly, Chicago Germans eventually controlled multiple wards on the north side of the city.\footnote{74 Bruce Levine. *Half Slave and Half Free: The Roots of the Civil War*, revised edition (New York: Hill & Wang, 2005), 200-201; Morgan, *Over-the-Rhine*, 37; “Cook County Returns,” *Weekly Democratic Press* (Chicago), June 9, 1855.}

Nativist opposition to German immigrants (among other ethnic groups) took shape in the late 1840s and grew steadily over the next decade. Harassment and even melees in the streets of Chicago were prevalent enough that societies (or perhaps gangs) such as the “Hungari” and “Hermann’s Sons” were formed to provide protection for Germans against nativist mobs, and were modelled after similar practices in New York City. As early as 1844, German mass meetings were held which declared that the community must fight for its rights in the face of nativist attempts to deprive immigrants of city offices.\footnote{75 Hofmeister, *The Germans of Chicago*, 54-55.}
Simultaneous with nativist sentiment was the growing power of the temperance movement, which was an especially successful participant in the many reform movements of the period. The changes wrought by the market revolution in America tapped into deep-seated fears among the citizenry over the future of the fledgling republic, as well as disagreements over the best path in pursuing prosperity. Economic changes disrupted social relationships as well, and interpretations of the proper remedy varied widely according to region, class, and eventually section. This uncertainty manifested in part through a widespread reform impulse in the first half of the nineteenth century which spawned organizations looking to impose their desired moral order. Such organizations were numerous and threatening enough to generate reactionary “anti-society jokes” ranging from innocent to vicious, such as the “Ladies-anti-ambition-to-figure-in-the-newspaper-under-the-pretence-of-religious-or-charitable-purposes-with-no-useful-result-to-the-neglect-of-your-own-domestic-duties-society.” Temperance reformers, for their part, assuaged their uncertainty about the political and moral success of the republic by linking alcohol consumption to troublesome social ills including crime, poverty, and insanity. Curtailing alcohol would in turn solve these problems.76

Efforts to diminish alcohol’s perceived social damage date back to the eighteenth century, but the nineteenth century temperance movement began during the 1810s in New England. Bolstered by the ideologies and zeal of the Second Great Awakening, their proposed solution to social problems found traction among the middle and upper-class Americans wary of the working poor, as well as employers hoping to sober up their workforce. Early temperance initiatives stressed the importance of personal discipline and moderation in alcohol consumption, but their

emphasis on self-control produced frustratingly meager results. They responded by soliciting public temperance pledges from willing men, relying on constant social pressure to ensure compliance. Increasingly, moderation rhetoric was replaced on a commitment to total abstention from alcohol. As temperance organizations escalated their public presence with petitions and conventions, they put teetotalism at the center of their message and received new vigor in the 1840s from a different source: reformed drunkards.

Known as the Washingtonian movement, this new breed of reformers targeted habitual drinkers, attempting to persuade them to take the pledge. Though highly varied according to local conditions, Washingtonians utilized a grassroots approach to reform which emphasized personal testimonials from multiple sources. They contrasted a drunkard’s past degradation with present respectable behavior—living proof that personal redemption could be achieved. They regarded alcohol as a terrible temptation that preyed on frail human will and demonized anyone who sold it. While Washingtonianism represented new energy for temperance, and swelled the number of pledged teetotalers, reformers found it increasingly difficult to keep everyone honest, especially with myriad saloons, offers of free liquor by Whig and Democratic party officials during elections, and a steady influx of immigrants resistant to an alcohol-free lifestyle. Moving forward, temperance activists would increasingly turn to legislative and other methods of coercion to curtail alcohol, organizing local campaigns against license laws as well as attempts to ban the sale of alcohol outright. Overall, the temperance movement was influential in changing consumption habits, as evidenced by the dramatic reduction in American alcohol consumption during the first half of the nineteenth century, but resistance to their efforts eventually lead them to ally with nativism.77

This process played out in both Chicago and Cincinnati. Long-winded (and likely fictitious) narratives appeared in newspapers depicting men who were corrupted and destroyed by alcohol, only to be saved again from its evils. While men were typically the direct target, their wives and children were regularly included as collateral victims of alcohol’s destructive influence. By the 1840s, these depictions described beer not as a moderate alternative but rather a perilous trick that would lure drinkers toward harder liquors. Temperance publications in Cincinnati, which experienced an economic depression in the early 1840s, pointed out the monetary savings that resulted from avoiding alcohol. Germans periodically responded to such rhetoric with derision and humor—in one case a German newspaper recounted a fictitious conversation between a German shopkeeper and a “temperance Methodist” who insists on teetotalism despite God’s insistence that wine be consumed during church services.78

More importantly, the 1840s saw attempts to legally stymie alcohol sales in both cities, foreshadowing efforts at local prohibition that would appear in the next decade. Samuel Carey, a fiery temperance leader based in Cincinnati, spearheaded Ohio’s shift from moral suasion to legal coercion with his 1847 pamphlet, Cary’s Appeal to the People of Ohio, and spent much of the decade championing bans on the issuing of liquor licenses, or at least prohibitively high fees to acquire them. Even the city’s nativist publications, though mainly focused on anti-Catholicism, were already showing support for temperance activism during this period.79

Chicago’s city council likewise participated in repeated discussions over temperance and licenses during the late 1840s and early 1850s. Citizens submitted multiple vehement petitions

79 Dannenbaum, Drink and Disorder, 86-89; “Temperance in the British Isles,” The Anti-Papist, January 30, 1847, ff RB071.771 A633, CHLA.
against the granting of liquor licenses, citing them as a drain on money and labor within the city. The council supported their efforts, regularly granting the use of city buildings for mass temperance meetings. In April 1851, the city even attempted to suppress retail sales of alcohol by doubling the price of licenses, from fifty to one hundred dollars. When a subsequent petition asked the city to reverse this decision, the council issued a passionate report about the evils of the liquor trade and the government’s imperative to put public health before economic benefits, personal liberty, or potential issues with enforcement. Yet, the license fee hike was reversed two weeks later, without any explanation offered in the city records.\(^80\)

Chicago’s license debates collided with its immigrant controversies a few years later, but the city expressed concerns over German drinking culture much earlier. Chicago citizens complained bitterly in 1852 about a German Fourth of July celebration (a Sunday in that year), decrying their military parades, music, and drinking in a north side public garden as a desecration of the Sabbath—and violation of city ordinance. The committee agreed with their complaint but saw no reason to make an example of that particular event when so many others took place without punishment. They instead called for stricter overall enforcement of the law.\(^81\)

As would become apparent in subsequent decades, contact between the temperance movement and German devotees to lager beer would contribute to the development of a more


cohesive ethnic group. Native-born American generalizations of these immigrants as generically “German” provided a common front against which all German immigrants could react, ironically helping to create such an ethnic group. As historian Sabine Meyer describes, “the temperance movement engendered processes of ethnicization and was strategically employed by German and Irish American leaders in order to promote the invention and renegotiation of these groups’ respective identities, with drink acting as a marker of ethnic identity.”

The foundations upon which ethnically German approaches to producing and consuming beer would transform the American brewing industry were centuries in the making and combined multiple facets of economic, cultural, and public life in both the United States and Germany. Trends in American alcohol consumption, comprised of Dutch and English-inspired tavern culture, a staggering intake of alcohol (particularly cider and whiskey) nationwide, and a struggling ale-centric brewing industry, created an environment susceptible to outside influence just as German immigration to the United States proliferated.

German brewing and consumption habits, drawing heavily from traditions in southern Germany which regarded beer not only as healthy nourishment but as a core constituent of ethnically German festive culture, led immigrant brewers to serve immigrant neighborhoods, by actively adapting lager beer techniques to American environments. In both Chicago and Cincinnati, these neighborhoods expressed their ethnicity loudly and publicly, a practice they felt necessary for cultural fulfillment, but this process drew ultimately negative attention from subsets of American society committed to advancing their own visions for American prosperity. The 1840s saw the beginnings of these conflicts and assertions, and while their manifestations paled in comparison to their progenitors, the momentum gathered in these early stages would

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define reform movements, German-American communities, and the brewing industry throughout the pre-Prohibition period.
CHAPTER 2. ‘SEDITION NOTORIously GERMAN’

The Pioneer Verein, a society devoted to preserving “the history and experiences of German pioneers in Cincinnati,” Ohio, was established in 1869 and required twenty-five years’ local residence for membership. In 1904, when nativists in the city were advocating for Sunday bans on alcohol sales and even prohibition, one Pioneer warned that “since the German no longer emigrates to Cincinnati and since we are down to our last reserves, so to speak,” it was no longer sufficient to merely “foster German customs and mores, to sing beautiful German songs, and to preserve the noble German speech for their descendants.” Germans, he argued, must be assertive and organized politically, “for if there is trampling to be done,” only Germans could be counted on to “take care of the trampling.”

Only in retrospect could the German immigrant experience in the Midwest look so rosy. On April 21, 1855, following months of debate over Illinois’ proposed Maine law (which would enact prohibition throughout the state) and the election of a pro-temperance and anti-immigrant city government, one thousand agitated Chicagoans marched down Clark Street toward the newly constructed city hall. The crowd, comprising mostly German-American citizens from the Nord Seite, protested the trials of hundreds of local saloon and tavern proprietors charged with violating new and resuscitated laws regulating liquor licenses and the sale of alcohol on Sundays. The then-nativist Chicago Daily Tribune claimed the mob intended to force Chicago’s justice system into accepting their desired acquittal of the defendants, and late-century histories of Chicago’s German community described hollow plans to storm the jail. But the ensuing violence and upheaval did

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less to affect courtroom verdicts than to demonstrate beer’s role in the tensions that German-
Americans’ navigation of American society could bring.  

During this period lager beer and the sites of its production and consumption served as
arenas where disparate visions of American prosperity competed for influence. As Germans used
beer and festive culture to help clarify the terms of their citizenship, economic livelihoods, and
cultural space within Chicago and Cincinnati, both nativists and temperance advocates coopted it
as a means to subvert German influence over social progress. Debates over beer incorporating
issues of health, societal impact, economic import, and ethnocultural autonomy coalesced during
the 1850s. Political contests in print form took firmer shape during this period as the brewing
industry and temperance movement each matured, and this would continue in some form or
another through Prohibition. Political and cultural nativism, for which opposition to beer was a
cudgel rather than an end in itself, readily injected anti-immigrant undertones into anti-alcohol
overtures. Yet this decade also saw the most overt and at times violent conflicts over beer of the
mid-nineteenth century, most notably the Lager Beer Riot.

Manifest Markets

By midcentury, impersonal market forces were becoming well-established as drivers of the
American economy and exerted more control over individual lives than ever before. Personal,
familial, and cultural connections were increasingly giving way to colder calculations of economic
interest. As wealth and industry multiplied, commercial transactions that formerly had taken place
between acquainted parties increasingly relied on cash and intermediaries. By midcentury banks

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2 “The Mob and Riot of Saturday,” Chicago Daily Tribune, April 22, 1855; Chicago und Sein Deutschum (Cleveland,
OH: German-American Biographical Publication Co., 1901-1902), 49; Emil Dietzsch. Chicago’s Deutsche Männer:
Erinnerungs-Blätter aus Chicago’s Fünfzigjahres Jubiläum. Geschichte der Stadt Chicago, mit besonderer
Berucksichtigung der Deutsch-Amerikaner auf ihre Entwicklung (M. Stern & Company, 1885), 24.
and creditors often supplanted personal relationships in order to arrange long-distance exchanges of agricultural surplus and manufactured goods that were themselves replacing sustenance farming and home production. Railroads and waterways facilitated the incredible growth witnessed in western cities such as Chicago and Cincinnati, carrying goods out and immigrants in while telegraph lines allowed for rapid communication and market coordination over vast spaces.3

Immigration provided much of the labor necessary for urban and industrial growth throughout the northern and western United States. During the 1840s and 1850s, over 4,200,000 people immigrated to the United States through ports like New York City and New Orleans. Over 950,000 ethnically German immigrants arrived during the 1850s alone, a 123% increase in the national population of that ethnic group. The largest groups originated from southern and western states like Baden, Bavaria, Württemberg, Westphalia, and the Rhineland, which together contributed 43.5% of German emigrants. Unlike the wave of politically liberal Dreissiger who had come during the 1830s, these German immigrants were often motivated by economic inequality brought on by what Jonathan Sperber has called “unfree market economies,” cumbersome government policies, religious conflict, aristocratic control, and poor agricultural output.4 Although the German leaders of the Revolution of 1848 seemed less interested in social destratification than the removal of market barriers, many of the skilled craftworkers, wage earners, and peasants who formed its shock troops found these concepts compelling. Though the revolutions themselves failed, both the revolutionary politics and lived experiences of many

ground-level revolutionaries instilled in them a strong commitment to both radical democracy and economic liberalism. They demanded universal male suffrage and opposed social stratification as well as state intervention in the economy. Further, the demographics most likely to adopt such ideals coincided with those most likely to emigrate to the United States, especially after the revolution failed. Those that did became the Achtundvierziger, or Forty-Eighters, who flooded the country during the early 1850s and dwarfed the Dreissiger in number. These broad trends notwithstanding, divisions still existed among German immigrant populations along religious, class, and political lines. Germans, though the largest single immigrant group of the period, were never as politically or socioeconomically homogenous as, say, the famine-era Irish.5

Urbanization

Chicago and Cincinnati both exemplified the urbanization of the mid-nineteenth century, which by 1850 brought the “urban” sector of the population (defined by residence in places with more than 2,500 people) to eighteen percent. Chicago, with 29,963 residents in 1850, was one of twenty-six American cities with a population over twenty-five thousand while Cincinnati, with 115,436 residents, was one of only six with a population over one hundred thousand. German immigrants tended to remain urban, preferring to make their homes in cities rather than rural areas

5 Once characterized by historians as a “revolution of the intellectuals,” new investigations of the Revolution of 1848 in Germany have shown how the grievances that led to revolution mobilized broad layers of the population, especially small producers and wage earners from both urban and rural areas who felt undermined by political and economic shifts throughout Germany. Working class laborers, small-scale farmers, and craftworkers, especially from southern and western German states, suffered from stagnating agrarian and manufacturing practices mired by slow and uneven rates of industrialization, concentrations of real estate and power among archaic aristocratic systems of government, and a steady decline in land ownership and working capital that left many vulnerable to economic fluctuations. Reduced agricultural output in the mid-1840s devastated many German farmers and craftworkers, spurring both immigration abroad and unrest at home. Although simultaneous political shifts, such as the collapse of the French monarchy in 1848, helped spur resistance to aristocratic institutions in Germany, a majority of active revolutionaries demanded an end to aristocratic and political privilege, as well as the removal of economic and financial barriers in markets. See Efford, German Immigrants, Race, and Citizenship, 20-21; Levine, The Spirit of 1848, 7, 19-46; Bruce Levine. “Community Divided: German Immigrants, Social Class, and Political Conflict in Antebellum Cincinnati,” in Shapiro and Sarna, Ethnic Diversity and Civic Identity, 47, 54-56.
by a factor of two to one. From 1840 to 1870, Germans comprised around twenty percent of Chicago’s population and were nearly always the largest single immigrant group in the city. Cincinnati German population fluctuated between twenty-five and thirty percent of the population during the same period, peaking during the early 1850s.6

These immigrants arrived in cities which were themselves in states of tumultuous and uneven transition. During the 1840s and 1850s Cincinnati experienced unprecedented growth in both its population and economic output. The now-completed canal system, including the Miami & Erie Canal which bisected the city into northern and southern sections, along with the Ohio River gave the city significant transport connections. Yet the 1850s also added significant railroad construction which grew and redistributed the manufacturing, export, and financial connections within the city. The massive pork and beef packing business, which earned Cincinnati the nickname “Porkopolis” in the late 1840s, suffered as railroads began to ship livestock east directly. Shipments of manufactured goods and certain commodities increased overall, however, and the city’s industrial output tripled during the 1840s to fifty-four million dollars.7

The steep hills surrounding Cincinnati to the north discouraged geographic expansion, leading to higher population density and compact living conditions. Immigrants pouring into the

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city compounded both the growing population of transient young males with little money and fewer constraints on their behavior. One German immigrant noted of his peers:

There are also enough people here who have been here for a long time and seldom have more than 5 dollars to their name and in the spring owe 10 to 20 dollars, these are mostly people who came here young and stay unmarried for a long time, they get to know all kinds of spendthrifts, are often in boardinghouses with 20 to 30 such fellows, and they all go from one tavern to the next and play cards to pass the time and only work when they are forced to because of lack of money, the much more fortunate are those who come here with a wife and children, and with no money, they keep up their German thriftiness and diligence the best and therefore make progress….

Crime seemed to plague the city as it grew. Whether simply due to increasing population, a developing police force, or a true rise in criminal behavior, the number of arrests in Cincinnati exploded from 873 in 1846 to 6,769 in 1853. Over roughly the same period, the number of local murders featured in newspapers increased nearly sevenfold. In June 1853, the Cincinnati Daily Enquirer complained that, though murder had once been a rare and heinous occurrence which people “among all nations, and in every age, no matter how savage” had eschewed, it was now “so common as to cease to excite horror or even astonishment.” Citizens associated the rise in criminal activity with immigrants, who filled a growing majority of the county’s jail cells as the 1850s progressed. Alongside crime was disease. Cincinnati suffered its worst cholera epidemic yet in the summer of 1849, with nearly four thousand deaths. Although wealth and economic output skyrocketed, such even and dangerous side effects left the city worried. Local temperance advocates, who had long argued that the aggravation or alleviation of urban disorder, disease, and

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8 Kamphoefner, et al, News from the Land of Freedom, 87; Dannenbaum, Drink and Disorder, 72.
poverty hinged on the level of alcohol use, saw their efforts as increasingly vital to the stability of the city.⁹

During this decade Chicago was the smaller of the two cities, but its development paralleled that of Cincinnati. Between 1830 and 1850, Chicago’s population grew from one hundred to nearly thirty thousand. Located at a confluence of railroads, canals, and Lake Michigan, Chicago became a trade hub connecting East and West. The citizenry prioritized commercial over civic uses of space. They directly altered the local landscape, invading ostensibly public streets with peddlers, pushcart merchants, and sidewalk displays, as well as reshaping the mouth of the Chicago River to accommodate commercial traffic. The pace of economic and population growth in Chicago was too rapid for strained city budgets to keep up, and public spaces often went underdeveloped and neglected. Streets in the “city of mud” lacked any hard surfacing before the installation of wood planking in 1849. Limestone blocks followed in 1855, but pedestrians were still forced to cross on small paved paths to avoid the quagmires that were Chicago streets. A lack of city services meant that store owners paid sweepers to keep even those paths clean. One observer stated that Chicago had “the worst streets and most intolerable city government that ever cursed the headway of a pedestrian or creditor.” Those crossing bridges, which were “always open when you want them shut,” could easily be blasted with “suffocating smoke” from the stacks of tugboats passing underneath.¹⁰

The Chicago River stood as a testament not only to the city’s attempts to protect the common good through regulation, but also their ineffectiveness at doing so. One of the city’s first

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public health ordinances after the founding of its charter forbade the disposal of dead carcasses in the river. Despite a host of anti-dumping laws, the river became little more than a “deep and sluggish” sewer whose emissions alone, described in 1860 as “a combination of sulphered hydrogen, the odor of decaying rodents, and the stench of rotting brassica [cabbage],” made it impassable by fording or small boats. Chicago during the 1850s was less economically and socially stratified than some liked to pretend. High social mobility and the relative youth of the city meant that lavish displays of wealth could be rebuked by simply reminding the would-be elite that they had once clerked in the dry-goods store. Livestock pens regularly appended to even high society homes.¹¹

Vice and crime also ran rampant. A meager police force (not officially established until 1855) and a large transient male population (as high as twenty five percent) created strong markets for alcohol, gambling, and prostitution, even in the heart of downtown. The same stretch of Randolph Street, between State and Clark, was separately known as “Gambler’s Row” and “Hair Trigger Block” during the mid-nineteenth century. Saloons were themselves evolving—more established barrooms, often attached to hotels, faced growing competition from “sample rooms” operated by liquor dealers and attained more and more independence as distinct businesses. Here, too, temperance advocates saw a link between alcohol, vice, crime, and other social ills. Reformers in Chicago consistently derided saloons as a blight which preyed on working men to deprive them of their wages and impoverish their families. Eventually, a perceived majority of immigrant ownership among saloons, as well as the forward creep of lager beer’s popularity within them, would couple nativist resentment with temperance reform.¹²

¹² Before 1855, Chicago relied on a night watch and a small number of constables to keep order. Both the Lager Beer Riot and politically motivated unrest caused by a controversial speech by Senator Stephen Douglas the previous year
Lager Beer as Business

As the German immigrant population blossomed, lager beer and its presence in festive culture gathered momentum as a significant cultural handhold and form of economic engagement. During the 1850s brewing surged in popularity and production, vying with distilled liquors as the primary form of alcohol consumption in the United States. Lager beer, produced nearly in total by German brewers, began to supplant the English-style ales dominant in previous decades and gain traction among non-German consumers. In 1850, the 431 American breweries nationwide produced thirty-seven of the total volume of alcoholic beverages consumed in the United States (but not absolute alcohol). Yet by 1860, 1,269 breweries dotted the country and produced more than half of total alcoholic beverages, with German brewers and lager beer claiming significant market share. Locally, Chicago surpassed this rate of growth with a fivefold increase in its brewing industry, while Cincinnati grew from thirteen breweries in 1850 to thirty-six in 1860.13

not previously. The development of icehouses and eventually mechanical refrigeration would facilitate this process, but lager brewers’ first solution was to retreat underground or into hillsides, digging massive lager beer cellars. Modelling them after counterparts in Germany, immigrant brewers typically built their cellars long and slender with vaulted ceilings, deep enough to keep temperatures as cool and uniform as possible. They often partitioned multiple adjacent cellars from one another for the same reason. Further, as brewers mastered temperature control they also extended the brewing season. Cellar capacity meant production capacity—a single brewery’s cellar network might collectively provide tens of thousands of square feet, and the lager brewers with the most cellars tended to be the most lucrative.¹⁴

Meanwhile, sites of consumption—beer gardens, beer halls, and saloons—shifted first to accommodate German festive culture and drinking traditions, and then again to blend German conventions with American ones. Many of the earliest establishments serving lager were recreations of German beer gardens—family-friendly outdoor spaces with ample greenery and long, communal tables. Married women and children could join their husbands and fathers in a jovial atmosphere that might include singing and dancing as well as drinking, particularly on Sundays. Yet as German communities proliferated and lager beer gained popularity, beer kegs found their way behind the bars of saloons and beer halls in both Chicago and Cincinnati. Such haunts (often immigrant owned) incorporated German influence but they also conformed more to the conventional American saloon’s masculine archetype which excluded women and hosted

¹⁴ When possible, brewers would also utilize natural caverns for beer cellars, but naturally their efforts and designs relied heavily on local geography. Sandy soil in some parts of Chicago made it more difficult to carve cellars, while Cincinnati’s Over-the-Rhine district, which hosted many breweries, still has dozens below street level. Yet more cellars were dug into the hills just north of the district. See Susan Appel. “Buildings and Beer: Brewery Architecture of Cincinnati,” Queen City Heritage Vol. 44, No. 2 (Summer 1986), 8; Susan Appel, “Refrigeration and the Architecture of 19th-century American Breweries,” IA: The Journal of the Society for Industrial Archaeology, Vol. 16, No. 1 (1990), 23-24; One Hundred Years of Brewing: A Complete History of the Progress Made in the Art, Science, and Brewing in the World, Particularly During the Last Century (Chicago: H.S. Rich & Company, 1901), 74.
rowdy working-class crowds. Whatever the medium, lager beer consumption pervaded German communities. One writer said of Chicago’s German-dominated Nord Seite, “every other male engaged in selling beer, and the rest of the men, women, and children consume it.” One Cincinnati German likewise remarked “there is certainly no burgher in Lengerich [his former home] who eats or drinks better than I…I also drink more beer than water on hot summer days, and every now and then a bottle of wine, for anyone can do that here and still save enough money if he’s healthy and wants to work.”

Both the embrace of technological advancement and the transplant of ethnically German sites of consumption demonstrated the use of beer as both economic engagement and cultural handhold. In burgeoning and urbanizing cities like Chicago and Cincinnati, immigrant brewers and consumers alike adapted beer to help them engage with the changing economic and cultural landscape of the Midwest. During the 1850s, several German immigrants in Chicago followed the example of John Huck, who in 1855 moved his operation to an expanded facility on North State Street, near Lake Michigan. Within a few years, Huck’s Eagle Brewery became “one of the most extensive establishments of the kind in the country,” reportedly with two miles of subterranean lager beer cellars (no small feat given Chicago’s sandy soil) and proportional brew and malt houses.

Though Lill & Diversey remained the city’s largest individual brewer for the moment, several competing firms—mostly German-owned—were established near the northern lakefront.

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16 Though John Huck originally established his brewery with a partner, Johan Schneider, by this period he was the sole owner of the business. Schneider sold his interest in 1850 in order to participate in the California gold rush. See One Hundred Years of Brewing, 162-163; “German Industry and its Results: A Visit to the Brewery of John A. Huck,” Illinois Staats-Zeitung, May 16, 1865..
The Blattner & Seidenschwanz firm was one of the smallest, established around 1850 between Rush St. and Pine (now Michigan Ave.), and produced only 250 barrels annually. The Union Brewery, established by George Metz in the same year at the corner of Wolcott and Scott St. Employing six hands, Metz was producing over 2,400 barrels a year by 1856. By that time Valentin Busch and Michael Brand’s brewery, founded in 1851 and located between Metz’s and Blattner’s breweries on Cedar St, produced over 3,200 barrels.\footnote{Andreas, \textit{History of Chicago} Vol. 1, 564-565; Van Wieren, \textit{American Breweries II}, 72-82; \textit{One Hundred Years of Brewing}, 186.}

Several other breweries joined the likes of Metz and Busch throughout the decade, at least thirty in total. Of course, not all of them prospered or were owned by German immigrants. Of over two dozen breweries founded in Chicago during the 1850s, eight experienced the dissolution of partnerships, were sold to new owners, or outright closed by the end of the decade. The Garden City Brewery, established in 1854 at 115 Dearborn Street by John Parker, closed within two years. J.J. Sands, alternatively, established the Columbia Brewery in 1855 and produced a cream ale which rivaled Lill & Diversey’s signature product. But excepting the largest brewery in the city (and likely the Midwest) at the time, native-born or Irish-owned operations tended to be smaller than their German counterparts, and in the long run would prove less successful.\footnote{Andreas, \textit{History of Chicago} Vol. 1, 564-565; Van Wieren, \textit{American Breweries II}, 72-82; \textit{One Hundred Years of Brewing}, 162-163.}

Conrad Seipp, perhaps the most significant Chicago brewer of the period, got his start during this decade. Born in 1825 in Langen, Germany, near Frankfort-am-Main, he trained as a carpenter prior to his immigration to the United States in 1849. Described as an “honest, open-hearted man,” Seipp spent a brief time working in Rochester, New York before relocating to Chicago. After operating a hotel for five years, Seipp began brewing in 1854 and produced around one thousand barrels at the foot of 14\textsuperscript{th} St. Forced to relocate to 27\textsuperscript{th} St. after a calamitous fire his
first year, Seipp invested over eighteen thousand dollars and employed six hands to get his brewery back onto its feet. In 1858 he partnered with Frederick Lehman and began a meteoric rise that would transform Seipp & Lehman into the largest brewer in Chicago, producing over 120,000 barrels annually by the 1875.19

Cincinnati followed a similar trajectory. In 1851, George Herancourt shifted production in his brewery from ales to lager, and in 1854 purchased a second brewery from his brother Peter, located at the corner of Hamilton Rd. and Denman (now Central and Kindel). He operated that brewery for five years before leasing it out. Friedrich Billiods followed suit—after his brewery burned in 1848, he rebuilt and expanded lager beer production. The expansion allowed him to begin shipping his beer to other local establishments while his brother opened a saloon/bakery next door to the brewery. Karl Class, who purchased Peter Noll’s pivotal Cincinnati Brewery in 1850, only managed to stay in business for another two years before stiff competition from other breweries overwhelmed them. Class opted to open a saloon instead of another brewery and his workforce took up positions in the area’s other breweries.20

Shifting to lager beer meant more than cosmetics and taste. It could also change the way a brewer produced their beer and conducted business. For Herancourt in Cincinnati, lager’s popularity increased demand and prompted the construction of large beer cellars, which allowed him to stretch his inventory further into the summer months. Next, the “energetic and methodical” Herancourt began making contracts with his clients during the winter months, when business was slower but the next year’s lager was also in production. In this way he arranged for a year’s worth

20 Louis J. Hauck Scrapbook, Mss f X H368, Cincinnati History Library and Archive (hereafter CHLA); Wimberg, Cincinnati Breweries, 60, 88, 110; History of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, 869; Van Wieren, American Breweries II, 269.
of sales up front, which stabilized both his business and the working conditions of his employees. It further allowed him to turn away opportunistic buyers who only sought out his beer in times of shortage, like the late summer.21

Some Cincinnati breweries experienced incredible growth during this decade. In 1850 Peter Schaller and Johann Schiff, immigrants from Baden and Rheinpfalz respectively, leased the former Lofthouse brewery. Neither had any brewing experience personally, but they hired a brewmaster and produced an impressive six thousand barrels of common beer in their first year. By 1857 they were selling ten thousand barrels of both common beer and lager, and built a new brewery on Canal Street. Their new facility and shift toward lager expanded their business immensely. Charles Cist’s *Sketches and Statistics of Cincinnati in 1859* described the Schaller & Schiff brewery as a European design, square with a courtyard and three stories high. Extensive underground cellars could each over one thousand gallons of lager. Steam-powered machinery hoisted water and materials to the upper floors of the building and pumped ingredients throughout the brewing process. Extensive use of ice allowed them to brew lager even during the summer. This facility allowed Schaller & Schiff to make approximately twenty-one thousand barrels of lager in 1859, and export more of their product than any other brewery at the time.22

The Christian Moerlein Brewing Company mirrored this pace on its way to becoming the largest Cincinnati brewer of the nineteenth century. Born in Bavaria in 1818, Moerlein received training as a blacksmith as well as an education in brewing before seeking out a more prosperous life in the U.S., which he believed to be “the land where youthful strength, resolve, and force of will find their reward.”. Arriving in Baltimore with twelve dollars in his pocket, Moerlein’s inability to speak English made it difficult to find work, and in April 1842 he was digging cellars

21 Holian, *Over the Barrel*, 42; *History of Cincinnati and Hamilton County*, 869.
for homes in Cincinnati for fifty cents a day. By October, he’d saved enough to open a blacksmith shop on Elm St. In 1853 he converted the shop to a brewery, partnering with Adam Dillman. They initially brewed common beer, but after Dillman’s death in 1854 Moerlein partnered with Conrad Windisch and in 1856 began producing lager as well. By the end of the decade production had increased from one thousand to over twenty thousand barrels. Production of common beer would cease four years later.  

Overall, the growth of lager beer as “a fashionable drink” tripled beer production in Cincinnati between 1850 and 1860, with the increase in consumption outpacing population growth. But forays into brewing during the 1850s were not all tales of success. Like John Parker’s brewery in Chicago and Peter Noll’s in Cincinnati, dozens of breweries were forced out of business during the decade. Even those which remained open could regularly shift as partnerships dissolved or ownership changed hands. Paul Endress, for example, opened his Cincinnati brewery around 1854 only to sell the operation to George Schmieds in 1858, who was himself out of business within a year. The Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce opined that the local brewing industry had been “overdone,” with intense competition creating “disastrous consequences.” The rapidly growing capacity of existing breweries such as Schaller & Schiff and Christian Moerlein, as much as the raw number of firms, allowed the overall output of the city to increase while also small or unstable firms to fail. Volatility in the beer market caused by the Panic of 1857 also contributed.

Both the individual and collective success witnessed in cities like Chicago and Cincinnati demonstrated the lucrative path to prosperity that brewing an ethnically German product
represented for these immigrant communities. Entrepreneurs starting out with varying levels of brewing experience, or even no experience at all, could realize significant gains within just a few years. Not only did this process require adapting lager beer production to its American milieu, conforming to local landscapes and applying new technologies, it also required navigating the currents and eddies of a rapidly changing economy.

Beyond those who directly owned a firm, numerous German immigrants in both cities sought prosperity through brewing during the 1850s, and their efforts underscore the myriad forms that economic engagement could take. Many found employment in breweries, worked in related trades, or both. Aside from working as laborers, some became hop merchants, dealers in brewing and distilling supplies, maltsters, or bookkeepers.25

In several cases, their labor, experience, and family connections paved the way for brewery ownership later on, just as John Huck and George Herancourt gained brewing experience prior to immigration. Conrad Windisch, before partnering with Christian Moerlein, first worked as a superintendent at the small brewery called Koehler & Company. Johann (John) Kauffman, a “Frenchman of German heritage” from Alsace-Lorraine, started in 1844 as a typical laborer in the Franklin Brewery on Lebanon Road, owned by his uncle. Four years later Kauffman helped establish John Hare’s Ohio Brewery as superintendent, and subsequently left that position to become the brewmaster at August Tiemann’s Jefferson Brewery. In 1851 he left to become the superintendent at a brewery in Walnut Hills owned by George Eichenlaub, and within a year had married Eichenlaub’s daughter, Marianne. In 1856, the two partnered with Kauffman’s cousin to purchase the Franklin Brewery and began building a firm which would last until Prohibition. John Hauck, who later became a titan Cincinnati brewer himself, also utilized family connections.

25 Wimberg, Cincinnati Breweries, 2; Chicago City Directory and Business Advertiser (Chicago: Robert Fergus, 1855), 65.
Shortly after immigrating from Bavaria at a young age, he found employment with his uncle, George Herancourt and first learned the brewing business. In 1858 he married one of Friedrich Billiod’s daughters and took a position in his new father-in-law’s brewery.26

Of course, seeking prosperity was not the same as finding it. As steam power and other innovations organized and mechanized brewery operations, the relationship between worker and owner would only depersonalize. Historical studies of the workers’ movement claimed that the average brewery worker in the United States earned $278 annually, and daily wages would lag behind other skilled trades through the end of the century. Workers labored seven days a week for fourteen to eighteen hours (less on Sundays) and might face abuse from supervisors and owners. In 1855 the immigrant-owned Sandman-Lackman brewery paid its workers between fifteen and eighteen dollars a month plus board.27

**Ethnic Consumption**

Lager beer provided a distinctive form of economic engagement for German brewers, but it also asserted the wider cultural influence of the German community. Within this sphere, ever-increasing communities of German immigrants contributed to the growth of the city on their own terms. Saloons, beer halls, and beer gardens allowed much larger groups of German-Americans to express themselves economically through their alcohol purchases, but also afforded the opportunity to adapt German drinking customs and festive culture to an American milieu. Since they could drink a German product, they would do so their own way.

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The single beer garden on the site of John Huck’s Eagle Brewery in Chicago was soon joined by numerous others. Chicago’s German population lived mostly north of the river west of Clark St., near present-day Old Town. An 1855 city directory listed dozens of German-owned beer halls and saloons throughout the downtown, northern, and northwestern sections of the city, and certainly neglected a number of legal and illegal establishments. One description of the city complained in 1858 that a “lager beer shop” could be found every few buildings.28

German beer halls and gardens differed measurably from the liquor saloons frequented by native-born citizens, and not just in the choice of beverage. Quintessential expressions of festive culture, these garden-like settings were part of the German “continental Sunday,” which coupled drinking with recreational activities such as music and dancing. Unlike the typical working-class saloons selling whiskey to an exclusively male clientele, German beer gardens were outdoor community establishments which welcomed escorted women and children. These ethnic spaces further accommodated the numerous singing clubs, militias, political associations, and other Vereine which fueled German social life. Here, immigrants could discuss their concerns and the Vaterland. “O! The enjoyable Sunday afternoons when we happy voiced immigrants sat in some beer garden talking politics, and world affairs! That was a time of beautiful unity,” reminisced one Cincinnati German years later.29

Beer saloons throughout Chicago were less familial but no less German. Under the Sherman House, a luxury hotel on the corner of Clark and Randolph, across the street from the Cook County Courthouse, Henry Weiss operated a beer saloon which served as a principle

29 Though married women might be welcome in some cases, German beer gardens were hardly egalitarian. Unescorted women were not admitted. See Erenberg, “’Ain’t We Got Fun?,” 6; Wimberg, Cincinnati Breweries, 2; Chicago City Directory and Business Advertiser, 39.
gathering place for Germans. Local native-born Americans had not yet developed much taste for the lager that Weiss ordered daily from Philip Best’s brewery in Milwaukee. They preferred a sour (likely infected) “old stock ale” when they weren’t drinking whiskey, but that didn’t stop Weiss from selling out by 3:00 PM each day. Because he did not wish to sell schnapps, Weiss “happily” closed his business at that time, hanging a sign on the door which read “No more beer today!” Saloons like his and Valentin Blatz’, nearby on the corner of Market and Randolph, shared the downtown area with nativist watering holes like the Young America Saloon, and commonly featured a prominent sign advertising “Milwaukee Lager Beer.” The beer might actually come from Milwaukee, as was the case with Weiss, or (despite the sign) it might also come from burgeoning Chicago brewers like John A. Huck and Conrad Seipp, or else from brewers like Busch & Brand in nearby Blue Island.30

Like George Klotter’s Rising Sun saloon over a decade before, German beer gardens proliferated around Cincinnati. Every drop of the 800-1000 barrels of beer produced at the Glossner Saloon and Brewery annually was served on long tables in their shady Over-the-Rhine lawn. Glossner’s saloon was later described as “the resort for the best of the German citizens and their families,” a hub where Germans could discuss the lands they’d left behind. Some years later, a Cincinnati resident said nostalgically that “no beer will ever taste so good to me as that did,” and “if I could have one wish gratified before I die it would be that I might sit in Glossner’s for an hour and drink a mug of his beer with the chums of those good old days.” Such gardens were commonly established behind saloons as well.31

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Temperance and Nativism

The inroads that lager beer forged for German immigrants economically and culturally drew the attention of other groups opposed to both. Of course, neither beer nor the German community were ever the sole targets of either nativists or temperance advocates. But as beer gradually supplanted distilled liquors, accounting for over fifty percent of alcoholic beverages consumed by 1860, its popularity drew increasing criticism for its effect on health, the proliferation of immigrant retailers, and the perceived German desecration of the Sabbath by drinking and reveling on Sundays.\textsuperscript{32}

As the late 1840s rolled into the 1850s, the progression of the humanitarian Washingtonian movement and the shift toward teetotalism among temperance advocates coalesced into a more aggressive political initiative. The public dismissed local leaders’ calls for prohibition as “a wild scheme” during the 1840s, but resistance to such notions softened as the economic landscape shifted. The same forces and influx of immigrants that propelled the German-dominated expansions of the brewing industry simultaneously exacerbated the urban crowding, poverty, and crime that reformers blamed on alcohol use. Temperance gains up to this point now seemed to be in danger. Samuel Cary, a temperance leader in Cincinnati, called the city “a great cancer” and warned that the U.S. could go the way of Babylon, Rome, and other “nations, once prosperous, powerful under the benign influence of temperance principles, [which] were reduced to effeminacy and poverty, through excessive indulgence…[in alcohol].”\textsuperscript{33} They further rejected the argument, widely held outside temperance circles, that moderate consumption of less potent beverages (wine and beer) might be acceptable. Alcohol consumption was a disease, they maintained, unsafe and

\textsuperscript{32} Tyrrell, \textit{Sobering Up}, 9-10, 302-303.

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{American Temperance Magazine and Sons of Temperance Record}, Vol. 1 (Nov. 1851), as quoted in Dannenbaum, \textit{Drink and Disorder}, 78-79.
lacking health benefits regardless of one’s moral character. Faced with a rising tide, reformers changed their tactics from moral suasion and argument to outright legislative force. Following a series of marginally successful initiatives to reduce or ban the issuance of liquor licenses in Hamilton County, Cincinnati temperance reformers applauded the August 1851 passage of a statewide prohibition law in Maine, and began trying to replicate that success at home.34

So-named Maine laws represented the temperance movement’s greatest pre-Prohibition advances. These prohibitory laws, seeking to achieve social order by fiat rather than fortitude, represented the culmination of anti-alcohol reformers’ coercive shift during the late 1840s and 1850s and exemplified the market revolution’s bittersweet effects on American urban and social life. Longstanding legal pathways to the restriction and control of alcohol consumption, such as licensing and local option measures, typically encountered loopholes and enforcement issues that rendered these measures inadequate by reformers’ standards. High evidence requirements and limited powers of search and seizure made it difficult to prove the illegal sale of alcohol in a court of law while prosecutors unsympathetic to prohibition obfuscated the legal process. Even with a conviction, fines were often so small (a single dollar in Maine prior to its prohibition law) that sellers simply included it as a cost of doing business. This regulatory tradition reflected a longstanding pattern, with roots in the eighteenth century, of local supervisors theoretically allowing only persons of good character to sell alcohol. Prohibition-minded reformers throughout the United States first sought to work within these existing structures by advancing “no-license” initiatives that pressured local governments not to issue licenses despite retaining the authority. Such initiatives began in the Northeast and spread to the Midwest over time, but they never achieved the same success. New England transplants might bring prohibition sentiments with them,

but they shared western states with a much larger proportion of Irish, German, and Scandinavian immigrants, as well as Anglo-Americans migrating west from other parts of the Union, all with their own viewpoints on alcohol.\textsuperscript{35}

Dissatisfied with these haphazard and localized success which failed to eradicate the consumption of alcohol, reformers viewed Maine laws as a cleaner, more sweeping solution. Originally passed in New England but adopted in a total of thirteen states by 1855, these laws allowed authorities to not only seize illegal liquor but also destroy it, while also restricting delays in prosecution. Maine laws replaced the old system, full of complexities and arbitrary enforcement, with a utopian ban.\textsuperscript{36}

The campaign for a Maine law in Ohio began in 1853, and Cincinnati’s temperance organizations initially tried to court the powerful German voting blocs in Over-the-Rhine. They targeted the established German Protestant and fledgling Methodist communities—those most likely to embrace teetotalism—but faced constant setbacks. Temperance reformers clashed with Forty-Eighter leaders in the community, struggled to avoid nativist undertones in their rhetoric, and failed to combat the near-ubiquitous German acceptance of moderate beer and wine consumption, all of which scuttled their attempts at an alliance. Even so, prohibitionists in Cincinnati and the rest of Ohio campaigned tirelessly throughout 1853, seeking to navigate a shuffling party system with a hardline message centered on the social disruptions caused by alcohol. Temperance-backed candidates found themselves caught up in party politics, nor could they overcome criticism that the Maine law was unconstitutional (a particularly potent argument

\textsuperscript{35} Tyrrell, \textit{Sobering Up}, 254-259; Sabine N. Meyer. \textit{We Are What We Drink: The Temperance Battle in Minnesota} (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 6, 20. Meyer asserts that the Midwest, with its diverse population and less-established political and economic structure during this period, provides an excellent arena for studying the antebellum temperance movement, especially as a counterweight to the eastern U.S., which has received the most historiographical attention.

\textsuperscript{36} Tyrrell, \textit{Sobering Up}, 242, 254-260.
among German-Americans), and thus lost spectacularly at the state and local level. German opposition to the law in Cincinnati instead drove many immigrants further into the arms of the Democratic Party, the full effect of which would be felt two years later.\(^{37}\)

The Maine law failed in Ohio, just as it did in Illinois two years later, in no small part due to the sizeable opposition posed by large immigrant populations and alcohol industries. The more such obstacles inhibited their political goals, the more temperance reformers aligned themselves with nativist partisans. This process unfolded in Cincinnati and Chicago simultaneously. Hoping to counter the foreign-born voters that, in their view, had cost them legal prohibition, many Cincinnati temperance advocates actively supported the rising Know-Nothing Party in 1854 and 1855. Initially, by limiting its political planks to opposing Catholicism and the Kansas-Nebraska bill, Know-Nothings in Cincinnati found tenuous support among non-Catholic Germans. One German wrote “we will try the Know-Nothings this time for reform, and then if they be humbugs, we will try some new sort of Know-Nothings next time.” Indeed, once the Know-Nothings revealed their staunchly nativist colors and expressed temperance sentiments, Germans abandoned them in droves.\(^{38}\)

The cultural differences posed by beer contributed to such political divisions. The German tendency to “assemble on Sunday at their public gardens, drink wine and beer, and dance to music” was “very painful to American-born citizens.” It created in their minds “the impression that the Germans who thus spend the Sunday are a God-despising people, and are rapidly traveling the road to damnation.” Additionally, beer production and consumption represented part of the


democratic institutions and economic liberty that, by this time, many Germans willfully brought with them from Europe.\textsuperscript{39}

Obviously, Cincinnati Germans would oppose an anti-immigrant party, but the addition of prohibitionism compounded the issue. The enmity came to a head in the spring election of 1855, when the Know-Nothings filled their ticket with prominent nativists and temperance figures from the city. Outraged, nearly all Germans flocked to the Democratic ticket. Accusations that Germans were stuffing boxes with illegal ballots and preventing native-born Americans from casting votes prompted thousands of the city’s nativists to come out in force. The mob attacked German polling places in the Eleventh Ward (in Over-the-Rhine) and, claiming fraud, began destroying ballot boxes themselves. Germans fought back, and at least three thousand Cincinnati citizens participated in the resulting melee. Immigrants barricaded streets in Over-the-Rhine, secured a cannon that they refused to surrender for days (and then only doing so once its wheels had been removed). Although neither Cincinnati’s sources of beer nor other alcohol policy was directly at stake (a few accusations of drunkenness notwithstanding), the brewing of lager beer and temperance opposition to it provided crucial context and impetus.\textsuperscript{40}

News of this violent outbreak between nativists and German immigrants reached Chicago just as the stage was being set for a similar clash. Early in the year, the Illinois General Assembly passed its own version of the Maine law, though a statewide referendum, scheduled for June, was required before it could come into force. News of the potential ban on alcohol prompted immediate outcry from the city’s immigrant-dominated North Side. In early March a meeting was called at the North Market Hall, the first of many, during which Alderman Stephen D. La Rue (whose

\textsuperscript{39} “Here and There,” \textit{The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer}, Aug 30, 1853.

constituents included many Germans) announced his intention to violate the law if passed. This opening salvo combined with the aggression of Chicago’s nativist political factions to culminate in violence.\footnote{Richard Wilson Renner, “In a Perfect Ferment: Chicago, the Know-Nothings, and the Riot for Lager Beer,” \textit{Chicago History} 5, No. 3 (Fall 1976), 163; “The Mob and Riot of Saturday,” \textit{Chicago Daily Tribune}, April 23, 1855.}

\textbf{The Chicago Lager Beer Riot}

Nativism in Chicago had been on the rise since at least 1853, spurred on by several publications and later enjoying significant (if brief) local political success. Leading the charge was the vitriolic \textit{Chicago Daily Tribune}, which assumed a staunch anti-immigrant and especially anti-Catholic position in 1853 after Henry Fowler assumed editorial control of the paper. Though he mostly targeted the Irish and the Catholic Church, Fowler periodically blamed local unrest on immigrant drunkenness and once accused a local Catholic weekly that its opposition to temperance was a tactic to retain power through “ignorance and superstition and degradation.” In June 1854 the paper commended the city’s growing Native American Party. The following month, Thomas A. Stewart replaced Fowler as the \textit{Tribune}’s editor and continued its anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic message. Starting in February 1855, the \textit{Tribune} publicly aligned itself with these local Know-Nothings in anticipation of the city election held annually in March.\footnote{Thomas Keefe, “The Catholic Issue in the Chicago Tribune Before the Civil War,” \textit{Mid-America} 57, No. 4 (October 1975), 227, 232-233; Renner, “In a Perfect Ferment, 161. Other papers, notably the \textit{Free West} and the \textit{Chicago Literary Budget}, likewise spread nativist agendas within the city.}

Reeling from the loss of their mayoral candidate to Democrat Isaac L. Milliken the previous year, the Know-Nothings in 1855 formed a symbiotic alliance with local temperance groups and made drunkenness the primary political issue, a feat made easier by stereotypes of whiskey-tippling Irishmen and beer-swilling Germans. Heading the ticket was Levi D. Boone (grandnephew of Daniel Boone), a medical doctor and prominent local citizen, with supplemental
nominations for the city collector, attorney, treasurer, surveyor, and ten seats on the Common Council. On March 6, they won all major offices and six seats on the council with the support of nativists, teetotalers, and abolitionists—including many Germans.\footnote{Levi Boone had maintained a medical practice in Chicago since the 1830s and also dealt in real estate. He helped vaccinate the poor during a smallpox outbreak in 1848, was a founding member of the Chicago Medical Society, President of the Merchant’s and Mechanic’s Bank of Chicago, member of the Chicago Lyceum, and alderman to the city’s second ward prior to his election. See Andreas, \textit{History of Chicago} Vol 1, 461, 466, 522, 538, 548, 595; Keefe, “The Catholic Issue in the Chicago Tribune,” 233-234; Renner “In a Perfect Ferment,” 163.}

With terms lasting only one year, Boone and the city council wasted no time. On Saturday, March 17\textsuperscript{th}, Boone issued a proclamation declaring that a long defunct law requiring liquor retailers to close on Sundays would be enforced, leading to several arrests when the law was predictably violated the next day. Those cases were tried on March 26\textsuperscript{th} before Justice H.L. Rucker of the city’s Police Court, who consistently ruled in the city’s favor. The same day, the Common Council voted to raise the annual cost of a liquor license from fifty to three hundred dollars while also shortening the license’s effective term from one year to just three months. The council would have banned the sale of alcohol outright, but believed that the city’s only legal authority on the matter derived from its licensing power. They further hoped that the Maine law would be ratified in Illinois that summer and go into effect July 1856, meaning their de facto ban via prohibitive license rates needed only to last one year. To ensure its success in the interim, Boone and the council reformed and expanded city law enforcement, recruiting men “of strong physical powers, sober, regular habits, and known moral integrity,” to ensure the laws were obeyed. Every applicant, for the police or any other employment in the city administration, was required to prove he was born on American soil.\footnote{Quoted in Renner, “In a Perfect Ferment,” 164; Andreas, \textit{History of Chicago} Vol 1, 453; “Report of Committee on Licenses Relative to Liquor Licenses,” March 26, 1855, \textit{Chicago City Council Proceedings Files 1855/56-1855/56}, Box 135, Document # 73, Illinois Regional Archives Depository, Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, IL, Accession Number 7/0001/01 (hereafter IRAD); “Ordinance Regulating Sale of Spirituous Liquors,” March 26, 1855, \textit{Chicago City Council Proceedings Files 1855/56-1855/56}, Box 135, Document # 93, IRAD; John J. Flinn, \textit{History of...}}
The German community in Chicago perceived the city’s new stance on alcohol as an assault on their rights and livelihoods, akin to slavery. Though tensions over Boone’s policies would erupt in violence several weeks later, the initial reaction of the German community was aggressive but decidedly nonviolent. Meetings at the North Market Hall continued, sometimes hundreds strong, and on April 4th funds were collected to form a society opposed to the new laws, headed by local brewer John Huck. Critics accused leaders of the German parts of the city of using these meetings to inflame the mob with “violent and revolutionary speeches” which “declared that the rights of the German citizens were invaded, their liberties taken away, had themselves made slaves by the Americans,” and urged them to make their voices heard at city hall.45

Brewers, saloon-keepers, and wholesale liquor dealers further established the Anti-Prohibitionist, a newspaper dedicated to opposing the Maine law and Boone’s policies. Its appearance perturbed the pro-temperance and nativist Tribune, which described the paper as a “six column sheet…the avowed purpose of which is to prevent moral and social reform, and perpetuate the evils of intemperance and its concomitants in our State.” The Anti-Prohibitionist, for its part, called the Tribune an “ocean sheet, filled daily with bullyism, black guardism and inflammatory seditious language” that was “a poor organ for the cause of temperance, and a sad example of the refinement of literature in this city.” The two papers traded insults and arguments over the issue of alcohol regularly in the weeks before the riot.46

Faced with genuine threats both to their Sonntagsfreiheit (“Sunday liberty”) and basic access to beer, German drinkers and retailers pursued legal and democratic remedies to their...
grievances. Dozens of tavern and saloon owners, most of them German, petitioned the Common Council on April 4th, declaring that while they were willing to “cheerfully comply” with the previous license ordinance, they could not afford the new rate and would be driven to close their doors and “suffer a heavy pecuniary loss” if not be “totally ruined.” Several other citizens, not all of them German, submitted a petition asking that Edward Steinbrecher, who kept a “decent and respectable” saloon on West Randolph Street, be exempt from the new license rate. Steinbrecher reportedly lost both his feet in a railroad accident and was unable to otherwise support his family.47

The city government remained totally intransigent. They summarily rejected every such petition and soon passed a blanket resolution affirming that the new rate would not be repealed. Meanwhile the council approved the use of South Market Hall for a temperance lecture by Horace Greeley on the virtues of prohibition, even remitting the rent, while a grand jury from the city’s Recorder’s Court issued a resolution in support of the new license law and “regarding a proper observation of the Sabbath to be essential to good morals and progressive civilization.” The city government’s stark juxtaposition of stonewalling opposition while accommodating political allies extended beyond the walls of city hall, leading many Germans in the city to feel deliberately targeted by Boone and his administration. While the nativist press complained that immigrants (of all nationalities) owned and operated all but fifty of the city’s 675 saloons, Germans perceived enforcement of the Sunday law to be unfairly dependent upon ethnicity. Police carefully monitored Weiss’ Sherman House saloon and Blatz’ beer hall while essentially ignoring the Young America Saloon just a block away. The nativist haunt’s main doors on Dearborn Street remained closed but patrons simply entered through a small backdoor on Randolph Street instead. Valentin Blatz

countered police scrutiny by closing his curtains and stacking empty beer glasses against the door and windows to dampen the sound, then directed patrons to a back door inside an adjacent physician’s office.48

The license law received stauncher opposition. Viewing it as a prohibitive attack on their cultural and liberal beliefs, many German saloon operators who had purchased licenses previously now began operating without them in defiance of the law. Though the city issued eighty licenses by mid-April, arrests for illegal sales of liquor exceeded one hundred. As the city jail filled with those who could not afford their bond, German Chicagoans pooled funds to pay for their legal defense and declared that they would appeal any unfavorable decision to the Illinois Supreme Court if necessary.49

Justice Rucker’s court proved to be the final catalyst. After the city attorney and counsel for the defense agreed to let a single test case stand for all outstanding cases, the city expected Rucker to deliver his opinion on Friday, April 20th. That morning, hundreds began to gather on the streets of the North Side. Some formed a procession and marched toward city hall while others meandered their way downtown in small groups, but by ten o’clock the Tribune estimated that a crowd one thousand strong had assembled around the courthouse. Justice Rucker, however, was delayed outside the city and unable to appear that day. Upon hearing the news, the crowd, in the derisive words of the Tribune, “absorbed into the various rum shops and lager beer saloons in the


49 Dietzsch, Chicago’s Deutsche Männer, 24-26; Renner, “In a Perfect Ferment,”, 165; Flinn, History of The Chicago Police, 74.
vicinity.” That morning, two more people were fined twenty five dollars for selling without a liquor license.\footnote{“The ‘Ten Thousands’ in Arms—The Whiskey Sellers in Trepidation,” \textit{Chicago Daily Tribune}, April 21, 1855.}

The \textit{Nord Seile} returned the next day. Early that morning, ringleaders reportedly rode around on horseback to the beer saloons in the city, rallying fellow Germans to again march on the courthouse. Led by drum and fife, hundreds of “the most brutal, ignorant, and debased portions of our Dutch population,” led by Germans “of a higher class...who seemed intent on stirring up the crowd to violence,” descended on the courthouse. Among the leaders was Alderman Stephan La Rue, representing his heavily German district north of the river.\footnote{“The Mob and Riot of Saturday,” \textit{Chicago Daily Tribune}, April 23, 1855; “Seventeen Years Ago,” \textit{Chicago Tribune}, October 27, 1872.} From a nativist standpoint, resistance from the city’s German population encroached upon the very sovereignty of the nation. The \textit{Tribune} was beside itself at the “strange spectacle”:

A body of men, foreigners by birth, speaking a foreign tongue, [with no claim] of citizenship, owing to this country gratitude for having afforded them a free home, a refuge from tyranny and oppression and an opportunity of proving themselves to be men and not beasts, bound by all ties which gratitude, respect, and ordinary decency could throw around them to respect our laws and pay the strictest attention to our regulations, see fit to take it into their beer-be-muddled heads that an ordinance requiring them to close their Lager Beer Halls on the Sabbath, and restrain their Bacchanalian revels for one day in seven, is an infringement upon their \textit{rights}! Their rights, forsooth, as if they had a right to rule us instead of we them and forthwith assemble in force upon our public squares, before our Court House, resolved to overawe and intimidate a Court of Justice, to force it to decide according to their prejudices, or to revenge themselves by rapine and murder if justice did not yield to their audacious demand! A more outrageous, bold, flagrant, and provoking act of insolence and rachism has never occurred within our knowledge.\footnote{“The Mob and Riot of Saturday,” \textit{Chicago Daily Tribune}, April 23, 1855.}
Beyond ridiculing the protestors for not properly respecting American notions of liberty, the Tribune claimed that the crowd intended to attack the courthouse, murder the mayor, liberate the prisoners from jail, and then sack the Tribune office itself if the court upheld the license law. In less hyperbolic sources, the crowd wished to overwhelm the court with its presence, stand up to the Know-Nothing administration, and free their imprisoned “beer martyrs.” The muskets, revolvers, pitchforks, and clubs that many carried implied a violent undertone. The crowd “swarmed” up the courthouse steps. Justice Rucker’s courtroom “was filled in an instant like a sardine box. Then the vestibules were packed. Then the front steps.” Beyond, the crowd filled the intersection of Clark and Randolph streets, outside the Sherman House, blocking all traffic. The additional hordes of onlookers meant that thousands had now gathered outside.\footnote{53 “The Mob and Riot of Saturday,” Chicago Daily Tribune, April 23, 1855; Dietzsch, Chicago’s Deutsche Männer, 24; “Seventeen Years Ago,” Chicago Tribune, October 27, 1872; Flinn, History of The Chicago Police, 74-75; Andreas, History of Chicago Vol. 1, 453.}

On Mayor Boone’s order, a squad of police cleared the courthouse of protestors, posting officers at every gated entrance to the courthouse square. The situation finally erupted in violence when Nichols demanded that the crowd disperse and got into a scuffle with a protestor. The resulting melee caused several injuries on both sides, but Nichols’s squad quickly dispersed the crowd with the help of reinforcements and sympathetic bystanders. Many Germans retreated north on Clark Street, back across the river. Several others were arrested, including Alderman La Rue, who had climbed atop a carriage and attempted to address the crowd. Whether he intended to temper or rally the mob varies by account, for he only managed to say “My friends—“ before being yanked to the ground and arrested.\footnote{54 Renner, “In a Perfect Ferment,” 167; “Seventeen Years Ago,” Chicago Tribune, October 27, 1872.}
Police restored order around the courthouse by noon, but the mob was regrouping. Angry crowds swore to free their friends even as they retreated up Clark Street. Across the river, aggressive speeches warned that if the Germans failed today, the Know-nothings would “never stop until they had burnt down their homes and murdered their families.” Downtown, fearful rumors spread of armed Germans drilling to the north or plotting in nearby beer saloons. The Tribune opined that “nothing could exceed the insolence, brutality, and thirst for revenge manifested by these Dutchmen.” Mayor Boone hastily swore in another hundred and fifty officers, nearly tripling the size of the police force.55

That afternoon, hundreds of Germans formed into two armed columns and marched back down Clark Street toward the courthouse. Once the first column crossed the swing bridge over the river, its operator (acting on orders from Mayor Boone) turned the bridge as if to accommodate river traffic, preventing the Germans from reaching downtown. The mob yelled, threatened, and offered bribes, but the bridge-tender refused to budge without orders from the mayor, which only came once an unacceptable amount of traffic accumulated at either end. Once they were able to cross, the remaining Germans overpowered the operator to prevent the bridge from being closed again.56

Mayor Boone, having used the time to deploy the expanded police force, watched from his office window as hundreds of Germans approached on the west side of Clark Street, several of them brandishing weapons. When they rounded the Sherman House on the corner of Randolph

56 Andreas, History of Chicago Vol. 1, 616; “The Mob and Riot of Saturday,” Chicago Daily Tribune, April 23, 1855; “The Chicago Mob,” Cincinnati Daily Enquirer, April 26, 1855. The Cincinnati Enquirer account claims that the German crowd fired upon the bridgetender when he refused to close the bridge, but this claim is not corroborated in any other account of the riot examined for this study.
Street, they found the police waiting for them. The crowd gave a “terrific yell” and formed a hasty line, at which point Boone called for militia reinforcements.\textsuperscript{57}

When a police detachment demanded that the crowd surrender their weapons, the Germans attacked. Someone in the mob shouted to “pick out the stars!” and several shots were exchanged. A German named Peter Martin aimed a double-barreled shotgun at Officer George Hunt and blew off his arm. He was subsequently shot by police while attempting to flee. Several other injuries were sustained, including bystanders grazed by bullets and beatings on both sides. Martin died days later of his wounds, the only recorded death; nevertheless, rumors persisted of secret funerals on the North Side over the next few days.\textsuperscript{58}

The rioters once more retreated, gathering “in front of the lager beer saloons” on the north side of Randolph. The police began disarming them, leading to more altercations. Anyone who resisted was arrested, around sixty in total. Around five o’clock, militia units began arriving on the scene and began clearing the streets around the Courthouse. The Montgomery guards, ironically an Irish volunteer unit, deployed two leftover cannon from the War of 1812 at opposite corners of the square, where they could cover any approach. As the militia units secured the area, Mayor Boone emerged from the courthouse and declared martial law in Chicago, ordering all good citizens to disperse. After clearing the streets, militia patrols began searching nearby lager beer saloons. If refused access, they forced their way in and arrested any armed German they found, including two Germans inside Mueller’s saloon on Randolph Street who concealed revolvers and a sword.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{57}“The Mob and Riot of Saturday,” \textit{Chicago Daily Tribune}, April 23, 1855; Renner, “In a Perfect Ferment,” 168; Flinn, \textit{History of The Chicago Police}, 77-78.
\textsuperscript{58}“The Mob and Riot of Saturday,” \textit{Chicago Daily Tribune}, April 23, 1855; Renner, “In a Perfect Ferment,” 168; Flinn, \textit{History of The Chicago Police}, 78.
The fighting lasted only a few minutes, and the courthouse was secured within an hour or two, but the resulting frenzy would plague Chicago for days. Shops closed early and gas streetlamps burned through the night. The courthouse plaza became a military encampment, with militia units posting guards and maintaining patrols. By ten o’clock that night, a handbill was distributed warning that Randolph Street near the courthouse was under military occupation in case of further riot. Rumors of Germans once more amassing and drilling across the river persisted into the next day but proved baseless. Chicago’s German population never challenged the battery around the courthouse.60

The Lager Beer Riot incurred significant costs and far reaching consequences for the city, but not within the justice system. Of the dozens of arrests, only a handful of rioters were indicted and by the end of June all but two Irish participants had been acquitted. Even the two convictions were granted a retrial on account of jury interference, and that retrial never took place. Both men were released. One later commentator noted it as “little less than a travesty of justice that in a sedition notoriously German the only victims should be two Irishmen, accidentally caught in the crowd, without any evidence of previous affiliation with the malcontents.”61

The Anti-Prohibitionist tried to distance itself from the violence by making the German protestors into scapegoats. One week after the riot, the paper vilified the “poor Dutchmen” as ignorant and unruly foreigners who understood only that their beer had been threatened, and that no larger concerns over temperance or Maine laws had been present. It asked how its editors could

possibly have stoked the hostility of the mob when “not a half a dozen” Germans in the city could even comprehend a paper published in English. Its retreat into nativist rhetoric, seemingly to buttress its campaign against the Maine law, failed to recognize a watershed moment for the city’s Germans.  

Political nativism and temperance in Chicago were, in fact, the real casualties of the riot. Mayor Boone’s administration continued its pro-temperance policies, both vigorously defending the March license law as written and championing the upcoming prohibition referendum as well as local temperance efforts. But the political coalition that had swept them into office was eroding. Originally, that coalition included Germans who supporting Boone’s ticket on anti-slavery grounds, but the administration’s hostile treatment of Germans alienated both this constituency and many who were beginning to find the new Republican Party preferable to the Know-Nothing’s “disreputable tactics.”

That June, the statewide and local failure of the referendum on the proposed Maine law in Illinois dealt not only another blow to Boone’s administration and marked a political awakening for the city’s Germans, who up to this time had taken on only a minor role in public life. The heavily German wards of the North Side provided the decisive votes necessary to defeat the referendum in Chicago, despite claims of fraud by what one nativist publication called “the foreign rabble and disgraceful rummies” of the city. The Seventh Ward, for example, voted nearly ten to one against prohibition and saw a fifty percent increase in voter participation versus the previous election. On June 25, 1855, the Common Council retreated slightly by passing a new license law which kept the fee at three hundred dollars but increased the license term to a full year. Two weeks

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62 *The Anti-Prohibitionist*, April 28, 1855.
later, the council passed a strongly worded resolution both defending the new law and requesting that the Mayor vigorously enforce it.64

But local support for harsh temperance reform, even among non-Germans, faded too quickly. On July 23rd, Mayor Boone requested (and received) five hundred dollars be placed at his disposal to better enforce the license ordinance, citing a concerted effort among the city’s liquor dealers to resist. In August, a petition (signed mainly by non-German citizens) asked the city once more to reduce the cost of a liquor license to one hundred dollars, citing the city’s depleted treasury, the need to address the “many matters of vital importance” neglected by the city at that point, mounting public opinion, and the preference of moderate approached to alcohol reform rather than the Mayor’s “extreme” policies. The Common Council finally acquiesced and, citing the reasons given in the petition, agreed to act. The new alcohol ordinance set the license fee at one hundred dollars for those selling distilled liquors and fifty dollars for those selling fermented drinks. Mayor Boone stood his ground for a time, using a veto and a strongly worded letter, which attributed three quarters crime in the city to the sale (mostly by immigrants) of intoxicating liquors, to bully the council into prosecuting license violators. But by then temperance had combined with debates over slavery and the Kansas-Nebraska bill to dismantle political nativism. The next election, the Know-Nothing mayoral candidate lost to Thomas Dyer, a Democrat.65
Decades later, Boone would claim that his policies were benevolent in intention and misunderstood, reaffirming that he believed a Maine law to be inevitable in Illinois at the time and sought to ease the German population into sobriety, as “an abrupt passage from unlimited beer to no beer would be a trial that no well-regulated Teuton could undergo with equanimity.” Even these statements, failing both to frame Boone’s policies as oppositional to all alcohol and to shed his disdainful tone for the city’s immigrant populations, confirmed the marriage of nativism and temperance politics that led Chicago to erupt in violence over lager beer.\(^\text{66}\)

**Undeterred Temperance**

Temperance agitation endured even as lager beer continued to gain ground throughout the Midwest and the nation in general. The diminishing influence of nativism, whose political fate was sealed by the rise of the Republican Party and the dominance of sectional politics, removed a powerful stimulant for overt physical conflict over alcohol. Yet it left a distinct vitriolic aftertaste in temperance discussions of beer for some time after. As they doubled down on perceived links between alcohol and degrading public health, poverty, and crime, nativist undertones crept into their rhetoric.\(^\text{67}\)

Nativist slants among Cincinnati temperance publications were particularly prevalent after 1855. In responding to a New York court case which examined whether beer should be considered an intoxicating beverage, a Cincinnati temperance magazine, *The Crusader*, complained, “we have for several years been astonished and alarmed at the rapid increase in the consumption of this Dutch swill. Out native-born citizens who are not particularly fond of stinking ‘kraut’ are learning

to imbibe very freely the juice of rotten barley.” It further proclaimed “that ‘lager’ stultifies, stupefies, brutalizes, no one can doubt who will step into a Dutch saloon about ten o’clock on a Sunday night.—They can ordinarily find a score or more, male and female, who seem to vibrate between human beings and brutes.” It further reprinted statements which argued for a correlation between crime and beer consumption in German states like Baden and Bavaria, where numerous local immigrants originated.68

The Crusader further attacked the retailers and brewers of lager beer in Cincinnati, who “make enough in the Queen City and St. Louis to stupefy and bloat a nation,” as well as any moderate drinker or “quack physician” touting its safety, as tempters and poor examples who would lead themselves and the nation to ruin. Medical claims were also proffered, asserting that lager beer explained the “lethargic and torpid” state of Bavarians, caused “an unnatural deposit of fat all over the system in persons of sedentary habits, and endangered the children of breastfeeding mothers.” Finally, reformers attributed the state of the German states in Europe to alcohol. “It is little wonder that the German nation should remain subject to the rule of thirty-six petty tyrants,” The Crusader lamented, further claiming that German art, music, and spirituality all fell prey to the degradations of lager beer. Alongside their volleys was the occasional self-reassuring aside, reminding them that “an oak is not felled by one blow.”69

During the 1850s, then, lager beer was an arena for both the challenge and defense of German citizenship and ethnocultural practice in the Midwest. It allowed brewers and consumers alike to engage economically and carve out ethnic spaces which aligned with their interpretation

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of American society, festive culture, and inclusion in their new home. When contested by Americans with competing visions of their own, German-Americans negotiated their position aggressively, even violently. By the decade’s end, lager beer not only remained, but was flourishing. Its fortunes only improved in the 1860s and beyond as the Civil War, industrial developments, and coordination within the brewing industry evolved German-American approaches to their own ethnicity, the significance and popularity of lager beer within their communities, and their ability to respond to similarly adaptable nativist and temperance offensives.

In 1858 a photographer named Alexander Hesler climbed to the tower of the Cook County Courthouse and captured an image of the city in every direction. Reformers might denigrate Chicago’s beer halls as “hells,” but when Hesler took his photos Randolph Street hosted no fewer than five of them, advertising both Milwaukee and local brands, with another saloon nearby on Clark Street. They stood in full view of the intersection where immigrants and police had clashed over the right of such establishments to exist. The persistence of such institutions, the breweries supplying them, and their many patrons would propagate significantly in the coming decade.70

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In December 1858, Samuel Cary published a letter in his temperance magazine, *The Crusader*, sent by H.A. Guild, a fellow reformer from New York. Guild was no friend of lager beer, which he called the “Devil’s Chloroform,” but *The Crusader* had recently lambasted a New York court for entertaining the question of whether lager beer should be considered an intoxicating beverage and he wanted to set the record straight. The court did not entertain the question, he corrected, but rather referred it to a committee that then reported quite firmly that lager beer was in fact intoxicating and “otherwise pernicious in its effects.” Ultimately, Guild accused the magazine of little more than a good faith error, but he wanted to clarify that his state’s “record is not only clear but strong upon the point in question…the day is not far distant when, as Temperance men, we shall be called upon to wage a fiercer war against lager beer than against any other poison now or likely to come into use.”¹ His urgent tone over a small and procedural matter revealed an important subtext—to treat lager beer less severely than any other form of alcohol was sacrilege within temperance circles, precisely because it was common everywhere else. Encouraged by German brewers and immigrant communities, many came to view the relatively weak styles of beer as safer, healthy, and even nutritious alternatives to wine and distilled liquor. Temperance organizations, rebuked by their failed coalition with political nativists just a few years earlier, therefore prepared to combat lager beer on this front instead. Before they had their chance, however, sectionalism dominated the national landscape and quickly descended into war. By the

time reformers once again found space to maneuver, neither the German immigrant community nor the beer industry were the same.

The Civil War and its aftermath suppressed the principal forces opposed to German immigrants and their beer. Political nativism faltered and dissolved into the growing Republican Party, which in turn stifled anti-immigrant planks in favor of antislavery ones. The temperance movement began to attack lager beer in less overtly nativist ways, but likewise lost political momentum after the mid-1850s and faded into the background while sectional conflicts festered. The marginalization of these forces, however, proved temporary. Opposition to German beer, or German-American beer, never fully disappeared in the pre-Prohibition era, nor would it shed its antebellum roots.

The 1860s generated multiple economic, cultural, and technological opportunities for German-American brewers to influence and expand their industry. The total number of commercial breweries had already risen sharply from 431 in 1850 (producing 750,000 barrels nationally) to 1,269 in 1860 (producing one million barrels). That number nearly tripled again by the end of the decade. Likewise, the Civil War era saw a seventy-four percent increase in beer consumption among Americans despite a stable rate of pure alcohol consumption. Lager beer accounted for the majority of that growth. Expansion during the 1860s was bolstered in no small part by German-Americans’ service in the war which, though not always stellar or even sober, introduced many native-born Union soldiers to German drinking and festive culture. The growing customer base coupled with technological and architectural advancements to make breweries more complex, more efficient, and more German. Wartime necessity led Congress to pass a series of new taxes, including on beer. This in turn spurred the founding of the United States Brewers
Association, an organization led primarily by German industrialists and tasked with reconciling civic duty with an opposition to taxation.

Throughout the Civil War and its aftermath, German immigrants and brewers readily embraced their growing acceptance into American society. German festive culture, they observed, gradually transitioned from public nuisance and spectacle to welcome entertainment, even on Sundays. Naturally this transition was not total, and detractors continued to criticize Germanic displays both brewed and otherwise, but German-Americans seized this opportunity to reshape American public life and citizenship, in part with beer. Cincinnati and Chicago played integral roles in this process. Immigrant soldiers from both cities helped spread lager beer (though not without incident) to potential new customers. Both new and existing breweries capitalized on the groundwork laid during the previous two decades, steadily eclipsed their ale competitors, and led the widespread construction of more sophisticated operations. Their efforts helped connect the market revolution to its industrialized and capitalist progeny while also maintaining their ethnocultural character. As lager beer steadily became the national drink, its distinct character integrated itself into broader American culture so that what was once German became German-American and, in some respects, simply American. Their actions during this period, like those of the temperance and nativist contemporaries who laid in wait, would define their developmental trajectory through the early twentieth century.²

Political Nativism and Temperance Subdued

The political alliance between the nativist and temperance factions that precipitated events like Chicago’s Lager Beer Riot dissolved as quickly as it had formed. Opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 combined with antiparty and anti-immigrant rhetoric to give the Know-Nothing Party rapid appeal among northern voters and further helped dismantle the Whig Party. Around the nation, they gained so many victories in 1854 and 1855 that the New York Herald confidently predicted their party could elect a president in the next year. But the Know-Nothings, like the Whigs before them, struggled to reconcile their northern and southern wings over the slavery issue and split irrevocably in early 1856. Truncated “North American” nativists competed for dominance in the free states with the fledgling Republican Party, itself no stranger to nativist policies including anti-immigration, anti-Catholicism, temperance, and Sabbatarianism. Depending on the state, Republican and Know-Nothing campaigns sometimes allied prior to 1856, an association that Democrats were quick to exploit among prospective German immigrant voters. But Republicans slowly exorcised their nativist politics by focusing on the issue of slavery, largely to attract immigrant votes, and further dismantled the Know-Nothings’ political power in the 1856 presidential election. Candidate John C. Fremont became the clear antislavery candidate of that election but eschewed nativism; by advancing him while rejecting any overtures of cooperation from the Know-Nothing running mates, Republicans took the reins of antislavery politics in the North and brought free-soil Know-Nothings into their fold without alienating immigrant voters. The American Party stalled as slavery became the overriding issue in national politics.3

German political participation, particularly in the Midwest, both influenced and was influenced by this process. German Republican leaders attracted other immigrant voters by presenting slavery as the singular issue of the age and linking it to immigrant rights. They presented opposition to the slave power as not only humane but part of a distinctly German commitment to freedom and democracy. That cause was paramount, even if it meant political alignment with some nativists, something Chicago’s *Illinois Staats-Zeitung* called “a union of different elements for the attainment of one common and good end.” Though Germans did not find the message universally appealing, they lacked an ideal alternative. Northern German Democrats had worked to brand the Republican Party as nativist, but immigrant demonstrations against the Kansas-Nebraska Act quickly led southern Democrats to abandon them. Arguments that Germans were ethnically predisposed to resist slavery further helped neutralize the Democrats’ white supremacist ethos, which proved far more effective on Irish immigrants.4

German immigrants who committed to the party regularly used their numbers to dissuade Republicans from nativist policies. During Ohio’s gubernatorial race in 1855, they easily persuaded candidate Salmon P. Chase to reject anti-immigrant stances, trading a few nativist votes for many German ones. Still, close ties at the local level meant that Chase shared a ticket with eight Know-Nothing candidates. In Cincinnati, where the Know-Nothing’s had so recently revealed their anti-immigrant and anti-alcohol colors, non-Catholic German voters initially proved reluctant to leave the Democrats. Local Republicans needed to claim that Democrats had abandoned Over-the-Rhine during 1855’s election riots to have any hope of luring them away.

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Chase’s narrow victory in the election demonstrated that German votes required heavy suppression of any nativist rhetoric, a lesson that Republican leaders learned throughout the North.\textsuperscript{5}

Further, the political developments of the 1850s blurred the lines between disparate immigrant factions. Though German Protestants often quarreled with German Catholics, Anglo-Protestant support for anti-immigrant, Sabbatarian, and anti-alcohol legislation alienated them all. Know-Nothing activism changed how the \textit{Achtundvierziger} discussed religion in public and prompted German Republicans to speak about Catholicism in more conciliatory terms. Republicans’ rejection of nativism provided a rallying point for German immigrants which suppressed fringe elements. The majority of them, for example, rejected 1858 calls to form a new, ethnically based “social-republican party” and only staunchly conservative (and typically Catholic) Germans remained allied with the Democrats. German Republicanism proved to be highly influential in the Republican Party and a ready home for many immigrants, particularly in the Midwest. The 1860 Republican convention in Chicago inserted strong pro-immigration language into its platform.\textsuperscript{6}

Even so, German immigrants did not flock to the Republican Party at the national level. Continued wariness over nativism, Catholic conservatism, as well as local issues and loyalties led most German immigrants to vote Democratic in 1860, especially in eastern states. Regardless, anti-immigrant (at least, anti-German immigrant) politics was left without power or party for now.\textsuperscript{7} Debates over alcohol in the U.S. laid the seeds for future controversy before being similarly suppressed by the political discord of the 1850s. As the sectional crisis reached its height,

\textsuperscript{6} Efford. \textit{German Immigrants, Race, and Citizenship}, 69-82; Levine, \textit{The Spirit of 1848}, 245, 250.
temperance magazines like the *The Crusader* sustained their onslaught against alcohol, including lager beer. Arguments against the “detestable form of grog” included numerous nativist slights against German brewers and drinkers but also filtered into debates over the composition and nutritional qualities of beer. Beyond its social dangers, beer was labelled a public health hazard which physically endangered anyone who drank it. Temperance partisans scoured published descriptions of beer and its production and decried the “medley of poisons” that were added to beer to alter flavor, consistency, or potency, including chalk, opium, oil of vitriol (sulfuric acid), and even strychnine. Whether or not the beer contained literally poisonous substances, they claimed it would “destroy the liver” and “constipate the bowels,” leading to a bloated and grotesque appearance that further left the drinker susceptible to sores and disease.\(^8\)

Temperance reformers did not make these arguments in a vacuum; from the 1850s forward, figures both with medical training and without made regular statements about the health benefits of beer, which in many ways comprised more scientific versions of early modern exclamation of beer’s healthfulness. Its lower alcohol content, for example, meant that beer retained more nutritious “extract” from its base malts compared with, say, distilled liquor. Hops allegedly retained tonic properties with “exhilarating and stimulating powers.” Advocates deemed beer especially beneficial to the working classes, whose laborious lifestyle made their bodies immune to any intoxicating effect. Beer was simultaneously a stimulant to the diseased, capable of treating exhaustion, digestive impairments, and even some chronic conditions. Even so, they did not portray beer as a miracle cure—moderation was an essential component of its claimed medical benefits.

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effectiveness. Based on these claims, some argued that lager beer should be considered distinct from wines and ardent spirits and thus exempted from any prohibition or temperance legislation. Temperance advocates reacted to any such claims in the strongest possible terms during the late 1850s, accusing proponents of trying to legalize poison, touting the physical prowess of “water-drinkers,” and decrying the poor mental state of those men, and specifically Germans, who consumed it.9

Coupled with debates over the healthfulness of beer was another, more fundamental question: will beer intoxicate? Of course beer was alcoholic, with lager beers ranging from two to four percent by volume and ales reaching as high as ten percent, but perspectives about whether it was alcoholic enough to diminish men’s faculties varied widely. Some proponents of beer argued that it only intoxicated when consumed excessively, while others insisted that it did not intoxicate at all. Germans were of course at the heart of such discussions, and the intoxicating effects of lager beer sometimes hinged on observations of their behavior while drinking it. In one report, a police superintendent patrolled New York’s Central Park on a Sunday in July 1859, assessing how well saloons complied with the Sunday closure law. He witnessed numerous Germans drinking lager beer freely “with no drunkenness or disorder following its wholesale imbibition,” and did not consider any of them to be intoxicated, nor the sale of lager beer on Sundays to be illegal.10

Courts addressed the question on more than one occasion, particularly when saloon or beer garden proprietors were charged with selling liquor on Sundays. In addition to published articles or testimony from medical experts, local drinkers gave statements as to the perceived effect of beer upon themselves, or their observations of others. In July 1859, for example, a Chicago court tried

two Germans for operating a typical German beer garden on the south side of the city on Sundays, hosting music and dancing halls, a shooting gallery, and space for the selling and drinking of lager beer. Reportedly, the garden attracted tens of thousands of visitors as well as “noise, violence, drunkenness and quarreling” which disturbed the peace and damaged local property. The defendants claimed, as part of their defense, that even if temperance laws prohibited ardent spirits and wine, lager beer was not an intoxicating beverage and therefore not subject to such laws. Such cases led various judicial bodies and juries to disagree, declaring lager beer intoxicating in some cases and not intoxicating in others. Such debates, which gained momentum before the Civil War halted them, resurfaced by the end of the 1860s. The German-led brewing industry would eventually defend its business interests by joining the chorus in support of lager beer’s societal and health benefits.11

By the late 1850s, however, few Americans still paid attention to such debates. Temperance agitation yielded to the rise in sectional tensions, the Republican Party’s suppression of anti-alcohol political action, and lackluster enforcement of prohibition laws where in force. But other factors also contributed, including a decrease in immigration rates and a reduction in incidents of social disorder. Though not radically different, an urban way of life which included lager beer felt less immediately threatening, particularly while the specter of disunion loomed.12

**German Soldiers and Lager**

When the Civil War broke out in 1861, German-Americans (especially the Achtundvierziger) volunteered by the thousands to fight for the Union. Of the 1.3 million native-

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12 Dannenbaum, *Drink and Disorder*, 173.
born Germans residing in the U.S. in 1860 (the vast majority of whom lived in the Union), historians estimate that between 180,000 and 216,000 Germans served in the Union Army and represented its largest foreign-born demographic. Beer had followed German immigrants across the Atlantic, and now it followed them to war.\textsuperscript{13}

At the onset of the war, before unit names became more standardized, thirty-four units self-selected names beginning with “German.” Six of the first seven volunteer regiments in Missouri contained mostly German recruits, and German volunteers were instrumental in protecting a significant Union arsenal in St. Louis at the start of the war. Northern cities with larger German populations, on both sides of the Appalachians, formed many of these ethnically segregated regiments, with many more German-American soldiers enlisting with nonethnic units. Sometimes Germans formed ethnic units simply to stick with the familiar, but their motivation might also be defensive, either for fear of nativist harassment from other soldiers or contempt for American military officers. Bolstered by fiery newspaper editorials which hailed these soldiers as Germans first and Americans second, ladies aid societies which organized relief efforts, and nationalist rhetoric from ethnic generals like Franz Sigel and Ludwig Blenker, German-American soldiers expressed their support for the Union in distinctly ethnic terms. The pace and intensity with which Germans rallied behind the Union cause and mobilized their communities to provide political and economic support for soldiers stemmed from the cohesion that had formed within German communities throughout the 1840s and 1850s. In their own eyes, German immigrant soldiers

provided a vital service to their adopted home, and if anything overestimated their own contribution to the Union cause.\textsuperscript{14}

German units shared not only ethnicity or national origin but also language, food, and beer. German regiments might use their native language for drill, conversation, and even commands. Orders might be distributed in both English and German to ensure every soldier understood. Sutlers (civilian merchants assigned to various units to sell provisions in the field) serving German units carried ethnic food items that did not appear on the Army’s standard-issue invoice form, such as sausages, kraut, and onions. Finally, German regiments maintained an ample supply of beer…at first. The early days of the war saw highly disparate alcohol regulation between units, though consumption was discouraged by both civilian and military authorities. Yet when word spread that a German unit was permitted to drink beer in their camp, soldiers from other units tended to gather in the vicinity. \textit{Harper’s Weekly} published a series of sketches in the summer of 1861 illustrating life in the Union Army. One such sketch, labelled “The Lager Bier Wagon,” depicted soldiers being served beer out of the back of a sutler’s wagon while a nearby sentry dutifully looks in the other direction. Before long, Anglo-American commanders began to complain about the lapse in discipline, and the beer supply became restricted even within German units.\textsuperscript{15}

Lack of sources make it impossible to quantify precisely alcohol consumption by soldiers during the Civil War, but it was assuredly widespread not only due to antebellum consumption

\textsuperscript{14} Walter D. Kamphoefner, et al. eds. \textit{News from the Land of Freedom: German Immigrants Write Home} (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 19; Keller, \textit{Chancellorsville and the Germans}, 15-21; Thomas P. Lowry, \textit{Irish & German—Whiskey and Beer: Drinking Patterns in the Civil War} (Thomas Lowry, 2011), viii; Engle, “Yankee Dutchmen,” 20-21. Over the course of the war, ostensibly German units naturally incorporated soldiers of other ethnicities and national origins. Such non-German soldiers were typically a minority which did not significantly alter the ethnocultural practices of their units.

patterns but also the way military authorities handled regulatory and disciplinary matters pertaining to alcohol. Many new recruits on their way to army camps near cities like Chicago and Cincinnati, for example, stayed in cheap boarding houses located in or near lager beer saloons. Historian Christian Keller describe measures taken by commanders to curtail beer and other alcohol consumption in the Union Army, with officers generally enjoying more leeway than enlisted men. Although Keller acknowledges that restrictions on alcohol sales did not necessarily mean that the flow of beer immediately ceased, he may overestimate their effectiveness within the ranks. Court martial records from units formed in Ohio and Illinois, especially German units, help illustrate the prevalence of alcohol consumption, including beer, among soldiers and officers alike.16

Of the seventy-six thousand recorded courts-martial in the Union Army during the Civil War, approximately fourteen thousand, or 18.5%, involved alcohol. Only a minority of these trials specified the type of alcohol—typically whiskey, brandy, wine, or beer—in the proceedings. Most simply refer to “Drunkenness” in some form, subject to qualifiers ranging from “beastly drunk” to “on a frolic” to “just plain drunk.” The imprecision with which military courts interpreted drinking demonstrates that the act itself did not prove drunkenness, nor was all drinking cause for formal disciplinary action. Though General George McClellan, for example, might lecture that “[officer’s] duties are not so simple as to be within the competency of a half-sober person,” actual trials for drunkenness among soldiers (including officers and enlisted men) practiced much more nuance in the prosecution and sentencing of offenders. Their attitudes reflected the same evolving

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perceptions of alcohol consumption that frustrated temperance advocates, which did not universally associate drinking, or even specific alcoholic beverages, with intoxication.\footnote{Lowry, \textit{Irish & German—Whiskey and Beer}, 2, 7, 89-92. Lowry’s findings are based on The Index Project, a nonprofit cataloging initiative which was reportedly the first to give concrete data on the quantity and variety of Union courts-martial during the Civil War.}

“Drunkenness” constituted a prosecutable offense on its own, but courts often paired it with other charges such as “conduct unbecoming of an officer and a gentleman” or insubordination. In some cases, the drunken state of a defendant did not lead to a charge of its own but rather featured in the circumstances that led to another offense. In others, defendants offered their state of intoxication as an explanation or even excuse for their crime, though this defense rarely warded off conviction. Whatever the case, a defendant’s state of intoxication, in the eyes of the Judge Advocate General, depended almost entirely on the testimony of soldiers and officers who witnessed the events in question. They might characterize the accused as “grossly intoxicated but not out of his senses,” or “not sufficiently under the influence as to be incapable of doing his duty,” or even “not drunk – only drinking beer.” This inherently subjective process led not only to myriad definitions of drunkenness but also periodic descriptions of the circumstances surrounding a soldier’s consumption of alcohol. The select cases which refer to the availability and consumption of beer within Union Army units from Illinois and Ohio prove quite revealing.\footnote{For an example of alcohol consumption contributing to an offense, but not leading to a specific charge of drunkenness, see Court Martial Proceedings for Private Louis Gerhardt, Co. C, 28$\textsuperscript{th}$ Ohio Volunteer Infantry, convened October 26, 1863, Case File NN-474, Court Martial Case Files 1809-1894 (CM 1809-1894), Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General (Army), Records Group 153 (RG 153), NAB; For examples of soldiers using drunkenness to explain or excuse their behavior, see the court proceedings for Private Francis Filian, Co. I, and Corporal Francis Studder, Co. D, 9$\textsuperscript{th}$ Ohio Volunteer Infantry, convened March 27, 1862, Case File OO-1847, CM 1809-1894, RG 153, NAB; Lowry, \textit{Irish & German—Whiskey and Beer}, 89-92.}

First, while clearly dependent on supply lines and levels of discipline that varied from unit to unit, soldiers could procure beer and other alcohol through a variety of legal and illegal means. When Sergeant George Martin of the 43$\textsuperscript{rd}$ Illinois Infantry was court martialed in March 1863 for
drunkenness and using insulting language toward officers, he stated in his defense that he had been encouraged to drink by his captain. After being told “I can have as much beer as I wanted for myself,” the captain reportedly offered to help him procure it, to which Martin replied, “I can get liquor without an order.” In another case within the 43rd Illinois, a soldier counterfeited an officer’s signature to obtain “spirituous liquors,” likely whiskey. And when units were near a southern brewery, such as when the 108th Ohio Infantry camped near Nashville, soldiers could visit and imbibe without direct sanction.19

Sutlers provided soldiers with sociable and sanctioned access to alcohol, including beer, and allude to the spread of lager beer among non-Germans. Once the war was well underway German units did not retain a monopoly on the beer supply. Private Alexander Daemon and Corporal Bernhard Axer in the 9th Ohio Infantry demonstrated as much in June 1863 when they were both arrested for insubordination, using disrespectful and threatening language (in German) toward superior officers, defying orders, and being “beastly drunk” while their unit camped in Tennessee. According to Daemon (who spoke no English and needed an interpreter during his court martial) and other witnesses, the altercation with their superiors took place while they were drinking copious amounts of beer at the sutler tent of the 10th Kentucky Infantry, a non-ethnic unit. According to testimony, Daemon’s and Axer’s superior officers initially overlooked their intoxication and only arrested them following their refusal to leave the out-of-bounds camp of the 10th Kentucky, as well as the subsequent altercation when Axer tried to prevent his comrade’s arrest. Their experience exemplifies an undertone within such court martial proceedings, that

19 Court Martial Proceedings for 1st Sergeant George Martin, Co. G, 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, convened March 6, 1863, Case File LL-304, CM 1809-1894, RG 153, NAB; Court Martial Proceedings for Corporal John Seeman, Co. G, 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, convened March 13, 1863, Case File LL-934, CM 1809-1894, RG 153, NAB; Court Martial Proceedings for 1st Lieutenant and Regiment Quartermaster Christian Dilz, 108th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, convened March 17, 1864, Case File NN-1648, CM 1809-1894, RG 153, NAB. Note that included testimony in this case refers to recreational visits to drink at a nearby brewery, but these acts do not appear to have been prosecuted.
alcohol consumption and even drunkenness was not only subjectively interpreted but tolerated within certain limits. The soldiers’ knowledge and access to beer did not indicate ample or regular supply, but it highlighted the sociability and semi-public spaces where beer consumption could be jointly experienced and introduced to new soldiers.\textsuperscript{20}

In a near identical situation, an officer spotted Private Louis Theurer, 82\textsuperscript{nd} Illinois Infantry, at the regimental sutler shop in June 1863. According to testimony, Theurer was already quite drunk when found, and the officer ordered him to his quarters and told the sutler not to serve him anymore. Theurer refused to go and threatened, “when I cannot get beer here I will go over to the 19\textsuperscript{th} Pennsylvania and get beer there.” The argument devolved into a fistfight. According to the prosecution, this was not the first time Theurer had been intoxicated in the camp. The court’s many witnesses disagreed strongly about Theurer’s level of drunkenness. Theurer himself claimed “I was not drunk so many times as I am charged,” but the court ultimately convicted him of most of the charges. As with Private Daemon and Corporal Axer, Theurer’s prosecution hints at the broader, sociable, and visible practice of alcohol consumption which contained beer and was likely managed informally outside of extreme cases.\textsuperscript{21}

Other cases reveal how the lure of German beer and drinking culture could be overwhelming. In one colorful case, Captain Edward Lewis, Company D, of the 106\textsuperscript{th} Ohio Infantry was accused of taking part in the theft of a barrel of beer from a sutler’s tent. According to the report, Lewis conspired with Company G Privates Schoefer and Greisheimer to steal the beer and, when one was arrested, attempted to secure his release by pulling rank. The Company G

\textsuperscript{20} Court Martial Proceedings for Private Alexander Daemon, Co. K, 9\textsuperscript{th} Ohio Volunteer Infantry, convened August 7, 1863, Case File NN-254, CM 1809-1894, RG 153, NAB; Court Martial Proceedings for Corporal Bernhard Axer, Co. K, 9\textsuperscript{th} Ohio Volunteer Infantry, convened August 2, 1863, Case File NN-254, CM 1809-1894, RG 153, NAB.

\textsuperscript{21} The 19\textsuperscript{th} Pennsylvania Infantry was, like the 10\textsuperscript{th} Kentucky, not a specifically German regiment. See Court Martial Proceedings for Private Louis P. Theurer, Company F, 82\textsuperscript{nd} Illinois Volunteer Infantry, convened July 15, 1863, Case File NN-184, CM 1809-1894, RG 153, NAB.
captain likewise claimed to have witnessed Lewis receiving hand signals from one of the men to indicate that the theft had been successful. According to testimony given in the case, the beer-serving sutler’s tent was open to soldiers of all ranks and drew an unusually large crowd in the wake of the theft. In a separate case, Captain Louis Kauffman of the 106th Ohio faced charges in March 1863 after absconding for five days in Cincinnati while on assignment to track three deserters from the regiment. Kauffman telegraphed the commander of Camp Dennison (near Cincinnati) on March 4th, claiming to be too sick for duty, and was subsequently spotted drinking in a beer saloon late into the night by Lieutenant Colonel Gustav Tafel (commander of the 106th and future mayor of Cincinnati). Tafel testified that Kauffman looked in decent health at the time. Kauffman returned to camp on March 9th to a waiting court martial, this incident allegedly following a string of absences, general neglect of duty, and appearing in front of his men while drunk. Kauffman was found guilty and dismissed from the Army. Two months later, Private Henry Schadelman, Company A, 28th Ohio Infantry was also court martialed. He had checked into the U.S. Marine General Hospital in Cincinnati due to intoxication, only to escape at four in the morning. He was subsequently found in a state of “stupid intoxication” around eight, have spent the night drinking his way through the city streets.  

Finally, beer consumption within the Union Army could serve as an extension of the same festive culture that Germans had brought to northern cities nearly two decades before. Chicago’s Fourth of July celebration in 1862 featured a parade of Union Army units from nearby Camp

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Douglas, including the predominately German Fourth Division. When the parade ended, the soldiers joined a massive crowd of local German Chicagoans in a popular city grove, where they sang, drank, and celebrated in typical Teutonic fashion. John Hess, who served as sutler to Chicago’s own 24th Illinois Infantry, spent years pursuing payment for various provisions sold to Joseph Lannert, principal musician for the regiment’s band. Among these items was $30.60 worth of beer, as much as four barrels depending on the price and style (not listed), purchased for the band in the summer of 1864. Though the government denied his claim and Hess was presumably never paid, the pairing of ample quantities of beer and the regiment band suggests the same ethnocultural conviviality that Germans practiced had been practicing in Chicago’s and other cities’ beer gardens since the establishment of their communities. It is further unlikely that the music or beer remained confined to the band, or even the camp of the 24th Illinois.23

In the unusual and trying circumstances of the war, many soldiers considered alcohol a vital refuge from their circumstances. It is only natural that in this environment, even a scarce supply of beer would constitute a great necessity to German troops and a new opportunity for native-born soldiers whose communities may well have opposed German beer and public lives during peacetime. Although a minority of courts martial cannot by themselves explicate the full extent of beer’s penetration among Union Army soldiers nor fully describe German units’ wartime engagement with its consumption, they do allude to a wider military culture where alcohol consumption seeped through porous cultural barriers and subjective authority structures. While the blurring of these ethnic lines via beer did not necessarily mitigate nativist sentiment either in or out of the military, it did encourage a taste for lager beer among greater portions of the U.S.

population. No matter how much beer soldiers drank, however, the war exerted an even greater influence on the brewing industry, and its German-American component, outside of the military.  

The United States Brewers Association

While the Union Army fought the war, Congress worked to finance it. Tariffs and other revenue sources proved inadequate to support an expanding wartime federal government. In the summer of 1860 Congress increased customs duties, directly taxed the states, and instituted an income tax, but these measures also fell short of providing the millions of dollars needed to combat disunion. In late 1861, Congress re-convened and began discussing excise taxes on myriad goods from railroads to cotton, as well as liquors both distilled and fermented. According to historian Amy Mittelman, legislators considered alcoholic beverages to be an easy target for vital revenue. It was a luxury or an evil or both, and deserved taxation in any case. The Internal Revenue Act of 1862 “marked the entrance of the federal government into the affairs of the liquor industry; it has never left.”

Taxing beer at the federal level was in a way novel—the last federal excise tax on distilled liquors had ended in 1817 and did not include beer. But it also iterated the longstanding regulatory relationship between governing bodies and alcohol producers, which helps explains why excise taxes on beer and liquor, unlike nearly every other wartime tax, remained long after the Civil War’s end. Congressional discussions while organizing the excise tax revealed that they considered liquor a “sure thing.” They treated alcohol as either ingrained custom or addiction, assuming habitual drinkers would pay any price for it. They did, however, join the common German refrain of

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24 Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans*, 33; For insight into the general scarcity of beer within the Union Army, see Kamphoefner and Helbich, *Germans in the Civil War*, 89, 123, 187, 194, 254, 422.

distinguishing beer from distilled liquors, and thus reduced its relative tax. They discussed lager beer almost jokingly while debating the bill. A few used the opportunity to demonstrate their temperance leanings and deem lager beer more damaging that spirits, but others, including Thaddeus Stevens, labelled lagers the least intoxicating of all liquors, if they intoxicated at all. Such members based their claims on personal experience or by recounting (with mocking accents) conversations with German-American acquaintances.26

The new tax, as originally passed, struggled both to define alcohol economically and to accommodate the internal complexities of the industry, and thus gave the brewing industry ample opportunity for rebuttal. Signed into law by President Lincoln on July 1, 1862, the Internal Revenue Act of 1862 taxed beer at the rate of one dollar per thirty-one gallon barrel (lager beer received no special treatment) and required brewers to pay an additional fifty dollars annually for a license. German brewers responded almost immediately, not with the public demonstrations and violence of nearly a decade earlier, but with peaceful organization and political mobilization.27

In late August, three dozen lager brewers from New York formed an association and immediately called for a national convention, to be held in the same city on November 12, 1862. The Erste Brauer-Congress, or First Brewer’s Congress, was attended by brewers from New York, Newark, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh, and other nearby cities. All were of German descent and the proceedings of the meeting were recorded in the German language. Forming a national association that protected the brewing industry’s common interests, the president of the congress declared, represented their only hope in navigating their “unusual” and “urgent” circumstances. Aside from internal organization and structure, the association focused solely on

26 Mittelman, Beer ngs Battles, 16, 25-27; Baron, Brewed in America, 213-214.
27 Mittelman, Brewing Battles, 26-27; Baron, Brewed in America, 214-215.
the new federal tax, specifically its effect on lager beer. Their meetings did not question the legitimacy of the tax, nor request its repeal, but rather objected to which beer was taxed and how.28

Brewers at the congress addressed their grievances in a far more peaceful way than Chicago’s German community had done in 1855, but their dissatisfaction with the revenue bill stemmed from similar commitments to economic liberalism and radical democracy. The law taxed any beer sold after its initial passage, including large quantities of lager beer that had been produced the previous winter. The long-term storage required to mature lager beer produced over the winter and the resulting necessity to form contracts with retailers in advance, these brewers reasoned, meant that their product did not fit into the simplistic tax structure being foisted upon them. They paid the tax up front and complied with the law, but lager brewers staunchly objected to the government’s refusal to consider lager beer’s unique properties. The president of the association, Frederick Lauer of New York, wrote a letter explaining these circumstances to the commissioner tasked with enforcing this law, who rebuffed him. This convinced the brewers that their constitutional rights were not being respected, and they resolved to send a delegation to Washington to defend their rights, secure a refund and, if possible, modify the law.29

A second brewers meeting convened in Philadelphia in February 1863, attended by brewers from an even wider variety of cities including Chicago and Cincinnati. Lauer’s report described amicable relations between the delegates and various members of Congress, who not only listened to the brewers but also offered advice on how to best accomplish their goals, such as appearing in person rather than sending lawyers to advocate for them. In December 1862, this cooperation led

28 Although the congress was attended only by brewers from eastern states, there is still evidence of Midwestern participation from the association’s inception. A nine-person committee appointed to propose “improvements” to the revenue act included four representatives from Midwestern brewing centers, including George Eichenlaub from Cincinnati and Michael Diversey from Chicago. See Proceedings of the Erste Brauer-Congress, convened November 12-13, 1862, Beer Institute Library, Washington D.C., 1-10; Baron, Brewed in America, 214.
to the House of Representatives amending the revenue bill to refund the premature taxes, a move secured with the help of local brewing associations from New York, Philadelphia, and Cincinnati. Overall, the association demonstrated a general willingness to work cooperatively with members on Congress and abide by the law, in stark contrast with distillers, many of whom had been found to evade the new taxes wherever possible.  

Negotiations continued, and the delegation gave its final report at the third convention held in Cincinnati in late October 1863. A delegation of ale brewers (who also attended the Cincinnati convention as guests) ultimately joined their lager-brewing colleagues in Washington by a delegation of ale brewers. Their combined force successfully lobbied for a reduction in the tax on beer from one dollar to sixty cents per barrel, as well as a more “proper” method of counting fractional barrels for tax purposes. Unfortunately, however, the Senate killed the refund provision of the bill in March 1863 and no refund would be paid to brewers for their erroneously taxed beer until 1869. Despite mixed results, the outcomes and tone of these early brewers’ meetings determined much of the associations future behavior and influence over the industry as a whole.  

While they adopted the name United States Brewers Association by their third meeting, the group remained committed to lager beer above all else. Ale and porter brewers regularly attended this and future conventions, and USBA officials affirmed the importance of cooperation, but the organization consistently prioritized German lager beer in membership and objective. They published proceedings in both English and German from the third meeting forward and remained bilingual well into the 1870s. The USBA did not represent all brewers during this time despite giving that appearance, but it presented a unified front to the U.S. government on behalf of their

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30 Proceedings of the Zweite Brauer-Congress, convened February 4-5, 1863, Beer Institute Library, 1-12; Baron, Brewed in America, 215.
31 Proceedings of the Third Convention of the United States Brewers Association, convened October 28-29, 1863, Beer Institute Library, 7-8; Mittelman, Brewing Battles, 33.
industry. The organization quickly evolved into an effective lobbying force, responding to industry-wide obstacles in ways that other manufacturing sectors would take decades to emulate. Brewers in Chicago and Cincinnati sent regular delegations.32

From its initial establishment, the USBA demonstrated a certain hybridity when setting policy goals, which blended domestic concerns with international mindsets. Despite the clear victory of lowering the beer tax to sixty cents per barrel, the USBA insisted that the ideal “liberal” tax rate from an industry standpoint was fifty cents. The brewers determined this rate by reviewing alcohol taxation rates across the Atlantic, focusing primarily on Great Britain and the various German states. References to this approach appeared early but culminated in a massive report commissioned at the fifth convention in Baltimore and submitted to Congress in early 1866. The report, compiled following a USBA commissioned tour of Europe, outlined the alcohol tax laws across Great Britain and Europe, including seven major German states, as well as their effect on local industries. Nearly all of Europe, they noted, not only enjoyed lower taxes on beer than the current U.S. tax rate but also their proposed rate of fifty cents per barrel (excepting Britain, with an adjusted tax of ninety-four cents per barrel). Moderate taxes on beer, they argued, provided the best results for all concerned parties—tolerable rates led to better beer for consumers and thus higher sales and taxes on those sales. The Cincinnati convention in 1863 passed a resolution affirming the brewers’ support for the federal government and Union cause and their willingness to pay higher taxes if domestic circumstances commanded it, though they maintained that liberal tax laws would maximize their ability to do so. When Congress subsequently raised the tax back

32 Proceedings of the Third Convention of the United States Brewers Association, 7-8; Mittelman, Brewing Battles, 28, 33; Baron, Brewed in America, 26-27.
to one dollar per barrel, the brewers paid it while patiently continuing to negotiate with the government.  

Brewers further asserted that their product conferred immense societal benefits in addition to economic ones, and the USBA looked abroad to prove it. Soon after forming, the German-led USBA began insisting that lager beer was a “wholesome and nutritious beverage” that, when burdened by regulation or taxation, restricted “the growth of the nation.” In Europe and especially German states, they explained, proper regulatory treatment of beer promoted the well-being and health of the citizenry. Contrasting themselves with spirituous liquors, which they derided as proven hazards that deserved punitive taxation, brewers regarded their lager beer as a moderate alternative that presented no social dangers. Bavaria exemplified their argument as a place where wise government protections of the beer industry translated to cultural harmony. Holding up ethnically German festive culture as a model, the 1866 USBA report described Bavarian public festivals with ten thousand attendees, all of whom enjoyed beer and wine alongside games and amusements while devoid of “any drunkenness or impropriety of conduct. Not a police officer was on the ground, or was required to be present to preserve order.” The Bavarian government recognized beer “as a national beverage” and treated it accordingly. The U.S., brewers argued, was quickly adopting beer as its own national drink, and advised the government to support this enlightening development.  

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33 The rotating geographic location for early USBA conventions factored heavily into attendance. Local cities were always more represented in each convention. While Chicago brewers were less present, Cincinnati typically sent five or more delegates to each convention from 1863 forward. See Proceedings of the Third Convention of the United States Brewers Association, 7-8, 11-12; Proceedings of the Fourth Brewers’ Congress, convened September 8-9, 1864, Beer Institute Library, 8; Report of the Commissioners Appointed by the United States Brewers Association to the United States Revenue Commission on the Taxation and Manufacture of Malt Liquors in Great Britain and the Continent of Europe (Philadelphia: Collins, 1866), Beer Institute Library, 18-38; Proceedings of the Sixth Annual Brewers’ Congress, convened October 18-19, 1866, Beer Institute Library, 6.

By advocating for their industry on the political stage and looking back to Europe for guidance on how best to do so, German immigrant brewers demonstrated two priorities that would define the direction of their industry moving forward. First, they shed any remaining ambiguity regarding their desired customers. Lager beer, the USBA’s clear favorite over any other style of beer, was no longer an isolated German product manufactured for isolated German immigrant communities, if indeed it had ever been so. The brewing industry became a powerful force of integration for German-Americans, where they not only sought participation in wider society but married a transnationally-constructed immigrant product into a negotiated American ethos. Second, these brewers adopted a new tactic to ward off anti-alcohol reformers. During the 1850s, German producers and consumers of beer fought against nativist and temperance agitation by prioritizing their perceived constitutional rights as citizens. During the 1860s, industry leaders began arguing first and foremost that beer served as the most effective weapon against intemperance and drunkenness. Beer neither intoxicated nor disrupted society the way distilled liquors could. They insisted instead that “[t]he remedy for national intemperance…is not the abolition or disuse of every beverage but cold water, but in the substitution for a hurtful beverage one which is harmless.”

Brewers’ perception of lager beer, rooted in early modern attitudes transplanted from Europe, convinced them that Germans would be natural leaders in this transition. Their orderly conduct and devotion to lager beer allowed them to enjoy life without suffering the negative effects of alcohol consumption. The USBA commission sent to Europe reported:

We have seen…thousands of persons—men, women, and children—in the German states, assembled, drinking their national beverage and enjoying their games and sports with the greatest hilarity, and have failed to see a drunken among them. The

35 Report of the Commissioners, 46-47.
natives of [German] states, who emigrate to this country, bring with them their preference for [beer], and the sports and amusements of their fatherland. No policemen are required to protect the public peace from any disturbance of it by a ‘Saengerfest’ or ‘Turnverein.’ When the services of the police are required at these festivals, it is to guard their peaceful reunions and innocent enjoyments from the insolent and riotous intrusion of ruffians inspired by quite different potations.36

The UBSA asserted the benefits and safety of lager beer almost immediately, and soon after began framing these arguments in terms of the temperance debate. The earliest pronouncements appended to their effort to reform federal tax policy, but they soon took on a life of their own. At the Seventh Brewers’ Congress, held in Chicago in June 1867 and with over thirty Chicago and Cincinnati brewers present, the USBA declared the brewing industry to be the “true apostles of temperance” and that “the constant agitation against malt liquors showed a total ignorance of the true mission of these nutritious beverages” to prevent drunkenness and nourish the poor. They lauded the work of pioneering immigrant brewers around the country despite blue laws that, while restrictive, represented a lesser threat than the prohibition temperance reformers now advocated. If reformers could only see past their “crazy notions,” brewers argued, they would acknowledge that beer presented the best path to true reform. The USBA appointed delegates from each state to investigate temperance and anti-Sunday campaigns, and form plans on how best to mitigate them. This reasoning and course of action would help the brewing industry ward off anti-alcohol reformers for decades, but not forever.37

36 Report of the Commissioners, 47.
37 Proceedings of the Third Convention of the United States Brewers Association, 8; Proceedings of the Fourth Brewers’ Congress, 10; Proceedings of the Seventh Brewers’ Congress, convened June 5-6, 1867, Beer Institute Library, 6-7.
Lager Beer Evolves

The Civil War was a unique event in American history whose consequences ripple into the present day, but the war’s effect on German immigrants and lager beer unfolded in the shadow of more foundational shifts in government and race relations. Organizational and political development among German-American brewers and the wartime popularity of lager beer took place against a backdrop of unchecked expansion among American brewers and the integration of German festive culture into American public life. But beer’s contributions to the negotiated acceptance of German immigrants did not occur instantly. For all the inter-ethnic and political space it helped carve for immigrant communities during the 1850s, German-led brewing was still a minority product in 1860. The nation’s 1,269 brewers produced just over one million barrels, due in large part to the tripling of per capita beer consumption since 1840. Alcoholic beverages accounted for about three percent of the nation’s economic output, malt beverages comprising less than half of that. Lager beer accounted for roughly one quarter of the total, attesting to the enormous strides it had taken during the previous decade. While neither industrialized nor big business in 1860, it steadily filled the voids left by reduced liquor and cider consumption while also outpacing competing ales. The forward motion of the brewing industry capitalized on this early momentum to fuel its more cerebral growth.38

Starting in the 1860s, breweries began to physically reflect the underlying changes taking place within American beer culture. As brewers developed complex brewing systems designed to serve larger populations of drinkers and in turn generate more revenue, such as increasingly mechanized brewing equipment and expanded icehouse capacity, they turned to professional architects to design and engineer sophisticated brewery structures. Growing prominence and

38 Mittelman, Brewing Battles, 21-22; Conzen, “Ethnicity as Festive Culture,” 74.
prosperity likewise allowed breweries to embrace form alongside function. Before the 1860s, brewery design was typically basic and functional. Even large breweries typically grew into complexes of short and simple buildings that showed little regard for aesthetics. Both the need to update existing breweries and construct new ones throughout the late nineteenth century provided ample opportunities for brewery architects, themselves often of German descent and from Midwestern cities. Although Chicago physically embodied its great influence on brewery architecture later in the century, due largely to the devastation of the Great Chicago Fire on both breweries themselves and the documentation of their construction, Chicago-based architects managed half the nation’s brewery design projects prior to Prohibition and helped effect the technical and aesthetic “Germanization” of American brewery design.

The architectural design of a German-owned brewery in the United States could convey both its ethnic heritage and technical development. Cincinnati breweries built between the 1850s and 1870s were often “style conscious” in their design, emulating Rundbogenstil (“round-arched style”), a Romanesque Revival form popular among German breweries since the 1830s and 1840s. This style allowed for larger breweries with a more impressive outward façade. The main building of the Christian Moerlein complex, for example, featured arches, rounded windows, and brick cornices. Breweries of Moerlein’s size usually comprised complexes of many buildings, so designs began unifying them around a visual theme. Frederick Bauman, Chicago’s first German-born architect, also used his designs to help lager brewers tackle their technical obstacles, such as refrigeration and the use of gravity to help water and malt flow naturally through equipment. Eventually he published articles in brewing journals regarding the design of above-ground icehouses, a perennial problem for Chicago’s lager brewers. Steam power likewise became a more sophisticated presence in breweries, with models capable not just of pumping water or beer to
upper floors of a brewery but also boiling and transferring wort from kettles to mash tuns to cooling vats. Though unseen, subterranean lager storage (a far more common presence in Cincinnati) also began developing into extensive networks of cellars and sub-cellars and remained a significant site for combining ethnic and technical elements of German breweries.39

Architectural developments gave distinct physical features to lager breweries as they eclipsed ale brewers and established themselves as industry leaders in the United States. Both Chicago and Cincinnati mirrored these aesthetics and growth. Smaller immigrant firms from the 1850s ballooned into local and regional powers while also incubating a new generation of brewers that would help define late century brewing.

**Cincinnati**

Cincinnati’s beer market grew at an incredible rate through the 1860s and beyond. As the city itself approached a population of two hundred thousand, the number of breweries in the city grew to thirty-six, up from twenty-five in 1855, while existing breweries like Schaller & Schiff drastically increased their capacity through new equipment and cellars. Most operations were German-owned. With access to the Ohio River and new transportation networks like the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, Cincinnati was able to trade beer regionally as well as to southern cities, especially New Orleans. In 1860, over seventeen thousand barrels floated downriver out of 22,500 total barrels exported. Though local consumers drank the majority of Cincinnati’s beer, the city’s brewing interests considered trade to be a pillar of their business.40

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40 Cincinnati imported beer from other cities as well, but imports never exceeded one third of exports during this period. The proportion would only decrease as exports multiplied during the late 1860s. William Smith, *Annual Statement of the Trade and Commerce of Cincinnati, for the Commercial Year Ending August 31st, 1859* (Cincinnati: Gazette Company Steam Printing House, 1859), 381 C 574 1848-59, CHLA; William Smith, *Annual Statement of the*
The Civil War disrupted this growth in the short term. Southern ports closed in April 1861 and suspended much of Cincinnati’s valuable export trade. Local production fell well below capacity, with brewers refusing to take on new contracts for barley and other supplies due to “gloomy anticipations.” Markets slowly reopened as the Union Army reclaimed the Mississippi River, but by 1863 demand for beer was rising due to more than just accessible ports. The federal government now taxed beer at a rate of one dollar per barrel, or roughly three cents per gallon, but it also taxed distilled spirits at a rate of twenty cents per gallon. Contemporaries credited the rising relative costs of distilled liquor as a significant factor in returning demand for beer despite simultaneous increases in its price. The war’s effect on beer consumption was not purely economic, however, as by 1865 the same voices also credited local predilections for beer on a second cause: the superiority of German lager.41

Cincinnati’s total production began to skyrocket after the war, singularly accounting for more than half of Ohio’s beer manufactures in 1868. By 1869, Cincinnati brewers attained a national reputation and shipped their product to all major cities in the Union. They produced over three hundred thousand barrels of lager in 1869, surpassing all other locally produced beer styles in barrelage by a factor of ten. Exports reached sixty-six thousand barrels, an increase of nearly one hundred percent compared to the previous year. As American beer began to industrialize and

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organize at the national level, it did so in ways which incorporated its increasingly German identity.\textsuperscript{42}

Although numerous Cincinnati brewers from all nationalities closed their doors during the Civil War era due to competition or poor management, those that prospered in the long run were almost exclusively German. Christian Moerlein, soon to be one of the largest brewers in the nation, became a clear leader among Cincinnati’s rapidly prospering brewers. Production tripled to sixty thousand barrels per year by 1870, and Moerlein’s shrewd business acumen led many local brewers to seek advice from him. In addition to buying out the stake of his partner, Conrad Windisch, in 1866, Moerlein steadily expanded his operation throughout the decade, incorporating additional cellars, above-ground cold storage facilities, an additional brewhouse, and a workshop to produce barrels. Several breweries nipped at his heels, such as the Kauffman & Company brewery which built a new facility in Over-the-Rhine in 1860. Moerlein’s greatest competition came from his old partner; Conrad Windisch joined with a Bavarian named Gottlieb Muhlhauser to establish the Lion Brewery right after leaving Moerlein’s firm. They designed their gigantic new facility in the Romanesque revival style. The building boasted two stone lions perched atop the gables, powerful steam engines, and two stories of lager beer cellars. By 1868 their output reached thirty thousand barrels per year and the Lion Brewery would soon outstrip even Moerlein. An insatiable thirst for lager beer was growing both locally and regionally, allowing brewers to industrialize at incredible rates.\textsuperscript{43}


New brewers also tried their luck as entrepreneurs during the 1860s. John Gerke, an immigrant from Hanover of remarkably meager means and education, purchased a partnership in Joseph Schaller’s prosperous brewery in 1866 after spending years amassing wealth in various industries. In 1863, John Hauck and John Ulrich Windisch, two Bavarian immigrants, bought five acres of land near the Miami-Erie Canal and built a steam-powered brewery there. Hauck and Windisch trained extensively and served as brewmasters at the late Friedrich Billiod’s Lafayette Brewery (Hauck had married Billiod’s daughter Katherine in 1858) and the Moerlein brewing company, respectively, before striking out on their own. Investing in such a large operation paid off for its new proprietors; they produced ten thousand barrels in their first year and gained such a reputation for quality that the brewery and storage cellars were quickly expanded. By 1869 they produced forty thousand barrels annually.\

The growth of Cincinnati breweries relied on a distinctive local demand for beer, such that four out of every five barrels of beer were consumed locally even as production spiked in the late 1860s. Early in the decade, citizens outside of German neighborhoods often viewed lager beer as a perplexing or even vexing phenomenon. One Cincinnati newspaper reprinted a London article asking how the citizenry of Germany could smoke dozens of cigars and drink incalculable amounts of beer without becoming ill. Another published a humorous fictional account of a native-born housewife scolding her husband for staying out in German saloons all night, dancing and fraternizing with “Dutch girls” and reeking of lager beer. By the mid-1860s, however, the city’s two thousand alcohol retail establishments had helped more and more native-born Cincinnatians understand German cultural predilections from firsthand experience.

45 Timothy Holian, Over the Barrel: The Brewing History and Beer Culture of Cincinnati, 1800 to the Present, Volume One (St. Joseph, MO: Sudhaus Press, 2000), 112; “German Amusements,” Cincinnati Daily Press, October 24, 1861;
Local commentators marveled at “the taste which has been acquired for ‘Lager,’ as a beverage, not only among the native population, but all classes. Beer Gardens, where this beverage is swallowed by old and young and in incredible quantities, have become institutions of great magnitude in [Cincinnati] and all the large cities of the Union.” They speculated that many drinkers equated lager beer with grain, where a shortage of one was as damaging as a shortage of the other. Based on “the rush made to those beer shops, where a fresh keg of ‘Lager’ has been tapped,” they concluded that “a large number of citizens would dispense with their break rather than their beer.” Lager might still make humorous appearances in the newspaper, but not (intentionally) as a detriment. One overtly racist poem published by the Cincinnati Times portrayed a recent visit by a Native American leader to beer gardens in Over-the-Rhine, where he was subdued by the beer that Germans consume with ease.46

By the end of the decade, beer gardens appeared in ever-greater number and variety throughout the city, ranging from tiny yards behind saloons to elaborate picnic spaces with many tables, cooking space, and room left over for nightly concerts during the summer. Retailers vied to invite customers to their establishments for Sunday lunches, sometimes advertising a specific brewer’s product. The 1870s and later decades only solidified these expansive trends in the production, visibility, and popularity of lager beer.47

47 See, for example, Westliche Blätter [Cincinnati, OH], September 22, 1867; Kenny’s Illustrated Cincinnati, 14.
Chicago

Chicago’s German population took longer than Cincinnati to convince the city of lager’s merits. The Lager Beer Riot remained fresh in the public mind, immigrants remained a controversial topic in the media, and the region’s most successful ale brewery resided just a few blocks from the city’s most established lager brewers. Ultimately, however, German-manufactured lager beer proved just as successful along shores of Lake Michigan as the banks of the Ohio River. The local brewing industry was still smaller than Cincinnati’s—in 1857 the combined investments of every brewery not named Lill & Diversey totaled a mere seventy thousand dollars. Nevertheless, it was robust. In 1861 the city of Chicago produced around fifty thousand barrels of lager beer while producing over ninety thousand barrels of ales and porters. Many breweries dotted the lakeshore, especially north of the Chicago River, and their trade integrated into a market extending far beyond the city limits. As early as 1852, Milwaukee brewers floated small quantities of lager beer down to Chicago. Some of the beer shipments continued on to St. Louis via canal and the Illinois River, and newly-constructed rail links soon simplified the entire process. In the late 1850s, a fledgling brewer named Philip Best purchased a saloon on Randolph Street, near the site of the riot, to sell his lager. In turn, Chicago exported tens of thousands of barrels of its own beer, perhaps ten percent of its total output.48

Lill & Diversey reflected the broader characteristics the city’s industry. After producing ales and porters exclusively during its early years, by 1862 the firm devoted around a thousand

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barrels’ worth of fermentation tanks to lager brewing, compared to around 1,500 for ales. Consumers found their beer in Michigan and western Illinois but also in New Orleans, Colorado, and western New York. The brewery occupied two city blocks on northern Pine Street (later Michigan Avenue), costing hundreds of thousands of dollars and consisting of three major buildings and assorted out buildings, yards, stabling, and storage. The brewery doubled as its own malting facility and employed multiple advanced technologies in its operation, from grain elevators to steam pumps to early refrigeration. For Lill & Diversey, added lager production faced the same obstacle that Chicago’s early German brewers faced a decade before—the extensive cold storage space required for secondary fermentation. Chicago’s soft, wet soils prevented extensive use of cooling cellars, but newly developed ice houses allowed the city’s estimated twenty lager brewers (Lill & Diversey included) to better compete with encroaching Milwaukee concerns. The corporate organization of the brewery likewise evolved—Lill & Diversey incorporated in 1867 following another expansion of its brewing facilities, employed agents “in all the principal cities of the West” to facilitate its distribution, and built a supplementary malt house in Janesville, Wisconsin. Lill & Diversey might have been the largest and most successful operation in the city during the early 1860s, but it soon faced competition.

In 1860 over 110,000 people resided in Chicago and in the course of the decade over sixty breweries operated in the city at one time or another. Most were small and many failed. Of the thirty-two open in 1860, twenty did not survive the decade. All but a handful would change ownership, incorporate new partners, or otherwise reorganize. Germans lager brewers owned most

of these firms, particularly the ones who lasted the decade, and they enjoyed most of the local industry’s growth during this period.\textsuperscript{50}

In 1847, John Huck’s original brewery and beer garden looked quaint compared to Lill & Diversey’s large operation two blocks away, but by 1865 the large brick structures of his Eagle Brewery looked like competition. The malthouses contained two enormous ovens which could roast thousands of bushels of malt at a time. Above his beer cellars now stood three insulated icehouses which chilled his beer even during Chicago’s hot summers. The brewery was two stories, but Huck planned to add a third, employing a forty-horsepower steam engine to operate equipment and move supplies around the complex. His beer was no longer just a local feature, but rather well-regarded throughout the Old Northwest and later considered by many German-Americans to be one of the archetypal breweries in America.\textsuperscript{51}

Other German-owned lager breweries expanded alongside Huck’s. By 1863 the Busch & Brand brewery established a head office to manage their two operations, one on Cedar Street and the other on nearby Blue Island. Following their partnership in the late 1850s, the Seipp & Lehman brewery greatly expanded throughout the 1860s. Seipp’s original brewery produced just one thousand barrels of beer when he first opened in 1854, but the new partnership would approach one hundred thousand barrels of beer annually by the end of the decade. This pace led them not only to surpass Lill & Diversey, but also become the nation’s fifth largest brewer by the end of the 1870s. Beyond production, Conrad Seipp contributed to the United States Sanitary Commission, a federal relief agency during the war, was active in the local Republican Party, and taught his son

\textsuperscript{50} Skilnik, \textit{Beer: A History of Brewing in Chicago}, 8-9; Dale Van Wieren, \textit{American Breweries II} (West Point, PA: Eastern Coast Breweriana Association, 1995), 72-82. These numbers include breweries within the Chicago city limits at the time, and may be supplemented by breweries in surrounding municipalities that are today part of Chicago.

William the brewing business while Brand served in the state legislature. Prosperity allowed
immigrants like Seipp and Brand to politically, socially, and financially contribute to their
communities, a practice they often passed on to their children along with their wealth.52

New firms rose to prominence during the decade. Peter Schoenhofen, a Prussian émigré to
Chicago by way of New York, spent his early years working for Chicago’s veteran German
brewers, including driving a beer wagon for Conrad Seipp. In 1860 he partnered with another
German immigrant and foreman at Seipp & Lehman, Matthias Gottfried, to establish a brewery of
their own. Like their 1850s predecessors, Gottfried and Schoenhofen started small at roughly six
hundred barrels per year, but when Schoenhofen bought out his partner’s interest in 1867 the
brewery had moved to a larger location and produced over ten thousand. The industry’s momentum
in Chicago and elsewhere allowed firms like Schoenhofen’s to grow rapidly and reorganize (or
fail) suddenly. Several brewers of both ales and lagers placed local ads either looking for partners
of hoping to sell their facilities.53

Lager beer and its local producers grew faster than the city could acclimate. The Chicago
Daily Tribune warmed slowly, having continued its campaign against Catholics but largely traded
(non-Catholic) nativist politics for the Republican platform since its fiery coverage of the Lager
Beer Riot. The paper now maintained a far less extremist anti-alcohol stance. Its editors might
repeat hyperbolic claims that lager beer drinkers consumed a barrel every day or associate them

52 William C. Seipp, Conrad’s son, contributed generously to various social institutions upon his death. See Chicago
Historical Society, Annual Report for the Year Ending October 31, 1912 (Chicago Historical Society, 1912), 60-61;
One Hundred Years of Brewing, 163; “One Day to the Sick and Wounded Soldiers,” Chicago Tribune, October 26,
1864; “Congressional Convention,” Chicago Tribune, October 10, 1866; Chicago und Sein Deutschtum, 144-145.
53 One Hundred Years of Brewing, 188-189; “Schoenhofen (Peter) Brewing Co.,” Encyclopedia of Chicago, Chicago
“Chicago’s Breweries Statistical Items about the Most Outstanding Breweries,” Der Westen, June 20, 1875; A.T.
Andreas, History of Chicago: From the Earliest Period to the Present Time, Volume 3 (Chicago: A.T. Andreas, 1886),
578; “For Sale—Brewery—Valuable,” Chicago Tribune May 25, 1866; “Rare Chance to Make Money,” Chicago
Tribune, September 26, 1866; “For Sale—A Brewery,” Chicago Tribune, June 30, 1865.
with isolated instances of violence around the city, but they also came to lager’s defense when they could, say, use it to attack their rivals. When a Democratic paper attacked numerous lager brewers and saloonkeepers for allegedly violating license ordinances in early 1860, the Tribune rushed to their aid by accusing its competition of character defamation and attempting to destroy their businesses. Soon after, the Tribune published an exhaustive list of the eighty establishments in question, demonstrating that only three were actually guilty of any violation.54

Lager beer’s repeated appearance in the papers reflected gradually warming attitudes toward the beverage, and the city government could not help but weigh in. When one alderman proposed yet another resolution to enforce a Sunday ban on retail alcohol sales, a second alderman asked pointedly whether such a resolution would include lager beer, since it was “not a liquor.” The resolution did not pass, a tangential argument about whether it was pronounced “Logger” or “Lar-ger” demonstrating the relative novelty of the debate. In 1863, the city prosecuted a recently arrived German immigrant, “fresh from Faderland,” for public drunkenness after touring the city’s lager beer saloons, and the Tribune opined that his conviction had finally settled the question of lager’s intoxicating effects. The political economy of lager beer was at times exasperating—when Detroit Democrats carried an election by using opposition to Sunday license laws and lager beer to attract German Republicans, the Tribune lamented “that was all there was about it.” The paper’s icy attitude toward Germans and beer soon thawed, however, a change that reflected larger societal acceptance of German customs and lager beer into society.55

The Tribune never approached the zealous advocacy for German-immigrants displayed in foreign language newspapers like the Illinois Staats-Zeitung, but its coverage of outdoor Sunday revelry and local beer consumption evened out by the end of the decade. The paper continued to report temperance meetings in friendly terms, including fiery sermons by local religious figures which accused Chicago’s German community of trying to tear down churches and replace them with lager beer halls, but it also began reporting German Turner festivals and local debates over the price of beer without editorial criticism. It did not celebrate Germans’ heavy influence in the local Republican Party in suppressing blue laws or recount German-led anti-temperance meetings, as the Staats-Zeitung did, but it did print letters to the editor which decried “Maine-Lawism” as impractical and recalled the “convulsions” that has resulted from temperance activism in the past. By 1869 the Tribune included lager beer consumption, which afforded Americans “the novelty of pleasure at European prices,” in its arguments that Chicago’s parks rivalled the best in the nation. The debate was hardly over, but even the Tribune seemed willing to acknowledge the positive aspects of lager beer by the end of the decade.56

The Civil War era saw numerous steps in the acceptance of lager beer and its immigrant purveyors, but before long the wartime national crises that had suppressed anti-alcohol agitation faded. A creeping tolerance for beer represented a step forward for some, and a step backward for others, and the temperance debates of the late 1850s soon resurfaced.

Beer a Temperance Beverage

In 1866, a cholera epidemic swept through Cincinnati, killing hundreds in a matter of weeks and causing a health panic within the city. Charlatans offered remedies including opium, alcohol, peppermint, and cinnamon, and some believed beer helped spread the disease. During a particularly tragic day in Cincinnati, lager beer consumed at a German Sunday picnic was blamed for dozens on cholera deaths. Folk advice circulated on how to avoid contracting the disease, including eating fresh food, maintaining a clean home, and abstaining from all “intoxicating drinks, ale and beer, as well as whiskey,” causing beer sales in the city to plummet. Brewers disagreed with that assessment, arguing that lager beer’s healthful qualities actually protected against disease. At the 1867 United States Brewers Association meeting, representatives from New York, Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis all claimed that beer reduced cholera deaths in the Midwest versus New England and further explained why the disease was more prevalent in European countries where beer did not flow generously. Following the Civil War, earlier debates about the health effects of lager beer found new life and became the new front against anti-alcohol reformers.57

From the late 1860s forward, the temperance movement found itself revitalized, due in large part to women’s participation. Long kept on the sidelines in a temperance movement organized by men, women began asserting their agency within the movement once it began politicizing in the 1850s. Their efforts intensified as the temperance movement wavered during the sectional crisis and war years and as dramatic increases in alcohol consumption, especially

lager beer, became a greater perceived threat to the home and family. While their eventual attacks on saloons drew significant attention, they took place alongside rhetorical battles regarding the health benefits of beer, its intoxicating potential, and Sunday laws. The German-led brewing industry did not hesitate to fight back on these fronts. Though revived during the late 1860s, public debates over the intoxicating effects and temperance potential of lager beer would continue until Prohibition.  

While the USBA worked to establish a narrative around the benefits of lager beer and the leadership of the German community in making it a national drink, debates raged on at the local level. At its core, the common argument for lager beer touted it as a moderate beverage used for enjoyment and clearly distinguishable from the intemperance of distilled liquors. Substituting “mild lager” for “fiery whiskey” reduced public crime and drunkenness while also conferring health benefits on the population. Many questioned whether lager beer was intoxicating at all.  

Some treatments of the subject were tongue-in-cheek, such as a report of a Cincinnati German (a “worthy disciple of Gambrinus”) consuming forty-five glasses of lager in five hours without any damage to his health. A native-born Cincinnatian made a humorous experiment out of the question in 1866, documenting a day of lager drinking which began at nine in the morning. Consuming three glasses of beer in the first ten minutes, the author went on to describe a day of revelry and comradery with several unnamed Germans which lasted well into the night. He insisted along the way that lager beer was not intoxicating, nor was he ever drunk, all while slurring his speech (as represented textually) and arguing with his wife between hiccups (likewise represented textually). Other commentary looked to Germany for evidence that beer was not intoxicating,  

59 “Consumption of ‘Brews’ in Chicago,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 1, 1866.
observing that while wine and beer were an “indispensable part of a German picnic,” the writer had never witnessed a single case of intoxication.⁶⁰

As during the 1850s, the question of beer’s intoxicating effects also resulted in court proceedings from time to time. Trials from the east coast repeatedly joined local stories Chicago and Cincinnati newspapers, and as in Union Army courts martial, the definition of intoxication proved highly variable. Testimony in the trial (for alleged drunkenness) of a Chicago police sergeant openly discussed his consumption of beer, but likewise insisted that it “won’t make a man drunk.”⁶¹

Both sides in these debates clearly and intimately linked the issue of beer consumption and the German-American community. A temperance leader in Chicago accused the German community of being more devoted to lager beer than to the Republican Party. Local temperance advocates incensed the Staats-Zeitung when they placed Germans at the head of a “widespread and well-organized conspiracy” aimed at “desecrating the Sabbath, breaking down public morals, fostering crime and violence, and undermining the very principles which all Americans esteem very highly.” Not only was their demonization of drinking beer on Sundays “foolish and unjust,” the newspaper declared, it was a hypocritical attack on religious freedom.⁶²

Soon after, another Chicago clergyman accused the German community and its “beer conventions” of undermining temperance efforts through its influence in the Republican Party:

The Germans rendered valuable services; they fought very bravely in the late War, but they have no right to force upon the New World the un republican and immoral principles which they brought with them when they came here from the old country.

Beer gardens and desecration of the Sabbath was against morality and cannot be tolerated. The Germans speak of their rights, but are they the only citizens of American [sic] who have rights? Have the adherents to religion and the advocates of law, order, and temperance no rights?63

The German community, for its part, did not hide its political support for alcohol. Just as Germans’ early participation in the Republican Party had been predicated on liberal alcohol policies, Teutonic participation in Chicago politics following the beer riot went far in suppressing blue laws and Sunday bans on sales. The quickest way for a politician in Chicago to win German votes was enjoy a glass of lager, thus proving that “there was no taint of Maine Lawism of Know Nothingism on his garments.” The Staats-Zeitung vowed to protect newly arrived immigrants from being blindsided by temperance agitation, as well as “the harmless amusements and entertainments to which the Germans are accustomed, and which are not prohibited even by the oppressors in their native country.”64

The late 1860s, then, saw the revival of animosities over lager beer that would extend well beyond the decade. As the din of sectionalism faded, temperance reformers began using their voice to criticize German immigrants less as a foreign danger to morality and the Sabbath and more as a domestic menace pushing their intoxicating beverage on unsuspecting Americans. As the consumption of lagers increased and spread to non-immigrant sections of the population, it occupied more and more of their attention. But with the proliferation of lager came additional organization and opposition to the temperance message. Both national organization and newfound acceptance of lager beer at the local level presented a significant counterargument to the

63 “Anent the Temperance Movement,” Illinois Staats-Zeitung, September 17, 1867.
temperance message. Both industry and reform were poised to evolve during the coming Gilded Age.

Conclusion

The proliferation of brewers and consumers of lager during the 1860s, as well as technological and economic growth within the industry, further undergirded a process of sophistication. While temperance and nativist opposition was subdued, soldiers began to redefine a German product into a German-American one by not only demonstrating their citizenship through military service but by seeking (legally or not) and sharing their beer with other soldiers. While judge advocates grappled with the intoxicating characteristics of lager within the military, wartime federal taxes on beer spurred German brewers around the country to organize a political narrative which advocated their product as socially beneficial and nutritious. The United States Brewers Association both reflected and shaped the growing power of the German-led brewing industry, forging supportive relationships for brewers that reached across space and allowing them to act in concerted, mutual self-interest. Those brewers, both individually and through the USBA, used emergent architecture and technology to both expand production of lager massively and forge its identity as a safe, non-intoxicating, and German product. Lager beer, in this way, contributed to the broader acceptance of German-American citizenship during the Civil War and its aftermath.

When the temperance movement resurged with a new, coordinated, and less nativist opposition to Germans and their beer, they encountered an evolving community of brewers and drinkers that proved far better equipped to respond than they had been during the 1850s. Though hardly as violent as their predecessors a decade before (though, indeed, many individual immigrants participated in both stages), immigrant supporters of lager beer wielded the language of American liberty as well as international testaments to lager’s moderate and even healthful
character to hold their adversaries at bay. The increasingly coordinated responses that the industry eventually mustered against its obstacles, whether the federal government or temperance reformers, signaled an evolution within the brewing industry that helped it transition out of the market revolution era and into the more capitalized, more industrialized, and more complex Gilded Age. But that transition was not over.
CHAPTER 4.  A ‘WONDERFUL REVOLUTION,’ WELL MANAGED

By the night of October 8, 1871, an autumn drought had dried Chicago’s many wooden buildings as well as the prairie grasses surrounding the city. When a fire sparked at Patrick O’Leary’s cottage just southwest of what is today the Loop, it quickly grew into one of the most iconic events in Chicago’s history. Strong midwestern winds swept the towering flames north and east into the heart of the city, carrying them over the river and toward the courthouse that Alexander Hesler had climbed thirteen years before. As the flamed consumed block after block, panicked citizens fled for their lives, crowding unstable bridges and searching for loved ones. Looting was rampant; some stores and saloons threw open their doors to give their wares away rather than see them engulfed. Those who could not flee west or south, away from the flames, took their chances in Lake Michigan. Nothing in the fire’s path survived, including cemeteries, wealthy residences buffered by greenery, and allegedly “fire proof” buildings. By the next day, the fire had devastated an area four miles long and two thirds of a mile wide and cut through the heart of the Nord Seite. Three hundred people lost their lives, another hundred thousand left homeless, with hundreds of millions of dollars in assessed damages. Several of Chicago’s formerly prominent breweries laid among the ruins, including John Huck’s.¹

Huck lost nearly everything to the fire. His brewery lay in ashes and his residence marked the northernmost extent of the fire’s destruction. Along with several local brewers, he lent out his empty beer kegs to carry water for the firefighting effort but had to threaten legal action when the kegs were not returned afterward. The site of Chicago’s original lager brewery and beer garden remained dormant for several years as Huck contributed to citywide efforts to rebuild. He

eventually began working on a replacement for his Eagle Brewery but died in January 1878 before any facilities could be built. Over one thousand people reportedly attended his funeral, including members of the German societies to which he belonged. Each of his pallbearers was a prominent brewer in the city—all German except for one—from veterans like Conrad Seipp and Michael Brand to rising figures like Andrew Leicht, who had worked as a superintendent in Huck’s brewery until it burned down. The brewing industry that he left behind looked nothing like the one he first entered thirty years before.²

As a transnationally-constructed immigrant product, lager reoriented markets around the nation and soon ushered in the largest expansion of beer production and consumption in the nation’s history. Although spirits accounted for the majority of absolute alcohol consumption until the 1890s, per capita beer consumption among Americans aged fifteen and older rose from over six gallons in 1860 to ten gallons in 1875 and continued to rise until Prohibition. The number of operating American breweries peaked in 1873 at 4,131 before the economic downturn of that year forced many to close. Nevertheless, lager came to be preferred nationwide, its proliferation intimately tied to the ethnocultural practices of German communities as well as the response of broader American society to them. Through a complicated process of negotiation amalgamated from business competition, reform debates, and cultural interpretation, the 1870s solidified the hyphenation of German and American beer culture in the United States.³

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The German-led brewing industry propelled this process by putting the earned momentum of lager beer to good use. They built upon the capitalist and organizational gains of the previous decade and in doing so accomplished the ethnoculturally-inspired goals of immigrant brewers since the 1840s. Before the Civil War, German immigrants who produced and consumed beer had done so despite the opposition of nativist and anti-alcohol partisans. The mounting success of lager brewing gathered economic power until the German brewer became capable of not only defending their practices but asserting their place within broader American society. Large breweries, organizations like the USBA, newly-formed auxiliaries like trade journals, technological innovation, and ethnic architecture not only contributed to America’s flourishing capitalist system but also wielded that system on political and cultural fronts. Immigrants in German neighborhoods no longer needed to take to the streets to fight oppositional laws or political agitation—the industry now defended German beer for them, taking the offensive in publications, government, and public life to secure their capitalist interests. Though naturally self-serving, these structures secured the growth of the brewing industry on every front by asserting beer’s safety and healthfulness (especially versus spirituous liquors), attacking temperance reformers, sharing technological and business information through trade publications, and advocating for beer at the government level—all efforts undertaken through a distinctly Teutonic lens.

That same lens intimately bound the fate of lager beer to the actions of German immigrants and external perceptions of their ethnocultural practices. The unification of Germany in 1871 naturally shifted the way many members of the German-American community viewed their own ethnicity, partially sacrificing their commitment to liberal democracy in order to support Otto von Bismarck’s strong national government. Their shifting definition of citizenship now focused less on guaranteed individual rights and self-government, yet it also reaffirmed their commitment to
laissez-faire economic policies which not only suited industrialization but also promoted their widespread opposition to temperance reform.4

The evolution of the German-led brewing industry reflected these shifts through rhetoric and ethnicity as much as direct economic activity. Continuing their offensives forward into the 1870s, the brewing community brought its increasingly managed capitalist power to bear against its political and social enemies. Coordinated efforts through the USBA, supporting publications, and direct local engagement by brewers aggressively promoted beer as a path toward true temperance as well as a healthy source of nourishment. They further helped reconcile German beer and drinking culture with wider American customs. Beer and beer gardens became more commonplace and were even coopted by non-German brewers. American public life, in accepting lager beer, imbibed aspects of German festive culture that gradually normalized their affinity for innocent leisure and public celebration. Florid recreational spaces with free-flowing lager became more popular, imitating the displays once used to reify insular (or isolated) German neighborhoods. German-American contemporaries noticed these trends and even embraced them, applauding the relaxation of social modesty and the increasing frequency of public events.5

Beer, as a common feature of such displays both in German immigrant culture and its American emulations, therefore helped solidify a renegotiation of Germans’ status as citizens in American society. Sharing and at times proselytizing German beer in the 1870s and beyond, through capitalist expansion, public display, and defense from external criticism obscured the boundaries of Germans as a group, leading to the erosion of its outsider status. It contributed to their redefinition not as truncated immigrant groups clinging to ethnic islands within the American

landscape but as German-American citizens who celebrated their distinctiveness while also contributing to a broader societal milieu. This process naturally carried the danger of eroding the inner cohesion of German communities, who might see less reason to differentiate themselves from other Americans at all, thus blurring the line between historical ethnic group and scholarly category.  

Finally, this process remained incomplete throughout the entire pre-Prohibition era. German and American customs might hyphenate in practice, but many still considered the German distinct from the American in public discourse. German neighborhoods could still be labelled as a foreign country, and American appropriations of lager brewing or beer gardens made little mention of their transnational origin. Negotiating immigrant citizenship naturally relied on the reactions of other Americans who, by their choices, might seek to bound them as external parts of the society, even to the point of contradiction.

**From Market Revolution to Gilded Age**

Chicago and Cincinnati helped propel America’s economic transition from the market revolution to the industrialized Gilded Age, with brewers taking part. Each had long been a regional market hub where raw materials, finished goods, and services from all over the Atlantic world could be exchanged. In addition to their natural water connections, both cities used the proliferation of canals and later railroads to command their surrounding landscapes. The capital-oriented logic that drew transportation technologies naturally drove constituent industries, filling steamboats and rail cars with goods, transforming urban centers into more sophisticated generators of profit. As their economic circumstances developed, brewers became more capable of

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manipulating the flow of American capital. Although the bulk of their finished product was consumed locally, brewers connected to far-flung markets via political developments such as the federal excise tax, the purchase or processing of raw materials, and technological innovations that allowed breweries to grow.⁷

Rapid changes in the nature of American business, both in terms of external definition and internal organization, took place in tandem with these developments. Government regulation of corporations tended to relax from the 1870s onward, ending earlier limits on corporate charters. Across the United States, barriers involving who might establish corporations, how they might be run, and how they served the public began to vanish. Supreme Court cases declared that industries which were “clothed in public interest,” such as railroads, could be subjected to regulation, but the corollary of such decisions implied the lack or regulatory power outside narrowly defined purviews.⁸

American business transformed alongside regulatory structures. Before the Civil War era, entrepreneurs tended to manage all firms, brewing or otherwise, without complex middle management hierarchies. The transportation and communication revolutions of the mid-nineteenth century allowed for greater integration of functions within a single enterprise as well as new administrative procedures to manage them. For a brewery in the 1870s and after, this not only meant better integration into the national business community through trade organizations and publications like the Western Brewer, but also the ability to construct enormous complexes beyond any one person’s oversight, coordinate shipments within regional or national networks, establish

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far-flung distribution branches to oversee them, and integrate more steps of the brewing process such as farming, malting, and bottling. While some breweries in both Chicago and Cincinnati had created internal hierarchies reached distant markets before the 1870s, those with enough capital to embrace the managerial revolution now did so on an untold scale. Their stratification, industrialization, and complexity exemplified the late nineteenth century’s business development. The aggregate community of German-American brewers thus secured not only market share but market control, as well as the means to keep it.⁹

American capitalism, despite these changes, remained ensnared by the business cycle. After the Civil War, an overextension of railroad construction and international bond markets led many firms to default on their creditors, leading to a banking panic in late 1873. Despite assistance from the U.S. Treasury meant to stabilize New York stock markets, disruptions in the flow of capital cascaded throughout the country, causing a string of railroad bankruptcies which in turn hurt other industries. What began as a credit bubble spiraled into an economic depression lasting most of the decade.¹⁰

Despite lasting damage to wages and employment, production numbers across several industries rebounded after about two years, the brewing industry included. National production of beer dropped modestly, from almost nine million to roughly 8,700,000 barrels, but would rise to around thirteen million barrels by 1880. Cincinnati reflected the temporary setback, dropping

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⁹ For an exemplary study of the managerial revolution as the transition of American business toward industrialization in the late nineteenth century, see Alfred Chandler, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Harvard University Press, 1977). Further, while not all U.S. breweries became massive operations with national distribution networks, such as Pabst or Anheuser-Busch, even local and regional operations could, given the requisite capital, build proportional internal hierarchies and integrate similarly into the flourishing national flow of capital. See Martin Stack, “Local and Regional Breweries in America’s Brewing Industry, 1865-1920,” *The Business History Review*, Vol. 74, No. 3 (Autumn, 2000).

production from roughly 468,000 barrels in 1873 to 452,000 in 1875, only to rise to 655,000 barrels by the end of the decade. Nevertheless, the total number of American breweries fell sharply from over four thousand to under three thousand. The United States Brewers Association reported that some states lost proportionally more breweries than others—nearly two thirds of Michigan’s breweries closed by the end of 1874. Sustained production despite numerous brewery closures speaks to the significant expansion of many breweries into industrial facilities far more complex and integrated than their predecessors. Despite external setbacks both local and national, demand for lager remained strong, allowing brewing centers like Chicago and Cincinnati to embrace the prevailing tendency toward expansive business enterprises.11

Rebuilding and Reorienting

For Chicago, significant tangible progress toward a more complex and industrialized brewing industry during the 1860s had been undone by the enormous losses of the 1871 fire. Besides John Huck’s Eagle Brewery, the flames destroyed Lill & Diversey, J.J. Sand’s ale brewery, Busch & Brand’s Cedar Avenue location and over a dozen smaller firms, collectively valued at over two million dollars. At least one brewery worker, Johnny Beart, perished in the fire while trying to rescue Lill & Diversey’s draft horses from their stables. In the wake of the tragedy, Chicago’s brewing industry became a partial vacuum.12

Lill & Diversey did not reopen following the fire. At a meeting attended by prominent landowners from the scorched north side, Lill announced his departure from an increasingly German brewing industry. He was “sick” of the brewing trade and “would rather not have anything

more to do with a brewery if one were given to him gratuitously.” Brewing was profitable enough, he reported said, but “all the employes [sic] and every one connected with a brewery were more or less drunkards. He would rather go into some other business and make half the money.” Instead, Lill built a house for himself on the corner of Pine and Chicago Avenue, where the main complex of Lill & Diversey once stood, and lived there until his death in 1875. His estate contained numerous properties still held in the name of the brewery, though some had been divided by then between Lill and the surviving heirs of Michael Diversey, who passed away before the fire.13

Lill and Huck were not alone. Of those breweries destroyed by the fire, only three ever opened their doors again. Michael Brand’s plant was running again in less than three months, thanks in large part to Busch & Brand’s partner facility in nearby Blue Island, which escaped the fire’s path. Closure did not always mean complete severance from the brewing industry—William Lill no longer brewed, but continued operating his satellite malting facilities following the fire.14

Chicago’s tragedy, however, presented a significant opportunity for others. Milwaukee brewers had maintained a small foothold in Chicago’s market since the mid-1850s, but the sudden loss of local brewing capacity allowed them to quickly gain market share among their southern neighbors. The Phillip Best Brewing Company, then under the management of Frederick Pabst, immediately maxed out its brewing capacity, ordered new boilers and cooling vats, began constructing additional icehouses, and tripled its Chicago-focused workforce. Within a couple years, Chicago customers consumed roughly one thousand kegs of Best beer per day, and by 1878 Pabst (having taken more direct control of the company) established a dedicated branch office in

Chicago. Edward Uihlein, a Chicago-based sales agent for Milwaukee’s Schlitz brewery and one of four brothers who held various prominent positions within that company, credited the fire for Schlitz’s most significant growth during the period. By the 1890s Schlitz would be one of the largest breweries in the country, and Uihlein Vice President of its Chicago branch.¹⁵

Despite the heated competition, several Chicago brewers not only prospered in the wake of the conflagration but developed complex business structures to manage their ballooning volume. The Seipp & Lehman brewery, located on the south side of the city, escaped the flames and benefitted from Chicago’s brewing void almost as much as Milwaukee. Conrad Seipp and his partner nearly doubled their personal earnings from the brewery in 1872, though the latter perished in a carriage accident that year. By 1875 the brewery sprawled across three and a half acres, its twenty-three wagons and sixty-six horses taking up “every inch of the road.” The necessity to increase its steam power added not only new buildings but the highest smokestack in Chicago (at one hundred and fifty feet). The product of one hundred and seventy fermenters fed into extensive cellars described as a “labyrinth of tremendous proportions,” which typically contained at least thirty thousand barrels of beer and employed elevators to bring stock to the loading docks. Hops came from the east (likely New York) and barley was purchased from California, all brought into the complex via a special spur connecting the brewery to the Illinois Central Railroad. Both malting and coopering facilities were onsite, as “the proprietor has items manufactured elsewhere only when absolutely necessary.”¹⁶

Seipp’s brewery sold nearly ten thousand barrels of beer per month, all of which was consumed within an eighteen-mile radius. Their volume made them the fifth largest brewer in the United States in 1879, jockeying for position with Schlitz, Ballantine, and Christian Moerlein. Seipp employed not only his son to help manage the business end of the brewery, but also a variety of foremen and managers to oversee the brewery’s one hundred and fifty employees. In 1875 the brewery opened a branch office not in another city but on Milwaukee Avenue on the north side, employing a dedicated branch manager there to coordinate with nearby saloon operators and oversee the transfer of beer to a nearby icehouse for storage before delivery. Growth had become so immense for Seipp that it was no longer defined solely by output but by the company’s ability to manage that output.\footnote{“Chicago’s Breweries Statistical Items about the Most Outstanding Breweries,” Der Westen, June 20, 1875; “The Conrad Seipp Brewing Co.,” The Western Brewer, Vol. 3, No. 9 (September 1878), 588; “Sales of Beer,” The Western Brewer, Vol. 1, No. 2 (September 1876), 35; Frederick Salem, Beer: Its History and Its Economic Value as a National Beverage (Hartford, CT: F.W. Salem & Co., 1880), 181, 201, 228, 241.}

Smaller Chicago brewers lacked the same capital as Conrad Seipp but nevertheless embraced integrating markets to make their operations more efficient. In 1872 Philip Bartholomae and Andrew Leicht, who met working in John Huck’s brewery prior to the fire, partnered to found a new firm. Though they produced roughly one third of Seipp’s volume and likewise distributed locally, Bartholomae & Leicht invested in new technologies, including larger steam engines and mechanized barrel washers, and further sought to control auxiliary facets of the brewing process. They purchased their own ponds to harvest ice each winter, producing enough surplus to more than cover the brewery’s own costs. Peter Schoenhofen, whose brewery was similarly sized, spent much of the 1870s investing in malt facilities, onsite shops for repairing barrels and livestock barns,
matching stone edifices in his buildings, and connections which shipped his beer to outlying
districts along the Illinois Central and Michigan Southern railways.\(^{18}\)

Finally, the Downer & Bemis Brewing Company embodied the ongoing integration of
German and American brewing. Henry Bemis and John McAvoy, neither of whom were of
German descent, partnered in 1865 to construct a three-story brick brewery on South Park Avenue.
Bemis had produced ale with various partners since 1860, but the two agreed to switch to “the
popular peoples’ beverage, lager beer.” Later commentators recalled widespread doubt at the time
whether American brewers (though McAvoy was himself an immigrant from Ireland) could match
the quality of German brewers. They further claimed erroneously that Bemis and McAvoy were
the first non-Germans to do so profitably, though by the mid-1870s their foreman and all their
employees were German-American. They nevertheless gained notoriety even among German
consumers, and grew their production volume from an initial 3,500 barrels to over 56,000 in 1878.
They added a malt house, a large addition to the brewery, and several icehouses along the way.
The brewery naturally mechanized, incorporating not only steam power but also ammonia-based
Boyle Ice Machines, produced locally in Chicago, which drastically stabilized and cheapened the
brewery’s access to ice. They would subsequently take steps to emulate more facets of German
drinking culture than the lager beer could singularly provide with an opulent beer garden,
demonstrating not only mounting American interest in German beer but also the close marriage of
both product and practice.\(^{19}\)

\(^{18}\) “Chicago’s Breweries Statistical Items about the Most Outstanding Breweries,” Der Westen, June 20, 1875; “Sales of Beer,” The Western Brewer, Vol. 1, No. 2 (September 1876), 35; Chicago und Sein Deutschtum, 275-276.

Growth in the local industry naturally affected relationships between Chicago’s brewers. In 1878, for example, Matthias Gottfried sued multiple competitors for infringing on his patented method of pitching beer barrels. Barring a specific grievance, however, brewers operating in the city tended to band together in common interest. They also organized brewers’ associations culminating in the Chicago & Milwaukee Brewers Association in 1873. Local collaborations could serve individual brewers’ interests more directly than a nationally-focused organization like the USBA.²⁰

From the late 1860s, brewers operating in Chicago also colluded to fix the price of beer within the city, to the perennial chagrin of local saloon owners who could not as easily raise the retail price. In one such case in early 1874, both local brewers and Milwaukee newcomers such as Schlitz announced an increase from ten to twelve dollars per barrel, claiming that a poor harvest forced them to import more expensive barley from western states like California and Utah. The price of a glass would not be affected, the brewers assured the public, since (they claimed) saloons generally earned twenty dollars per barrel at retail. Incensed at having their profits dictated, nearly five hundred of the city’s saloon owners held a mass meeting at the North Side Turner Hall to protest the move, warning that an increase would ruin the saloon trade. Brewers, they said, made plenty of profit without the increase, and they maliciously delivered barrels that were not completely full. It was the brewers who needed retailers and not the other way around, the owners insisted. If they could not purchase beer at the original price then they would merely import it from outside the city. The contest ended within weeks, when Milwaukee brewers acquiesced to the saloon owners’ demand for beer at ten dollars per barrel. Chicago brewers promptly retaliated by

going even lower and instigating a price war. Cutthroat, liberal-minded competition permeated the German-led brewing industry in Chicago, with different segments of the trade vying for control.²¹

Beyond its direct brewing output and contentious trade, Chicago became the Midwestern hub for brewing design and scientific innovation. Chicago-based architects, most ethnic Germans themselves, contributed roughly half of the nation’s brewery design projects prior to Prohibition, lending not only aesthetic but technical expertise. Architects like Robert Schmidt and Friedrich Wolf not only supervised expansions of several breweries in Chicago but also held patents on malt kilns and firing methods employed at those breweries. Wolf continually supplemented his work as an architect by inventing brewery improvements, as well as securing American rights to European inventions. In the 1870s and beyond he provided designs for breweries around the country, including the Joseph Schlitz brewing company, further incubating several influential architects who rose to prominence during the 1880s. In addition to architecture, numerous Chicago firms began selling these new and innovative technologies to modernizing brewers. “Dustless mill” manufacturers claimed to clean malt grains of mildew and other contaminants while manufacturers of rolled wire-cloth kiln floors, elevators, and keg hoisters promised to reduce labor. Other companies sold insurance specifically to brewers. Finally, architects like Wolf and Joseph Siebel, a German brewing scientist who founded Chicago’s longstanding Siebel Institute for Brewing Science, advertised their services to brewers directly.²²

Such services and technology featured prominently in *The Western Brewer*, a trade journal established in Chicago in 1876 which served as the Midwest’s principal brewing publication.


throughout the nineteenth century. Advertisements naturally connected innovators with potential clients, but the journal also published extensively on brewing science and innovative practices. Articles described the benefits of using a thermometer to better regulate the malting process (maltsters previously relied on instinct). Others tended to the perennial cold storage requirements for brewers, discussing known methods for creating artificial ice, its benefits over traditionally harvested ice, and promising inventions in England and Germany that produced it with the most efficiency. Professionals like Frederick Bauman contributed extensive advice on brewery and malthouse construction, including how design elements could minimize labor, contaminants, and unwanted heat. Although many of these contributions served an additional capitalist purpose by promoting innovations or their providers, they also helped coordinate best practices among disparate brewers and facilitated more rapid development of the brewing industry.²³

For all the destruction the Chicago fire caused, city boosters soon claimed that the fire had been an overall good, clearing away wooden clutter that prevented the city from realizing its inevitable grandeur. Chicago remained connected to water and rail networks and therefore integrated into wider flows of capital which allowed the city to resurrect itself through both relief aid and new economic prospects. While those same connections gave external brewers, namely from Milwaukee, the chance to strengthen their presence in the city, it also allowed surviving and new local brewers to thrive in ways hardly possible ten or fifteen years previous. Inventors, architects, and trade journalism kept the stimulus of ideas flowing in and out of the city, transforming it into a hub for brewing information as much as consumable product. As will be

²³ “Practical Use of the Thermometer in the Manufacture of Malt,” The Western Brewer, Vol. 1, No. 3 (October 1876), 59; “Artificial Production of Ice and Cold in Fermentation Rooms and Beer Vaults,” The Western Brewer, Vol 1, No. 3 (October 1876), 61-62; Frederick Bauman, “On the Construction of Breweries,” The Western Brewer, Vol 1, No. 4 (November 1876), 88-90; Frederick Bauman, “Malthouses,” The Western Brewer, Vol 1, No. 5 (December 1876), 107-108.
discussed, these economic developments were intimately connected to the political and cultural evolutions of German-led brewing which proved equally impervious to fire...and brimstone.24

**Cincinnati**

Spared any fiery cataclysms of their own, brewers in the Queen City produced a combined four hundred thousand barrels of beer in 1871, with firms ranging from a mere two hundred barrels to over forty-six thousand in the case of Windisch & Muhlhauser’s Lion brewery. Like Chicago, the most successful brewers readily incorporated complex business structures and new technologies into their operations. Aggregate production increased steadily over the decade except from 1873-1875, when the economic downturn stalled the industry without lasting damage. The Chamber of Commerce estimated that more than thirty breweries throughout the city employed over 1,300 people, paying out $1.2 million in wages. The German Pioneer Society opined that Cincinnati’s brewers paid more federal tax on beer than the total monetary value of the city’s brewing output fifty years prior. By this time, the city’s brewing industry had committed almost exclusively to lager beer. Only three ale brewers survived by 1872, contributing a mere fifteen thousand barrels to the city’s output. Eastern metropolitan brewing centers like New York and Philadelphia remained far more heterogeneous in the styles of beer they produced.25

As had been the case just before the Civil War, Cincinnati supplemented thriving local consumption with exports, particularly down the Ohio River. Local commentators praised the quality of Cincinnati lagers not only for generating demand but for surviving transport across both

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land and water. By 1872 Cincinnati beer found a ready home in cities along the Atlantic coast, the Rocky Mountains, Caribbean islands, Mexico, and South America. After 1874, bottling beer proved far more advantageous for long trips (for the few breweries who could afford the equipment) while the local trade continued to rely on barrels and kegs. The Chamber of Commerce boasted in 1876 that “Cincinnati beer will stand shipment, without injury, to the whole world. A consignment to Peru, South America, was eight months on the way, crossing the equator and doubling Cape Horn, and arrive at its destination in excellent condition.” Even so, Cincinnati’s growing population consumed at least sixty percent of their local product throughout the decade. The strong home market undoubtedly helped brewers weather the economic storm as railroad construction ceased mid-decade.26

Christian Moerlein’s firm, a longstanding and significant force within Cincinnati’s brewing community, pulled away from nearly all competition during the 1870s and became the largest brewers in the state of Ohio. Like Conrad Seipp in Chicago, Moerlein invested in supplemental office buildings as well as a mechanical refrigeration machine and central icehouse to replace the various facilities he had relied on since the mid-1860s. Two wells supplied the brewery with thousands of gallons of water. The first was over two thousand feet deep, producing sulphuric water used to clean equipment and bottles, while a shallower well produced potable water for brewing purposes. At this point over eighty men worked at the brewery.27

Like many German brewers, Moerlein invited his sons to participate in the family business. George Moerlein, following his education and service in the German army during its unification in 1871, spent the early part of the decade assisting with the brewery’s expansion as well as

26 Twenty-Fourth Annual Report; Chamber of Commerce Annual Report for 1875-76, as quoted in Downard, The Cincinnati Brewing Industry, 32; Ibid, 32-33.
27 Robert J. Wimberg, Cincinnati Breweries (Cincinnati, OH: Ohio Book Store, 1989), 98; One Hundred Years of Brewing, 183.
incorporating Bavarian brewing methods into its operation. He further managed Moerlein’s exhibit during Philadelphia’s Centennial Exhibition in 1876, which helped sales double over the next two years and propel the brewery to over one hundred thousand barrels per year. When the firm incorporated in 1881, George became vice president under his father. George’s contributions highlight how Moerlein’s success was directly tied to the brewery’s embrace of strong managerial structures as well as advanced industrial processes.\(^{28}\)

The Windisch-Muhlhauser Brewing Company could not keep up with Christian Moerlein, but their operation represented the same capitalist development that defined late-century American brewing. By 1875 their underground cellars stored up to thirty thousand barrels of beer at a time, equivalent to their entire production in 1868, and their copper vats could make up to three hundred and fifty barrels at a time. Thousands of bushels of wet barley piled six inches deep on each of four enormous malting floors, roughly one fifth of which was transported from California and used to make a their widely renowned pilsner, a lager style which soon became incredibly popular among American drinkers. By the end of the decade their Lion brewery produced over seventy thousand barrels annually.\(^{29}\)

Just as Bartholomae & Leicht purchased ice ponds, some Cincinnati brewers sought to vertically integrate their control of the brewing process by purchasing farmland to fulfill the needs of their firms. In the 1870s, both Christian Moerlein and Windisch & Muhlhauser bought farmland north of the city to sow barley for use in the brewery, provide pasture for their draft horses, harvest winter ice, and even provide summer homes for their families. Though a smaller brewery by production volume, the Dayton Brewery owned by John Hauck and Johann Windisch surpassed


them by purchasing an impressive four hundred acres in northern Hamilton County for the same purposes in 1876. While farms of that size could not singularly supply the barley needs of either brewery during that period, but they illustrated the increasing diversification of brewing operations and their supply chains.30

As Hauck’s and Windisch’s farm shows, capitalist development extended beyond the largest firms, even if it was most visible there. Herman Lackman, who bought out his longtime partner’s share in 1868, managed to triple his output during the 1870s, to thirty thousand barrels per year, by expanding his brewery’s cellar systems, employing additional steam power, and digging multiple wells beneath his facility. The Kauffman Brewery, which began modestly in Over-the-Rhine during the 1850s, produced fifty thousand barrels of lager by 1877 and distributed to southern cities from New Orleans to Savannah. It further dug a well of its own to end its reliance on the city water works. Late in the decade, George Herancourt became the first local brewer to purchase an Arctic Ice Machine to mechanically refrigerate his brewery despite some healthy skepticism whether it could replace naturally harvested ice. Other brewers soon followed suit, as the machine both saved space and cut labor costs considerably. They also began taking advantage of local third-party services for bottling as well as advertising. One firm in Cincinnati utilized advances in visual media to produce iron and glass artwork for breweries and beer halls, advertising both locally and in The Western Brewer.31

As in Chicago, Cincinnati’s brewers also banded together to support their mutual interests. A local Beer Brewers’ Association met monthly at a clubhouse in Over-the-Rhine, and its secretary was tasked with reporting to all its members the name of any saloon owner who refused or failed

30 Wimberg, Cincinnati Breweries, 55, 104, 149.
to pay for delivered beer. Members would then all pledge to refuse service to that saloon until its owner repaid the debt. They further colluded to fix the price of beer, though not all harmoniously: two brewers stirred controversy in late 1877 by lowering their price below the association’s set rate, causing significant consternation. Of course, saloon owners wielded their own weapons against the brewers as well. In the summer of 1878 they artificially lowered the retail price of beer in the city, forcing brewers to slash wholesale prices in order to keep their most coveted accounts. The resulting price war nearly halved the price of a barrel of lager. Such skirmishes, however, usually resolved themselves too quickly to impede the overall progress of the industry.\(^\text{32}\)

By the end of the decade, Cincinnati’s brewing industry had grown by over a third and accounted for the majority of all beer produced in Ohio. Networks of beer cellars became so extensive that visitors to the city sought them out as a kind of tourist attraction. Chicago and Cincinnati each utilized networks of capital to propel their brewing industries forward into the Gilded Age, though their efforts yielded different results. Chicago’s major brewing export became information and expertise by the mid-1870s, whereas Cincinnati positioned itself as a well-reputed source for quality lager beer around the nation, but with maturation came significant cultural shifts. Just as in previous decades, the evolution of German-American brewing in the United States was directly tied to the immigrant community at large, both its ethnocultural dynamics and its broader status within American society. That community was in simultaneous flux.\(^\text{33}\)


\(^{33}\) *Kenny’s Illustrated Cincinnati and Suburbs*, 18-19; Downard, *The Cincinnati Brewing Industry*, 32-33.
A Turning Point

In July 1870, the Second French Empire under Louis Napoleon III declared war on the Kingdom of Prussia. Prime Minister Otto von Bismarck took the opportunity to ally his northern confederation with southern German states, consolidating political power and rousing immense nationalist support. Within a year the Germans achieved resounding victory over the French and proclaimed a new German Empire. Support for the new nation-state united German-Americans like never before. The Cincinnati Volksblatt called it a “turning point in the political and social course of the German element in the United States.”

Excitement transcended words for Chicago’s German population, but the staff at the Illinois Staats-Zeitung tried anyway—their report on the city’s peace celebration in May 1871 reached eighteen thousand words. Centered on north Clark and Wells streets, the heart of the Nord Seite, the activities roused the city at 4:30 AM with over a hundred cannon shots. By six crowds filled the streets and at 9:15 a planned parade began. City police did not oppose this procession of Germans; instead the commissioner and over sixty officers on horseback led the way, followed by several militia formations and a music corps dressed in Prussian uniforms. The city’s various German lodges followed them, one delegation comprising six hundred men.

Subsequent sections of the parade displayed tokens of German nationalism. Groups marched in costumes representing various periods in German history and cultural accomplishments while a Staats-Zeitung press, loaded into a wagon, printed German songs and poems to distribute to the crowd. These divisions culminated in an actor portraying Kaiser Wilhelm I greeted the crowds, flanked by three hundred Civil War veterans.

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34 Cincinnati Volksblatt, April 14, 1871, as quoted in Efford, German Immigrants, Race, and Citizenship), 143; Christian B. Keller, Chancellorsville and the Germans: Nativism, Ethnicity, and Civil War Memory (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 196n25.
The latter divisions of the parade comprised various professions and organizations from sharpshooters to masons. Chicago’s brewers featured prominently, with two hundred and fifty men marching alongside twenty-three cars, displaying festive imagery and poems professing the inherent Teutonic love for beer. The parade led, predictably, to a grove on the east side where ten thousand guests gathered for food and music, consumed roughly five thousand kegs of beer, and listened to “very long speeches,” one of which proclaimed “here [America], where freedom, united with education, makes prosperity possible for everybody, here we will show you in the old fatherland the way in political and social development, so that America be always as powerful as Germany, and Germany soon as free as America!”

From the din of German-American support for the new German empire came a significant shift in their ethnic perceptions. The spirit of 1848 had instilled in many immigrants a sense that political and cultural communities, namely the German Volk, could grow and incorporate new groups based on liberal principles—a perspective that guided their own pursuit of inclusion in American society. From the late 1860s onward, however, the prospect and eventual rise of a nationalist German Empire spurred them to adopt a more essentialist concept of their own ethnicity with rigid borders and based around innate, perhaps even biological characteristics. Observing the bombastic new nation-state further motivated German-Americans to reconceive the political institutions meant to undergirded citizenship in the first place. Bismarck did not enact the liberal nationalism that many Achtundvierziger expected (or perhaps just hoped), forcing his stateside devotees to find new reasons to support their newly unified homeland, such as its educational system, strong military, and effective bureaucracy. At home, this shifting political ideology helped steer German-Americans away from radical Reconstruction debates, including African-American

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enfranchisement, and toward topics where they shared common ground. Both German Republicans and Democrats, under this new status quo, rallied around the laissez faire economic policies and opposition to resurgent temperance activity which reinforced their ethnocultural worldview.\(^{36}\)

These shifts filtered easily into the realm of German-American brewing. Lager beer’s advancing popularity within American society mirrored the creeping acceptance of the German immigrant community itself, allowing both producers and consumers to rely less on pluralistic definitions of citizenship. Beer instead became a handhold not just for ethnic identity but also for their hybrid inclusion in both American society and its internal German subsets. At both the local and national level, the German-led brewing industry embraced its new ethno-political paradigm, utilizing its growing capital and power to intensify the narratives it had begun in the wake of the Civil War. Beer was a national beverage, they contended, the natural choice for all alcohol-consuming Americans. It not only conferred health benefits but also presented a moderate option that allegedly advanced the cause of temperance far more than radical anti-alcohol reformers ever had. Throughout the 1870s, both the United States Brewers Association and localized industries in Chicago and Cincinnati embraced this ideology to assert both their reformed ethnic worldview and the political rhetoric that would safeguard it.

Even so, the integration of German beer into broader American society was a negotiation, not a proclamation, and relied on externally-defined interpretations and boundaries. Lager beer connected intimately to German culture and though more Americans eagerly consumed it each year, they did not all spend their Sundays attending festive German picnics in shady Over-the-Rhine or Nord Seite beer gardens. They instead translated their appreciation for German culture and its products selfishly, adopting practices piecemeal and continuing to distinguish German

\(^{36}\) Efford. *German Immigrants, Race, and Citizenship*, 143-150.
communities from mainstream society despite validating Teutonic viewpoints. The temperance movement brought additional controversy to this process by seeking restrictions on beer and thus inviting retaliation from German communities. Though certainly appropriative and politicized, such practices nevertheless contributed to the reconciliation between German immigrant status and American socioeconomic life that, for the time being, served the capitalist goals of the brewers themselves. Chicago’s debates over Sunday laws during the early 1870s exemplified this process.

Acceptance and Appropriation in Chicago

During the 1870s German beer played a significant role in both Chicago’s evolving public life as well as several of its political debates, and the Tribune took strong notice. Long past bombastic tirades about the unruly Nord Seite, the paper instead portrayed German brewers, retailers, and drinkers as relative paragons of proper beer consumption and advocate for moderate alcohol policies. In doing so, they inadvertently contributed to a discourse on German-Americans’ status within local society. One of several voices in both Chicago and Cincinnati, the Tribune revealed how broader American society was embracing lager beer far more readily than its immigrant purveyors.

The Downer & Bemis brewery, for example, did more than simply brew lager beer. They also established the Tivoli Garden in 1874, which the Tribune considered to be Chicago’s first “Great Lager-Beer Palace.” Despite the festive groves frequented by local Germans, the paper lamented in 1874 that those who wished to “join in the social glass of lager” in Chicago lacked an “elegant and enlightened” space to do so. The Tivoli garden, located on the corner of Clark and Washington (one block from the site of the Lager Beer Riot), apparently saved the city from its own banality. Designed to introduce lager to “the better class of American society,” the garden featured crystal chandeliers, floral arrangements, fountains, aquariums, a lunch counter, and a cigar
stand, all furnished by respectable local businesses. Management was shared between an American and a German immigrant specifically to ensure that “the wants and wishes of both nationalities will be perfectly understood and attended to.” Indeed, rather than rejecting German drinking culture outright, Henry Bemis and John McAvoy claimed that Tivoli blended its best qualities with the ornate luxury of Parisian restaurants and refinement of English lawn parties. The Tivoli Garden remained open for nearly five years, until its owners felt satisfied that they had properly introduced lager to the city’s social elite.\(^{37}\)

Like their brewery, Bemis and McAvoy’s Tivoli Garden illustrated the hybrid status that lager beer attained in the 1870s, as well as the reservations that still lingered around German beer culture. Lager beer was acceptable and inextricably linked to the fundamental sociability and recreation with which German immigrants enjoyed it, but specific German practices might not be refined enough to associate with the beer they appropriated. The Tivoli’s “merchant’s lunch” catered to members of the nearby Board of Trade. Plants, flowers, and even birds brought the shady grove indoors. The garden welcomed women and children but ushered them into a separate “Ladies Department,” altering the familial mindset of the German beer garden. By its third anniversary, the American half of Tivoli’s original management now operated alone. Although ethnically German proprietors and workers retained majority control of the evolving brewing industry, the *Tribune*’s description reaffirmed the process as a negotiation. German and American cultures propelled the consumption and production of American beer simultaneously, but not necessarily together.\(^{38}\)


Despite its newfound tolerance, the Tribune exhibited a mildly nativist mindset whenever it attempted to profile lager and the sites of its consumption. The beer could at times represent a sort of convivial gift to American society from its German constituents and in other cases remain a distinct marker of ethnic German culture. In 1872, for example, the paper described beer saloons as social spaces bearing many markers of German festive culture in addition to the beer itself—amicable conversation, the presence of whole families (on Sundays), and cigars—that lacked ethnic self-segregation. Though hardly on par with elite respectably establishments which catered to the “English-speaking population,” the paper nevertheless lauded the fact that “this mode of social enjoyment is no longer confined to native Germans; it is gradually including large numbers of others who, for want of means or the want of acquaintances, find in these places a sociability that does not descend into disorder, and a narcotic at small cost which does not intoxicate.”

The Tribune exhibited less enthusiasm when it offered a lengthy description of “a German Sunday” in 1874 and deliberately separated Chicago’s German component from the rest of the city. Though south Clark Street was quiet and even dull on a Sunday, it was so lively and crowded north of the river that a visitor there had “not merely gone from the First Ward to the Twentieth” but rather, “with a few paces, crossed from America into Germany.” More than mere florid description, the paper repeatedly contrasted German practices on the Sabbath with American counterparts. In both pleasant groves along the Lake Michigan shoreline and in manufactured gardens with “stunted” trees in pots, an estimated thirty-thousand people spent their Sundays drinking copious amounts of “the indispensable lager beer,” listening to orchestras through a cloud of tobacco smoke, and otherwise clashing with the domestic quiet of an “American” Sunday. Although the Tribune claimed that few Americans ventured north on these days, and instead looked “with great contempt

upon these simple enjoyments,” some invariably found themselves in Lincoln Park, which was “to
a certain degree American” and technically did not allow alcohol (though there was a “continual
rushing to…the beer-garden” across the street). The Tribune also speculated that the Turner Hall’s
cigar-choked concerts might be more respectable if the city adopted New England’s definition of
the Sabbath as beginning Saturday evening and ending Sunday evening. “This would throw the
music and the beer, the cigar and the coffee, over to Monday…but possibly if it had not a spice of
sin in it, it would cease to interest the average Chicagoan.” Many Americans, it seemed, could
publicly enjoy German beer and notions of conviviality, but not always in their entirety and even
less on Sundays.40

Beyond the general extension of German lager into Chicago’s mainstream public sphere,
beer also became a major point of contention when the issue of Sunday alcohol bans resurfaced in
late 1872. Sparked by the murder of a police officer in a whiskey den, the city government
associated a recent crime wave with drunkenness and rushed to respond. At an initial meeting of
prominent citizens and city officials, the Police Commissioner echoed Mayor Levi Boone’s
attitude years before by attributing ninety percent of the city’s crime to drunkenness. One official
suggested raising the city’s liquor license fee to five hundred dollars to force all but the most
“respectable” saloons to close, but such a measure was deemed imprudent. Instead claiming that
most crime statistically originated from Saturday night and Sunday drinking, the committee
resolved to resurrect the city’s ban on Sunday alcohol sales. One member suggested that lager beer,
being a “harmless amusement” for immigrant families, be exempt from the ban to safeguard
German support for the local Republican Party. “If all people were Germans it might be all right
to open on Sundays,” another responded, “but there could be no distinction made between lager

40 “A German Sunday,” Chicago Daily Tribune, June 29, 1874.
beer saloons and whiskey saloons.” If the committee would not entertain distinctions between lager beer and other forms of alcohol, then the rest of the city would.41

City officials feared the Nord Seite’s response to the Sunday ban and expressed their desire to avoid another Lager Beer Riot. A Board of Police representative, when asked whether he would enforce the law, stated he was “unwilling to show any vindictiveness” toward saloon owners. Police would instead “do things calmly, deliberately, systematically, and, as he hoped, wisely.” Some commissioners opposed the law entirely; one suggested a law modeled on England and Germany, which closed saloons late on Saturday night and allowed them to reopen at two o’clock Sunday afternoon. The city eventually adopted such a plan, but not yet. The Tribune, meanwhile, published a timely recounting of the 1855 riot, saying by way of introduction that “history is philosophy teaching by example. Charts are made to show where rocks have been found, oftentimes by going ashore on them.”42

Despite the officials’ fear, German Chicagoans managed to vote with their feet without storming city hall. The first Sunday to enforce saloon closures saw near total compliance of the law…at first glance. Few arrests for Sunday violations were made, but the Tribune noted “mysterious disappearances of Teutonic gentlemen” in alleys throughout Chicago Avenue, hinting that beer saloons entertained their clientele through secret entrances. Additionally, a group of saloon owners “got even” by marching through the North Side dispensing free beer, which was not illegal. Yet more drinkers simply visited saloons just outside city limits while the saloons south of the river adopted a similar pattern of keeping front entrances closed and back entrances open. Zennischel & Matthein’s beer saloon on the west side, whose clientele reportedly was only one

quarter German, remained open in flagrant defiance of the law and faced no police sanction. The Tribune itself saw no reason to uphold a Sunday ban, the editors calling for “determined resistance and firm union” while advising saloon owners to “preserve external appearances,” and refuse police entry without a warrant. Anton Hesing, editor of the Staats-Zeitung, denounced the ban so strongly that he was called upon by the mayor to explain himself. Hesing admitted his belief that, if he had not done so, the city’s Germans would turn on him completely.43

The following Sunday saw equally flippant compliance with the law, by which time the Tribune branded the city’s efforts “The Lager Beer War” and a “crisis.” The original and singular purpose of the ban, the editors recalled, had been the prevention of crime in the city. The ban might be effective if police focused on the real sources of crime—the “low whiskey-dens and groggeries, and that triple combination of the restaurant, whiskey-shop, and brothel”—but they did not. By seeking to close the beer saloons instead of exempting them, said the Tribune, the city drew unnecessary ire and led German citizens to defend their “palpable personal right.” Beer saloons neither sold intoxicating liquors nor contributed to crime rates, but instead provided Germans a “necessity of life.” The paper further published lengthy descriptions of Chicago’s German community, including churches, myriad Vereine, economic contributions, and military service, calling them “true American citizens” whose resistance to the Sunday ban was both understandable and fair.44

Yet while the Tribune defended German customs and predilections with one hand, it marginalized their community with the other. After proclaiming the orderly behavior of German-Americans despite consuming beer, the very next sentence warned of their bestial propensity to

riot should their access to beer be restricted. The article then cautioned any German readers that “in their championship of their rights, the duties of the good and law-abiding citizen should not be overlooked. Whatever they may do, whatever protest they may make against the invasion of their rights, let it be made within the boundaries of law and order.” The Tribune’s treatment of this issue demonstrated beer’s contributions to the hybrid and at times contradictory status of German-American citizens: they (and their beer) were a part of American society, and a positive part at that, but they also remained a probationary outsider to be managed.45

The Tribune’s enthusiastic and backhanded defense of German lager beer added to the much larger local discourses in Chicago and Cincinnati regarding German immigrants and the steady infiltration of lager beer into American society. Even without the spectacle of political crisis, beer was generally spoken of as the “national beverage” of Germans and potentially Americans. Saloons in Cincinnati ranged from neighborhood watering holes to ornate resorts and halls, similar to the Tivoli Garden in both clientele and ownership. Saloon life centered around Over-the-Rhine but drew in locals from around the city and observers cautioned against the “mistake” of assuming their patrons were all German. Instead, one visitor noted, “everybody goes to the beer gardens—Americans, English, Scotch, Germans, men, women, and children.” Conrad Windisch owned two large saloons including the Atlantic Gardens, which advertised its magnificent concerts in both German and English-language newspapers. And yet the imagery of German beer and drinking culture kept it partially distinct from mainstream society. English language publications still described Over-the-Rhine as a foreign country, where “rivers of beer, mountains of pretzels, and huge carts of sausages disappear down the Teutonic throat daily.” German predilections for beer were still contrasted with Americans’ supposedly ubiquitous love for whiskey, and exclusive

resorts and ordinaries might offer unspecified “Cincinnati lager beer” among myriad wine and brandy offerings. More often, the available beers were ales or porters.46

In generally accepting lager beer as a national beverage for German-Americans (if not the overall population) as well as a moderate alternative to distilled liquors, Americans embraced its penetration beyond distinct immigrant neighborhoods. Whether that acceptance translated into the wholesale inclusion of German immigrants into American society, however, depended on the situation. The popularity of lager beer precluded the type of cultural rejection they had faced during the 1850s except among the most extreme anti-alcohol partisans, but it guaranteed no more. This hybridity resulted in part from the revitalized temperance movement, which continued to decry lager beer and its purveyors as contaminants to their vision for reform. As the 1870s progressed, public conversations involving lager beer and its consumption, whether benign or politicized, local or national, contributed to larger debate about its utility and desirability in American society. Advocates in favor of beer would prevail in the moment, aligning with the brewing industry’s embrace of economic growth.

Lager as a Temperance Battleground

The resurgent temperance movement continued to target lager beer as part of their campaigns against alcohol and vice. Although nativism never fully vacated their criticisms of German-American production and consumption of alcohol, reformers now took part in discussions

of beer which reinforced a hybrid status for German citizenship and treated beer as an American product with strong ties to German immigrant populations. Beyond ethnicity, temperance reformers provided an influential counterweight to debates over beer’s intoxicating effect, efficacy as a moderate alternative to liquor, potential health qualities, and social effects. Many of these debates surfaced in the Tribune’s coverage of Chicago’s Sunday bans on alcohol, but they transcended individual debates at the local and national level such that a master pro-beer narrative and anti-beer counternarrative began to form. For the time being, the ayes would have it.

Temperance reformers, like the brewers they opposed, had evolved beyond their antebellum counterparts by the 1870s. As white women exerted greater control over the temperance movement, manifested in the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, they reaffirmed longstanding conceptions of intemperance as a threat to the home. Government and business interests in alcohol encouraged husbands and sons to drink and consequently abandon their family responsibilities, sustain prostitution and crime, and spread venereal disease. The second annual meeting of the Illinois WCTU in 1876 called liquor “a growing cancer,” protected by law, “which continually transforms plenty into poverty, happiness into horror, genius into imbecility, and hope into despair!” To combat such a cancer, reform groups such as the WCTU positioned themselves as critics of the political economic as well as the moral health of the nation, their positions colored by their generally white, native born, middle class, and Protestant point of view. Beer was hardly their singular target, but it deserved no special treatment either.47

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Although the temperance movement in the 1870s employed both moral suasion and legal coercion as tactics against alcohol, the Woman’s Crusade represented an important and visible facet of their efforts. With origins in the 1850s, this tactic involved crusading women gathering in a saloon to kneel and pray conspicuously, embarrassing patrons and pressuring the proprietor to close their doors, if temporarily. After a string of successive saloon visits in Cincinnati and southwestern Ohio in late 1873, the crusade became more organized and gained national attention.\footnote{Reportedly, the strategy was invented by a woman in Dixon, Illinois in 1858. See Dannenbaum, \textit{Drink and Disorder}, 203; Bohlmann, “Drunken Husbands, Drunken State,” 21.}

In attacking the entire liquor trade, crusaders made powerful and even aggressive enemies. Cincinnati in 1874 contained over three thousand saloons, many in Over-the-Rhine where anti-alcohol sentiment already predominated. Beyond direct consumption, the city’s brewing and distilling interests held over thirty-three million dollars in capital and employed at least thirty thousand people. Almost half of the City Council participated in the liquor trade in some way, and the city’s business interests worried that disrupting the local alcohol trades could compound existing economic problems. Crusading women faced not only government interference but also hostile treatment by some of the establishments they visited. When they marched on the Foss, Schneider, & Brenner brewery in May 1874, workers stood on the roof and at windows, beating copper cans as drums, throwing eggs and beer at the women, and “howling like demons.” The mayor arrived and failed to convince the women to leave. The angry crowd then attempted to force them out, leading to a scuffle in the street that nearly erupted into a riot. Police later attempted to track down the aggressors but also received orders to “let the women fight their own battles,” and the mayor attempted to prohibit their marches the next day, citing public order concerns.\footnote{Jed Dannenbaum attributes part of the decline in Ohio’s liquor trade from 1873-1875 to the Women’s Crusade, citing a general statement by the United States Brewers Association blaming them for a decline in annual beer}
Chicago temperance reformers encountered similar disdain and hostility. In February 1874, saloonkeepers around the North Side received letters declaring them as targets for an impending visit by a local band of crusaders. Though the letter was subsequently revealed to be a hoax, thousands gathered at the various saloons in question to observe (or perhaps harass) the expected reformers. One German saloonkeeper both ordered an additional barrel of bock for the occasion and hired a band to drown out the prayers with popular songs. In March, when the city council considered an ordinance to modify the Sunday ban on alcohol sales enacted two years before, fifty-seven women marched on their meeting, carrying a petition with sixteen thousand signatures which opposed any repeal of the ban. The council allowed the petition to be presented but promptly ignored it and passed the ordinance. A crowd of several thousand had gathered outside to meet them, and when the women emerged they were met with “the most obscene phrases” and the “foulest epithets.” The crowd jostled and tripped the women, pulled at their hair, and spit tobacco juice on their dresses. According to Annie Wittenmyer, first president of the national WCTU, the experience did not intimidate Chicago’s temperance women but rather “made them a thousand times more determined.” Before long, local WCTU leadership was coordinating temperance meetings throughout the city.50

In the general discourse, temperance messages mingled with other viewpoints, not all of which involved direct visits to saloons or hostile interactions. Alongside its defenses of German production. He further claims that the Crusade aided the consolidation and industrialization of American breweries by forcing many small and marginal operations to close. However, he does not provide substantial analysis for this claim nor qualify how the Crusade’s effect on liquor trades compared to or interacted with the economic downturn of the mid-1870s. See Dannenbaum. Drink and Disorder, 216-219, 232n22; The Jackson Standard [Jackson, Ohio], May 28, 1874.

Chicagoans and their beer, the *Tribune* published numerous temperance arguments throughout the 1870s, more often when it lacked some pressing issue to advocate. The haphazard and sometimes contradictory message surrounding lager beer, in the *Tribune* and elsewhere, reflected its contentious definitions and status. The connection between German ethnicity and lager beer blended into these discussions according to its rhetorical utility in each situation.

Articles decrying drunkenness and portraying the tragic self-destruction of the drunkard contradicted the idea that beer provided a moderate path to temperance. If whiskey or brandy represented their final downfall, a glass of beer might be the initial lapse that lured them away from their abstinence pledge. “It is indeed a great question,” a *Tribune* reporter wrote, “whether an oath to give up lager would not be regarded on the North Side as void.” Another letter seeking to limit liquor licenses tied lager’s destructive potential to its ethnic and sociable origins. Citing conversations with “an old German friend,” the author asserted that convivial gatherings at saloons precluded reasonable levels of consumption, turning what might be “two or three glasses of lager-beer a day, and no alcoholic drinks or wine” into fifteen or twenty. Temperance organizations issued public statements directed at Chicago’s German population insisting that beer indeed intoxicated and that its consumption caused the same degrading effects to the home and family as whiskey. Laws such as Sunday bans, reformers insisted, were akin to those against “administering poisons,” and asked why Germans should oppose them any more than other nationalities.51

Temperance agitation in Cincinnati went even further in blending their rejection of beer’s moderate status with opposition to German ethnicity, viewing its flourishing breweries, attractive beer gardens, and proportionally high German population as a menacing juggernaut. Women’s Crusade literature targeted beer gardens, printed German statements (whether real or invented)

with mocking accents, and labelled them “ignorant bigots and infidels, who were ready, on any pretext, to cry out against the Bible and Puritanism.” Some Germans in Cincinnati reinforced these distinctions by insisting that the breweries were all German, while distilleries were all American. Other statements used nationwide statistics to make their case, arguing that decreases in whiskey consumption in favor of beer served the cause of temperance. Cincinnati partisans further critiqued Chicago saloon-owners for openly defying Sunday bans on alcohol, arguing that provoking city authorities publicly hurt their ultimate goal of demonstrating beer’s temperate qualities, stating it was “entirely probable that Chicago and every other large city in this country would vote in favor of allowing the beer-gardens and beer-saloons to remain open on Sunday…if the sale of beer could be practically separated from the sale of spirituous liquors.” The workers at Foss, Schneider, and Brenner apparently forgot that lesson sometime before they began throwing eggs at crusading women.

Questions regarding beer’s effect on health entwined with debates over its moderate qualities as demonstrated by the Tribune when it defended lager beer as a temperance beverage in 1874:

We believe that the cultivation of the taste for lager beer as a substitute for the fiery alcoholic beverages used by the drinking portion of the community is one of the best possible movements in the cause of temperance. If the compounds retailed at the bars in this city, under the names of whiskey, brandy, and gin, and even as wine, were analyzed, the wonder would not be that men are poisoned by the use of liquor but that the number thus poisoned is not tenfold greater than it is. While we do not advise any teetotaler to use beer, we think it would be a happy circumstance if the consumption of the latter were doubled and that of alcoholic drinks diminished by

52 Wittenmyer, History of the Woman’s Temperance Crusade, 248-250, as quoted in Dannenbaum. Drink and Disorder, 225.

one half. When beer shall become the national beverage, there will be an immense reduction, not only of the number of drunkards, but of those whose minds, nerves, and bodies are seriously injured by the poisonous adulterations now sold in saloons.\textsuperscript{54}

Claims about the health and social effects of beer permeated debates throughout Chicago and Cincinnati. Anti-alcohol partisans included lager beer among the excesses and indulgences said to invite cholera, and temperance claims that breweries employed not only substandard ingredients but literal poisons to manufacture beer resurfaced. The classic (but perhaps valid) claim that lager beer provided a safe alternative to local water also reappeared at times. As took place when Chicago debated its recent Sunday law, other observers linked lager beer consumption to social ills such as crime and drunkenness and often included more general references to German and European culture. Comments on both sides used European rates of alcohol consumption as well as crime statistics to debate similar correlations at home. Discussions of lager’s relatively low alcohol content and nutritious ingredients regularly combined with exclamations of German-Americans’ sober and orderly habits to assert beer’s temperance value, though reformers rarely agreed.\textsuperscript{55}

Sometimes, brewers included claims about the health of their beer in advertisements. Conrad Seipp claimed that the lengthy fermentation period of his beer made it healthier than “fresh beer.” John Hauck claimed that his lager beer cured “a morbid appetite for strong drink.” George Weber, a Bavarian brewer also in Cincinnati, claimed repeatedly that the cold storage facilities at his brewery purified his beer of any “adulteration,” by which he meant poisonous or damaging

traits. At times, Weber took his claims so far as to disparage other Cincinnati beer in the process. In 1877 the Weber brewery published a self-aggrandizing article in the *Cincinnati Star* touting the purity of their product, in the process quoting a previous claim that Cincinnati brewers employed substandard and even poisonous ingredients, which originally appeared in the *Cincinnati Gazette*. Calling the *Gazette* “the Mucker and Temperance organ of this city,” eight prominent Cincinnati brewers took offense to Weber’s implication that only its beer could be pure and healthy. They claimed that the city’s German community was “aroused and indignant when a German brewery acts in this manner,” and that Weber aided the temperance movement by lending credence to their arguments that beer could be toxic in any way. A public argument ensued, dubbed “the Beer War” by the *Star*, between Weber and a growing coalition of Cincinnati brewers whose overtones about Cincinnati beer’s health qualities and purities also contained significant undertones about solidarity among brewers and the German community at large regarding opposition to the temperance movement, as well as the social penalties that came with breaking rank.56

Finally, Germans demonstrated awareness that attacks on lager beer represented attacks not only on their personal freedoms but their very status as American citizens. In 1873, speakers at a German mass meeting in west Chicago recalled their community’s military service during the Civil War and declared that:

> the temperance people were demanding their pound of flesh and they would have it. The Germans were not ‘beer guzzlers,’ but just as good and freedom-loving citizens as any native-born American…Now was the time for them to demand their rights, including that of drinking a glass of beer when they pleased. The fact was, the Americans were jealous of the Germans, belonging, as they did, to a race which has recently played so prominent a part [in the war]. Yet they were all, Americans

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and Germans and Irish, parts of a grand whole, forming unitedly the American nation, and all entitled to equal rights.\textsuperscript{57}

German Americans saw laws curtailing German customs and habits, specifically including beer consumption, as an arbitrary and fanatical threat to their hard-won place as American citizens. For all the warnings made in newspapers that they might take to the streets if denied their beer, German statements in both Chicago and Cincinnati primarily treated the ballot box as their guarantor of citizenship. With the specter of slavery resolved and German perceptions of ethnicity turning inward (thus ignoring slavery’s lingering shadow over African-Americans), former party allegiances among German immigrants had eroded. Though hardly the Germans’ only political concern, stances on temperance issues mattered more than the party taking them.\textsuperscript{58}

Although fought on multiple fronts including Sunday bans and other specific laws, the health and social effects of lager beer consumption, the observed behavior and characteristics of its chief representatives, and questions of individual rights, local battles over lager beer directly contributed to discourses on the status of German immigrants as American citizens as well as their effect on larger questions of morality, public safety, and government. These debates, however, were not purely local but rather iterations contributing to a growing national conversation.

On the National Stage

Entities like \textit{The Western Brewer} and United States Brewers Association helped coordinate the brewing industry across time and space, disseminating not only information and services but also insights into the scientific, political, and cultural concerns of the brewing community. Their

magnified voice translated arguments about the benefits, temperance potential, and best practices of lager production. They further advocated for the German-led brewing industry and the cultural norms which undergirded it, a stance which pitted them against temperance reformers. Brewers and related professionals in both Chicago and Cincinnati contributed significantly as members of this community.

The national meetings of the USBA cemented the organization’s priorities as a political advocate for the brewing industry, its enmity with temperance reform across the nation, and its devotion to a narrative portraying lager beer as a healthy, safe, temperate, and national beverage for American society. The organization also retained its decidedly German character, publishing most of its proceedings in German as well as English and continuing to focus on lager over other styles of beer. A New York brewer, addressing the Twelfth Brewers Congress held in that city in 1872, extolled the virtues of the USBA by saying “hospitality is a characteristic trait of the German race, ever ready to extend the hand of friendship to their competitors in trade.” By working together via the USBA, the German-led brewing industry believed it had avoided untold injury by limiting federal taxes and opposing temperance legislation. Brewers from Chicago and Cincinnati contributed proportionally to this development through attendance, participation in various committees, and periodic addresses of their own.  

Although tax reform provided the initial impetus for the formation of the USBA, by the 1870s the organization showed equal concern for the resurgent campaigns of temperance reformers. Attendees at the annual meeting expressed disdain for perceived overreach by the Internal Revenue Service as well as a belief that overburdensome regulation would choke the industry as well as its temperance potential. “If we would supplant strong drinks,” one brewer declared, “we must

59 Proceedings of the Twelfth Annual Brewers’ Congress, convened June 5-6, 1872, Beer Institute Library, 10-11.
continually be checked by senseless laws.” Brewers continued their pattern of negotiating with the government to ease restrictions on its trade, such as import duties on barley or the cost of barrel stamps (which indicated payment of the federal tax), and further began taking interest in state and local laws which regulated brewing. In 1872 Association members issued strong statements in favor of laissez-faire economic policies regarding their industry. In short order, this same logic began to encompass proposed temperance laws alongside economic regulations. When the USBA convened in Pittsburgh in 1871, the president of the local brewers’ association lamented, “we are heavily burdened…by the chicanery of the temperance fanaticism and the laws of the United States Congress.” The two topics jointly dominated the docket of each national meeting.60

In the minds of USBA members, their industry advanced the cause of temperance far better than any reformer. They considered proposed temperance laws to be an irrational threat to American liberties, “a direct step towards lawlessness and despotism.” Passing such laws undermined the reformers’ very cause by incentivizing the purchase of whiskey as well as moving alcohol consumption away from semi-public saloons and into the home. True devotees of temperance, the USBA reasoned, encouraged beer consumption as a safe and moderate alternative, and it was therefore up to the brewers to save the “fanatics” from themselves. “We have paid too little attention to politics heretofore,” Henry Clausen, a New York brewer, declared in 1872, “necessity compels us to act with determination and unity. Our opponents have unsheathed the sword, ready to exterminate us.” As it did among German neighborhoods in Chicago and Cincinnati, imperative superseded party loyalty: Clausen (a lifelong Democrat) proclaimed, “I

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60 Proceedings of the Tenth Congress of the Brewers of the United States, convened June 2, 1870, Beer Institute Library, 4; Proceedings of the Eleventh Congress of the Brewers of the United States, convened June 7, 1871, Beer Institute Library, 3; Proceedings of the Twelfth Annual Brewers’ Congress, 9.
would sooner vote for the Republican ticket than cast my ballot for [a pro-temperance] candidate.”

Beyond reacting to temperance agitation or federal laws, the USBA further sought to promote the general welfare of the industry and advance and positive narrative surrounding lager beer. Lager beer, they insisted year after year, was an antidote to spirituous liquors and the drunken criminality that they promoted. It was a stimulating and healthy beverage which, when consumed in moderation, promoted amicable social interactions. As demonstrated by centuries of responsible use in German, beer was not only harmless but nutritious such that, if made affordable and accessible, it shielded the poor and laboring classes from detrimental alternatives. Such connotations culminated in the argument that lager beer ought to be the national beverage of the United States, if its inherent popularity had not already earned such status. In addition to rhetoric, the USBA worked to promote scientific understanding between brewers and promote the establishment of a sister organization in Germany.

If umbrella organizations like the USBA helped coalesce the narratives and directives of the German-led brewing industry, journals like The Western Brewer in Chicago helped disseminate them. From its first issue, the journal promised to “preach the gospel of BEER” and defended its use from a variety of angles and mocked temperance actions and ideas at every opportunity. Descriptions of polluted drinking water sources around the country as well as acidic blurbs that “water is a liquid for men to wash in and for horses to drink” sought to discredit it as the standard pro-temperance alternative. It lambasted anti-Sunday arguments as “senseless sectarian twaddle”

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61 Proceedings of the Twelfth Annual Brewers’ Congress, 8-10
62 Proceedings of the Fourteenth Annual Brewers’ Congress, convened June 3-5, 1874, Beer Institute Library, 7-8; Proceedings of the Tenth Congress of the Brewers of the United States, 16; Proceedings of the Eleventh Congress of the Brewers of the United States, 6, 16-17.
and blamed temperance agitation for frightening would-be German immigrants from coming to the United States which, in turn, prolonged the economic hardships of the mid-1870s.63

Beyond criticizing the brewing industry’s enemies, *Western Brewer* articles also promoted the industry and its goals far beyond describing the latest technologies, scientific discoveries, and facility designs. Profiles and obituaries celebrated the accomplishments of individual brewers and helped foster a sense of community across space. Numerous articles disseminated production statistics from various parts of the United States as well as coverage of production, consumption, and temperance debates in European countries. Germanic nations and communities throughout Europe, as well as historical accounts of beer in Germany, naturally featured most prominently in *The Western Brewer*’s international vision, helping promote the ethnic character of the industry. This character melded organically with assertions that beer did not intoxicate, was nourishing and healthy to the point of being “the poor man’s bread,” and rightfully could be called a national beverage. Using Chicago’s development as an example, the journal proclaimed that a quiet revolution in favor of beer had swept the nation, transforming dram shops into beer saloons, mitigating drunkenness and helping opulent beer gardens like the Tivoli become the city’s most prominent features. “Here is a bone for the temperance fanatics to gnaw on,” the journal concluded, “all their fuss, and preaching, and tracts, have not accomplished as much in a hundred years in the way of temperance reform.”64


Providing a national platform for the interests and arguments of the brewing industry not only reflected local debates in cities like Chicago and Cincinnati but also provided them useful tools for promoting their business interests. Although they acted on their distinct ethnic vision, the German-led brewing industry’s efforts to engage American society politically and culturally not only helped it combat immediate opposition like the temperance movement but also helped it flourish within American capitalism. Economic prosperity gave brewers the means to expand but also the financial and political momentum they needed to engage legislators and defend against political adversaries. Narratives legitimizing lager beer and opposition to temperance laws, whether prohibition efforts or localized Sunday bans comprised not only cultural victories but economic ones, all of which fed through a German lens which was internally as well as externally bounded. During the intense net expansions of the brewing industry through the 1870s and beyond, those victories would be enough.

Conclusion

Neither the 1871 Chicago fire nor the Panic of 1873 slowed the expansion of the brewing industry for long. Numerous economic, political, and cultural shifts both at home and abroad, however, steered its development. Technological and organizational advancements in the management structure, technology, and design of breweries allowed them to expand production in ways never before possible, allowing German-American brewers unprecedented access to prosperity and influence over local political economies. Shifting notions of citizenship and governance within the German immigrant community, propelled by the unification of German in 1871, combined with the increasing (if incomplete) integration of German communities into American society changed not only how the brewing industry constructed its identity but also how it was externally defined. Although temperance reformers emerged as a newly potent political
force in the aftermath of the Civil War, the brewing industry’s burgeoning sense of identity proved capable of shielding its members from legislative and rhetorical assault. Instead of facing destruction from economic hardship of temperance agitation, the brewing industry instead profited from its newly hyphenated German-American identity and poised itself to flourish through the remainder of the nineteenth century.

On the surface, a sprawling brewery complex in 1875 Over-the-Rhine shared little in common with the converted blacksmith shop that first began operating twenty years before. But the predilections, politics, anxieties, and actions of the German lager brewers who had seized an industry proved how much Gilded Age capitalism could rely on the cultural and economic momentum of the market revolution. The 1870s marked neither the beginning nor the end of an era of German-American brewing history, but the middle of one.
CONCLUSION

When Chicago’s Sunday ban debate resurfaced in 1872, references to the Lager Beer Riot crept into the Chicago Tribune’s coverage of the events over and over, at one point retrospectively calling the riot the “First North Side War” as if to imply a second fomenting on the horizon. Some city officials shared the newspaper’s portentous view of the situation: the police self-consciously promised an evenhanded response while the city council shied away from using liquor license fees as a coercive tactic against public drinking. The city seemed to regard the riot as a spectral lesson warning what antagonism of the local German population might mean. “Even a monkey with a match,” the Tribune warned those who risked repeating the past, “may fire a powder magazine.”

Despite the rhetoric and fear, Chicago’s situation in 1872 differed greatly from that of 1855. A nation shattered by war was slowly reconfiguring the pieces. Chicago had become a western metropolis intricately connected to the surrounding landscape. Its breweries, like others around the country, represented significant local capital and looked nothing like their relatively simple 1850s counterparts. The lager beer they produced had triumphed over other styles. The community of German immigrants had grown prodigiously, and they used both their service in the Union Army and Germany’s recent unification to augment their political voice in ways the city no longer ignored. Likewise, the temperance movement had changed from Maine law advocates to crusaders, buoyed by resurgent women’s participation, who blockaded saloons and railed against the supposed moderation of beer. Chicago reformers faced a barrage of insults and tobacco spit during their Sabbatarian quest, but mobs no longer resulted from German mass meetings. So why did the

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Tribune draw dire parallels when so much had changed during the interim? In all likelihood, the situation felt familiar because these changes merely put old wine in new bottles.

Circumstances differed, but the foundational connections between beer and German ethnicity endured. The brewing industry and its products proliferated during the mid-nineteenth century, the Teutonic and temperance players evolved, and the rhetoric changed, but the arena stayed the same. Beer provided cultural, economic, and political ground upon which German ethnicity and citizenship were asserted, clarified, and bounded through multilateral negotiation. It remained so throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, until the First World War and national prohibition took their toll on the status of the German-American community. Beer’s role in ethnic definition arose in tandem with the German community itself. German brewers’ overwhelming agency in transforming the American brewing industry between 1840 and 1880 aligned it with the ethnic fate of the immigrant community at large.

The previous chapters investigated this process within two Midwestern cities, Chicago and Cincinnati, both via local developments rooted in place and their links to broader national trends. As waves of new German immigrants arrived in what William Rorabaugh called the “alcoholic republic,” they used beer in part to create cultural handholds and paths to economic engagement which aided in the navigation of their adopted society. German festive culture and the lager beer that helped lubricate it became a welcome feature in burgeoning immigrant neighborhoods, but they also appeared alien, disruptive, and sinful to many living outside them. As German-owned breweries appeared, gradually flourished, and competed with longstanding ale brewing traditions, temperance reformers came to perceive expanding German production and consumption as a threat to their decades-long anti-alcohol activism. In the 1850s an alliance between temperance reformers and nativist partisans targeted beer and German communities jointly, leading to overt conflict
when immigrants defended their transnationally-constructed notions of rights, citizenship, and political economy using a transnationally-constructed style of beer.

As the Civil War transformed every aspect of American life, German-Americans used both military service and the changing economic landscape to expand the practice and production of their preferred alcoholic beverage. During the 1860s their ownership, expertise, and labor gave them ideological and financial control of the brewing industry as a whole; meanwhile, the strong association between lager beer and German festive culture meant that the beverage’s growing fame proportionally influenced the American public life in which it was consumed. The cultural, technological, and economic capital that fueled the German-led brewing industry’s success allowed brewery owners, by the late 1860s and 1870s, to defend their interests in the face of resurgent temperance agitation and, to a lesser extent, federal government regulation. As a German nation coalesced across the Atlantic, the political and cultural developments surrounding German lager beer and its immigrant hosts helped blur intraethnic lines. The result was a reified ethnocultural and political ethos that helped hyphenate German and American beer consumption. Beer’s role in the redefinition of German-American citizen and economic continued well beyond the 1870s and the scope of this study. In most respects, the process culminated in Prohibition itself, whose passage relied in part on wartime public hostility toward German-Americans and by extension the brewing industry. Nevertheless, numerous German cultural elements remain in American drinking culture today.²

If such a study bears out any one theme regarding the American brewing industry and its ethnically German components, that theme is momentum. The gathered momentum of the market revolution, German immigration, the temperance movement, lager beer, and the brewing industry

as a whole propelled existing ideologies, practices, fears, and grudges across the chasm of the Civil War and into the late nineteenth century. Though smelted in the crucibles of civil war, urbanization, industrialization, local and national political struggles, and ethnic reification, antebellum experiences provided the materials from which American society forged the ongoing terms of German immigrant citizenship. The historiography of American brewing could benefit immensely from a wider perspective which integrates not only multiple temporal stages of American brewing but also more nuanced lines of inquiry.

Prevailing general (and many localized) histories of American brewing typically regard its German component as an uncomplicated and natural inclusion while also privileging the significance of the industry’s later expansion. They rush through the origins of beer in America (or sometimes beer’s very invention by prehistoric societies) in a chapter or two before concentrating on the post-Civil War growth of the industry. One study calls antebellum brewing in the United States “a relatively unimportant affair.”\(^3\) When authors have afforded significant attention to early American brewing, as in Stanley Baron’s seminal 1962 work *Brewed in America*, analysis tends to build teleologically toward the rise of national breweries in the late nineteenth century rather than considering the inherent significance of earlier decades. Such narrow focus stems from an overemphasis on the business facets of the brewing industry which privilege high production volumes, mechanization, and clout, a lack of historiography fully integrating brewing into wider studies of nineteenth century American cultural life, and implicit presentism regarding

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German ethnicity’s eventual normalization in American society. In treating the rise of lager beer and German-American breweries as a relative given, such historiography ignores the enormous cultural contention that defined immigrant influence throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, disconnects later industrial brewing from political economy, transnational forces, and ethnic strife that gave it shape, and further precludes the possibility that brewing can contribute to broader examinations of American history. As shown here, the brewing industry provides significant and necessary perspectives to considerations of German ethnicity, American economic life, reform movements, and U.S. foreign relations while also demonstrating continuity between pre- and post-Civil War periods.4

An expansive view of American brewing history further reveals significant comparative opportunities between lager beer’s mid-nineteenth century expansion and the modern rise of craft beer. Breweries in the United States have exploded in number since the early 1980s and now represent a breadth of sizes, markets, business practices, and political engagement. Although craft brewers now compete with enormous international conglomerates such as Anheuser-Busch Inbev and Molson Coors (both with intimate ties to historically prominent German-American breweries), their political economy mirrors some of the developments and challenges presented in this dissertation. The most obvious is timeframe: the number of American breweries grew from barely one hundred in 1978 to over six thousand in 2017, similar in scale to the growth experienced between 1840 and 1873. Next, each development benefitted greatly from new communities of brewers departing from the established styles and methods which preceded them. Just as German brewers introduced a new product in lagers, craft brewers intentionally departed from “fizzy, yellow” beer (ironically born of the nineteenth century) and greatly diversified the styles of beer

available to American consumers. Next, both stages of American brewing history have demonstrated a high sensitivity to local communities in their business practices. Finally, both developments have struggled with issues of diversity and inclusion with regard to which groups can and should be part of beer consumption and production, though the issues manifested in different ways. German immigrants found their acceptance as American citizens tied in part to lager beer while craft beer enthusiasts today grapple with their community’s inclusiveness toward women and people of color. Comparisons between these distinct yet analogous eras raise once more the question of continuity across American brewing history, as craft beer may represent a resurgence of localized, diverse, and innovative brewing institutions in addition to its oft-cited insurgency against entrenched macro brewers.⁵

During the mid-nineteenth century, German immigrants to the United States wielded beer not only as a festive social lubricant but also a political weapon, economic engine, and ethnocultural identifier. Both the product and its implications straddled oceans, cultural barriers, and uneven markets, and performed analogous functions both before and after German-Americans negotiated their place within the nation’s broader milieu. By considering beer as a lens into shifting

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intersectional facets of American political economy, further study will reveal new contact points between American history and the present day.
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