Happy Birthday, America - Who Gave You That Name?

Whenever world leaders meet, they receive exhaustive press coverage these days. Often, there are more press than active participants in attendance at any given conference.

So, it is slightly disappointing that little media attention was given to the visit of Chancellor Angela Merkel to the Library of Congress earlier this year. She formally turned over to the United States a 500-year-old document which is occasionally referred to as “America’s Birth Certificate.”

The document in question is a 1507 map by the German cartographer Martin Waldseemueller (no relative of the “Waldseemüller” who was the first to name the new continent “America”). Hence, Waldseemueller, rather than the Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci, could justifiably be called the “Godfather” of America. In fact, since Waldseemueller credited Vespucci with having discovered a separate continent unconnected to Asia, as Christopher Columbus believed he had done 15 years earlier, some have called his map America’s first “declaration of independence.”

During the April 30 ceremony, Merkel did not truly “turn over” this 12-panel Renaissance masterwork, because the Library of Congress had bought it in 2001 for ten million dollars, and had taken full title to it in 2003. However, the map now officially belongs to the continent whose birth certificate it constitutes.

I recently heard from Willy Aust, “We all should be thankful to Martin Waldseemueller, because had he chosen Vespucci as name for this country, we now would be called ‘Vespucian’ or ‘German-Vespucians’—for that matter.”

—Hardy von Auenmueller

Season’s Greetings

The year just ending has been full of challenges, for the Society and for me personally.

Thanks to the hard work of the Board, our office manager and quite a few volunteers, a lot has been accomplished. During our past fiscal year (which ended on June 30) a further growth in revenue of 40%, and holding the increase in operating expenses to less than 10%, continued the positive trend of the prior year, when a turn-around was accomplished. In addition, we benefited from the good investment climate on Wall Street. (For further details, please see the comparative financial data on the insert of this newsletter.)

These favorable developments produced a sizable surplus, which has strengthened our financial position so much that we are now proceeding with our most urgent capital improvement project: a sprinkler system to be installed throughout the basement area, auditorium, main hallway and the adjacent townhouse. Major funding support for it was secured from the...
More than 80% of those who came to Philadelphia a German Town.”

Attracted over 1000 people to our premises. We take encouragement from the first German settlement in nearby Germantown. We plan to be more at the forefront of events. It is not often that an ethnic cultural institution like ours is able to attract such broad interest.

Furthermore, we wish to apologize in deep appreciation. We accept this gift with humility and sister organizations, which had been vilified only a few years earlier. Hence, we accept this gift with humility and deep appreciation.

The ten events hosted by us—several as joint ventures with other local organizations—were a tall order indeed, for our Society. However, here as well our most reliable volunteer force, the Women's Auxiliary, led by Christel Tillmann—with constant support by husband and son—came to our rescue! What would we ever do, without them, or, for that matter, Sharan Knoll, who enlisted her Mom and Dad when the going was getting tough. And this year's Christkindlmarkt (or should we call it "Christst Kindermarkt"?) drew such crowds to our building on December 1 that the line for our midday meal extended halfway around the auditorium. We would like to thank all those who waited patiently for their servings of Kasseler and frankfurters, while our volunteer kitchen staff strove to handle the unexpected volume of business. We also appreciated the added beer and wine consumption, which helped to overcome the lack of steam heat that our aged boiler refused to generate.

In mid-September, we celebrated our (early) Oktoberfest in the Ratskeller—a new venue for this event. The space had been decorated in a Bavarian Biergarten fashion, and the smell of sauerkraut wafted throughout the area. It, too, attracted a record crowd who dined on a slow roasted pig, potato salad and various kinds of wurst.

A few weeks later, we enjoyed a most successful Stiftungsfest, while in between our facility was successfully rented out for various types of celebrations, such as weddings, birthday parties, fashion shows and poetry readings.

Also, our language program has become more diversified. In addition to our regular evening adult classes, we are now offering German language instruction to three different youth levels on Saturday mornings, while—at the same time—our library is again available to the public. Our custom-made, on-site language courses are likewise finding great acceptance with corporate clients, as does our tutoring service.

The Society’s music offerings have also been expanded, and are being marketed under the label of "Wister and More!"

Conversion of various local papers, radio stations and, of late, by the commercial Experts of business. We also expected the calendar of events on page seven, to both our membership and the public.

The Library is now open to members and the public on Saturdays from 9:30am—12:30pm.

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**Calendar of Upcoming Events**

**December 2007**

**Wed. Dec. 12**

**Konversationsabend**—Traditional Advent Celebration at the von Auenmullers, 7:00pm

The business office will be closed from 12/22/07—1/1/08, reopening on 1/2/08.

**January 2008**

**Sat. Jan. 5**

Women’s Auxiliary Monthly Meeting, 10:00am

**Sat. Jan. 5**

Studi-VZ New Year’s Party in the Ratskeller, 7:00pm

**Mon. Jan. 7**

German Language Classes—Winter Semester for Adults Begins

**Fri. Jan. 11**

Friday Film Fest, “Alles auf Zucker”, 6:30pm

A journalist of Jewish descent in Berlin feels that he is a loser of the political changes in Germany after 1989. When his mother dies, he has to meet his brother to whom he has not talked for years. But during the preparations for the funeral, he plays a snooker-cup to try and win the money to pay his debts, and many things mix up.

**Sat. Jan. 12**

German Language Classes—Winter Semester for Kids (ages 4-15) Begins

**Sun. Jan. 20**

“Wister and More!” presents The Frankfurter Kammertrio, 3:00pm,

**Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Brahms**

**Mon. Jan. 21**

**Konversationsabend:** “Review of Germany’s Present Political and Socio-Economic Status”, 7:00pm with Hardy von Auenmuller

**February 2008**

**Sat. Feb. 2**

Karnevalsparty in the Ratskeller—a joint venture with Netzwerk Philadelphia, 7:00pm

**Fri. Feb. 8**

Friday Film Fest, “Nirgendwo in Afrika”, 6:30pm

Shortly before WWII, a Jewish family in Germany emigrates to Kenya to start running a farm, but not all family members come to an arrangement with their new life. Shortly after their departure, things in Germany change very quickly and turning back seems impossible. So, everyone has to adapt to life in a new continent.

**Sun. Feb. 10**

“Wister and More!” presents The Wister Quartet, 3:00pm, Schubert, Mozart, and Brahms

**Thurs. Feb. 21**

**Konversationsabend:** Slide Presentation on Elbe River Trip with Georg Simon, 7:00pm

**March 2008**

**Sun. March 9**

“Wister and More!” presents Duo Parisienne, 3:00pm, Schubert, Tchaikovsky, Debussy, and Spohr

**Fri. March 14**

Friday Film Fest, “Effie Briest”, 6:30pm

Set in the closed, repressive Prussian society of the Bismarck era, the film tells the story of Effie Briest, a young woman who seeks to escape her stifling marriage to a much older man by having an affair with a charming soldier. Six years later, her husband discovers her affair with tragic consequences.

**Mon. March 17**

German Society Board of Directors Meeting, 7:00pm

**Fri. March 28**

**Konversationsabend:** The comedy “Der zerbrochene Krug” by Heinrich von Kleist will be performed by the theater group of the Elmshorn High School from Germany

**Sun. March 30**

“Wister and More!” presents The Tokito-Oka-Uhlig Trio, 3:00pm

CPE Bach, Haydn, and Moszkowski

The Library is now open to members and the public on Saturdays from 9:30am—12:30pm.
Thanksgiving Eve

This year on the eve of Thanksgiving, approximately 70 people gathered in the Horner Memorial Library to participate in a small fund-raising party in support of its operating budget.

Long time friend and supporter of the Society, Walter Staib, expertly prepared a good selection of wines, champagne, and a wonderful buffet.

Since the last guests stayed beyond midnight—dancing to the well-known tunes of the Kauriga Orchestra—the attendees proved it was, indeed, an enjoyable affair.

Perhaps you may recall, we re-opened our Library last fall. Shortly thereafter, Dr. Friederike Baer was hired as our Librarian, opening our Library last fall. Shortly thereafter, Dr. Friederike Baer was hired as our Librarian, opening our Library last fall.

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Area high school students take advantage of the warm weather and tasty food prepared in our garden during the German-American Weekend.

Marnie Old demonstrates the principles of beer brewing during the German-American Weekend.

Families participating in our St. Martin’s Parade gather in the Ratskeller on 11/11/07.

The designs of Melani von Alexandria, one of the numerous fashion shows held at the German Society.


Volunteers from the Temple University German Club standing in front of their painted wall.

The Civil War era Philadelphia Beck Band performing during the German-American Weekend.