

German newspapers donated to University of Pennsylvania

Earlier this year, the German Society donated several titles from its German-American newspaper collection to the University of Pennsylvania, thanks to the efforts of Frank Trommler, Professor Emeritus of German at the University of Pennsylvania and former chair of the Society's Library Committee, and Brigitte Burris, Librarian for Germanic Languages and Literatures at Penn. All of these titles had been previously microfilmed and we retain those copies for researchers to use in our library. Unfortunately, the bound originals are in very bad condition due to age and poor storage conditions, and it was no longer possible to handle the physical copies. Van Pelt Library will soon begin digitizing the newspapers to make them even more accessible to individuals researching Philadelphia's German history. Below is the press release issued by the University of Pennsylvania upon receipt of the donation:

The Penn Libraries' historic collection of research material on German immigrants to Pennsylvania recently grew to include a set of nine German-language newspapers published in Philadelphia at the turn of the twentieth century. A generous gift of the German Society of Pennsylvania, this collection features some of the most notable German-language newspapers in the country. These include *Philadelphia Demokrat*, *Neue Welt*, *Philadelphia Tageblatt*, *Philadelphia freie Presse*, *Philadelphia Morgen-Gazette*, *Philadelphia Schwäbischer Merkur*, *Schwäbischer Merkur*, *Philadelphia Sonntags Journal*, and *Volks-Stimme: das Socialistische Wochenblatt für die Ost-Staaten*.

Spanning the period from the 1870s through World War I, the newspapers provide unique insight into the German immigrant community in Philadelphia and the origins of German-American identity. At that time, first and second-generation Germans comprised as much as 12% of the city's population. The papers are an essential source of information about the community's social, cultural, political, economic, and labor relations, as well as about changes

to its ethnic identity over time and through crisis. To maintain a German identity in a new country and, later, to create a new and distinctly hyphenated German-American identity, immigrants created institutions such as cultural organizations, unions, holidays, and memorial events. One of the most effective of these was the establishment of a German-language press. Not only did this serve to preserve the culture and perpetuate the language, it was also a vehicle for publicizing efforts to unify German-Americans culturally and politically. Ultimately, with the advent of World War I, the later issues of the collection record the decline in efforts to ennoble German-American culture.

Highlights of the collection include the *Philadelphia Demokrat* (1877-1907), the oldest-running daily German-language newspaper in Philadelphia, and the *Philadelphia freie Presse* (1877-1887), both of which provide insight into the identity and lifestyle of the middle-class German immigrants to America, their primary readership. Also of note, the *Philadelphia Tageblatt* (1879-1918) was an official organ of the German Social Democratic Workingmen's Party and one of the most important German socialist publications in the country.

Much of the collection represents the last known copies extant in the world. To both preserve this extraordinary treasure for posterity and to make it broadly accessible to the public, the Penn Libraries plans to digitize the newspapers beginning in 2016. Title-level records are now available in the Libraries' catalog, Franklin. The newspapers are available for viewing in the Kislak Center Reading Room upon request.

-Bettina Hess