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Ethnicity and Race in the Urban South: German Immigrants and African-Americans in Charleston, South Carolina during Reconstruction

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ETHNICITY AND RACE IN THE URBAN SOUTH: GERMAN IMMIGRANTS AND AFRICAN-AMERICANS IN CHARLESTON SOUTH CAROLINA DURING RECONSTRUCTION

By

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ABSTRACT

Germans and African-Americans exhibited a significant degree of economic, social, and political interaction in Reconstruction Charleston. Race and ethnic relations between Germans and African-Americans tended to be more positive than those between blacks and white southerners and challenged southern social norms. During Reconstruction, a small but economically and politically significant community of German immigrants thrived in Charleston, South Carolina. The overwhelming majority of Germans in Charleston had immigrated between 1850 and the Civil War. They worked primarily as merchants, shopkeepers, and skilled artisans, but a minority of them worked as laborers, domestic servants, and other service-related occupations.

Germans often lived in the same neighborhoods, buildings, and even households as African-Americans. Interracial relations between Germans and African-Americans challenged social conventions of the time and drew criticism from southerners. In several instances Germans and African-Americans entered into sexual relations and even married. Following the Civil War, some southerners and German elites in Charleston considered attracting German immigrants to stimulate the economy or replace black laborers. However, German immigrants lacked to desire to settle there, and southerners had hostile views toward German immigrants and never committed to a program that would successfully attract Germans to the South.

Many Germans owned and operated successful businesses and sometimes they faced the scrutiny of southerners. Germans shopkeepers catered to African-American consumer demand.
and sometimes sold items to blacks on credit. German middle-class businessmen organized social clubs based on their cultural heritage. The German Rifle Club leadership organized its annual Schutzenfest, and the members invited southerners and African-Americans to attend. In the annual Schutzenfest parade, German elites expressed their willingness to become southern whites and contribute to white political ascendancy. African-Americans demonstrated their own political and martial power at Fourth of July and Emancipation Day parades in which the entire community participated in the procession.

German and African-American political cooperation and conflict posed a tremendous problem for southerners. Southern whites called for German Democratic political support, but African-Americans appealed to Germans as well, evidence that Germans held moderate views. Throughout Reconstruction, Germans divided themselves between both political parties, but politically active Germans gradually moved toward the Democratic Party.
INTRODUCTION

Charleston was a cosmopolitan city during Reconstruction with thousands of German immigrants, African-Americans, white southerners, and others living and working side by side; all actively attempting to escape the postwar economic doldrums. In 1872, upon his arrival in Charleston, the well-traveled Stephen Powers, walked down to the Battery and noted, “The birthplace of the great rebellion still slumbered in the deep sluggard languor of Southern cities on a winter morning.” Powers remarked pejoratively,

Charleston was a city, first, of idle ragged negroes, who, with no visible means of support nevertheless sent an astonishing multitude of children to school; second, of small dealers, laborers, and German artisans, starving on the rebel custom; third, of widows and children of planters, keeping respectable boarding-houses, or pining hopeless and unspeakable penury; fourth, of young men loafing in the saloons, and living on the profits of their mother’s boarding-houses; fifth of Jews and Massachusetts merchants, doing well on the semi-loyal and negro custom; sixth, of utterly worthless and accursed political adventurers from the North, Bureau leeches, and promiscuous knaves, all fattening on the humiliation of the South and the credulity of the freedmen.¹

The city had not yet recovered from the impact of the war when the Panic of 1873 and subsequent depression devastated the feeble economy.

During Reconstruction, a small but economically and politically significant community of German immigrants thrived in Charleston, South Carolina. These primarily middle-class immigrants lived throughout the city’s eight wards, but they tended to live nearby other Germans. The overwhelming majority of Germans in Charleston had immigrated between 1850 and the Civil War. They worked primarily as merchants, shopkeepers, and skilled artisans, but a minority of them worked as laborers, domestic servants, and other service-related occupations. Similar to those in other United States cities, Germans in Charleston exhibited more positive relations with African-Americans than southern whites because German immigrants had not been racialized in accordance with southern social norms. Germans and African-Americans lived in the same households, and in rare instances entered into sexual relations and even married. German shopkeepers catered to African-American consumers, sometimes extending goods on credit but more often conducting a cash business with them.

In the aftermath of the war, African-Americans actively participated in the debate over the social, political, and economic course that had not yet been determined. Former slaveholders attempted to maintain control over their labor force and resisted the efforts of freedmen to act as independent wage laborers. Carl Schurz, a prominent liberal German immigrant and abolitionist, reported on the conditions in the South and emphasized that most southerners did not believe African-Americans would work as freedmen, and that southerners had already begun to legislate restrictive controls over African-Americans. Among the German Republicans in Charleston...
some participated in this debate and argued on behalf of African-Americans. Many northerners became increasingly disenchanted with the behavior of southern whites and Congress began to promote radical reforms in order to gain control of the situation in the South.

Many African-Americans decided to move from plantations and the rural South to the cities. The percentage of African-Americans living in cities throughout the United States increased from around 5 to 7 percent in 1860 to over 25 percent in 1910. In Charleston, the African-American population increased from 17,000 in 1860 to over 27,000 in 1880. “Blacks relished opportunities to flaunt their liberation from the innumerable regulations, significant and trivial, associated with slavery,” Eric Foner writes, “Freedmen held mass meetings and religious services unrestrained by white surveillance, acquired dogs, guns, and liquor (all barred to them under slavery), and refused to yield the sidewalks to whites. They dressed as they pleased, black women sometimes wearing gaudy finery, carrying parasols, and replacing the slave kerchief with colorful hats and veils.”

In 1865, four million freed African-Americans actively participated in the South’s social, economic, and political life. In late 1865, Congress ratified the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution that abolished slavery in the United States. Presidents Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson planned to bring the Confederate States back into the federal government under circumstances favorable to southerners. Johnson’s policies tended to promote a climate in which southern whites intimidated African-Americans into unfavorable labor contracts and accepted white racial violence against blacks. The new southern state legislatures mirrored their antebellum predecessors, and southern government officials enacted black codes that restricted African-American civil rights, including the right to vote. African-Americans resorted to public protest and clamored for the passage of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments that guaranteed citizenship for freedmen and voting participation for black males. Between 1867 and the 1870s, the sympathetic northerners and African-Americans united under Republican Party auspices, and they embraced a black civil rights program.

In 1865 and 1866, southern whites took control of their governments and attempted to subjugate the black population. Southerners met in state conventions and formulated new constitutions that called for continued white authority and control of the African-American population. The legislatures soon passed legislation that maintained the caste system with African-Americans on the bottom. South Carolina and Mississippi enacted black codes that imposed severe restrictions on African-American mobility, property rights, marriage, labor contracts, and jury participation. White legislators instituted fines for African-Americans who quit their jobs, carried weapons, violated curfew, and insulted whites. South Carolina’s black code was the most oppressive in the South and whites in other states widely considered it a model for their own. John A. Wagener, a German immigrant and influential Democrat elected to the South Carolina’s state convention in 1865, voted against the black code.

African-Americans demanded full citizenship rights and the found support from Radical Republicans in the North. Republicans did not tolerate the South’s blatant moves to undermine their efforts at African-American civil and political equality. Senators Charles Sumner, Benjamin Wade, and Henry Wilson and Congressmen Thaddeus Stevens, George W. Julian, and James M. Ashley pushed for the extension of citizenship rights to African-Americans. In February 1866, Republicans in Congress extended the Freedmen’s Bureau and provided direct funding and expanded the power of bureau agents to judge civil rights violations. In March 1866, Congress passed the Civil Rights Bill that conferred national citizenship to all persons born in the United States and extended equal rights and protection of “person and property.” The
Reconstruction Acts of 1867 divided the former Confederate States (except Tennessee) into five military districts, each under the authority of a military commander. The Reconstruction Acts called for southern states to draft new constitutions, extend to blacks the right to vote, and ratify the Fourteenth Amendment before they would gain admittance into the United States. In 1868, Congress ratified the Fourteenth Amendment that had passed nearly two years earlier. It made it illegal for any state to enforce or make any laws that abridged the “privileges and immunities” of citizens, deny “equal protection of the law” and to deprive citizens of life, liberty or property without due process. The Fourteenth Amendment also encouraged southern states to enfranchise African-American men. In 1870, Congress ratified the Fifteenth Amendment that extended the right to vote to all male United States citizens, including African-American men, and regardless of “race, color and previous condition of servitude.” African-Americans made up one-fourth of all delegates to the state constitutional conventions. In South Carolina, African-Americans made up a majority of the delegates. At the state conventions, delegates enfranchised African-Americans and enacted social welfare and legal reforms.

In May 1865, the federal government had created the Freedmen’s Bureau in the War Department for the purpose of assisting African-Americans in the transition from slavery to freedom. The Bureau distributed food, supervised labor contracts, assisted with education, and provided financial assistance to needy whites and African-Americans. Radical Congressmen such as Thaddeus Stevens and George W. Julian called for land distribution to freedmen, something African-Americans badly needed. Unfortunately, federal officials redistributed a very small amount of miniscule confiscated land to African-Americans.

African-Americans relied on their own ethnic self-help organizations. African-Americans withdrew from white dominated Churches and formed their own. The Church stood at the center of the African-American community, providing spiritual and social support. They formed their own mutual aid societies, militia companies, and social clubs. As freedmen, in Charleston, African-Americans made real wages and they spent their money in a variety of ways, typically purchasing groceries and other items at German-owned stores—a continuation of an antebellum trend. The Germans also formed numerous social organizations that catered to a variety of interests. The Saint Johannes German Lutheran Church, German Friendly Society, and German Rifle Club were the most important German social organizations in the city. Because German Protestants were more visible than German Catholics and German Jews, it probably aided in their acceptance by southerners.

African-Americans turned to political activism as a means of ensuring long-term independence, but whites resisted their efforts and launched a violent campaign against African-Americans as early as 1865. Between 1868 and 1871, the Ku Klux Klan and other white paramilitary organizations attacked and killed African-Americans and white Republicans throughout the South. Congress passed the Ku Klux Klan and Enforcement Acts of 1871-72 to protect African-Americans and prosecute guilty whites. Southerners gradually gathered support for the Democratic Party while systematically undermining the Republican Party in the South. In 1876, whites used violence, intimidation and murder during the election campaign with success, and they managed to bring about the “redemption” of southern state governments to the Democratic Party. The German Rifle Club in Charleston drew its members from the ranks of middle-class German Democrats, and they participated in violence against African-Americans.
Related Research

In his class synthesis, *Reconstruction; America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, Eric Foner wrote that “no part of the American experience has, in the last twenty-five years, seen a broadly accepted point of view so completely overturned as Reconstruction—“the violent, dramatic, and still controversial period that followed the Civil War.” I have expanded on several of Foner’s themes. First, I have added the relationship of German immigrants to “the centrality of the black experience.” Second, I reveal that German immigrants and African-Americans actively pursued cooperating and competing political and economic agendas. Foner considers African-American political participation “the most radical development” of the period. German political participation in Charleston at times challenged white southern norms. Finally, I am interested in the intersection of ethnicity and race in the social, economic, and political spheres. More specifically, I investigate the complicated race relations and add German immigrants to the traditional black and white categories.

In rejecting the exclusivity of the black-white paradigm in southern history, I have used an interdisciplinary approach that combines recent Reconstruction social and cultural history with new scholarship on the historical and social construction of “whiteness” that emerged in the early 1990s. David Roediger, Barbara Fields, Glenda Gilmore, and Noel Ignatiev have each made significant contributions to the history of race, ethnicity, class, and gender during Reconstruction. In another key study, Neil Foley discredits the myth of white Anglo-Saxon purity in Texas and the South. In South Carolina, southerners accepted middle-class Germans as white, but they viewed working-class laborers as closer to black. Moreover, the “black” racial category included a large “mulatto” population that realized greater social and economic success based upon their skin color. Furthermore, poor whites did not gain access to the same privileges and status that normally accompanied whiteness, and successful whites explained their own success in racial terms. In Charleston, elite southerners considered themselves a “better class of whites.”

Interracial relations between Germans and African-Americans challenged social conventions of the time and drew criticism from southerners. In several instances Germans and African-Americans entered into sexual relations and even married. Historian Neil Foley claims, “After centuries of thinking of blacks as a separate racial group, we often overlook the fact that Black Americans, like Mexicans and Anglos, are also ethnically diverse and represent generations of intermarriage with Anglos, Mexicans, Asians, Indians, and other groups.” This is definitely the case in Charleston where African-Americans intermarried with Germans.

Only recently have scholars begun to focus on southern cities in the nineteenth century. Southern and Immigration historians have long ignored the social, economic, and political contributions of the Germans in the South. Mainly, they posit that the total number of immigrants was small compared to the native-born white population and African-American populations. The scant scholarship that exists portrays the Germans generally as more liberal and politically divided over the issues of secession and politics. In his history of *The Maryland Germans*, historian Dieter Cunz dedicated a significant portion to Germans in the state between 1865 and 1900. Like most of his contemporaries, Cunz focused on the political and economic contributions of elite and middle-class Germans. He finds the Maryland Germans were generally pro-Union and anti-slavery. In *The Virginia Germans*, Klaus Wust devoted a little over ten pages to the role of German immigrants in the Civil War and Reconstruction. Similarly, Wust reveals a middle-class German community in which Germans were divided over slavery and
politics. During Reconstruction, Wust shows, some Richmond Germans supported the Republican Party. In *The German People of New Orleans, 1850-1900*, John Fredrick Nau discovered that the Germans in New Orleans split into competing political factions during Reconstruction. By 1876, the majority of politically active Germans in New Orleans had moved toward the Democratic Party.¹¹

Historians of the South have neglected ethnic diversity and its role in political relations in nineteenth century Southern cities. Standard studies of the Reconstruction period, such as Eric Foner’s *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, ignore the diversity within the European-American category labeled “white.” George Brown Tindall has identified ethnic diversity and interaction as a “new frontier” in southern history, but he fails to recognize immigrant influence in Reconstruction Charleston. George Brown Tindall writes “one new frontier for southern historians is the role of ethnic diversity in the region—more than just that represented by black and white.” Tindall exposes the myth that “southerners have always embodied an Anglo-Saxon purity.” He focuses on the cosmopolitan nature of antebellum southern cities but ignores the ethnic communities following the Civil War.¹² Dennis C. Rousey notes the necessity of a more detailed understanding of the ethnocultural interaction among ethnic groups in the South, more specifically a closer study of the process by which immigrants adapted to southern society—and how they changed it.¹³

Recent scholarship has begun to fill this void but much work remains to be done. David T. Gleeson has written on the Irish in the South but he completely ignores obvious political divisions within that ethnic group. Instead, he portrays the Irish as staunch supporters of the Democratic Party, a traditional view that has been challenged.¹⁴ Brian D. Page reveals that “white political leaders and the conservative press were forced to consider a new definition of whiteness that included Irish Americans, in order to cement the economic and social dominance of the native, elite white population. Whiteness was politically constructed to the extent it solidified white control versus the abhorrent alternative of black domination and working class solidarity.”¹⁵ Mark K. Bauman has investigated the German Jewish community in New South Atlanta, Georgia.¹⁶ In his discussion of Jews in Savannah, Mark I. Greenberg argues that Jewish commitment to Southern honor, slave ownership, and the Confederate cause assisted their assimilation process and helped them “become Southern” more easily.¹⁷

Few studies exist that investigate race and ethnicity in Charleston during Reconstruction. Bernard E. Powers offers an excellent discussion of African-American interaction with immigrant laborers from the black perspective.¹⁸ Scholars have tended to pay more attention to southern immigration in the first-half of the nineteenth century, and much of the discussion has focused on antebellum communities. They seem to have ignored that many of these same immigrants remained or returned to their homes and places of employment. Several works on antebellum immigrants in Charleston exist, one by historian Christopher Silver, and another coauthored by Ira Berlin and Herbert G. Gutman. Berlin and Gutman contributed perhaps the best analysis in their article “Natives and Immigrants, Free Men and Slaves: Urban Workingmen in the Antebellum American South.”¹⁹ I have attempted to build on the latter study in looking at what happens to those groups, mainly Germans and African-Americans, after the Civil War.
German Immigrants and African-Americans in Charleston

In Chapter One, I have introduced new evidence that suggests efforts to attract immigration to Charleston and South Carolina failed because the majority of southerners never committed to the project. In particular, G. A. Neuffer, a native of Wurtemberg, Germany and commercial merchant in Charleston, wrote an unpublished essay criticizing the lack of organization in South Carolina and the need for professional immigration agents in Europe and New York. Historians Walter J. Fleming, R. H. Woody, Bert James Lowenberg, and Rowland T. Berthoff have written essays on the subject, and they generally agree that immigrants chose not to settle in the South because of the depressed economic conditions there. I believe that southern nativism and lack of respect for wage labor posed an equally strong barrier to immigrant recruitment. The Charleston press and government reports provide an extensive historical record describing immigration efforts and failure in South Carolina. I have also relied on a database compiled from the 1860, 1870, and 1880 Manuscript Census as well as the published census records for those same years.20

In the following chapter, I explore the nature of race and ethnic relations in Charleston between 1860 and 1880. I pay special attention to the relationship between African-Americans and German immigrants. Mainly, Germans and African-Americans did not experience the same level of conflict compared to that of southern whites and black Charlestonians. Germans and African-Americans lived in the same households, and I uncovered several instances of intermarriage, cohabitation, and mixed-race children in the Manuscript Censuses of 1860, 1870, and 1880. In the words of Graham Hodges, “These marriages are not significant numerically but have great symbolic importance” because they “defied the racist conventions of their times to build genuine relationships and at times families.” Furthermore, African-Americans stole from German shopkeepers and sometimes committed acts of violence against them. In 1870, German restaurant and saloon owners challenged the Civil Rights law and either refused to serve food to African-Americans and charged exorbitant prices for liquor. African-Americans filed official complaints with city officials, and the mayor levied the $1000 maximum penalty in most cases. But Germans did not confront African-Americans on nearly the same level as southern whites. When the black longshoremen organized strikes, for example, Germans were not among the employers targeted.21

In Chapter Three, I analyze the R. G. Dun and Company records for the City of Charleston, concentrating on German and African-American entries in the credit rating books. Don H. Doyle first examined these rarely used records in his study of New South business history. I expanded his slight treatment of race and ethnicity and found that Germans had considerable influence within Charleston’s business community. German business success often created hostility with white and black southerners because Germans achieved noteworthy profits even during weak economic times. At the same time, African-Americans faced great difficulties in opening or expanding their businesses, and blacks did not appreciate high prices that Germans charged nor their refusal to extend them credit.

In Chapter Four, I look at the role of the German Schutzenfest as a social and cultural event in Charleston during Reconstruction. This German festival has been ignored. I demonstrate that German elites organized the event as a cultural activity based upon a strong heritage in their homeland, but also as an opportunity to showcase their business success. In 1868, Germans organized the first Schutzenfest since the Civil War and mainly Germans attended the event. By 1871, Charlestonians of all races and ethnicities, including southern
white elites, flocked to the *Schutzenfest* and made it the largest recreational and social event of the year. African-Americans, Germans, and southern white children competed with each other in the various amusements located on the *Schutzenplatz* grounds. African-American rifle clubs did not compete with the German and native white rifle clubs. In 1875, political conflict erupted between Germans and native-born Charlestonians and the popularity of the festival declined.

The next three chapters investigate German and African-American social and cultural contributions and their relationship to Charleston’s political climate and the manner in which the southern aristocracy viewed their activities. In Chapter Five, I show that the parade to inaugurate the annual *Schutzenfest* had serious political implications. When the Germans appeared in full uniform and armed with rifles, they demonstrated their willingness to “become southern.” At the same time, southerners embraced the parade as an opportunity to demonstrate their own military power. African-American militia clubs did not participate in the *Schutzenfest* parade, but the German Fusiliers did invite them to their 1875 Centennial parade. In Chapter Six, I rely heavily on recent scholarship of Mary Ryan, Jane Dailey, Elsa Barkely Brown, and Elizabeth Pleck to analyze the cultural and political nature of African-American parades. In my discussion of African-American public culture, specifically the Independence and Emancipation Day parades, I emphasize that black Charlestonians African-American parades were political acts. Southerners objected to African-American activism, and whites attempted to intimidate blacks along the parade route. In each parade, African-Americans demonstrated a profound willingness to “become southern” and continually reconstructed a unique African-American identity. Embedded within each parade were distinct African cultural linkages, including communal expression, dramatic presentations, and singing and dancing.

In the last three chapters, white violence against African-Americans emerges as a theme. Stephen Kantrowitz, Richard Zuczek, and Joel Williamson have written first-rate studies on the role grassroots violence against African-Americans in undermining Republican politics and bringing about the “redemption” of South Carolina’s Democratic government. In *After Slavery*, Williamson identified four phases of racial violence in Charleston: post-Civil war violence between July 1865 and November 1866 there were three major race riots in South Carolina, political violence between 1867 and November 1868, Ku Klux Klan violence from October 1870 through the summer of 1871, and election violence during the election of 1876. In addition, he determines that white rifle clubs began their redemption campaign of violence and intimidation in 1874. He maintains they were previously “social clubs more or less devoted to the cultivation of the military arts.” Increasingly, “these military clubs emerged as a primary political tool.” The white clubs were determined to disarm the well-armed black militia companies that had formed since the beginning of Reconstruction. I find that rifle clubs began their campaign of intimidation in 1871 when they participated in the *Schutzenfest* parade, and especially in 1873. White obsession with intimidating African-Americans into submission resulted in the massacre of African-American militia members at Hamburg, SC on July 8, 1876.

I have chosen to end this study with a chapter on racial and ethnic politics during Reconstruction. This chapter mainly utilizes the Charleston newspapers that provide valuable insight into the political and cultural history of the period. The majority of the material in this essay comes from anonymous editorials and articles published in these papers. In addition, I have added references from diaries and personal letters that exist in the South Caroliniana Library and South Carolina Historical Society. During Reconstruction, white southerners overwhelmingly supported the Democratic Party and opposed Republican government in the South. The majority of African-Americans voted Republican, but a small minority moved
toward the Democratic Party. Historians have always lumped German immigrants into the category labeled “white,” but the Germans divided their political support between Democratic and Republican parties. Many Germans supported the Republican Party and several served as Republican Party officials. Political divisions within the German immigrant community caused considerable dismay among southerners and African-Americans. Each group felt the Germans should support their cause.

The 1871, 1873, and 1875 municipal election revealed significant ethnic divisions in both the Democratic and Republican parties that often led to violence. By 1876, the majority of politically active German immigrants had joined the Democratic Party, largely in response to the impact of the depression that began three years earlier. Yet, the Republican Party received a majority of votes in the City and County of Charleston. Municipal elections often led to riots between African-Americans and southern whites, and sometimes Germans were involved. In 1871, a municipal riot occurred in which African-Americans assaulted German shopkeepers and destroyed their property symbolized the growing tension between both groups. The Democrats had nominated John A. Wagener, a German immigrant, for mayor and many Germans, in supporting Wagener, became politically active for the first time and on his behalf. Earlier that year, Germany had defeated France in the Franco-Prussian War, and the victory stimulated a heightened sense of nationalism among German-Americans in Charleston.

Introduction Notes

1 Stephen Powers, A Foot and Alone; A Walk From Sea to Sea by the Southern Route. Adventures and Observations in Southern California, New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, Etc. (Hartford, CT: Columbian Book Company, 1872), 42-44.


3 United States Bureau of the Census, Eighth Published Census of the United States (1860), Tenth Published Census of the United States (1880).


5 Eric Foner, xix.

6 Foner, xxiv, xxv, xxvi. Foner shows that social, economic, and political developments “arose form a complex series of interactions among blacks and whites, Northerners and Southerners, in which victories were often tentative and outcomes subject to challenge and revision.” A major theme of Foner’s book was “the evolution of racial attitudes of race relations, and the complex interconnection of race and class in the postwar South.” I have added German immigrants to this discussion.

7 Neil Foley, White Scourge: Mexians, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 5. Foley writes, “In rupturing the black-white polarity of southern race relations, the presence of Mexicans in central Texas raises some interesting questions about the way in which “whiteness” itself fissured along race and class lines.” Foley argues that Texas fits within the boundaries of the South. “White Texans had a long history of invoking the color line in their social, economic, and political interactions with African Americans, but they had little experience in plantation society with what one contemporary sociologist called ‘partly colored races,’”” Foley continues.

8 Foley, 6.
Foley, 9. At the same time, mulattos demonstrated a greater tendency to marry within their own racial
category than with African-Americans but intermarried with other groups as well. Like Foley, I use the terms white
and black because their contemporaries used similar identity labels. I have chosen to use the terms African-
American and black interchangeably to emphasize the cultural connections between black Charlestonians and
Africa.


11 Klaus Wust, The Virginia Germans (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1969), 218-230; John
Fredrick Nau, The German People of New Orleans, 1850-1900 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958), 43-47. Also see Joseph P.
O’Grady, “Immigrants and the Politics of Reconstruction in Richmond, Virginia,” Records of the American Catholic
Louisiana Historical Quarterly, Vol. 23, No. 2 (April 1940), 501-524.

12 George Brown Tindall, Natives and Newcomers: Ethnic Southerners and Southern Ethnicities (Athens:
University of Georgia Press, 1995), 51.

13 Dennis C. Rousey, “Aliens in the WASP Nest: Ethnocultural Diversity in the Antebellum Urban South,”

14 See David T. Gleeson, The Irish in the South, 1815-1877 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina
Press, 2001) for a general discussion of Irish immigrants in the South. Gleeson ignores that Irish Republicans
existed in Charleston during Reconstruction.

15 Brian D. Page, “An Unholy Alliance”: Irish-Americans and the Political Construction of Whiteness in

16 Mark K. Bauman, “Factionalism and Ethnic Politics in Atlanta: The German Jews from the Civil War
through the Progressive Era,” Georgia Historical Quarterly, Vol. 82, No. 3 (Fall 1998), 533-558.

17 Mark I. Greenberg, “Becoming Southern: The Jews of Savannah, Georgia, 1830-1870” American Jewish
History 86 (1), 63, 73.

18 Howard Rabinowitz, Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890 (Athens: University of Georgia
Press, 1996); Bernard E. Powers, Black Charlestonians: A Social History, 1822-1885 (Fayetteville: University of
Arkansas Press, 1994).

19 Christopher Silver, “A New Look at Old South Urbanization: The Irish Worker in Charleston, South
Carolina, 1840-1860,” Southern Atlantic Urban Studies, 3 (1979): 141-72; Ira Berlin and Herbert G. Gutman,
“Natives and Immigrants, Free Men and Slaves: Urban Workingmen in the Antebellum American South,” American
Confederacy,” Southwestern Historical Quarterly Vol. 102, No. 4 (April 1999), 441-455.

20 G. A. Neuffer Essay, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, 1-32; Walter J. Fleming,
“Immigration to the Southern States,” Political Science Quarterly 20 (1905), 276-277; R. H. Woody, “The Labor
and Immigration Problem of South Carolina During Reconstruction,” Mississippi Valley Historical Review Vol. 18
No. 2 (Sept. 1931), 195; Bert James Lowenberg, “Efforts of the South to Encourage Immigration, 1865-1900,”
South Atlantic Quarterly 33 (October 1934), 363; Rowland T. Berthoff, “Southern Attitudes Toward Immigration,

21 Graham Hodges, “‘Desirable Companions and Lovers,’ Irish and African Americans in the Sixth Ward,
1830-1870” appearing in The New York Irish edited by Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher (Baltimore: Johns

CHAPTER 1

GERMAN IMMIGRATION AND THE LABOR QUESTION IN CHARLESTON

In the late 1870s, G. A. Neuffer, a German immigrant living in South Carolina, wrote an essay on Immigration criticizing South Carolina’s feeble attempts to increase immigration.¹ Neuffer began, “Efforts have been made for the past ten years to increase the population of our State, by establishing an immigration Agency, up to the present time we have been unsuccessful in that direction from the fact that the business has been put in the hands of parties who were not capable to carry out the program. Their past management is sufficient evidence to convince any reasonable mind that such is the fact. It is about time that some steps should be taken to successfully carry out the so much desired end. Other Southern States have accomplished far more than we have at much less cost. In another part of this report I will show what other States have done.”²

Although German immigrants did not arrive in significant numbers during Reconstruction, thousands of Germans remained there after the Civil War. Historians have ignored the role of German immigrants in Reconstruction South Carolina. Any analysis of Reconstruction era immigration to South Carolina reveals more than only sparse immigration statistics. The dialogue among proponents of immigration demonstrates numerous inconsistencies and a general lack of commitment to their supposed cause. At the same time, many southerners objected to white immigration and attempted to block any effort to bring European immigrants to the state. Southerners debated the political, economic, and social motivations for European immigration. In this chapter, the author analyzes several convention reports and recently uncovered critique of South Carolina immigration efforts that G. A. Neuffer wrote in the late 1870s.

Several problems plagued immigration efforts. First, government officials placed non-experts in charge of the immigration organizations. These men proved unsuccessful in fulfilling their appointed roles, while immigration administrators in other states realized tremendous success. In part, the south had little experience with immigration while the North and West had experienced professionals to operate their agencies. My findings suggest that South Carolinians were divided over the issue, and probably more people opposed it than supported it. The greatest proponents were entrepreneurs and urban elites, and they spent much of their time trying to convince the rest of the population about the benefits of white immigration. The failure of these men and their elected officials to bring immigrants to South Carolina symbolized the failure of New South business enterprises more generally. They failed because of southerners disagreed over the best kind of immigrants to bring. Mainly, they desired German middle-class immigrants over all other Europeans, including the Irish.

Between 1840 and 1860, over one and a half million German immigrants fled social and political problems and immigrated to the United States. The reasons Germans left their native
country varied according to region and mainly entailed poor economic conditions, land shortages brought on by population growth, and German government officials conscripted many Germans into the military. In 1860, two-thirds of German-Americans worked in cities, mostly as skilled workers, a greater concentration than in German cities. Moreover, Germans occupied the middle-class professional trades, including merchants, bankers, and wholesalers and skilled trades such as tailors, shoemakers, blacksmiths. Germans developed an appreciation for wage labor and liberals called for labor organization and socialist reforms. In most instances, Germans settled in isolated communities and maintained little contact with non-Germans. 

Between 1850 and 1860, 2.7 million immigrants arrived in the United States but the total foreign-born population increased by only around 2 million. In 1860, the three largest immigrant groups consisted of the Irish (1.6 million), Germans (1.3 million), and English (430,000), and the total foreign-born population equaled 4.1 million people. Between 1850 and 1860 the German population increased by 716,000. In 1850, 2.25 million immigrants lived in the United States and 8,707 resided in South Carolina. In 1860, the foreign-born population neared 10,000 in South Carolina. In 1870 the foreign-born population had increased to 5.5 million and only 8,074 in South Carolina. In 1870, 1.7 million Germans lived in the United States and 2,754 resided in South Carolina.

Many of the Germans who arrived in Charleston migrated from Hanover and Prussia. Upon arriving in Charleston, German and Irish immigrants exhibited a high level of interaction with both southern whites and African-Americans. Southerners, African-Americans, and Irish and German immigrants lived in racially and ethnically diverse neighborhoods throughout the city’s eight wards. Moreover, German immigrants exhibited exceptional relations with African-Americans when they lived in the same households, intermarried, bore children, and socialized more generally. Southern whites looked upon these behaviors with suspicion. Most importantly, some German and Irish immigrants supported African-American political equality and the Republican Party. Southern whites did not tolerate immigrant Republicans.

The historiography on southern immigration remained relatively thin until recently. The old body of scholarship revealed several competing interpretations. In 1905, Walter J. Fleming argued that southerners did not desire immigration until the early 1880s; at the same time, Fleming believed that immigrants had “little desire” to settle in the South. In his view, foreign immigration to the South remained “insignificant.” R. H. Woody recognized that throughout Reconstruction South Carolinians desired white immigration, and they considered the “great panacea for the political and economic ills of the state was immigration.” Bert James Loewenberg confirmed that, “There was a definite desire for immigration throughout the whole period.” In addition, Loewenberg argued that Reconstruction era immigration efforts took place within the context of post war disorganization. Rowland T. Berthoff stated, “From 1865 to about 1907 planters, land speculators, railroads, industrialists, and the state governments strove, with little success, to tap the rushing stream of immigration to the United States.” Berthoff believed southern boosters not only failed to attract immigrants, but they never convinced whites in the South it made any sense. “To be sure, neither immigration promotion nor nativism were major concerns of the South...The appeal to foreign laborers and settlers was but a minor and futile phase of the New South,” he wrote. Nativism and a disorganized effort to promote immigration brought about those negative results.

Most recent scholarship has identified the existence of historically significant immigrant communities in the First New South. In Natives and Newcomers, George Brown Tindall debunks the myth that the South has always embodied Anglo-Saxon purity. While few
immigrants desired to settle in the rural South, many chose to live in southern cities. He reveals, “The cosmopolitan character of antebellum southern cities is one feature of the Old South that has only recently become visible. The myths of the Old South were the myths of the rural South whether they represented the plantation tradition of the Sunny South or the abolitionist image of the Benighted South.” “Obviously, then,” Tindall concludes, “one new frontier for southern historians is the role of ethnic diversity in the region—more than just that represented by black and white.”

Mark I. Greenberg and Mark K. Bauman have revealed that German Jews made important contributions to Savannah and Atlanta, Georgia. The German immigrant population represented eight and seven percent of Charleston’s whites between 1870 and 1880. In 1861, Irish immigrants totaled 14 percent of the population but that number had dropped to seven percent in 1880, equaling the proportion of Germans in the white population (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Native-born White and German and Irish Immigrant Populations, 1860 to 1880

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Ireland</th>
<th>Native White</th>
<th>Total White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>23,376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>26,969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>22,749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>22,699</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concurrently, African-Americans migrated from rural plantations to cities and towns, especially Charleston. The African-American population increased from 17,146 in 1860 to around 27,276 in 1880, a clear majority. The white population decreased from 23,376 in 1860 to 22,699 in 1880. The aggregate population for both races increased by nearly 10,000 people from 40,522 to 49,984 during the same twenty-year period (see Table 1.2).

Table 1.2 White and Afro-American Populations in Charleston, 1860 to 1880

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>% White</th>
<th>% Black</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>23,376</td>
<td>17,146</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40,522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>26,969</td>
<td>21,440</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>48,409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>22,749</td>
<td>26,173</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>48,956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>22,699</td>
<td>27,276</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>49,984</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The German immigrant population decreased from 2,437 in 1861 to around 1,537 in 1880. The total foreign-born population decreased from 7,500 in 1861 to around 3,950 in 1880.
These numbers do not account for in- and out-migration that took place during each census decade (see Table 1.3).

Table 1.3 German and Irish Immigrant Populations in Charleston, 1860 to 1880

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Ireland</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Native</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>1,944</td>
<td>3,263</td>
<td>6,311</td>
<td>40,578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>2,437</td>
<td>3,662</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>40,909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>1,826</td>
<td>2,180</td>
<td>4,892</td>
<td>44,064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>1,537</td>
<td>1,611</td>
<td>3,950</td>
<td>46,034</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: *The Eighth Census of the United States, 1860* (Washington, 1864), *Census of Charleston, 1861* (Charleston, 1861); *The Ninth Census of the United States, 1870* (Washington, 1872); and *The Tenth Census of the United States, 1880* (Washington, 1883)

**Southerners and African-American Laborers**

In July 1865, Major General Carl Schurz, the most famous German-American of the nineteenth century, visited Charleston while on a tour of the South. He interviewed some of Charleston’s white elites regarding the postwar situation. In his 1865 “Message to the President of the United States,” Carl Schurz reported on the conditions of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. He wrote, “The solution of the social problem in the south, if left to the free action of the southern people, will depend upon two things: 1, upon the ideas entertained by the whites, the “ruling class,” of the problem, and the manner in which they act upon their ideas; and 2, upon the capacity and conduct of the colored people.” Schurz recognized that southern whites refused to accept freedmen as their civil and political equals. “That the result of the free labor experiment made under circumstances so extremely unfavorable should at once be a perfect success, no reasonable person would expect,” he began. “Nevertheless, a large majority of the southern men with whom I came into contact announced their opinions with so positive an assurance as to produce the impression that their minds were fully made up. In at least nineteen cases of twenty the reply I received to my inquiry about their views on the new system was uniformly this: ‘You cannot make the negro work without physical compulsion.’ I heard this hundreds of times, heard it wherever I went, heard it in nearly the same words from so many different persons, that at last I came to the conclusion that this is the prevailing sentiment among the southern people. There are exceptions to this rule, but, as far as my information extends, far from enough to affect the rule.”

In a section on immigration, Schurz wrote, “A temporary continuation of national control in the southern States would also have a most beneficial effect as regards the immigration of northern people and Europeans into that country; and such immigration would, in its turn, contribute much to the solution of the labor problem. Nothing is more desirable for the south than the importation of new men and new ideas.” Schurz believed that immigrants and northerners would migrate to the South if the federal government ensured their protection. “Nothing can, therefore, be more desirable than that the contact between the southern people and
the outside world should be as strong and intimate as possible; and in no better way can this end be subserved than by immigration in mass. Of the economical benefits which such immigration would confer upon the owners of the soil it is hardly necessary to speak,” he continued. Schurz recognized the need for the inducement of immigration into the South. “Immigration wants encouragement. As far as this encouragement consists in the promise of material advantage, it is already given. There are large districts in the south in which an industrious and enterprising man, with some capital, and acting upon correct principles, cannot fail to accumulate large gains in a comparatively short time, as long as prices of the staples do not fall below what they may reasonably be expected to be for some time to come. A northern man has, besides, the advantage of being served by the laboring population of the region with greater willingness,” Schurz wrote.17

Yet Schurz worried that southern nativism and resentment might endanger immigrants to the South. Shurz stated, “But among the principal requisites for the success of the immigrant are personal security and a settled condition of things. Personal security is honestly promised by the thinking men of the south; but another question is, whether the promise and good intentions of the thinking men will be sufficient to restrain and control the populace, whose animosity against ‘Yankee interlopers’ is only second to their hostile feeling against the negro. The south needs capital. But capital is notoriously timid and averse to risk itself, not only where there actually is trouble, but where there is serious and continual danger of trouble.”18

Henry DeSaussure wrote about an encounter with Carl Schurz when he visited Columbia, South Carolina. Similar to his interviews in Charleston, Schurz solicited the opinions of prominent southerners. DeSaussure wrote, “A few days ago two U States Generals came up my front steps…Brig[adier] Gen[eral] Hartwell introduced me to one Major Gen[eral] Carl Schurz, who soon relieved me by announcing he was General Inspector of the whole Department, and came to get information. He propounded many questions [and] we had a long and animated conversation, in which we did not always agree. He is a sensible man, but has some stereotyped abolition extreme views.” Schurz asked DeSaussure around ten questions about the transition from slave to freedom, including his opinion of African-American rights to vote, education, jury participation, emancipation, and military occupation of the South. At times DeSaussure remained quiet and declined to answer certain questions. He asked Schurz “whether the matter might not be safely trusted to our own sense of our true interests.” DeSaussure inquired whether Schurz “did not consider it unstatesman like and unphilosophical to attempt to abolish suddenly by a Proclamation, a stroke of the pen or of the sabre, all the distinctions of caste which had been the growth of more than a century, and especially where the races were distinguished by colour.”19

DeSaussure pointed out some of the contradictions between northern and southern society when he asked if “it would be wise or just to compel us to confer upon uneducated Negroes, so long slaves, privileges which the Northern States denied to the few who were among them.” “I inquired whether they intermarried with them, allowed them to vote, to sit on juries,” DeSaussure wrote. Schurz answered few of the questions. “This Gen[eral] Carl Schurz is an enthusiast. He will report to the President that the system is working well in South Carolina” and he “was made Major Gen[eral] owing to his great influence over the Germans in the North West, but if I am not mistaken when he was sent as Minister to Austria or Spain, he was recalled at the request of the Government to which he was accredited in consequence of his offensive radical doctrines and course,” DeSaussure concluded.20
Christopher Memminger, a German-American lawyer and member of the Charleston aristocracy, wrote to Andrew Johnson, “The Northern people seem generally to suppose that the simple emancipation from slavery will elevate the African to the condition of the white laboring classes, and that contracts and competition will secure the proper distribution of labor. They see, on the one hand, the owner of the land wanting laborers, and on the other, a multitude of landless laborers without employment; and they naturally conclude that the law of demand and supply will adjust the exchange in the same manner as it would at the North. But they are not aware of the attending circumstances which will disappoint these calculations.”

Many white southerners believed that emancipated African-Americans would not work. In September 1865, the editor of the New York World wrote that, “the labor of the freed negroes cannot, in the absence of compulsory measures, be made available to supply the industrious wants of the South.” Southern whites thought that African-Americans were inherently inferior. John McCrady asserted, “when an inferior race is brought into contact with the white race on terms of equality, the two are thus made competitors in the struggle for existence, and in that struggle the inferior race must go down as the African himself in the Southern States has been gradually disappearing ever since his emancipation.” Many whites based their views concerning African-American idleness on racist ideology. The New York World stated, “The latent savagism of his nature reveals itself in his condition as a free agent; and, released from the restraints of discipline, his instincts seek only the gratification of animal appetites. Without care for the future, without principle as a restraint or incentive, his labor for the day is only sure as long as his wants for the day remain unsatisfied.” Many African-Americans did not see the benefits of creating an agricultural surplus for their former masters. Instead, many headed for the city for relief, protection, and urban employment.

African-Americans migrated to cities and they helped organize religious, social, political, and educational institutions. Foner writes, “In the cities, many blacks believed, “freedom was free-er.” African-Americans formed schools, churches, and fraternal societies. And the army and Freedmen’s Bureau protected blacks from the violence prevalent throughout the rural South. Moreover, African-Americans relied on strong family ties that had existed under slavery. “Second only to the family as a focal point of black life stood the church,” Foner determines. African-Americans withdrew from biracial congregations throughout the South. In addition, African-Americans created thousands of such fraternal associations, mutual aid societies, fire companies, debating clubs, Masonic lodges, drama societies, trade associations, temperance groups, and equal rights leagues. Williamson writes, “The rapid increase in urban Negro population was, of course, closely related to rural unemployment. The villages and towns and the city of Charleston were natural collecting places for unemployed agriculturalists.”

Southern whites believed African-Americans were best suited for agricultural labor. The editor of the Daily Courier claimed, “In many portions of the State, especially along the seacoast, the land will, in all probability, continue to be tilled by the colored race. They are inured to the climate and especially suited to the products of this section.” Southern whites feared the loss of their livelihood and wished to maintain their status at the top of the occupational hierarchy. The Daily Courier believed that African-Americans would become an extinct race if they refused to work as agricultural laborers. The editor wrote, “The colored race must give their continuous regulated toil, or they are doomed to extinction. If they will not do this, then another labor will be introduced into the lower divisions of the State.” Yet thousands of African-Americans worked as farm laborers throughout the state and unskilled laborers found work in towns and cities such as Charleston.
Many southerners proposed to bring in white immigrant laborers to replace their emancipated slaves. They believed the South offered tremendous opportunity for white laborers to make a decent living. Yet, manual labor had always meant black labor in the minds of white southerners. Augustine Smyth wrote his brother, “You speak of white laborers. I have circulated through the country that I was anxious to hire, but have failed. Our own native poor population are not yet ready for it, will not step into the shoes of the negro. They mostly have small plots of land & prefer tending them, poor as may be the return, to lower themselves as they think it, by hiring to another. Foreign emigration has not yet reached us. In a year’s time we may have them in plenty, but not now.”

The *New York World* determined, “The Southern landholders have come to the conclusion already, that they must have white labor to work their plantations profitably.” Some southerners believed white laborers should replace African-American workers. The *Daily Courier* editor asserted, “The experience of the past few months has shown how ruinous it would be for the interests of the State for us to depend wholly upon freedmen for the cultivation of our fields, the harvesting of our crops, and the performance of needful work in our manufactories and places of business generally.” The move from black to white labor entailed a tremendous cultural change. Firmly entrenched in Southern culture and society was the belief that African-Americans were better suited for manual labor. The *Daily Courier* wrote, “if white men be employed we will unhesitatingly say the work will be performed in a manner that will be advantageous to all. It is idle for people to extol the superior of black over white labor in the present and progressive stage of the reconstruction of the State. The black man has been tried and found wanting.”

Historians of southern immigration have long recognized the role of the press in promoting immigration. “While the press as a whole endorsed the plea for immigrants, few South Carolinians did anything of a concrete nature to further the movement,” Woody determined. Loewenberg wrote, “The war had no sooner ceased when the contemporary periodicals, recognizing the preeminent need for labor, began a campaign to create a new supply.” Northern and southern newspaper editors discussed the need for southern immigration almost daily. They believed an organized system of free white labor in the South would develop resources and assist in the revival of trade and industry. The *Daily Courier* editor endorsed efforts to bring white laborers to the state and lobbied for white immigration to South Carolina when he wrote, “Then let us have white laborers, and let them come in processions of hundreds.” W. L. Trenholm, a leading Charleston businessman and booster, wanted “what immigration has accomplished for the North and Northwest.”

Southerners recognized the need for economic growth in South Carolina and linked it with the need for population. Southerners believed they should no longer rely on black laborers. They argued immigration would increase the size of the laboring population. In 1870, Trenholm headed a committee on immigration at the Labor and Immigration Convention in Charleston. The committee proposed the establishment of a direct steamship line with Europe, railway transportation for immigrants from Charleston to the Southwest, the formation of emigrant aid societies, creation of a Board of Immigration, and the publication and distribution of promotional materials.
Southern governments appointed immigration commissioners but most immigrants settled in the North and West. The number of foreign-born residents in the eleven Confederate states had actually decreased between 1860 and 1870. The lack of industry in the South did not attract immigration, and most southerners were not yet committed to industrial growth.\footnote{39}

South Carolinians believed their native State could easily attract immigrants due to its favorable economic and social climate.\footnote{40} Southerners realized they must offer greater inducements to immigrants than other States did. Many supporters of immigration suggested appointing immigration agents to New York and Europe to attract immigrants to South Carolina. One editor of a southern newspaper recognized, “it has not been the custom, neither has there been occasion, in time past, for the South to offer inducements to foreigners to come among them and give the section the benefit of their industry and inventive genius.”\footnote{41} The \textit{Daily Courier} determined, “South Carolina presents as fine a field for the industry, wealth and ambition of the emigrant as any other State in the Union.”\footnote{42}

Walter Kamphoefner considers “the network of agents should be viewed primarily as a social organization, which channeled and facilitated the emigration, but did little to convince people who were not already inclined to move.” He writes that chain migration, letters from friends and relatives, provided a controlling influence over unscrupulous agents and their propaganda.\footnote{43}

The German Friendly Society, a mutual aid society, sent a delegation to the 1870 Immigration Convention, and the delegation recommended inducements such as paying for transatlantic passage and offering inexpensive land. They called for a regular steamship line between Charleston and a German port, preferably one that had been neglected by New York and Baltimore shipping companies. Furthermore, the delegation recommended the formation of immigrant aide societies throughout the South to help attract foreign immigrants. They emphasized that immigration through the port of Charleston would probably stimulate economic growth because immigrants that landed in New York and Baltimore had contributed to the economic growth of those cities. The members of the German Friendly Society delegation believed that the same could happen in Charleston.\footnote{44}

The idea that European immigration could stimulate southern economic growth preoccupied its supporters. The editor of the \textit{Daily Courier} added, “We have not faith in any other kind of labor than that which is free, intelligent, and which can add to the capacity, the wealth, and the self-government of the State.”\footnote{45} The editor wrote, “One of the essential subjects is that of immigration. While the advent of thrifty, honest and industrious citizens of Germany, Prussia and other countries of Europe, has built up the North and Northwest, but few have made their homes in Southern climes. And yet there is no country where the seasons are more auspicious, or where industry meets with a more hearty recognition and responsive return than at the South.”\footnote{46} Some southerners, however, recognized that economic conditions in the South would not attract immigrants. Farm laborers could earn fifteen to thirty dollars per month on farms in the North and West. In addition, the group did not believe immigrants would enjoy life on the southern plantations. The delegation recognized that Europeans did not think highly of the South, and European newspapers continued to publish negative reports.\footnote{47} Southerners considered laborers as subordinate and inferior.\footnote{48} The German traveler Friedrich Ratzel recognized that his compatriots had relatively ignored the South compared to the North and West. He believed that most Germans settled in Charleston to start businesses or trades. Ratzel
incorrectly noted that the German community had not experienced the burden of lower class German immigrants. He wrote, “the South really seems to offer an especially favorable soil for the industry and thriftiness of our countrymen, and in ‘antebellum times,’ as they say, the way to riches seemed to be easy.” But German laborers did exist in the city, and they struggled to gain acceptance into southern society.49

Many southerners looked to the West for a successful model in attracting immigrants. They recognized economic development and urban growth in that region in the West. Immigrants were attracted to the abundant resources there, but they also contributed to the development of the West.50 G. A. Neuffer believed German immigrants settled in the West because professional state immigration agents used “superior and systematic arrangements” to attract them. Neuffer recommended that South Carolina follow their model because “meetings and resolutions have so far accomplished nothing.”51

German, Irish, and other European immigrants had left their homeland and settled in the North and Midwest for a variety of reasons. Wagener asked, “Why should the South refuse to profit by such obvious examples?” Wagener divulged the various emigration factors from Germany, and they included high taxes, financial complications, high land prices, and military conscription.52 Wagener noted that government officials in Michigan, Wisconsin, and other Midwestern States had appointed immigration commissioners to encourage and manage immigration.53 The Southern Celt recognized several factors in immigration to the West. He identified the role of letters that immigrants sent to Europe depicting their economic success in the United States. He noted they “carried with them their old customs, habits, food, and often their mother tongue.” He continued, “the South was left to its individuality and cotton, and was not anxious to share its easy wealth with the needy stranger, however honest and industrious. But the war has changed much of this…many are looking South.”54

In his work on the Westfalian immigrants to Missouri, Walther Kamphoefner writes that German immigrants espoused cultural pluralism, “the idea that German immigrants could contribute more to America by retaining and cultivating institutions and customs of their cultural heritage that were lacking in the New World than by denying their heritage and attempting to submerge themselves in the Anglo-American mainstream.” German immigrants in Missouri considered themselves different and yet superior to the Irish and native-born whites around them, and they rarely intermarried with them. Germans exhibited lower rates of slaveholding than native whites in Missouri and elsewhere. Slaveholding and intermarriage with native whites were both signs of assimilation.55

Leading businessmen, along with support from the newspapers in Charleston, promoted organized efforts to bring immigrants to the city and South Carolina. In September 1865, the Daily Courier published a letter from John A. Wagener addressed to B. F. Perry, the Provisional Governor of South Carolina, that promoted a legislative measure to increase foreign immigration. Wagener believed European immigration was necessary to relieve the labor problem in the State. He wrote, “I think the immigration to and settlement amongst us of industrious and frugal foreigners will be of great value to us.” Wagener made several recommendations to the Governor and South Carolinians. First, he called for an act to encourage immigration. Second, he requested that the State appoint an immigration commissioner. Third, he asked for the publication of promotional materials, including advertisements in the papers of Northern ports and European ports. Fourth, immigration agents were to be appointed by the commissioner.56
In 1865, Wagener capitalized on the lack of immigration to Charleston. In September 1865, the editor of the *Daily Courier* noted the lack of immigration to Charleston. The newspaper editor thought the new immigration society would assist in bringing German and Irish immigrants to the city. In 1866, the South Carolina legislature passed an act for the encouragement and protection of European Immigration, and for the appointment of a commissioner and agents. The legislature appropriated ten thousand dollars for that purpose and each agent earned around $1,500 per year. Wagener used the money to send agents to Germany and Scandinavia. He had intended to send an agent to Ireland, but it never happened. Wagener recognized that several southern states had established immigration bureaus. German immigrants arrived at New Orleans, Galveston, and Memphis in large numbers.

In fact, South Carolina and John A. Wagener led the South’s first organized movement to attract white immigrants to the State. Wagener suggested establishing an agency in New York while making Charleston a port of immigrant arrival as well. He argued, “The better class of immigrants to that great port proceed immediately to their points of destination.” Wagener had little interest in immigrant laborers. Instead he focused on “a class of immigrants that will not only bring us their personal powers of production, but the means also to make them available at once; and with them and after them will come enough of laborers to supply all our demands, without overburdening us with numbers of useless idlers, who we are unable to support.” Wagener believed the “better class” of immigrant could arrive at Charleston rather than New York.

John A. Wagener mismanaged the entire immigration agency. In perhaps the most problematic aspect of South Carolina’s attempts at immigration, government officials appointed John A. Wagener, a Confederate General as Commissioner of Immigration. His mismanagement of the office plagued efforts at increased immigration from the outset. Wagener demonstrated a strong preference for white immigrants who were most likely to adopt similar conservative views. In the first section of their promotional brochure, Wagener intentionally targeted his ideal type of immigrant. The racist nature of the text would have discouraged liberal Germans and other European from choosing South Carolina, while leaving the door open for those immigrants who did not find the content objectionable. Wagener wrote that South Carolina “has never heretofore taken steps, officially, to induce immigration, because of her peculiar institution of African slavery, which enabled her inhabitants to prosper and live in patriarchal peace and contentedness; but she has never refused the immigrant a pleasant and prosperous home, and a helping hand in the hour of his need.” He informed prospective immigrants that the slaves had been freed, and blacks had begun migrating out of the South. Wagener declared, South Carolina “now need of men and women of her own blood and kindred.”

Wagener tried to sell prospective immigrants on the ease of purchasing cheap land. He wrote, “A good farm may be had in South Carolina as cheap as any where inn the Union, perhaps cheaper.” Of course, as mentioned previously, this was not the case. Next, he misrepresented South Carolina as an industrial center and the port of Charleston as one of the best in the world. He informed prospective immigrants that they would have voting rights rather quickly. Surprisingly, he determined that taxes, especially on land, were very low compared to other States. Wagener portrayed South Carolina as “a liberal and enlightened community.” He argued, “hard work and steady employ have now become fashionable; and whoever cultivates his fields best, and is personally most industrious, is the most successful and the greatest gentleman. And the immigrant, as a brother workingman, will be heartily welcomed, and will meet with
encouragement and friendly offices wherever his habits of industry, frugality, honesty, and thrift.”

On November 29, 1867, the bark Gauss arrived at Charleston harbor after forty-nine days at sea. The ship left Bremen with 152 immigrants. Their relatives and friends welcomed them at the wharf. A large crowd of native-born Charlestonians demonstrated “interest which South Carolinians feel in the introduction to this community of the representatives of a race who have always been honored for the exhibition of those sterling characteristics which constitute good citizenship.” The immigrants arrived in good health and only Doria Siemer died on the voyage. Most of the immigrants settled with their relatives or friends. Captain Wieting had been bringing immigrants to Charleston for twenty years. One year later, few of the immigrant passengers remained in Charleston as they had moved on to other States in search of better opportunities.

In January 1868, John A. Wagener wrote, “the freedman is becoming more and more unwilling to exert himself, and the planters generally agree in the opinion that it would be folly to trust his labor for a remunerating crop. Under these circumstances, our only resource is the acquisition of a people that is able and willing to work.” Wagener recommended the creation of a steamship line for direct trade with Bremen, Hamburg or to stimulate economic activity and promote immigration. That same month, W. J. Ferlov, a German immigration agent, wrote Wagener from Hamburg, Germany that “The Hamburg American Steam Ship Company have authorized me to inform you, that the Company will be willing to let those steamers, which are now running to New Orleans, call at Charleston, if goods or emigrants enough can be furnished to pay for the expense.”

In May 1868, John A. Wagener published a report on immigration to South Carolina in which he described his failures. Wagener reported that he had printed 14,000 copies of the immigration pamphlet in four languages—Danish, Swedish, German, and English. He planned to distribute the brochure in European and northern cities. He had appointed immigration agents to Germany, Scandinavia, and Ireland. The agent for Ireland resigned and moved to Texas, and Wagener never appointed a replacement. Wagener wrote, “I have encountered very bitter opposition in my endeavors, both at home and abroad; but I have also found numerous friends and well-wishers, even in the North and in Europe.” But he did recognize that some members of the southern press supported his efforts, including DeBow’s Review. Wagener admitted that his agents in Germany and Scandinavia failed to attract any immigrants. He argued that the agents did not have adequate funds to operate. Wagener also identified a lack of support from Charleston’s merchants in establishing steamship service between Charleston and Europe. He believed the line would not only benefit trade but also attract “a share of the better class of immigrants, who generally prefer to cross the ocean in that manner.”

The effort of South Carolinians to attract immigrants to their state failed miserably. In 1868, only 248 immigrants had arrived in South Carolina since Wagener opened the Immigration Bureau in 1866. Approximately 147 found employment in Charleston. Wagener had received and answered only 400 letters and distributed 1,000 pamphlets in northern cities. He advertised in the German and Irish papers in New York, but few people expressed interest. Reflecting a bias against Irish immigrants, he focused his efforts on Scotland. Wagener admitted that the Bureau of Immigration had realized “very limited” success. Yet he firmly believed that immigration could stimulate economic growth in the State. He called for landowners to offer more land. He wrote, “Several planters have already made offers of donating to industrious settlers, portions of their lands. But our constant endeavor should be to induce people to associate everywhere in the interest of immigration and industrial progress.” He also noted that
immigrants tended to avoid South Carolina “in consequence of the embarrassments of our labor system, and the insecurity of our intentions.”

Most immigration supporters recommended that the state appoint expert immigration agents to manage the immigration plan. In response to limited immigration, the editor of the Daily Republican declared, “But how meager the results!” In May 1870, immigration supporters held an Immigration Convention in Charleston, and many of the city’s business elite attended. W. L. Trenholm, one of Charleston’s most successful businessmen, called for southerners to make cheap land available to the immigrants. Trenholm believed that Charleston should send German and Irish immigration agents to Europe to recruit immigrants. He wrote, “Neither the Government nor people of Germany understand the political condition of South Carolina.” He hoped these agents, familiar with the language and customs of their native countries, could convince immigrants to settle in the South. Trenholm appeared to suggest a sort of immigrant screening process that would take place at the port of departure, and he hoped to divert immigration away from northern cities, including New York, to Charleston.

G. A. Neuffer agreed that South Carolina should send “intelligent” and honest agents to Europe. He suggested that the agents should be natives of the countries where they recruited immigrants, but also familiar with the advantages South Carolina offered them.

Throughout the United States, immigrant aid societies assisted with the transportation, settlement, housing, employment, and social services. Trenholm called for the organization of immigrant aid societies in counties throughout the State. The societies would make housing arrangements for houses, sometimes building the houses upon the reserved farms of the association. Trenholm suggested letting immigrants live rent free for their first year, and later charge them a moderate fee. He remarked, “there are many houses on the various plantations in the State, which can be made available for the purpose with a little repair.” He recognized the “great difficulty” in persuading landowners to make land available and in obtaining the necessary funds for the association.

German immigrants had been landing at the Port of New York, and settling in the Midwest. In Germany, German families made arrangements to settle there. They brought money with them. The various immigrant aid societies assisted with their transition into the United States, sometime providing economic and medical relief. The editor of the Daily Courier recommended, “It is for the people of each country to form their immigration societies, whose capital should be either lands donated, or money subscribed, and thus bring among us people of our own race, hardy, thrifty, and industrious, who will not only add to its population, but to its freedom, and the development of all its innumerable resources.” Once they had relocated and found employment in the United States, immigrants struggled to create new identities.

In Charleston, The German Friendly Society assisted immigrants in finding employment. On January 7, 1871, a group of immigrants arrived on the bark Kepler in Charleston. The bark with Capt. Lanckena in command left Bremen on the November 7, but was forced to avoid French cruisers. The immigrants arrived in good health, and most of them had relatives in the city and intended to remain. German employers actively sought out the recent arrivals. Captain Lanckena brought a cargo of groceries and other supplies.

Neuffer disagreed with Franz Melchers’, a State appointed immigration agent, who claimed that he brought two thousand immigrants from New York City. In 1874, the Tax Union appointed Mechers as an immigration agent. Melchers stated that in six months he could bring ten thousand families from Europe to South Carolina, and that he had appointed twenty agents in
Germany. Neuffer claimed “none of his Agents have accomplished anything yet” and considered it “a gross exaggeration and entirely impossible to bring that many families to South Carolina.”

In the late 1870s, G. A. Neuffer believed that South Carolina had been unsuccessful due to inadequate agents and mismanagement. Neuffer disagreed that a line of steamships from Charleston to a European port to encourage immigration would work. He called it a “wild and imaginary scheme” that “will never pay.” Instead, he recommended that South Carolina establish an immigration bureau and target immigrants that landed at New York harbor, a much cheaper alternative. Neuffer wrote, “It is about time that the tide of immigration should take a turn towards South Carolina. Men who have brass, but not the brains, have devised schemes to secure position at the expense of the people’s money. The time has come that they should step down and out. Their past career is evidence enough to warrant the assertion.”

Neuffer directed his criticism at Wagener and his agents. Woody stated, “Wagener set about his work with intelligence and enthusiasm.” This was simply not the case. Neuffer gave numerous valuable reasons for the failure of South Carolina’s effort to bring immigrants to the state. He revealed that immigration agents went to North Germany in 1866. He stated they spent $10,000, “but accomplished nothing, nor have they ever rendered any account how the money was spent, nor have they given any reason why they have not met with any success.”

Political, Economic, and Social Motivations

Many southerners equated white immigration with the political resurgence of the Democratic Party and white supremacy. Most southern whites would have agreed with immigration if it meant more members of the Democratic Party. However, many immigrants in Charleston actively participated in the Republican Party or abstained from political participation altogether.

Southerners wanted European immigrants who were most likely to assist them in political redemption. The Charleston Mercury, a conservative daily, agreed with southerners’ efforts to promote the immigration of “industrious, thrifty, enterprising white settlers” and “emphasized the role of “honorable” immigrants in redeeming South Carolina from Republican rule. The editor wrote, “Already we can see the dawning light of our political disenthrallment.” In twenty years, he predicted, the white population, native and immigrant, would “throw the negroes into the shade.” Colonel S. W. Maurice called for “neutralizing and overcoming the existing negro majority in the State by bringing white men into the State.” He recommended that the State reorganize a Bureau of Immigration for that purpose of bringing “industrious, honest, and frugal white immigrants, no matter from what State or country he comes.” One southern observer declared, “If all the taxpayers could be induced to earnestly co-operate in the matter of immigration, we might ourselves effect our deliverance from the difficulties which surround us, without the help of Northern sentiment or Northern sympathy.” C. H. Moise wrote, “It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of immigration to our State. In the material and moral development to which every good citizen must look forward with hope, the chief if not the only agent must be the infusion into our population of a large number of intelligent and industrious immigrants. To this element must also, and to the general diffusion of education, must look for the improvement in the character of our voting population, without which we, as a people, can make no real progress.” Moise suggested the printing of a cheap immigration
European immigration would “build up society, which, after all, will prove the shortest cut to redemption—political, moral, intellectual, and in every other respect,” wrote one observer.90

Many southerners believed that immigrants from the North and Europe would bring necessary capital investment and help revive Charleston’s economy. “We want a broader range of agricultural products, and a more thoughtful, thorough system of farming and planting; and we want an entirely new series of manufactures,” one man wrote.91 Supporters of immigration had many and varied ideas about the way to attract immigrants.

In April 1870, the editor of the Daily Courier proposed that South Carolina grant land for a small fee to prospective European immigrants. Lawton asserted, “I have little doubt that if we begin a line of two steamers, we could readily induce the dense and overflowed population of Europe to seek homes in our midst…It is, therefore, a certain fact, that if the South desires to fill up her waste places, it is her duty to begin earnestly, and at once, by bringing immigrants to our doors.”92

Neuffer believed immigration agents were the key to securing immigration. Agents for the states in the Midwest had realized tremendous success in Europe. At the same time, the agents informed prospective immigrants not to settle in South Carolina. Railroad and steamship lines had runners and agents in Europe that sold tickets to destinations in the West. Neuffer believed South Carolina needed a similar plan. He argued the “majority of immigrants who come South, are the refugee and riff raff of all Countries, They are those who just had enough money to reach New York, and in that condition they are helpless, they are then willing to go any where to get employment, when their passage is paid. This class of people are a burden to our Country…These are the kind of Immigrants that have been brought to South Carolina by those Agents.” Neuffer called for South Carolina to send agents to Europe and the North. The agents would find farmers and make arrangements for their passage to South Carolina. He also believed they should purchase railroad tickets in advance. He suggested that agents in New York would also realize success in attracting immigrants.93

R. Dozier recognized that immigration efforts were not well organized in South Carolina. He reported, “Immigration, as now instituted, cannot be a success for the present generation. The great difficulty is, that the organization, as now constituted, compels every man who wishes to procure immigrant labor to understand, as well as to undergo, either all or, at least, a part of its risks of losses or gains.” With that in mind, Dozier proposed a joint-stock company to distribute some of the risk among a greater number of people.94 Dozier recommended establishing an immigration bureau at Charleston for receiving and forwarding immigrants. He thought the company could send agents to England, Ireland, Scotland, France, Holland, Sweden and Norway, Germany and Italy. “My belief is that we will never succeed to any extent until we adopt the Joint Stock Company plan, and no longer trust the general intelligence of the people upon this matter,” he said.95

The Daily Courier called the Labor and Immigration Convention (1870) “perhaps the most important Convention ever assembled in this State since the close of the war. Agriculture and immigration are just now matters of vital importance to the State.”96 The Convention took place in Charleston and William M. Lawton, President of the South Carolina Institute, chaired the meeting. The purpose of the convention: “To Induce settlers, immigration and efficient laborers to till the fertile and genial lands of South Carolina, and bring out her various resources of manufacturing and other industrial pursuits.”97 Delegates included German and Irish immigrants, southerners, and members of the South Carolina Institute, Charleston Chamber of
Commerce, Charleston Board of Trade, German Society of Charleston, and the Mechanics’ Society of Charleston, South Carolina Agricultural and Mechanical Society, and the South Carolina Railroad. At the convention, William Lawton claimed that “immigration has become a necessity with our old State,” and he believed that South Carolina could establish a steamship line for immigration. He stated, “If we bring immigrants to Charleston, they will be sent throughout the entire State and country.” He argued that the black population had steadily declined and would eventually disappear from the South.  

In February 1874, southerners held a Tax-Payers Convention and the topic of immigration occupied much of the agenda. Unfortunately, no German or Irish immigrants served as officers or on the Executive Committee. Some Germans sat on the Committee on Immigration, but it does not appear the Irish were represented. The committee proposed that “effective organization” was necessary to encourage immigration to the state. Julian Mills considered immigration “a necessity” and suggested a “system of publication, which shall inform the immigrant, that our soil will produce every article of necessity to life and comfort and that our climate is congenial to every race.” He also suggested a State immigration agency that would sell cheap land to immigrants. Mills estimated “a well instructed laborer and small employer, common among the agricultural classes of Germany and Ireland, coming in contact with our present labor, would develop at least one third more.”

Neuffer revealed that immigration agents and runners had been arrested in some parts of Germany for irresponsible behavior and corrupt practices. He called for South Carolina to send honest and reliable agents, and they would realize success. Neuffer thought the Legislature needed to make some money available for the endeavor. He noted that Tennessee, Texas, North Carolina, and Virginia had instituted similar plans and brought immigration to their states. Neuffer wrote, “Tennessee is making great headway, in filling up her State with the right class of peoples from the North and from Europe, and with much success by reason of proper management, South Carolina is actually asleep.” Neuffer concluded, “Every now and then public meetings are held in different parts of our State, speeches are made, resolutions are passed, published in the Country papers, and that is generally the end of it, no practical result is arrived at.” In reference to South Carolina immigration, he deemed “the whole affair was a failure, for no immigrants were procured. That was the death blow to immigration in South Carolina.”

Nativism and Objections to Immigration

In the wake of the Revolution of 1848 in Germany, thousands of German democrats and radicals who had fought for liberty, democracy, and national unity left for the United States. These German immigrants tended to participate in politics to a much greater extent than their predecessors. Lawrence S. Thompson and Frank X. Braun argue, “There was no love lost between the Forty-eighters and the Southern Democrats.” In particular, Germans disagreed with Southern Democrats’ stance on slavery, nativism, and support for foreign democratic revolutions.

Although many immigration boosters called for the ready availability of cheap land, not all southern landowners expressed a willingness to part with their land at low prices. Neuffer complained, “The great evil with our land ownership is, that when people come to buy their land, they are not willing to sell at reasonable figures, and purchasers have to go elsewhere, and
owners have to keep their land and pay taxes on it, when it is valueless to them, will the people of our State come in to line and act prudent?"  

Trenholm recognized the difficulty in getting landowners to relinquish some of the land for immigration. He called for the railroads to donate some of their surplus land. He also called for certificates of state stock in exchange for land. R. Dozier determined, “One great difficulty in the way of appealing to the farmers of South Carolina, to donate lands is that the old system of entailing landed property was much in vogue previous to the war, and now many have judgments hanging over their landed estates.” He entertained a scheme for the distribution of land. The state would acquire land and then send immigration agents to Europe. European immigrants would settle on small farms throughout the state.

C. W. Dudley said, “We cannot get immigrants unless we offer inducements. We have no houses for immigrants, and we must first build them. We must construct cottages fit for an immigrants wife to live in—and married men are the kind of men whom we need. Our proper plan is first to arrange houses and homes for the immigrant.” Dudley suggested offering homes rent free for a year. After a few years of paying rent, the immigrant would own the house and land. He believed landowners should divide their large plantations. “When this is done, we can offer sufficient inducements to immigrants,” he wrote.

The editor of the Daily Courier espoused the “advantages of a dense population.” He recognized that millions of acres of land went uncultivated and believed immigrants should work the idle land to the benefits of the state. He declared, “Let us have immigration upon any terms, for we are convinced that in this work lies the talisman of our redemption—social, political, and commercial.” “It is time that we should realize that the policies and plans of the past are utterly unsuited to the present. We have entered upon a new condition of things. This condition requires population and industrious immigration,” he continued. The editor believed that landowners should donate a portion of their land because improvements upon it would increase the value of their own. He concluded, “we must welcome the immigrant of every section, without prejudice, and make him as one of our own people.”

George A. Trenholm stated before the Immigration Convention that the South Carolina Railroad Company would grant immigrants alternate sections of land belonging to the company. However, this never occurred. The Weekly Republican said, “This practical offer is worth more than bushels of the documents hitherto given on Immigration to the South Carolina public, speculating as to how many quarts of meal, and how many pounds of bacon a healthy immigrant can eat, and whether his wife and daughters will wear the linsey-woolsey style of dress. Give immigrants a knowledge of our almost unrivalled climate, and our soil and markets, and then give them land…especially if we treat them as men, and not cattle, they will come.”

Importantly, Wagener identified nativism in South Carolina as a possible deterrent to immigration. Wagener determined, “There may be some ill feeling in our State to the immigrant, on account of the large and effective part he has taken against us in the late war. But if we view the matter rightly, fairly and justly, we shall find that the immigrant has only proved his faith to the community in which he resided. If the Northern and Western adopted citizens and their countrymen have sided honorably with their respective States, have not the Southern adopted citizens and their countrymen done the same for their Southern States?” Wagner determined that German and Irish immigrants had sided with the Confederacy in Charleston, and stated that, “This should be conclusive proof that every fair and impartial mind that the immigrant may be safely encouraged and taken by the hand as a friend and a brother.”
Southerners remained divided over the question of white immigration. The *Charleston Mercury* reported, “Since the close of the war of secession, the mind of the Southern people has been more or less divided on the subjects of emigration and immigration. Much serious thought has been devoted to the question.” Col. C. W. Dudley suggested that southerners seemed to want immigration, but they were unwilling to commit their time and money to the endeavor. Some southerners at the immigration convention objected to European immigration. Governor Robert K. Scott agreed with efforts “to encourage and promote emigration to this State of all peoples, who are homogeneous in customs and usages with our own, that are willing to labor, as well as those who will bring into it skill and capital.” He did not see the benefit of spending money on immigrant land schemes, because he believed that white immigrants would compete with southern laborers, black and white.

European immigrants tended to avoid the South because of reports of ill-treatment there. William Lawton said, “There is, as you are aware, a strong prejudice in the minds of European immigrants, generally against the South.” “They think that we have always despised labor; that we hate the laborer, and look down upon him and his occupation with contempt,” he continued. Lawton remarked that many Europeans believed “if they were to come to the South they would be made slaves of instantly” and “that the Southern people are a lawless and semi-barbarous,” “that the Southern climate is deadly to the white laborer,” and that only African-Americans can handle the climate as laborers. Lawton recommended that erasing those prejudices were critical for obtaining immigrants.

Recognizing a nativist strain in South Carolina, a supporter of immigration recommended that southerners needed to rid themselves of “erroneous ideas” regarding white immigrants. He believed that many had hardened their nativist tendencies because of their experience with carpet-baggers. He remarked that southerners must trust that immigrants would choose “the side of justice and economy and good government.” He also noted that South Carolinians needed to let immigrants hold their own opinions. He recognized sentiment that “South Carolinians will welcome everybody who inclines to come to the State, provided they come to promote its industrial prosperity, and leave politics alone.” He suggested that all “surveillance and criticism” should cease, because immigrants would bring “a good stock of opinions” with them. The correspondent wrote, “This intolerance of opinion had its roots in the practice of slavery…Immigrants here must be like immigrants everywhere, free, unconstrained, independent.”

Germans desired equal treatment in South Carolina, something not all native-born whites wanted to provide. The editor of the *Courier* wrote, “There are now in Carolina hundreds of immigrants successful in life, and respected in their avocations, whose presence is the highest proof of what may be accomplished. But it must ever be borne in mind that the immigrant will only come as an equal.” The editor continued, “There are always some who are accustomed to regard the peasantry for instance, as they are termed, of Germany as ignorant and ill provided with food. There never was a greater mistake. They are all educated and are well provided with wholesome food.”

Nativism toward immigrants had existed in Charleston and South Carolina since the antebellum period, and the overwhelming majority of Europeans avoided settling in the South. A southern newspaper editor observed, “Slavery which has heretofore diverted the emigration from Europe into more Northern channels, no longer exists. It is therefore an act of wisdom in the Convention to have at once set the seal to the prejudices of the past, and in its cordial invitation to the emigrant, to assure him of a warm welcome and a fair livelihood on the soil of South Carolina.” He continued, “There has heretofore prevailed a feeling, both at the North and
in Europe, that immigrants from those sections would not be received with a warm hand, and upon an equal basis with our own fellow-citizens.” Colonel W. L. Trenholm asserted, “A great prejudice exists all over Europe against coming to the South. They have been told that although slavery has been abolished the Germans emigrant if he came South would be treated as the slaves had been before the war.”

Southerners often treated immigrant laborers like they did their former slaves. In discussing the reasons for immigration failure in the South, Rev. T. S. Boinest said “in most cases of failure the fault had been on the part of employers, and not of the employees. The German laborer must not be treated as were our former slaves, and could not be expected to tabernacle long when a ration of bacon and meal was given to them to live on.” The Weekly Republican contended that southerners mistreated immigrants, contending “The old slave system has so warped and distorted our ways of thinking, that we need a baptism of freedom to restore us to symmetry. We have been accustomed to say to one, Go! And he goeth; to another, Come! And he cometh, and to our servant, Do this! And he doeth it; forgetting meanwhile that the were something more than machines to dour our bidding. No race of white laborers will endure for long this sort of treatment.” F. W. Dawson argued “planters should have prudence to see that they can never be kept here by such treatment as was formerly bestowed upon slaves.” “Let our citizens seriously reflect on the efforts assumed to be put forth to secure German immigration. What have we really done? The work actually accomplished looks pitifully small and weak,” the Daily Republican concluded. The editor of the Daily Republican reasoned that southerners persecuted immigrants from the North and Europe, and he recommended that the South stop recruiting immigrants until it changed its nativist ways.

Germans had little interest in working as farm laborers in the South. Mainly, they either settled in cities throughout the Mid-Atlantic and Midwestern states or on farms in the Midwest and Southwestern States. “The high hopes aroused by prospective immigration into southern agricultural areas came to meager fruition; most of the foreigners attracted to the section proved even less content than Negroes to remain laborers,” asserts Rowland Berthoff.

Germans did not tolerate southern nativist tendencies. A German immigrant wrote, “There is still a prejudice against the South existing among the Germans. They have always been opposed to slavery. It is now, in fact, removed, but they see plainly enough that the South is somewhat tainted with the old spirit yet.” Germans believed that southerners “would immediately reduce German immigrants to slavery.” The editor of the Daily Courier revealed that many prospective immigrants believed “although slavery has been abolished, the only class of labor which will suit the South is one on the same practical basis.” Southern plantation owners had attempted to hire German immigrants, but they housed the Germans in the slave quarters and fed them “a peck of corn meal, three pounds of bacon, and a quart of molasses a week, as food, and expected that on this they would be content.”

A Preference for German Immigrants?

Those South Carolinians who supported immigration demonstrated a strong preference for German. In 1865, the editor of the Daily Courier wrote, “Without expressing preference for any particular nationality, we would suggest that an active, intelligent gentleman should be appointed to proceed to Bremen and make the necessary arrangements.” Immigration Commissioner John A. Wagener definitely preferred German immigrants. He recognized that
German immigrants brought millions of dollars in capital with them. In addition, most of them were employed as farmers and skilled laborers. Wagener pointed to the successful German settlement in Walhalla, SC as proof that the state could benefit from German immigration. Wagener wrote that “immigration of the right class will not only be a great advantage but is an actual necessity for our State.” Mainly, he hoped that German immigrants would farm the upper districts and grow grain and grapes and raise livestock stock.  

Many southerners believed European immigration would benefit South Carolina. They recognized that it had been instrumental in the economic and physical growth of the country. Colonel T. Y. Simons said, “As to the necessity of an intelligent, industrious, and thrifty immigration, there can be no dissent.”

Charlestonians recognized extensive German social and economic contributions in their city. Simons acknowledged that German immigrants had assisted in the economic development of Charleston when he said, “We need look no further than our own city for the most ample illustrations. We can scarce refer to any department of life, or class of business, without receiving the aid and progress derived in the advancement and prosperity from the citizens of Germany, of Prussia, of Ireland, and of other climes.” Echoing the views of many Americans, a newspaper editor called German immigrants “undoubtedly the most industrious people that land on our shores. Their economical habits and thorough acquaintance with all the smaller industries…lay the foundation of a prosperity and wealth.”

A German immigrant promoted his nationality group as the ideal ethnic group. He emphasized the high literacy rate in the German states of Bavaria, Baden, Wurtemberg, Hannover, and other South German states. He revealed that immigration from Prussia had increased due to military conscription. The German supposed that his countrymen often headed to the West to escape northern nativism. “They want to teach them good morals, not to drink lager beer on Sunday nor to dance and go to theatres on the holy Sabbath, while the Germans have opinions of their own on these subjects. In Germany, rich and poor, men and women, on week day or Sunday, mingle together in beer gardens, saloons, ball rooms, theatres, on horseback or in omnibus. Their enjoyments they never will be willing to dispense with in this country.”

South Carolinians disagreed on the skill levels that immigrants to their state should have and class considerations dominated much of the discussion at the 1870 Immigration Convention. At the same time, he thought European immigrants were not an inferior race. Simons said, “But the character of the immigration which has built up this country, and in part this State, and which we would seek to invite, is that of intelligence, of thrift and of industry. It has not been, and never will be, that of an inferior race.” He thought European immigration would make South Carolina “a homogenous people, and build up a State of intelligent and progressive freemen.” Simons recognized that most immigrants had avoided the South because “slavery existed, and the white industry of Europe would not come where they had to enter into competition with a condition of servitude, and with another and variant race.” Neuffer wanted agricultural laborers and small farmers to settle rural South Carolina and not urban working class immigrants, and he recommended that South Carolina send agents to South and Central Germany in search of the “best agriculturalists” because population overcrowding had caused land shortages there.

The editor of the Southern Celt, a Republican Irish nationalist newspaper did not think Irish immigrants would become “dissatisfied in a short while” as farm laborers. The editor believed that skilled workers could find success in manufacturing and phosphate industries. “We would not advise any of our countrymen who expects to support himself comfortably, much less
a family, to come to our State as a common laborer…unless it be under some capitalist, who will make special arrangements with him,” the newspaper advised. Immigrant capitalists were also encouraged to settle in the state.\(^\text{139}\)

In an apparent contradiction, R. Dozier argued that South Carolina should target “that class of European peasantry…in a hopeless state of poverty and dependence.” He believed once they had begun to settle South Carolina that skilled artisans would follow. He did not desire urban immigrants because “the latter class are totally unfitted for our climate as well as our system of labor.\(^\text{140}\) In an attempt to keep immigrant laborers from leaving the state, Dozier advocated the introduction of laborers rather than the bringing in of families into the State. “Until the South is regenerated politically, we cannot expect any material accession in numbers except from the class of peasantry of those countries who are in a helpless state of poverty—the sturdy, thrifty, diligent laborer who has been taught truth, honesty and integrity, coming fresh from the agricultural districts,” he asserted.\(^\text{141}\)

Some white southerners raised objections to calls for immigrant laborers because thousands of African-Americans longed for employment. The \textit{Daily Republican} objected to calls from Convention delegates for the immigration of unskilled farm laborers. Instead, the editor called for German farmers with a few hundred dollars to invest in a small plot of land.\(^\text{142}\) Neuffer wrote, “We do not want Laborers to come here, for we are amply supplied with them, we want the well to do farmer from all Countries to come to our State, buy our lands settle down, become good citizens, and help to develop the resources of our State.\(^\text{143}\)

The editor of the \textit{Daily Courier} recognized many white southerners’ apathy toward immigration. He stated, “We may desire immigration and direct trade, and in gorgeous language describe their advantages…but if this is all, there the matter will end.” He wrote, “With regard to immigration from Europe its value is attested in every community in the land. There are hundreds of the most valued citizens of Charleston, engaged in every avocation of business, property holders, and prosperous men in the varied departments of life.” He declared “do not expect them to come as the substitute of our former slaves, or to till the soil for us, but as citizens, equals and co-laborers, to become a part of our people, and to assist in common with us in developing the resources of the State, and building up a fortune of progress and prosperity.”\(^\text{144}\)

Colonel D. W. Aiken declared, “If we want the best labor in the world we should go to China…they are the only people to raise rice and Sea Island Cotton, and the Germans will not go there. They (the Germans) don’t want such lands. They don’t want to go where they are liable to all sorts of malarious diseases. They are intended for the up country. They delve deep, and make poor lands yield bountifully. They want a healthy country. We want all kinds of people, and must forget whether a man comes from Texas or Germany.”\(^\text{145}\) Aiken’s statement reflected popular sentiment regarding both Chinese labor in the South and the thoroughness of German farmers.

However, Aiken expressed nativist sentiment when he said, “Let the Germans come quickly and be absorbed in our midst; let us make South Carolinians of them, not let them make Germans of us.” This statement drew substantial criticism from both the conservative and liberal press. Aiken recommended dividing 100,000 acres of land into farms and sending the maps and titles to “prominent” firms in Bremen and other cities in Europe. “Let the companies in the foreign cities send the immigrants,” he declared. He recognized that Charleston businessmen had little interest in bringing farmers to South Carolina.\(^\text{146}\)

In another expression of nativism, Aiken asserted, “Another gentleman said that we must introduce immigrants and receive them as our equals. If any many occupies my land as my equal
he must do it after my death. If a gentleman from Germany, or the North, or anywhere else comes here, I will receive him as my equal. But what European gentleman will come here to labor? We should have a sturdy, energetic people, and when they come let us recognize them as friends. But let us have not social equality with our laborers.”

Many southerners probably agreed with Aiken.

Germans objected to Aiken’s comments. One German immigrant wrote, “In vain I looked to the Charleston Democratic press to declare against the dishonor heaped upon the Germans in the Emigration Convention…but their silence confirms and supports the sentiments of that Convention, that Germans are only serfs and not gentlemen…thank you…for defending us against men who would use us as slaves. It proves that you will even take up for the German as well as the colored men.” The *Weekly Republican* wrote, “The Germans, of course, feel grieved and wronged by a statement like that.”

The conservative editor of the *Daily Courier*, a longtime supporter of immigration, objected to D. Wyatt Aiken’s comments. The newspaper editor believed that Aiken had “challenged public investigation and opinion” and “made an assault upon the very principles of immigration which have tended to develop South Carolina in the past, and which forms her hope in the future.” “The immigrants must come, and be welcomed as equals, and with an even chance in the race of life. These are wanted to add to the intelligence, the free thought, and the welfare of the State,” he wrote. European immigrants demanded “free thought and action, and to build up his character and fortune, on the same terms of equality with all others. It is the recognition of this truth which has constructed and developed the Middle States, the North and West, and which has to-day given to South Carolina, in the presence of a thriving and prosperous foreign population; useful and respected citizens.” The editor asserted that “all labor is honorable, and that every man is to be respected and regarded for what he is in himself. And this without regard to the section from which he comes, the department of industry in which he is engaged, or the place of his nativity. For if matters are to be traced to their original source, all men in the United States are the descendants of immigrants. These were the forefathers of every man who now lives upon the soil of America.”

The editor of the *Daily Courier* objected, “those who desire the immigrant as a mere subservient laborer, are isolated instances and not the general sentiment of the people of South Carolina…We desire the presence of the thrifty and industrious immigrant as equals, and we invite him to a fertile soil, and a hospitable climate. We extend to him a warm hand of welcome to all the rights and privileges we enjoy. We desire his aid and co-operation in building up the waste places of the South, and his assistance in creating for the future, free, secure, and intelligent self-government.” "There are not only in South Carolina, but in Charleston to-day, hundreds of immigrants who sought these shores from Europe, who are among our most honored and respected citizens, and whose presence and prosperity is the best evidence of the feeling and sentiments of the people of this State,” he stated.
In May 1870, the editor of the *Suedlicher Correspondent* lashed out at the conservative opposition to German immigration. The editor wrote, “Colonel D. Wyatt Aiken has proved...that in the six years since the close of the civil war, in which time much could have been learned and much accomplished to restore the conquered and impoverished South to its former prosperity, he has not learned the least thing.” The editor called him a “genuine slavocrat” that viewed “the wealth of the single individual the prosperity of his country.” He overlooked “the cities of the North and West, which have been made great and prosperous principally through German industry and German free labor” and “Only through slavery, he thinks, could a country become wealthy, and as he seems to know at least this much—that the Germans cannot be governed by the whip.” He continued, “the German already knows in the old Fatherland that a residence of five years in America makes him a citizen of the same; and he also knows that the negroes have likewise been made voters by the Fifteenth Amendment. And shall German immigrants enjoy social equality with gentlemen? Gentlemen are only the ‘Slave Pachas,’ who do nothing but issue orders at the most.” In particular, the newspaper objected to Aiken’s desire for European gentlemen. He exclaimed, “The immigrants who have acquired wealth by the labor of their hands, and, through it, have made this country great, are not gentlemen!” The editor concluded, “God be praised that the ranks of such lights are thinning, and that better ideas are already finding expression. People of that class should be stuffed after their death, and be placed in a glass case as objects of curiosity and remembrance.”

Indicative of the immigration dilemma in South Carolina, Colonel J. P. Thomas stated, “It is incumbent upon us while seeking other labor to employ that which we have around us...We have a laboring class and our first duty is to mould this element. We must take the negro and improve and civilize him. Those who desire to employ other labor may do so, and yet efforts can be made in the direction indicated by the committee. I regret that invidious comparisons have been made. The question is not whether we shall be Germans or South Carolinians. But let us stand shoulder to shoulder, all of us, in the work of progress. (Applause.) We can learn much in this State. The North and Germany can teach us much. It is the composite population that has made this country great in the past, and which will make it magnificent in the future.”

**Conclusion**

While Germans did not immigrate to Charleston in large numbers during Reconstruction, a significant number of them lived there. The overwhelming majority of Germans had immigrated during the 1850s and remained following the Civil War. They represented a significant portion of the white population. Many southerners did not believe freed African-Americans would continue to work without a slave master forcing them to labor for a living. This led some whites to call for white immigrants to replace black laborers in the South. Immediately following the War, this minority of southerners, primarily elites and urban boosters, promoted South Carolina as a “home for the industrious immigrant.” They considered the successes in the North and West as a model for their own efforts. Unfortunately, the legislation to organize immigration to South Carolina was flawed and it did call for the appointment of expert agents to head the operation. John A. Wagener realized few successes primarily because he targeted middle-class Germans whom he felt would fit into southern society. After all, the urban elites leading the push for immigration had conservative leanings and desired a return to
white political supremacy. They hoped that European immigrants would become white citizens and vote for the Democratic Party. The majority of southerners, however, did not support their efforts to bring immigrants to Charleston, probably because they recognized political dissension among immigrants and between immigrants who supported liberal political parties and themselves. In fact, D. Wyatt Aiken expressed the opinion of southern nativists when he opposed the immigration of German immigrants to South Carolina. Aiken was aware of inconsistent social behavior in Charleston between Germans and their neighbors, especially their relationship with African-Americans.

Notes Chapter One

1 G. A. Neuffer Essay, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, 1-32. The front page was dated but Neuffer includes 1880 statistics. He began the essay on 1 December 1877 and probably completed it in 1880. Neuffer conducted his own research. “I have taken pains and at some expense to secure valuable reports from Chief of Bureau of Statistics at Washington, D.C. also [sic] from the Governors of Texas, Kansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, Georgia and North Carolina all these reports contain valuable information, and are in striking contrast, to what South Carolina has accomplished, in that direction. I have taken some pains to follow up this South Carolina immigration, and watched its progress or proceedings closely, the result is anything but favorable,” he wrote. On page 28, Neuffer noted that he had attempted to promote his views to a larger audience, but he did not find any success. In his appendix dated 24 December 1879 “For the past few years I have made several attempts to have my essay published, but did not succeed in doing so. As I have mentioned what General J. B. Robertson said in regard to Texas, which remarks were published in the Philadelphia Times, I am sorry to say I am not now able to furnish them, in consequence of having furnished the printed slip to an Editor in the up Country, who had promised to publish it but did not do so. And as a matter of course (like all Editors) never returned the paper.”

2 Neuffer, 1.


4 United States Census Bureau, The Eighth Census of the United States (1880), xix, xxix, xxviii, 377; Compendium of the Ninth Census (1870), 376, 392, 393.


7 R. H. Woody, “The Labor and Immigration Problem of South Carolina During Reconstruction,” Mississippi Valley Historical Review Vol. 18 No. 2 (September 1931), 195.

8 Bert James Lowenberg, “Efforts of the South to Encourage Immigration, 1865-1900,” South Atlantic Quarterly 33 (October 1934), 363.


10 Berthoff, 342-343, 360.


Bauman focuses on southern-born Jews but includes a discussion of German Jews as part of the Savannah Jewish community.

13 Charleston Daily Courier, 18 July 1865, 19 July 1865.


15 Schurz, 16.

16 Schurz, 40.

17 Schurz, 41.

18 Schurz, 41.

19 Henry A. DeSaussure to brother, 23 July 1865, Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham. DeSaussure wrote the letter write after the days that Schurz visited Columbia.

20 Henry A. DeSaussure to brother, 23 July 1865.

21 Christopher Memminger to Andrew Johnson, 4 September 1865, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia.

22 Daily Courier, 26 September 1865.

23 Daily Courier, 11 May 1870. McCrady continued, “We know positively, as far as scientific observation will warrant us in saying we know anything, that nothing will prevent this dying out of the inferior race, but making the white race responsible for its continued existence, and we know that the white man will not and cannot assume the responsibility unless he gets with it the right of governing the inferior race, and enjoying a large portion of the profits of its labor in return for his protection. As none of the white race have now this responsibility for, and its consequent rights over, the African, he must, of course, disappear from this country at no very distant day, unless the condition of things be changed. His disappearance must indeed be more rapid than that of the Indian, for that has always been more or less dependent upon the slow Westward march of the backwoodsman and prairie farmer, while the African has no wild country to fall back upon but that which has been made so by the hand of war, and every foot of which has already a white owner, whose restless energy will be devoted to bringing it again under cultivation. Thus we know that whatever may be our regrets when we call to mind the old and cherished affections with which we have regarded some of those whose presence still forms the dusky background of our boyish memories, the African race will, before many years, have disappeared from the Southern States.”

24 Daily Courier, 26 September 1865.


26 Foner, 88, 89.

27 Foner, 95.

28 Williamson, 107.

29 Daily Courier, 25 September 1865.
Augustine Smythe to brother, 2 December 1865, Smythe Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina.

31 Daily Courier, 26 September 1865; Woody, 201-202.

32 Daily Courier, 6 October 1865.

33 Daily Courier, 6 October 1865.

34 Woody, 211.

35 Loewenberg, 368.

36 Daily Courier, 6 October 1865, 25 April 1866.

37 Daily Courier, 25 September 1865. The editor continued, “Labor is the foundation of capital and population one of the chief elements of wealth. That country is the most prosperous and its realizations the most abundant where the soil is thoroughly cultivated, and its fruits abound to its highest capacity.”


39 Foner, 213.

40 Daily Courier, 25 September 1865.

41 Daily Courier, 6 October 1865.

42 Daily Courier, 6 October 1865.


44 Immigration Convention, 25.

45 Daily Courier, 7 May 1870.

46 Daily Courier, 4 May 1870.

47 Immigration Convention, 25

48 Daily Courier, 7 May 1870.


50 Daily Courier, 25 September 1865.

51 Neuffer, 24.

52 Daily Courier, 25 September 1865.

53 Daily Courier, 25 September 1865.

54 Southern Celt, 2 April 1870.


56 Daily Courier, 25 September 1865.

57 Daily Courier, 28 September 1865.

58 Commissioner of Immigration, Home for the Industrious Immigrant (Charleston: Joseph Walker, Agt., 1867), 25.

59 Daily Courier, 12 May 1868.

60 Berthoff, 336.

61 Daily Courier, 12 May 1868.

62 Commissioner of Immigration, 5, 6.

63 Commissioner of Immigration, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24. He wrote, “South Carolina has a republican form of government, similar to that of the other States of the Union…The Constitution of the State secures to every inhabitant equal protection before the law, and, to the citizen by naturalization, equal civil rights and immunities with the citizen of native birth. European immigrants, who have declared their intention of becoming citizens of the United States, are, after two years’ residence in the State, admitted to the elective franchise.”

64 Daily Courier, 30 November 1867.

65 Daily Courier, 30 November 1868.

66 Daily Courier, 8 January 1868. The Courier published a letter from Wagener to the Charleston Camber of Commerce. The executive committee resolved to meet with Wagener concerning the issue. However, Wagener later claimed they never contacted him regarding the letter.

67 Daily Courier, 8 January 1868. The agent continued, “The steamers would commence on the 1st October, 1868, and make seven trips to New Orleans, the last trip April 1869, though a steamer may be had at any other time, if it should become necessary. The company would also form a second company with the merchants of Charleston, and let them have one or two steamers as the case might require and would work to their mutual interest.”

68 Daily Courier, 12 May 1868. He the report to Governor James L. Orr. Wagener completed the report in accordance with the Immigration Act of 1866. Wagener appointed Mr. Ferler the agent for Scandinavia, Captain Alexander Melchers for Germany, and Major Ryan for Ireland. Major Ryan moved to Texas and resigned his office, and Wagener did not appoint his successor.

69 Daily Courier, 12 May 1868. Wagener also suggested that the railroads offer a “reduced fare to Memphis, and getting such a line of steamers, the port of Charleston might become the entry for immigrants to Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Tennessee, etc. The immense value of this must be obvious to all, without my going into any further details of reasoning.”

70 Daily Courier, 12 May 1868. “In the absence of our agent for Ireland, I have accepted the kind aid of several gentlemen and ship masters, to distribute in that country and in Scotland, several hundred pamphlets,” he wrote.

71 Daily Republican, 14 January 1870.

72 Daily Courier, 6 May 1870.
Neuffer, 12-14. Neuffer offered to serve as the agent for a fee of $3000. Neuffer was a native of South Germany and had resided in South Carolina for a number of years. He spoke both the German and English.

Mercury, 13 November 1867. The editor of the Mercury wrote, “The successful [immigrant], twenty years from now, will be well off and materially comfortable in a foreign land, surrounded by people who despite of long years of intercourse and friendship seem strangers still. There will be with these restless, unsatisfied desire to visit the land of their birth, and to spend their declining years in the home of their youth. Even if they accomplish this object, they do it at the expense of all the associations which have made them successful, and against the inclination of the family which has grown up all around them; and, after all, when they return to the long wished for shore, they find that they are still among strangers. They have not succeeded in making themselves at home in the land of their adoption, but they have nonetheless become strangers to the land of their birth.”

Daily Courier, 25 April 1870. The Society had 250 members and Mr. John Campsen acted as the President.

See Chapter Seven for a discussion of immigrant political activity in Charleston.


Daily Courier, 3 May 1873. Wagener had printed 14,000 copies of a forty-eight page pamphlet that probably proved costly. He could have printed many more brochures.

Weekly Republican, 14 May 1870.

Immigration Convention, 9, 10

Neuffer, 1-3. He contended, “wherever they go they slander and abuse the people of our State.”
Daily Courier, 4 May 1870.

Daily Courier, 30 April 1870.

Immigration Convention, 1.

Immigration Convention, 8, 9. He desired an immigration convention for the entire south.


Neuffer, 15-17.

Neuffer, 26-27.

Neuffer, 17-20, 24, 29.

Neuffer, 29, 32.


Neuffer, 30.

Daily Courier, 6 May 1870.

Daily Courier, 4 May 1870.

Daily Courier, 5 May 1870.

Daily Courier, 3 May 1870.

Daily Courier, 5 May 1870.

Weekly Republican, 14 May 1870.

Weekly Republican, 14 May 1870.

Daily Courier, 25 September 1865.

Mercury, 13 November 1867.

Immigration Convention, 10, 11, 12.

Robert K. Scott, “Annual Message,” Journal of the Senate of the State of South Carolina, 29 November 1870, 41, 51. He wrote “There has been much discussion upon the alleged scarcity of labor, and a variety of schemes has been suggested for its alleviation; but thus far without practical result. The importation of foreigners, either Christian or Pagan, can work but an inconsiderable influence, as these are keenly alive to the facilities of improving their condition as the native whom they attempt to supplant, and will dispose of their services.”

Immigration Convention, 10.
News and Courier, 23 April 1873. “It survives still in a modified degree, although emancipation has destroyed all apology for it. Any assertion of this spirit in the present changed condition of things is absurd. Every man, in our day, in South Carolina and everywhere else, must be permitted the exercise of his opinion, in decorous terms, on any subject whatever, without rendering himself obnoxious to anybody, or subjecting himself to the rebuke of anybody. This is the one new thing which South Carolina people of high and low degree must be prompt to learn. It is the very first condition of her regeneration and extrication. Nothing short of unreserved submission to this law of all our growing communities will secure the end and objects of her salvation,” he stated.

Daily Courier, 4 May 1870. He continued, “He comes for an equal chance with all others in the race of life. He comes to identify himself with the people of the soil, and to have his citizenship fully recognized. He comes to found, not service, but a home for himself and a future equally with all others for his children.”

Daily Courier, 6 May 1870.

Daily Courier, 5 May 1870.

Weekly Republican, 14 May 1870.

Daily Courier, 29 April 1870.

Daily Republican, 21 September 1869.

Daily Republican, 10 September 1869.

Berthoff, 331.

Daily Republican, 21 September 1869.

Immigration Convention, 9, 10. William Lawton linked the demand for immigration with efforts to promote agriculture, advance civilization, reconstruct commerce, advance manufactures, and promote the arts.

Daily Courier, 12 May 1870. The editor claimed that southerners were not aware that Germans were used to “better fare, a more comfortable home, and the prospect of education for their children.”

Daily Courier, 6 October 1865.

Daily Courier, 25 September 1865.

Daily Courier, 6 May 1870. Simons continued, “The value and importance of this has been attested by the whole past history of the country. This country had its origin in immigration. It is this which has founded every city throughout the broad expanse of our land. It is this which has built up the North and the Northwest, and made of their plains fertile and productive farms, and dotted them with thriving villages and prosperous cities.”

Daily Courier, 16 April 1872.

Daily Republican, 21 September 1869.

Daily Courier, 6 May 1870.

Neuffer, 12-14. Neuffer offered to serve as the agent for a fee of $3000. Neuffer was a native of South Germany and had resided in South Carolina for a number of years. He spoke both the German and English.
Delegates at the convention debated the possibility of attracting Chinese immigrants, something that had been discussed throughout the South. Colonel T. Y. Simons objected to Chinese immigration. “The plan is both impracticable and ill-advised,” he argued. “It can result in no good. It may be the precursor of the introduction of an inferior race, whose advent will be disastrous to the best interests of the State.” Simons disagreed with any discussion of Chinese immigration because, “The people of Germany, of Prussia and of other countries, educated, alive to freedom and its institutions, will never come if they are to meet, upon the same basis, immigrants of a lower scale and an inferior race.” General Butler “wished to see the State populated by the Anglo-Saxon race, by people for whom he could vouch.” Many other delegates participated in the debate.
CHAPTER 2
RACIAL AND ETHNIC RELATIONS

In 1860, the relationship between Germans and African-Americans was less conflicted than were relations among southern whites and blacks in Charleston. In Charleston, Germans preferred free labor and hired free blacks as contractors, store clerks, laborers, and domestic servants, the latter often living in their households. Labor and race were never entirely separable in the minds of white southerners, and southern whites associated “blackness” and dependence with common labor. Many German immigrants, albeit a minority of them, served as skilled and unskilled laborers and this probably affected their status in the German community, and in general Charleston society.¹ If some Germans tended to have better relations with African-Americans in Charleston, then it affected their social status in Charleston, especially after the Civil War.

Racial and ethnic relations were in a state of flux following the Civil War. In his classic study, The Strange Career of Jim Crow, C. Vann Woodward argues that the line of racial segregation was not clearly drawn after the Civil War, and Charleston, as a case study, tests Woodward’s thesis. In a more recent interpretation of Reconstruction, Bernard Powers determines “while evidence of certain practices characteristic of the later ‘Jim Crow’ era could be found, the patterns of race relations during Reconstruction and had not yet “crystallized” into the rigid forms which typified the mid-twentieth century South.”² In Charleston, Germans and African-Americans freely interacted and undoubtedly aggravated many southern whites.

In the mid-nineteenth century, southerners believed Germans were “whites” and this led to conflict with the African-American community. Many white European immigrant groups achieved upward social and economic mobility at the expense of blacks. It follows then that a variety of white European immigrant groups were also vying for position in the southern racial hierarchy. Southern whites willingly accepted middle and upper class German immigrants into the “white” community while blacks increasingly resented their economic influence, political power, and social status.³

German immigrants settled throughout Charleston, living in ethnically diverse wards and households, and sometimes in majority African-American neighborhoods. The heterogeneous composition of households in Charleston led to heightened cultural, social, economic, and political interaction. German heads of households accepted Germans, African-Americans, southern whites, and European immigrants as boarders—sometimes boarding members from different ethnic groups in the same household. African-Americans boarded with German and Irish laborers and shopkeepers. Moreover, blacks and Germans frequently resided in the same buildings and apartments. These heterogeneous households and their social relation within often led to offspring with “mixed” ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore, German men and women lived with and married African-Americans.⁴
Graham Hodges investigated the intersection of race, class and gender to show how intermarriage between African-Americans and Irish immigrants challenged historical perceptions of relations between both groups during the antebellum period. More specifically, historians have focused on racial conflict between both ethnic groups and argued that Irish assimilation occurred through racism toward African-Americans. Hodge looks at laborers and domestic servants, semi-skilled workers, including carters, porters, grocers, tavern and porterhouse keepers, butchers, junk and rag dealers, and prostitutes and petty criminals. He argues that these “three groups of workers provide considerable insight into the daily interplay of gender, class, and race among Irish and African Americans.”

Recent scholarship contends race and class influence the public sphere and that gender and identity formed in the household. Laura Edwards argues, “These identities and the households in which they were based then provided the framework that structured social and political relations in the South as a whole.” Therefore, numerous German households made a political statement and challenged the social and political hierarchy.

Germans lived in ethnically diverse households during the middle to late nineteenth century. A perusal of the 1860 Manuscript Census reveals Germans and African-Americans living in close proximity to each other. In 1870, Robert Jackson, a black drayman, and his wife Abagale lived with Charles Blase and Rudolph Arndt, both Prussian, and Issac Heyward, a black South Carolinaian. In 1880, Phyllis Fraser, a black servant and head of household, lived with Mary Friendly, a dressmaker from Germany, and her two children Clara and Ludolph, both epileptics.

German grocers often located their stores in ethnically mixed neighborhoods and took in boarders. In 1860, unrelated African-Americans and Germans lived together. While a few Germans owned slaves, they were underrepresented as slaveowners compared to southerners. In 1870, E. H. Beling located his store and residence in a majority black neighborhood. F. Puckhaber, a Prussian grocer, lived with his family; and George Bulwinkle, a clerk from Prussia, and John Brown, a black laborer from South Carolina, occupied the same household. Benjamin Riels, a Prussian grocer, and his wife Madeline, boarded six blacks in a predominately black neighborhood. In 1880, Henry Doscher, a German grocer, lived with his wife and son but also boarded Jonathan Silenthal, a second-generation German-American store clerk. Furthermore, his employees Johanna Otelling, a German cook; and African-Americans George and Catherine Rivers (his waiter and maid) lived in his household. The grocers probably benefited financially from the presence of boarders, either through direct cash payment or their labor.

Perhaps most surprisingly the census taker identified twelve “colored” Germans in Charleston in 1870. The 1870 published census reveals twelve black Germans in several United States cities, but mainly in New York (13), New Orleans (15), and Savannah (13). In Charleston, John Jungbluth, a saloon and barkeeper from Hamburg headed an ethnically diverse household—all Afro-Germans. His wife Margaret was a native of Hesse-Darmstadt and they had five children, all were “whites” born in South Carolina. Their domestic servant Margaret Nicholaj, also from Hesse-Darmstadt, rounded out the household. In the same building, probably the saloon itself, Benjamin Elliott, his wife Elizabeth and daughter Annie, Bella Williams, Madoline Binneau, Hanah Williams, and Isaac, Charlotte, and Mary P., all from Hesse Darmstadt, occupied two apartments. Further investigation will determine their background, but Jungbluth’s nativity may provide a clue. He was a native of Hamburg, an old Hanseatic port city, with international trade ties. Jungbluth may have brought the Afro-Germans to Charleston. Possibly, they spoke German and confused the census taker.
Romantic relationships between Germans and African-Americans threatened white supremacy in Charleston.\(^5\) In 1870, Anna Huges, a black seamstress from Prussia, and Louis Klein, a “mulatto” butler from Prussia lived together.\(^6\) Thomas Hazell, a “mulatto” female, had a German father and a mother who was a native of Georgia. Phillip Lindan, Jr., a “mulatto” shoemaker, had a Hanoverian father and a mother born in South Carolina. In 1880, Andy Jenkins, a black domestic servant from South Carolina was married to Lena, a white domestic from Germany. Frank Sudenberg, a mechanic from Germany, lived with a black woman (keeping house) with the surname Grant, and had two mixed children, Mary and William. In 1880, Peter Provost, a 38 year-old black male porter in a store and native South Carolinian, married his wife Mary, a 28 year-old German female from Baden, and they had an eight year-old daughter Elaina. Kate Hamilton, a 60 year-old black child nurse and mother of Peter, also lived with the family. Richard Schanaburgh, a laborer from Bremen, married Sarah, a Black South Carolinian. O. W. Schaidkures, a 20 year-old white male German store clerk, boarded with two working-class black families, consisting of eight blacks and two mulattoes. Fritz Martin, a German harnessmaker; Herman Rickels, a German bartender; William Jenkins, a black stabler; Charles Gibson, a “mulatto” hostler; and Jonathan Millen, a “mulatto” student occupied the same household.\(^7\) Many more examples of mixed-ethnicity households exist during the same period.

Most often, German men entered into sexual relationships with African American women and sometimes they married. In rare instances, German women and African American men became romantically involved. In August 1867, Augusta Finck, a German woman and wife of Henry Finck, a German grocer, ran away with William Overton, an African American wheelwright who had been boarding in the Finck household for several months. Augusta and Overton were arrested on their way to New York and extradited to Charleston. The Charleston press presumed that judicial proceedings were imminent but responsibility rested with Henry Finck. Fortunately, for Overton, the Courts had adjourned for the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.\(^8\) The editor of the conservative *Wilmington Journal* blasted “Strange Inconsistency! Unnatural taste! Here we have a woman beloved by her husband, a white man and her equal…flying from the arms of her natural and legal protector, and taking with her…a Negro—one in the sight of God and the eyes of man, her inferior, both by nature and education. What next?” Importantly, the Charleston press identified both Germans as “Whites” and completely ignored their German ethnicity. In the “shocking case,” the author of the article merely referred to Augusta Finck as “the wife of a white grocer” and Henry Finck as “grocer.”\(^9\) The Conservative *Charleston Daily News* reported, “The evils of miscegenation were made painfully public yesterday…the best punishment that could be inflicted would be to compel the runaways to marry.”\(^10\) The response of the Charleston press demonstrates the commitment of southern whites to a social and racial hierarchy. Most southern whites considered themselves culturally and biologically superior to African Americans. The establishment of racial dominance was critical because emancipation had caused many people to question that hierarchy. Sexual relations between African American men and white women were unacceptable.\(^11\)

White men, as the legal protectors of white women, viewed them as property. When an African-American man and a white woman had sex, southern whites considered it a violation of white male property rights and southern patriarchy. If the liaison became public, the incident often led authorities to charge rape, especially if it involved an elite white woman. In *White Women, Black Men*, Martha Hodes determines that white virulence regarding the dangers of African American male sexuality increased following the Civil War. There were legal and social obstacles to sex across the color line as well as marriage between white women and African-
American men, and southern whites used “miscegenation” laws and violence to discourage African Americans from having sex with white women.²²

**German Storekeepers and Black Militancy**

Public interaction between Germans and Afro-Charlestonians occurred in stores and open markets and the nature of the “business meant that generally all races and genders were acceptable customers.” In many instances, German grocers catered to working class blacks, often selling merchandise in tiny quantities, and remained open early in the morning to late at night. Germans sometimes extended credit to stimulate repeat business.²³ “Negroes who were renters found they were no longer bound to deal exclusively with their landlords (their former masters),” writes Joel Williamson, “and tended to ally themselves with storekeepers who were often more liberal in racial and political attitudes...A pronounced hostility grew between white landowners as opposed to white storekeepers and their Negro allies.”²⁴

African-Americans sometimes stole from German storekeepers. In 1865, around ten African-American soldiers went into H. P. Knee’s store and caused a small disturbance. Knee had been robbed several nights earlier. The soldiers left Knee’s store when some whites arrived. The group moved to the store of K. P. Reils and attempted to steal his money drawer. Reils forced them out. Finally, the men robbed Mrs. Roberlitz at gunpoint. A week earlier a group of black soldiers refused to pay for cigars at C. Witchen’s store and they took his money at gunpoint. Witchen identified the men as members of the Massachusetts 54th Regiment. The men may have objected to the high prices that Germans charged for their goods.²⁵ A few weeks later, someone forced open the door at J. Kruse’s store and stole a large amount of groceries and fancy goods. It was the third robbery of his store in the past two months.²⁶

In April 1866, someone burglarized the gunsmith shop of J. H. Happoldt located in the basement of the Commercial Hotel. Mr. Ostich, the proprietor of the Hotel, heard the burglary in progress but the men escaped with around twenty revolvers.²⁷ In February 1871, burglars again robbed Happoldt’s shop and took a dueling pistol that he made for Colonel Alfred Rhett and several pistols and rifles. It was the third time he had been burglarized within one year.²⁸

In January 1871, Menke and Muller reported that someone had stolen valuable clothing from their store. The police arrested Janes Geddes, Samuel Graham, and John Perronneau, all employees in the store. The men admitted they had “purloined” the merchandise. Police recovered three hundred dollars in fine cloth and expensive coats and pants. The found some of the clothing “in a house where a prayer meeting was being held.” The Daily Republican reported, “The articles recovered are sufficient to set up a small clothing store.” It appears the men may have intended to accomplish that since they had hidden the clothing.²⁹

Sometimes Charlestonians robbed Germans for food, a sign of the dire poverty many of them faced. In February 1871, John Critchbon, a white, entered O. Schroder’s store and stole a piece of meat. Schroder, a Prussian immigrant around 22 years of age, gave chase and Critchbon pulled out a knife. He did not injure Schroder, and the police arrested him for assault and battery.³⁰ William Jones and Robert Thorn, both African-Americans, stole bacon from William Hoffmeyer’s grocery store. The 10 year-old Jones stole a shoulder of bacon “to get something to eat.” Jones admitted that Thorn distracted Hoffmeyer with a one-cent biscuit purchase while he stole the bacon and ran off with it.³¹
That same month, Milton Spencer, an African-American man, robbed the corner grocery store of John H. Luden, a native of Hanover. Spencer asked Luden for a sheet of paper. When Luden turned his back, Spencer reached into the cash drawer and grabbed a wallet containing $90, and ran away. Police captured Spencer at his home. Spencer had thrown the wallet away without realizing over $70 remained inside the wallet. It does not appear the police recovered the missing $20.

In June 1871, police arrested James Conyers for a robbery of Henry Bischoff’s grocery store. That same month around fifteen to twenty black men attempted to break into Henry Behrmann’s grocery store. Behrmann awoke to the burglary in progress and fired a small pistol at the men. They fired two shots back at him. Thieves broke into the corner grocery store of Mr. V. Arnaud and stole two hundred pounds of rice, a box of biscuits, soap, matches, tobacco, hats, and a pair of shoes and a few dollars.

On July 2, 1871, a group of African-Americans robbed the corner grocery of F. Wehrman in one of the most successful grocery burglaries in Charleston’s history. They stole five sacks of coffee, seven boxes of tobacco, seven sacks of flour, several hams, 5000 cigars, 15 dozen fishing lines, seven demijohns of whiskey, nine bottles of brandy, a revolver, jewelry, and $25 in currency. The estimated value of the goods totaled $800. The detectives found much of the merchandise at the home of Joe Lloyd. The police also arrested Mary Williams, his mistress. Neptune Smalls and several others had managed to avoid arrest.

African-Americans may have disagreed with unscrupulous business practices of some German grocers. On September 29, 1869, the United States Commissioner issued a warrant for Henry Doscher, a twenty-five year-old Prussian immigrant, for selling tobacco and liquor without an Internal Revenue license. Doscher paid his bail. Over a year later, police arrested Doscher again on charges of “swindling.” He had posted bail and fled Charleston armed with a double-barrel shotgun and two pistols. The court of general sessions abstract reveals numerous German names among persons arrested for receiving stolen property and operating without licenses.

Race Conflict

German immigrants had a reputation for liberal thought concerning race differences, and they tended to identify with free labor ideology. Eric Foner recalls, “The last border state to experience an internal reconstruction was Missouri, like Maryland a state divided between slave and free communities and possessing a great industrial city that harbored abolitionist sentiments. Indeed the presence of a large population of German immigrants, many of them exiles from the failed revolution of 1848 who identified the Slave Power with the landed aristocracy of Europe, gave the democratic revolution a significant base of white support.”

Immediately following the Civil War, German-American elites in Charleston expressed profound dismay with the disappearance of the former caste society based on slavery. The feared African-American freedmen would not work in a free labor system. Moreover, they did not want to accept blacks as their equals. On September 4, 1865, Christopher Memminger, a German immigrant adopted and raised in Charleston by a southern elite family, expressed his concerns about blacks and their labor in a lengthy letter to President Andrew Johnson. His life is a study in racialization of immigrants, because he essentially grew up as a southerner and adopted the racist ideologies prevalent in southern society and culture.
In his letter, he summed up his feelings on emancipation and possible political quality for African-Americans. Memminger wrote, “I take it for granted that the whole Southern Country accepts emancipation from Slavery as the condition of the African race; but neither the North nor the South have yet defined what is included in that emancipation. The boundaries are widely apart which mark on the one side, political equality with the white races, and on the other a simple recognition of personal liberty. With our own race, ages have intervened between the advance from one of these boundaries to the other.” Memminger stated, “But where the population is from constitution or habit peculiarly subject to the vices of an inferior race, nothing short of years of education and training can bring about that state of moral rectitude and habitual self constraint which would secure the regular performance of contracts. In the present case, to these general causes, must be added the natural indolence of the African race, and the belief now universal among them, that they are released from any obligation to labor. Under these circumstances the employer would have so little inducement to risk his capital in the hands of the laborers, or to advance money for food and working animals in cultivating a crop, which when reaped, would be at the mercy of the laborers, that he will certainly endeavor to make other arrangements. The effect will be the abandonment of the negro to his indolent habits.”

Following the Civil War, many African-Americans did move around and expressed their freedom to leave or join an employer at their own discretion. Black domestic servants frequently moved from one household to another. Domestic service entailed difficult and tiring work such as carrying water and firewood, disposing of waste, washing laundry, cleaning floors, and watching children. Many domestics, however, preferred to make less wages in exchange for room and board plus more steady employment. Hodge writes, “The exploitative nature of the work negated any feelings of loyalty, and female domestics quickly learned to bargain for their value.” Exploitative and difficult working conditions led to frequent turnover. Schirmer, a German-American born in Charleston, found it useful to keep a separate journal from his diary called “Our Domestic Trials with Freedmen and Others” in which he recorded the hiring, firing, and resignation of over a hundred African-American and a few Irish servants. Not a single German domestic appears in the journal.

If the thought of blacks as free labors disturbed southerners, then efforts of federal government officials to ensure civil equality irritated German-Americans as well. In July 1865, Jacob Schirmer remarked, “Another Month of the most object degradation has passed every day some act of fine or imprisonment is exercised by the Provost Marshall on the Citizens both Male and Female for some imaginary evils committed by Owners over their former Slaves and in almost every case the negro is believed and the evidence of the owner disregarded.” Schirmer objected to the presence of black troops outside Charleston. A month later the black troops had been replaced with whites, and he remarked, “Our Political situation if any thing is rather better, the Black troops have been sent away and we now have a Company of Whites.”

African-American political ascendancy disturbed many German-American elites, especially when it involved German Republican supporters. Most German immigrants in Charleston had not yet become politically active and African-Americans had little to fear from them. On March 22, 1867, Schirmer revealed that a mass meeting of freedmen took place at Military Hall and that a German immigrant helped organize the event. Schirmer wrote, “The only two men of White color of any prominence that allowed their name to be published was H Judge Moore as Chairman and J. P. M. Epping our Estimable and worthy US Marshall as One of the Committee of Whites Streaked and Yellow. Their whole proceedings are published in this mornings papers and if any wishes to feel mortified, degraded and depressed let him read it.”
A few days later, Schirmer wrote, “Mass Meeting of ‘Niggers’ on Citadel Green this afternoon as usual. H Judge Moore was Chairman. Speeches were made by J. P. M. Epping our US Marshall and a lot of others, at dark some of them attempted to take possession of a street car, and the Military & Police were called into requisition, at night a Torch Light Procession, which was kept up till near morning. Oh! Tempora Oh! Mores.”46 On May 8, 1868, the delegates to the Republican Convention met in Charleston. They appointed a “committee on permanent organization” to help form the Union Republican Party. The officers included only two white men and included J. P. M. Epping, a German and citizen of Charleston.47

In 1867, Francis Warrington Dawson complained to his father about African-American political success. He wrote, “All the power is being thrown into the hands of the negroes, and by this winter there is every probability that this State, which has hitherto been governed by the most cultivated men in America, will be in the hands of the blacks. We expect [a] negro Governor, negro legislature, and negro mayor and aldermen, and nothing can save us but a complete revolution of feeling in the North.” Dawson objected to black militancy when he wrote, “The negroes are very much inclined to be insolent, and no wonder. Two years ago they were slaves—no they are politically higher than men who were not only their masters but who had had for a century in their families the leading positions of their country. George Washington if he now lived would be less than a negro; and General Lee has less political power at the polls than the negro boy who blacked his boots. It is a sad jumble.”48

Black political ascendancy often involved a more equitable distribution of government appointments, including the police force where Germans also served. On July 22, 1870, Schirmer divulged, “Murder last evening was Row in King Street near Burns lane between some US Soldiers and the Police when one of the Black Police was mortally wounded and the other shot in the leg. ‘Martin’ the man killed was buried with Military Honors accompanied by some of the white officials as mourners on the afternoon of 23.”49 There were many other instances of violent confrontations between white soldiers and African-American police, and sometimes black militia and white rifle clubs.

In 1871, large-scale violence between Germans and blacks occurred for the first time. German political activity on behalf of the conservative party in the city stimulated black discontent with German middle-class shopkeepers. African-American militancy against German immigrants disturbed Schirmer. On July 31, 1871, Schirmer wrote, “Torch Light. A Procession to night of Negro Men, Women and boys marched through the streets in a most boisterous manner, demolishing more or less many Stores belonging to Germans, throwing Missiles into Private Houses and acting most shamefully.”50

In August 1871, yellow fever spread throughout the city and it killed many people, but especially German immigrants. Jacob Schirmer noted the appearance of the fever at mid-month, and the fever actually helped quell African-American attacks on Germans. “Yellow Fever. The town is full of rumors to day. A German named ‘Deitz’ living with Mr. Clampen in Market Stret died last night, and it is said a confirmed case. Rumor says an Irish girl also died in Beaufain Street and a Colored woman in Duncan street,” Schirmer wrote.51 Two weeks later Schirmer revealed, “Yellow Fever The Board of Health comes out in the Papers to day and announced its appearance, that the first case occurred on 27 last. That there has been up to this time 35 cases and 9 deaths. It has caused a general stampede and the business prospects of the city killed. The past few days, all the Steam Engines have been engaged in taking the water from all the cellars and lots.”52 In October 1871, Schirmer stated, “The Past month has been warm, the fever still hangs on and a great deal of sickness in the City. Scarcely a family has escaped with some
species of fever and with Strangers was generally fatal, and particularly so among the Gemans, a large number have died, and at the close of the month it appears to be increasing and especially in the upper wards." On November 13, 1871, Schirmer noted that the fever had subsided, probably due to winter weather. “Yellow Fever now appears to be expiring. We have kept printed copies of the weekly reports (filed away back of this book) which makes comparisons with former years. It has been generally very severe and fatal, particularly with the Germans,” he wrote.

Domestic Servants

African-American women often worked as domestic servants for white families, including Germans. In June 1869, Eliza Grant had a disagreement with her employer Eliza Westendorf, a native South Carolinian. “[A]fter abusing her violently for some time, and collecting a crowd of idle negroes in the vicinity,” Eliza Westendorf ordered Grant to leave her house. Grant refused and Westendorf attempted to force her out through the front gate. Grant defended herself and struck Westendorf in the chest. A white man had Grant arrested but the mayor refused to charge her for her role in the fight. Unfortunately, a criminal prosecutor indicted her for assault and battery and sent her to jail.

German-Americans typically hired German women as domestics, but they sometimes employed blacks and Irish immigrants. On May 19, 1866 Schirmer revealed, “today from advertising, a specimen of no small stature of Irish humanity appeared to make a bargain with us as cook and washer, her name Ellen from engaging we find that she left her former employer because there was too much temper exhibition by her on trivial accusations, but however we concluded to give her a trial, what is to be the results is yet to be realized.” On August 20, Ellen decided to find work elsewhere. Schirmer wrote the “Irish woman…took her departure being with us two months. We parted friendly, she was a tolerable fair cook and washer, but none of the most cleanly, considerably of a street walker and no small share of temper. Rumor says that she has determined to change her situation, and as it was not convenient for suitor to visit her, she every afternoon and night would visit him.”

On September 21, 1866, Schirmer noted that his servant an African-American women named Mary Ann left this morning “for no particular cause” and “soon as she left an Irish female citizen named Mary Conlin entered our cuisine and commenced her duties. Mary Ann had worked for him for a little over three months. Two months later, Conlin informed Schirmer that “her month was up tomorrow and that she will leave. She finds that she is quite an inexperienced cook and thinks she does not please and has never been accustomed to eat her meals in the kitchen, but with all her objections, she intimated that she would remain if we would pay her $10 per month, instead of $8. We thought it had the appearance of gouging. So we told her that she had better go.” He replaced her temporarily with Mary Ann, the woman who had worked for him until September. A couple of weeks later, Schirmer “made a bargain with an Irish female citizen named Mary Ann Flood who entered immediately upon her duties.” Mary left and intended to find work with another man.

In May 1870, a German wrote to Thomas Jefferson McKie from Riel, Germany, “The best of servant girls never leaves their home without the parent with them and hands to work. I could get plenty for you but of what kind I do not possibly know and you will have plenty of trouble in the first time with those Dutsh people on account of the mood of living and houses.
The[y] would never be contented to live in a log cabin like yours in delapidated circumstances the vitals the[y] will not be satisfied with corn meal and Pork all the time.” He continued, “Tell or write me how much you will give your men servant for horses and house servant girl, and a great objection the[y] have often not the money to get to you.” He planned to leave for the United States in September and requested that McKie send $150 to $200 in gold to Hamburg for their passage. He planned to get families with children because McKie could mold them into obedient servants. He wrote, “to get use to those dull Dutsh not costume to your country and speech you will enjoy it at first and if I ever did know you to use bad language you will condemn the dutsch to the bottom. But I do think they are a little better then those Gentleman and Lady of African decant.”

In 1874, Elizabeth Ford Holmes expressed her disaffection with her Irish domestic servant. She wrote, “The discharging one Emerald [and] procuring another installment, occupies my attention, then Monday night was aroused of my sleep by singular noises, light flashing in the yard, found my Emerald cook [and] washer quite beside herself—knowing nothing she was doing—crazed by a visit to a neighbor, where she had been overtaken by temptation.” “I am so disappointed, she is a very nice cook [and] a good washer—a good work woman, clean, neat in all she does—but she seems mortified [and] to hide her disgrace desires to leave. I learn however from an outsider she is addicted to it [and] very noisy when so [and] won’t take a word from anyone—therefore her repetition of it would keep us in an anxious state [and] it is what I cannot stand,” she continued.

Holmes wrote, “Lila has taken a new Lease of patience [and] perseverance since she has me by her side, I have her to lean on—but we have a great comfort, so far, in a tall strong Irish Margaret, who is very efficient in all work over the house, Carrie’s chamber too [and] never a word of grumble of work too heavy, we are allowed a plenty of water for baths, etc.—I giver her 6.00—Carrie 1.00 so it makes it 7.00—her fee is no more, but the providing a room [and] c., cost me about 10.00 of which I will [and] to hold hereafter, so is not lost—gave her my lumber room, turned the middle room into lumber room—she is up at 5AM regularly [and] if detained downstairs till 10 PM never a word of complaint. Mrs. Clarke of the Broad St. Laundry, washed for me last week very satisfactorily but says not working this week, the Glorious 4th being at hand, so my Margaret says, if I find none by tomorrow, she will go herself [and] find me one.

Some southerners demonstrated a preference for German immigrant domestics. On March 20, 1867, John Tylee asked a favor from a friend, “I want a good smart girl or woman (Germans preferred) as a child nurse and to attend to two bedrooms and a parlour. Such I cannot get here for it seems tho[ugh] everyone thinks like a servant both white and black in Charleston is corrupted and fit for nothing. I have now an Irish girl at $8.00 per month who works well enough but is so dirty and offensive that we are actually afraid to let our baby go to her for fear of taking vermin from her. I am compelled consequently to give her up on the first of April whether I have any one or not. I will be willing to give the same wages though were any one to accept less it will be better for my pocket which I can assure you is not at all overburdened with means.

Holmes expressed her desire to have a German domestic servant. First, she objected to the resistance she faced from her black domestics, writing, “I wish I were as fortunate in cook [and] washer, the Matilda who came to me with Sallie is inefficient in ability and a bad character, that I was glad to have my yard free from Patty, the old standby is cooking [and] ironing for me. I hire a woman who washes for a day each week.” Then she mentioned her affection for Germans. “I am waiting if I can so long, for those Germans that are coming
consigned to Captain Card—I would like a German for a cook—they are a dearly tribe—they are expected in December—and Wilke asked me last night if you would like on he might get one for you—he is to have the 1st selection from the house servants, I told him you were able to pay the wages,” she wrote. I have no doubt you would like it—unless in mean time you meet one up there to do your work—but, I know how difficult it is, to get one interior, to take the place of a servant in a family who are at all refined. The fell too much on a footing and I fear these Germans will want $6 a month at least—Betts want one, but that is the difficulty in the country, are accustomed to give such low wages, you cannot get one from the city to go—Betts offered a Swede here $4—she talked of $8—an educated woman I would like.” Holmes recognized that German immigrants tended to hire German domestics, leaving few for southern families. She concluded “very few Germans are out of service here, unless they are among Germans—we rarely meet with them in our need of white Servants. I am sure I sincerely hope you have been able to retain the cook, or servant.”

In 1868, the Daily Courier included “A Hint to Employers” in which he noted, “The emancipation of our slaves has worked many inconveniences to our people, but none so marked in its personal discomforts as those which flow from the constant changes in our domestics.” The editor suggested, “Day after day we hear of one family tempting the servants of another to leave. Our people can remedy all this inconvenience by a little common sense, mixed and shaken up with considerable good manners.”

German Civil Rights Violations

Beginning in 1869, legislators in South Carolina passed the most extensive civil rights laws in the South. The laws “required equal treatment by all places of public accommodation and any business licensed by municipal, state, or federal authority. The maximum penalty for individual violators ranging from theater owners to railroad conductors was a $1,000 fine and five years in prison, and offending corporations would forfeit their charters.” Foner writes, “Indeed, with the rise of independent black churches and fraternal societies, the establishment of separate schools, and the rapid expansion of black facilities from skating rinks to barrooms, separation, not integration, characterized Reconstruction social relations.”

Many German immigrants faced scrutiny from African-Americans because of civil rights violations that Germans committed against them. In January 1870, Primus Green, a 65 year old African-American filed a complaint with the Magistrate T. J. Mackey. Green claimed that Isaac Schwartz, a Prussian dry goods merchant, assaulted him as he left his store. Green had purchased two pair of shoes for $3.25. As he left the store, Schwartz grabbed him and demanded more money. When he refused, Schwartz punched the sixty-five-year-old Green in the face several times and attempted to take Green’s watch. Mackey issued a warrant for Schwartz’s arrest.

In January 1870, Magistrate T. J. Mackey issued two warrants against Mr. Ford for violation of the Civil Rights that the South Carolina Legislature had approved on February 13, 1869. Ford forced blacks to sit in the balcony and faced charges of race discrimination. Two months later Germans faced similar charges. James Evans charged that Louis Kenake, a German immigrant, with a violation of the civil rights bill. Kenake posted $1,000 bail. The Daily Republican reported that restaurant owners, many of them Germans, had pooled their money and planned to test the constitutionality of the Civil Rights Act. N. Fehrenbach, a German-
American born in Charleston, Martin Meyers, a middle-aged Hanoverian, and A. D. Lorenz, a Prussian grocery clerk, all Germans, faced charges that they violated the Civil Rights Act. In each case the person discriminated against had filed charges with the magistrate. And the Germans paid bails ranging from one to two thousand dollars.\textsuperscript{68} N. Fehrenbach paid a twenty dollar fine for operating a barroom with four billiard tables without a license. That same day, H. H. Fehrenbach and Martin Myers (second time) faced allegations they violated the Civil Rights Act. The both posted $1,000 bail.\textsuperscript{69} A few days later, H. H. Fehrenbach, a young German-American liquor store owner, was arrested for charging two African-Americans $5 for two drinks of whiskey. Fehrenbach claimed he charged whites the same price. The \textit{Daily Republican} joked that Fehrenbach “must imagine himself back in the old Confederate days, when $5 was the usual price for a glass of whiskey.”\textsuperscript{70} Martin Myers and H. Fehrenbach lived in adjacent houses. Not all Germans discriminated against African-Americans. At Stelling’s restaurant the bartender offered Alonzo J. Ransier and other influential blacks free drinks and cigars.\textsuperscript{71}

**Labor Organization**

African-American workers organized to counter labor exploitation in Charleston. I have not found evidence of large-scale conflict between German employers and African-American workers appearing in the newspapers. In February 1870, the \textit{SC Weekly Republican} stated, “We hope that our colored mechanics will not be turned aside from their purpose to organize by the fact that the white mechanics are organized by themselves.” The newspaper hoped Afro-Charlestonians would “set an example of liberality and freedom from prejudice by establishing labor unions open to all men alike, of whatever race or nationality…We hope sincerely that they will organize themselves on the liberal basis, and be ready to cooperate with any and all other unions for the common benefit.” The newspaper editor recommended that the newly-formed Workingmen’s Union No. 1 should work closely with the National Labor Union, a white union.\textsuperscript{72}

In May 1870, the \textit{Southern Celt} wrote, “Before the war, the laboring class politically speaking, were those of the white race, and it is folly to ask whether they enjoyed civil and political equality with the aristocracy. Now a fact has changed this. Another class has entered the field, and the poor laboring class—as a class—are both white and colored. The interests of labor are identical all over the world. Something may prevent the thorough union and organization of the laboring classes among us, as is the case too often elsewhere.” The \textit{Southern Celt} advised workingmen to join the Republican Party because it would “assure them their civil and political equality.”\textsuperscript{73}

The \textit{Weekly Republican} suggested, “we want to see the workingmen more liberal in thought and independent in action. We do yearn to see them exercise the great power they actually possess for their own advancement and advantage. If they did, they would be happier and better, their work would be better done, business would be better. In short, the improvement of mankind improves everything else in society.”\textsuperscript{74}

African-American laborers in Charleston demonstrated a high level of labor activism. On April 26, 1866, the mill-workers at Fred Tupper & Edward Thurston’s mill struck for higher wages and the proprietors fired the entire workforce. They replaced them with white laborers at the old wage rate.\textsuperscript{75} In 1869, longshoremen went on strike and a steamship left for New York to secure white laborers at cheaper wage rates. The Lonshoremen’s Protective Union had
announced they would strike on October 1 if their wages were not increased to $2.50 per day, a reasonable rate. In January 1870, the black mechanics met with members of the Workingmen’s Union and many whites attended. The black mechanics disagreed with the Union’s plan to organize all trades, and instead recommended that workers organize by trade. The Daily Republican hoped that whites and blacks would unite in the labor movement.

In early September 1873, the longshoremen employed at Brown’s Wharf went on strike for better wages—an increase from $1.75 per day to $2.50 per day. Hundreds of strikers assembled on the wharf and threatened injury to any strikebreakers. Many of the “scabs” found refuge on the steamship Georgia to escape harm. When the longshoremen decided to return to work, the proprietor fired them. Two days later, striking longshoremen at Adger’s Wharf armed themselves with clubs, sticks, rocks, and cotton hooks and battled strikebreakers there. Ironically, many of the men had been fired from Brown’s Wharf. The members of the Longshoremen’s Protective Union hoped to organize the workers at all the wharves in Charleston. The mayor met with O. A. Bowen, a shipping merchant and the proprietor of Adger’s Wharf, and soon after Bowen agreed to pay the laborers $2.50 per day.

In September 1873, the mill-workers went on strike and brought the mills to a standstill. The millworkers armed themselves with clubs and threatened potential strikebreakers with violence. At Steinmeyers Mill, the thirty laborers earned from one to two dollars per day. Mr. Steinmeyer told them to quit if they were unwilling to work at their old wages and they walked off the job. The mill shut down. At Hudgin’s Mill, the thirty laborers earned from one dollar to two dollars and fifty cents per day. The mill-workers took control of the mill and attacked white strikebreakers. They showered the offices with brickbats, broke windows, and damaged other portions of the mill. They demanded that everyone earn at least $2.50 per day. The mill closed. At West Point Rice Mills, the fifty laborers and thirty coopers went on strike. The laborers earned one dollar a day and free housing. The coopers earned money by the piece. The superintendent of the mill shut down because he feared the strikers would damage the mill. In all five large mills shut down, and five hundred workers had been sent home or fired. During the evening, the strikers rioted in the vicinity of Hudgins Mill. The white sailors serving on the steamship South Carolina followed the lead of the stevedores and deserted their captain. The sailors complained of ill treatment; they had not eaten for over twenty-four hours. The mayor sent them back to their ship. Upon arriving, the captain put them back to work and eventually fed them after thirty-six hours without food.

The following day, the laborers at Steinmeyser’s Mill returned to the mill, but Steinmeyer paid them their back wages and fired them. The white clerks “put down their pens and lumber measures, and pulled off their coats and went to work in the mill at two dollars and fifty cents per day.” The other mills operated at less than full capacity. That night two hundred strikers, all African-Americans, met to discuss the labor situation. The men decided to accept two dollars per day for year-round work and two dollars and fifty cents for shorter periods.

Rioters attacked the grocery store of F. William Becker, a native South Carolinian. They threw rocks and bricks at his residence and grocery store, destroyed the store windows and showcases, damaged stock, and shouted death threats at Becker. The police arrived but the crowd had already left the scene. The rioters also threatened to destroy property at Reuben Hudgins Mill. Earlier that day, two African-American men had entered Becker’s store and ordered a beer. The fourteen-year-old F. W. Becker Jr. replied that they did not serve beer. One of the men knocked the younger Becker down and attempted to force the father out of the store. The men left but threatened to “clean out the damned shop” that same night. Becker sent for a
policeman who then talked with the two men. They returned after dark with a dozen more men. The group attacked a man for purchasing groceries from Becker and almost beat him to death. The men had armed themselves with clubs and razors. The elder Becker attempted to stop the assault, but they beat him as well. Someone also cut the younger Becker with a razor. The crowd went outside and began to throw brickbats at the store. Becker fired a pistol into the crowd but missed. He managed to shut and lock his door while the crowd outside threatened to kill him. When the policeman arrived, the crowd had already left the area. Becker identified the three men as Isaac Gouldin, Jim Davis, and Baby Holmes. The judge sentenced Baby Holmes to three months in prison for the offense. The criminal court indicted Holmes for “assault with intent to kill.” Holmes had cut F. W. Becker Jr. with a razor. That same evening, a group of twelve strikers went into the grocery store of William F. Sieling, ordered drinks, and walked out. Sieling “very timidly suggested that he had not been paid, and was politely told to go to hell.” Longshoremen continued their tradition of labor activism throughout Reconstruction and into the twentieth century. On January 25, 1875, Schirmer remarked, “Longshoremen This association composed altogether of American Citizens of African descent had a very large procession to day, and addresses delivered at the race course by a Revered M Adams and a Mr. George Rivers Walker.” While German-Americans expressed distaste for labor activism, German employers appear to have treated their employees better than white southerners did.

**Conclusion**

African-Americans and Germans demonstrated a high degree of social interaction. They lived and worked together, married and cohabitated, and even bore children together. This exceptional behavior challenged southern white and African-American social norms. German shopkeepers often drew criticism from their black neighbors. African-Americans probably resented the degree of economic success that German immigrants achieved, and they sometimes reacted militantly. German-Americans exhibited greater tendencies toward racist ideology and civil rights violations against black Charlestonians. African-Americans workers, including domestics, sometimes organized against the German and southern white employers. This led many southerners to prefer German immigrant laborers and domestics to replace African-Americans.

In cities throughout the United States, Germans demonstrated strong tendencies toward sports and recreation, including gymnastics, archery, shooting, picnics, dancing, music, and bowling. In a letter to the editor of the *Daily Republican*, some German citizens complained that the “old ordinance prohibiting the rolling of nine-pins after ‘second bell ringing’ has been called to life again…the most respectable of our citizens frequent these bowling alleys for healthy exercise and recreation, and in our recollection no nine-pin alley has ever been reported as a nuisance…Why, then, deprive men who do not leave their office or counter until eight or nine o’clock at night, and sometime later, of a few hours of healthy recreation and amusement? There are places in this city where almost every night music, dancing, and sometimes fighting is carried on until near daylight, to the intense disgust of all neighbors; but such places, for some reason, are never or seldom disturbed.” On the surface, this looks like a nativist measure similar to ones enacted in places where Germans settled. Yet, only a few months earlier, German immigrants held a *Schutzenfest* that many native Charlestonians attended. The festival only
became more popular throughout Reconstruction. The popularity of the festival decreased as the German immigrant population decreased over time and gradually assimilated in southern society. Germans in Charleston had faced similar nativist laws during the antebellum period. In 1857, during a period of Know Nothing Party activity, the Charleston city government passed a Sunday law against the sale of alcohol, and any policeman who reported a violation earned half of the fifty-dollar fine. This led to some police corruption.\(^{87}\)

**Notes Chapter Two**


5 Graham Hodges, “‘Desirable Companions and Lovers,’ Irish and African Americans in the Sixth Ward, 1830-1870” appearing in The New York Irish edited by Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 107, 109, 112, 113. Hodge focuses on New York City’s Sixth Ward and its infamous Five Points neighborhood. He states, “In a neighborhood where shared experiences surmounted racial differences and people were identified more by work than ethnicity, blacks and Irish brushed regularly against each other.”

6 Laura Edwards, 6.

7 1860 Manuscript Federal Census, 1861 Charleston Census.

8 1870 Manuscript Federal Census. The census identifies both “mulatto” and “black” persons living with and even marrying Germans. Blase had 1,900 dollars in property but no occupation was listed in the census.

9 1880 Manuscript Federal Census.

10 1860 Manuscript Federal Census

11 1870 Manuscript Federal Census.
12 1880 Manuscript Federal Census.
13 United States Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of the United States (1880), 388-89.
14 1870 Manuscript Federal Census; United States Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of the United States (1880), 539.
15 Edwards, 14-18, 107-144, 198-200.
16 1870 Manuscript Federal Census. The “mulatto” designation proves problematic and necessitates further investigation.
17 1880 Manuscript Federal Census.
18 Jacob Schirmer Diary, November 1867, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston; Charleston Courier, 11 November 1867 and 13 November 1867.
19 In his diary, Jacob Schirmer identifies the Finck couple as Germans. The 1860 Manuscript Federal Census identifies them as “European.”
20 Wilmington Journal, 12 November 1867. The author titled the article, “A white woman absconds with her husband’s property—she is accompanied in her flight by a swarthy lothario and his offspring” and determined Augusta was “a fine looking woman” and Overton was “quite genteel in appearance.”
21 Charleston Daily News, 11 November 1867; Charleston Daily News, 13 November 1867; 1870 Federal Manuscript Census; 1880 Federal Manuscript Census. The paper determined that Overton had run away with a white man’s wife and “The finale is to take place in Wilmington, but it is not known if it will be conducted according to old established rules, however, the wife might be allowed to go with her sooty friend as the matrimonial market can hardly furnish worse wares.” In addition, the paper reported the “guilty parties only await the action of the injured husband.” Both the Deutsche Zeitung and Charleston Mercury declined to mention the story in their papers.
22 Martha Hodes, White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth-Century South (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).
23 Hodge, 119-120. Hodge describes an incident in which a couple of blacks attempted to rob a grocer, but he does not attempt to explain the conflict further.
24 Williamson, 174.
25 Charleston Daily Courier, 24 July 1865. German storekeepers are discussed at length in Chapter Three.
26 Charleston Daily Courier, 2 August 1865.
27 Charleston Daily Courier, 5 April 1866.
28 Daily Republican, 18 February 1871.
29 Daily Republican, 23 January 1871, 25 January 1871.
30 Daily Republican, 18 February 1871. The 1870 Federal Manuscript Census describes Schroder as a 21 year old “broker’s clerk.”
31 Daily Courier, 10 January 1868.
32 Daily Courier, 13 February 1871.

33 Charleston Daily Courier, 9 June 1871.

34 Charleston Daily Courier, 12 June 1871.

35 Charleston Daily Courier, 23 June 1871.

36 Charleston Daily Courier, 5 July 1871.

37 Daily Republican, 29 September 1869; Charleston Daily Courier, 9 January 1871; 1870 Federal Manuscript Census; Court of General Sessions Abstract, South Carolina State Archives, Columbia, SC.


39 Foner, 41.

40 1870 Federal Manuscript Census. Memminger, an attorney, had owned real estate valued at $20,000 and personal property worth $100,000. Memminger hired black domestic servants.

41 Christopher Memminger to Andrew Johnson, 4 September 1865, Christopher Memminger Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina.


43 Jacob Schirmer Diary, “Our Domestic Trials with Freedmen and Others,” South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston.

44 Jacob Schirmer Diary, July and August 1865.

45 Schirmer Diary, 22 March 1867.

46 Schirmer Diary, 27 March 1867.

47 The Christian Recorder, 18 May 1867.

48 F. W. Dawson to father, 2 September 1867, F. W. Dawson Papers, Special Collections, Duke University Library, Durham.

49 Jacob Schirmer Diary, 22 July 1870.

50 Jacob Schirmer Diary, 31 July 1871. A more thorough discussion of this riot appears in Chapter Seven.

51 Jacob Schirmer Diary, 17 August 1871.

52 Jacob Schirmer Diary, 26 August 1871.

53 Jacob Schirmer Diary, October 1871.

54 Jacob Schirmer Diary, 13 November 1871.
In 1870, Westendorf had hired seventy-year old Flora Deas as her live-in domestic servant.


Unknown Author to Thomas Jefferson McKie, 2 May 1870, South Caroliniana Library.

Holmes to Sydney P. Holmes, 29 July 1874, Holmes Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

Eliza Ford Holmes to Henry Holmes, 29 June 1874, Holmes Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

John Tylee Letter Book, 20 March 1867, South Caroliniana Library.

Eliza Ford Holmes to Henry Holmes, 29 June 1874, Holmes Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

Daily Courier, 29 July 1868.

Foner, 317-372.

Daily Republican, 14 January 1870; 1870 Federal Manuscript Census.

Daily Republican, 10 January 1870.

Daily Republican, 26 March 1870.

Daily Republican, 28 March 1870. The 1870 Manuscript Federal Census shows “Otto Lorenz.”

Daily Republican, 29 March 1870.

Daily Republican, 2 April 1870.

Daily Republican, 30 March 1870. On one occasion, some white patrons charged that Ransier and several politicians had become riotous at Stelling’s. Ransier vehemently denied the allegations in the newspaper.

South Carolina Weekly Republican, 5 February 1870.

Weekly Republican, 14 May 1870.

Weekly Republican, 25 June 1870.

Charleston Daily Courier, 2 September 1873.

Daily Republican, 2 October 1869, 1 October 1869.


Charleston News and Courier, 2 September 1873; 4 September 1873, 5 September 1873.

Charleston News and Courier, 10 September 1873.

Charleston News and Courier, 10 September 1873.

Charleston News and Courier, 11 September 1873.
82 Charleston News and Courier, 10 September 1873, 11 September 1873.

83 Charleston County Court of General Sessions, Indictments, L10153, Box 20, No. 3144, South Carolina State Archives, Columbia, South Carolina.

84 Charleston News and Courier, 11 September 1873.

85 Jacob Schirmer Diary, 25 January 1871.

86 Daily Republican, 17 September 1869.

87 Thomas Petigru Lesesne, History of Charleston County South Carolina: Narrative and Biographical (Charleston: A. H. Cawston, 1931), 85.
CHAPTER 3
BUSINESS, RACE, AND ETHNICITY IN CHARLESTON

German immigrants had considerable influence within Charleston’s business community following the Civil War. In 1860, Germans occupied various commercial positions while southern whites aspired to slaveholding and the planter class. Irish immigrants also owned businesses but to a lesser extent. During the Civil War, many Germans businesses took advantage of wartime demand and raised substantial capital more than white Charlestonians did. Following the Civil War, these same Germans used their capital to improve their businesses, establish new ventures, and purchase real estate and even plantations. African-Americans faced numerous restrictions to owning businesses. They mainly relied on German immigrants for daily necessities. Germans, and some Irish, supplied goods to southern whites and African-Americans, sometimes dealing with the latter exclusively.

The onslaught of the Civil War devastated Charleston’s economy, and Charlestonians faced great difficulties in realizing their antebellum business success. Historian Don H. Doyle revealed that Charleston’s economy failed to develop at a rate competitive with other southern cities such as Atlanta and Nashville. I have chosen to focus on the role of race and ethnicity in Charleston’s postwar economic development. The over-arching theme of this chapter is the significant degree of interaction between German immigrants and African-Americans, and to a lesser degree between Irish and African-Americans.1 During Reconstruction, Germans influenced the business community as hostility to merchants grew. Certainly, Germans were well represented in the commercial trades in cities throughout the United States.2 The Irish, too, operated small retail establishments.3 Germans dominated certain businesses, especially the retail grocery trade, when few others had the capital to invest in such pursuits. While many German businessmen supplied southern white and African-American consumer demand, their business pursuits were not widely respected in the South. Irish immigrants participated in the retail trades, but they never achieved the same level of success. Thus, the Germans offered the greatest business competition for native-born Charlestonians. Southern whites may have resented the wealth and influence successful German merchants achieved.

German business success eventually led to conflict with less affluent southerners, Irish immigrants, and African-Americans. In Charleston, Germans formed their own banks and created an extensive, self-sufficient business network that was integrated both horizontally and vertically. Southerners resented the German merchant class mainly because southerners had less access to credit. Moreover, the Germans often charged high prices and refused to sell merchandise on credit, instead, conducting a cash-only trade. During Reconstruction, Germans also operated numerous businesses that catered to African-Americans, and the latter ethnic group often disapproved of German business practices, sometimes violently. Moreover, German
businessmen employed African-Americans and benefited from their labor. In the 1870s, southerners, Irish immigrants, and blacks supported political parties in opposition to German-dominated ones.4

In his study of New South business development, Don H. Doyle recognizes the role of German immigrants in Charleston’s economy. In the 1870s, a few German members entered the Charleston Chamber of Commerce “but the officers, with few exceptions, were still almost all from the old Anglo-Huguenot aristocracy and were typically in the cotton trade.” Doyle reveals that 24 percent of Charleston’s 1880 business elites were foreigners, nearly all of whom were German, including several Jews. Initially, the Germans “worked outside the prestigious cotton and rice trade dominated by old Carolinians. During the postwar era they expanded into wholesale commerce, banking, cotton trading, and most every other part of Charleston’s business life,” Doyle writes. A local Charleston proverb asserted, “the Germans own it, the Irish control it, and the Negroes enjoy it.”5

The defeat of the South “forced a new order upon the South” including a removal of restrictions on urban development. Doyle finds, “The new order of things that came with the war, emancipation, and Reconstruction opened a multitude of opportunities to some business leaders while confronting others with unprecedented hardships.”6 “For many Charleston merchants, the war opened new possibilities for the city to triumph in its long and frustrating quest to regain commercial preeminence,” Doyle contends, “but they remained exclusively committed to Charleston’s role as an entrepot to a plantation economy, and as the soil of South Carolina grew less fertile, so did Charleston’s fortunes.”7 Many German businessmen remained in Charleston during the war or returned immediately afterwards. Sally DeSaussure wrote her sister, Mrs. Joseph Glover, and remarked, “The unexpected shelling of the City has caused great excitement and indignation, and will perhaps help us, in bringing many foreigners in particular to think its now time for them to defend their lives and property, the shelling has caused great alarm, and a general move to the upper part of the City.”8

Following the war, many German merchants fueled Charleston’s economic rebirth. Newspaper editor F. W. Dawson informed his father that, “Our expenses, unlike those g merchants, cannot be reduced no matter how dull trade may be, hence we are losing money heavily every week and shall continue to do so until October.”9 Charlestonians recognized the role of German businessmen in reviving Charleston’s economy following the Civil War. Friedrich Ratzel, a German journalist, wrote, “I have many times heard the Germans praised for being the first ones after the war to get to work energetically and in a short time to become economically established again.” Ratzel treated the German community in Charleston as a monolithic ethnic entity and emphasized its economic influence. He believed German political apathy allowed for greater attention to business and ignored the presence of political and class divisions among the German immigrant community.10

Many German stores prospered during the Civil War, as they and commercial enterprises continued to operate and assist with badly needed supplies. In the aftermath of the war, German merchants faced scrutiny for selling goods at high prices.11 In March 1865, Colonel S. L. Woodford and United States Army officials instituted several military orders aimed at controlling Charleston’s merchant population, including the sale of liquor.12 Shortly thereafter, several merchants, including Germans, faced charges of selling liquor without a license.13

By 1870, Germans almost dominated the merchant trade in Charleston. German immigrants made up only eight percent of the population but owned 48.5 percent of the businesses. Southerners’ share of the merchant economy declined following the war, but it soon
rebounced. Surprisingly, Irish representation in the merchant occupations declined between 1860 and 1880. African-Americans had almost no representation in the merchant occupations (see table 3.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>South</th>
<th>Other US</th>
<th>Ireland</th>
<th>Other Foreign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: SPSS database of 1860, 1870, and 1880 Federal Manuscript Censuses

The African-American community lacked an established elite business class of bankers and merchants, and whites restricted African-American access to white-collar occupations. “At the apex of the urban community stood those few blacks able to escape manual labor for entrepreneurial occupations,” Foner writes. African-American businessmen typically owned small businesses grocery stores, restaurants, funeral parlors, and boarding houses “devoid of economic significance” and most of them closed after one or two years. Historian Juliet E. K. Walker argues, “While southern whites continued to resent and resist independent black economic initiative and activity, they had no alternative but to rely on blacks, who constituted one-third of the South’s population, to provide the essential goods and services needed for the reconstruction and redevelopment of the region.” But only a small minority of African-Americans owned bars, barbershops, artisan workshops, and worked as independent fishermen, seamstresses, and hucksters. The majority of African-Americans worked as unskilled laborers for their white and German employers.

African-Americans faced tremendous difficulties in establishing businesses in Charleston. In fact, the reporters at R. G. Dun and Company identified only three African-American owned businesses in the City. R. G. Dun and Company employed reporters to provide “measures of capital worth, cash flows, and other quantifiable data. Dun provided his customers with statistics of business failures, economic conditions, and other information that he felt would enable them to make more rational decisions on credit transactions.” An investigation of these three businesses reveals that African-Americans faced severe credit restrictions and fervid racism from southern whites.

In March 1870, George E. Johnson, an African-American, owned and operated a bar and restaurant. He did a fair cash business, but the Dun agent recommended that Johnson pay cash because he could get all the goods he needed in Charleston. In September 1872, the Dun representative reported that Johnson had sold his business. The credit restrictions surely limited his ability to compete with other businesses. Whites deeply resented African-American entrepreneurial spirit and refused to support their businesses.

In 1878, the black longshoremen opened a cooperative store that primarily supplied members of their union. The business faced tremendous difficulties in obtaining credit because, the Dun agent judged, the business had “no responsibility” and “doubtful management.” He repeatedly recommended the “semi political organization” not receive any credit, and
wholesale grocers declined to supply the cooperative. Yet, the business flourished and increased its capital worth. It continued to operate until 1882, and did obtain limited credit lines in the early 1880s.18

In the early 1850s, F. H. Mark, a mulatto barber, opened a barbershop in the Charleston Hotel. By the end of the Civil War, Mark had earned a reputation as the best barber in the city, and he owned real estate and personal property worth around $25,000. The Dun agent considered him a reliable businessman and a good credit risk.19 While only these three African-American businesses appear in the R. G. Dun and Company account books, a few more marginalized black businesses probably existed in the city.

In Charleston, African-Americans outnumbered whites. The Civil War had wrecked the economic infrastructure. However, instead of African-Americans, German immigrants and some Irish supplied necessary goods and services in the postwar period and throughout Reconstruction. In particular, the Germans dominated the wholesale and retail grocery trade. In 1873, the editor of the Charleston News and Courier considered the wholesale grocery trade one of the “largest and most valuable” to that city’s economy. Approximately fifty wholesale grocers and commission merchants, businessmen who conducted business transactions for others on commission, dominated the trade in Charleston and they supplied the interior towns and provided a great percentage of the groceries to the retail grocers in the city.

Some of the commission houses traded almost exclusively with cotton and agricultural wholesalers and furnished their supplies on credit to the planters. The commission houses generally sold to merchants in the interior towns in the early fall. The construction of new railroad lines had assisted in that endeavor. The economic panic and depression of 1873 forced some merchants out of business, but, in general, the merchant traders continued to profit. They sold the goods to wholesalers on credits of one, two and three months, and the bills matured in November and December. The commission merchants sent the plantation supplies to the cotton traders, and the planters either advanced the money or obtained the provisions on time. They paid their bills when the cotton crop reached the market.

The News and Courier regarded the “jobbing trade,” the buying of groceries from one person and selling them for profit, as “perhaps the heaviest branch of trade in the city.” Several firms employed an “army of commercial travelers” who sold groceries in North and South Carolina, Georgia, Florida and Alabama. These houses dealt very largely in all kinds of groceries and provisions that they bought in the markets of Chicago, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Louisville, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. They obtained bacon and flour from the Western markets; butter, lard and cheese from New York and Baltimore; and mild cured meats from Philadelphia. The commission houses imported coffee and sugar directly from South America and Cuba, and limited quantities of English and Scotch ale and wines from Europe. They purchased the bulk of their imported groceries, including spices and teas, from importers in New York. Some firms participated in a large liquor trade, and they purchased their liquor from Louisville and Baltimore. Moreover, they had recently entered into an extensive trade in domestic wines and liquors, including California wines and brandies.20

Frederick W. Wagener, a native of Hanover, Germany, gained tremendous wealth as one of Charleston’s most successful businessmen. Wagener owned and operated a wholesale grocery before and after the war. The firm began as a grocery and quickly increased in size and influence, including wholesalers in naval stores and cotton. In 1880, Wagener owned real estate and personal property worth nearly $500,000.21 Germans not only operated Charleston’s most successful commission and wholesale grocery and liquor businesses, but they owned profitable
drug stores, bakeries, and retail groceries. Henry Bischoff and Company operated one of the largest wholesale grocery and liquor concerns in Charleston. C. F. Panknin operated the most successful drug houses in Charleston. Alexander Melchers, Jacob Small, the Buckheit brothers, and several others operated successful bakeries in Charleston. The Claussen Brothers operated the largest and most profitable bakery in the city. Numerous Germans operated smaller retail establishments that supplied white clientele. F. W. Becker, G. Bulwinkle, and F. Von Oven owned small retail grocery stores. Alderman William Ufferhardt summarized German business success in Charleston when he asserted, “Our German adopted citizen knows his business. He builds or buys a house, and pays for it, or he hires one and pays the rent the first thing. He or his family eat no meal and wear no clothes until they are paid for. He is the foremost at the tax offices and does not rest until he has his tax receipts in his pocket.” Germans had quickly gained a “middle class” reputation throughout the United States.

Few Irish immigrants became successful professionals. John S. Ryan owned a brokerage and auction house. Prior to the war, Ryan owned and traded slaves, drawing the scrutiny of southern whites. In 1865, the Dun agent recognized Ryan’s success, but he scoffed, “He lives with a Negress [and] has children by her, and would not advise [credit] as he [would] not apply for any thing in that line except for a [very] large [amount]. In 1869, Ryan served as director of the Savannah Railroad and owned stock and real estate, but the agent considered him “a sharp, shrewd, tricky man” with a bad reputation.

Even before the Civil War, many German grocers catered to an African-American clientele and realized tremendous profits. Historians Richard C. Wade and Claudia Dale Goldin have shown that German grocers undermined the slave system to a significant degree. In the early twentieth century, Daniel E. Huger Smith recalled, “A good deal of money in a small way circulated among the negroes, and the keepers of the smaller grocery shops made a good profit out of this trade. These were chiefly Germans, who in many cases were bold breakers of the law against selling liquor to the blacks.” Huger continued, “These shops were always at corners, and were called “Dutchman corner-shops.” The Dun agent remarked, “There is some uncertainty about this class of trade. They are often caught selling liquors to Negroes in a little back room—the penalty severe.” The Dun agent considered them “a great pain” because they sold liquor to blacks and bought stolen property requisitioned from whites in violation of the law. The corner storeowners had difficulty obtaining credit because the police often shut them down on short notice. In selling liquor to blacks, slave and free, and receiving property requisitioned from whites, Germans drew criticism from their southern neighbors. These small corner stores faced the greatest crunch during the Civil War and many of them failed. But many others survived and continued to supply African-Americans in the postwar era.

During Reconstruction, some German grocers drew tremendous criticism animosity from African-Americans because Germans refused to extend them credit. This often occurred in their dealings with poor whites as well. Fred Klintworth earned fine profits selling groceries to African-Americans, but the Dun agent considered his standing fair and credit weak. Klintworth extended credit to African-Americans, but only after they attacked him and nearly destroyed his store in 1871. During the municipal election riot of 1871, African-Americans targeted numerous German shopkeepers, destroyed some of their shops, and physically assaulted several Germans. J. N. Kornahrens operated a small grocery and barroom, and he refused to extend credit to black Charlestonians. In 1870, Wallace Blanding, an African-American, sent his daughter into Kornahrens store to purchase food on credit. Kornahrens refused and Wallace
argued with him. Several weeks later the man returned to the store, and a deadly fight ensued between a white patron and Blanding.  

Germans often lived in apartments above their stores, and they took in boarders to supplement their income. Henry Finck ran a corner grocery, and his business faltered after the war. He was arrested on at least two occasions for receiving stolen property and operating without a license. In November 1867, his wife Augusta ran away with William Overton, an African-American wheelwright, who had been boarding in the Finck household for several months. Importantly, the Charleston press identified both Germans as “whites” and completely ignored their German ethnicity. During Reconstruction, southerners identified German and Irish immigrants as whites, rather than Germans or Irish, for political, economic, and social reasons.

Numerous successful German grocers made their fortunes catering to African-Americans and they enjoyed good business reputations and lines of credit. C. Claussen earned a reputation as an industrious grocer of good character even though he sold exclusively to blacks, especially liquor. He received better ratings from R. G. Dun than other groceries that dealt with African-Americans, certainly because his business prospered. P. C. Schroeder ran a profitable corner grocery and sold primarily to African-Americans and lower class whites. C. Momeier located his combination grocery and liquor store in a “very low locality,” and he sold mainly to blacks. H. Desebnock operated a successful cash liquor and grocery trade with African-Americans, enjoyed good credit, and paid his bills promptly.

Several Irish immigrants participated in this branch of trade, but they never achieved much success. James Barry, a twenty-two-year-old Irish immigrant with no managerial experience, opened a retail grocery in September 1866. Patrick Cullman, a fifty-year-old Irish immigrant, operated a small dry goods store and sold cheap goods primarily to blacks for cash. He had done business in Charleston for many years but the business had not prospered. Cullman did obtain small lines of credit but mainly paid with cash. The Dun agent noted that Cullman did not own property, but he considered him a good credit risk, honest and sober. The few Irish businessmen did not draw much criticism from southerners and African-Americans.

German Jews, in cities like Charleston, were fully integrated within the German communities. Other than following their own religious observances, they did not differ from the German Lutheran and Roman Catholic immigrants. M. Wetherhorn and Zacharia rented two stores where they made and sold cheap clothing to an African-Americans. Several German Jews operated dry goods stores and sold goods primarily to blacks. Each businessman faced the scrutiny of the Dun agent but eventually earned a small credit line. Jacob Kosminsky ran a small dry goods store and sold almost entirely to African-Americans. In 1869, Kosminsky had some success and kept a small stock valued under $2,000. The agent regarded him an honest man and considered him a fair credit risk for small amounts. In 1874, Kosminsky moved into a larger store at a better location and added to his stock now estimated at around $5,500. Moses Marks owned a small dry good store, and he dealt primarily with blacks. Before the war, Marks worked as a peddler. Gradually, he earned a small line of credit. But in the early 1870s, he had difficulty obtaining credit even though he owned significant property, and instead he bought his goods from New York. H. Brown operated a dry goods store and dealt principally with African-Americans and soldiers. Initially, the Dun agent did not think he was worthy of credit, but Brown paid his debts and eventually earned a fair credit line. J. Wirtheim operated a dry goods store and did a small and profitable business with African-Americans.

Not only did Germans earn money selling to African-Americans, but they benefited from unskilled African-American labor. Germans excelled as skilled artisans. German
cabinetmakers, tailors, gunsmiths, and shoemakers, obtained credit to improve their businesses, something African-Americans found difficult. 46 Irish artisans, especially shoemakers, also obtained credit for their businesses. B. Foley sold shoes, trunks, and clothing for sailors. In 1854, he was 44 years old and single and had already been in business for six years. He did not own any property but kept a “good stock.” The Dun representative considered him honest, industrious, frugal, and a good businessman generally. Foley slowly increased his property and business holdings to around $10,000. In 1860, the Dun agent noted that Foley’s business was doing well, but he was “a rough uneducated Irishman” and sold to “a common class” of customers. In late 1860, the Dun agent revealed that Foley owned two houses and other property, and his business clientele now included some of Charleston’s elite. In 1857, Irishman D. O’Neal and his sons migrated to Charleston from Boston and opened a small retail shoe business. The Dun agent regarded them “clever” and industrious but without money outside the business. D. O’Neal purchased most his goods abroad and manufactured shoes to order. In January 1873, the Dun agent reported that O’Neal and Sons owned two stores, including one wholesale and one retail. The depression had decreased their profits, but they continued to operate. He considered them industrious businessmen and worthy of credit and estimated their total property at around $40,000. 47

Many Germans ran successful bar rooms and billiard halls where they sold cigars, beer, and liquor. 48 John M. Martin ran a successful bar room and boarding house that catered to sailors. In 1859 Martin was about twenty-six years old and kept a boarding house. The Dun agent called him an honest German, and estimated his investment at $1,000. He advised caution in crediting small shops. On January 24, 1860, the agent remarked that Martin conducted a cash business. In 1865, the Martin had increased his investment to around $2,500, and the Dun agent recommended a small credit line. In September 1869, the Dun agent remarked that Martin did business with the lower classes, made small tax returns, and had invested around $1,000. Martin continued to make a modest living into the late 1870s. 49 H. F. Bittersohn and A. Tiefenthal also owned and operated saloons. On April 30, 1875, the Dun agent called Bittersohn “A German of good character steady and industrious commenced business about [fifteen] months ago and appears to be getting along well. And making money slowly. He has very fair local credit for moderate bills. And its said he pays them promptly.” In 1877, at the depths of the depression, the Dun agent noted that Bittersohn owned real estate and property worth around $9,000. On November 26, 1869, the agent believed A. Tiefenthal, a single man aged about thirty-five years, was a very successful saloonkeeper. He did not own real estate, but invested in city stocks and other securities. He leased his store and always paid cash. R. G. Dun regarded him a good credit risk and estimated his worth at around $7,500. In December 1877, the Dun representative divulged that Tiefenthal was a profitable agent for a lager beer brewery. He considered Tiefenthal a “close fellow” that earned money and owned real estate, and he estimated his property worth about $20,000. In December 1878, the Dun agent remarked that Tiefenthal successfully operated three saloons and served as an agent for a popular lager beer brewery. 50 These men earned substantial profits and received good credit lines. John H. Jungbluth operated a lager beer saloon, and he drew criticism from his southern neighbors. 51 The Dun representative regarded Jungbluth a “steady, temperate, and economical” businessman with only fair moral standing, probably because he housed ten “colored” Germans in the building he owned. He slightly improved his credit status in the immediate postwar period, but his business slowly fell apart. 52
Women also operated stores and, at times benefited from the support of their fellow Germans. The majority of German businesswomen were widows, and they never dealt exclusively with African-Americans. The portion of women conducting business in Charleston increased significantly after the war. German women operated businesses at a greater rate than southern whites.

Table 3.2 Merchant Populations in Charleston by Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>94.9</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>82.9</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SPSS database of sample of 1860, 1870, and 1880 Federal Manuscript Censuses.

The Mehrtens business typified the success and transition from male to female ownership. In 1860, Joseph Mehrtens operated a small shoe shop and the Dun agent considered it weak, but he deemed Mehrtens honest and industrious. On November 10, 1865, the agent remarked that Mehrtens had carried on business during the war and owned real estate. The agent noted that his business had improved, and he estimated his business and property worth over $10,000. J. Mehrtens died in March 1868 and his widow continued the business in his name. The Dun agent regarded her “a smart woman” and “likely to succeed.” Mrs. L. Mehrtens operated successfully with a few thousand dollars and a good stock of goods. In January 1871, Mrs. L. Mehrtens had converted the shoe store into a millinery business with the assistance of her sister. Both women were sisters of Frederick W. Wagener, and the Dun agent assumed that he would assist them with their operation. In 1873, Mrs. Von Hadelin joined L. Mehrtens and Company and their “industrious” and “attentive” business had increased its capital to about $5,000. In 1874, they moved into a better store and continued to thrive. By 1878, the Dun agent remarked that with assistance from friends, Mehrtens and Von Hadelin made a good living doing millinery business for their considerable German patronage. In December 1881, he revealed Mehrtens controlled a good trade among a “better class of people.”

Mrs. C. Mauls owned and operated a millinery business before and after the Civil War. In the late 1850s, the “honest and industrious” Mauls conducted a small business. Mauls enjoyed a fair credit evaluation. In December 1859, the Dun agent noted that her husband owned one slave, and she kept a stock of $400. In November 1865, Mauls’ business continued to be successful, and her daughters had joined the business. In April 1868, Mauls still operated the small and marginal business. Mrs. S. C. H. Habers, a widow, operated a successful grocery business. In January 1874, the Dun agent regarded her character and habits good, and estimated her property and business worth at least $10,000. He considered her good for moderate amounts of credit. Her business was doing very well and she paid her bills promptly. Mrs. Julia Haas owned and operated a fancy goods store, selling jewelry, millinery, and other luxury items, above a German grocery. In 1875, the Dun agent noted that Julia Haas had just established her business and he believed she was industrious and had a good character. In July 1876, the Dun agent believed Haas made an acceptable living and considered her a good businesswoman. She
paid her debts and could buy all she wanted in Charleston. Moreover, she kept her expenses low and he estimated her property worth around $3,000. Although Julia Haas was married to a merchant, it appears she supported herself. In the winter of 1873, Levinia S. Witcofsky opened a grocery store that she owned and operated with her husband.

Following the war, a few Irish immigrants operated liquor enterprises. In the late 1860s, a young R. H. McElhose opened a grocery and bar, and the Dun agent noted that he was steady, temperate, had an excellent character, and worthy of limited lines of credit. An industrious and hardworking Patrick Walsh owned a grocery and liquor store worth around $25,000. He had good character, standing and credit. B. Heslin owned a small liquor store and sold to African-Americans. In 1869, the Dun agent did not recommend any credit because Heslin “barely made a living.” One year later, he had accrued some property but the Dun representative objected to his drinking habits. He continued to profit throughout Reconstruction, eventually purchasing his place of business and building significant credit and wealth. By 1881, he owned one of the more profitable liquor stores in the city.

John H. Ostendorf, M. H. Collins, James Brennan, and General W. N. Taft had Republican Party connections. Following his business failure, the Dun agent considered John H. Ostendorf as having few assets and unsafe to credit. In June 1874, Republicans elected Ostendorf to serve as deputy sheriff of Charleston County. The Dun agent still did not recommend any credit for Ostendorf. M. H. Collins, an Irish immigrant and successful drugstore owner, found it difficult to earn a good credit standing. Although Collins operated a successful business, owned real estate, and exhibited good management skills, the Dun agent considered Collins “sharp shrewd tricky,” credit standing “only fair,” and character “unpopular.” The Dun agent remarked Collins’ political views had negatively affected his standing in the community. James Brennan, an Irish immigrant, operated a gristmill and general store. He also managed the Southern Celt, an Irish nationalist newspaper published in Charleston. In 1874, the Dun agent reported Brennan had “made money” out of his Republican Party affiliation. Regardless of his liberal political sentiments, the agent considered him a good and responsible businessman, and perhaps more importantly, recommended him for a moderate line of credit. General William N. Taft, a young white man from Rhode Island, served as general of the black militia of the state and Charleston County auditor. In June 1874, Taft owned a profitable business, but the Dun representative concluded that Taft had poor standing in the community because of his Republican political activities.

**Conclusion**

During Reconstruction, Germans and African-Americans exhibited a high degree of economic interaction in Charleston. German immigrants significantly influenced Charleston’s economy and assisted in rejuvenating business in the City. German economic impact vastly exceeded the proportion of the German immigrant population of Charleston. Irish immigrants also participated in the economic rebirth, but they were far less entrepreneurial than the German immigrants. Southern whites had long resisted the smaller retail and other merchant trades, but they gradually moved into those types of business endeavors. African-Americans found it nearly impossible to obtain credit to own or expand businesses in Charleston. Instead, they depended on German suppliers for their daily necessities, and they often resented high prices and the
refusal of Germans to extend them credit. Moreover, German immigrants employed blacks in their businesses. Black Charlestonians, in turn, used their wages to consume German goods.

Notes Chapter Three

1 In this chapter, I have analyzed countless entries in the R. G. Dun and Company account books located at Harvard University’s Baker library. Don H. Doyle used these records in *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860-1910* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990) to answer questions about economic growth in the post-Civil War South.

2 Bruce Levine, *The Spirit of 1848: German Immigrants, Labor Conflict, and the Coming of the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 52-82. Levine includes an extensive breakdown of the various professional, skilled, and laboring occupations in which Germans served. While he focuses on the antebellum period, Germans continued to occupy similar positions.

3 David T. Gleeson, *The Irish in the South, 1815-1877* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2001), 38-39. Gleeson reveals that a minority of Irish in the South worked as professionals, mainly as druggists, but including physicians, lawyers, and civil engineers.

4 Hartmut Keil, “German Immigrants and African-Americans in Mid-Nineteenth Century America” in *Enemy Images in American History*, Ragnhild Fiebig-von Hase and Ursula Lehmkuhl editors (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1997), 138. Keil hypothesizes that “German cultural and political traditions, relative numerical strength of both groups in specific local settings, the near absence of direct occupational competition coupled with a difference in class status, and specific patterns of spatial proximity in the neighborhoods molded social relations in ways that tended to alleviate racial tensions.”

5 Don Doyle, 165, 91, 113, 114.

6 Doyle, 21.

7 Doyle, 7-8, 21, 53.

8 Sally DeSaussure to Mrs. Joseph Glover, 1863, DeSaussure Family Papers, Duke Special Collections.

9 F. W. Dawson to Father, 26 August 1868, F. W. Dawson Papers, Duke Special Collections. The g probably abbreviates “grocery” or “German.”

10 Friedrich Ratzel, *Sketches of Urban and Cultural Life in North America* Translated and edited by Steward A. Stehin (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988): 161, 162. A German journalist, born in Karlsruhe Germany on August 30, 1844, Ratzel traveled to North America in August 1873 and remained until 1874. The Kolnische Zeitung financed his work, introduction, xiii, xiv, xv. Ratzel believed that German business success promoted “closer cohesiveness within the community than is possible particularly in places, like the Northeastern states, where the lower-class Germans overlap with the proletariat, while the upper classes belong to a rather cosmopolitan moneyed aristocracy. Here we have predominantly middle-class people, who have already succeeded or who are on the way to making their ‘mark in life’; a few very rich, who ‘represent’ the German community to the outside world, and very few one could call poor.” Ratzel observed the “German community in Charleston, as opposed to many other groups, as noted for the harmony that exists within it and the excellent accomplishments for which its cohesiveness has for years qualified it. It consists of about three thousand people, forming one-fourteenth of the population, although its taxes amount to more than one-sixth of the city’s total tax income. Once can say that our countrymen are generally pretty well off here.”

11 *Charleston Daily Courier*, 11 March 1865. The editor of the *Daily Courier* informed his readership, “Our citizens will be glad to learn that Colonel Woodford has already made an example of a number of individual bakers and others, charged with demanding extortionate prices for the necessaries of life, and who would afflict additional distress on the poor and destitute by their heartless and avaricious exactions.” A “widowed lady” paid twenty-five
cents for a loaf of bread from H. Soubeyroux, a grocer. The woman reported the high price to Captain Haviland, the Post Treasurer. Colonel Woodford authorized Captain Haviland to fine the guilty parties involved. Mr. H. Soubeyroux claimed he had purchased the bread for twenty-cents a loaf and sold for twenty-five cents. Regardless, Captain Haviland considered him an accessory and fined him $10. Mr. Alexander Melchers, a German baker, sold the bread to Soubeyroux, but he claimed to have purchased the flour from P. Mulkai for $40 per barrel. Captain Haviland fined Melchers $10. P. Mulkai denied having charged or received the flour at that price, but he failed to convince Haviland, and he fined Mulkai $25. The Daily Courier asserted, “It is hoped these examples will be sufficient warning to others similarly disposed to set aside all claims of justice or humanity;” Charleston Daily Courier, 17 March 1865. The editor of the Daily Courier determined, “Judging from the high scale of prices that some of our merchants and other business men have adopted, they have a poor faculty of discriminating between the value of the national currency and the worthlessness of the rebel.” The Confederate currency had lost its value and many people did not have any money. The editor continued, “Viewing it in that light, no necessity exists whatever for charging such exorbitant prices for articles on sale. To demand twice to thrice as much as the goods will bring in New York is an imposition on the public.

12 Charleston Daily Courier, 20 March 1865, 22 March 1865. First, Lieutenant James F. Haviland of the 127th New York Volunteers, and Acting Assistant Inspector General, became of the Post Treasurer. Second, the order revoked all existing permits to trade or any kind of business. Beginning April 1, no person could conduct any kind of business until they had taken the Oath of Allegiance to the United States and obtained a License from the Post Commandant. Third, businessmen need to submit an application in writing to Lieutenant Haviland for permission to continue their business. Fourth, the order imposed the following license fees: retail goods and wares, $5; wholesale goods and wares, $100; hotel and theatre, $100; restaurant, $25; billiard saloon, $10 for each table; license to drive carriages and carts, $2 for each vehicle. Fifth, each businessman paid a 1 percent tax on monthly sales. Sixth, the order called for imprisonment and confiscation of property for any evasion or attempted evasion of the order. Finally, the proceeds from the fees and taxes would defray the expenses of lighting and cleaning the streets and towards the civil expenditures of governing the Post.

13 Charleston Daily Courier, 27 June 1865. In the Provost Court, Judge and Captain H. James Weston issued the following sentences. The following cases have recently been disposed of in the above Court. Charles Klemm, a grocer on East Bay, sold liquor on Sunday and paid a $15 fine. A man named Bohn, a worker on the steamer Alhambro, distributed liquor without a license and received a $100 fine. Louis Barbot sold liquor to soldiers on King Street, in full view of the Upper Guard House, and he was fined $100. Catherine Buck sold liquor without a license and paid a $50 fine.

14 Foner, 396-399.


20 Charleston News and Courier, 16 September 1873. The gross sales for the year ending August 31, 1873, reached about $12,000,000.


23 Charleston News and Courier, 24 September 1880.


26 Richard C. Wade, Slavery in the Cities: The South 1820-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964): 87, 155-157, 252-255; and Claudia Dale Goldin, Urban Slavery in the American South, 1820-1860 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976): 32, 47-48. Charleston passed legislation to combat the problem but the laws were rarely enforced. Wade stated that in the 1850s, “there arose a white element whose influence, like the presence of free blacks, weaken[ed] the system of restraints and exclusions on which slavery rested.” Wade determined that “grog shops” posed three main problems for slaveholders. First, grocers accepted merchandise in exchange for liquor and that encouraged slaves to steal from their masters. Second, drunkenness and alcoholism led to inefficient labor production. Third, it broke down the barriers between black and white, slave and free.


33 A discussion of the election riot of 1871 appears in chapter seven.

34 Charleston Court of General Sessions, Indictments No. 8, 1870, Box 18, South Carolina State Archives, Columbia, South Carolina.


36 In the Jacob Schirmer Diary, Jacob Schirmer identifies the Finck couple as Germans. The 1860 Manuscript Federal Census identifies them as “European.” In the “shocking case,” the author of the article merely referred to Augusta Finck as “the wife of a white grocer” and Henry Finck as “grocer.”


Throughout the 1870s, Cullman continued to slowly increase his property holdings and business capital. By 1876, he owned around $5,000 in real estate and the business.

The fifty-year-old Wetherhorn directed the business, and ran the shop where the firm made “cheap clothing” for African Americans. In 1858, Zacharia died and Wetterhorn went bankrupt in 1868.

Steinmeyer employed African-American laborers. In another recorded instance of Germans employing African-Americans, C. D Ahrens hired Henry Richardson, a plastering contractor, to work on his new building.
The 1870 Manuscript Federal Census shows that Taft served as a police lieutenant in Charleston.
CHAPTER 4

THE GERMAN SCHUTZENFEST: RACE AND ETHNICITY AT THE “PEOPLE’S FESTIVAL”

Every racial and ethnic group includes festivals as part of their customs and culture. The Italians celebrate St. Anthony’s Day. The Irish celebrate St. Patrick’s Day. Mexicans celebrate their Independence Day on the 16th of September each year. African-Americans celebrate Emancipation Day and Independence Day. The role of these festivals is important in understanding ethnic social history for many groups.

Following the Civil War, Charlestonians of every race and ethnicity mingled at the annual German Schutzenfest, a fair and shooting competition. The German business elite organized the festival as a business venture and a platform for social and cultural expression. In 1868, the spring shooting festivals resumed for the first time since the beginning of the Civil War and attracted thousands of Charlestonians. In 1871, the Schutzenfest opened with an elaborate military parade through the main streets of the City. By 1876, the Courier editor remarked “the great festival has come to be considered as the event of the spring time by a very large portion of the people of Charleston. It is in fact to Charleston what the Mardi Gras is to New Orleans, May Day to Savannah, New Year’s Day to New York, or the Centennial to Philadelphia.”

The Schutzenfest, as the largest social activity in Reconstruction Charleston, represented an ideal venue for the interaction of race, ethnicity, class, and gender relations. Initially, the Germans opened the festival to the entire community including African-Americans who expressed their newly acquired freedom and attended the festival. Women, African-Americans and the laboring classes renegotiated prevailing cultural norms at the festival. Gradually, however, the Germans emulated the dominant southern white cultural norms and restricted the lists of invitation. They did not offer the African-American militia an opportunity to participate in the shooting competition. Thus, the Germans demonstrated that they and southern whites had similar elite status. Southern whites enjoyed the festival for that reason. African-Americans participated but they could have played a greater role.

The Deutsche Schutzengesellschaft (German Rifle Club) and their annual Schutzenfest provides perhaps the best example for the level of German social and cultural influence in Charleston during Reconstruction. The Schutzenfest provided upper class Germans with an opportunity to demonstrate their economic influence and their willingness to assimilate and become southern whites. At the same time, the festival allowed the Germans of all classes to continue their traditional social activities and customs. In addition, the Schutzenfest provided an excellent opportunity for all ethnic Charlestonians to participate in various forms of recreation, something badly needed to escape post-bellum political and economic problems.

Historians have neglected the role the German Rifle Club and its annual Schutzenfest played in Reconstruction Charleston. In his classic study After Slavery, Joel Williamson...
emphasizes the role the white rifle clubs played in the restoration of white supremacy.² In perhaps the best explanation to date, Stephen Kantrowitz discusses the white rifle clubs and their influence in South Carolina politics and society during the 1870s and especially during the 1876 presidential election campaign.³

German Motivations for the Schutzenfest

Four factors motivated the German community and its leaders to hold the annual Schutzenfest. First, the sizeable German immigrant community in Charleston maintained a rich cultural tradition that included varied recreational activities. By sustaining these cultural inheritances, Germans maintained their ethnic identity. The Schutzenfest originated in Germany and served as an opportunity for Germans to retain and demonstrate their cultural traditions. Undoubtedly, the Schutzenfest and its accompanying recreational activities was a significant component of German culture.⁴ Second, German businessmen viewed the festival as a money making opportunity and approached it much like they would any other business venture. Third, Germans in Charleston recognized the necessity of a Volkfest (People’s Festival) in escaping the misery and hardship that had befallen them since the Civil War began in 1861 and continued in the post-bellum era. Finally, elite Germans viewed the Schutzenfest as a political and military exercise that demonstrated their preparedness for military conflict, most likely between Democrats and Republicans. Of these, however, business and social motivations predominated for the Germans, especially during the early part of Reconstruction.

During Reconstruction, German business leaders organized the Schutzenfest as a business venture and to celebrate their influence in Charleston’s economy and society. In May 1868, the Charleston Germans held their first three-day-long Schutzenfest since 1860. The editor of the Deutsche Zeitung, Alexander Melchers, stated that the purpose of the festival was “to indulge in the achievement of the Germans not long living here.” He hoped that no future interruptions would occur and that the festival would become “brighter and more profitable with every year.”⁵ Prominent German businessmen sold various goods from booths located on the Schutzenplatz grounds. This proved an effective way to market their wares and services to a large segment of the community.

Charlestonians recognized the critical role the Germans played in their economy and society. The editor of the Daily Courier pointed out the combined business and recreational purpose of the Schutzenfest when he ascertained the Germans “devote themselves assiduously to their business, and yet do not deprive themselves of recreation and enjoyment, who enter into the performance of whatever they find to do, be it pleasure or business, with a most remarkable zest and perseverance.”⁶ He continued, “Who more attentive to his business than the German, who more addicted to the pleasures of life than the German. His time is divided between business and pleasure.”⁷ In another article, the Daily Courier editor asserted, “The occasion is one of much interest. There is no portion of our population which has added more to the thrift, energy and prosperity of the State, than that of our German fellow-citizens. They understand not only the claims of business, but the innocent enjoyments of nature.”⁸ The net profits for the festival, including entrance fees, amusement proceeds, and rent, normally reached over $1,500; and that amount did not include the profits independent businessmen earned.⁹ Business and recreational activity served as primary motivations for the annual festival, but the Schutzenfest represented more than that to Charleston’s German immigrant community.
The Germans perceived the Schutzenfest as an opportunity to contribute positively to Charleston’s post Civil War social condition. Alexander Melchers, editor of the Deutsche Zeitung, recalled that since the last festival “there have been a whirlpool of events. How many problems, how much misery and despair, how much trouble has been caused in many families, how many of our old members participated in our last festival, they want only to go again.” Melchers expressed hope that the German festival would “win a charitable influence on American lives, so it is our push, to be allowed to say, that even our local Germans have no small interest in the reformation of the social condition in their new home.” The German immigrant community took the initiative in drawing Charleston’s community out of its depressed social condition. Immediately, the Germans and their neighbors embraced the renewed social event and it became a popular holiday.

In 1868, Alexander Melchers welcomed the return of the annual Schutzenfest. In addition to editing the premier German language newspaper, Melchers served as the president of the German Rifle Club. In his coverage of the Schutzenfest of 1868, he expressed the desire that Charleston’s population learn to consider it a “welcomed people’s institution, and weave it into the sincere customs of the region.” He hoped that Charlestonians of every ethnicity would attend the event, and Melchers went so far as to compare that goal with that of German unification. Melchers linked the goal of German unification with the reunification of the United States.

Native-born Charlestonians recognized the role of the Germans in improving their social situation. During a speech at the Schutzenfest opening ceremony, Colonel Rutledge, a Confederate veteran, “alluded to the fact that, after the excitement of the war had ended, a gloom had settled upon almost everyone in the land, the Germans of Charleston had been the first to shake off the despondency and institute their amusement season. The American people, he said, knew how to work, but they did not know how to play. The Germans did both, and did them well.” Native whites appreciated the opportunity to participate in public rituals, in this case military exercises, and demonstrate white military, and later political, ascendency.

The annual Schutzenfest showed signs of a military exercise, demonstrating both the willingness and ability of the German Rifle Club to participate in the defense of the white community. While slave patrols predominated during the antebellum period and “scouts” and the Ku-Klux terrorized African-Americans and white Republicans, white rifle clubs followed the Germans’ lead in reestablishing themselves after the war. In his speech to the Schutzen and their guests, James Simons, Jr. emphasized that the purpose of the German Rifle Club and its annual Schutzenfest was “the manly and athletic exercises, which these institutions induce and encourage,” “the instruction in the use of arms so necessary in personal and national defense,” the “harmony” stimulated among the participants, and the “virtue of eminent value in furnishing relaxation and amusement amidst the toils and cares of life, alike innocent and harmonizing.” Simons added, “These Festivals, brought to this continent by the intelligent, industrious and liberty-loving German, have not failed in these valuable results and should stimulate all to join hands in a work which gives joy to labor, strews with garlands of peace upon the paths of war, and scatters genial blessings through the homes of our people.” Simons, therefore, focused on the recreational and martial motivations of the event. He did not, however, discuss a potential enemy or aggressor. The political and social climate might have enabled Simons, a leading Democrat, to verbally attack the Republican Party and its majority African-American constituency. Instead, Simons purposefully ignored political points of contention, probably because many Germans identified with the Republican Party and sympathized with the plight of African-Americans.
Organizing the Annual Schutzenfest

German immigrants held a strong reputation among native-born whites for their organizational prowess. The German Rifle Club leadership demonstrated superb organizational skills in its preparation for the annual Schutzenfest. Early each spring, the members of the German Rifle Club began readying the club’s own Schutzenplatz, the fairgrounds and rifle range, in the suburbs of Charleston. The Club consistently made improvements to the grounds in an effort to make each festival more successful than the last.

Nature, however, did not always cooperate. Spring rains often interfered with the festival. On other occasions, the weather proved warm, dry, and dusty. In 1870, the grounds keeper could not improve Schutzenplatz that appeared in “terrible condition” and “thick clouds of dust” dirtied the visitors’ and their clothing, leaving them nearly blinded. In 1872, dust reappeared as a common complaint along with sand fleas, and Jacob Schirmer, a second-generation German-American, believed it had caused a significant drop in the festival’s attendance. Regardless, the editor of the Daily Courier determined that “hospitality” was a major component of German character.

The German preoccupation with hospitality probably pleased Southerners who traditionally claimed hospitality as a regional custom. In 1870, Captain Melchers addressed the German Rifle Club and their guests, and he emphasized: “Let us not forget that during the festival we have to do everything in our power to satisfy our guests, and make their stay among us as pleasant as possible. The greatest joy for us lies in the fact that our guests feel themselves at home. My friends let us not forget that we are Germans, and that the good name we already possess must, if possible, be heightened.”

The Germans exercised their hospitality and invited Charlestonians, people from throughout the region, and sometimes from distant states. Beginning with the Schutzenfest of 1868, the Germans actively searched for white rifle clubs and German societies from other cities to participate in the shooting competition and accompanying festival. In 1869, the German Rifle Club invited both German and non-German societies from the North and South to participate. By 1870, the popularity of the Schutzenfest had increased significantly. Delegates from German societies from all parts of the United States participated, and the Germans invested considerable amounts of labor and money to improve the festival each year. Rifle clubs and visitors from Washington DC, Baltimore, New York City, Jersey City, Savannah, Augusta, and elsewhere attended the festival in varying years. In addition, the officers called for the participation of passive members of the Club. All German Rifle Club members were expected to wear their uniforms and participate in the parade. While the shooting competition attracted rifle clubs from Charleston and along the Atlantic coast, the accompanying fair caught the attention of the entire community and thousands of visitors went to the Schutzenfest. By April 1873, the Courier determined the Schutzenfest had “become one of the annual institutions of the City by the Sea.”

The Schutzenfests had gained popularity throughout the United States, and Charleston exhibited a similar affinity for the cultural event.

The members of the German Rifle Club catered to people of all classes, but they mainly wanted influential middle and upper class Charlestonians to attend the festival. The recreational nature of the festival challenged social norms, and they needed to convince elites that the festival
fell within their social rules so as not to keep elite men and women away from the event. In 1875, the *Courier* editor informed elite southerners:

> The characteristic energy and enterprise of the German are visible on all sides; and if the visitors do not, in vulgar parlance, get their “money’s worth” it is surely no fault of the hosts. A great deal of time and money have been spent this year to make the fest a success, and there is really all there that can be desired in a charming rural entertainment, and without the slightest violation of any rule that might govern the most punctilious gentlemen or fastidious lady.”

In an effort to attract elite southern whites to the festival, the German Rifle Club appealed to their interest in public military processions. In 1874, the opening ceremony included “the grandest military pageant that Charleston has witnessed since the war.” The “military pageant” or parade inaugurated the festival each year and Chapter Five provides a useful discussion regarding it as an exercise in white supremacy. Yet the military nature of the festival itself deserves mention here.

Charlestonians appreciated the military character of the festival, and its accompanying parade. First, the German Rifle Club received authorization to march with their weapons through the streets of Charleston. In 1868, the Germans gained permission to hold the parade, but it remains unclear what reasoning the military and government officials used in affording the Germans this opportunity. In 1870, Mayor Gilbert Pillsbury authorized the firing of the opening salute on the first day of the festival within the city limits. In April 1873, federal troops at the Citadel fired a salvo of artillery at six o’clock in the morning to signal the opening of the festival. Following the artillery salute, the *Schutzenfest* parade began and the military procession progressed through the main thoroughfares of Charleston.

The members of the German Rifle Club exercised their constitutional right to bear arms during the parade. James Simons, Jr., a leading member of the German Rifle Club, equated the right to bear arms with citizenship. He claimed, “There is no doubt but that these Clubs which are to be found wherever the German has his home, took their origin far back in the early ages of oppressions of power and hostile neighbors. As the necessity which called them into existence through the progress of events, disappeared, these associations were perpetuated for other purposes.” Simons stressed, “To carry arms has ever been esteemed the inalienable and inviolable right of freemen. With its loss of liberty soon vanishes. The brazen trumpet of war is not forever silent and their country, they must be ready to know how to defend them.” The German Rifle Club’s members considered themselves a militia (although the South Carolina governor did not officially recognize them as such) and protector of Charleston in time of conflict. The German Rifle Club and other clubs participated in the military parade to inaugurate the annual festival.

**Reporting the Event**

All of Charleston’s newspapers reporters covered the event, and they usually made it their lead story. The conservative and liberal press embraced the festival as a viable cultural opportunity. They focused on the positive attributes of the festival, including German and Southern white interaction. At the same time, the conservative newspapers portrayed African-
American participation in a negative light. That did not necessarily mean that African-Americans disrupted the festival and conflicted with the Germans, after all the Germans had invited them. The editors used German words indiscriminately throughout their stories, effectively demonstrating that certain words had made their way into the Charleston vernacular, and possibly appealing to its German readership.

The German language newspaper took the initiative in covering the festival, and within a day or two the other Charleston newspapers began to cover festival. In May 1868, Alexander Melchers and the Deutsche Zeitung began the thorough coverage, and Melchers determined, “It was taken up by the whole newspaper, that we would describe the festival in full.” The evidence suggests that Charlestonians craved the latest coverage.

To accommodate the demand for accurate and “up to the minute” coverage, the German Rifle Club installed telegraph communications at the Schutzenplatz and connected the grounds to downtown Charleston and beyond. The Courier reporters dispatched news directly from the Schutzenplatz via telegraph until the newspaper went to press. The editor of that paper boasted the coverage had “proved a decided hit, and the paper sells like hot cakes at the Schutzenplatz and elsewhere.” In 1873, Melchers, then president of the German Rifle Club, sent a telegraph to Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany. The telegram read: “Emperor William of Germany: The Schutzenfest was commenced. Twelve hundred men, under arms, send greetings to the emperor.” Surely, the knowledge of German immigrants in the United States leading a military procession through the streets of Charleston would have appealed to Wilhelm’s own militaristic character. Charlestonians probably did not approve of an association with the Kaiser. They seemed, however, to appreciate the military nature of the festival, and they began to form their own military clubs in 1869.

The German Rifle Club as a Model

Comments about the military character of the parade and Schutzenfest indicate Charlestonians recognized the social and political importance of the festival. The antebellum white rifle clubs reorganized and others formed only after the festival reoccurred. Many of these rifle clubs had enlisted in the Confederate Army but they were disbanded following the War. The Schutzenfest provided an excellent opportunity for the clubs to parade fully armed and in view of the public. They masked their real cause in recreational and cultural language but it was really about their commitment to white supremacy. The German Rifle Club started the trend toward reorganizing the white rifle clubs in the South.

Alexander Melchers declared, “The festivities of this week can boldly be compared to the festivities of the Schutzen Club in Germany. But not that we celebrate alone, from near and far visitors have come to the city to partake in our festivities, and even our American fellow-citizens have formed a Schutzen Club, and have kindly accepted our invitation to participate in our festival.” James Simons, Jr. agreed with Melchers’ sentiments as he discussed the importance of the newly organized Carolina Rifle Club. Simons stated: “[The Germans] greet their friends of the Carolina Rifle Club, and are glad that they should have selected this festival for their first appearance, and trust that with each succeeding year they may increase in numbers and prosperity, and that the harmony and good will which have been established, may always unite them in the bonds of friendship, as long as the Carolina Rifle Club and the German Rifle Club shall continue to exist.” A positive relationship between the two clubs continued throughout
In 1876, the editor of the *News and Courier* recalled: “When the war closed and reconstruction had spread over the State one or two organizations were started on a semi-military basis. The German Rifle Club had already an existence; the Carolina Rifle Club were next organized.” Many other white rifle clubs organized after 1870 and all of them participated in the *Schutzenfest* parade. Noticeably absent from the festival were African-American militia companies. Regardless, African-Americans and Charlestonians of every race and ethnicity turned out to watch the parade and attend the fair.

The Multiethnic Crowd

The German community patronized the annual *Schutzenfest* with great fervor, but the festival attracted many more ethnic groups than just Germans. The editor of the *Daily Courier* reported “there is not a Teuton in our city but will participate in the amusements.” The following day, he continued: “During these three days every German in the neighborhood considers himself bound to abandon his every day pursuits, and with his family devote the time to merry making.” The Germans, however, did not reserve the festivities for themselves; instead, they welcomed non-Germans to participate in the event.

Charlestonians of every race and ethnicity attended the annual festival and the *Schutzenfest* maintained a cosmopolitan quality. In 1868, the editor of the *Deutsche Zeitung*, Alexander Melchers, declared, “This year’s festival was formally made the People’s festival.” While the Germans opened the festival to the entire Charleston community, it did not attract the thousands of visitors it would later draw. The editor of the *Deutsche Zeitung* determined: “It was a mixed mass of people and overall tumult, full of bliss and pleasure, old and young, German, American, African, from all ends of the Earth, a right world for the little ones, but without the problems and troubles of the world in general.” The German language newspaper recognized the importance of African-American attendance, but the native publications and southern whites did not.

Increasingly, ethnic Charlestonians and southern whites attended the *Schutzenfest* and its popularity rapidly increased. In 1869, the editor of the *Daily Courier* determined “every preparation has been made to render the affair a volkfest [sic]—a festival for the people, and the Schutzenplatz, doubtless, be crowded today by people of every nationality.” The editor of the *Daily Courier* stated: “The visitors embraced every possible race and nationality, from the phlegmatic Teuton who drank his thirty glasses of lager a day and grunted his satisfaction thereat, to the hot hasty American…Charleston seemed to pour out her entire population to participate in the festivities, and the booming of the evening gun alone put an end to the increase of numbers.” Jacob Schirmer, a second generation German-American, remarked that “for the last three days the Germans have had a jolly time at the Schutzenplatz. I went up this afternoon and it appeared as if the whole city was there.” The Germans gladly accepted their multiethnic neighbors at the festival.

By 1870, the festival had become popular among all ethnic Charlestonians. The editor of the *Daily Courier* recalled, “The assembly in the dancing saloon and on the grounds soon assumed a cosmopolitan character. In one booth a boozey Frenchman might have been seen, drinking the health of the Faderland, with a robust Teuton, and in another an enterprising American, grown affectionate under the influence of foaming beer, might have been seen, singing in union with a German baritone, Was is den Deutsche’s Faderland [What is the
German’s Fatherland?].” He continued his favorable remarks, “The annual festival of the
German Schutzen Club, which, three years ago, was participated in only by the Germans of the
city, has become essentially a cosmopolitan festival, to which almost every merry woman and
child in the city is devoted.” In 1873, the Daily Courier editor wrote, “The crowd was of
course very cosmopolitan, and it continued to increase in numbers until after five o’clock in the
afternoon. The scene along the road to the platz [sic] was perhaps the liveliest that has ever been
witnessed in the suburbs of Charleston.” The newspaper editor estimated several thousand
people visited the Schutzenplatz. In 1874, the Daily Courier editor proclaimed:

What was once known in Charleston as the German Schutzenfest has, of late years,
assumed so cosmopolitan a character that it is now more appropriately called the People’s
Festival. The details of the merry fest have been so enlarged and amplified year after
year that the community have generally come to consider it a holiday week. Not only
does all Charleston turn out to the festival, but during its continuance large numbers of
visitors from abroad and from the interior of the State flock to the city to participate in
the festivities.

Alexander Melchers and the German community had realized their wish—The Schutzenfest had,
in fact, become Charleston’s Volksfest (People’s Festival). In 1876, the Courier determined,
“The entire German population and a large proportion of all the other population in Charleston
have been in the habit of looking forward to the merry festival as a week of amusement and
jollification, and it is probable that no period of the year is the weather more closely and more
anxiously watched than during the week preceding the annual Schutzenfest.”

German Identity

While ethnic Charlestonians attended the spring festival in large numbers, German
immigrants maintained a strong affinity for the festival as an opportunity to continue their
cultural traditions and strengthen their German identity. During the mid- to late-nineteenth
century, German immigrants demonstrated a tendency to identify with the cultural traditions of
the Vaterland (Fatherland). In Charleston, a strong relationship existed between the Schutzenfest
and German identity. In 1868, the editor of the Courier declared, “If there are a people who
preserve entire the national character, in whatever clime they may find themselves, and never
lose their identity, that people are the Teutons.” During the mid-nineteenth century, German
immigrants had a reputation for cultural pluralism and it continued until the First World War.
Native-born Americans tolerated their behavior because Germans had acquired a reputation for
hard work and thrift, and Germans assimilated into American society in various ways. After all,
the overwhelming majority of German immigrants intended to remain in the United States, often
coming as whole families, and they rapidly achieved middle-class status. Hence, the Germans
quickly gained acceptance into mainstream society.

German immigrants grew keenly aware of their positive social contributions in
Charleston. In his native German language, Alexander Melchers addressed the crowd consisting of Schutzen and their visitors totaling about 2000 persons: He stressed, “When the German
leaves his beloved native home, to seek in a strange country that satisfaction which he finds not
in his own, he does not think that he gives his fatherland the goodbye forever. Even in the breast
of the poorest, there lives the hope that once again he may see his beautiful Germany, his beloved Fatherland.” Melchers did not imply that the Germans wanted to repatriate to Germany but merely wished to maintain contact with their homeland. He continued, “They carry their Germany in their hearts, of which nobody can rob them, and when only two or three equal minded souls come together, there blossoms in a strange soil German habits and customs, German hilarity, German sociality and the good nature of the German.” Germans were proud of their social and cultural influences in Charleston, and they continued to practice them.

German-Americans such as Confederate veteran Captain A. J. Mims expressed pride in his German identity. At the same time, he drew attention to his dual ethnicity. He stated, “It is a well-known fact that I am half Irish and half German. When the Irish have a festival my Irish blood predominates, and I am as good an Irishman as anyone; but when the Germans have a parade and festival I am all German. If the American rifle clubs could only harmonize sufficiently to have a fest, I might become an American. Let us unite with our German friends in making this the people’s festival.” Mims’ comments depict the freedom that “white” European Americans had in choosing their ethnic group identity, in this case between Irish and German backgrounds. Mims chose to emphasize his German ethnicity because the Germans held the monopoly on the people’s festival and its centuries’ old heritage.

In Germany, the Schutzenfest and marksmanship clubs had existed for several centuries. In the thirteen century, Schutzen clubs formed when citizen militias obtained bows and arrows to protect their towns, and the nobility allowed the citizen militia to practice target and bird shooting. During the medieval ages, the custom of holding annual festivals began in Switzerland, and soon, the Germans formed their own archers’ associations. The Germans named the organizations “schutzen-gilden” (shooting guilds) and the obtained charters directly from the Emperor. As the number of shooting guilds increased, they held festivals in each province, and the various societies and their marksmen competed with each other for prizes. The weeklong festivals included music, dancing and other forms of recreation, and they closed with an impressive prize presentation of prizes to the best marksmen. The nobility and high officials attended the festival and participated in the prize presentation. In 1824, the first national Schutzenfest took place in Switzerland, and the Germans held their first national festival in 1864 at Frankfort and the second at Bremen in 1866. The Germans organized shooting societies throughout Germany, and they considered shooting a significant part of their cultural traditions. Every spring, the Germans in Charleston and throughout the United States held their own shooting festivals to continue the tradition begun in Germany. The Germans organized shooting societies throughout the United States, and the German Rifle Club in Charleston acquired the Schutzenplatz for that purpose. In continuing the festival in the United States, German immigrants maintained an important part of their cultural identity.

The Schutzenplatz

The German Rifle Club owned the Schutzenplatz (Shooting grounds) in the suburbs of Charleston, and they held their annual festival there. The suburban location provided the ideal recreational retreat from the congested confines of downtown Charleston. At the same time, the shooting events and the accompanying fair demanded a sizeable amount of open space, so the event could not have taken place within the city limits. The Germans made every attempt to decorate the Schutzenplatz in German furnishings. The editor of the Daily Courier remarked: “It
required no great stretch of the imagination to induce the beholder to believe that he was in the Faderland.”

The Germans decorated the Schutzenplatz grounds with flags, banners, flowers and other symbols of their German heritage. At the entrance to the Schutzenplatz, the Germans hung an enormous United States flag and a Palmetto flag, the South Carolina state flag, over the gateposts. A dozen flags flew above the gate and within the enclosure small flags and small banners hung from every tree and shrub. On the left side of the grounds, two rows of numerous food and beer booths were decorated with flowers and evergreens, and the flags and bunting of “almost every nation in the world.” The grounds were decorated with miniature German flags that fluttered among the shrubbery. The Germans decorated the dancing hall with wreaths of evergreen and artificial flowers. In 1872, J. C. Bischoff hung the flag of the German Artillery, riddled with bullet holes from Civil War battles, high above the new German flag.

The festivities began as soon as the Schutzen and their guests reached the grounds and a salvo of artillery signaled their arrival and the opening of the festivities. The Germans and their guests exited the train cars, reformed their ranks, and proceeded up the avenue to the Schutzenplatz. As they entered the grounds, the honor guard fired a twelve-gun salute. The rifle clubs filed around the elaborately decorated speaker’s stand, and the officers of the companies assembled on the platform. Ribbons and flowers adorned the canopy and pillars of the speaker’s stand and a statue of Emperor William rested on the platform. Several dignitaries assembled to the platform and several “tastefully dressed young girls” accompanied them. Young women participated in the opening and closing ceremonies of the festival. Next, the rifle club members and their guests convened at several large communal tables for a ceremonial German banquet that included the “national lager” and German cuisine. Outside the main hall, the Schutzen cadets consumed lemonade, ham sandwiches, spring chicken, and potato salad on the piazza. Following the banquet, the rifle club members received their tickets for the target shooting, and, shortly after, a single shot from the howitzer announced the beginning of the shooting contest.

The Germans considered the Schutzenfest a family affair and German men, women, and children filled the Schutzenplatz. The editor of Harper’s Weekly determined “The German never enjoys himself, whether at feast or at work, without his children, and the little ones as well as the rifles were in arms during the festival week.” The whole festival equaled a “grand family reunion.” The German Riflemen spent most of their day at the large, noisy shooting range, so they always built a restaurant and beer hall nearby. In Charleston, African-Americans served beer and sandwiches at the restaurants but this did not occur elsewhere. The German Schutzen, adorning ribbons and decorations, visited the saloon between shooting at the targets.

While the riflemen took aim at the shooting gallery, other family members enjoyed themselves in the dance hall. Dancing took place in the great or main hall that maintained a central position on the Schutzenplatz. The Germans decorated the dancing hall with flowers, flags, and the saloon with colored lanterns and banners. Outside the banister of the front piazza stood the drawings of two Schutzen with a target between and the words ‘Welcome, welcome.’ The Germans typically built large elaborate Festhallen (Festival Halls) and a spacious shooting stand. In 1873, the Charleston Germans unveiled a new, grand octagon-shaped dancing hall and included a spacious “ladies’ saloon.” The women’s saloon provided women an opportunity to socialize apart from the men at least for a brief period.

Upon entering the Schutzenplatz, guests could choose between two rows of booths located on each side of the main building. The first booth on the right was the reception room. Next, German vendors provided an endless supply of German and Southern food, including
cakes, cigars, fruits, ice cream, lemonade, lager beer, apples, oranges, ginger nuts, hot coffee, soda water, half-pints of goobers, and hot meals. At each of the refreshment booths, the proprietors dispensed the “national drink” and “lager flowed profusely throughout the day” to the sounds of “Bohemian” music grinders. The proprietors paid a fee to operate the booths, and visitors patronized the lager beer saloons, lottery booths, and refreshment booths all day. The prize lottery men operated booths and they moved around the grounds to market and sell their tickets, often profiting a “harvest of greenbacks.” Little evidence exists that the German Rifle Club allowed non-Germans to operate booths at the Schutzenfest. In perhaps the only instance, an Italian immigrant vended peanuts at ten cents per quart and sold “squealing air balloons” near the entrance to the Schutzenplatz.

A few Germans appear to have monopolized the larger food and beer ventures. The lager beer saloons had the greatest money-making potential and required the largest capital investment. In 1870, Mr. J. W. Semken obtained the principal bar in the main ball for 400 dollars. In Semken’s main saloon, the men bowled for lager and played shuffleboard for cigars. In addition to the main saloon, Semken operated the three booths immediately to the east of the shooting gallery. Semken employed a “corps of able assistants,” probably including African-Americans, to wait on the gentlemen-only crowd. Semken’s booths vended lager beer, centennial punch, Rhine wine, Hockheimer and good cigars. Semken also ran two soda water stands in the basement of the dancing hall to provide refreshment for the dancers.

In 1876, the German Rifle Club changed its system of distributing the booths. The Club decided to rent out only four “privileges” and left the remainder of the booths vacant for the visitors to lounge in. Supposedly, this did not limit the selection of ethnic foods and drinks available. L. F. Meyer and P. Meitzler operated the “Centennial Restaurant” on the north side of the Schutzenplatz where visitors could spend a half a dollar for as “square a dinner as can be procured in the city for double the money.” In another location, D. Bullwinkle sold soda water, cakes, pies, ham sandwiches and hot coffee at “reasonable prices.”

Women congregated at their own popular meeting places. Many women frequented Von Santen’s restaurant and the “ladies’ saloon.” Von Santen located his establishment on the south side of the Schutzenplatz; he decorated his booth with thirty-eight banners, each one bearing the name of one of the United States on it, and a German flag draped above them. The women assembled on the matting and chairs at Von Santen’s and enjoyed his popular ice cream. The also convened at the “ladies’ saloon” on the lower floor of the main hall, possibly to drink a beer or mint julep, and to discuss the day’s events. The editor of the News and Courier resolved that the Schutzen and their guests patronized the women’s saloon to consume refreshments as an “essential prelude to the inauguration of well conducted Schutzenfests.”

The Germans preferred beer to any other refreshment available at the festival. German vendors distributed a tremendous amount of lager beer at the Schutzenfest. The editor of the Daily Courier reported, “Barrels of lager were emptied in a shorter space of time than it takes to write about it; but soon the attack upon the tables was over and the feast of substantiale having been concluded, the flow of reason began.” At the beginning of the festival, the Germans and their visitors cheered the arrival of the long train of supply carts and wagons, stacked with Rhine wine, lager beer and a variety of foods for the booths. During the 1868 Schutzenfest, nearly five thousand people visited the grounds and they consumed over 50,000 glasses of beer. The crowds grew with each annual festival and the beer consumption probably did as well. The editor of Harper’s Weekly determined, “Another very common and characteristic scene is the
Teutons at the lager beer tables. The dancing, as well as the drinking, was kept up continuously, day and night, in spite of the hot weather. The Germans held an excellent reputation for social drinking. Typically, no fights occurred at the Schutzenfest, and although beer-kegs lay under almost every tree, few men appeared intoxicated. Predictably, not everyone exhibited the same level of restraint and some visitors ingested above-average quantities of alcohol. The editor of the *Daily Courier* wrote, “Here and there might have been seen a gay Teuton, who had wished the Fatherland too much prosperity, engaged in a serious discourse with a pine sapling while another who had congratulated himself too often, might have been seen laying down the law to his companion, who had grown melancholy over the too many happy reminiscences of the past.” Germans did not reserve beer and wine consumption for themselves, and native Charlestonians and immigrants joined them in the consumption of alcoholic beverages. The Germans operated numerous saloons throughout the City and Charlestonians, including African-Americans, frequented many of them. The editor of the *Courier* reported, “The Englishman drank his “arf and arf” under the cooling shades with as much unction as the portly Teuton worried down the ‘Lager.’” The editor considered lager a “peculiar drink,” and he proclaimed:

A German “button-holds you, and without any ceremony, puts a glass in your hand. Being carried away by the force of his example, you drink it almost unconsciously, and in this way throw yourself outside of a dozen glasses in less than a half-hour. After having swallowed about twenty glasses, you begin to feel a kind of change coming over the spirit of your dreams. Visions of vine-clad cottages on the Rhine, and Leipzig pipes, come over you, and your are at once seized with an incomprehensible desire to hug every Teuton you see, often mistaking pine trees for Teutons; not that there is any similarity of outline between pine trees and a Teuton, but because of the largeness of your heart—and head. Having taken this turn the feelings must be given vent to, and in a short time you find yourself singing in lusty tones a popular German refrain. But lager is a delightful beverage, not withstanding man’s spite towards it; and there is no place at which it drinks better than at the Schutzenfest.

The editor of the *Courier* considered the *Schutzenplatz* “the best place in the world to spend a day—provided one does not drink too much of Weikin’s, or Fehrenbach’s, or Torck’s lager beer.” The Germans celebrated each festival with a ceremonious toast that included passing around of an immense silver goblet filled with Rhine wine, the equivalent of “passing around the horn.”

The sheer magnitude of the festival probably allowed for greater interaction between the sexes than normal. The *Schutzenfest* provided both sexes with an excellent opportunity to interact for two reasons. First, thousands of people attended the festival, increasing the selection of available partners. Second, chaperon would have found it difficult to enjoy the holiday festivities and keep track of the charges on the spacious and busy *Schutzenplatz*. The combination of lager beer and holiday atmosphere may have relaxed the inhibitions of both sexes. The editor of the *Courier* called the return home from the *Schutzenfest* “a big thing in itself.” He recounted: “The scene was enlivening in the extreme, thirsty swains left their inamorates [sic] to take a farewell glass of lager, and anxious Mama’s rushed about in frantic search after lost daughters, who were quietly enjoying a tête-à-tête with a love lorne gallant.” Visitors drank beer and Rhine wine, and they enjoyed numerous “amusements.”
The Schutzenplatz contained activities for men, women, and children of both sexes adorned in their holiday attire. The elderly walked the grounds and visited the various places of amusement. Most of the “ladies” visited the dancing halls, while others walked around the grounds or sat upon benches under the trees. The “gentlemen” attended the dancing halls, the shooting galleries, the bowling alley, and the lager beer saloons.92

The Fair and Amusements

In the mid-nineteenth century, most German immigrants devoted their leisure time to various recreational activities, and they influenced native-born European-Americans to adopt similar practices. During a typical Charleston festival, ten thousand men, women, and children visited the grounds and presumably each found something to their enjoyment. Numerous families spent the day in the woods and continued to arrive until six o’clock—nearly closing time.93 Germans excelled at several sports, including bowling, gymnastics, and shooting. Not surprisingly, the Germans included these activities in the amusement program. Germans and their guests drank lager beer and soda water, bowled ten pins, walked the grounds, and danced “to the dulcet sound of merry music and whispered soft tales to willing ears under the umbrageous oaks.” The grounds proved ideal for quiet walks and lounging in the shade.94 The latter provides more evidence of interaction between both sexes. The amusements program included dancing, hurdle races, bowling, gymnastics, Italian music, balloons, sack-running (bag racing), hahn-schlagen [cock fighting], somerset [sic] racing, auger target, foot-racing, swings, air guns, a prize wheel, whirligigs, swings, slides, acrobats, and equilibrists, and the “juvenile” attractions.95 The “juvenile” amusements included the greased climbing pole, the mill of misfortune, the ducking slide, the merry-go-round (carousel), bag racing, blindfolded pushcarts (wheelbarrows), egg hunting, and the coin game.96 Throughout Reconstruction, the German Rifle Club modified its amusement program at the festival to include open-air concerts every afternoon and minstrel performances, the latter reflecting heightened racism on behalf of the program committee.97 The Germans offered a diverse athletic program. In 1869, the Germans entertained their guests with a featured velocipede race.98 Later, the Germans scheduled walking matches, and after them, the general attention turned to dancing.99 In many ways, the Charleston Schutzenfest was similar to those that appeared in other cities. The shooting events attracted the riflemen while the remainder of the family attended the fair.100

Dancing, perhaps the most popular form of recreation at the Schutzenfest, attracted many visitors. Either Muller’s or Metz’s band played waltz and other music for the multiethnic crowd from early afternoon to around seven o’clock. The Germans located a saloon inside the dance hall and people drank and danced until the evening gun.101 The dancing was “vigorous” and “energetic” and “young Teutons” danced to the music of Muller’s band and continued until the evening gun signaled the end of the day’s festivities.102 Dancing rivaled shooting in importance at the festival. The editor of the Daily Courier determined “without dancing it would be difficult to have a festival, and there is no better or cooler a dancing-room in the South than the spacious dance-hall at the Platz.”103 Throughout the day, Germans and their guests filled the dancing hall and danced quadrilles, waltzes, and gallops.104 The Germans opened the dance hall to everyone that attended the festival. In 1869, the Courier editor noticed, “The two delinquent parties were there in the dancing hall. A very attractive graceful ornament they proved to the hall, as every one who knows them will testify.”105 Not all dancing took place in the dance hall. Some people
played organ grinders on the grounds, and on at least one occasion, Italian musicians played
music for the outdoor games. In the front part of the grounds, Beck’s Brass Band played
music on the speaker’s stand.

Next to dancing, the children found the various amusements most attractive. German,
African-American, and southern white youths enjoyed the merry-go-round (carousel).
Throughout the day, horses carried the children around the merry-go-round. The riders carried a
ring upon their swords as they moved quickly around the circle, and the visitors sat on benches
beneath the trees and watched the riders, young and old, enjoy the merry-go-round and its
horses. Many of these people would not have had the opportunity to ride horses, and they
took advantage of the occasion. The adults, however, chose from a select group of activities,
many of them reserved for elites only.

The Germans included bowling in their annual program. Beneath the piazza, on the
ground floor of the main building they installed ten-pin alleys. The Germans demonstrated
exceptional skill at the sport, and they filled the lanes all day long. The editor of the Daily News
observed, “The Germans were as good at this sport as at shooting and they bowled huge balls
with great accuracy.” The Germans attached a saloon to the bowling alleys, and that normally
may have kept elite Charlestonians away. Surprisingly, only “gentlemen” competed at the
bowling alley, and it became one of the most popular meeting places for “gentlemen.” In fact,
newcomers found it difficult to participate because the lanes could not accommodate the huge
demand. Bowlers drank lager and bowled to win prizes. Women did not compete with men
for prizes, but they did bowl at the allies.

The Germans demonstrated a profound interest in gymnastics and added it to their
amusements program. The German Turnerbund often set up a gymnasium tent at the festival and
performed for the visitors. The Germans invited gymnastics groups from outside Charleston
to perform at the festival. In the mid-1870s, the Germans invited the Alfredo and Saydam
Brothers, a troupe of celebrated acrobats, gymnasts, equilibrists and trapeze artists, to perform.
They dressed as clowns and entertained the crowd as they performed on the double trapeze.

Balloons ascensions entertained the crowd of visitors. Von Santen sent his balloon
skyward several times throughout the day. On May 15, 1870, William Tennent wrote his
daughter Sarah, “The last week was quite a stirring in Charleston, two conventions in session,
commemoration day, and the German Schutzenfest, the latter attracting greater crowds than ever,
and a balloon accession.” In 1871, at dark, the grounds were illuminated with multicolored
lanterns and a fireworks display accompanied the balloon ascension.

Tight ropewalking sustained a popular following at the festival. In 1870, Harry Leslie,
the “hero of Niagara” and tight rope “champion of the world” performed at the Schutzenfest.
Maggie Nicholls accompanied Leslie, and she performed “graceful and daring feats” on the slack
wire. In the evening, practically everybody in the city turned out to watch Leslie and
Nichols. During his performances, Leslie stretched the tight rope between two trees at a
height of seventy-five to one hundred feet. He walked, danced, and ran, on the rope, thrilling the
crowd. Nearly 3000 people watched Leslie perform on the rope in high winds, and they
anticipated the worst. On one occasion, Leslie carried a cooking stove on the tight rope.

Maggie Nichols, a twenty-four year old woman from New York City, performed on the
slack wire for the crowd. She provided a positive role model for many women in Charleston,
while at the same time, challenging prevailing notions about femininity and domesticity. She
learned the trade from her father, Alexander Nichols, a renowned pantomime and slack wire
performer. The editor of the Courier focused on her feminine features and described her as “very
pretty, with blue eyes, light complexion, and has a fine figure.” However, he considered her performances on the slack wire, “if not as dangerous as those of Leslie equally as wonderful.”

Jacob Schirmer considered Nichols and Leslie the highlights of the festival.

Two years later, a different tight ropewalker, recently injured, performed for the crowd. Professor Bond walked the wire, although he had not yet recovered from a terrible fall in Georgia where he had fallen forty feet onto a stone pavement breaking both arms and legs and sustained other injuries. Schirmer, again, noted Bond’s performance as a highlight.

Professor Bond delighted the crowd of enthusiastic spectators with his walking and gymnastics routines. He, like Leslie, faced a high wind and, in light of his recent injuries, he did not remain on the wire long. Thousands of spectators witnessed Bond’s performances. He sat on the wire in a chair, with his feet on the seat, and enclosed part of his body in a sack and impressed the worried crowd. After his brave performances, Alexander Melchers presented him a medal on behalf of the club.

In 1873, a one-legged tight ropewalker attracted large crowds until he fell to the ground. Schirmer recalled, “they had a One Leg Man walked the Tight rope and his Son performed some great Gymnastic feats.” Two days later, he wrote, “this afternoon a sad accident occurred. The One Leg rope Walker fell from the Rope and broke his hip and received other bruises.” Professor De Houne performed on a rope about seventy feet above the ground, and he used his stump while going through his performances. He had reached the middle of the rope when a sharp crack sounded. The spectators released a collective cry as he fell to the ground. The News and Courier editor recalled, “Women ran to and fro, weeping and shrieking, and men rushed from all sides towards the scene of the disaster.” Several “gentlemen” carried De Houne to the groundkeeper’s residence. Surgeons, probably on the grounds in the case of an accidental shooting, dressed the wounds, and he was transported to the City Hospital. Probably not every woman ran away nor every man ran toward the scene of the fall. Yet the editor felt obligated to emphasize the “gentlemen” did not panic, an obvious attempt to demonstrate their “masculine” nature. The surgeons did not consider the wounds serious. He fractured his left leg about two inches below the hip joint, received a nasty cut above his left eye, and sprained his left arm, but he apparently escaped internal or life-threatening injury.

Professor De Houne blamed the accident on an African-American who had helped him set up the rope. Several experts, including experienced sea captains, examined the break in the rope. They all speculated, with one exception, that the rope had been cut. The rope had recently been purchased from Captain A. O. Stone’s ship chandlery, and the broken ends of the rope appeared to have been cut cleanly with a sharp edge. The professor believed that an African-American man cut the rope because De Houne had offended him the previous day. The African-American man had held one of the guide ropes during the performance, and De Houne refused to pay him a quarter for his services. De Houne refused to pay the man because he considered it “unusual for the holders of the guide ropes to ask of pay.” African-Americans attended the festival and participated in setting up the grounds. It shows that they expected some form of compensation; possibly free admission to the festival. If the African-American man did cut the rope, he did it to protest his lack of wage earning.
African-American Participation

African-Americans contributed to the festival in several ways. First, they operated or owned many of the vehicles that transported the guests to the festival. Second, they served as target minders on the shooting range. Third, they worked as servers in the saloons and operated the various amusements. Mainly, African-Americans partook of the festival as guests of the Germans. African-Americans especially participated in the various amusements at the festival where they could win prizes, including money. The newspaper coverage reveals that many whites watched the amusements. The *Daily Courier, Deutsche Zeitung, Daily News, News and Courier*, and *Daily Republican* noted with amusement the attendance of the “gamin class,” especially African-Americans. A *Courier* editor found that, “Charleston abounds in that class of population called *gamin*, and they are on these occasions made to contribute to the general amusement, and at the same time, enabled to turn an honest penny for themselves.” The “gamin class” did not merely include African-Americans since every ethnic group participated in the amusements. Regardless, the papers tended to equate gamin with African-Americans and concentrated on their participation in the lower class amusements, probably in accordance with the so-called “one drop rule.” African-Americans appear to have won more prizes than any other group. Were they simply better at the games or did they actually participate at a greater rate than Germans and other ethnic groups? Existing evidence does not allow for conclusions here. Perhaps the press hoped to portray African-Americans in a less favorable manner than whites. Occasionally, the reporters described the participation of Irish and German immigrants in the amusements, but they overwhelmingly focused on the young African-American male participation.

It appears African-American youths participated in the numerous “juvenile” amusements more than any other ethnic group, perhaps because they had most to gain from their victories. In the two most popular games, African-American youth tried their skill at the “mill of misfortune” and greased “climbing pole” to win “attractive” prizes. The attractive prizes offered a valuable incentive to the participants. The African-American youth, many facing dire poverty, took advantage of their opportunity to win money and merchandise. At the same time, African-Americans might have gained personal satisfaction in defeating the white European-American competitors. In addition, the youngsters played many other games to win similar prizes.

It appears the multiethnic crowds at the *Schutzenplatz* followed the amusements. The “army of gamins” followed the Amusement Committee around the *Schutzenplatz*. The Amusement Committee held an important role in bringing laughter and excitement to the festival. The editor of the *Daily News* recalled that “at each catastrophe the laugh was as fresh and as loud as ever.” The games appeared at intervals throughout the day, and included greased pole climbing, the mill of misfortune, the ducking slide, bag or sack racing, cigar smoking, molasses dipping, walking the plank, crossing the greasy bar, tilting for the ring or bucket tilting, and sugar and clabber eating. The games provided equal enjoyment and excitement for the spectators and participants.

African-Americans had some incentive in participating in the amusements, even though many whites might not wish to participate themselves. The editor of the *News and Courier* wrote: “Sambo revels in these diversions, and cares little about the mishaps that befall him so long as he feels conscious of the fact that he is the figure upon which the fun turns and he gets a trifle in the shape of currency, a toy or words of commendation bestowed upon him.” Many of the prizes went beyond a “trifling.” African-Americans may have enjoyed entertaining their
own community, if not the Germans and southerners. The winners probably gained some sort of social acceptance. The editor of the *Courier* jeered:

> There is nothing from the observation of which more amusement can be derived than a small boy, and when the boy is a black and particularly ragged and Bohemian one, and is putting himself into all sorts of ridiculous positions, he is probably the most mirth-provoking animal in existence. Throughout the day delighted crowds were gathered about watching small colored boys attempt the climbing of the treacherous greased pole.\textsuperscript{140}

The white elite did not necessarily approve, but the Germans kept inviting them and the African-Americans kept coming.

The Charleston newspapers used pejorative descriptions in describing the games. They referred to African-Americans as “[s]hoeless and hatless Republicans” or “juvenile Fifteenth amendments.” And they found it amusing that African-Americans dunked their heads into broad bowls of molasses in search of half-dimes (five cent pieces) at the bottom of the bowl or scrambled to eat pounds of brown sugar to win greenbacks.\textsuperscript{141} In both games, the players won a monetary prize. The *Daily Courier* determined “two youngsters with auburn locks had abandoned the lucrative business of selling matches and were, both blind-folded, feeding each other with boiled starch for a trifling pecuniary consideration.”\textsuperscript{142} The boys sold matches to make money, but they also earned money at the games. In the clabber eating contests, blindfolded “[i]ncipient Fenians” (young Irish) sat at small tables, and fed each other boiled starch.\textsuperscript{143} African-Americans and Irish immigrants participated in these games, but the Germans rarely allowed their children to partake in the event.

Gradually, the Germans removed the molasses, clabber, and brown sugar eating competitions from the amusement program. In 1875, the *Daily Courier* editor remarked that the people had “tired of seeing diminutive black gamin debaub themselves with molasses and clabber and stuff themselves with sugar.” Instead, the Germans “altered and raised the tone and character of the sports, giving the public that class of enjoyment which never fails to please everybody.”\textsuperscript{144} However, the Germans continued to offer various amusements and African-Americans still participated.

At the first festival, the Germans scheduled numerous types of races, including hurdle races, bag races, handicap races, and blind races on the amusement program. The editor of the *Daily Courier* asserted, “The races were of a varied character, and the lists were open to all (as the legislators say) without regard to race or color. Here, too, the contestants were principally of the gamin class, and by their expertness and activity, excited many encomiums from the surrounding crowd.”\textsuperscript{145} The Germans opened the races to every ethnic group at the festival, and every ethnic group participated. The editor of the *Courier* declared “The runners being chiefly young gentlemen of black and tan complexion and Republican persuasion. The running was excellent, and in most cases threw Bull Run completely into the shade.”\textsuperscript{146}

In the egg-hunting game, six young African-Americans adorned blindfolds and entered an enclosure about fifteen square yards. Each participant carried a flexible five-foot long hickory switch. The referee spun and pulled the players around to disorient them. Then an egg was placed in the middle of the space, and the player who first broke the egg with his stick won a prize. The blinded participants swung their sticks wildly and often hit each other, amusing onlookers.\textsuperscript{147}
In the “Mill of Misfortune,” a smooth circular log turned on an axle, and small boys attempted to run or walk over it. If successful at making it to the other side, the boy obtained a prize. If the participant fell, he landed to the right or left of the log. If he fell to the right he tumbled into a bag of pulverized charcoal, and to the left he fell into a bag of flour. The participants attempted to cross the smooth, greased, and revolving pole placed horizontally on two supports. A piece of money was placed on one of the supports and the participant started from the other. The amusement committee placed a canvas bin on either side and one was filled with wheat flour and the other with soot. Once the participant took a few steps, the pole began revolving and he struggled to retain his balance. The Daily News asserted, “If he can make the choice, he takes the flour, and comes out amid a shout of laughter, making a hideous ghost-like reconstructed appearance.” Young Irish boys also participated in the mill of misfortune to win prizes. The newspapers seemed to concentrate on the two ethnic groups with the greatest representation in the lower class.

In the greased pole game, the amusement committee placed a large smooth mast, tapered and thickly smeared with a slick coating of tallow, upright on the grounds. A hollow floral sphere on the summit of the pole contained the prizes—a violin, a tambourine, a bow and arrow, a watch and a stuffed monkey. The contestants, mainly from the gamin class, tried to win them but other visitors played the game. African-Americans used tar to climb the pole, while others smeared their trousers with pine gum. The amusements committee did not object to their ingenuity. The basket of toys, and other articles attracted the numerous African-American participants. After several boys attempted to climb the pole, the grease began to wear off. Some boys filled their pockets with sand and used it during the climb. When a participant made his way to the top, the referee lowered the prize basket and the winner selected his prize. Then the referee raised the basket a little higher for the next contestant. The climbers showed persistence and the climb itself proved difficult but several boys won prizes each day. The editor of the News and Courier determined, “The amusements generally were not unlike those of other days, the heroes being colored boys, who had been let into the platz [sic] for the fun of the spectators.”

Unlike some of the other amusements, the Germans also participated in climbing the greased pole. This suggests that the Germans included it in the festival because they enjoyed the challenge. The Courier editor poked fun at the physique of the Germans: “A stately pine tree on your left seems to be waltzing gracefully with the greasy pole, and a knarled cedar on your right seems to be intently engaged in drinking lager.”

The Germans also joined in the bear hunt. In the bear hunt, the blindfolded participants made “frequent mistakes” making the spectators laugh. The participant rolled a wheelbarrow and attempted to place it closest to a post in the ground to win a prize. Mr. N. Fehrenbach, an influential German businessman, won the competition and demonstrated that even German elites occasionally participated in the amusements.

In the cigar-smoking game, the amusement committee invited “several colored juvenile lovers of the weed” to smoke cigars on a raised platform. They distributed fragrant Havana cigars to the participants, and offered a prize of five cents to the first person to finish their cigar. The Daily News editor determined, “The cigars were lit and volumes of smoke are ejected as if from engines getting under way. The joke is good, and the smokers are doing their best, when suddenly a tremendous puff of smoke envelopes [sic] the head and face of one of the puffers, and his cigar explodes in the center. The others fight shy, and smoke wearily, but in vain; and the same catastrophe attend each amid the shouts of bystanders.”
African-Americans enjoyed trying their skill at the ducking slide. The amusement committee located the “ducking slide” at the western entrance to the main hall. It consisted of an inclined platform about four feet wide and twenty-five feet long. Above the middle of the platform, a bucket of water was suspended between two posts. A board was placed on one side of the bucket, and a ring was placed in an opening at the lower end of the board. A boy rode a small car down the platform and tried to unhook the ring with a small wooden rod without upsetting the bucket. If successful, the boy won twenty-five cents. But, if the boy was unsuccessful, the bucket dumped its water onto him.

At several festivals, an African-American man adorned a monkey suit for the entertainment of the guests. The Daily Courier editor proclaimed: “The menagerie was in full blast, a pure blooded African Oorang-Outang [sic] keeping the door and poking up the animals.”161 The editor of the Deutsche Zeitung, wrote that an African-American disguised as an ape held his arms in a manner “so natural,” an overtly racist comparison between African-Americans and monkeys.162 The man in the monkey suit gained some reward for his efforts. The Daily Courier editor described the monkey as “a muscular Fifteenth amendment” wearing a tight fitting brown suit and a “hideous mask.” His keeper pulled the “uncouth object” around the Schutzenplatz in an ice cream wagon and the “urchin crowd” followed with continuous shouts and yells. An itinerant string band, including a hand organ, a half dozen harps, fiddles, and hautboys, and coronets, played music.163 The monkey sang the song “Captain Jenks” to the tune of “Old John Brown.”164 The Daily News editor wrote, “Jocko performed several feats which would have been credible to a real monkey, the most remarkable of which was the fortitude with which he bore the sharp applications of the rattan by his heavy handed keeper.”165 If the keeper actually pretended to whip the monkey, it subjected the African-American male to considerable embarrassment and possibly great offense. Yet, similar situations presented themselves in Charleston and elsewhere.

African-Americans occupied similar roles at German Schutzenfests in other portions of the United States. At a national festival in New York, Harper’s Weekly described:

One of the principal attractions on the grounds was a negro who stuck his head through a hole in a canvas and allowed the visitors to pelt him with baseballs, three shots for ten cents. Many doughty Germans worked themselves almost into a condition of apoplexy in their endeavors to hit the negro’s head, but the African was a clever dodger, and after every shot he would look up and grin and hurl some mocking jest at the ball-thrower. One day, however, a quiet-looking young man, who turned out to be a college baseball-player, stepped up to the stand and threw one ball. He hit the negro square on the top of the head, and it took the doctors several minutes to restore him to consciousness. After that the African dodger made a target of himself for the benefit of large-sized Germans only.

African-Americans often labored for German employers in Charleston. A strong relationship exists between the latter two cases and minstrelsy. In minstrelsy, white males painted their faces black and performed skits based upon prevailing stereotypes of African-American culture. Beginning in 1873, the newspapers recognized the performance of minstrels at the festival. The Germans had begun to adopt the racist tendencies normally attributed to southern whites. The News and Courier editor determined, “An enterprising vendor of lager beer and Rhine wine whose booth bore the expressive sign of a huge cannon shooting forth a tumbler of
lager, had engaged the services of a band of minstrels, pure and simple, but mostly simple, gentlemen of undoubted color and infinite wit, who performed in the most primitive style upon a triangle, banjo and tambourine. Their music was sweet as the rude strains that Du Chaffe tells us are made by the musicians of the interior of Africa. At least they were as uncouth, and coming as they did from Africans, the presence of Dr. Livingstone and Stanley was alone needed to complete the picture.” Germans continued to hire minstrels throughout the remainder of the decade. The Germans hired the Carolina minstrels for their amusement “and their performances were invariably crowded and evidently enjoyed by their audiences, the fun and music being just of the informal and unconventional sort to be appreciated on such a picnicking occasion.” The News and Courier remarked, “The minstrel performances which always contribute so much fun to the fests will be still further improved this year, and will take place upon a platform so elevated as to allow them to be seen and heard throughout the grounds.”

African-Americans entertained the guests in other ways. A troupe of ten African-American boys performed for the same crowd. The News and Courier editor decided, “It is not an easy thing to amuse 5,000 men, women, and children. Two bands of music gave open air concerts in the park while the native minstrels afforded fun to as many as could be packed in the pavilion. Those were not rolling nine pins or playing ‘Dom Pedro’ in the cool booths, or tripping the light fantastic toe in the large hall, or lolling beneath the shady trees enjoying the cool breeze, or eating peanuts, were amused by a rather novel exhibition in the shape of a game called the ‘Pyramide d’Afrique.’ Four of the larger boys stood on the ground with their arms on each other’s shoulders. Three medium sized boys stood up on their shoulders and two smaller boys stood upon their shoulders. Finally, the smallest boy climbed a stepladder to the top of the pyramid and someone removed the ladder. This gymnastics routine entertained the guests, but they did not gain as much attention as the singing performances.

African-Americans formed singing groups and entertained on several occasions. The Germans organized a “peripatetic African Saengerbund” composed of one hundred “juvenile black Republicans.” They marched around the grounds to the tune of ‘Captain Jenks,’ and concluded by giving a ‘Shoo Fly Concert’ on the speaker’s stand.” On a cloudy, not so pleasant afternoon, 2,500 people arrived at the Schutzenplatz, including a “very large proportion of ladies and children.” According to the editor of the News and Courier,

A new feature in the amusement programme [sic] was the performance of a band of simon-pure African serenaders [sic], none of your Northern-born gentry with flash diamonds on their shirt fronts and seal rings made of paste, but pure American citizens of African descent fresh from the cotton fields. The costumes of the troupe were neither rich nor gaudy, and their acting and singing was natural. The “bones” and tambourine man had mouths on them a sight of which alone is fully worth the price of admission to the grounds, (the exhibition is free,) and the performance itself was novel and amusing.

Although the editor of the News and Courier found the performance amusing, the Germans probably invited the group to perform because of their singing ability.

African-Americans maintained a strong economic relationship with the Germans. African-Americans patronized German stores and purchased merchandise sometimes supplied to meet their specific demands. They worked as laborers in German-owned businesses, and sometimes worked alongside working class Germans. Moreover, African-Americans worked as domestic servants in German households. It is not surprising that German businessmen
employed African-Americans to work at the festival. A “regiment” of African-Americans served beer on the grounds throughout the day. Some African-Americans worked at the amusement stands and distributed prizes. African-Americans also served as uniformed target markers. Each of the above circumstances allowed African-Americans to earn money and attend the festival free of charge. African-American servants probably brought their children and other family members with them to the festival. And many other African-Americans could have paid the twenty-five cent entrance fee until the Germans limited admissions.

Social Control

The Germans employed constables on the Schutzenplatz to enforce a strict rule code. The Germans maintained strict rules and regulations at the festival even though the newspapers did not report any criminal activity. The German Rifle Club advertised the general rules in the daily newspapers.

In 1870, the Germans restricted admission to individuals and families with invitations. The rules included the following:

1. The members of the club and their friends are invited to participate in the festivities.
2. No person will be admitted without producing their cards of invitation, and no invitation will, under any circumstances, be issued at the gate of the Schutzenplatz.
3. Every shareholder and his family has free admittance, but he must obtain his family. Riflemen and invited guests in uniform are not required to produce their cards of invitation. The badges delivered at the entrance of the Dancing Hall are to be kept in sight.
4. Cards of invitation are to be kept in sight, and it is the duty of all riflemen to endeavor to have this rule complied with by all persons present.
5. Only members in uniform are admitted to the eagle and target of honor exercises. Such as have not paraded and desire to take part in the eagle shooting, pay $1 fine.
6. Neither horses nor vehicles of any description will be admitted to the grounds.
7. Articles found on the grounds must be delivered at the secretary’s office.
8. Complaints and wants are to be brought before the officers at headquarters.
9. A deposit room for hats, cloaks, and rifles will be provided.

The Club executive officers expected all riflemen to assist in preserving order. In 1875, the Germans stationed a “squad of special constables” on the grounds to keep order. The News and Courier recommended, “Everything is conducted in the most respectable manner, and the most fastidious lady may have no compunctions about visiting the Platz [sic].” The Germans might have hired the sheriffs because of past problems at the festival, but the newspapers do not document any incidents at the Schutzenfest. The editor of the News and Courier noted, “One noticeable feature in this year’s festival is the perfect order that reigns throughout the grounds, and this is due doubtless to the fact that a number of deputy sheriffs have been appointed, who seem to possess a peculiar talent for subduing the over exuberant spirits of the more boisterous of the crowd.”

In 1876, the Germans stationed six deputy-sheriffs on the grounds to keep order. Since no problems arose at the festival, the sheriffs’
primary responsibility was “to keep the gamins from jumping the fences or from crowding the acrobats.”

**Shooting**

A single shot from a howitzer signaled the beginning of the marksmanship contest, and the sharp cracks of rifles rang out throughout the day. The Schutzen adorned their green shirts, and they challenged the Charleston Riflemen in their gray coats and the other native southern clubs in their gray and white shirts. The German Rifle Club opened membership to non-Germans, and they even allowed passive memberships to the Club. Passive members paid a five-dollar entrance fee plus an annual subscription of four dollars. The membership entitled them to all privileges of active membership except the shooting at the target of honor and the king’s shot at the festival, probably the most important event.

The shooting took place in a shooting gallery divided into two compartments, one for the members of the Club, and the other for the public. The Germans normally placed the targets 200 yards away from the marksmen, and the marksmen paid money to shoot at them. The best marksmen won valuable prizes. The Germans used twelve to fourteen reversible targets for the prize shooting, and they consisted of white canvas and a black bull’s eye three to six inches in diameter. The targets could slide up and down in their sturdy frames. The Germans erected the frames above an embankment, and the target minders lay behind them. Every time a riflemen hit the bull’s eye, the target minder waved a red flag, pulled down his target, and detached the center and kept it for reference. Then the target minders added the points to each marksman’s total score. The best marksmen not only won prizes, but they earned the respect of their peers. The German Rifle Club won all the Schutzenfests during Reconstruction.

The “crack marksmen” of the German Rifle Club fired the “superb” and highly accurate Happoldt Rifle, made by Mr. James H. Happoldt, a gunsmith in Charleston. A rivalry existed between the best shots in the club, and they competed fiercely with each other in the attempt to make the greatest number of bull’s eyes. The elderly club members hauled their heavy, antiquated Hapsburg rifles to the shooting competition. The Germans published the shooting rules at the shooting stands, and the target master strictly enforced them.

The Germans included “targets of honor” at the festival that recognized reputable men, including moderate Republican Governor Daniel H. Chamberlain. The Schutzen took shots at the eagle, and only rifle club members shot at the targets of honor, mostly placed at two hundred yards. Club members paid ten cents to five dollars to shoot at the various targets. In 1875, Republican Governor Daniel H. Chamberlain’s target commanded the highest fee of ten dollars for a ticket of ten shots. The George Washington target commanded the second highest fee (five dollars) and the greatest prize (one hundred dollars plus a gold medal). The General John A. Wagener and Charleston targets drew only ten cents per shot. The Germans had placed greater honor on a Republican governor than their own German Mayor, a Democrat. Women aimed and fired rifles at their own targets. Not only did they participate in the shooting, but they occupied the same shooting stand. The targets of honor were typical and appeared at other Schutzenfests.

Visiting riflemen often offered gifts to the German Rifle Club and they became part of the prize list. The Schutzenfest target shooting prize list for 1870 included a double-barreled shot gun worth fifty dollars, and a gold medal worth five dollars (first), a silver pitcher and
waiter worth thirty dollars and a silver medal worth three dollars (second), and a set of silver tea spoons (third prize). The eagle shooting prize list included a set of French bottles and glasses, a rotary album, a silver-headed cane, a cedar cigar case, and a traveling bag. The Germans marketed the prizes at Von Santen’s store until the opening of the Fest when they were moved to the Schutzenplatz. The prizes were exhibited on the grounds in accordance with the rules. In 1875, the German Rifle Club displayed the prizes inside a canopy located at entrance to the Schutzenplatz. The Club valued the prizes at around 1,500 dollars worth of silverware, china, saddle accessories, domestic items, and a choice assortment of groceries, put up in convenience packages, from all parts of the United States, and a package of old Buck Eye corn whiskey.

In another popular shooting event, visitors competed in air gun gallery. Visitors, especially “gentlemen” from the country, who were not affiliated with the rifle companies could pay a small fee to shoot at the air gun gallery. The Germans decorated the air gun gallery with flags, and people paid twenty-five cents for four of their best shots to win prizes. Women participated in the shooting matches and they competed for prizes.

In fact, women had their own “ladies’ shooting gallery” where they competed with each other for prizes. They did not use high-powered rifles and instead fired air guns. The women fired their guns with “remarkably good” accuracy and “with keen appreciation of the value of steady timing.” Women flocked to the shooting gallery. The News and Courier editor considered, “The ladies shooting gallery was, as on the previous days, a place of popular resort, and the shooting was as spirited as it was excellent.” The editor of the News and Courier remarked, “The fair ones showed by the decided hits they often made, right in the bull’s eye, that the had not confined their studies to the art of pleasing.” The News and Courier editor determined, that the women began shooting at mid-afternoon and “many a delicate finger pulled the trigger before sunset.” The air gun fired a sharp-pointed shaft of iron “feathered” with worsted. The News and Courier editor said, “The prizes for the ladies’ target consist of a variety of small articles, all of them useful and beautiful. It was very amusing to see the ladies suddenly close their eyes when they pulled the trigger, causing them, of course, to shoot wide of the centre [sic].” Several “American” women participated, but the German women excelled in their “pastime.” The News and Courier editor declared, “If the ladies who attend the festival (and they are not confined to the wives of the members of the clubs) handle a less dangerous weapon than the sterner sex, they are none the less notable for the air-line shots they make. Indeed, some of the lady marksmen, if such a term can be applied to those of the gentler sex, were quite as skillful with the air guns as the lords are with saltpeter.”

Remarkably, the newspapers do not report a single accidental shooting involving a rifle. In one serious accident, a premature discharge of the rifled twelve-pound cannon during the firing of the opening salute wounded three riflemen. When Mr. Nordall, an elderly member of the German Artillery, rammed the charge of powder down into the cannon, the charge exploded, discharging the rammer and wounding him in the arm. The sponge flew and hit Mr. McCoorish, a member of the Irish Rifle Club, standing about twenty yards away, and it ripped open a gash on his forearm. The rammer slightly injured another bystander. Drs. Lynah and Myers, stationed on the grounds, attended to the wounded men, and they considered one of the wounds dangerous. The Schutzenfest in Charleston was safe compared to those in other places.

The eagle target offered each German rifleman the greatest possibility of achieving notoriety. The Germans mounted the eagle on a pole, and the Schutzen members won prizes for shooting off any limb of the bird. The eagle was placed upon a lofty pole at the distance of two hundred yards from the shooting boxes. Only the members of the German Rifle Club
could shoot at the eagle, and each member took his shot as his name was called. Who had their name called after only the body remained? The Germans excelled as marksmen and some men demonstrated superior talents, but the eagle shooting proved difficult, and sometimes only one German hit the eagle. When a marksman shot away the body of the eagle, the Germans immediately fired a salute of twelve guns, and the Germans carried the successful marksman off on their shoulders. They arrived at a nearby booth and “punished” an “inordinate quantity” of Rhine wine in honor of the festival.

On the last day of the festival, the reigning Schutzen King crowned the newest King in a coronation ceremony. Normally, a leading German delivered an address and the coronation ceremonies followed. The Schutzenfest committee members distributed prizes to the successful marksmen. In the evening, numerous balloons ascended into the air, lanterns illuminated the grounds, and a fireworks display signaled the end of the festival. The riflemen formed a line at the headquarters on the grounds, and escorted the new King and Queen of the festival to the grandstand. A number of “handsomely dressed” little girls, typically from the “best families” headed the procession and the King and Queen followed. The former Kings and Queens, and members of the various rifle clubs escorted the new King and Queen to the dancing hall, where the riflemen and their guests listened to speeches and prepared for the following celebration. Typically, Charleston’s “distinguished citizens” brought their families to watch the coronation ceremony, making the last day of the festival the most popular.

In 1872, the editor of the Daily Courier stated, “King Ploger and his Queen, Miss Schmidt, and her Maids of Honor and escorts were the cynosure of all eyes, as many wished that it had been their fortune to be in the places of those whom they viewed. The gallants were in their cool looking green uniforms, and the ladies in spotless white, as were also a number of little girls who were upon the stand.” The King chose his Queen, and she often came from one of the wealthy German families. African-Americans did not participate in the coronation ceremony, and women appeared in their traditional roles.

Conclusion

Elite Germans organized the Schutzenfest to display the high level of German cultural and economic influence in Charleston. Charlestonians of nearly every race and ethnicity embraced the festival for various reasons. The Germans invited African-Americans to the event, and African-Charlestonians expressed their newfound freedom and attended the first festival in 1868. They continued to attend and participate in the festival, but the Germans began to restrict admission to their “friends” only. Native-born southerners, including elites, quickly embraced the annual event as a tremendous social and recreational opportunity. Moreover, the German Rifle Club never invited the African-American militia to participate in the shooting competition. Only armed whites participated in the parade and shooting events, and they displayed their military power to the entire community. The military parade that inaugurated each Schutzendfest represented an overt display of white supremacy in Charleston. But African-Americans organized their own public rituals that intimidated whites and motivated them to form even more rifle clubs and prepare for a “war between the races.”

Notes Chapter Four

1 Charleston News and Courier, 2 May 1876.


5 *Deutsche Zeitung*, 13 May 1868.

6 *Charleston Daily Courier*, 7 May 1868.

7 *Charleston Daily Courier*, 7 May 1868.

8 *Charleston Daily Courier*, 5 May 1869.

9 *Charleston Daily Courier*, 16 May 1871.

10 *Deutsche Zeitung*, 13 May 1868.

11 *Deutsche Zeitung*, 13 May 1868.

12 *Deutsche Zeitung*, 13 May 1868. He asserted: “Even in our old Fatherland, where many things have changed in the last couple of years, and moved closer to German unity among many objectives and have built in the north a powerful federation, which makes a stand to the respect of all nations, so has even this people’s festival very much contributed to it, to achieve these results.”

13 *Charleston News and Courier*, 22 April 1873.


15 *Charleston Courier*, 14 May 1870. Simons added “Public games and amusements have always been cultivated and cherished among nations, from the earliest antiquity…We contrast with these the joyous amusements of today, and rejoice in the advance of civilization and enlightenment. The sports and pastimes which these assemblages are intended to encourage address themselves to the higher and better sentiments of mankind, and cannot fail to attract those who would sensibly combine innocent and invigorating pleasures with the serious occupations of daily life.”


17 *Charleston Courier*, 6 May 1869; *Charleston Courier*, 27 April 1870; *Charleston Courier*, 11 March 1871; *Charleston News and Courier*, 21 April 1873; *Charleston News and Courier*, 21 April 1874. In May 1869, the editor of the *Courier* determined the German Rifle Club “have made, and are continually making additions and improvements to it, and upon these grounds the annual festival is held...The grounds [were] improved and every
necessary preparation made to render the festival one of the most successful ever witnessed in Charleston.” In April 1870, workmen were already cleaning up the Schutzenfest grounds in anticipation of “one of the most elaborate Schutzenfests that has ever occurred in the South.” In 1871, the German Rifle Club built a carousel on the Schutzenplatz and planned other improvements in time for the festival. In 1873, the editor claimed “The preparations for this festival, which its directors have determined shall exceed in completeness all of its enjoyable predecessors, have been carefully matured during the past few weeks and are now complete.” In 1874, the editor of the News and Courier determined “The recent improvements at the park and the elaborate arrangements that had been made justified the prediction that the festival this year would far surpass that of previous years.”

18 Jacob Schirmer Diary, 2 May 1871, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston.

19 Charleston Daily Courier, 12 May 1870; Jacob Schirmer Diary, 21 April 1873. The editor recommended “Before the recurrence of the next festival the ground should be turfed over. Half the pleasure of visiting the place is destroyed by the excessive quantity of dust that is floating about.”

20 Jacob Schirmer Diary, April 1872.

21 Charleston Daily Courier, 14 May 1870. “Captain A. Melchers, or Captain F. Melchers, Herrs Bergmann, or Von Santen, or Puckhaber, Spangler, or some one of the committee, invariably took the visitor in charge and entertained him royally.”

22 Charleston Daily Courier, 10 May 1870. The Schutzenfest was the lead story. The author of the article practically reprinted the story from the Charleston Daily Courier, 7 May 1868.

23 Charleston Daily Courier, 6 May 1869.

24 Daily Republican, 6 May 1870.

25 Charleston Daily Courier, 7 May 1868 and 7 May 1869; Charleston Courier, 11 March 1871; Charleston Daily News, 3 May 1871 and 4 May 1871; Charleston Daily Republican, 1 May 1871 and 3 May 1871. The New York Schützen, Brooklyn Schützen, the Jersey City Schützen Corps, the Brooklyn Independent Schützen, the Augusta Turners and Saengerbund, and, of course the Charleston Schützen Corps and the Charleston Turnverein accepted invitations between 1868 and 1871. The Charleston and Adger Rifle Companies were also regular attendees. In 1871, the German Rifle Club announced that three clubs would visit, two from Washington DC and one from Baltimore, and the Schützen committee expected a large number of visitors from Savannah and throughout the region.

26 Charleston Daily Courier, 27 April 1870.

27 Charleston News and Courier, 21 April 1873; Charleston Daily Courier, 14 May 1870. In 1870, James Simons, Jr., stated: “I believe I utter sentiments of each and every member of the German Rifle Club of Charleston, when I say, that they are more than gratified by the lively interest, which has been manifested by their friends and fellow-citizens during this celebration. They have endeavored to receive them, on and all, both as organizations and individuals, with that warm welcome which true riflemen extend to their friends.”

28 “The Schutzenfest,” Harper’s Weekly, 11 July 1868, p. 439. In 1868, the Germans in New York invited “[e]very body” and even sent a delegation to Washington [DC]. The President promised he would attend, and the Senate and House of Representatives appointed a “committee of visitors.” Foreign government officials planned to attend and support the sharpshooters representing their countries.

29 Charleston News and Courier, 19 May 1875.

30 Charleston News and Courier, 21 April 1874.

31 Charleston Daily Courier, 27 April 1870.
The Deutsche Zeitung provided detailed coverage of the festival and even announced its program in advance. The other newspapers, the Daily Courier, Daily News, Daily Republican did not report on the festival until its second day.

Deutsche Zeitung, 13 May 1868.

Charleston News and Courier, 23 April 1873.

Charleston News and Courier, 22 April 1873. The message was sent to New York and then forwarded to Germany.

Charleston Daily Courier, 14 May 1870.

Deutsche Zeitung, 13 May 1868.

Deutsche Zeitung, 13 May 1868. The newspaper credited the arrangements committee, especially its chairman, J. C. H. Claussen, with organizing the successful festival. It deserves mention here that Claussen actively participated in Republican politics. This probably negatively affected his leadership role in the German Rifle Club, and the Club soon replaced him with someone else.

Charleston Daily Courier, 6 May 1869; Charleston Daily Courier, 5 May 1869.

Deutsche Zeitung, 13 May 1868.
51 Charleston News and Courier, 22 April 1873; Charleston News and Courier, 24 April 1873. Senator Sprague of Rhode Island attended the festival.

52 Charleston News and Courier, 21 April 1874.

53 Charleston News and Courier, 2 May 1876.

54 Charleston Daily Courier, 7 May 1868.

55 Charleston Daily Courier, 14 May 1870. The newspaper provided a translation.

56 Charleston Daily Courier, 14 May 1870. Melchers was especially proud that more than twenty years ago, “some Germans commenced to give their children, as it is the custom in Germany, a Christmas tree, they soon found many who did likewise, and now you scarce find a family in Charleston, be they American or German, who have not a Christmas tree for their children.”

57 Charleston News and Courier, 21 April 1874.

58 Charleston Daily Courier, 11 June 1868; Charleston Daily Courier, 14 May 1870; and Charleston Daily Courier, 7 May 1868; “The Schutzenfest,” Harper’s Weekly, 11 July 1868, p. 439. Delegates from German Rifle Clubs throughout the US attended a Schutzenfest in New York City. It was the third annual festival of the “Schutzenbund in America, and the largest ever held in this country.”

59 Charleston Daily Courier, 7 May 1868.

60 Charleston Daily Courier, 6 May 1869.

61 Charleston Daily Courier, 10 May 1870; Charleston News, 3 May 1871; Charleston Daily Courier, 4 May 1871; Charleston News and Courier, 22 April 1873. In 1871, the new Schützen flag was unveiled. The club had ordered the flag in black, white, and red satin, and trimmed with heavy gold fringe. The old flag was black, red and gold. While the bylaws of the German Rifle Club called for the old flag of black, red, and gold, the new flag celebrated the national colors of the new German Empire. For the same reason, some of the Schützen retained the old cockade on their hats, while others adorned the new black, white and red one.

62 Charleston News and Courier, 22 April 1873.

63 Deutsche Zeitung, 30 April 1872.

64 Charleston Daily Courier, 10 May 1870.

65 Daily Republican, 1 May 1871. The officers of the Charleston Rifle and Adger Rifle Clubs, both native white rifle clubs, presented silver goblets to the Schützencorps and the Germans returned thanks to both.

66 Charleston Daily News, 2 May 1871; Charleston News and Courier, 2 May 1876.

67 “The Sharp-Shooters’ Carnival,” Harper’s Weekly, 18 July 1868, page ? The editor wrote, “It was common to see a sturdy Teuton loaded down, as is the one in our sketch, with a fat baby and his favorite rifle, and those of his friends who were engaged in dancing.”

68 “A German-American Fete,” Harper’s Weekly, 13 July 1895, p. 664. At the national festival in New York, the waitresses dressed in short-skirted costumes of the German peasantry. These girls wore target-shaped hats and they walked about with foaming steins of beer in their hands or tall Rhine-wine casks.

69 Charleston Daily Courier, 10 May 1870.
“The Schützenfest,” Harper’s Weekly, 11 July 1868, p. 439. The Harper’s editor wrote, “The buildings at Jones’s Wood represented in our engraving have been erected at a cost of over $40,000. A Festhalle has been built for this occasion. The shooting-stand is over three hundred feet in length, allowing for each target—fifty-six in number—six feet five inches, and the same room for each rifleman.”

Charleston News and Courier, 22 April 1873; Charleston Daily Courier, 24 July 1873. The new hall was an octagonal building, about fifty feet in diameter. During the late spring of that year, gale force winds battered Charleston and strong winds ripped off the roof and destroyed the main hall. The German Rifle Club decided to build a new one with the remaining portions of the old hall. The Schützen moved the old building from the center of the grounds to a location at the rear of the grounds on the spot occupied by the groundskeeper’s residence. The Club enlarged the old building and made several other improvements to make it look entirely new. The ground floor had previously been used as the bar, and the Schützen remodeled it, dividing it into office space for the target master and committee members, but reserving an area for the new spacious “ladies’” saloon. The Club utilized the second floor for dancing and other indoor activities of the Schützenfest. A broad piazza surrounded the building. The removal of the main building from the center of the Schützenplatz provided an unobstructed view of the booths on the grounds. The Club tore the groundskeeper’s residence down and built a cottage in a different location. The Club removed numerous pine trees and replaced them with shade trees. Other improvements were considered but they involved “a considerable outlay of money.” The editor of the Courier determined “the Germans of Charleston never stop to consider the cost when they undertake an enterprise of the kind, and the means will be promptly forthcoming as the work progresses. It is proposed to make the Schützenplatz in future a place of resort for the members of the club only, and their families.”

Charleston Daily Courier, 10 May 1870; Charleston Daily Courier, 6 May 1869; Charleston Daily Courier, 4 May 1871; Charleston Daily News, 2 May 1871; Daily Republican, 3 May 1871. In 1869, a dozen pennants hung from each booth.

Charleston News and Courier, 23 April 1874.

Charleston News and Courier, 24 April 1874.

Charleston News and Courier, 2 May 1876. The editor of the Courier considered the balloon station the “most diabolical machine that modern ingenuity can devise for the torture of the human race. The instrument is arranged with all manner of tubes to imitate the squalling of infants, from the semi-basso of a six year-old youngster to the treble squeak of an infant of six weeks.”

Charleston Daily Courier, 27 April 1870.

Charleston News and Courier, 2 May 1876.

Charleston News and Courier, 2 May 1876.

Charleston News and Courier, 2 May 1876.

Charleston News and Courier, 27 April 1880.

Charleston News and Courier, 22 April 1873.

Charleston News and Courier, 24 April 1873. The beer and food would have spoiled without adequate refrigeration.

Charleston Daily Courier, 9 May 1868.


87 Charleston Daily Courier, 7 May 1868.

88 Charleston Daily Courier, 11 May 1870.

89 Charleston Daily Courier, 12 May 1870.

90 Charleston Daily Courier, 10 May 1870. The editor reported, “An event of the lunch was the drinking of a bottle of Rhine wine, sent to Captain Spangler by his old club. The contents of the bottle filled an immense silver goblet, presented last year by the Washington Society, and it was passed around among the members very much after the good old German custom of passing around the horn.”

91 Charleston Daily Courier, 7 May 1868.

92 Charleston News and Courier, 24 April 1873.

93 Charleston Daily Courier, 8 May 1869; 13 May 1870. In 1869, the editor determined if anyone “was not amused, he or she must have been confirmed lunatics, or else must have been in a state of melancholy drunkenness.”

94 Charleston Daily Courier, 9 May 1868; Charleston News and Courier, 23 April 1873; Daily Republican, 1 May 1871.

95 Charleston News and Courier, 18 May 1875; Daily Republican, 1 May 1871;

96 Deutsche Zeitung, 13 May 1868; Daily Republican, 3 May 1871.

97 Charleston News and Courier, 26 April 1880.

98 Charleston Daily Courier, 7 May 1869. A space was marked out in the large dancing hall making a circle around the room of about four feet in width. Two bicycles were entered for the first race, which consisted of a three minute run; the rider making the greatest number of circuits in that time was declared the winner. Mr. William S. Henerey, Jr. was the winner of this prize. The second race was a “slow race” and the rider that circled the room twice in the longest amount of time was declared the winner. The winner took home six bottles of cologne.

99 Charleston News and Courier, 28 April 1880. The walking match entailed a ten mile heel and toe walk for a money prize and silver medal, second man to take second money. The laps were an eighth of a mile each.

100 “A German-American Fete,” Harper’s Weekly, 13 July 1895, p. 664. Harper’s reported, “The shooting may have been the most important object to a few hundred brave Schutzen in cocked hats and green feathers, but to the thousands and tens of thousands of good-natured citizens, with their buxom daughters and scampering youngsters the chief delights of the Fest were the merry-go-rounds, the lottery booths, the dancing pavilions, the bands, the Tyrolean singers, the Punch-and-Judy shows, the magic fishing-tank, the Aunt Sallies, and the negro dodger. Shooting, to the majority, was merely an excuse for a week of real German festivity.”

101 Charleston Daily Courier, 10 May 1870, 11 May 1870; Charleston News and Courier, 26 April 1880.

102 Charleston Daily Courier, 7 May 1869

103 Charleston News and Courier, 27 April 1880, 24 April 1874.

104 Charleston News and Courier, 24 April 1873; Daily Republican, 3 May 1871.
The band was composed of eleven pieces, played by young Charlestonians. They were organized only four months but they played several difficult pieces well.

Prizes included silver tablespoons, teaspoons, knives, and ice pitcher.

Officers of the Riflemen were A. Melchers, President; J. D. Lesseman, VP; C. H. Bergman, Secretary; J. H. Peterman, Treasurer. Captain Gerdes, “a whole-souled son of Teutonia”, presented to the Charleston Schuetzen Club an engraved massive Silver Goblet...Captain Melchers reived the present in a few graceful words of thanks. Captain J. Horstmann of the Jersey City Schuetzen Corps presented the Club with a double case Gold Hunting Watch to be given as a prize to the best shot in the Club. In 1876, the Turners did not participate in the parade. Instead, they spent the day at the Platz and in the evening had a gymnastics meet at the Turnverein Hall on King Street in downtown. The meet pitted the Savannah Turners against the Charleston Turners. The contest consisted of vaulting, turning, jumping and exercising on the horizontal and parallel bars. Two members of the Savannah team won first and second prize. In referring to the Turners and Saengerbund members, the editor of the Courier determined, “The sole object of their presence at that headquarters is to do the honors of the Faderland, and woe to the stranger who gets among them. A tussle ensues as to who shall entertain him, and although blood does not flow, lager does, and he must be a strong man who can emerge from their hands minus the impression that he has been converted into a walking beer barrel.”
Jacob Schirmer Diary, April 1872. Schirmer determined Bond “the same man that exhibited himself as recorded 8 March 1869.”

**Charleston Daily Courier, 24 April 1872.**

**Charleston Daily Courier, 25 April 1872; Deutsche Zeitung, 30 April 1872.**

**Charleston Daily Courier, 27 April 1872.**

**Charleston News and Courier, 23 April 1873.**

**Jacob Schirmer Diary, 21 April 1873.**

**Charleston News and Courier, 24 April 1873.** The rope was an inch and a half in diameter, and was extended over the limbs of two pine trees located about one hundred feet apart. It was kept steady by ten guide ropes that were held by men stationed on the ground.

**Charleston News and Courier, 26 April 1873.**

**Charleston News and Courier, 26 April 1873.**

**Charleston Daily Courier, 7 May 1868, 9 May 1868, 6 May 1869 and 7 May 1869; Charleston Daily News, 3 May 1871; Charleston Daily Republican, 4 May 1871.**

**Charleston Daily Courier, 6 May 1869.**

**Deutsche Zeitung, 30 April 1872.**

**Charleston News and Courier, 22 April 1873; Charleston Daily News, 3 May 1871.**

**Charleston Daily News, 4 May 1871.**

**Charleston Daily News, 3 May 1871; Charleston Daily Courier, 24 April 1872; Charleston News and Courier, 23 April 1874.**

**Charleston News and Courier, 22 April 1874.**

**Charleston News and Courier, 28 April 1880.**

**Charleston Daily Courier, 8 May 1869, 9 May 1868; Charleston Daily News, 2 May 1871.**

**Charleston Daily Courier, 8 May 1869.**

**Charleston Daily Courier, 9 May 1868.**

**Charleston News and Courier, 20 May 1875.**

**Charleston Daily Courier, 7 May 1868.**

**Charleston Daily Courier, 7 May 1869.**

**Deutsche Zeitung, 30 April 1872; Charleston Daily News, 4 May 1871.**

**Charleston Daily Courier, 10 May 1870.**

104
149 Charleston Daily News, 2 May 1871.

150 Charleston Daily Courier, 9 May 1868.

151 Charleston Daily Courier, 7 May 1868.

152 Charleston News and Courier, 24 April 1874.

153 Charleston Daily News, 2 May 1871.

154 Charleston Daily Courier, 24 April 1872; Deutsche Zeitung, 2 May 1876.

155 Charleston News and Courier, 24 April 1874.

156 Charleston Daily Courier, 12 May 1870.

157 Charleston Daily Courier, 9 May 1868. The editor of the Courier does not identify the bear as an actual animal or a costumed person.

158 Charleston Daily News, 2 May 1871.

159 Charleston News and Courier, 24 April 1873.

160 Charleston News and Courier, 24 April 1873.

161 Charleston Daily Courier, 7 May 1869.

162 Deutsche Zeitung, 30 April 1872.

163 Charleston Daily Courier, 7 May 1869.

164 Charleston Daily Courier, 10 May 1870, 11 May 1870.

165 Charleston Daily News, 3 May 1871.


167 Charleston News and Courier, 23 April 1873.

168 Charleston News and Courier, 26 April 1880.

169 Charleston News and Courier, 26 April 1880.

170 Charleston News and Courier, 29 April 1880.

171 Charleston Daily Courier, 13 May 1870.

172 Charleston News and Courier, 27 April 1880.

173 Charleston News and Courier, 22 April 1873.

174 Charleston News and Courier, 22 April 1873.
Eight target markers adorned red shirts and black pants with felt hats, four of them were white, and four of them were African-Americans.

The afternoon the shell road was crowded with passenger-laden vehicles going and returning, and the scene reminded one of a “Derby day.” All kinds of vehicles were visible from the graceful phaeton to the rickety mule cart, and all crawled along the smooth road at varying speeds, the occupants beaming with smiles.” In 1873, the German Rifle Club was the best in attendance with 1860 centers out of 2286 hits. The Savannah Schutzen had another 299. The remaining clubs made a total of 127 centers. Some clubs did not score a single center.

Charleston News and Courier, 2 May 1876.

1. The Eagle. 2. The Target of Honor, resting shots, 200 yards. 3. Washington Target, off-hand, 200 yards; price of ticket for five shots, $5, the prize being $100 in currency and a gold medal, to be awarded to the shooter of the highest number of points on any one ticket. 4. Chamberlain Target, off-hand, 200 yards; ticket for ten shots, $10. 5. John Mitchell Target, resting shots, 200 yards, tickets ten shots, $1. 6. J. A. Wagener Target, resting shots, 200 yards, 10 cents a shot, bull’s eyes. 7. Charleston Target, ticket for ten shots, $1, resting shots, 100 yards; only to be used by breech-loading or Enfield rifles, open sights. This target has only a black centre of 12 inches diameter, divided in ten rings. The highest number of rings in any one ticket entitles the shooter to the first prize, the second highest to the second, &c. The extra club prize will be awarded to that club which has made the highest number of bull’s eyes during the festival on the target: six rings or more will be considered a bull’s eye. The eighth target is for ladies.” Charleston News and Courier, 18 May 1875.

“The targets are the same as they are every year, except as to names, which are changed annually to suit circumstances. This year they have the Chamberlain, Mitchell, Wagener, Charleston targets, and others”

“A German-American Fete,” Harper’s Weekly, 13 July 1895, p. 664. The best shots in the United States attended the national festival. The prizes were worth many thousands of dollars and consisted of cups, medals,
silver plate, and many others. There were a great number of targets in the big ranges, and two “honor” targets besides. These were the “Columbia” and the “Germania.” The first prize for the highest score on the “Columbia” was a silver service of 125 pieces, valued at $1000; and the first prize for the “Germania,” a silver cup 36 inches high, valued at the same figure.

191 Charleston Daily News, 3 May 1871. In 1871, the Brooklyn Schutzen Corp presented a fine gold watch, and the Charleston and Adger Rifle Club each offered massive silver goblets. The Germans reserved the prizes for on the targets of honor.

192 Charleston Daily Courier, 7 May 1870. Other prizes included dishes, a writing desk, a clock, a tobacco box and match stand, a Meerschaum pipe, two walking canes, and a traveling bag.

193 Charleston Daily Courier, 27 April 1870. The prizes were purchased from the stores of W. G. Whilden and Co., F. Koldeway, J. E. Spear, W. Carrington and Co., and F. Von Santen.

194 Daily Republican, 6 May 1870.

195 Charleston News and Courier, 19 May 1875. Maddux, Hobart and Co. of Cincinnati shipped the whiskey through their agent, Mr. Hermann Klatte, wholesale dealer in liquors and cigars. Klatte probably hoped to market the whiskey at the festival. “The Schutzenfest,” Harper’s Weekly, 11 July 1868, p. 439. At the national festival in New York, the Germans imported the prizes from Germany, and groups and individuals in the United States donated them. The prizes were valued at $30,000. There were gold watches and gold coin, silver watches and silver coin, silver tea-sets, goblets, artistic cups, sewing-machines, rifles, music-boxes, wax-flowers, oil-paintings, telescopes, marine-glasses, a collection of lead-pencils, meerschaum pipes and cigar-holders of the same material, beautifully modeled parlor-inkstands of bronze, papier-mâché, and vulcanized rubber; Japanese work-boxes, gold and silver medals, bills of exchange, certificates of deposit, orders for suits of clothing, for carpets, for cooking-ranges.

196 Charleston Daily News, 2 May 1871; Charleston News and Courier, 24 April 1873. The Germans enclosed the prizes behind several glass windows.

197 Charleston Daily Courier, 12 May 1870.

198 Charleston Daily Courier, 25 April 1872, 26 April 1872. Prizes included a cordial set, a toilet set, cup and saucers, lady’s companion, lady’s satchel, water carafe, a parasol, fan, a set of collars and cuffs, and silver-plated garters.

199 Charleston Daily Courier, 25 April 1872; Charleston News and Courier, 26 April 1873. Mrs. Geilfuss demonstrated excellent shooting ability and she won several women’s shooting matches.


201 Charleston News and Courier, 24 April 1873.

202 Charleston News and Courier, 22 April 1874.

203 Charleston News and Courier, 19 May 1875.

204 Charleston News and Courier, 22 April 1873. The mishap occurred about eleven o’clock, and a spark probably caused, probably the explosion.

205 “A German-American Fete,” Harper’s Weekly, 13 July 1895, p. 664. At the national event in Manhattan, the Brooklyn Hospital established a field service at the park, and kept an ambulance and a couple of surgeons staffed it every day. Half a dozen accidents occurred, but none of the men hit with stray bullets suffered any more serious injury than flesh wounds.
A few targets sat at closer distances. In 1871, C. Mensing shot off the crown, H. F. Bonnemann, the head; J. Monsees, the scepter, W. Fisher, the imperial globe, Mr. L. Dunneman shot the neck Mr. F. Kressel the left claw. Each marksman had to name the part of the bird that he desired to shoot or the shot did not count. In 1876, the Germans extended the privilege of shooting at the eagle to visiting Schutzen. They invited them to participate in all but the shots at the crown and the body, deemed the “royal prerogative.”

Mr. Guilfuss was made King and he chose Miss Melchers Queen. Perhaps Guilfuss’s wife did not approve.
CHAPTER 5

THE GERMAN SCHUTZENFEST PARADE AND THE CULTURE OF WHITE SUPREMACY

If German elites organized the Schutzenfest to express their cultural heritage and economic contributions in Charleston, then the accompanying parade demonstrated their commitment to white political ascendency and desire to become “white” southerners. The Germans invited white Charlestonians to participate in the parade, and southerners accepted. Moreover, the parade provided German elites and southerners with a viable alternative to African-American parades that took place on Emancipation Day, the Fourth of July, and other holidays. Most whites, including Germans, refused to march in African-Americans parades, and the Germans organized the largest white parade in the City. Yet, in 1875, the German Fusiliers invited a black rifle club to march in their centennial parade and the German Rifle Club declined to take part. The Charleston newspapers provide extensive accounts of the Schutzenfest, Fusilier, and other German parades during Reconstruction, offering an opportunity to view the relationship between German-American popular culture and politics.1

The Schutzenfest parade presents an excellent vehicle for examining the association between German social and cultural events and the political sphere. George Brown Tindall considers a “new frontier for southern historians is the role of ethnic diversity in the region—more than just that represented by black and white,” and the Schutzenfest parade represents an ideal frontier.2 Susan Davis writes, “While great spectacles are mentioned in community histories or accounts of political movements, less elaborate parade traditions, such as Fourth of July military marches, street ceremonies for local anniversaries, or the mobile proselytizing parades of reform movements, have remained outside scholarly scrutiny.”3 In each parade, the Germans communicated their interest in white social and political ascendancy.

German elites viewed the Schutzenfest parade not only as a cultural ritual that had its roots in German tradition, but also as a political exercise that demonstrated their support for the conservative Democratic Party. Elizabeth H. Pleck has shown that assimilation did not always entail the immigrant’s abandonment of his/her own rituals in exchange for mainstream ones. Instead, she argues “ritual was one means of (selectively) preserving a tradition, which could help the newcomers adjust to a new life.” The Schutzenfest parade offered primarily middle-class Germans an opportunity to preserve tradition and assisted in their assimilation. “In both earlier and later phases of adjustment, ethnic entrepreneurs and community leaders saw advantage in promoting ethnic public festivals,” Pleck writes.4 In Charleston, successful German-American businessmen promoted the annual Schutzenfest.

The Schutzenfest parade took on a nationalistic and militaristic character that many southerners and Germans embraced. Cecilia Elizabeth O’Leary notes this trend, “Out of the crucible of the Civil War, the cultural representation of the United States quickly became a
marital affair. Spectacles of military power increasingly dominated public ceremonies.” Germans invited southern whites to participate in the parade, but they ignored African-Americans and black militias. This led to intense political debates “over endorsement of a nonracialized or segregated vision of the nation” and “the role of women as activists or subordinates within the patriotic movement.” The Germans capitalized on this trend toward a patriotic male-dominated civic culture.

German immigrants from fragmented regions throughout Germany constructed a national identity in the United States that had not previously existed. with each Schutzenf est parades. Immigrant leaders, including Germans, “constructed ethnic nationalism out of materials of their homelands and adopted land.” German elites offered numerous speeches on national identity that emphasized their German heritage and possibly drew indignation from southerners. Although German elites exhibited a high degree of acculturation into southern society, they did not forget their cultural heritage. Litwicki contends that ethnicity entailed a balance between acculturation and “showing that immigrant’s heritage and values were congruent with American culture and so need not be discarded.” “Like African-Americans,” she writes, “immigrants sought to demonstrate that, despite their ethnic ties, they were just as American as native-born whites. Thus, ethnicity was inextricably linked to America as well as to the homeland.” In Charleston, the Schutzenfest parade offered an opportunity to express their German heritage and their adopted southern one. “On ethnic holidays, immigrants and their children did not simply create ethnic national identities; they constructed versions of ethnic Americanism. Their ethnicity informed the way they constructed American identity, but their understanding of American culture and values also shaped their ethnic identity…The fraternal, musical, military, religious, and gymnastics organizations that sponsored ethnic celebrations tended to be middle class in membership, leadership, and outlook,” Litwicki reveals. In Charleston, middle-class Germans dominated the membership of the German Rifle Club and other societies, and they organized the parade and festival to demonstrate their German-Americanism. Most immigrant groups celebrated at least one national holiday either brought from their homeland or created in the United States. Litwicki argues “The main purpose of these holidays was to create bonds of ethnicity that would unify immigrants in America in support of the homeland and for the good of its emigrants to America.” German immigrants hosted numerous social activities throughout the year, but the Schutzenf est and accompanying parade held the greatest significance. During Reconstruction, the annual German Schutzenf est was the largest social event in Charleston and thousands of Charlestonians attended the annual celebration.

White Rifle Clubs

Between 1868 and 1876 elite whites launched a “counterrevolutionary mobilization against Reconstruction” and they relied on rifle clubs, the Ku Klux Klan, and other organizations, to overturn Republican rule. Whites used the threat of economic sanctions, intimidation, and murder to discourage economic independence and participation in Republican politics. White rifle clubs formed in response to African-American emancipation and the destruction of the caste system inherent in southern slave society. Stephen Kantrowitz writes, “As African Americans moved toward social, political, and economic independence, former slaveholders…struggled to sustain the antebellum world’s hierarchies and habits. Southerners
resorted to collective action, including violence, physical intimidation, and voter fraud. They had considerable experience with violence and military organization and they did not hesitate to use that tradition against African-Americans. “In the war over Reconstruction, men did battle, but so did images and ideas flowing from the very different histories of white and black Southern manhood. As Republican militias clashed with Democratic rifle clubs, each group claimed legitimacy: one man’s mob was another man’s militia,” Kantrowitz claims. “White Democrats mobilizing against the Republican government relied on the same strategy of promise and threat, accommodation and violence, that they had employed to govern slaves,” he concludes.\(^\text{10}\)

Whites responded to African-American social and political activism with force. Stephen Kantrowitz argues, “In South Carolina, former slaves and other black men constituted a majority of the electorate after 1867. This new political climate encouraged the formation of interest-based coalitions. One possibility was a union of poor black and white men. Another, mutually exclusive, alternative was building white unity across class lines.”\(^\text{11}\) In the \textit{Schutzenfest} parade, German immigrants and southern whites demonstrated their political unity. German elites communicated their ideas about white supremacy in sponsoring the all-white military parade. Susan G. Davis writes, “Parades were an important, varied, and popular mode of communication in nineteenth century cities…American city dwellers often used collective gatherings and vernacular dramatic techniques—reading aloud, oratory, festivals, work stoppages, mass meetings, and parades—to propose ideas about social relations.”\(^\text{12}\) When the German Rifle Club and various other white rifle clubs took to the city streets, they attempted to communicate something to the public—the parade was a highly political event in its own right.

The German Rifle Club provided a model for the formation of native white Rifle Clubs, and the \textit{Schutzenfest} offered the parade ground for the reestablishment of white supremacy, undoubtedly speeding the Germans’ assimilation into southern white society. David Blight determines, “The bulk of white Southerners had experienced the psychological trauma of defeat; their world had been turned upside down, and they simply could not abide the presence of assertive blacks wearing uniforms and carrying guns, organizing Union Leagues, or voting and serving in the legislature and on the judicial bench.”\(^\text{13}\) Members of the white rifle clubs consisted primarily of middle- and upper-class men who had much to gain from such a public demonstration of their martial and political power.

\textbf{Meaning of the Parade to the Community}

Surely not everyone agreed with the white supremacist message apparent in the \textit{Schutzenfest}, especially those groups the Germans and southerners excluded from participation. More specifically, African-Americans and women did not take an active role in the parade beyond participating as spectators. The \textit{Schutzenfest} parade meant different things to the marchers, audience, and non-participants. Each parade entailed “a selective version of local social relations that hardly represented all communities, all points of view, and all versions of patriotism.”\(^\text{14}\) African-Americans would not have appreciated their exclusion from the \textit{Schutzenfest} parade because they welcomed the opportunity to participate in public demonstrations.\(^\text{15}\)

Political relationships in the city shaped participation in the parade. Susan Davis writes, “Images of social relations were filtered through a complex process of inclusion, exclusion, influence, and planning, until the parade expressed power and special interest more than unity.
and consensus.” “Looking at parades in their social-historical context—in this period a context of change and conflict—reveals that parades do more than reflect society,” she continues. The parades, in turn, shaped social relations in the city. In 1871, the Schutzenfest increased dramatically in size and popularity. During the summer, a German campaigned for mayor and he eventually won election. His candidacy led to rioting between African-Americans and Germans.16

Thus, the German Schutzenfest parade was both a social and political act. “As political acts, parades and ceremonies take place in a context of contest and confrontation,” Susan G. Davis writes. The public nature of street parades suggests “contested terrain.”17 In 1868, the Daily Courier editor rejoiced, “Since the close of the war, none of these celebrations have been observed, and therefore the appearance on yesterday of the German Rifle Club in the streets, armed and equipped for the bloodless contest, created quite a sensation among the good people of this city.” He continued, “People began to think that the Goddess of Liberty plucked up a little courage, left her hiding place behind the fragments of a torn and shattered Constitution, and again smiled—faintly smiled on her rebellious votaries, as the procession, preceded by Muller’s band, wended its way through the streets of the city. Many pleasant recollections of the good old ante bellum period were recalled in the minds of those who witnessed it.”18 Whites embraced the German parade because it reminded them of the Old South and southern tradition.

Southerners joined the Germans in decorating Charleston for the parade. During the antebellum period, mainly German immigrants attended the Schutzenfest and participated in the parade. Following the war, southerners and Germans hung German flags from their windows, balconies, homes, businesses, and halls located along the line of procession, and even the ships in the harbor displayed their colors. Charlestonians lined the streets along the parade route. During the parade, the News and Courier editor recognized, “The whole city wore a holiday appearance, with the large numbers of flags and other decorations upon the buildings, and the crowds of spectators who filled the streets through which the procession passed.”19

During the antebellum period, most parades consisted of several distinct divisions, including citizens, public officials, military personnel, and workers.20 The German Schutzenfest parade excluded only the latter. In 1868, the 130 German Rifle Club members, armed with rifles, paraded in full uniform through the main streets of Charleston toward the wharf. The editor of the Deutsche Zeitung proclaimed, “It was a reminder of the past days our rejoicing again.”21 The reason that Charleston officials allowed the Germans to march through the streets armed with rifles during a period of federal military occupation remains unclear. Probably, the Germans argued the Schutzenfest had strong cultural connotations, not linked to the Confederacy, but to German tradition.

German Rifle Clubs from Charleston, the region, and even from the North participated in the parade. In 1869, the New York Schutzen Corps, New Jersey Schutzen Corps, German Rifle Club, Augusta Saengerbund, Charleston Saengerbund, Augusta Turners, Charleston Turners, and the Germania Turnerbundt marched in the parade. Beginning in 1870, native Charlestonians followed the Germans’ lead and formed their own Schutzen Clubs. In 1871, the parade had increased in popularity and several native more white rifle clubs appeared for the first time. The Germans and their “friends” appeared “out in full force” with rifles and uniforms to inaugurate the Schutzenfest. The editor of the Daily Republican wrote, “the rifle has come to be the one emblem of liberty; and so the Germans, with their deep and passionate love of true liberty, do well to hold their shooting festival—in which a large part of the town will aid them. The present
festival promises even larger things than former gatherings of the kind.”

In 1871, when southerners and Germans recognized the parade had grown substantially since the first one, the procession included several white rifle companies, including the Carolina Rifle Club, Charleston Rifleman, and the 120-member Adger Rifle Club, the largest native white rifle club participating in the parade. Two years later, fifteen organizations from Charleston participated in the parade, including the German rifle clubs of Savannah and Augusta. The procession promised to be the “largest and finest that has been seen in Charleston since the war.” The Germans placed the smaller less prestigious clubs at the front, and located the Carolina Rifle Club, the best native white rifle club, toward the rear of the procession.

Early the morning of the parade, normally six o’clock, Charlestonians awakened to the sound of artillery. In 1870, an artillery detachment of the German Rifle Club fired a salute of twelve guns to awaken the riflemen and “their wives and daughters and sweethearts.” In 1873, a salute of twelve guns from the Citadel summoned the different clubs from their respective headquarters. Then they marched to the rendezvous point on Meeting Street, near Calhoun.

Several distinct divisions emerged in each parade. A unit of target minders and a band headed the procession. The parade began with eight target minders carrying their pointers, and on at least one occasion half of them were African-American men. The cavalry started at the front of the parade, the German Hussars occupied the last position of the three, and their horses’ excrement may have proved difficult to trudge through for the remainder of those in the parade. The cavalry horses of the mounted clubs generally behaved well, but some of the animals that had little or no experience with similar occasions. When the bands began to play, their riders had some difficulty in managing them, and there were several minor mishaps. In the precarious position behind the cavalry, the Guard of Honor, which consisted of five or six members of the German Rifle Club, escorted the native rifle clubs. The small detachment of men carried French Chassepot rifles that Germans had captured during the Franco-Prussian War, and Emperor William of Germany had given the Club. The German Rifle Club always occupied the first and last rifle club position in the parade. The honorary members of the German Rifle Club, Club officers, the reigning King and Queen, and former Schutzen Kings, rode in open carriages behind the German Rifle Club. Around fifteen German girls dressed in white and wearing green sashes rode in the Triumphal Car, a large wagon decorated with red, black, and white drapes, and flags, flowers, and evergreens. Beginning in 1871, the girls carried flags that represented each of the recently unified German States. The entertainers, including the Saengerbund, Turnverein, and slack wire and tight ropewalkers completed the parade. The members of the Charleston Turnverein dressed in white and carried a flag bearing the motto, “Frisch, frei, froh” (Fresh, free and easy).

All along the route, people from all classes celebrated in the streets and threw flowers, and the riflemen placed flower bouquets in their rifle barrels. Spectators lined the sidewalks and watched from their windows, doorways, verandas and porches, and rooftops. Those people could afford it threw flower bouquets from their balconies to their favorite companies. The editor of the News and Courier stated, “The number of ladies who graced the line of march was unusually great, and they threw copious a shower of bouquets that nearly every man in the long column had the muzzle of his gun ornamented before the end of the march was reached. The pageant was a remarkably brilliant one, and by the unanimous voice of the spectators was judged the grandest that Charleston has produced since 1861.” Women crowded the windows and
balconies along the parade route, and the onlookers cheered the clubs as the procession “moved along amid clouds of blinding dust.”

1871 Schutzenfest Parade

The year 1871 marked a critical point in Charleston in the contest for the public sphere. The surge in participation in the 1871 Schutzenfest coincided with white supremacist activities throughout the State stimulated by the creation of the black militia. In response to the Ku Klux Klan violence against African-Americans and liberal whites, Republican officials raised a large state militia. The militia recruited a few whites, but African-Americans mainly staffed the organizations. African-American militias faced opposition from more organized whites who had more military experience than blacks and disagreed with their liberal mission. Moreover, whites owned most of the weapons and they did not hesitate to use them against African-American and white Republicans. At the same time, Republican officials failed to meet the challenge of elite southerners and protect African-American civil rights.

Whites did not respond positively to African-American militias. Stephen Kantrowitz writes, “Black martial mobilization inspired an overwhelming response. Whenever black militia units appeared, their very existence as a body of armed black men provoked the same mass mobilization of white men that rumors of slave revolts had prompted.” Joel Williamson notes “native whites chose not to join militia companies in which [blacks] participated and were reported to be extremely apprehensive of being forced to undergo the ‘humiliation’ of joining a mixed company.”

Instead, southerners formed their own rifle clubs and they participated in the German Schutzenfest and other rifle competitions to demonstrate their martial power. Charlestonians recognized the martial nature of the Schutzenfest parade and used it to their advantage. The editor of the Courier expressed his approval:

Such a parade as that of yesterday, partaking as it did, of a military character, had not been witnessed in Charleston for many years, and many recollections were revived by the appearance of the jacket of gray and Palmetto buttons of the Charleston Riflemen, one of the escorting Clubs. As might have been expected the ladies turned out in force to witness the sight, and lent the charms of their presence to the occasion. All along the line of march banners, German and American flags, were flung to the breeze and the Riflemen in the line were greeted at several points with showers of bouquets from their fair friends.

The parade must have impressed the majority of the white community committed to restoring its political authority in the City. Jacob Schirmer marked the celebration in his diary: “Schutzenfest to day commenced the Germans Gala week, a superb procession paraded the Streets. For the first time since the war four uniform companies well manned with rifles paraded viz. Carolina Riflemen Washington Riflemen, Adger Rifles, and German Corps all showed off grandly.”

At the same time, it deeply disturbed African-Americans and liberal whites, including at least one northern reporter. The parade attracted national attention when a reporter for the New York Herald published a highly critical account of the military procession. He expressed his...
dismay that Charleston’s white population had used the Schutzenfest parade as a public display of white supremacy. The New York Herald correspondent informed his readers:

Yesterday the Charlestonians came out in strong force on several of the streets to give at a very ominous sight. Twelve brass field guns, with forges, caissons and all the paraphernalia of guns in battery, swept through the streets to the citadel, the last place in this city where [the Confederacy held out]. A few days since came one hundred [illegible] of the United States Artillery, and last week came a troop of cavalry, and in the neighborhood of the citadel, the hammer and chisel and saw are heard daily. Barracks and sheds are being erected for the United States troops, who are being gradually poured into the State in view of the so-called Ku-Klux troubles.

The presence of artillery in the procession appears to have disturbed the reporter most. The Republican government had only recently formed African-American dominated militias. While militia members had been armed with new rifles, they did not have cannons. The reporter documented the presence of the African-American militia in Charleston, and he predicted a war between them and the whites. The reporter claimed the South Carolina National Guard consisted of fourteen regiments of African-American infantrymen, armed with Winchester rifles, a “formidable” weapon. The first regiment stationed in Charleston, consisted of eleven companies and totaled one thousand members. Regardless, the Herald reporter predicted the white minority would win an armed conflict with the African-American majority.

Southern whites had formed their militia companies intent on armed conflict with African-Americans. They called their organizations “rifle clubs,” an obvious attempt to mask their martial intentions. The Daily Courier editor admonished the Herald reporter, arguing the Herald correspondent had:

not seen a rifle in the hands of a gray coat for such a length of time that, like some or our colored military men here, he has come to believe that the white men of the South have not right to bear arms. Our Rifle Clubs were organized simply for pleasure purposes. They participated in the German Schutzenfest and if Governor Scott loaned them some of them State arms it is no more than he ought in justice to have done. It may have never occurred to the Herald’s correspondent that the white men have the best right to these arms, inasmuch as their hard earned money was taxed from them to purchase the guns. Both the white and colored men of Charleston are orderly, and unless the blacks provoke it there is no danger of a collision. The Rifle Clubs will never interfere with the “National Guard,” and it is not absolutely necessary for the two organizations, who conflict in no way, to go to cutting each other’s throats.

Southern whites supported the white rifle clubs in their parade. The Broad Street merchants, lawyers and brokers, he determined, “put up their bills, laid aside their books, and ceased their bargaining to look in admiration upon the handsome show…In [Meeting] street the procession marched in open order, and the imposing spectacle of six hundred Charlestonians under arms and marching with measured tread to the music of two brass bands, was for the first time in a long number of years presented to the view.” Subsequently, the annual Schutzenfest parade attracted more rifle clubs and spectator attendance increased.
The Germans did not always attempt to attract the participation of southerners. On March 8, 1871, the Germans held a “Peace Jubilee” to celebrate the German victory in the Franco-Prussian War. This parade took on a highly nationalistic character with probably served to unify the German community. Several months later they turned out to support a German mayoral candidate. In fact, that mayoral candidate probably ran for office in an effort to capitalize on German unification. On February 25 representatives of various German societies met at the German Hall to organize the parade and festivities, and the entire German community celebrated at the Schutzenplatz from early morning until the early evening when they moved to Freundschaftsbund Hall for a ball. Surprisingly, the Germans opened the ball to the German public only. The editor of the Daily Courier wrote, “The return of the peace and the glories of Vaterland were handsomely recognized in our city yesterday...The general public was not, it is true, invited to participate, for the reason that it was very naturally thought that there might be some who did not feel as the victors did, but it was pretty generally understood and given out that all who would come would be met with a proverbial hospitality, and so it was.” The President of the Schützengesselschaft, Alexander Melchers, addressed the crowd, “We may well rejoice, my countrymen, that peace has been made, and German acknowledged as a leading nation of the world.” George Keim asserted his desire that the Germans in Charleston “remain Germans in fidelity, in faith, and in unity.” The Freundschaftsbund Hall filled to capacity and “[h]undreds went away, while the streets outside were lined with persons of all kinds, reveling in the blaze of light, which shot from myriad candles at the windows...and rays from Chinese lanterns.” Rev. L. Muller stated, “Although the ocean separates us from our brethren beyond, the blood that courses through their veins is one and the same with the stream that gives life to every German on this continent. Though we have become citizens in another country, in heart we remain the children of our old mother.” He continued, “Germany’s Unity—the dream of our life—has become a truth.” Five thousand people assembled at the Schutzenplatz, including non-Germans who sympathized with the German victory. Hundreds of people occupied the sidewalks in front of the Freundschaftsbund Hall. Germans celebrated throughout the city and music “all breathing of German patriotism, German greatness and gratitude for the glorious peace” sounded through the city.

In 1872, Charlestonians anticipated the annual festival and parade, and a strong relationship developed between the Carolina Rifle Club, a native white rifle club, and the German Rifle Club. The editor of the Charleston Courier proclaimed,

As on the return of every festival of our German fellow-citizens, who probably comprehend the philosophy of this mundane sphere, as well, if not better, than any race of people who inhabit it. It is expected that the Schuetzen [sic] Corps and their guests, the Carolina Rifle Club, will make a fine parade today. We know that a number of our young men have joined the German Club, desiring to enjoy the association of the members, and have as free a scope as possible in all the privileges that membership entails. The Carolinas—one of the best rifle corps in the city—are not a little interested in the fete, and will lend to the occasion all the cheer they can.

The positive relations between the Carolina Rifle Club and the Germans symbolized the union between southerners and middle-class Germans generally. Jacob Schirmer wrote: “The Annual amusement of the Germans commenced this morning with a Handsome procession, escorted by
some of our young Military Companies, through the Principal Streets to the Depot where they embarked to the Schutzenplatz.”

The 1873 Schutzenfest parade may have been the largest ever. It did not disappoint white Charlestonians such as Jacob Schirmer who claimed the parade “about as grand a display of the Military as they have previously had.” White Charlestonians recognized the parade and festival as their primary holiday and recreational event. “The merry Schutzenfest which, transplanted from its native Fatherland by the patriotic sons of Germany in this city, has now become the great popular festival of the City by the Sea,” the News and Courier wrote. In particular, southern whites appreciated the military character of the parade, especially since only white rifle clubs participated. The editor of the News and Courier reported, “The military pageant which preceded the festival, the display at the grounds, and the arrangements which have been made for the continuance of the festivities, are admitted to have been the most extensive, complete and brilliant that have ever been seen on any similar occasion in Charleston.” The News and Courier wrote, “The general bearings of the clubs, and the facility with which they obeyed the usual orders of the march, showed that they had been trained in the soldierly style.”

Captain Alexander Melchers, himself a German and Confederate veteran, expressed pride in the fact that native white rifle clubs had joined the German Rifle Club in the parade, a “testimonial, not so much for its being an evidence of the good feeling and confidence of their fellow-citizens.” Instead, and more importantly, he argued “there was no other City in the United States that could boast of such good feeling between its citizens as that which existed between the riflemen of Charleston. The festival had well been called the “People’s festival.”

The following year’s parade rivaled its size and grandeur, but it did not quite reach the same heights.

In 1874, Charlestonians anticipated another large parade and festival. The editor of the News and Courier predicted “one of the grandest and most imposing military demonstrations that has been witnessed in Charleston since the war.” Capt. A. J. Mims of the Charleston Riflemen, a Confederate veteran, commanded the procession with the assistance of the senior captains of the other rifle clubs. In a surprising change, the procession formed with the most prestigious native clubs at the front of the parade, in this case the Carolina Rifle Club occupying the first position. The German Rifle Club remained at the rear in the most honored position. Schirmer called the military parade “about as handsome as it ever was and the day beautiful.”

By 1875, Charlestonians had come to expect the Schutzenfest and its accompanying parade “as part and parcel of their diversion.” Yet, the Germans disappointed them, and the procession significantly decreased in size since many of the native white rifle clubs had instead attended the German Fusiliers’ centennial parade discussed later in this chapter. The low turnout may reflect growing political tension between the Germans and native white Charlestonians. The German Rifle Club membership improved slightly to 164 men, and around 200 men from several native white rifle clubs participated.
The Charleston parade did not differ much from parades in other parts of the country. Mainly, the Germans in Charleston had the company of native-white rifle clubs, and in other places, the Germans marched alone. Similarly, however, the Germans in the North organized large processions with crowds of spectators and parade divisions. Not surprisingly, their parade order mirrored that which existed in Charleston and probably Germany. In one important difference, native whites did not exhibit nearly the same rates of participation as in Charleston. The *Harper's Weekly* reporter wrote, “Although the Schuetzenfest [sic] was a German affair through and through, a strong current of patriotic Americanism permeated the entire proceedings.

### German Fusilier Parade

In a display of patriotism, on May 3, 1875, the German Fusiliers, a rifle company founded exactly one hundred years earlier, celebrated its centennial as the oldest military company in the United States. The editor of the *News and Courier* stated, “perhaps there is no society of company in the city which is more closely identified with the past history of Charleston than the German Fusiliers.” The editor continued, “today all Charleston will unite in honoring the day which completes the first century of the existences of the Fusiliers a day so rich with the memories of revolutionary times and heroes so inseparably bound up and interwoven with the history of American liberty, that all true Americans, and especially all true Carolinians, must unite in honoring its observance.” In 1861, the young members of the Fusiliers joined the German Artillery Volunteers to fight in the Civil War and only three German Volunteers survived. On February 12, 1874, the Fusiliers paraded through the streets of Charleston for the first time in twelve years. Jacob Schirmer noted in his diary, “German Fusiliers an old Company and old Company revived, had their first parade this afternoon and were escorted by the Washington Rifle Company.” Ella Lonn observed, “One of the most noted of the nationality companies in the South was the German Fusiliers of Charleston, which traced a long and honorable history back to 1775.”

In 1875, native rifle clubs and Charlestonians assisted the Fusiliers’ executive committee in preparing their centennial parade. At dawn, a detachment of the Fusiliers, headed by a drum corps, marched through the principal streets of the city and woke up sleeping Charlestonians with reveille. At the same time, the bells of St. Michaels played “sweet melodiuous music” and United States Army personnel fired a one hundred guns at sunrise. By seven o’clock, hundreds of flags of all nationalities hung throughout the City, and an hour later, the majority of the community had already filled the streets. The editor of the *News and Courier* reported, “At nine o’clock the streets were filled with ladies, who, with the bright uniforms of the riflemen, made the streets look lively. The entire city seemed to take an interest in the matter, and the various clubs who participated in the celebration seemed to vie with each other in their efforts to make it a parade worthy of the occasion.” One observer predicted the parade and celebration would be the “brightest ever witnessed in the city.” Twelve rifle clubs, including ten native, participated in the parade, but it did not reach the same level of success as several earlier Schutzenfest parades.

Remarkably, the German Fusiliers invited the Black Riflemen to march in the parade, something the German Rifle Club had failed to do. The editor of the *News and Courier* noted, “The Washington Light Infantry, who have always been intimate with the Fusiliers, the Wagener
Artillery, the Black Riflemen, and the Hussars, as a mark of respect, paraded as a battalion of two companies, under the command of Col. T. Y. Simons.” The rifle club members carried bannerettes of palmetto leaves in their rifle muzzles, and the officers hung them from their swords. The Washington Light Infantry experienced their largest turnout since July 4, 1860, when the company paraded 144 men. The editor of the News and Courier believed the marching “equal to that of a body of regular troops.”

Women did not participate in the procession, but they watched the event from the sidewalks and balconies along the parade route. “The ladies, as usual, did honor to the occasion and to themselves by turning out in full force. They lined the sidewalks and windows along the entire route, and as the brigade passed literally rained a shower of bouquets upon the men,” the editor of the News and Courier revealed. In fact, the Fusiliers carried the bouquets of roses and palmetto leaves with tiny German flags in the muzzles of their rifles. The women threw more flowers than the Fusiliers could handle and they had to “transfer their floral gifts to their comrades of the other companies.”

Charlestonians decorated the parade route with the greatest display of bunting to date, including the flags of Germany, South Carolina, Ireland, Sweden, and Norway. The “lady friends” of the Fusiliers presented the company a wreath of laurel leaves and a Eutaw Flag. Captain Samuel Lord, Confederate veteran, presented the flag to the Fusiliers executive committee.

Several speakers at the Fusilier event emphasized German racial and ethnic identity. Captain Lord proclaimed, “Fusiliers! a martial garb becomes you; for you have come from a race of soldiers—a nation of warriors.” The parade assisted Germans in their formation of a distinct German-American ethnicity. Capt. Alex Melchers received the flag and said:

Aye, my friends, we can feel proud as descendants of this great and powerful nation. Where, I ask, is there a German on the whole great and wide world, who does not look with a bold eye upon the glory of his country? And if there be one who does not think so, he is no true son of Germany, not a drop of German blood is flowing in his veins. Have we, as adopted citizens of this country, no right to think with love and admiration of the land where our cradle stood? Or would that man be expected to love his wife better, who neglected and ill-treated his old mother?

Melchers chose to focus on German identity rather than upcoming Fourth of July or Decoration Day holidays.

The Fusilier parade represented the Germans’ commitment to ethnic nationalism. The United States military took part in the ceremonies. A battery of the First United States artillery, in full uniform and mounted, fired a thirteen gun “national salute” at the corner of Meeting and Broad streets. The editor of the News and Courier observed the artillery battery members, “exhibited a degree of perfection in military drill and discipline which does infinite credit even to the well-drilled soldiers who wear Uncle Sam’s colors, and whose presence in Charleston has always been a source of so much gratification to Charlestonians.” He continued,

As the brigade passed and gave the marching salute, by coming to the shoulder arms, the battery returned it by bringing their sabres [sic] to the present. The blue and the gray saluted each other—the much talked of bloody chasm to the contrary notwithstanding. It was a graceful compliment to the day by the brave and thoughtful officers who command
the military forces at this post, and will be long remembered and appreciated by the celebrants.\textsuperscript{73}

The participants expressed a desire to forget past differences and move forward. At the same time they paraded, Germans and Charlestonians memorialized the Civil War, as southerners and Americans generally had begun to celebrate Decoration Day (Memorial Day) in the Month of May. The Fusilier celebration took place in May and the Germans took advantage of the situation to draw attention to their influence in Charleston.

The Germans emphasized their support for the Confederacy, undoubtedly pleasing their southern guests. In his speech, Major Rudolph Siegling focused on two aspects of the festival. First, he noted the parade commemorated “the origin of an organization founded a century ago by the German inhabitants of ancient Charlestown.” Next, Siegling concentrated on the Fusiliers’ Confederate legacy, asserting, “The first burdens of the [Civil] war…fell more especially upon the militia companies of Charleston. In the response of the German Fusiliers to the summons of the State, they again illustrated by innumerable and perilous services the principles drawn from the lives of men that the highest duty of the adopted citizen was to the community in which he had made his home.”\textsuperscript{74}

Charlestonians idealized the Old South, and they looked to the Revolutionary War for more glorious memories. While the Germans focused on their contributions to the Confederacy, they remained deeply committed to ethnic nationalism. The editor of the \textit{News and Courier} wrote:

\begin{quote}
It was a gala day in especial honor of the Germans; but as they and theirs, on a hundred fields, have shed their blood, not as Germans, but as Americans, so the whole people of Charleston joined them in their festivities, and made May 3, 1875, a day worthy to be lovingly remembered all that is best and most honorable in our past shall shine as a living light in the eyes of the people in the United States, and all that is bitter and barren in the past of North and South, shall be put away and forgotten.\textsuperscript{75}
\end{quote}

Southerners continued to hope for redemption from Republican control. To that end, they expressed interest in unifying with the North.

The Germans expressed an interest in unifying the rifle clubs, including the Germans, in white solidarity. Colonel Thomas Y. Simons said, “Between your sister rifle clubs of this city and yourselves there has ever existed the closest friendship and esteem. There never can be any other rivalry than for the welfare of each other, and the advancement and prosperity of the community, the State, and the country in which we live.”\textsuperscript{76} Southerners agreed that whites should look out for each other.\textsuperscript{77}

On May 1, 1875, Governor Daniel H. Chamberlain addressed a letter to Alexander Melchers and the German Fusiliers. Chamberlain wrote, “I have received, with peculiar pleasure, your invitation in behalf of the German Fusiliers of Charleston to attend their Centennial anniversary celebration. I appreciate this honor very highly.” Chamberlain expressed regret that he could not attend because of his accrued “public duties and labors.”\textsuperscript{78} Chamberlain passed on the invitation because he recognized the white rifle clubs, overwhelmingly conservative and supporters of Democratic Party, represented the political opposition. Chamberlain would have disappointed his Republican supporters while providing political ammunition to the Democrats. In fact, the Democrats used the above letter in 1876 to
argue Chamberlain supported the white rifle clubs while rejecting his Proclamation ordering them to disband.

In 1876, the German Rifle Club faced the scrutiny of Governor Chamberlain and Republican government officials in South Carolina. In response to the Hamburg and Ellenton Riots, in which whites massacred African-Americans, the *News and Courier* predicted that Chamberlain would issue an official proclamation “ordering all the white military clubs to surrender their arms and disband at once.” If rifle club members refused, the editor believed the governor would declare martial law and request federal assistance. The editor wrote, “The talk about disarming the rifle clubs is an empty threat. Their arms are their private property, paid for with their own money, and they will not surrender them. That, at all events, will be our advice…If Governor Chamberlain means revolution, in Heaven’s name, let it get on!” That same day, Governor Chamberlain issued a proclamation disbanding the Rifle Clubs. Chamberlain considered white rifle clubs illegal and strictly forbidden, and he employed the military force of the state to enforce the law. In his view, the rifle clubs had committed “open acts of lawlessness and violence.”

On October 11, the editor of the *News and Courier* objected that the government had armed the African American militia, and many weapons had not been located. The editor wrote, “Thousands of improved rifles, ten thousand or more, are in the hands of the colored militiamen, not in armories, but in houses and cabins all over the State. The possessors of them, far from being ‘a well-regulated militia,’ are passionate and credulous negroes, easily alarmed and excited by their crafty leaders.” Whites believed that blacks had thousands of rifles and “whites must be expected to hold themselves in readiness to repel attack, and this cannot be effectually done without organization and concert of action.” “The Rifle Clubs have been, and are, a public necessity in South Carolina. There is nothing secret about them. They have not oaths or passwords. Nor are their members, in some counties, whites exclusively,” he concluded.

On October 20, Governor Chamberlain addressed a letter to the German Fusiliers and Captain Alexander Melchers. Chamberlain pointed out that the rifle club had received 250 state-owned rifles from the Savannah and Charleston Railroad Company in May. He maintained the purpose of the organization was “to ride up and down by day and night in arms, murdering some peaceable citizens and intimidating others,” and he asserted, “I am now compelled by my official duty to direct that the above named arms be forthwith delivered to Captain H. W. Hendricks, chief of police of Charleston.” Chamberlain also insisted that the rifle club disband in accordance with his proclamation. The editor of the *News and Courier* defended the German Fusiliers as one of the oldest militia companies in the United States. He wrote, “The Fusiliers are Democrats to a man, and the letter requiring them to surrender the rifles, and to say whether they are still in existence, comes from Governor Chamberlain.” The Fusiliers make no resistance to any lawful order, however arbitrary, but through them, as representatives of German integrity, manliness and fortitude, every German in the United States is injured and scorned,” he continued.

On November 1, the New Orleans Germans addressed a letter of sympathy to the German Fusiliers. The members of the club wrote, “With feelings of deep regret we have learned that your ancient and venerable corps has at last fallen a victim to the dominant party, and is doomed to dissolution.” “When only a few months since the Fusiliers with other military organizations celebrated that noble festival of fatherization with citizen soldiers of Boston and New York, we believed faithfully that all old hatred was forgotten; that the barrier so far dividing the North
from the South was broken down, and that an innermost intimacy between the sections had been at last reestablished,” the authors continued.83

**Conclusion**

African-Americans expressed their freedom to occupy public sphere in Reconstruction Charleston. They did not want a return to the status quo ante-bellum—something whites had been trying to achieve since the end of the War. African-Americans took to the streets and demonstrated military and political power. However, the federal government officials failed to assist African-Americans in their attempt to achieve political and social equality. Southern whites and Germans attempted to restrict the public sphere to whites only. German immigrants held annual *Schutzenfests* and accompanying parades, and they invited white rifle clubs to participate in the public celebrations. Quickly, white Charlestonians adopted the annual parade as their primary public celebration. Eventually, southern whites, with the assistance of German immigrants, won the contested battle for the public sphere in 1876. German immigrants and native-born whites paraded through the streets of Charleston in numerous displays of white political ascendency. African-Americans attempted to do the same, but ultimately failed in the face of highly organized and experienced white rifle clubs that aimed to intimidate and defeat them. When the United States troops pulled out of Charleston and Wade Hampton won the gubernatorial election, African-Americans had little power to protect themselves. Schirmer put it best when claimed, “Our Political Horizon appears to be brightening, the radicals made no opposition to our members of the Legislature, scarcely a negro was seen in the streets during the day of Election.”84 White political ascendancy had occurred gradually since the first parade in 1868. Whites used a combination of intimidation, murder, and corruption to accomplish these ends, as the following chapter details.

**Notes Chapter Five**


3 Susan G. Davis, *Parades and Power: Street Theater in Nineteenth Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 3-4. In her view, “Historians have analyzed great events and social movements, but they have often ignored the nonliterate, nonelectronic communication through which movements and events are accomplished, interpreted, and remembered.”

4 Elizabeth H. Pleck, *Celebrating the Family: Ethnicity, Consumer Culture, and Family Rituals* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 12, 13. “For the descendants of U.S. immigrants,” she continues, “ritual was one of the few vestiges of ethnic identity to persist for a group living a mostly middle-class American life.”


8. Litwicki, 118.


12. Davis, 3-4.

13. David W. Blight, Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American History (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 110. Blight continues, “Most white Southerners found intolerable the collective and individual demonstrations by blacks of their public identities as citizens during the years of radical Reconstruction. White rage led quickly to individual and organized violence against the churches, schools, homes, farmsteads, and bodies of black citizens, as well as against their white Republican allies.”


17. Davis, 5, 6, 13. Davis continues, “The domain in which public performances take place must be views as structured and contested terrain, rather than as a neutral field or empty frame for social action, and the public nature of street parades should be analyzed rather than assumed. The institutions, practices, behaviors, spaces and places we call the public sphere include the very idea that there can and should exist social interaction open and accessible to the widest popular participation and influence.”


19. Charleston Daily Courier, 5 May 1869, 6 May 1869; Charleston Daily Courier, 22 April 1873, 23 April 1872, Charleston News and Courier, 20 April 1874. In honor of the occasion, the Courier displayed the new national ensign of the German Confederation.

20. Davis, 1-2. Davis shows “On February 22, 1832, the centennial of George Washington’s birthday, thousands of Philadelphians took part in an elaborate commemoration that commenced with resounding cannot fire…The colorful spectacle presented a ceremonious image of the city’s social makeup.”


22. Charleston Daily Courier, 6 May 1869, 14 May 1870; Daily Republican, 1 May 1871.

23. Daily Republican, 1 May 1871; Charleston News and Courier, 21 April 1873, 22 April 1873.

24. Charleston Daily Courier, 10 May 1870; Charleston News and Courier, 21 April 1873, 22 April 1873.
Charleston Daily Courier, 23 April 1872; Charleston News and Courier, 21 April 1873, 22 April 1873.

Charleston Daily Courier, 10 May 1870; Daily Republican, 1 May 1871; Charleston Daily Courier, 23 April 1872.

Charleston Daily Courier, 10 May 1870; Daily Republican, 1 May 1871; Charleston Daily Courier, 23 April 1872; Charleston News and Courier, 21 April 1873, 22 April 1873.

Charleston Daily Courier, 10 May 1870; Daily Republican, 1 May 1871; Charleston Daily Courier, 23 April 1872. The clubs marched through King Street to Broad Street, East Bay, and Market Street, and then to the South Carolina Railroad depot; Charleston News and Courier, 21 April 1873, 22 April 1873. The clubs formed a line with the cavalry above the infantry before Calhoun Street. The line of march proceeded through Calhoun to King Street, down King to Broad Street, through Broad Street to East Bay, up East Bay and through Market Street to Meeting Street, and up Meeting Street to the Ann Street depot of the South Carolina Railroad. In front, the three mounted clubs formed the line according to seniority. Captain Melchers of the German Rifle Club commanded the parade and Captain C. R. Holmes of the Palmetto Guard, Captain James Armstrong of the Irish Rifle Club, and Lieutenant F. W. Pieper of the Wagner Artillery acted as assistant marshals. In 1870, Professor DeHoune, a one-legged tight rope performer, with his son, occupied the last carriage.

Charleston Daily Courier, 10 May 1870. The clubs marched down King Street to Broad, East Bay, Market and Meeting; Daily Republican, 1 May 1871. The procession moved down King to Broad, through Broad to East Bay, through East Bay to Market, through Market to Meeting, up Meeting to the South Carolina Railroad depot; Charleston News and Courier, 22 April 1873; Charleston News and Courier, 2 May 1876. The parade processed up Calhoun, King, Market, East Bay, Broad and Meeting streets to the Ann Street Depot of the South Carolina Railroad.

Stephen Kantrowitz, “One Man’s Mob is another Man’s Militia,” 69. Kantrowitz writes, “While black voters frightened white men, African American militias terrified them. In the eyes of white men, black men were inherently unfit for citizenship.”

Stephen Kantrowitz, “One Man’s Mob is another Man’s Militia,” 70-71, 73.

Stephen Kantrowitz, Ben Tillman, 58


Charleston Daily Courier, 2 May 1871.

Jacob Schirmer Diary, 1 May 1871, South Carolina Historical Society.

Charleston Daily Courier, 8 May 1871.

Charleston Daily Courier, 8 May 1871.

Charleston Daily Courier, 8 May 1871.

Charleston Daily Courier, 8 May 1871.

Charleston Daily Courier, 8 May 1871.

Charleston Daily Courier, 8 May 1871.

Charleston Daily News, 2 May 1871.

Daily Republican, 27 February 1871; Daily Courier, 8 March 1871, 9 March 1871.

Daily Republican, 9 March 1871.
At nine o’clock the bands began to play and the line to move. The head of the column countermarched down Meeting to Calhoun Street and westward to King. When the head of the column had proceeded some distance down King Street the foot had not yet turned out to Meeting Street. The rest of the line of march lay through King, Broad, East Bay, Market, and Meeting streets to Ann street, where the column halted.

The small German Fusilier club, although it maintained a great tradition, was placed behind the three larger, more established Irish clubs.

The line of march was through Meeting, Calhoun, King, Broad, East Bay, Market streets, and up Meeting street to the Ann street depot.

The Fusiliers had formed the Seventeenth Regiment of the South Carolina militia before the Civil War. In July 1873, leading Germans reorganized the Fusiliers, and they named Alexander Melchers, captain; F. Von Santen, first lieutenant; W. Knobeloch, second lieutenant; and Charles Siegling, third lieutenant.

“The Schutzenfest,” Harper’s Weekly, 11 July 1868, p. 439. At the third annual festival of the Schutzenbund, the largest ever held in the United States country. The festival began on June 29 with a grand procession through the streets of New York to the shooting grounds. General Franz Sigel headed the procession.


Charleston News and Courier, 3 May 1875. The Fusiliers had formed the Seventeenth Regiment of the South Carolina militia before the Civil War.

Charleston News and Courier, 3 May 1875. In July 1873, leading Germans reorganized the Fusiliers, and they named Alexander Melchers, captain; F. Von Santen, first lieutenant; W. Knobeloch, second lieutenant; and Charles Siegling, third lieutenant.

Charleston News and Courier, 3 May 1875.
At 10 o’clock, the battalion line formed on Meeting Street, and the Carolina Rifle Club once again occupied the first infantry position and the German Fusiliers the last. The Washington Light Infantry and the Wagener Artillery had great traditions and took positions toward the rear. Curiously, the German Rifle Club did not participate in the parade. The line of march went through Calhoun, King, Hasel, Meeting, Market, East Bay, Broad and King streets to the Academy of Music. The parade stopped at the Academy of Music, and following a prayer by the Rev. L. Muller, Major Rudolph Siegling delivered an address. The Fusiliers had invited friends of the rifle companies, tourists visiting the City, the public, and “the Ladies particularly,” “to honor the public ceremonies with their presence.”

After a steamship excursion around the harbor, a two hour-long reception ensued. In the evening, the Fusiliers with their invited guests attended a banquet at the Freundschaftsbund (German Friendly Society) Hall.

The flag was made at Schuhman’s on King Street. On one side was a wreath of Oak leaves and “The German Fusiliers.” One the reverse side was a palmetto tree with the shield of the US resting at its base.

Line of march was through Calhoun, King, Hasel, Meeting, Market, East Bay, Broad, and King Streets.

Jacob Schirmer Diary, 3 May 1875. Schirmer wrote, “German Fusiliers Quite a gala day of the celebration of their centennial.”
CHAPTER 6

PUBLIC RITUALS IN THE URBAN SOUTH: AFRICAN-AMERICAN PARADES IN CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA DURING RECONSTRUCTION

During the early 1870s, Edward King, a travel writer, noted a marked change in African-American public life in Charleston, South Carolina. He wrote, “The Court-House and the City Hall are substantial edifices, fronting each other on corners of Broad and Meeting streets. Around them are always lounging crowds of negro men and women, as if they delighted to linger in the atmosphere of government and law, to the powers and responsibilities of which they have lately been introduced. At the Guard-House one may note white and black policemen on terms of amity.”

Afro-Charlestonians had gained access to public areas and government occupations that whites had previously denied them. In March 1865, African-Americans paraded through the streets of Charleston in tremendous displays of freedom and political expression, and they continued to their public processions throughout Reconstruction. Each parade provided a forum for political expression and the assertion of cultural and ethnic identity. In organizing and participating in Emancipation and Independence Day parades, and political processions generally, African-Americans celebrated their newfound freedom from slavery and demonstrated their desire to become citizens. Moreover, these parades provided a vehicle for cultural expression in which African cultural roots persisted. Northern whites objected to black political activism, and whites tried to restrict African-Americans’ access to public thoroughfares and buildings.

Historians Eric Foner and Joel Williamson recognize the role of these parades as a critical form of African-American political activism and resistance to white dominance. Foner writes, “In the spring and summer of 1865, blacks organized a seemingly unending series of mass meetings, parades, and petitions demanding civil equality and the suffrage as indispensable corollaries of emancipation. Political organization also proceeded apace in Southern cities, where the flourishing network of churches and fraternal societies provided a springboard for organization, and the army and Freedmen’s Bureau stood ready for protection.” Williamson writes, “These celebrations were significant as assertions of freedom, but they were important in other ways. They obviously gave the Negro population a feeling of unity and an awareness of the power that unity bestowed. Further, they pushed forth leaders from among their own numbers who, in time, would translate that power into political realities.” Recent scholarship on African-Americans in the post-Civil War South, building on the work of Mary Ryan, has focused on the cultural significance of African-American parades. Jane Dailey argues, “the appropriation of public space was an important way for African-Americans in this period to assert their humanity, demonstrate their political rights, and stake their claim to equal citizenship.” Susan Davis considers parades “an important, varied, and popular mode of
communication in nineteenth century cities,” and she shows that people used festivals, mass meetings, speeches, and parades “to propose ideas about social relations.” Yet scholars have largely ignored the role of African-American Fourth of July, Emancipation Day, and Torchlight parades as a mode of cultural communication in Charleston.

Reconstruction in United States History

In 1865, African-Americans began the transition from a slave to a free society, and many blacks sought employment and protection in southern cities. Charleston’s African-American population increased from 17,000 in 1860 to around 27,000 in 1880. On October 27, 1865, C. P. Gadsden observed, “The city is quite filling up, a great many freed men & coloured [sic] soldiers in the streets & a multitude of strange faces, among whom however we are every now & then greeted by an old Charlestonian, & the feeling of sympathy & reunion is not unlike that experienced when friends meet in a strange land.” African-Americans took advantage of their perceived strength in numbers and organized politically. On June 14, 1865, Henry Ravenel wrote from Aiken, South Carolina, “Our young men are going to work in earnest for a living. Everyone sees the necessity of exertion…The negroes are very foolishly leaving their former masters…They all want to go to the cities, either Charleston or August. The fields have no attractions.” In Ravenel’s view, whites could look for honest employment in the city, but blacks should remain plantation laborers.

African-Americans had long relied on a strong sense of community and familial bonds that had originated in Africa and strengthened in the Americas to resist white oppression and slavery. After slavery, African-Americans formed community-based social and religious organizations to assist with their transition into postwar southern society. African-American fraternal and benevolent societies provided a “special flavor and unity” to black urban life. Whites had imposed restrictions on black social activities and welfare eligibility, and African-American social organizations formed to counter them. The benevolent societies provided material aid to community members and the fraternal societies sought to improve black social life.

African-Americans took advantage of their perceived strength in numbers and organized public parades that played an important role in southern society and politics during Reconstruction. Afro-Charlestonians wished to remain free, and the realized the necessity of political activism to obtain civil and political rights. Most whites, however, wanted to return to political supremacy, and they hoped to reestablish the racial caste system. This trend reflected changes taking place throughout the United States. Prior to emancipation, African-Americans in Philadelphia did not celebrate the Fourth of July publicly. By the Civil War, parades had become part of popular culture in Philadelphia, and some native white Philadelphians criticized the Fourth of July parade because of the presence of “an ethnically and racially mixed rabble who lacked decorum, deference, or restraint.”

In parades and public ceremonies, the participants act out their political aims and assisted in redefining social relations. Leaders of the African-American militia, fire companies, and associations in Charleston made parades their most popular activities. African-Americans celebrated the Fourth of July, anniversaries of the ratification of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, the adoption of the Civil Rights acts, and Emancipation Day, and most whites chose to remain at home. Militia companies accomplished many of the same social
functions as fraternal organizations. Their drills and parades “provided release from everyday pressures of earning a living and fostered a sense of camaraderie,” and they assisted African-Americans in making excellent social contacts with the business and political leaders of their community. African-Americans had formed militias and other armed organizations to protect themselves from southern whites, and the black militia marched and drilled in full view of southerners. Many military companies and neighborhood associations became political clubs of the Union League or Republican Party. Republican Governor Robert K. Scott armed and mobilized a state militia in response to Ku Klux Klan and other white violence against blacks, taking its membership from the marching societies and Union League companies. The militia companies and neighborhood associations marched and drilled in full view of whites and blacks. Stephen Kantrowitz claims, “While black voters frightened white men, African-American militias terrified them.” Immediately following the Civil War, southern whites began a “war against Reconstruction” and they entered the conflict well armed and well organized. Kantrowitz asserts, “Between the aspirations of former slaves and those of former masters lay a gap too wide to be bridged. Emancipation and Reconstruction unleashed hopeful strivings among black and white Southerners, but these revolutions also fostered a backlash of devastating ferocity.” As African-Americans moved toward social, political, and economic independence, southerners attempted to maintain the antebellum slave society and its rigid racial hierarchy. Emancipation, Kantrowitz writes, “could not erase the centuries of racialized subordination that had made blackness a marker of social inferiority and subjugation.” African-American military organizations “provoked the same mass mobilization of white men that rumors of slave revolts had prompted.” Republicans organized a large state militia to defend themselves, but whites refused to join companies in which blacks participated rather than face humiliation.

The Political Meaning of African-American Parades During Reconstruction

Afro-Charlestonians viewed the postwar era as, David Blight suggests, “a time of celebration and of ritual role reversals.” Under slavery, African-Americans ridiculed the failures and abuses of their masters as Africans did their own oppressors in West Africa. In Africa, social organizations, workers, singers, and individual villagers traditionally used satirical songs against neighbors, relatives, elites, and rulers who maltreated them. Some African societies limited a large portion of their political satire to holiday festivals. Slaves in North America adopted similar uses of satire, and they used it in a variety of ways to resist their masters, often parodying them in songs. African-Americans relied on the “informal controls that in Africa had accompanied public satire, praise, and ridicule” to skillfully “voice many of their grievances before their masters and openly vent their frustrations and disdain as well.”

In 1865, African-Americans claimed the Fourth of July as their holiday. Southern whites expressed surprise that the holiday had already returned. The editor of the Daily Courier wrote, “It was hardly expected, under present circumstances, that any elaborate preparations could be made by the citizens for the proper celebration of the glorious Fourth of July.” Before the Civil War, southerners had celebrated the holiday with “peculiar pride and veneration.” The Fourth of July holiday had always meant something different for African-Americans and white southerners. Mary Ryan calls the Fourth of July the “central event in the cyclical patriotic rite” and “the focal point of local holidays.” During Reconstruction, African-Americans could freely celebrate in public for the first time, and they attached new meaning to the Fourth of July.
holiday. Afro-Charlestonians appear to have organized the Fourth of July holiday without input from southern whites. After recognizing that African-American’s had organized the holiday festivities, whites scrambled to reclaim the day but they were unsuccessful. On the morning of the Fourth of July holiday, leading white southerners assembled at the Masonic Hall and proposed to organize an association for the “proper observance” of the “National Anniversary” in the future. These elite Charlestonians decided to call it the Fourth of July Association, and it appears they formed the organization because they did not want African-Americans to dominate the procession. In Richmond, southern whites did not respond well to the African-American intrusion upon “their” holidays and public spaces. In fact, they chose to stay away from the Fourth of July holiday altogether. When African-Americans took control of the city’s public spaces, it indicated that the political, social and economic structure had transferred to African-Americans.

Charleston whites recognized that African-Americans had monopolized the public celebration of the Fourth of July, and they refused to participate publicly in the ceremonies. Southerner Daniel E. Huger Smith recalled the Fourth of July “was a very grand fete for the negroes.” Jacob Schirmer expressed his disapproval that African-Americans now dominated the Fourth of July celebration in his usual overtly racist tones. Schirmer wrote:

The Day the Niggers now celebrate, and the whites stay home and work, Salutes were fired. Processions morning & afternoon and Truly a Gala Day it was for the African Race, in the afternoon Rumor Says Our Despotic Ruler had a Party and many a Sycophant who once was a hot Secessionist was there to make obeisance to him and guzzle down his Liquor and the day was closed with a Yankee display of Fire Works on the Citadel Green, The Bells as formerly played its merry tones, and it was the only thing that carried our minds back.

Southern whites no longer celebrated Independence Day publicly because it meant something different to them. It reminded them that the Confederacy had lost the Civil War to the Union. Schirmer wished for a return to the Old South. Moody and Simkins determined the Fourth of July had “once been lavishly observed” but southerners now “studiously ignored” the holiday “since it had been made into a second Emancipation Day and an occasion for the manifestation of patriotic emotions objectionable to white Southerners.” Henry William Ravenel, a native South Carolinian and former slave-owner, wrote, “Our own people are scarcely in a condition yet to join in rejoicing with those who seem to think the day belongs exclusively to them. I hear the Yankees & negroes are co-operating in a barbecue somewhere in the village.” On another occasion, he entered into his journal, “Fourth of July! An anniversary once honored through the whole length of our land. Now our Southern people (the white citizens) feel that they are still ostracized, & under the political ban. Until they are fully restored to political rights, they cannot take a part heartily in a national celebration, which is intended to perpetuate the liberty & independence of the United States of America.”

Some whites did, however, participate in private festivities. Methodist minister Whatcoat Asbury Gamewell entered into his pocket diary, “This is independence day: but alas what independence for us whites of the South! We are now more the Slaves of the North than our fathers were to the crown of Great Britain. The Lord give us a better day.” Many whites did not celebrate the Fourth of July in the postwar period, because they refused to accept their defeat. Regardless, African-Americans continued to organize for the celebration. “The freed people
have a great dinner and invite us to it. I learn that a goodly number of our men attended it of which I am glad. I spent the day quietly at home employed in various ways,” Gamewell wrote. In 1872, some whites participated in the festivities, but most of them left to partake in “pleasant recreation at the various cool localities” outside the city.

Most African-Americans took the day off from work, and southern whites participated in the holiday when they closed their stores. In 1866, businessmen closed their stores and the streets of Charleston remained empty most of the day. The newspapers do not provide an account of any parade taking place that year. Years later, however, African-Americans took advantage of the Fourth of July holiday with a day off from work to participate in the parade and festivities at the Battery. Businessmen closed their stores and “all classes of people” celebrated the holiday except most whites, leaving the day to black Charlestonians.

African-American parades involved the entire African-American community. The parades had an obvious social and cultural function, but they also held a strong political meaning. African-American celebrations presented an ideal opportunity for the formation of a new post-Civil War identity. African-American organization and participation in parades symbolized both their newfound freedom and their struggle for inclusion into southern society. In the South, the parade participants reflected significant ethnic and class divisions, and each “marching unit” acted out their competing identities on the public thoroughfares. Typically, African-Americans organized their parades around the militia, political leaders, skilled workers, and the community at large. Mary Ryan sees the parade as “a peculiar text, intricately entangled with its social and historical context. It has multiple authors: the thousands of marchers who carried their chosen symbols into one composite ceremony.” Practically the entire African-American community participated in Fourth of July and other parades. These parades had an obvious social and cultural function, but they also held a strong political meaning. Joel Williamson explains the significance of the Fourth of July for African-Americans as more than just an assertion of freedom. He believes it provided the African-American community with “a feeling of unity” and “an awareness of the power that unity bestowed.” During the parade, African-Americans selected their leaders that would later assume political offices, and whites quickly realized the political challenge the parades presented.

Afro-Charlestonians dominated the first Fourth of July parade following the Civil War. In the procession, the four hundred person Home Guard escorted the Mutual Aid Society through the main streets of Charleston to Zion’s Church. African-Americans crowded into Zion Church, and they listened to an opening prayer, readings of the Declaration of Independence and Emancipation Proclamation, and the main address. In 1870, the First Regiment of the African-American militia paraded through the streets under the direction of Colonel William N. Taft during the early morning. The militia demonstrated exceptional marching skill with their weapons, a their uniforms only slightly matched. During the afternoon parade, two military companies and the Union League processed through downtown to the Battery. Two hundred people participated in the procession, and the African-American fire companies joined with two visiting companies from Savannah, Georgia and Orangeburg, South Carolina. On the Battery, a large crowd of African-Americans assembled to watch the military display.

In 1872, the bells of St. Michaels Church rang at four o’clock in the morning and awoke black Charlestonians. Five to six hundred black men participated in the military procession. The various military companies and the Union League formed the procession on Wentworth Street in the afternoon, and they marched to White Point Garden on the Battery. The participation of the Union League probably brought tremendous conservative opposition. Southerners expressed
hostility toward the organization. Otis Singletary considers the Union Leagues instrumental in providing African-Americans with a necessary “political indoctrination.” According to Singletary, “Its clandestine meetings and mysterious initiation rites, shrouded in secrecy, led to the wildest speculation and gave rise to all sorts of groundless fears on the part of the whites.” During the early years of Reconstruction, the Union League joined the militia and aggravated already strained relations between whites and African-Americans, and whites responded with violence against them.  

Southern whites objected to the heightened level of African-American militancy. Augustine Smyth wrote home, “Mother they are awful! And then when their animal nature, ready for anything like riot or robbery is applied the teachings & drillings, which these negro troops that have infested our country have been so eager to inculcate, when from the ignorant he rises into the bloodthirsty & revengeful brute, eager to possess all he sees, unable to look beyond the present merely acting under the direction of blind & maddened impulse, of animal desires & passions.”

African-Americans gathered for Emancipation Day parades throughout the South. Emancipation Day parades had political and class implications. Black and white Republicans attempted to expand black civil rights but also to maintain political power in the South. In Richmond, Virginia, blacks and whites assembled for public celebrations they discussed compelling social, economic, and political issues. In their participation in public celebrations African-Americans took “step toward claiming citizenship.” Emancipation Day processions took place in nearly every southern city. The 1868 Emancipation Day procession in Nashville included the military companies, Sons of Relief, Barbers Association, Mutual Relief, Mechanics Association, and Equal Rights League. Throughout the South, African-American men, women, and children, “struggled to define on their own terms the meaning of freedom in the process to construct communities of struggle.” They used parades to construct that meaning while assisting in their own identity formation. During Reconstruction, the primary African-American public celebration took place on Emancipation Day. That was probably true in Charleston because thousands tended to turn out for the latter versus hundreds for the Fourth of July.

African-Americans in Charleston celebrated Emancipation Day on the first day of each year to commemorate Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation. In 1865, Afro-Charlestonians celebrated their emancipation in a massive procession that stretched two and a half miles through the principal streets of the city. The crowds cheered continuously for Abraham Lincoln. The editor of the Daily Courier wrote, “It was an event of great rejoicing with the colored population of Charleston, and will never be forgotten by them in the new career upon which they have now entered.” Surprisingly, the editor wrote, “The whole affair was very successful, and reflects much credit on all concerned.” The editor of the Daily Courier used positive tones in referring to the parade, but he could not have predicted they would reoccur with regularity and fervor.

In March 1865, African-Americans paraded in full view of the public to celebrate their emancipation. During Reconstruction, black leaders, often ministers, organized Emancipation Day celebrations, and thousands of freedmen and freedwomen participated in the annual celebration. A large segment of the African-American community participated in the parade. Military officers, ministers, and a large number of “gentlemen” participated in the celebration. At around noon, a crowd began to assemble at the Citadel Square and it reached around four thousand people within two hours. Colonel Bennett commanded the Twenty-First Regiment United States Colored Troops and its band. The various trades people, associations and mutual
aid societies, and African-American school children followed the troops. Whatcoat Gamewell wrote, “The public square was filled with the poor colored people. Heard some of them speak. The main point was that they must have half the crop. Several apply to us for hire.” Emma Holmes noticed the parade’s attraction, “Tremendous excitement prevailed, as [African-Americans] prayed their cause might prosper & their just freedom be obtained. Great numbers of servants went off from town really crazy from excitement & the parade, as well as the idea of going to Charleston in carriages.”

African-Americans probably viewed Emancipation Day on the First of January as an extension of their traditional weeklong Christmas holiday. Henry Ravenel wrote, “The old custom of several days holiday among the negroes still prevails. They are taking their time, easy & happy & thinking but little of the future.” African-Americans organized their Emancipation Day celebration in advance of the Christmas holiday season.

On the fifth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, large crowds lined the streets in Charleston to watch the procession of African-American fire companies and societies. The marchers carried banners and paraded the principal streets to the sound of band music. The editor of the Daily Courier claimed the parade “presented quite an imposing appearance.” He continued, “To the credit of the freedmen it may be said, the celebration passed off in the most orderly manner and without the slightest disturbance.” In their paternalistic view, most southern whites believed African-Americans could not control their passions, and probably feared or expected a riot on this day. But African-Americans proved these racist ideas unfounded, and the majority of the parades occurred without violence.

African-Americans celebrated both with a public parade and they continued in the privacy of their own homes. They dressed in their holiday clothes and military uniforms. The military companies, Union League, Masonic Lodges, Longshoremen’s Union, civic societies, and drum corps formed for the procession with their banners or rifles in hand. In 1871, Magistrate W. H. Mishaw gave an address at Military Hall in which he urged that African-Americans continue to celebrate the holiday. Mishaw used the occasion to discuss the history of the American slave trade, and he called on Afro-Charlestonians to “pledge our fealty and devotion to the principles for which a Brown, a Lincoln, and a Randolph died.” In 1871, thousands of people gathered at White Point Garden at the Battery to hear Captain J. W. Lloyd read the Emancipation Proclamation. In 1873, African-Americans celebrated the tenth anniversary of their emancipation with passion and enthusiasm. Again, the African-American filled the streets and sidewalks along the militia’s parade route. Colonel William N. Taft directed the ten or twelve companies totaling five to seven hundred men of the First Regiment of the National Guard.

African-American celebrations presented an ideal opportunity for identity formation. In these parades, African-Americans constructed their own racial identity as they continued to struggle for inclusion to United States society. African-American organization and participation in parades symbolized their newfound freedom. Alessandra Lorini believes post-Civil War parades “represented the forces unleashed by the abolition of slavery that profoundly affected the country’s future.” In Richmond, Virginia, the presence of African-American militia in the parades marked a significant change from the antebellum era. During the antebellum period, white militia companies paraded on Capitol Square and they barred African-Americans from that same space. During Reconstruction, however, African-Americans seized the city’s most important public space on the Fourth of July, on Washington’s Birthday, and on the two Emancipation Days, while the majority of whites stayed away from the celebrations.
The Virginia Grays and other African-American militia paraded and drilled on the square and非洲-Americans spectators cheered them.\textsuperscript{57} When government officials formed state militia and armed African-Americans, whites overwhelmingly objected to the move. Most southerners, such as George Walton Williams, Charleston’s most successful entrepreneur, overwhelmingly opposed the formation of the African-American militia. In a letter to South Carolina Governor Robert K. Scott, Williams stated, “I sincerely hope that the Charleston editor is the victim of an April fool...You have lived long enough at the South, Governor, to learn something of the negro character, and how easily they are drawn from their daily pursuits by circus exhibitions and military parades. The formation of a few negro regiments at this time, would not only have the most disastrous effects upon the agricultural laborers (both white and black) of the State, but would unquestionably lead to a war of races.”\textsuperscript{58} The sight of African-Americans marching through the streets armed with powerful rifles irritated southern whites.\textsuperscript{59}

**African-American Culture and Community Participation in the Processions**

A study of the parade reveals that a tremendous cross-section of the African-American community participated in the Emancipation Day Procession. The most important participants led the procession and included politicians, organizational leaders, business professionals, and the militia.\textsuperscript{60} Yet the overwhelming majority of the participants came from the laboring class. Young boys and girls participated in the parade. In 1865, a group of schoolboys followed the troops, and they carried a banner that read, “We know no masters but ourselves.” Thirteen young girls dressed in white, with white head wreaths, followed the boys in the “Car of Liberty.” Next, the preachers, elders and Sunday school teachers of the African-American congregations carried their bibles and hymnbooks. Perhaps more imposing, around eighteen hundred African-American school children appeared in the procession with their white officers and teachers. The carefully dressed children, many carrying bouquets, sang and cheered, and carried banners with them that said: “We know no cast or color” and “The Heroes of the War: Grant, Sherman, Sheridan, Thomas, Dahlgren, Terry, Proth, the Private.”\textsuperscript{61}

Adult workers participated in the emancipation parades. In the nineteenth century, skilled workers normally participated in the procession and unskilled majority made up the audience.\textsuperscript{62} In Charleston, a large number of African-American skilled workers took part in the procession, including a large group of tailors and coopers, makers of barrels, and firemen at the head of the procession. More skilled and semi-skilled workers followed, including carpenters, wheelwrights, blacksmiths, painters, barbers, masons, coach, carriage, wagon and dray drivers, and farmers, all bearing some implement of their trade. The newspapers do not document the attendance of unskilled laborers. While the workers did not carry rifles, many of them did have tools that could have been used as, or at least symbolized, weapons.\textsuperscript{63}

African-American men, women and children in the South actively participated in the political process for the first time. Although women did not earn the franchise, they did participate in political meetings in large numbers and organized political societies during the 1860s and 1870s. African-American women in Richmond organized a ceremonial militia company for emancipation day activities in the late 1870s.\textsuperscript{64} The presence of women in African-American public processions was highly symbolic, especially since most people disapproved of women taking part in public ceremonies.\textsuperscript{65}
Women played an important role in the Emancipation Day celebration in Charleston. One young woman presented a banner to a black rifle club and gave a speech on the steps of City Hall. In the afternoon, the Randolph Riflemen, an African-American militia company, marched up Meeting Street, and halted in front of the City Hall steps. Militia Captain R. B. Arston’s daughter unfurled a banner that she and her friends had made for the company. She presented the banner with a prepared speech that she read from a manuscript. The presentation attracted a large number of spectators. Typically, women did not take an active role in parades until the 1870s.

African-American women took advantage of the Fourth of July and Emancipation Day holidays to supplement their income. Most whites closed their stores for the holiday, and black women set up small stands and sold ginger bread and soda water along Meeting-street and South Battery. Daniel E. Huger Smith, a native-white Charlestonian, recalled, “On Meeting Street from Chalmers Street to the South Battery and along the South Battery the sidewalks were crowded with booths kept by old negro maumas, and many more were under the trees on the Battery. The viands they sold were mostly sweet, and drinks cooling. Whatever you bought you ate standing up or walking, and consumed your soft drinks on the spot.” Enterprising African-American saleswomen walked ahead of the procession and sold substantial amounts of ice cream, ice-lemonade, and foodstuffs along the parade route. Around three thousand African-American men, women, and children of all ages congregated at the Battery. African-American entrepreneurs set up numerous refreshment booths and conducted “a prosperous business” along the parade route and at the Battery.

During the Emancipation Day parade, African-Americans began filling the streets and sidewalks early in the morning. Southerners expressed their dismay that African-American men, women and children, attended the parade, and in the process, they took possession of the sidewalks “to the absolute exclusion of non-interested pedestrians.” Augustine Smyth expressed his dismay with the Emancipation Day parade and all that it symbolized. He wrote, “The poor negro, besotted with ignorance, & so full of freedom, looking forward to January as to some day of Jubilee approaching, with all the difficulties & dangers of a free man’s life to encounter, & none of the experience or sense necessary to enable him successfully to battle with them, thinking only that freedom confers the privilege of going where & doing as they please, work when they wish, or stop if they feel disposed, & yet be fed, supported & cared for by his Master, lazy, trifling, impertinent!” Black Charlestonians looked forward to the holiday while whites despised it.

Jacob Schirmer attacked whites who attended and participated in the Emancipation Day festivities. He ranted “‘Our Free Niggers’ made a fine show today both in the Military and Civil branch, the day was fine and warm, after carrying out their program an Oration was delivered at the Battery by one Delaney (A Black), but two white men showed themselves publicly, the famous T. J. Mackey and his boon companion Coroner Taft. There were one or two other white ‘Niggers’ in carriages, but their seats so arranged as to prevent them from being recognized with their fraternity.” Several years later, Schirmer strongly objected to the city ordinance that forced white firemen’s companies to parade with the African-American ones. In his view, the Firemen’s parade had “been a gala day for the citizens but its glories are gone and gone forever.” The following year, Schirmer wrote, “The Parade of the Fire department was but a sorry affair, had no display and a Rain coming up, they were disrupted without any exercise, every thing smelt too strong of ‘Nigger.’” White Military Companies are now forming and arms
are given to them.” Schirmer was not alone in his racist beliefs. In the mind of southerners, whites who fraternized with African-Americans became black themselves.

The Fourth of July parades began early in the morning so the participants might escape the heat. Daniel E. Huger Smith recalled, “The military parade always took place on account of the heat very early in the morning, and was dismissed with the firing of three volleys on the East Battery.” Typically, African-Americans began their Fourth of July Celebration with an early morning military parade through downtown Charleston. The parade began with a cannon salute that was noticeably absent from the Emancipation Day parade. At dawn, military personal fired “national salutes” from the Citadel Green and Fort Sumter and another at sunset. During the evening, a massive crowd gathered to watch the fireworks. On at least one occasion, navy personnel fired salvo from their ships in the harbor. Sailors decorated all the vessels in the harbor with flags and variegated lanterns that glowed in the night. When the procession reached the Battery, military personnel fired salvo from cannon stationed there.

African-Americans constantly reinterpreted the meaning of the Fourth of July celebration. At the Battery, politicians gave speeches, including one in which influential black Richard H. Cain recalled that the 1867 Fourth of July celebrated the anticipated Fifteenth Amendment. This day, however, African-Americans celebrated its ratification. Colonel Martin Delany warned blacks not to follow white men or they would find themselves “again in slavery.” Afro-Charlestonians stacked their arms and surrounded the speakers’ stand to listen to political rhetoric spout from Republican leaders such as Lieutenant Governor Alonzo J. Ransier, who gave a speech. Someone else read the Declaration of Independence.

Emancipation celebrations offered Republican leaders an excellent opportunity to reach the masses through their eloquent rhetoric. On April 15, 1865, African-Americans gathered at Zion Church to hear William Lloyd Garrison and Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts. The Republican leadership preached self-help, education, thrift, and constraint from revenge. After the speakers finished, the two thousand spectators formed a procession and escorted them back to the Charleston Hotel, and they continued beyond the hotel and late into the night. In May 1870, five thousand people gathered around the speakers stand or under shade trees to escape the hot sun, and they listened to various political speeches to commemorate the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment. In 1873, Martin R. Delany and A. Mansin gave speeches and Major Sam Dickerson concluded the celebration with a reading of the Emancipation Proclamation.

**African Culture in Emancipation Parade**

African-American celebrations in Reconstruction demonstrated tremendous amounts of African culture. During the antebellum period, African-Americans celebrated any holiday that allowed them observe their own sense of community. A defining characteristic of any ethnic groups and ethnic identity entails a sense of community. African-Americans participated in a variety of European-American holidays and that led to a blending of European and African culture. African-American celebrations throughout the United States entailed clearly identifiable African cultural forms. William D. Piersen writes, “African-American parades featured boisterous, improvised music and back-and-forth interaction between male and female spectators and parade performers. Neither feature was typical of white parades or processions of the era, but both prevailed in black rites in West Africa and the Caribbean.” African-American spectators played a critical role in the humor of black festivals and they observed and
participated in these dramatic processions or “plays.” The interaction between the performer and audience comprised an essential part of the event.\(^{82}\)

African-Americans valued satire in their festivals and plays. In many antebellum celebrations, African-American humorists focused on the pretentiousness of the master class. In West Africa, festival performers directed satire at the people in power. The satire often appeared in song lyrics that “targeted moral and ethical pretensions” of those in power. In the United States, African-Americans used the songs “as they had in Africa: to mobilize and affirm the ultimate authority of community values.” Slaves entertained each other with satiric performances at informal gatherings called plays and formal occasions such as corn husking, elections, parades, and militia training. In the early nineteenth century, black militia parades included satirical performances.\(^{83}\)

Parades in Charleston, South Carolina resembled those in Africa. In Africa, the central performers in the parade wore special costumes and the audience formed a “second line” and interacted with the main participants, moving along with the procession. This proved true at African-American parades occasions where individual performers competed for audience approval. The audience expected improvisation and “stylistic embellishment,” but they approved only when the performers artistry remained within their social boundaries.\(^{84}\) A noticeable characteristic of the parades, African-Americans followed the parade as it processed through the streets, filling the sidewalks and walking at the rear. Thousands of Charlestonians followed the procession through the principal streets and toward the Battery.\(^{85}\) The *Daily Republican* recalled, “During the march the streets were one moving sea of humanity, and cheer after cheer of delight was sent up.”\(^{86}\)

African-Americans dramatists performed two rituals during the procession that deserve attention here. African-Americans effectively conveyed their message of freedom upon the thousands of spectators. During the emancipation celebration on March 21, 1865, men, women and children overflowed from the Citadel-square into the streets on either side, and four thousand people participated in the procession. A mule pulled a cart containing an auctioneer that stood over two African-American women seated on a block with their children standing near them. Adding to the drama, several men and women in the “gang to be sold” followed with their hands tied to the cart with a long rope. A boy in the cart vigorously rang a bell to attract the attention of the audience. A sign on the cart said, “A number of negroes for sale.” As the cart processed along the street, the auctioneer appealed to the crowd for bids, making use of the phrases normally heard in a slave auction-room. As the procession moved along, the auctioneer repeatedly asked the spectators: “How much am I offered for this good cook?” He called out loudly: “She is an excellent cook, can make three kinds of mock turtle soup, from beef, fowls, or fish.” “Two hundred, three hundred and fifty; four hundred,” he requested until he reached from twelve to fifteen hundred dollars in Confederate money. Some spectators bid extravagant amounts for good field hands or mechanics. In fact the auctioneer would not accept bids lower than one thousand dollars. The slave auctioneer acted his part well, and he made the spectators laugh.\(^{87}\) Women, children, and men participated in the ritual. The auctioneer concentrated on the positive attributes of an African-American female cook, and he attempted to sell field hands and mechanics. The ritual had dual meanings to the participants and the spectators. The “slaves” had previously been tied down, but now freedmen and women paraded through the streets of Charleston in full view of the entire population.

In the next ritual, African-Americans mourned the death of slavery in a mock funeral procession that attracted much attention. Following the slave auction, a hearse carried a coffin
with the inscriptions: “Slavery is dead;” “Who owns him?” “No one;” “Sumter dug his grave on the 13th of April, 1861.” A group of mourners dressed in black followed the hearse. The African-American dramatists communicated their message of freedom in a manner that would normally inspire sadness rather than joy. But this was a joyous occasion and African-Americans used the funeral to attract attention, and it worked.\textsuperscript{88}

Southern whites did not agree with the symbolism imbedded within the parade’s dramatic performances. The \textit{New York Times} correspondent determined, “Charleston never before witnessed such a spectacle as that presented on Tuesday of last week. Of course, the innovation was by no means pleasant to the old residents, but they had sense enough to keep their thoughts to themselves. The only expressions of dislike I heard uttered proceeded from a knot of young ladies standing on a balcony, who declared the whole affair was ‘shameful,’ ‘disgraceful.’”\textsuperscript{89}

In fact, southern whites never approved of these large and imposing African-American parades and their accompanying patriotic rituals. Immediately, whites promoted violent confrontation as a means to quelling black political activity in Charleston. In response to a mass meeting at the Zion Church, whites circulated a rumor among the African-American community that whites would shoot anyone “who entered into any jubilant expressions on account of Union successes.” The \textit{Daily Courier} editor warned his conservative readers that African-Americans had “evinced a determination to go forward and do what they can toward establishing sound Union principles in this city, and, unless the white people are energetic in their movements they will find the work will have been accomplished.”\textsuperscript{90} The latter remarks probably promoted white hostility and aggression toward African-American demonstrators. In their effort to control African-American activism, white southerners inspired some of the most violent riots in United States history.\textsuperscript{91} African-Americans continued to express their freedom in Emancipation Day and Independence Day parades despite tremendous opposition from white southerners.

African-American celebrations usually entailed some sort of humor. James Phillippo wrote, “when attracting the gaze of the multitudes at their annual carnivals by their grotesque appearance and ridiculous gambols, the blacks have been often known to indulge in the keenest satire and merriment at their own expense.”\textsuperscript{92} In 1868, African-Americans in Columbia, South Carolina celebrated the Fourth of July with a procession of various political organizations and ending with a Republican mass meeting. Hundreds of African-Americans and a lesser amount of whites crowded the sidewalks to watch the “masquers” in the annual “Invincibles” parade. South Carolina whites and blacks had celebrated the festival in the years just before the Civil War. The \textit{New York Times} correspondent called it “a motley array of grotesque, fancy and comic characters, who parade through the principal streets, with music, mock ceremonies and antics of the circus order.” He compared it to carnivals in southern Europe, but recognized “the styles are widely different.” For two hours, one hundred African-Americans, adorning masks and extravagant outfits, walked, danced, rode horses, or sat in carts. They dressed as women, priests, military officers, monkeys, birds, and monsters. Many people in the procession carried humorous banners. In one instance, a group of African-Americans carried a banner made of brown paper with the letters “K.K.K.” drawn on it. Approximately 400 African-American men and women and around 20 whites attended the political meeting following the annual parade.\textsuperscript{93}
African-Americans overwhelmingly supported the Republican Party, and they took an active role in municipal politics. The Republican Party leadership organized mass meetings and parades in preparation for the municipal election. The typical assembly attracted from one to five hundred African-Americans and around fifty whites, and included a torchlight procession through the principal streets of Charleston. The procession often incorporated fifes and drums and those in parade voiced their concerns. In an effort to intimidate the Republicans, white Democrats armed themselves and assembled at various points along the parade route. African-Americans expressed a profound determination to participate in Charleston’s politics. In defiance of white harassment, African-American paraded through the streets and some of the processions took on a more militant tone. In August, the procession began at the Military Hall, and the Republican supporters marched through the streets armed with bludgeons and sticks. As the procession passed the Guard House, some of the participants threw bricks at the building and vocally expressed their disapproval. The group also threw bricks at several streetcars because the conductors failed to stop for the procession.

African-Americans often held torchlight parades during the evening hours. Men, women and children turned out to discuss to discuss political and civil rights and express their grievances. In her discussion of a Fourth of July torchlight parade, Mary Ryan asserts “[T]hey did so at night, when the flickering lights of torches could not clearly illuminate the identity of the participants nor the mottoes inscribed upon their banners.” In Charleston, however, African-Americans demonstrated their newfound right to remain outside on the city streets after dark. During the antebellum period, whites had forced African-Americans, both slave and free, to return to their homes after dusk. African-Americans did not seek anonymity; instead, they marched in a profound expression of freedom.

Southern whites objected to torchlight processions and political meetings. Southern whites did not approve of the heightened level of African-American political activity. C. P. Gadsden wrote, ”There was a freeman’s mass meeting held last night at Zion church—to memorialize the Legislature but upon what subject I have not yet been able to learn. We have however malignant enemies in the radicals, & they will do all they can to make us feel the deepest humiliation of defeat.” African-Americans sought organizations that would afford them protection from whites determined to maintain the antebellum hierarchy. In 1867, Jacob Schirmer made the following entry in his diary, “Mass meeting of “Niggers” on Citadel Green this afternoon as usual. Honorable Judge Moore was Chairman, Speeches were made by J. P. M. Epping our US Marshall and a lot of others, at dark some of them attempted to take possession of a Street Car, and the Military & Police were called in requisition, at night a Torch Light procession, which was kept up till near morning Oh! Tempora. Oh! Mores.” On another occasion Schirmer wrote, “Torch Light procession this evening by little niggers and then went to Military hall to hear speeches, ratifying the nomination of “Grant” by the Philadelphia Convention, Proceedings to disgusting to record.”

During the evening, men and women of all ages participated in possibly the largest torchlight procession in Charleston’s history. Celebrants fired rockets, roman-candles, and other fireworks into the night sky. Parade participants carried humorous banners with political slogans that included: “We have played together, you say; but were we ever whipped together” and “What the Citizens’ party don’t like—to parade with ’niggers.” A picture of a jackass named ‘Citizens’ Party’ saying ‘Oh, our colored fellow-citizens, how I love you!’ appeared on another
banner. When the hundreds of torchbearers reached White Point Garden, they found it filled with an enthusiastic crowd. At 11 P.M. William J. Whipper ended the celebration when he said, “[T]his great celebration has left a memory with us which not only the colored but the white citizens of the community ought to cherish through their lives.” The editor of the Daily Republican noted that whites, their “life-long” enemies exhibited “good feeling” or a high degree of tolerance during the celebration, but the “bearing of the whites we speak of had nothing, however, of sympathy, in it, and they lent none of those provocations of enthusiasm, such as hoisting flags on their buildings.”

African-American festivals lasted until late at night, and that annoyed white Charlestonians and European-Americans in other cities held similar contempt for nighttime festivities. Typically, the parades ended at ten o’clock, but African-Americans continued their celebration with dancing at their own homes. Similar to those in West Africa, African-American celebrations lasted well into the night in Charleston. In West Africa, the daytime heat did not cooperate with efforts to organize celebrations. Southerners probably understood the celebrations could not take place during the day. However, white Charlestonians did object to the noise level of African-American festivals that traditionally occurred outdoors in Africa. The editor of the News and Courier recalled that Charleston had been one of the “quietest cities upon the Atlantic coast...but things have changed.” He continued, “We all admire an occasional parade of the military in all the pomp and circumstances of war, but we cannot bring our minds to endure the everlasting tooting and drumming which have made the lower portion of the city a place of torture, by day or by night, for some weeks past.”

In the summer of 1871, a torchlight parade the night before the municipal election sparked a riot that pitted African-Americans against German immigrants, and it probably cost Republicans the election. The riot apparently motivated many Germans to support the Democratic Party and Frederick J. Wagener, a German immigrant, and aided in the reestablishment of white supremacy. During the torchlight procession, around five hundred African-Americans marched through the principal streets, and a militant faction targeted Germans based upon their support for Wagener, destroying German shops and beating German immigrants. The marchers sang “John Brown is marching on,” proclaimed their disapproval of Wagener, and threatened to “burn down every dammed Dutchman’s house.” They attempted to break into German-owned grocery stores, cursed the Germans, and threw bricks through the windows of homes and businesses, one of them striking Louisa Klintworth, the wife of a German grocer, in the face. Many people believed a handful of “disorderly fellows” on the fringe of the procession, and not the real torchlight participants, caused the destruction. A larger number of German immigrants than expected turned out and voted for Wagener and the Democrats swept the election.

Black Charlestonians organized parades during municipal elections. In 1873, the Republicans defeated Wagener and the Democrats, and following municipal election, the Republicans organized a parade of the First Regiment of the National Guard of South Carolina (NGSC) and at least ten African-American militia companies. In late August 1876, African-Americans expressed greater determination than ever in preparation for the upcoming elections. Schirmer noted, “Torch Light procession this evening said to be as grand as a procession as we have ever had, they went up to citadel green where several addresses were made.” Perhaps this explains the level of violence that occurred only two weeks later in one of the worst riots in Charleston’s history.
Conclusion

African-Americans initiated the first public celebrations following the Civil War. They organized and participated in numerous Fourth of July, Emancipation Day, and torchlight parades that had political and social implications. In these processions, African-Americans expressed a profound desire to participate in local, state, and national politics. At the same time, they gained access to public thoroughfares and buildings that whites had previously restricted for their own. Moreover, African-Americans, through their various dramatic performances that took place during the parades, demonstrated strong linkages with African culture. The entire community participated in the events, either as organized marchers and torchbearers or the “sea of humanity” that moved alongside, behind and in front of them during the procession. This heightened sense of community frightened southern whites, and they found it threatened their claim to white political and cultural supremacy. Therefore, from the first days of emancipation until “redemption” with the Great Compromise of 1877, whites declared war on Reconstruction and southern blacks. Whites consistently challenged African-American control public spaces and political activism, and they found the presence of African culture embedded within black celebrations objectionable.

Notes Chapter Six

1 Edward King, The Great South: A Record of Journeys in Louisiana, Texas, The Indian Territory, Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland (Hartford, CT: American Publishing Company, 1875. King traveled the South between 1872 and 1873.


4 Jane Dailey, “Deference and Violence in the Postbellum Urban South: Manners and Massacres in Danville, Virginia,” Journal of Southern History 63, No. 3(August 1997): 553-590; Robin D. G. Kelley, “‘We Are Not What We Seem’: Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South,” Journal of American History 80 (June 1993), 75-112. Dailey examines “both how black men and women in the New South enunciated their claim to civic equality through their behavior in urban public spaces and how whites, determined to maintain their social, political, and economic control, responded to such black behavior.” Kelley advocates rethinking “the meaning of public space as a terrain of class, race, and gender conflict.”

5 Dailey, 557-558. While Dailey focuses on “the everyday pushing and shoving of white and black southerners,” this essay deals with the routine parades that took place during Reconstruction.

6 Susan G. Davis, Parades and Power: Street Theater in Nineteenth Century Philadelphia (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 3-4, 14. Susan Davis calls parades “one of a range of urban communicative events: orations, lectures, sermons, elections, ratios, demonstrations, balloon ascensions, commercial promotions, charitable balls, executions and punishments, market days, building dedications, concerts, and political meetings. Parades took some of their meaning from their relation to and contrast with other kinds of performance.”

7 Mary P. Ryan, Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825-1880 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 132-33. In her scholarship on the cultural history of parades during the nineteenth century,
Mary P. Ryan, considers the newspaper accounts of parades “very resonant documents.” Ryan continues, “If there is any overarching meaning, any capsule summary of a culture embedded in this text, it was not the design of an auteur but the creation of specific individuals and distinct groups who operated within the social constraints and political possibilities of their time. The parade, then, can tell us something of the historical process whereby cultural meaning is created.” This chapter mainly analyzes Charleston newspapers to investigate the numerous African-American processions that took place during Reconstruction.

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9 C. P. Gadsden to Rev. Thomas Smythe, 27 October 1865, Smythe Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia.


12 Davis, 4-6. Davis writes, “As political acts, parades and ceremonies take place in a context of contest and confrontation.”

13 Davis, 15, 16.

14 Rabinowitz, 228-229.

15 Rabinowitz, 227-228.


18 Kantrowitz, Ben Tillman, 3, 40-41.


20 David W. Blight, Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American History (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 66-67. Blight contends, “In such collective public performances, blacks in Charleston proclaimed their freedom and converted destruction into new life. In richly symbolic parades and other ceremonies, they announced their rebirth; whatever the new order would bring in their lives, they drew a line of demarcation between past and present.


22 See Blight, Race and Reunion for a discussion of northern and southern states unifying at the expense of African-Americans.

23 Charleston Daily Courier, 6 July 1865.


Litwicki, 56-57. Litwicki asserts, “If control of a city’s public spaces and rituals reflects the larger political, social, and economic power structure, the takeover of the most sacred public space in Richmond by black troops and revelers looms as a suggestive indicator of the transfer of power (if only temporarily) from white to black.”


Jacob Schirmer Diary, 4 July 1867, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston.

Francis Butler Simkins and Robert Hilliard Woody, South Carolina During Reconstruction (Gloucester, Peter Smith, 1966, originally 1932), 349, 365.

The Ravenel Journal, 287, 348. Ravenel wrote the entries in 1866 and 1870 from his Hampton Hill plantation near the village of Aiken, South Carolina.

Whatcoat Asbury Gamewell, 4 July 1866, DeSaussure, Gamewell, Lang, and Parish Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia; Charleston Daily Courier, 6 July 1866.

Daily Republican, 5 July 1872.

Charleston Daily Courier, 5 July 1870.

Ryan, Women in Public, 132-33. Ryan defines the term parade as a “ritualized, collective movement through the streets that took a distinctive form in nineteenth-century American cities.” The parade was organized into separate marching units, each representing pre-established social identity, and, according to Ryan, these constituent parts of the society was the basic action and structure of the American parade.


Williamson, After Slavery, 49.

Charleston Daily Courier, 6 July 1865. At nine o’clock, the four-hundred-member battalion of the Home Guard, in white uniforms, assembled at their armory on Citadel Square. Two hours later, the battalion marched from Citadel Square to Bonum’s Hall, and they escorted the Mutual Aid Society, parading through some of the principal streets to Zion’s Church. In the afternoon, a militia company escorted the Comet Star Engine Company through the streets and “presented a fine appearance.”

Charleston Daily Courier, 5 July 1870. Fifteen unarmed men paraded at the rear of the line in a “beat company” named the ‘James’ Island Light Infantry,’ instead, they carried wooden swords. The wooden sword might have meant African-Americans would fight with anything to retain their freedom. Republican onlookers possibly considered arming the group with firearms. A downpour interfered with the procession and the crowd dispersed before the addresses took place.
Daily Republican, 5 July 1872. Lieutenant Colonel Gray and Major Sam Dickerson commanded the First Regiment consisting of ten companies from Charleston. Col. E. W. Mackey commanded the Fifteenth Regiment consisted of eight companies from the country and Sea Islands. Lieutenant Colonel Gray and Major Sam Dickerson commanded the through the principal streets.


Augustine Smythe to mother, 12 December 1865, Smythe Family Papers, South Caroliniana.

Litwicki, 51, 53, 54.

Augustine Smythe to mother, 12 December 1865, Smythe Family Papers, South Caroliniana.

Litwicki, 51, 53, 54.

Litwicki, 229.


Litwicki, America’s Public Holidays, 52.

Charleston Daily Courier, 22 March 1865.

Charleston Daily Courier, 22 March 1865, 23 March 1865.

Charleston Daily Courier, 22 March 1865. The African-American parade marshals arranged the order of the procession and they exhibited “excellent management” skills.

Whatcoat Asbury Gamewell, 1 January 1866, DeSaussure, Gamewell, Lang, and Parish Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

The Diary of Miss Emma Holmes, 1861-1866, ed. John F. Marszalek (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1979), 434.

The Ravenel Journal, 301.

Charleston Daily Courier, 2 January 1868. The procession ended at the African Methodist Church on Calhoun Street, and African-American Reverend F. L. Cardoza gave a speech.

The newspaper accounts of parades during the period abound with commentary on their orderly and peaceful nature. Typically, they recognized that “no incidents” had occurred.

Daily Republican, 3 January 1870, 3 January 1871; Charleston Daily Courier, 2 January 1873. In 1873, as usual, mounted officers participated in the parade. The parade marshals, adorning blue sashes, commanded the parade while mounted on horseback. The band began the procession with the song “Yankee Doodle.” General Robert Smalls and the “irrepressible” Major Sam Dickerson accompanied Colonel Taft. The militia proceeded up King Street and met the Union League and the Longshoremen’s Association at the corner of Meeting and Calhoun streets. The members of the Union League carried batons in their hands and wore sprigs of olive in their hats. Congressman Alonzo J. Ransier, a speaker at the celebration, rode in an open carriage.

Litwicki, 52-53.


Litwicki, 55-56.

Francis Butler Simkins and Robert Hilliard Woody, South Carolina During Reconstruction (Gloucester, Peter Smith, 1966, originally 1932), 452.

Charleston Daily Courier, 22 March 1865. During Reconstruction, African-American butchers often held political offices as aldermen and government officials. They preceded the African-American troops, an indication that they represented the most respected portion of the community. The African-American troops represented political power and African-American ascendancy.

Charleston Daily Courier, 22 March 1865. The girls represented the original thirteen United States, and they decorated the car with United States flags. The editor of the Daily Courier remarked a “marked feature of the procession was the orderly conduct of the school children. This is due in a great measure to the laborious efforts of Mr. Redpath, the able and efficient Superintendent, who also deserves credit for the skillful manner in which he marshaled so large a body.” The students and teachers cheered for James Redpath. The parade proceeded through Calhoun to King-street, down King to the Battery, around the Battery to East Bay, up East Bay to Broad and Meeting-streets, and back to the Citadel Square. The crowds cheered Major General Saxton, Reverend French, Colonel Woodford, General Hatch, and Mr. James Redpath.

Charleston Daily Courier, 22 March 1865. The ministers of Zion and Bethel Churches, both African-American, organized the successful procession; Charleston Daily Courier, 23 March 1865. First, a large group of tailors marched with their shears and their razor-sharp shears probably symbolized more than their trade. The coopers followed the tailors. The African-American Firemen contributed eight companies to the procession, and the spectators greeted them with cheers all along the parade route. Several societies and trade associations appeared later in the procession, and it closed with the wood sawyers and fifty African-American sailors with their officers (probably all white) from the fleet. The editor remarked, “One conspicuous feature in the procession was the paper carriers, headed by George Smith, a colored pressman, and each bearing a copy of the “Charleston Courier.” African-Americans labored at the most conservative paper in the City.

Brown, “Negotiating and Transforming the Public Sphere,” 34-37, 39.

Lorini, Rituals of Race, 1. Alessandra Lorini argues, “The physical presence of the ladies in a public ceremony had a high symbolic meaning, given the prevailing disapproval of women taking part in public demonstrations.”

Charleston Daily Courier, 2 January 1873; Ryan, Women in Public, 53. On one side of the banner, a blue silk ground presented a palmetto tree; on the other, a green silk ground displayed a portrait of Randolph, painted in oil colors.

Charleston Daily Courier, 5 July 1870.

Smith, A Charlestonian’s Recollections, 65-66. Smith continued, “Sassafras beer was a fine drink! This is imitated today by a red drink called Hires Root Beer, but the imitation falls short of it. I learned one day how to compute money at one of these booths.”

Daily Republican, 5 July 1872; Charleston Daily Courier, 2 January 1873.

Charleston Daily Courier, 2 January 1873.

Augustine Smythe to mother, 12 December 1865, Smythe Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library
Jacob Schirmer Diary, 1 January 1872. Schirmer referred to politician Martin Delany, a former free-black, and Thomas Jefferson Mackey, a white Republican.

Jacob Schirmer Diary, 27 April 1870.

Jacob Schirmer Diary, 30 April 1871.


Daily Republican, 5 July 1870; Charleston Daily Courier, 6 July 1865; Charleston Daily Courier, 6 July 1866; Charleston Mercury, 6 July 1867; Daily Republican, 4 May 1870; Daily Republican, 5 July 1872. In the harbor, General Hatch and his staff, and a large number of invited guests, officers, ladies and gentlemen, on board, went on an excursion around the harbor on board the steamer Croton in 1865. In 1867, at 10 A.M. the fire companies and associations formed on the Citadel Green and marched to the Battery and back to the Citadel Green. The celebrants listened speech and reading of the Declaration of Independence. In the evening a promenade concert at the Citadel and fireworks on the Green. An “immense” crowd amassed for the fireworks. The firemen and Union League paraded separately during the afternoon, and they returned to their homes for refreshments and entertainment.

Daily Republican, 5 July 1870. Delany argued, “They want to neutralize race; wipe out the word entirely… The whites have enjoyed the privilege of education, they are consequently enlightened, and it is my object to enlighten the colored people. If you depend on other people to enlighten and help you, you will find yourself again in slavery. If black men have not their own leaders, white men will lead them, and when they change and become Democrats, they will carry the black people with them.”

Daily Republican, 5 July 1872.

Charleston Daily Courier, 17 April 1865; Daily Republican, 4 May 1870. Charleston Daily Courier, 2 January 1873. In 1873, the militia arrived at the Battery and stopped between the music stand and the waterfront, and they “exercised in the manual of arms, while the speakers and members of the Union League ascended the stand, and the Longshoremen’s Association surrounded it.” The United States flag hung in a position that allowed it to “brush the crowns of the speakers’ heads.” The parade moved down King Street to Hasel, through Hasel to Meeting, thence to Market, through Market to East Bay, and down East Bay to the Battery.


Piersen, 256.

Piersen, 258, 259, 261. In the antebellum South, the audience and performers interacted when African-American musicians played for white militias.

Piersen, 262-63.

Piersen, 267.

Daily Republican, 4 May 1870.

Charleston Daily Republican, 5 July 1872.

New York Times, 4 April 1865; Charleston Daily Courier, 22 March 1865.

New York Times, 4 April 1865; Charleston Daily Courier, 22 March 1865.
New York Times, 4 April 1865. At intervals throughout the procession appeared the United States flag.

Charleston Daily Courier, 3 April 1865.


New York Times, 10 July 1868.


Smith, *A Charlestonian’s Recollections*, 140.

Charleston Daily Courier, 17 August 1868.


C. P. Gadsden to Rev. Thomas Smythe, 27 October 1865, Smythe Family Papers.

Jacob Schirmer Diary, 27 March 1867.

Jacob Schirmer Diary, 27 June 1872.

Daily Republican, 5 May 1870. Other slogans included: “If it is not right to elect Democrats, it is not right to appoint them.”


News and Courier, 16 September 1873. He continued, “While this is going on we hear, about a quarter of a mile off, but with great distinctness, the uproar of a so-called religious meeting, where shouts of laughter come to the ears commingled with the singing of hymns and notes of prayer. But our minds are soon drawn aside by another outbreak which bears the refrain to us of: ‘Mis Carline! Mis Carline! Can’t you dance de peavine?’” See Daily Courier, 15 June 1871. In June 1871, the Daily Courier ran the following story, “Public Nuisance.—The residents of Queen street, between Meeting and Church, were disturbed yesterday by repeated loud cries of women in a lewd house in the vicinity, who were either in a bacchanalian revel or in a general fight, and this in broad daylight. Those of our citizens who live in the locality declare that these orgies are not unfrequent, and put them to the necessity of closing their windows, and debarring themselves from enjoying the front part of their houses. These tax-payers have the right to an immunity from such nuisances.”

Daily Republican, 1 August 1871.

Charleston Daily News, 1 August 1871. As the procession passed up Washington street, they attacked the premises of Otto Tiedemann, broke his windows and destroyed everything they could. The next house was C. H. Blancken’s at the corner of Charlotte and Washington. The broke his windows, entered the store, and thrust a burning torch into a molasses barrel, under the impression that it was a kerosene barrel. They next attacked the store of F. Klintworth at No. 50 Washington Street. They broke his windows, threw brickbats into the rooms, one large piece hit Mrs. Klintworth in the face and nearly killed her, broke crockery, furniture, etc.

Charleston Daily Courier, 1 August 1871, 2 August 1871. My findings suggest that the Germans targeted during the riot dealt with an African-American clientele, sometimes exclusively. At times, African-Americans expressed their disapproval with the Germans’ high prices and refusal to extend credit.
Daily Republican, 1 August 1871. In a speech following the procession, A. J. Ransier, an African-American politician, criticized General Wagener and the Germans for supporting the Democratic Party that opposed the rights of the African-American people. Ransier believed that many Germans disliked the Democrats, but they felt compelled to conform. T. J. Mackey, a white Republican politician, attacked General Wagener for his harsh treatment of Charleston’s population, including Germans, and for his support of the Black Codes. Mackey felt the Germans made a mistake in supporting Wagener and the Democrats.

News and Courier, 10 October 1873. The 150-member regiment paraded on Broad Street, one of the principal streets in the city, and Lieutenant Colonel Samuel Dickerson and Major H. L. Benford commanded the regiment. Numerous African-American militia companies followed the NGSC in the procession, including the Delany Guards, Carolina Light Infantry, Garrison Light Infantry, Lincoln Republican Guards, Comet Light Infantry, Lincoln Light Infantry, Grant National Guards, Scott United Blues, Randolph Riflemen, and the Attucks Light Infantry. The parade ended with a military inspection of the arms and accoutrements. No white rifle clubs joined them in their celebration.

Jacob Schirmer, 25 August 1876.
CHAPTER 7

IMMIGRANT AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN POLITICS IN CHARLESTON, 1865-1876

During Reconstruction, German and Irish immigrants, southern whites, and African-Americans often experienced political conflict within and between their ethnic communities. In 1868, for the first time in the city’s history, political leaders appealed to immigrants and African-Americans for political support. In 1871, the Democrats nominated General John A. Wagener, a German immigrant and Confederate veteran, for mayor, and the municipal election campaign increased ethnic political conflict in the city, mainly between Germans and African-Americans. In 1873, the Irish politicians appeared in equal numbers on the Republican and Democratic tickets, while nearly all politically active Germans by this time enthusiastically backed the Democrats. This trend continued in 1875, when the Germans refused to support the Independent Republican ticket, a multiethnic fusion of Democrats and Republicans; instead, they remained staunch supporters of the Democratic Party. In 1876, the majority of German and Irish and white voters supported the Democratic Party and helped reestablish white supremacy in Charleston.

This chapter focuses on two aspects of Reconstruction era politics in Charleston, South Carolina. First, the ethnic relations between these groups cannot be explained merely in terms of “Black” and “White.” German and Irish immigrants, African-Americans, and white southerners exhibited a tremendous amount of social and political interaction. Second, European immigrants and African-Americans participated in the public sphere. African-Americans involved themselves for the first time, while European immigrants increased their participation from minimal to a very noticeable level. During Reconstruction, significant numbers of German and Irish immigrants and nearly all African-Americans supported the Republican Party. Southerners resisted Republican government and often clashed with its supporters, especially the African-American community. Recognizing German and Irish economic influence and potential political power, native-born whites considered the Irish and Germans part of the "white" community for the first time. Most Germans and Irish eventually became politically active in the support of white political supremacy because it entailed social and economic benefits. Mainly, it improved their position in the racial/ethnic hierarchy. While the majority of German voters became Democrats, a sizable portion of the German community, mainly working class individuals, supported the Republican Party. Irish immigrants also supported the Democrats, but many Irish laborers identified with the Republican Party’s labor consciousness. If Irish laborers collectively chose to align themselves with African-Americans and the Republicans, it would have undermined the Democratic Party and white political authority. Political dissension within and between ethnic communities often led to outright physical conflict, and election violence rocked Charleston during each of the municipal elections during Reconstruction. The revolutionary potential of relations between African-Americans and the German and Irish immigrant
Communities declined as the Germans and Irish became more committed to white political authority or refrained from politics altogether.

Historians of the South have neglected ethnic diversity and its role in political relations in nineteenth century Southern cities. Recent scholarship has begun to fill this void but much work remains to be done. Standard studies of the Reconstruction period, such as Eric Foner’s *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, ignore the diversity within the European-American category labeled “white.”¹ George Brown Tindall has identified ethnic diversity and interaction as a “new frontier” in southern history, but he fails to recognize immigrant influence in Reconstruction Charleston.² This chapter focuses on the political interaction between African-Americans, Irish and German immigrants, and white southerners in Charleston, South Carolina during Reconstruction.³

Following the failed Revolution of 1848, thousands of German liberals immigrated to the United States, and the majority of them favored free labor—some of them even became politically active abolitionists. Southerners had little tolerance for abolitionist sentiment so Germans in the South typically refrained from voicing their liberal opinions. Following the Civil War, however, some Germans joined the Republican Party and advocated for black civil rights.⁴

In his whiteness study on racial and ethnic politics in Memphis, Tennessee, Brian D. Page has revealed a “cross-racial alliance” primarily among Irish immigrants, African-Americans, but including some Germans. He argues they formed a “powerful voting bloc” which threatened native white elites. Relying on recent whiteness scholarship, Page shows that Irish-Americans “were conflicted between their racial identity of whiteness versus their working class identity as they sought to extend political power garnered during the Civil War and Reconstruction.”⁵ Gradually, the collective German and Irish communities voted for the Democratic Party in that city.

German-Jewish communities thrived in the South after the Civil War. Mark K. Bauman reveals the German-Jewish community in Atlanta involved themselves in that city’s politics following the Civil War and through the Progressive Era. German-Jews also participated in municipal politics in New Orleans and Savannah.⁶ Mark I. Greenberg argues that “Because Jews clustered in commercial ventures and purchased blacks rather than toiling as manual laborers, their ‘whiteness’ was rarely questioned, and they faced relatively less social ostracism than other immigrant groups.” Greenberg shows “Nativism directed primarily against Irish immigrants restricted their access to political office to a far greater degree than anti-Semitism affected Savannah Jews.”⁷

In Richmond, German and Irish immigrants aided African-Americans in the Republican Party in 1867, but they also joined with Jews and southern whites in supporting the Conservative (Democratic) Party.⁸ Germans in New Orleans divided support between the reform and Democratic parties.⁹ The Germans in southwest Texas represented the largest immigrant Republican voting bloc in the South. In Austin and San Antonio, Texas, Germans supported the Republican Party, and they formed a coalition party with African-Americans in Colorado and Washington Counties. Republicans in San Antonio elected Edward Degener, a German grocer, to Congress.¹⁰

After the Civil War, southern politicians, resisting federal occupation, attempted to return to the status quo. In December 1865, South Carolina passed one of the strictest Black Codes in the South. The Black Codes required African-Americans to sign labor contracts, instituted curfews and vagrancy provisions, and restricted the movement of freedmen without written permission from their white employers. Andrew Johnson and his program of Presidential
Reconstruction failed to satisfy Republicans bent on recreating the South in the image of the North. In 1867, Congress passed a Reconstruction Act that divided the South into five military districts and provided for the general protection of freedmen. The Republican Party in the South attracted working-class European immigrants that held liberal views concerning labor and equality. In March 1867, South Carolina Republicans held a Constitutional Convention in Charleston and the former free blacks dominated the policymaking. At least one German, J. P. Epping, participated in the convention. 

Ethnic Politics in 1868

Between 1840 and 1860, approximately 1.5 million Germans immigrated to the United States. A small minority of them chose the Southern States, and even fewer settled in Charleston, South Carolina. Many of the Germans in Charleston made a living in the skilled occupations, especially in the grocery and wholesale goods trades. Yet some Germans worked as semi-skilled and unskilled laborers, and these occupational differences led to “sharp internal differences.” These divisions became evident during Reconstruction. In Charleston, emancipation resulted in German immigrants to become politically active for the first time. The Irish engaged in their own political organizing for both parties.

In March 1867 Congress passed legislation that authorized African-American males in the South to vote for the first time. On March 26, 2000 African-Americans met on the Citadel Green to organize the local Republican Party. In November 1867, Blacks participated in the South Carolina State elections.

In June 1868, a coalition of black and white Republicans selected Gilbert Pillsbury as their Charleston mayoral candidate. Pillsbury won a close election. Many whites bitterly criticized Charleston’s first Republican government. Whites did not agree with African-Americans gaining access to theaters, saloons, and restaurants under the state anti-discrimination law.

Southern whites, Germans and Irish immigrants, and a very small minority of African-Americans made up the Democratic Party in South Carolina. Most southern whites viciously opposed Republican rule in Charleston and South Carolina. In the main, whites objected to African-American political participation and leadership, and they did not tame their racist language in attacking African-Americans and the Republican government. In contrast, the German political leadership always refrained from public expressions of racism rather than risk offending the liberal element of the German community. Starting with the first election after the Civil War, political leaders from both parties increasingly appealed to the Irish and German immigrant communities for their political support. The introduction of ethnic politics created significant divisions within and between these ethnic communities.

Ethnic politics slowly took root beginning with the 1868 municipal election. When the Democrats gathered to name nominating committees, mainly native-born whites attended the meeting and Germans and Irish participated. That same evening, a large number of Republican Party followers attended a political meeting to discuss their nominations, but immigrant voters failed to take an active role. In contrast, General Wagener, a German, chaired the Democratic Party’s nominating convention for the municipal campaign. When the Democrats named their candidates for mayor and aldermen, several German and Irish immigrants were among them.
African-Americans overwhelmingly supported the Republican Party, and they took an active role in municipal politics. The Republican Party leadership organized mass meetings in preparation for the municipal election. The typical assembly attracted from one to five hundred African-Americans and around fifty whites, and included a torchlight procession through the principal streets of Charleston. The procession often incorporated fifes and drums and those in parade voiced their concerns. In an effort to intimidate the Republicans, white Democrats armed themselves and assembled at various points along the parade route.

African-Americans expressed a profound determination to participate in Charleston’s politics. In defiance of white harassment, African-Americans paraded through the streets and some of the processions took on a more militant tone. In August, they staged several mass meetings and processions in full view of the public. On August 3, one hundred African-American men and women and several white men, met on the citadel green played their fifes and drums and discussed “matters of great importance to the city.” Two weeks later, a procession began at the Military Hall, and the Republican supporters marched through the streets armed with clubs and sticks. As the procession passed the Guard House, some of the participants threw bricks at the building and vocally expressed their disapproval. The group also threw bricks at several streetcars because the conductors failed to stop for the procession. The following week, five hundred African-American men and women and some white men held a political meeting at Liberty Hall.

The Democrats held their own political meetings. In late July, over five thousand Democrats attended a political rally that featured Confederate General Wade Hampton. In his speech, General Hampton did not appeal to the Irish or German elements in Charleston. Instead, the Democratic Party leadership requested, if not demanded, support from the more sizeable African-American population. Mainly, they threatened African-Americans with unemployment since Democratic employers might bring in white labor to replace black Republicans.

Many Germans took the initiative in supporting the Democratic Party. In late August, they formed the German Democratic Club and named General Wagener chair. The Germans sought greater representation in the municipal government. They recognized German political apathy and hoped to increase German political participation in the Democratic Party. The majority of German immigrants earned a living in business and professional trades while some labored as skilled workers. Charleston’s economy had suffered since the war, and German business leaders maintained economic prosperity could only return under a Democratic administration.

The Germans took a more active role in politics in an effort to improve their business prospects. They defended their business success and demanded greater political representation. German middle-class professionals, nevertheless, ignored white privilege and racism against African-Americans, and asserted that African-Americans could acquire economic and political influence through “industry” and “thrift.” The German Democratic Club dissolved in response to the lack of perceived urgency by the larger Democratic Party of Charleston to organize a citywide canvassing campaign. The latter political group had not determined its nominees, nor did its members have any immediate plans to do so. The Germans, however, pledged their unwavering support to the Democratic Party in the upcoming election. They had become more politically organized than many southern whites and equally conservative in many ways.

German Democratic leaders organized a citizenship drive and rushed to naturalize Germans immediately before the election. In late October, Charleston Judge W. A. Pringle
processed an “unusually large number of applicants” for citizenship, and naturalized more than one hundred and fifty citizens—mostly Germans.\textsuperscript{31} The Irish had not yet organized to the same extent as the Germans, mainly because the Irish had greater class divisions.\textsuperscript{32} However, many Irish lacked class-consciousness and, instead of working for class solidarity with African-American and immigrant laborers, many opted for white Democratic authority.\textsuperscript{33} In Memphis, African-Americans and the Irish allied for the first time to support the Republican Party during the Congressional election of 1868. The Jewish community in Memphis, however, held a political rally to support the Democrats.\textsuperscript{34}

Violence routinely occurred during the municipal elections as whites and African-Americans clashed. Daniel E. Huger Smith, a leading native Charlestonian, recalled that elections were “bitterly contested” and “pandemonium ruled!”\textsuperscript{35} Government officials realized the potential for conflict in preparing for the election but they were unable to stop the violence.\textsuperscript{36} On election day, in 1868, voters crowded the polls early in the morning. In response to white intimidation, African-American men armed themselves with clubs and wore ribbons in their coats as symbols of unity. They prepared to defend their voting rights, and many people in Charleston feared a riot might take place at any moment.\textsuperscript{37} Thousands of voters anxiously waited for the results outside City Hall, and once a Republican victory became apparent, African-Americans celebrated in the streets until late at night. Throughout the day, a few minor skirmishes occurred, including a knife fight and an assault on a policeman.\textsuperscript{38} Southern whites had little experience with the heightened level of African-American militancy and they used physical force and intimidation to quell it. The Republican voters successfully elected Gilbert Pillsbury mayor and also dominated the aldermanic elections.\textsuperscript{39}

Following the election, Charleston’s political conflict continued on the city streets. On November 13, 1868, a “lady” and two African-American schoolgirls bumped into each other on Wentworth Street. The women protested the girls’ actions. They replied she “should have taken the outside, and ought to have known better, since the election was over.” The \textit{Courier} considered it a “trivial matter, but an exemplification of the old proverb: Coming events cast their shadows before.”\textsuperscript{40} Southern whites feared African-American political ascendancy might translate to social power.

In May 1870, Mr. L. C. Northrop, an Irish Nationalist and editor of the \textit{Southern Celt}, an Irish-American newspaper, gave a speech in support of the Republican Party and working class solidarity. His newspaper editorials often supported the Republican Party and working-class laborers.\textsuperscript{41} In Memphis, Germans joined a fusion ticket that included Irish-Americans, African-Americans, and other Republicans. The Germans had joined the alliance following their perceived lack of representation in the recent municipal elections. But by 1871, the Memphis German leadership clearly demonstrated a preference for the Democratic Party.\textsuperscript{42}

African-Americans dominated the first municipal election in Charleston, electing numerous black Republican alderman and several whites as well. Foner claims, “Only in South Carolina did blacks come to dominate the legislative process.”\textsuperscript{43} In particular, Charleston became a center of black political power.

\textbf{The Municipal Election of 1871}

In 1870, South Carolina Democrats created a Union Reform party that included a Republican judge for governor. The reformers lost to the Republicans, but the idea of reform
politics continued throughout Reconstruction. The municipal election of 1871 took place at a critical point in Reconstruction South Carolina. Democratic leaders focused on financial criticism of Republican officeholders, including high taxes and corruption. At the same time, the Republican Party increasingly showed signs of division.  

The pinnacle of federal enforcement of Reconstruction Acts in South Carolina had been reached with the Ku Klux Klan trials early that year. From that point on, the federal government gradually relinquished control to the South Carolina State government. Ethnic political conflict increased, when, in 1871, the Democrats nominated General Wagener, a German immigrant. A few Germans initiated the movement to nominate Wagener, because they wanted a German as mayor. Initially, the native-white Democrats objected to his nomination, but they gradually accepted it. The Wagener supporters decided to call their party the Citizens’ Party. They met with the Republican Party and discussed the possibility of electing a ticket that would best represent the interests of both parties. When the Republicans Party nominated Democrats to their ticket, some conservative Democrats attempted to hurt the nominees socially and destroy their businesses. The Citizens’ Party refrained from nominating Republicans and it soon resembled the Democratic Party.  

Historians have underestimated the role of the municipal election riot of 1871. In 1870, voters re-elected Governor Robert K. Scott and Alonzo Ransier lieutenant governor. “In the summer of 1871 when Republicans nominated Mayor Pillsbury for a second term of office with a slate of nine black and nine white aldermen they were still quarreling among themselves, and the Democrats beat them at the game of what we might today call “ethnic politics.”  

Republicans recognized the Democrats had desperately attempted to attract the immigrant vote. The Democrats nominated General Wagener to gain the German vote, while they appealed to Irish “passions” and “prejudices.” Many Charleston Democrats believed that the German vote would decide the election. However, they had difficulty attracting many Irish because of antebellum treatment of that group.  

The fifty-six-year-old Wagener had settled in Charleston in 1833. The Democrats nominated a ticket that included Irish, Germans, and African-Americans for the city council. In 1871, Wagener won the election and proceeded to run a budget deficit of over $250,000. These economic problems divided the Democratic Party rank and file. In 1873, some disgruntled Democrats joined the Republican Party, and they helped elect George I. Cunningham mayor. Cunningham and the city council cut costs, raised taxes, issued bonds to redeem past-due city stock, and reorganized the Board of Health. But the Panic of 1873, and the six-year depression that followed, brought poverty and unemployment to the City.  

The Democratic leadership had minor experience with ethnic politics, and they argued Wagener had been chosen for his administrative qualifications, not for his German ethnicity. They called for complete unity, regardless of “nationality” or “creed.” The German elites had originated the movement to elect Wagener because they sought political representation on par with their economic influence. Because black and white voters were almost equal in numbers, the Democrats needed the support of Irish and German voters. There were several hundred more Irish voters than the German. If the Irish voted Republican, they would defeat or neutralize the Germans. The Democrats, nevertheless, chose a German for mayor and the Republicans raised numerous objections.  

The Republicans called for Irish backing, and they focused upon class antagonisms. They argued the Democrats represented middle and upper class interests and discriminated against the working-class Irish and African-Americans. A significant number of Irish already
participated in the Republican Party because of their antebellum political experience in Charleston. Republicans identified the Democrats with the Know-Nothing party of the early 1850s, and accused them of discrimination against Irish immigrants. James Brennan, an Irish political activist and manager of the Southern Celt, an Irish Nationalist newspaper, pointed out that the Democrats appealed to Irishmen, although many native-born Charlestonians had discriminated against the Irish and relegated them to wharf hands, draymen, and ditchers. In his view, the Democrats showed preference for any “class” or “race” which promised them votes, or whose political power they feared. In the past, they had persecuted the Germans, Irish, and African-Americans, but now they called for their support. James Brennan wrote, “I have heard frequently within the past few days, about the ten thousand dollars which our German fellow-citizens have collected to buy up Irish votes.”

In contrast, the Republican Party leadership argued it did not discriminate according to race, class or nationality, and they identified more with the interests of immigrants and African-Americans. Brennan hoped both political parties could avoid the nationality question in the upcoming municipal campaign, but when the Democrats selected a German immigrant for mayor, that possibility was immediately erased. Republicans consistently attacked the Democrats’ choice of General Wagener, paying special attention to his German ethnicity. The Democrats defended their nomination and continued to deny any involvement in ethnic politics.

The Democrats argued their candidates represented the entire community, regardless of race, class, or ethnicity. Furthermore, they believed that if Republican rule continued the economy would not improve—only Democratic rule could rejuvenate it. The editor of the Courier alleged that Republicans had attempted to divide Charleston’s multiethnic community along ethnic lines, and he attempted to diffuse any animosity between African-Americans, immigrants and the native-born population. He proclaimed, “Let us, once and all, then, with united hears and clasped hands, move forward, and Charleston will be redeemed, regenerated and disenthralled.” During the 1872 municipal campaign in Memphis, the Democratic press emphasized Irish racial identity as whites and strongly opposed any political alliance with African-Americans.

Democrats organized to attract immigrant voters to their party, and the pattern of naturalizing immigrants directly before the election continued. On July 21, the United States Court Judge George S. Bryan approved forty-two applications for naturalization, including forty-one German and one Irish. The Democrats attempted to capitalize on their German mayoral candidate, and they began a naturalization drive that inspired hundreds of German and Irish immigrants to become citizens. For several days, Germans appeared before the court to obtain their citizenship papers. During the next week, hundreds more Germans and Irish immigrants received their naturalization papers and prepared to vote in the upcoming election. In total, at least 325 Germans and 175 Irish were naturalized during the latter portion part of July, and the majority of these names do not appear on the official federal citizenship rolls for Charleston.

The flood of naturalizations attracted the attention of the Republican Party and government officials in Charleston. Government officials disputed many naturalization certificates that had previously proved sufficient for local and state voting and other legal dealings. Election officials stationed a trial justice and constable at each precinct to arrest persons attempting to register to vote fraudulently. Officials arrested several people for attempting to register at more than one polling place or on naturalization papers belonging to others. The Daily Republican warned, “The utmost vigilance is necessary on the part of the Republicans, as the enemy is proverbially tricky.” The fact that Republicans felt obligated to
patrol the polling places and challenge naturalizations suggest the Democrats may have been the greater offenders.  

A torchlight parade the night before the election sparked a riot that pitted African-Americans against German immigrants, and it probably cost Republicans the election. The riot apparently motivated many Germans to support the Democratic Party and Wagener, which aided in the reestablishment of white supremacy. During the torchlight procession, around five hundred African-Americans marched through the principal streets, and a militant faction targeted Germans because of their support for Wagener. They destroyed German shops and beat German immigrants. The marchers sang “John Brown is marching on,” proclaimed their disapproval of Wagener, and threatened to “burn down every damned Dutchman’s house.” They attempted to break into German-owned grocery stores, cursed the Germans, and threw bricks through the windows of homes and businesses, one of them striking Louisa Klintworth, the wife of a German grocer, in the face. Many people believed a handful of “disorderly fellows” on the sidewalks of the procession, and not the real torchlight participants, caused the destruction. 

The marchers carried their torches, and the processions moved like a “sea of flame” until it reached City Hall. Along the procession, rockets and Roman candles shot into the air. The various ward clubs carried banners, including “Rally round the flag, boys;” “No Republican votes for sale;” “Irishmen, stand by us, we have stood by you;” “Equality before the law for all men and all creeds;” and “Workingmen defend your rights.” Men, women and children accompanied the procession on the sidewalks and crowded the torchbearers. Some “disorderly fellows” on the sidewalks threw rocks and committed several assaults. In one incident, several white boys threw rocks and bricks into the crowd. A large group of African-American men chased them with knives, clubs, brickbats, and other weapons. An errant slung-shot struck John B. Miller in the head, critically injuring him. The procession ended at City Hall and several Republican leaders gave speeches. 

In perhaps the best surviving account on record, Frederick Porcher recalled the election riot in a letter to his daughter. First, he noted a serious fight between Democrats and Republicans that took place during voter registration that afternoon. Porcher revealed that the torchlight parade “through some of the streets was marked by violence and outrage particularly on German shopkeepers and scenes occurred which it made the blood boil to hear.” He recognized that whites responded in typical fashion. “This seemed to move the whites to desperate action.” he wrote. “More vigilance was observed the next day in preventing unqualified persons from registering, and by general covenant all the stores were closed on election day not only that Clerks and employees could vote, but that they might watch the polls to protect negroes who voted for us and keep order generally.” African-American violence against Germans probably influenced election day voting and assisted in Wagener’s victory. 

Republican officials criticized German immigrant support for Wagener and the Democratic Party. Lieutenant Governor Ransier remarked, “I hold it the basest ingratitude in General Wagener and the Germans to support a ticket in opposition to the rights of the colored people. Many of the Germans hate their ticket but they are driven by the party lash.” He continued, “So far as the negro is concerned—let the Germans remember when they came here in their blue shirts—you patronized them, traded with them, and through your patronage they are enabled to-day to raise their heads and now desire to govern us.” T. J. Mackey accused General Wagener of not speaking out against the Black Code. Mackey also charged Wagener with anti-Semitism, claiming he had failed to issue insurance policies to Jews. He declared, “The Germans appeal to Germans. They are but seven in one hundred of the population.
Suppose the Americans should make this appeal, the Germans would be crushed like an egg shell. Suppose the Irish voters, who number 1,300, should set up this appeal, would they not carry everything before them.”

The Democrats used the riot to their advantage and called for the white community, including Germans and Irish, to vote Democratic and restore white supremacy. Democrats targeted Irish and other working-class voters, blaming the present Republican administration for the depressed economic conditions and low wages. They emphasized African-American animosity toward the Germans, and they encouraged the Germans to seek adequate representation in city government. The editor of the Daily News asserted, “Germans of Charleston! Once more you have an opportunity of electing men who will be your faithful spokesmen.” He wrote, “German citizens of Charleston! The negro hangers-on of the Pillsbury party, hounded on by their unscrupulous leaders, break into the houses of your fellow-countrymen, wound your wives and children, and threaten to burn down the residence of every ‘d—d Dutchman.’ Remember Tiedemann and Klintworth. Rally at the polls today. Vote early, and see that those whom you employ, or support, are not deterred from voting with you by the clubs or a negro mob.” He wrote, “Irish citizens of Charleston! … Strike a many blow this day for personal safety and public freedom.”

On the last day of voter registration, an African-American Democrat fought with an Irish Democrat, and a group of African-American Republicans attacked a Black Democrat. The Charleston Courier editor warned its Democratic readership that armed Black Republicans would attempt to intimidate whites from voting for the Citizens’ ticket, and he suggested a “united front” to counter the opposition. The editor warned, “Immigrants and trade alike shun a community that is not well governed.”

The Democrats nearly swept the municipal election, and together Wagener and the riot probably cost the Republicans several hundred votes. The editor of the Daily Republican declared, “Good judges estimate that that one thing cost us five hundred votes! It not only disgusted many who were prepared to act with us, but it consolidated the [Democratic] Party.” The editor of the Daily News rejoiced, “Redeemed at Last! The day has been won by the united labors of white and black, rich and poor, adopted citizen and native Carolinian.”

Violence erupted once again on election day. African-American Republicans threatened and attacked blacks who attempted to vote for the Citizens’ Party. An unknown person shot Balaam Grant at the Sires Street polling place. White Democrats pressured African-American and white Republicans into voting for their ticket. “Public opinion sat at the polls that day and narrowly looked…into the faces of many whom it had ruled with the iron rod for years, and these subjects dared not disobey his infernal majesty,” recalled one observer. Election officials distributed white tickets to Republicans and Democrats brought blue tickets to the polls. The Democrats, many of them business leaders and employers, watched voters at the ballot boxes. This cost the Republicans many votes because men were forced to use the blue tickets.

Following the election, African-Americans continued to target some Germans because of the election results. African-Americans worked in groups of fifty to seventy-five people, paraded through the streets armed with pistols and sticks, and focused their efforts on the German storekeepers. They walked into the different stores, ate and drank various goods without paying for them, and ran off with miscellaneous items. An African-American man threatened to kill Mr. Herman, a German grocer, for refusing to extend him credit to purchase sugar several days earlier. A larger street disturbance took place a little later. The editor of the Daily Republican condemned the attacks, declaring, “This is totally wrong, and must be ended. If
these Germans preferred to work for Gen. Wagener, so be it; it was their right.” At the same
time, he objected to “similar treatment” that Republicans received from Democrats.  

The Municipal Campaign of 1873

The reform-minded politicians did not attract the majority of African-Americans, because
blacks remained suspicious of their motives. Foner argues that the Depression of 1873, more
than any other factor, led to the demise of the Republican Party in the South. “The shift of
Republican opinion in a conservative direction during the depression strongly affected prevailing
attitudes toward Reconstruction,” he writes. Cotton prices fell fifty percent between 1872 and
1877 and southern port cities, especially Charleston, stagnated economically.  
The political divisions between ethnic communities continued to widen during the next
two municipal elections. The Republican Party attempted to enlist the support of the Irish and
German voters while the Democrats also courted the German and Irish immigrants. The
Republican Party leadership recognized that a unified German and Irish vote, along with the
native vote, might prove insurmountable. In an effort to cater to the Irish, the Republicans put
four Irishmen on their aldermanic ticket, but not a single German during the 1873 municipal
election.  

The list of Republican candidates for the 1873 municipal election reveals a diverse group
of candidates representing a variety of class interests. The Republicans nominated nine African-
Americans and nine whites, including the four Irishmen. Most of the white Republicans were
young professionals, and the Irish immigrants included a shoe retailer, two merchants, and a
druggist. The African-American candidates were mainly skilled workers, and included two
ministers, two carpenters, three butchers, and a musician. Germans refused to accept
nominations from the Republican Party. Instead, they remained staunch Democrats, believing it
the best way to obtain representation in the city government.  

The Democrats attempted to attract a diverse constituency, regardless of race, class, and
ethnicity; and they even nominated several Republicans. A large contingent of Germans turned
out for the Ward Five canvassing meeting, and they supported several German candidates for the
executive committee to nominate the mayor.  

They strongly supported the nomination of General Wagener. They nominated Wagener for mayor and the majority of German voters
supported the selection. The Germans involved themselves heavily in the Democratic
nominating convention.  

The Democrats nominated an ethnically diverse group, including German, Irish, African-
American and native-born whites. Many of the candidates were older “respected” property
holders, and they represented middle and upper class interests. The candidates included two
Germans: C. Voigt, a German Republican and shoe retailer that had served as alderman of the
Fourth Ward since the end of the Civil War; and Benjamin Bollman, a German Democrat and
successful grocery wholesaler. The Democrats nominated four Irishmen with political or
business experience. The African-American candidates were selected from the professional class
and included two Democrats, a cotton shipper and fish wholesaler, and three Republicans,
including two ministers and one physician. Democratic strategy failed. The Republicans
regained control of the municipal government and elected George I. Cunningham, a butcher, for
mayor.
The *News and Courier* editor charged that the Republicans “have always striven to array the blacks against the whites, and to sow discord and dissension between the races.” In an effort to divide the Irish and the Germans, he argued, the Republicans put four Irish immigrants on their aldermanic ticket, and no Germans. Democrats recognized Irish and German political power in Charleston. The Germans supported organized and economical government. “The united Irish and German vote, accompanying the native vote, would demolish the Radicals,” the editor wrote.

The editor *News and Courier* stimulated fear in his readership, warning them that Republicans would attempt to turn away Black Democrats from the polls and create riots in the majority Democratic wards. He suggested that white Democrats occupy the polling places to “discourage disorder” and “prevent repeating.” The Democrats warned that Republicans intended to cheat during the election. He wrote, “Forewarned is Forearmed!”

The day before the election, many immigrants received their naturalization papers and prepared to vote. Forty-nine immigrants received their naturalization certificates on election day. During the election, officials sent naturalized citizens home to get their papers, including well-known citizens who had voted for nearly over a decade without carrying papers to the polls. Election officials prevented some Germans from voting due to alleged irregularities in their papers.

Election day violence plagued the city once again. On Tuesday, African-American men from the neighboring islands filled the streets as they prepared to participate in the election. The *News and Courier* remarked, “These immigrants walked the public ways with the rations of bread and bacon, which had been issued to them, in their hands, some of them commenting on the shortness of the supply.” Deputy sheriffs arrested around thirty people, mainly for election law violations, although some for disturbing the peace and two Black men for drawing pistols. At the racetrack, a group of African-Americans assaulted police Lieutenant Heidt.

G. I. Cunningham convincingly defeated the incumbent Wagener by a count of 6,525 votes to 4,987, a 1,295 majority. The Democrats met to contest the election results. The *News and Courier* noted political apathy on behalf of the Democrats. Many Democratic voters stayed home and failed to vote in the election. Many native Charlestonians failed to vote for Wagener because the Germans had pushed for his nomination. He recognized “A few gallant young men, with the old Charleston blood in their veins, were at the polls when the balloting began, and stayed there to the last; but the elders of the community, to whom we look for help and counsel, were not there. The handful of young Charlestonians, and the staid Germans, and the impetuous Irish were on duty, and they alone.”

African-Americans rejoiced in their victory and the resurgence of the Republican Party. The 150-member First Regiment of the National Guard of South Carolina and several African-American militia companies paraded through the streets of Charleston. The longshoremen viewed the election of Cunningham as an opportunity for labor activism and the Longshoremen’s Union began a strike soon after the Republican victory. The depression hit hard southern states where African-Americans held strongest influence. That included South Carolina, where following the election, African-Americans held half the police and aldermanic appointments and almost all the legislative delegations.
Municipal Campaign of 1875

Republican governments began to promote policies of retrenchment and reform that many African-Americans found less appealing than southern whites did. Foner argues, “Nowhere was the need for change greater, or the conservative implications of “reform” more evident, than in South Carolina.” Conservative middle class blacks in South Carolina and Louisiana promoted the replacement of Republican governments with interracial political alliances. Daniel H. Chamberlain, the Republican nominee for governor, reflected the Republican trend toward conservatism, so much so that F. W. Dawson and many Democrats supported his policies.  

During a “Conservative Party (Democratic)” meeting in Charleston’s Fourth Ward, D. Muller proclaimed, “the Germans did not want the support of the Carolinians, or anybody else.” F. W. Dawson responded to Muller’s comments in an editorial. Dawson wrote, “There has always been a cordial understanding between the German citizens of Charleston and the rest of the community. They have done their whole duty by Charleston, in war as in peace; and they are part and parcel of the city, deeply interested in its progress, and most anxious to do what in them lies to improve its position and increase its prosperity.” Dawson believed that Mr. Muller had “no authority to speak for the Germans, that he did not express their thoughts or opinions, and that he represented his excited self alone.” The fact that Dawson felt compelled to respond to Muller’s comments suggests greater concern that he did represent a portion of the German community. And the course of the municipal election demonstrates strong divisions within the German community and the city at large.  

Dawson recognized the political divisions within the Democratic Party, and he attempted to alleviate them. “It would indeed be a crowning evil if questions of moment, which should be decided without passion or prejudice, should, among Conservatives, be affected by any consideration of race or class, and for this reason it is important that the Germans repudiate, most emphatically, the offensive statements which Mr. Muller, without a shadow of reason, attributed to them,” Dawson reasoned. The Germans soon formed their own “Conservative Party,” and they solicited support from African-Americans and Irish immigrants.  

Dawson recognized three parties in the municipal election: Radical Republicans, Independent Republicans, and Conservatives (Democrats) parties. He promoted the formation of a cooperative alliance between the latter two parties, because he believed that none of the three could win on their own. He believed that “without Republican help the Conservatives could have no representation.”  

The Germans moved to form their own party. “Perhaps the most remarkable phenomenon in the history of Charleston politics was the movement of the so-called “Conservative” primary elections yesterday,” Dawson determined. “It is hard to say which was more noticeable, the marked absence from the polls of the great mass of those who have heretofore been known as Conservatives, or the prominent part taken in the election by those, who, in past contests were the fiercest foes of the Conservative cause,” he continued.  

A large amount of African-Americans turned out to vote for the “Conservative” party. The News and Courier documents three main competing interests in the Democratic primary: the Wagener ticket, the anti-Wagener ticket, and the Split ticket. German and Irish immigrants and some African-Americans supported the Wagener party, but some Irish and Germans opposed them. The Wagener ticket dominated the first three wards. German and Irish immigrants and African-Americans supported that Wagener party, and native southern whites generally
supported the anti-Wagener party. White southerners attempted to challenge the votes of African-Americans, mainly questioning them about their party affiliation or support in the last election. The News and Courier noted the Wagener ticket supporters included German Republicans John Bonum, W. H. Ahrens, and John H. Jungbluth. In the eighth ward, no Germans appear on the ticket but some Irish supported Wagener, but the Irish also appear to have supported the anti-Wagener party as well.

Violence took place at the primaries. Most of the polling places did not have any problems. In the Fourth ward, John H. Albers, a German and known supporter of the Republican party, attempted to vote in the primary and a small fight erupted at the polling place. The polling managers allowed him to place his vote, but deputy sheriff John Bonum, a Wagener supporter, challenged the vote of John H. Young, a black Republican, for the anti-Wagener ticket. A riot erupted when someone hit a disputant on the head with a baseball bat. The rioters tore wooden posts from a railing that surrounded the ballot box and began clubbing each other. Numerous fights and several “knockdowns” took place in the streets throughout the day. The police made several arrests.

Dawson emphasized that the Wagener or “Conservative” party had formed in opposition to the “Co-operation Movement.” In the State election the previous fall the Conservatives supported the Co-operation ticket, and the party received a three thousand vote majority in Charleston County. Dawson considered Charles Voigt, a German, the “chief recalcitrant.” He had been the Bowen candidate for Probate Judge and opposed the co-operation movement. This probably diverted a few hundred Conservative votes away from the Co-operation candidates. Bowen nominated Voigt in an effort to divide the Conservatives, and defeat co-operation between Conservatives and Independent Republicans. Dawson wrote, “The plan was to play upon the ambition and natural sympathies of the Germans, who have hitherto, as a rule, voted with the Conservatives, and lure them on to an acceptance of his aid in electing a so-called Conservative ticket for Mayor and Aldermen.” He recognized that such an election would certainly break up the co-operation of the Conservatives with the Independent Republicans. He planned to do the same during the municipal election and serve the Conservatives as he had always served the Independents. Dawson believed the movement had begun during the State convention last election. Dawson declared, “The agents of Gen. Wagener have accepted Bowen’s aid! They can say, of course, that they want all the votes they can get.” Dawson emphasized the linkage to Bowen’s election frauds and political corruption. He revealed the Wagener party had been misnamed Conservative. Dawson wrote, “The Bowenites and the Wagenerites are working together. A blind man can see that! What are the high contracting parties to gain by the alliance? The Wagenerites get the votes of Bowen’s followers in the city, and of all the voters whom he can bring in from the islands. Bowen gains a representation for his following on the Aldermanic ticket, and, if the combination is successful, breaks the back of the Independent Republicanism and demonstrates to the Radical leaders elsewhere that in Charleston he is king.”

The Wagener ticket consisted of primarily young middle-class German, Irish, and southern white professionals, and a few skilled African-American workers. The German nominees included Charles Voigt, owner of a leather and hide business. Voigt headed the Radical Republican party, and he had served the city as Alderman under the Pillsbury and Wagener administrations. The editor of the News and Courier wrote, “As an Alderman in the Wagener administration he was notoriously a sharp thorn in the side of the mayor, and his conversion to the cause of General Wagener, whom he bitterly opposed in Council, would be an
astonishing change under any circumstances. …He is not regarded as a representative German by those of his nationality.” C. P. Poppenheim, a Charleston born German-American, owned a hardware business, and he had no political experience. The Irish nominees included Bernard O’Neill, the well-known wholesale grocer, and longtime Charleston resident. O’Neill, a true Conservative, had served as an alderman under Wagener during his administration in 1871-72. B. Callahan owned a successful drayage business. Mr. J. J. Grace, a worked as a clerk at Cameron & Barkley. The Irish-American Republican had graduated from Charleston College. Mr. E. F. Sweegan, a Charleston-born Irish-American and commission merchant, had served as an alderman in 1871-72. Irish immigrant C. B. Cassidy owned a successful drayage business and owned some property, but he did not have any political experience. The African-American nominees were a diverse group. Charles Michael had served as an alderman in 1871-72. An uneducated pilot named Edward Jenkins was included on the ticket. C. C. Leslie, a fish merchant, had previously run for alderman on the Wagener ticket in 1873. Republican Stephen Riley owned a livery stable at the corner of Smith and Bull streets. Nathan Robinson served as president of the Union Star Fire Company supported Cunningham, the gubernatorial candidate that Dawson endorsed. Dawson reported that Robinson would accept the Independent Republicans nomination and resign the Wagener ticket if given the opportunity. James S. Grant, a blacksmith and local preacher and Rev. J. Birnie, preacher and head of the Customhouse, rounded out the list. The native-born whites included D. C. Ebaugh, a northerner that had resided in Charleston for several years, worked as the superintendent of the Atlantic Phosphate Works. He owned some property. W. W. Sale worked as a teller in the First National Bank, and he had resided in this city for several years. Sale had no public service experience, but he actively supported the Conservative party. The Wagener party did not attract many native-born Conservatives. The southern whites included M. W. St. Amand, the chief bookkeeper of the First National Bank. He had not previously been politically active. B. A. Muckenfuss was a young native citizen and a dentist. 

Ethnic politics continued in the 1875 municipal election, as Irish immigrants supported both Democrats and Republicans, while the Germans opposed reform-minded southern whites and remained staunch backers of the Democratic Party. Many native-white Democrats and Republicans formed the Independent Republican or Reform Party, because they believed it the only way to gain representation in the city government. Moreover, many Democrats promoted the alliance “for the single purpose of purifying the State Government and of electing capable and upright citizens to public office.” The Charleston factory workers and other working class people supported the Republican ticket that included ten African-Americans, several Irish, but no Germans. The remainder of the Democrats, including the majority of German voters, supported a solid Democratic Party ticket. They endorsed General Wagener for mayor while many native-born whites objected to his nomination. The Democratic Party leadership nominated only two Germans for aldermen and both lost the election. Dawson considered Wagener an insufficient candidate for Mayor. He pointed to his inability to deal with the riot on Christmas Eve in 1872 and the riot during strike of 1873. In addition, he had not improved the fiscal problems of the city. Wagener had proved a “highly unsatisfactory mayor” in the past. General James Connor, a leading Charleston fusionist, looked forward to the Charleston municipal elections in 1875. The Charleston municipal elections served as a test case for fusion. Clark argues, “the politics of Co-operation cannot be understood if divorced from Charleston. It was in her business community that the policy was born and nurtured.” Dawson fathered the movement.
Democrats and Republicans tried fusion tickets with limited success in the 1870, 1872, and 1874 state elections. In South Carolina, fusion politics entailed bringing the white minority together into a voting bloc. That white minority combined with dissident Republicans, including immigrants, blacks, and some whites, might prove successful. In 1871, Germans and many southern whites appeared divided in the months before the election. Wagener claimed to have won election in 1871 without support from ‘the Carolinians.” He blamed them for his loss in the 1873 mayoral campaign. In 1875, a Wagener supporter claimed, “the Germans did not want the support of the Carolinians.” Wagener ran for office without consulting the southern Democratic hierarchy. Instead, he called Democratic ward meetings and hoped to gain support from voters unhappy with fusion politics. Many people in the German community felt unhappy with its treatment in the 1875 municipal election. Some Germans established a rival newspaper on May 1, 1876 called the *Journal of Commerce*.

The Independent Republicans soundly defeated the Democrats in the election. Following the election, the editor of the *News and Courier* pointed out the high level of German economic influence, but he regretted they did not have a single representative in the municipal government. Many native-born whites had opposed the Germans during the recent election. The editor argued that race, class, and nationality had no place in Charleston’s politics; instead, voters should work and act as Americans, not as Irish or Germans. The Independent Republicans could have nominated German Democrats to their ticket, but ethnic conflict erupted between the Germans and Democrats due to competing interests. Clearly, this had not occurred during the past two elections.

The *News and Courier* editor continued to look out for German political and business concerns in hopes that they might eventually “redeem” Charleston from Republican rule. He recommended that the new city council pay attention to German interests since they had no representation in the city government. Furthermore, he thought that it would prove “that only a sense of public duty—far removed from prejudice or ill feeling—arrayed the Conservative majority against the ticket to which the Germans gave their support.” The latter statement suggests that nativism led to political divisions with the Democratic Party.

On Election Day, violence again erupted throughout the city. Indicative of divisions among African-Americans, Black Independent Republican supporters clashed with twenty or thirty African-American Democrats wearing yellow badges marked “Wagener Campaign Club.” African-American Democrats marched to the polls armed with clubs and they clashed with Republicans. One German Democrat challenged naturalized citizens, mainly Irish immigrants, attempting to vote for the Independent Republicans, including some that had voted for twenty-five years. A couple of Irish citizens returned home for their papers and never returned.

Republican officials charged some Democrats with bribing voters. Several disturbances, including a shooting and a fight between a German and an African-American, occurred throughout the day. The editor of the *Deutsche Zeitung* alleged that the mayor-elect George I. Cunningham and the police had conspired to keep citizens from voting for General Wagener. At one poll, fights broke out between Wagener and Cunningham supporters. Later, at the same polling place, Deputy J. H. Ostendorff and his partner attempted to arrest Major E. Willis for bribing voters. The police arrested a group of two or three African-American men for disturbing the peace. In another instance, a man fired his pistol and shot his own finger off.

Similarly, the revolutionary potential of the alliance between Irish immigrants and African-Americans in Memphis ended with their defeat during the 1875 municipal election. In
1878, some Irish remained committed to a Workingman’s Party and several Irish Democrats left the Democratic Party and formed a fusion ticket with Republicans.\textsuperscript{129}

**Election of 1876**

White-line politics involved the adoption of intensive municipal canvassing campaigns throughout the South that replaced the traditional mass meetings. The year 1876 marked a low point in the economic depression begun three years earlier. Economic difficulties motivated many moderates in Charleston, including both Republicans and Democrats, to call for political changes. Democrats entered the year divided between a “fusion” or co-operation party and the idea of a “straight-out” party based upon white supremacist principles.\textsuperscript{130} White Democrats began the campaign that “redeemed” the state government from Republican Party dominance. In September, Charleston again experienced another political riot that pitted Whites, including German and Irish immigrants, against African-Americans. The riot, initially between African-American Republicans and Democrats, quickly spread to the white community, and a group of African-Americans severely beat Charles Behl, a German store clerk, and several others. Initially, the white community remained politically divided, especially the Germans who refrained from participating in the ward meetings. Following the riot, the majority of German and Irish voters pledged their support for the Democratic Party, and they assisted in that party’s election success and restoration of white supremacy.\textsuperscript{131}

Democrats resorted to murder, violence, and intimidation against African-Americans and white Republicans. Wade Hampton and his “Red Shirts” had ravaged the entire State.\textsuperscript{132} In response, Melinda Meek Hennessey argues that African-Americans in Charleston County “had the most sustained militancy of any riot-torn area during the Reconstruction period.”\textsuperscript{133} Yet, on September 6, black Democrats held a political rally at Archer’s Hall in support of Wade Hampton. After the meeting black Republicans attacked black Democrats and their white escorts.\textsuperscript{134} The violent conflict erupted during a period of fervid black political activity. It began when a group of African-Americans attacked J. R. Jenkins, a black Democrat, and he fled to the store of J. H. Muller, a German grocer. The men threatened to break into Muller’s store, but Jenkins escaped and sought police protection. During the riot, blacks destroyed storefronts and looted shops. A force of over one thousand whites, mainly organized into rifle clubs, prepared for battle with armed bands of African-Americans. Blacks armed themselves with clubs and pistols, and it appears the whites hesitated to attack them. During the riot, at least two whites were seriously injured. In another incident, a large group of Afro-Charlestonians attempted to disarm a group of whites. During the fight that ensued, someone shot an eighteen-year-old African-American passerby named Ben Gibbes. Soon after, African-Americans fought a pitched battle with the white Montgomery Guards and the Irish Rifle Club, both clubs firing from inside Byrne’s Hall.\textsuperscript{135}

A large group of Irish filled Hibernian Hall one week later to discuss the upcoming State and Federal elections and to form the Association of United Irishmen. The Irish leadership gave several lengthy speeches in an attempt to gain support for the Democratic Party. They did not attack African-Americans as a race, but instead, focused on Republican corruption and oppression. M. P. O’Connor declared, “[T]he Radical party put the ballot in the hands of the black man only that they themselves might keep in power and rob the whole country.”\textsuperscript{136} O’Connor wanted the Irish to unite “against mismanagement and oppression.” He recognized
that significant divisions existed within the Irish community, concluding “Were this an ordinary campaign I would be the last to endeavor to unify you as a race. But this is an extraordinary occasion. The people are struggling for their very existence.” The United Irishmen met again in early October, and twelve hundred people listened to speakers concentrate on Republican Party corruption and inefficient government. M. P. O’Connor proposed several principles of the Association of United Irishmen, focusing on the alleged abuses of the Republican Party. In two important declarations, the United Irishmen pledged their “adhesion” to the Democratic Party and the “memories of the struggles of Irishmen in their own land against the rule of outside domination, quickens them into activity against the aggression of centralized rule in America.”

Two days later, the Germans filled Freundschaftsbund Hall for their largest meeting in many years. The leaders of the German community sat upon the stage and addressed the German community. Captain Werner, presiding over the meeting, said, “Many of our German citizens are of the opinion that it is necessary to declare for which party the intend to poll, and that, through such a declaration, the public here will understand us, and a favorable impression will be made upon our countrymen in the North and West.” Major Franz Melchers argued that the Republican Party corruption and riots had endangered the State, and he believed that whites and Blacks had aligned themselves into the Democratic Party to overthrow the Republicans. Melchers summarized the German interests in the upcoming elections. In his view, the Germans wanted reduced taxes, protection of property, equal protection under the law, and economical government. Melchers enlisted support for Democrats Samuel Tilden and Wade Hampton. Captain F. Von Santen believed the corrupt Republican administration had oppressed the Germans in Charleston through burdensome taxation. Von Santen emphasized the necessity for the Germans to take an active part in the upcoming election. He argued that Republican leaders had misled the “uneducated” and politically inexperienced Black population. Their efforts had produced “nothing else but misunderstanding and hatred between the two races in the South, and it is this misunderstanding and hatred by which these corrupt leaders retain their control and power over them.” He continued, “I will ask, how can a land prosper, how can a people be happy, when the employer and employee are hostile to each other.” Captain Alexander Melchers stated, “[W]e see with regret that a wrong impression prevails among some of our fellow-citizens in regard to the position occupied by the Germans of Charleston in the present campaign.”

Whites used economic coercion to persuade blacks to vote Democratic. The social and economic repercussions for voting Republican kept many people from voting for that party. Voters had three options: vote Democrat, vote Republican, or abstain. The News and Courier published one-line announcements throughout the paper: “If you want a laborer, employ a Democrat” and “If you want a cook or washerwoman, employ the wife, daughter, or sister of a Democrat.” Many more announcements filled the paper.

Only a few days before the election, the United States Court approved over twenty-five applications for naturalization, including twelve Germans and four Irish. The News and Courier warned naturalized citizens to have their papers with them at the polling places. The Commissioners of Election required that voters must produce their papers or two responsible citizens must vouch for them. “The Radicals will challenge the votes of person who became citizens twenty or thirty years ago, if they can save a vote by so doing.”

At the Radical County Convention, the Republicans nominated John H. Ostendorff for clerk of court. At the meeting, Ostendorff insulted the German members of Muller’s Band, telling them they “had been slaves in their native land and now were trying to enslave others.”
The Republicans also nominated Dr. M. H. Collins, an Irishman, for coroner. Twelve blacks and a handful of whites rounded composed the Republican County ticket. On November 8, another riot took place on the night before the gubernatorial election day that left several whites and blacks seriously injured and one white dead. The Republican ticket of Hayes, Chamberlain, and seventeen local candidates of the South Carolina House of Representative defeated the Democrats in Charleston. The Compromise of 1877 solved the disputed election results. Chamberlain won 39 more votes in Charleston—he received 1427 votes and Hampton 1388. Samuel Tilden received 6323 votes and Hayes and 6322. F. W. Dawson supported the candidacy of Chamberlain for Governor and objected to Straight-Out Democracy, but native-white Charlestonians increasingly supported the straight Democratic ticket.

The Germans appear to have remained politically divided well into the late nineteenth century. In October 1880, the News and Courier published a letter from a German Conservative that called on Germans to involve themselves in Charleston’s politics. “The time has come when you can, if you choose, exert the full influence in the public affairs of Charleston to which your numbers and your large stake in the welfare of the city rightfully entitle you. You have but to cast your votes…Do not fail to seize the present opportunity to make your influence felt, and to secure for yourselves proper representation in the County Convention…It is important not only that you yourselves should register, but that you should see that no German citizen of your acquaintance fails to do the same thing,” the German wrote.

**Conclusion**

During Reconstruction, white southerners overwhelmingly supported the Democratic Party and opposed Republican government in the South. Historians have always lumped German and Irish immigrants into the category labeled “white.” Yet, these European immigrant groups divided their political support between Democratic and Republican parties. The majority of African-Americans voted Republican, but a small minority increasingly moved toward the Democratic Party. Municipal elections often stimulated political conflict and riots, mainly between whites and Blacks, although sometimes among African-Americans. In the 1871 municipal election riot, African-Americans assaulted Germans and destroyed their property, in an expression of both political and class conflict. The majority of German shopkeepers held middle-class status and supported the Democratic Party. Some Germans charged high prices and refused to extend credit to African-Americans, and this caused considerable conflict between both ethnic groups. The 1873 municipal election revealed significant ethnic divisions in both the Democratic and Republican parties. In 1875, Charleston Germans had become such strong backers of the Democratic Party, and they opposed the effort of many native southerners to form an alliance with Republicans. By 1876, the white southerners had successfully lured German and Irish voters into its constituency, and the majority of German and Irish immigrants voted Democratic in unison with white southerners.

**Chapter Seven Notes**

1 Several works on antebellum immigrants in Charleston exist, one by historian Christopher Silver, “A New Look at Old South Urbanization: The Irish Worker in Charleston, South Carolina, 1840-1860,” Southern Atlantic Urban Studies, 3 (1979): 141-72; and another coauthored by Ira Berlin and Herbert G. Gutman, “Natives

2 George Brown Tindall, *Natives and Newcomers: Ethnic Southerners and Southern Ethnics* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 51. Tindall determines “one new frontier for southern historians is the role of ethnic diversity in the region—more than just that represented by black and white.” In this work, Tindall debunks the myth that “southerners have always embodied an Anglo-Saxon purity.” He focuses on the cosmopolitan nature of antebellum southern cities but ignores the ethnic communities following the Civil War. See Dennis C. Rousey, “Aliens in the WASP Nest: Ethnocultural Diversity in the Antebellum Urban South,” *Journal of American History*, 79, no. 1 (1992): 152-164; in this essay, Rousey notes the necessity of a more detailed understanding of the ethnocultural interaction among ethnic groups in the South, more specifically a closer study of the process by which immigrants adapted to southern society—and how they changed it.

3 This chapter mainly analyzes the Charleston newspapers that provide valuable insight into the political and cultural history of the period. The majority of the material in this essay comes from anonymous editorials and articles published in these papers. When possible, I have focused on the Republican newspapers since historians have tended to concentrate only on the *Daily Courier, Daily News*, and *News and Courier*. I have paid particular attention to the role of German and Irish immigrants in Charleston’s politics. Heretofore, scholars have largely ignored their extensive influence in that city’s municipal elections. Undoubtedly, the German and Irish immigrant vote helped “redeem” Charleston from Republican rule.


5 Brian D. Page, “An Unholy Alliance”: Irish-Americans and the Political Construction of Whiteness in Memphis, Tennessee, 1866-1879, *Left History*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2002), 77. Page continues, “As a result, white political leaders and the conservative press were forced to consider a new definition of whiteness that included Irish Americans, in order to cement the economic and social dominance of the native, elite white population. Whiteness was politically constructed to the extent it solidified white control versus the abhorrent alternative of black domination and working class solidarity.”


7 Mark I. Greenberg, “Becoming Southern: The Jews of Savannah, Georgia, 1830-1870” *American Jewish History* 86 (1): 63, 73. Greenberg argues that Jewish commitment to Southern honor, slave ownership, and the Confederate cause assisted their assimilation process and helped them “become Southern” more easily.
8 O’Grady, 87-101.


11 Foner, 199-200, 276, 299, 305. Foner discusses P. J. Coogan, an Irish nationalist, who immigrated to Charleston and was elected to the South Carolina legislature in 1866.


13 Walter J. Fraser, Jr., Charleston! Charleston!: The History of a Southern City (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 284-86.

14 Fraser, 287-89.

15 Charleston Daily Courier, 4 November 1868.


17 Charleston Daily Courier, 5 July 1868. During a July 4 speech, one leading Republican and US Senator, F. A. Sawyer, recognized the Democrats’ lack of attention to the immigrant vote.

18 Charleston Daily Courier, 9 May 1868. A Democratic political meeting was held in the First Ward, heavily populated with Germans, and the meeting was a failure as only thirty-one of the 332 white registered voters in the ward attended. Some Germans participated in the meeting.

19 Charleston Daily Courier, 13 May 1868.

20 Charleston Daily Courier, 21 May 1868.

21 Charleston Daily Courier, 23 May 1868. Oscar Eickle, Benjamin Bollmann, J. H. Kalb, and Henry Oetjen were nominated for Democratic aldermen.


24 Charleston Daily Courier, 4 August 1868.

25 Charleston Daily Courier, 17 August 1868.

26 Charleston Daily Courier, 25 July 1868. The other speakers did not mention immigrants in their speeches.
The Democrats, of course, claimed they had not provoked any of the conduct. In response, the “Democratic White Voters of Charleston” addressed the Black community on the front-page of the Courier. “We have the capital and give employments,” they threatened Afro-Charlestonians. In addition, the white authors threatened that African-Americans faced immediate danger and potential conflict with the white race.


One speaker determined, “although our countrymen are disinclined to interfere much in politics, to heartily sustain the efforts to revive law and order, progress and the general welfare.” The following men were elected Vice-Presidents and Secretaries: Vice Presidents—H. Gerdts, J. C. H. Claussen, J. H. Kalb, B. Bollmann, A. Nimitz, D. Werner, John Campsen, John Hurkamp, H. Baer, Theodore Cordes, J. M. Ostendorff, D. A. Amme, Charles Schmetzer, A. Bischoff, C. Sahlman, A. Von Dohlan, Jacob Meitzler, C. Plenge, L. F. Behling. Secretaries—E. Wohltman, R. Issertel, C. G. Erckman. The German Democratic Club formed committees to increase German participation in their respective wards. The German Democrats passed the following resolution: “That whilst we having come as strangers in the land, have by thrift and industry acquired property and wealth, have been content to undergo a long term of probation before having been permitted the rights of citizenship, the colored people of the South might be satisfied and would act wisely to acquire property and influence in the same manner.”

Edward King, Great South (Hartford: American Publishing, 1875), 446. During his trip to Charleston, King recognized that African-Americans often congregated at the Courthouse and City Hall as an expression of their
political rights. Charleston Daily Courier, 12 November 1868. During the election, a fight took place between a white man and a African-American man on Meeting-street. The fight spread to a group of African-Americans and three whites. Mr. Duncan Cameron was cut in the back of his neck by a knife. In another incident, a group of African-American fought with a policeman for reasons unknown. The procession made its way to Gilbert Pillsbury’s house where he expressed his thanks for their support.

Charleston Daily Courier, 13 November 1868. Southerners called for greater police and military protection.

Charleston Daily Courier, 14 November 1868.

South Carolina Weekly Republican, 14 May 1870. With Mr. Northrop as editor and James Brennan, an Irish Nationalist, managing the paper, the Southern Celt had risen to “the front rank of Irish American journals, being recently introduced to the British Parliament for its fierce denunciations of English rule.”

Page, 82-83, 85.

Foner, 354-355.

Foner, 369, 375-389.


Melinda Meek Hennessey, “Racial Violence during Reconstruction: The 1876 Riots in Charleston and Cainhoy” South Carolina Historical Magazine Vol. 86, No. 2 (April 1985): 102-03. Hennessey does not consider it among the most serious riots leading up to 1876.

Fraser, 291-92.

Daily Republican, 28 July 1871. The Daily Republican cited the Columbia Union, date unknown.

Fraser, 291-92.

Fraser, 292-295.

Charleston Daily Courier, 24 July 1871. The editor proclaimed, “Whether one is born in Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Germany, or any other country, the moment he becomes a citizen of South Carolina his relations are merged, and he occupies precisely the same position, and is entitled to the same rights and consideration as if an original native of the soil.” The editor continued, “[I]t is a matter of no consequence where General Wagener first drew breath. He is one of us…”

Daily Republican, 31 July 1871. In fact, the editor determined that Wagener began the nomination process himself through a private circular.

Daily Republican, 28 July 1871.

Daily Republican, 29 July 1871. James Brennan did not consider himself the leader of the Irish in Charleston, but he did speak for many of them. He believed that hundreds of Irish would vote Republican in the upcoming election.

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56 Charleston Daily Courier, 10 June 1871. They accused General Wagener of supporting the Black Codes in 1865. Democratic Party officials, however, argued that Wagener had voted against the Black Code and even promoted a bill that offered public education for African-Americans. In 1875, the claim that Wagener supported the Black Code resurfaced; Daily Republican, 1 August 1871. The editor of the Daily Republican asserted that Wagener had little business experience, and the businessmen of Charleston would make a mistake if they supported his bid for the mayoralty. James Brennan, an Irish immigrant and influential Republican, argued that Wagener discriminated against the Irish when he failed to send an immigration agent to Ireland. Brennan alleged that Wagener misappropriated state funds from the immigration act when he dispatched an agent to Germany and ignored Ireland. A rumor circulated that the Germans intended to buy Irish votes with a ten thousand dollar fund for that purpose.

57 Charleston Courier, 31 July 1871.

58 Page, 86.

59 Daily Republican, 29 July 1871, 31 July 1871.

60 Charleston Daily Courier, 22 July 1871, 24 July 1871, 25 July 1871. On July 24, the judge naturalized forty-seven Germans and six Irish. The following day sixty-two Germans and five Irish applied for naturalization.

61 Daily Republican, 29 July 1871, 31 July 1871; Charleston Daily Courier, 26 July 1871, 27 July 1871, 28 July 1871, 31 July 1871; Charleston Daily News, 1 August 1871.


63 Charleston Daily Courier, 27 July 1871. The constables arrested several persons for registering at more than one poll, or on naturalization belong to other persons.

64 Daily Republican, 29 July 1871. The editor recommended these watchful Republicans should take the name and address of suspect persons registering to vote. Then, they should pass the record on to the election authorities.

65 Daily Republican, 1 August 1871.

66 Charleston Daily News, 1 August 1871; 1870 Manuscript Federal Census. At dusk, the lower ward clubs processed up Meeting Street and other clubs joined them until they reached the Citadel Green. There the upper ward clubs joined the procession. As the procession passed up Washington street, they attacked the premises of Otto Tiedemann, broke his windows and destroyed everything they could. The next house belonged to twenty-eight year old Hanoverian Claus H. Blanken, located at the corner of Charlotte and Washington. The broke his windows, entered the store, and thrust a burning torch into a molasses barrel, under the impression that it was a kerosene barrel. They next attacked the store of Fred Klintworth, a German, at No. 50 Washington Street. They broke his windows, threw brickbats into the rooms, one large piece hit Louisa Klintworth in the face and nearly killed her.

67 Charleston Daily Courier, 1 August 1871, 2 August 1871. Preliminary findings suggest that the Germans targeted during the riot dealt with an African-American clientele, sometimes exclusively. At times, African-Americans expressed their disapproval with the Germans’ refusal to extend credit and high prices.

68 Daily Republican, 1 August 1871; 1870 Manuscript Census. In a speech following the procession, Alonzo J. Ransier, an African-American politician, criticized the fifty-five year old Prussian General Wagener and the Germans for supporting the Democratic Party that opposed the rights of the African-American people. Ransier believed that many Germans disliked the Democrats, but they felt compelled to conform. T. J. Mackey, a white Republican politician, attacked General Wagener for his harsh treatment of Charleston’s population, including Germans, and for his support of the Black Codes. Mackey felt the Germans made a mistake in supporting Wagener and the Democrats.
71 Frederick A. Porcher to Miss Anne S. Porcher, 12 August 1871, Frederick Porcher Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia.

74 Charleston Daily News, 1 August 1871. The editor of the Daily News called for a force of white citizens, equal to that of the African-Americans, at the polling places. He requested that employers release their “young men” for the next two days. He called for Democrats to use violence at the polls if necessary, and requested that the whites should arm themselves and prepare for conflict with the Republicans.

75 Charleston Daily News, 2 August 1871.

76 Charleston Daily News, 1 August 1871, 2 August 1871. The Democrats called upon the German and Irish immigrant communities to register and vote, simultaneously charging Whites with voter apathy.

77 Charleston Daily News, 1 August 1871, 2 August 1871.

78 Charleston Daily Courier, 2 August 1871.

80 Daily Republican, 4 August 1871. The editor continued, “It is maddening to look back to the stupid bungling of that procession, which alone perhaps cost us the loss of Charleston. Such yells, such brandishing of clubs, such hurling of rocks and breaking of windows and fences and human skulls, such a little hell let loose by men who knew not what they themselves had at stake, surely was never seen before in the interests of politics within all the confines of civilization.”

81 Charleston Daily News, 4 August 1871.

82 Charleston Daily News, 1 August 1871.

83 Daily Republican, 7 August 1871.

84 Daily Republican, 5 August 1871.

85 Charleston Daily Courier, 8 August 1871; Daily Republican, 7 August 1871. In one incident, an African-American man named Nelson, entered Mr. Herman’s store and ordered bacon and rice, but Mr. Herman told him he could not purchase the food on credit. Nelson drew a pistol and threatened to kill the storekeeper. Later, Nelson returned and broke down Mr. Herman’s door with a post. Nelson did not agree with Mr. Herman’s refusal to extend him credit on at least one other occasion. The editor of the Daily Republican attempted to defuse the situation and appealed to its readership to stop their attacks on Germans and their property.

86 Daily Republican, 7 August 1871.

88 Charleston News and Courier, 25 September 1873. The editor of the News and Courier determined the Irish always voted Democratic, and the Germans were “always found on the side of good order and economical government.” Moreover, the editor was confident the Irish would support the Democratic ticket.
Republican African-American candidates included W. sixty-three years old mulatto trial justice J. McKinlay, minister S. B. Garrett, an African-American minister, musician A. B. Mitchell, W. G. Fields, thirty year old mulatto butcher John Godfrey, twenty-six years old black carpenter Benjamin Moncrief, carpenter and farmer R. N. Gregorie, twenty-eight years old barber George Shrewsbury, butcher Jonathan Gordon. Irish candidates included James F. Greene, merchant P. Moran (Democrat), sixty years old shoe retailer Dennis O’Neill (Democrat), and druggist Dr. M. H. Collins (Republican).

The editor called for their participation at the Democratic Ward meetings.

The majority of the German community leadership participated in the Democratic ward meetings.

Approximately 20 percent of the forty delegates were German.

The Irish candidates were fifty-four years old grocer wholesaler J. F. O’Neill, fifty years old brick-mason John Kenny, William Moran, and E. F. Sweegan. African-American candidates included Democrats R. Birnie (cotton shipper), twenty-eight years old mulatto Charles C. Leslie (fish factor), and Republicans Dr. M. G. Camplin (physician), Reverend Jacob Mills (minister), and the thirty-seven years old black S. B. Garrett (minister). Forty-eight men participated in the Independent Republican Convention, including twelve African-Americans. The Convention nominated six immigrants, six native whites and six African-American men. The wealthy native-born whites included merchants, cotton factors, and bankers.

It is the duty of every Charlestonian to give this day to earnest, systematic and untiring exertion to save the old city. The last desperate struggle of the pack of needy and reckless adventurers who run the “Republican” machine, hereabouts, to make themselves masters of the city revenues, will be made at the polls today…every honest citizen, regardless of political lines, whether he be white or black, rich or poor, should make it a point to be present at his voting precinct throughout the day, and by ceaseless work and watchfulness insure fair play and render a fraudulent reversal of the popular will a matter of impossibility.”

The city government had hired the majority of the sheriffs to keep order on election day. The group pulled Heidt from his horse, rubbed his head into the dirt, kicked him, and badly bruised his back.
In the First and Second wards, all three factions competed. Irish and Jewish nominees in First Ward split ticket. In the Third Ward, the Regular ticket, the Wagener ticket, the anti-Wagener or Independent ticket, and the split anti-Wagener or Independent ticket competed for nominations. In the Fourth Ward, only the German dominated Wagener ticket and the anti-Wagener competed, with southerners supporting the latter. In the Fifth Wards, Germans supported the Wagener Party and southerners the anti-Wagener party. In the Sixth and Seventh Wards, Germans and Irish for Wagener and southerners for the anti-Wagener ticket. Bonum had connections with J. H. Ostendorff, former Republican sheriff and C. C. Bowen supporter.

The editor of the News and Courier endorsed the Independent Republican or Reform Party.

The editor of the News and Courier called for the Irishmen to support the four Irish immigrants on the Independent Republican ticket. Irish candidates for aldermen: McGahan, McElroy, Conroy and Brady.

On October 1st, the editor of the News and Courier opposed Wagener and pointed to the Riot on Christmas Eve (1872), the riots during Longshoreman’s strike (1873), and the fiscal problems of the city. He considered him a “highly unsatisfactory mayor.” Both Germans were nominated for the Fourth Ward aldermen: C P. Poppenheim and C. Voigt.

He estimated the Germans paid five to six million dollars in real estate taxes. The editor expressed confidence that the new city council would protect German interests in the City.

Another fight occurred between a Wagener and a Cunningham supporter. Two or three African-American men were arrested for disturbances. At one of the precincts, a shooting occurred and the only real injury was the shooter blew his finger off.

In 1878, the fusion party leaders called themselves the Nationalist Party.

Page twenty white Charlestonians, including several police were injured during the riot.

Someone shot J. M. Buckner as he walked with a man named Bolger. Elsewhere, a group of African-Americans critically injured Belitzer (possibly a German). After their shoot-out with the white rifle clubs, the African-American contingent fell back to Military Hall where many more blacks awaited, and the whites returned or remained in their barracks.

A committee nominated D. Werner, J. F. Ficken, J. Small, A. Melchers, F. Von Santen, C. G. Ducker, and B. Bollman for the Legislature. All speeches in German except J. F. Ficken’s. The meeting adjourned with three cheers for Wade Hampton. A. Melchers also endorsed Tilden and Hampton.

Charleston News and Courier, 9 October 1875.
Charleston News and Courier, 9 October 1875.
Charleston News and Courier, 7 October 1875, 8 October 1875.
Charleston News and Courier, 4 August 1876, 7 September 1876, 8 September 1876, 11 September 1876.
Charleston News and Courier, 5 October 1876.
Charleston News and Courier, 2 October 1876; Zuczek, 52.
Charleston News and Courier, 4 November 1876.
Charleston News and Courier, 6 November 1876.
Charleston News and Courier, 3 November 1876.
Charleston News and Courier, 8 November 1876.
146 Charleston News and Courier, 9 November 1876.

147 E. Clark, 58-69.

148 Charleston Courier, 6 October 1880.
CONCLUSION

Germans and African-Americans exhibited a significant degree of economic, social, and political interaction in Reconstruction Charleston. The complicated ethnic and race relations between Germans and African-Americans were consistent with one of the most complicated periods in United States history. Not every German supported a single political party. Not every German worked as middle-class businessman or skilled artisan. And not every German admired African-Americans living among and around them. Positive relations between both German immigrants and African-Americans challenged southern social norms.

During the 1850s, Germans settled throughout Charleston’s eight wards, and they often lived in the same neighborhoods, buildings, and even households as African-Americans. In many cases, Germans occupied the lone white household on an entire city street in a black neighborhood. Germans often lived above the stores that they located in African-American locales. Moreover, German demonstrated a tendency to hire from within their own ethnic group, but they did employ African-Americans, mainly as domestic servants and laborers.

Following the Civil War, some southerners and elite German boosters in Charleston considered attracting German immigrants for capital investment or to replace black laborers. However, these immigrants lacked the desire to settle there. The majority of southerners had nativist hostile views toward German immigrants and never committed to a program that would successfully attract Germans and other European immigrants to the South. Instead, Germans consciously ignored the South and migrated into the midwestern and northern States because they offered better opportunities. A weak economy did little to attract skilled German artisans and shopkeepers with capital to invest in business pursuits. In the end, African-American laborers presented a large and able workforce willing to work for lower wages than most immigrants. Although they argued that blacks would not work without their former masters in control, most whites probably noticed that African-Americans continued to work.

Race and ethnic relations between Germans and African-Americans tended to be more positive than those between blacks and white southerners. Germans did not ascribe to the same racist ideology that had shaped southern society for generations. Mainly, slave society had led many southerners to believe that blacks were inferior and that labor meant black labor. Many Germans did not adopt the same view of blacks and labor as slave labor; instead, they had a greater appreciation free wage labor. German liberals, many of them refugees from the failed Revolution of 1848, participated in the abolitionist movement and the Republican Party. During Reconstruction, General Carl Schurz, a German immigrant and so-called “Forty-Eighter,” sympathized with the plight of African-American freedmen in the South and he lobbied Congress for their protection.

Many Germans owned and operated successful businesses and sometimes they faced the scrutiny of southerners. German wholesalers imported groceries and other goods from New York, Baltimore, the Midwest, and Europe. They sold these items to German grocers and shopkeepers, who, in turn, supplied food and other items that southern whites needed. In the
war’s aftermath, southerners charged Germans with price gouging. Supply shortages, high consumer demand, and the lack of hard currency probably affected Charlestonians’ opinion of German merchants. In other instances, African-Americans expressed their dismay with the refusal of German grocers to extend them credit. Germans catered to African-American consumer demand, and some German businessmen did sell items to blacks on credit. Mostly, however, Germans conducted a cash business with African-Americans because they had cash wages to spend while many southerners did not.

German middle-class businessmen organized social clubs based on their cultural heritage, including the German Friendly Society, the German Rifle Club, and German Fire Company, and the excluded African-Americans from membership. The German members of these organizations held social and cultural events throughout the year. Beginning in 1868, the German Rifle Club organized its annual Schutzenfest, and the members invited southerners and African-Americans to attend. African-Americans joined with whites in the various amusements at the festival, but Germans refused them the right to participate in the shooting competition. African-Americans did serve as target pointers, waiters, musicians, and entertainers at the festival.

Germans and African-Americans held holiday parades that meant different things to each community. In the annual Schutzenfest parade, German elites expressed their willingness to become southern whites and contribute to white political ascendancy. Beginning in 1869, they marched uniformed and armed with rifles alongside southern white rifle clubs, an effective exercise in military intimidation against African-Americans. In 1865, African-Americans, however, had already begun their own demonstration of political and martial power at Fourth of July and Emancipation Day parades in which the entire community participated in the procession. African-American men, women, and children filled the streets of Charleston causing discomfort among southern whites. African-American parades reveal a strong African cultural heritage, especially its communal form and the dramatic presentations that took place during the procession.

Finally, German and African-American political cooperation and conflict posed a tremendous problem for southerners. Southern whites called for German Democratic political support, but African-Americans appealed to Germans as well, evidence that Germans held moderate views. Afro-Charlestonians would not have appealed to Germans for assistance if the possibility did not exist. In fact, the earliest post-war German political activity entailed German Republicans participating Charleston and South Carolina government. Throughout Reconstruction, Germans divided themselves between both political parties, but politically active Germans gradually moved toward the Democratic Party. German faced severe sanctions from southerners and conservative Germans if they continued to openly support the Republican Party. In 1876, the German community, many of its members feeling the deep impact of the depression that began in 1873, voted for the Democratic Party and assisted in the southern white “redemption” of the government.

Today, immigrants and African-Americans continue to interact in urban areas throughout the United States. Many people consider inter-ethnic relations both new and atypical. Yet we know that African-Americans and immigrants have demonstrated a high degree of interaction in urban areas since the colonial period, and especially after 1830 when immigrants began to arrive in cities in large numbers.

Recently, historian Joe William Trotter, Jr. suggested that scholars should investigate the interaction between African-Americans and immigrants during the Industrial era. He recognized
that historians have tended to focus on each group separate from each other, subsequently
missing critical data about the intersection of race, class, and gender in the workplace and city at
large. Trotter looked to John Bodnar’s *Immigration and Industrialization: Ethnicity in an
American Mill Town, 1870-1940* as a landmark study and possible starting point. Jon Gjerde, in
his recent essay on the state of the field of the social history of immigration and ethnicity in the
United States, agrees with the scholarly trend toward transatlantic studies that investigate
immigrants in their homeland and follow them to their destinations in the United States. While
he rejects the “concrete, linear models of Americanization” he offers only a slight suggestions
that “Explicitly comparative scholarship either from the perspective of the diasporic groups or
from the perspective of a place wherein ethnic groups interact ought to be an area of growth in
research.” Surely, transatlantic studies allow for little attention to racial and ethnic interaction in
the United States. Scholars should take Trotter’s comments seriously, and begin to look at the
relationships between African-Americans and immigrants in the United States, not only in the
Industrial era, but from colonial times to the present.

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“Graduate Students Discuss Their Preparation as Future Faculty” participated at the 2003 American Historical Association Annual Conference (January 5, 2003)


“The American Historical Association Presents: Preparing Future Faculty in Florida” presented at the Florida Conference of Historians (March 1, 2001)