



Honoring Three Officers

During our *Stiftungsfest* earlier this month, it was wonderful to see three hard-working officers honored by our President. Each received a medal of the German Society, in recognition of his invaluable service during the past 3½ years:

Martin Knappe, Vice President of Operations, is well known for his hands-on approach in fixing the numerous mechanical problems of our ancient building complex. He first made his mark when supervising the Ratskeller Kitchen Project. His technical expertise was in high demand while we negotiated our sprinkler and elevator contracts, and dealt with our HVAC service company.

Lew Volgenau, Vice President of Finance, guides us through the current fiscal crisis while maintaining his sense of humor. He and his wife, Hella—whom we honored two years ago—are our most reliable volunteers for all kinds of jobs—from mowing lawns and picking up trash to cleaning floors and moving heavy chairs, to “chaperoning” facility rentals, etc.

Ernie Weiler, Vice President of Advancement, has successfully steered our various capital improvement projects and written numerous successful funding proposals. To date, these have yielded over \$400,000 in contributions from foundations, government agencies and others. He also has led our “in-house” efforts of upgrading our premises, including the painting of hallways, windows and shutters, as well as the fences that surround our property.
—Sharan Knoell

President's Thanksgiving Greetings

The meltdown of the stock market and the accompanying recession have brought us all individual challenges this year. Despite those conditions,

In his address at a reception at the Union League, he spoke of the longstanding German transatlantic connections of Pennsylvania with the city of Krefeld, the home of the original Germantown settlers. He commented that Germany, which in recent years has also become a country of immigrants, may well be advised to draw on the American experience of how to integrate people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

In April, a memorial was dedicated in Jamestown, Virginia, the site of the first European settlement. It commemorates the 1607 arrival of **Dr. Johannes Fleischer**, the very first German who came to this country. He came in search of medicinal substances, but succumbed to typhoid within a few months. Others soon followed, including two Hessian glassmakers, and several woodworkers from the Black Forest.



2008 has been a fairly successful year for the German Society, thanks to the most generous support of our membership, and the dedicated effort of several Board members and other volunteers.

It was also a year of many celebrations for the German-American community here in the Delaware Valley.

These celebrations began late in January—with the visit of **Dr. Juergen Ruettgers**, *Ministerpräsident* of North Rhine Westphalia. During the previous year, he had signed a state-to-state partnership agreement with Pennsylvania **Governor Ed Rendell**.

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Eventually, eight million Germans would make their way to these shores seeking religious or political freedom, as well as opportunities for a better life.

In early October, it was our turn to pull out all stops for a six-day German-American Anniversary Celebration. We conducted fifteen different events, such as the historical play, "Ben and the Germans", several student workshops, showings of the four-part PBS documentary, "Germans in America", an early German-American History symposium, a modern dance performance, a concert featuring medieval music, two performances by the

Landesjugendorchester Rheinland-Pfalz, and—last but not least—the thought provoking comedy "*Amerika gibt es oder gibt es nicht*," performed by the KRESCHTheater Company of Krefeld.

In addition, we celebrated our own Munich style *Oktoberfest* in the adjacent *Biergarten "Unter den Linden"*. While overall attendance did not meet our expectations—perhaps because so many other venues offered parallel activities—all those who did partake had a great time.

We also dedicated our German Immigration Mural (see photo on pg. 1)—with City Managing Director **Dr. Camille Barnett** and her chief-of-staff, **Steve Kennebeck**, as well as **Jane Golden**, Executive Director of the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program, in attendance.

Furthermore, an historical marker was placed in front of our main building by the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission. Its chairman, **Wayne Spilove**, attended the ceremony, as did

Bernd Scheelen, *Bundestag* member and Mayor of Krefeld, who presented an oak tree as a gift from his city. That tree will be planted in the Pastorius Park of Germantown.

Apart from all the above, the most important project we tackled this year has been the construction of an elevator annex to our main building, which will make our premises handicapped accessible. While we had hoped to have it completed by now, circumstances beyond our control intervened. Since the structure, itself, is substantially complete, we thought that our 244th *Stiftungsfest* would be the appropriate occasion to dedicate it to **Dr. George Beichl**, our beloved former president. The major two donors, **Ulrich Both** and the late **Hans Trustorff**, as well as all of us wished to honor him for his lifelong contributions to the Philadelphia German-American community.

Naming this structure for Dr. Beichl made our fundraising efforts much easier. Nonetheless, I would like to thank each and everyone who supported this worthy cause. There are still a few pledges outstanding which, I am sure, will be fulfilled by the end of this year. Anyone else who might want to contribute to this important project is encouraged to do so by December 31, 2008.

A plaque, listing the names of all donors who gave \$600 or more, will be mounted on the vestibule wall of the "Beichl Tower". No doubt, quite a few members and visitors will be enjoying the use of this elevator in years to come—instead of climbing the many steps up and down our stairways.

Finally, at our *Stiftungsfest* two weeks ago, everyone who attended that important fundraiser commented on the

sophisticated color scheme selected for our auditorium following the installation of a sprinkler system early this year, and what a splendid atmosphere it conveyed to such a festive event.

In this connection, I would like to express my appreciation to those colleagues and members of the Society who spent untold hours in planning this annual event—particularly **Frank Klare**, chair of the *Stiftungsfest* Committee. I also wish to recognize **Hella and Lew Volgenau** who—as in years past—did a marvelous job setting up our Silent Auction.

Reflecting on this busy year, I firmly believe, we have a lot to be thankful for. I wish to convey to you my heartfelt thanks for all you did in support of our Society.

May the blessings of this Christmas season be with you and your family throughout the coming year!

—Hardy von Auenmueller

Additional Beichl Tower Contributions

Thank you very much for your generous support of this project.

Individual Donors

One Step Towards Making Philly Green

In 2007, Hurricane Kyrill caused massive damage in Germany. In Krefeld alone, over 3,000 trees were destroyed.

In May 2008, a group from the GSP visited Krefeld to celebrate their 325th anniversary of the first German settlers. Our delegates donated a maple tree to be planted on hurricane-damaged Philadelphia Street of Krefeld.

In response, **Mayor Bernd Scheelen**, MdB reciprocated this effort by donating an oak tree to be planted in Pastorius Park of Germantown next spring. The tree demonstrates the importance of preserving and protecting the climate of our planet.

—Tony Michels

Bill Extends Tax-Free IRA Charity Distribution

The Federal Government's rescue plan for banks renews a popular opportunity for charitable giving. People over age 70 ½ can once again donate as much as \$100,000 from their individual retirement accounts to charity tax free.

The Pension Protection Act of 2006 had created "qualified charitable distributions." The original provision expired Dec. 31, 2007, but the bailout bill has extended it for this year and 2009.

So, if you meet the age requirement, you can make charitable donations this year and next using IRA assets. The distributions are tax free and can count toward the required minimum distribution that IRA holders who are 70 ½ and older must take from their account each year.

Let's say you're required to withdraw

\$12,000 from your IRA before Dec. 31, and you wish to give \$10,000 to several charities. If you direct your IRA custodian to send \$10,000 to the charities, that money would count toward your required distribution for 2008—and you would end up reporting only \$2,000 in IRA distributions (instead of \$12,000) on your tax return.

Of course, qualified charitable distributions come with several important rules. First the gift has to go directly from the IRA to the charity. So if you already have deposited your required minimum distribution for this year in your own bank account, you can't count a charitable gift from your IRA as your required withdrawal.

Second, you have to make gifts to a tax-qualified nonprofit group. Some charities don't count, including charitable trusts, donor-advised funds and private foundations.

To get your assets transferred successfully, it is important to give clear instructions to your IRA custodian, and also to alert the lucky charity. You may want to ask for a letter from the charity acknowledging the gift, the date of receipt, the amount and language specifying that it came from your IRA.

Please note that our Treasurer, **Tim N. Rausch, Esq.** is offering our members a free legal seminar on the topic of "**Eldercare Law**" where such documents as wills, powers of attorney, living wills and medical directives will be explained and discussed. We are tentatively scheduling this seminar for **Friday, January 16th** at 5:00pm prior to our regular monthly Film Fest. Kindly call the office or send an email to make a reservation for this event.

New Members

We extend a cordial welcome to all new Society members. Your interest in joining is appreciated, and we look forward to seeing you at many of our upcoming events.

**Life Membership*

Early German-American Historical Symposium

The Language Debate in Philadelphia's German Community, 1800-1830

In July 1816, fifty-nine German American men stood trial in Philadelphia on charges of conspiracy and assault. For several months, the prosecution claimed, the accused had harassed and intimidated a group of Germans who were requesting occasional services in the English language in the largest German Lutheran church in North America at the time, Philadelphia's St. Michael's and Zion.

The trial testimony revealed that tensions over language had been brewing in the congregation for over a decade. Around 1803, the demand by a group of members to hold occasional English services was met with strong opposition that ultimately resulted in the decision of some Germans to found their own, English-speaking, congregation. The spokesperson of this first pro-English group was Peter Muhlenberg*, son of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, the patriarch of the German Lutheran church in North America.

During the colonial period, the elder Muhlenberg often preached in English. Bringing order and unity to the then unorganized Lutheran church was more important than insisting on the use of a particular language. The church records from the pre-Revolutionary period, including the minutes of the Lutheran Synod that Muhlenberg helped create, never mention language as a divisive issue.

After the Revolution, however, language choice became a source of conflict that was so serious that it some-

times resulted in congregational schism. These tensions can be explained in part by the assertion of rights that came out of the Revolution, including the right to practice one's religion freely. Acculturated, well-established and bilingual German-Americans like the sons of Muhlenberg seemed to threaten this right by asking for the introduction of a "foreign" language. However, the Revolution had provided less-prosperous German-Americans of lower social standing with the ideology, rhetoric and justification to defend their perceived (American) rights in the strongest terms, including violence.

—Dr. Friederike Baer

*President of the GSP in 1788 and 1802-1807.

First Germans in America

It is commonly assumed that the US rose chiefly out of English settlements. However, Germans were here with the English from the beginning. We can say that Germans were present at the creation of our nation.

In fact, most Germans who came to early America were recruited by the British for their special skills and worked under their political leadership. When you ask today what has made this country great, it is the political system which we owe mainly to the British, and our technological know-how, which we owe more to the Germans than anyone else. This was already foreshadowed in a small way in the earliest settlements:

Dr. Johannes Fleischer decided to go to the New World to discover plants for

medicinal purposes. Fleischer was the only Continental among the first British settlers of the first permanent English settlement in America, established in 1607 on Jamestown Island.

Conditions on the island were anything but healthy. By January 1608, fewer than 40 men remained alive of the 115 who had arrived with Fleischer. As the first physician in English America, he had his hands full ministering to the sick and dying. Summer was the sickly season; people died from typhoid, dysentery or salt poisoning.

Johannes Fleischer was one of the most educated men in Jamestown. An obelisk on federal land at Jamestown dedicated by President Theodore Roosevelt proclaims Virginia the birthplace of the US. However, many Americans believe that the seed bed of our country was really in Plymouth. Virginia, however, is first by right of primogenitor. The first German Lutheran church was established in Jamestown 13 years before the first Pilgrims set foot in Massachusetts. The Pilgrims established a theocracy; the Jamestown colonists, the first representative government.

On October 1, 1608, five more Germans arrived. Two Hessian glassmakers ran tests inside the Fort proving that the local sand could be turned into glass, and three wainscot cutters from the Black Forest sawed planks of wood from that were shipped to England.

In response to constant demands by Jamestown's governor John Smith for food, Chief Powhatan replied that he would send corn provided he could acquire copper, hatchets, guns, swords, and a European style house.

Abstracts of Papers Presented during the German-American Celebration*

Smith wouldn't trade weapons but was willing to have a house built for him.

The three Germans worked on Powhatan's house while living in the same village as his daughter Pocahontas. Later, when the house was finished, Smith tried to capture the chief but he escaped for which the Germans were blamed. Meanwhile, the hungry settlers illegally traded arms for food. Later when Smith wrote his memoirs, he could not admit that conditions were so bad when he was in charge, so he invented the conspiracy theory by three German house builders to convey weapons to the Indians.

In the spring of 1609, the two Hessian glassmakers built a glasshouse with four furnaces just off Jamestown Island. The ruins may be seen to this day.

The officially approved exchange with the native Americans involved copper for corn. Copper ornaments distinguished the elite from the commoners. A small copper plate worn on the chest of a chief provided protection; copper placed in the grave guaranteed eternal life. This copper was in the form of scrap from the German-staffed Society of the Mines Royal. At Jamestown some of the settlers fashioned these sheets into ornaments for trade with the natives.

—Gary Carl Grassl

German Americans in Pennsylvania

When we look at travelogues of the 18th century, Germans in the countryside were often described as industrious, reliable, religious and canny. They

were peaceful, helped each other, and spent most of the day pursuing their business. Compared to their English neighbors, they seemed to be more efficient and avoided trouble caused by other ethnic groups.

During the War of Independence the German population of Pennsylvania was not united in their thoughts about secession from the English crown. The majority of the German population was unaware of the ideas of liberty based on the British *Bill of Rights*. When their merchants also suffered from the *Stamp Act*, more Germans started supporting the idea of resistance against British taxation. In particular, the German Society and the German churches did a lot to activate Philadelphia Germans for the cause of the revolution.

During the war, we find a lot of Pennsylvania-Germans in all kind of political institutions and conventions, in local militias, and in war relevant industries. German newspapers reported in a pro-revolutionary way, and a German regiment was formed by Germans from Pennsylvania and Maryland largely on a volunteer basis.

However, we must not generalize. Quite a number of Germans were taken into custody because they did not support the revolution. In other words, not every German was convinced to abandon their loyalty to the crown.

—Björn Oberhössel

Selling Early Pennsylvania

European promoters of North American colonial schemes faced a rhetorical challenge: To lure potential set-

tlers, their ads—pamphlets, public letters, travel narratives—needed to stress wondrous bounty ripe for the picking. Simultaneously, their promotional materials needed to persuade naturally wary prospective colonists of truth in advertising. A variety of German-language texts—some translated from English, Dutch, or French—pitched their projects, focusing particularly on materials selling Pennsylvania.

Special attention would be drawn to the deployment of the words and images which comprised *Schlaraffenland*. It was a place whose plentitude engendered, depending on one's perspective, either the good life or sloth, and it had been popularized since late medieval times by Sebastian Brant, Hans Sachs, and Pieter Brueghel the Elder. While some readers of colonial materials easily recognized *Schlaraffenland*, others were easy prey for unscrupulous promoters. The medieval trope clearly held considerable allure.

Various materials advertising Pennsylvania gathered under the name of Pastorius (1651-1719) circulated widely. Indeed, North American colonial historians trace the success of German settlements in PA, the most sizable in North America, to Pastorius' promotional abilities.

The Presentation concluded with an exploration of Pastorius' rhetorical balancing act: his ability to invoke plenty while maintaining credibility. —Dr. Bethany Wiggan

*in the Horner Memorial Library on October 1, 2008

Library News

The Horner Library of the German Society continues to be open to members and non-members alike, thanks to a small group of dedicated volunteers. Please come visit us on Saturday mornings from 9:30am-12:30pm to discover what's new in the Library:

The Lidy Pohl Lesecke boasts two beautiful, new leather armchairs and a reading lamp, which were given to the library by the Women's Auxiliary.

New Children's Books in German have been added to the collection. Please plan to bring the children upstairs after their Saturday classes to check out books geared to their interests and level of ability in German.

New Selections of Literature from the late 20th and early 21st centuries will be available for adult readers.

As always, the Library offers delightful 19th century *Gemütlichkeit* with its antique oak chairs and glass-enclosed bookcases crammed with books in German and English on a wide variety of topics. Current interests may be explored in the many magazines and newspapers arranged for reader convenience on the tables—perfect for both simple pleasure and serious research!

The Library Committee wishes to thank Robert Wild and Jürgen and Elisabeth Woelke for their children's books and the GSP Women's Auxiliary for the new furnishings. New volunteers are always welcome and needed. For more information, contact the German Society office at 215-627-2332.

COME, SIT, & READ in the German
Society Library
—Robin Spencer

"Fleeing the Swastika"

Konversationsabend mit Buchautorin Faye Cukier

"Ich wollte doch nur tanzen und singen! Die haben mir meine Kindheit gestohlen...", so klagte unser Gast, als sie uns am 10. Oktober in gepflegtem Deutsch aus ihrem Leben berichtete bzw. aus dem vorgenannten Buch übersetzte.

Nachdem Faye Cukier als 16-Jährige aus ihrer Heimatstadt Köln fliehen musste, war an eine berufliche Ausbildung in Tanz und Gesang nicht mehr zu denken. Einem Foto nach zu urteilen, war sie wohl dem Kabarett sehr zugetan. Dieses Foto, welches sie zusammen mit einer kleinen Band zeigt, hat sie bis zum heutigen Tag aufbewahrt.

Bereits in den Jahren vor 1939 hatte sie als Kind erfahren müssen, zu welchen Taten sich Mitmenschen - aufgestachelt von der antisemitischen Propaganda - hinreißen ließen. Einem Lehrer musste das kleine, eingeschüchterte Mädchen oft die Hand hinhalten, damit er sie mit dem Lineal schlagen konnte. Auch der Heimweg von der Schule war eine tägliche Mutprobe für sie.

Unmittelbar nach der Flucht ins flämische Nachbarland marschierten deutsche Truppen in Belgien ein. Dort war die Familie nun stets auf der Suche nach einer Bleibe, die meist nur von kurzer Dauer war.

Besonders erschreckend war für sie die Feststellung, dass viele Flamen mit den Nazis sympathisierten. So bestand immer die Gefahr, denunziert zu werden.

Wo auch immer sie Unterschlupf gefunden hatten (einmal sogar in einem

Kaninchenstall), fürchteten sie das Klopfen an der Tür mit dem Befehl "Aufmachen, Hausdurchsuchung!" und das nachfolgende "Mitkommen!" So versuchten sie den deutschen Besatzungstruppen jeweils um einige Kilometer voraus zu sein, bis sie sich eines Tages auf französischem Territorium befanden, was keinesfalls das Ende ihrer Flucht darstellte:

"Madame, wir sind von Feinden umstellt!" ließ ein französischer Soldat sie wissen, als sie mitten in eine Kampfhandlung hineingeraten waren.

Was Vertreibung, Flucht und Furcht vor der Verfolgung bedeutet, haben auch viele Deutsche aus den Ostgebieten miterlebt. Daher wird kein Deutscher einem Verfolgten sein Mitgefühl verwehren.

Zu guter Letzt erfuhren wir von Frau Cukier, dass sie nicht nur einen Koffer in Köln stehen hat, sondern eine Wohnung dort besitzt..., und so als Pendler zwischen Köln und Philadelphia die Vorteile der alten und neuen Welt genießt.

Während der nachfolgenden Unterhaltung kamen mir folgende Worte von Goethe in den Sinn:

"Selig wer sich von der Welt ohne Hass verschließt, einem Freund am Busen hält und mit dem genießt, was von Menschen nicht gewusst oder nicht bedacht, durch das Labyrinth der Brust wandelt in der Nacht."

Wir haben uns über den Besuch von Faye Cukier sehr gefreut. Ihr Buch ist erhältlich von dem Xlibris Verlag (ISBN: 1-4134-7346-6)

-- Inge Niebisch

Calendar of Events

December

Sat. Dec. 6	<i>Christkindlmarkt</i> of the Women's Auxiliary, 12:00 noon
Wed. Dec. 10	<i>Konversationsabend</i> —Traditional Advent Celebration at the Auenmueller's, 7:00pm
Fri. Dec. 12	Friday Film Fest, "Die Flucht" ("The Flight") Part I, 6:30pm
Sun. Dec. 14	"Wister and More!" Concert Series, Ephrata Cloister Chorus, 3:00pm
Mon. Dec. 15	German Society Board Meeting, 7:00pm
Dec. 25—Jan. 1	Closed for Christmas Holidays

January 2009

Sat. Jan. 3	Women's Auxiliary Monthly Meeting, 11:00am
Fri. Jan. 16	Friday Film Fest, "Die Flucht" ("The Flight") Part II, 6:30pm
Jan. 12—April 3	Start of Winter Session Evening Classes—Beginner to Advanced
Sat. Jan. 17	Start of Winter Session of Youth Classes—Ages 4-12
Wed. Jan. 21	<i>Konversationsabend</i> —Die Wirtschaftskrise - Was können wir von der neuen US-Regierung erwarten?, 7:00pm
Fri. Jan. 23	"An Evening in the Black Forest", Dinner at City Tavern Benefiting the German Society, 6:00pm
Sun. Jan. 25	"Wister and More!" Concert Series, Duo Parisienne, 3:00pm

February

Sat. Feb. 7	Women's Auxiliary Monthly Meeting, 10:00am
Sun. Feb. 15	"Wister and More!" Concert Series, American Virtuosi, 3:00pm
Fri. Feb. 20	Friday Film Fest, PBS Documentary "Germans in America", 6:30pm
Mon. Feb. 23	<i>Konversationsabend</i> —Die fuenf neuen Bundeslaender—Sind sie eine Reise wert?", 7:00pm

March

Sat. March 7	Women's Auxiliary Monthly Meeting, 10:00am
Sat. March 7	Philly Beer Week Presentation with Marnie Old, 3:00pm
Sun. March 8	"Wister and More!" Concert Series, Keystone State BoyChoir, 3:00pm
Mon. March 16	German Society Board Meeting, 7:00pm
Fri. March 20	Friday Film Fest, "The Gustloff", 6:30pm
Mon. March 23	<i>Konversationsabend</i> —Die Geschichte derer von Auenmueller - Und was motiviert Hardy?, 7:00pm
Sun. March 29	"Wister and More!" Concert Series, Frankfurter Kammertrio, 3:00pm

The Horner Library is open from 9:30am-12:30pm on Saturday mornings.

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A Planned Cultural Trip to Eastern Germany

Over the past two years, several people have asked me if I would consider leading a trip to the five eastern German *Bundesländer*, which for more than forty years were cut off from the Western world by the Iron Curtain.

As some of you know, I hail from that area. I was born in the state of Saxony. Germany's industrial development emerged from there in the mid-19th century. Even before that, it was in many ways also the cultural center of the country.

During my continual transatlantic commutes to Saxony over the twelve-year period following the fall of the Berlin Wall, I appreciated anew the history and beauty of that area which I had to leave as a kid, after the Russians confiscated our landholdings and called us "*personae non gratae*".

When I celebrated my 60th birthday in Eisenach, the geographic center of Germany, some American friends asked me to lead an eight-day guided tour through my home state—which I gladly did.

A similar journey, targeting Leipzig, Dresden and Berlin—with side trips to Eisenach, Weimar and Wittenberg—could be accomplished over a ten-day period. In spite of the high transatlantic airfare, we will try to hold the cost for transportation and accommodation below \$2,000.

We are planning such a trip for May, 2009. Please let us know if you would be interested. An orientation meeting will be held early in the coming year.

-- Hardy von Auenmueller