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GERMAN IN EVERY PARTICULAR?
FROM HISTORIC SETTLEMENT TO THEME TOWNS:
EXAMPLES OF “LITTLE GERMANIES” IN AMERICA

A Thesis in
German

by
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Among America’s most successful cultural and heritage tourism destinations are towns with a distinct and identifiable German character or theme. These “Little Germanies” are popular tourist destinations because of their historic and architectural ambiance and the natural beauty of their location. They are “German in every particular,” just as their visitors demand it. A multitude of special events and celebrations add to their popularity and success. Although they have in common their cultural theme and character, they are all very different in regards to their location, history and purpose of their founding, efforts in historic preservation, community profiles, tourism programs, and in many other respects.

These “Little Germanies” can be divided into three different categories: “Historic Settlement,” “Theme Town” and “Historic Settlement turned Theme Town.” In their efforts to market themselves as a viable destination to tourists seeking a German cultural experience, America’s “Little Germanies” employ differing approaches and unique characteristics in order to sell a similar product. Whereas the “Historic Settlements” emphasize the substance of their historical significance and German cultural heritage, the “Theme Towns” focus on the surface aspect, the carefully designed alpine- or Bavarian-themed appearance of their town. Frankenmuth, the sole “Historic Settlement turned Theme Town” of this study, although still drawing on its substance, far more emphasizes its surface, its Bavarian village architecture, in its tourist marketing efforts.

In this study, Hermann, Missouri, was selected as a prominent example of a town with a distinct and identifiable authentic German heritage and ways. The towns of
Leavenworth, Washington, and Helen, Georgia, will be included in this study as examples of perceived or assumed German culture. They will serve as examples in our discussion of the phenomenon of the creation of German “Theme Towns,” which do not have any actual German heritage at all, in different areas of the United States. These places are attractive because they give the appearance of German culture, since they adopted an alpine Bavarian architectural theme in the sixties and seventies. The fourth “Little Germany” included in this study is “Michigan’s Little Bavaria,” the town of Frankenmuth. Frankenmuth will serve as an example for a historic German settlement, which in the middle of the twentieth century decided to adopt a Bavarian-inspired alpine architectural theme for its business district in an effort to offer its visitors a more “authentic” German or Bavarian experience.

There can be little doubt that the successful preservation and fostering of an ethnic heritage, a worthy endeavor in the eyes of most Americans today, very much depends on its commercial viability. This, on the other hand, brings with it a danger to over-accentuate certain stereotypical aspects of the heritage, which can sometimes even lead to distortion and actual falsification. We have to keep in mind, however, that we are not dealing with the actual culture of Germany proper, but with German culture in the United States. We also must remember that we are not talking about groups like the Amish and Mennonites, who to this day have maintained their unique way of life, separate from their “English” neighbors, ever since establishing their communities in North America.
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America’s “Little Germanies”

One segment of the American heritage tourism market promotes and capitalizes on America’s German heritage. Innumerable towns and areas owe their existence to German settlers. Many of these places are merely identifiable by their name, while others still manage to preserve remnants and traces of their German founders in form of architectural features or historic celebrations. The vast majority of these German towns in America have since become American towns of German origin. Only a smaller number of towns have managed to preserve or successfully revive their German cultural heritage and have now become popular destinations for America’s cultural and heritage tourists; they are America’s “Little Germanies.” These towns can be considered the forerunners in a trend, which is still in its early phase today. More and more American towns are currently rediscovering their cultural heritage and are implementing rules and regulations for preserving what is left of this heritage, in an effort to get a share of the money cultural and heritage tourists spend in these locations every year.

Today, German culture and heritage in America are mostly limited to an occasional, often festive celebration, much rather than an every-day way of life. Hence, they are much more subject to commercial exploitation. For a number of towns and villages their German culture and heritage has become a marketable product in their efforts to attract tourists. When consumers purchase a product, its function is more important than its appearance, but looks nonetheless play an important part in the decision which product a consumer will ultimately buy. “Beyond these generalities,” Postrel explains, “it’s often hard to tell exactly how surface [=looks and design] and
The same holds true for tourists’ reasons to visit America’s “Little Germanies.” All of them successfully attract visitors by means of a wide variety of attractions and special events.

Heritage tourism, recreational tourism and entertainment tourism are the three major segments of the tourism market in America today. These “[t]hree basic, overlapping, and intertwined types of tourism,” Hal Rothman of the University of Nevada-Las Vegas explains, “have evolved and become integrated during the twentieth century in the American West. They existed in various forms from the beginning of mass transportation. They ascended to dominance, in no small part based on the cultural values of the moment, the distribution of wealth, and the availability of transportation to the destinations that defined the ethos of the moment” (Rothman, 23). Rothman sees today’s tourism market as a cumulative compound of these three types of tourism. His observation holds true for the entire American tourism landscape in general, and for America’s “Little Germanies” in particular.

A myriad of technological advancements also greatly influenced society in post World War II America, which underwent a shift towards placing more emphasis on the individual and personal expression. Two of the more pronounced expressions of this shift were the American anti-war movement and the Hippie culture. “In this changing cultural self-pronouncement, the American West (…) became a playground, the American dreamscape, historic, mythic, and actual, spawning a complex industry with the ability to transform places as it created an economy for destitute and flourishing communities alike. The development of Las Vegas, Disneyland, and their range of imitators characterized this phase” (Rothman, 24-25). It also saw the transformation of the former
logging and railroad towns of Helen, Georgia, and Leavenworth, Washington, into alpine-inspired theme towns and the architectural makeover of downtown Frankenmuth, Michigan, into a Bavarian-style village in an ill-conceived attempt of expressing the cultural heritage of the town’s founders. Travel and tourism had become accessible to more Americans than ever before. “In the post-1945 United States, travel to accomplish personal objectives acquired the status of national birthright” (Rothman, 25).

Rothman concludes that today forms of all three of these types of tourism combined characterize the tourism market. Changing tastes among the American tourists led to closer ties between recreation tourism and heritage tourism in the American West and elsewhere. In turn heritage tourism and recreation tourism became important aspects closely linked to experience tourism, as can be seen in the four towns selected as the focus of this study. “The result was an industry that was sufficiently malleable to weave straw into gold. But there was a steep price to pay for the trick: the cultural, environmental, and psychic transformation of place” (Rothman, 25).

For this study, we selected the following four towns based on a variety of reasons, such as their special historical background and development, significance as a cultural and heritage tourism destination, availability of data and research materials, community profiles, and their representative characters. Frankenmuth in Michigan, Helen in Georgia, Hermann in Missouri and Leavenworth in Washington were chosen for this study because they best represent the three different categories of “Little Germanies” tourists visit in large numbers throughout America today. To facilitate their analysis, these towns have been divided into the following three major categories: historic settlement, theme town, and historic settlement turned theme town.
In the following we will define these three categories:

**Historic Settlements**

Historic settlements are towns that were originally founded, planned and chartered by German immigrants on American soil and which throughout their history managed to preserve their German characteristics. The settlers who founded these historic settlements either pursued a specific purpose for the founding of their town or they just happened to settle in the same location. This category represents the largest number of American towns of German origin. Their distinct German cultural heritage and German character in areas such as architecture, city planning, design and layout, social traditions and customs characterize these historic settlements.

The historic settlement we selected to represent this category in our study is the wine-growing town of Hermann, Missouri. Hermann also represents an organized secular settlement founded upon the vision of establishing a safe-haven for the survival of German culture and German ways west of the Mississippi, which would eventually develop into one of the largest cities in the country, a dream that was never realized. The town’s primary source of income has traditionally been its wine industry, which played an important role nationally as well as internationally. Since most of the town’s early buildings were preserved without major changes or alterations to their exteriors, Hermann today boasts one of the most outstanding examples of nineteenth century German architecture in America.

**Theme Towns**

Theme towns are settlements which were neither founded nor predominantly influenced by German settlers, nor have any apparent ties to German immigration into the United
States, but which today present and market themselves as “Bavarian” or “Alpine” villages. They are towns that merely at random adopted or created a German (Bavarian or Alpine) architectural style or cultural theme for solely economic and tourism purposes, without having any actual ties to German culture or heritage.

Helen, Georgia, and Leavenworth, Washington, are two non-German founded American towns now marketing themselves as “Bavarian” or “Alpine” villages, displaying a large variety of alpine inspired architectural features, German style restaurants, festivals, and businesses. These towns independent of one another adopted their present German-based theme as a way out of economic crises in the late 1960s. When economic disaster hit Helen and Leavenworth and their major industries closed down and important sources of revenue disappeared, they chose to focus on developing their towns into major tourist attractions. Each town adopted an alpine theme for architecture, restaurants, businesses and festivals, and developed tourism into their most important industry and source of income.

**Historic Settlement turned Theme Town**

A historic settlement turned theme town is a town that was originally founded by German settlers and throughout its history remained a predominantly German settlement in character, but then at some point in time decided to adopt an architectural design theme in addition to its actual cultural heritage. The main purpose of the adoption of such an architectural, or design theme, is to underscore the actual existing heritage and to use it as a backdrop for special events, festivals, and celebrations, and to make the towns appearance more appealing to visitors, and to increase tourist revenues.
Frankenmuth, Michigan, is a historic settlement, founded by German immigrants as a Lutheran missionary settlement, which has maintained its German heritage and cultural identity throughout its history. In an attempt to give the town a more “authentic” German appearance, a Bavarian theme was adopted, after a business owner remodeled his restaurant in Bavarian style in the late 1950s. Today, Frankenmuth combines the two previously discussed categories as a historic settlement, which now displays an architectural theme in an effort to attract larger numbers of tourists.
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INTRODUCTION

Organized German Settlement on the American Frontier

The idea of establishing a New Germany on the North American continent was born out of the Romantic Movement in Germany in the early nineteenth century, which also sparked the German National Movement, culminating in the failed 1848 revolution. The availability of land on the western frontier made emigration to America, and subsequently colonization within the territories on the North American continent, a very attractive and appealing venture to many Germans who could have never even dreamt of one day owning land in their home country.

In his discussion of America’s German element, Faust distinguishes between German immigrants born in Germany and the American-born descendants of German immigrants, whom he labels “native German element.” He continues by explaining that the native Germans, who, unless they had lived in a predominantly German settlement area, had fully assimilated into the population of the United States, were at an advantage over the more recent immigrants in settling on the frontier, mainly due to their prior pioneering experience. They were more familiar with the ways of the West and they could better anticipate the trials and tribulations frontier settlement would bring with it (Faust Vol. I, 434).

Most of the earlier German immigrants had come to America in search of a new beginning and with the resolution to leave Germany and their past behind them. They were committed to becoming American and to contributing to the development and
advancement of their new homeland, as many of them demonstrated in their eager participation in the Revolutionary War. The new type of German immigrants arriving in the United States during the nineteenth century was a different kind of settler. Unlike the desire to leave Germany behind and to begin a new life in the new world, that was characteristic for many among the early waves of German immigration, these nineteenth century immigrants were individual settlers who saw themselves more as German expatriates in the New World and less as new Americans. Many made deliberate attempts to remain German, and to consciously preserve as much of their German culture and heritage as possible, not to merely hold on to old ways simply due to force of habit (Rippley, 22-43).

A.G Roeber identifies three major periods of emigration from Germany to America: the colonial period, the nineteenth century, and the twentieth century. He explains that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the majority of the Germans seeking a new life resettled within Europe, rather than leaving for the New World. The small numbers of immigrants who came to America during the early colonial period originated predominantly from northern Germany. Most Germans from other areas were more likely to re-settle in other parts of north-eastern and south-eastern Europe. “North America remained an unknown and insignificant realm for German speakers not connected via the Baltic and North Sea trade with England and Holland” (Roeber, 720).

This changed significantly during the decade following 1683, when “mostly Lutheran and Reformed church members came to North America.” They did, however, not flee from religious persecution, as Roeber explains, but “the motivation for migration
of these family-dominated groups was overwhelmingly economical.” The geographical origin of these migrants had also changed. While small numbers still originated in northern Germany, more and more migrants for southwestern Germany began to make the voyage to America, where most of them settled in Pennsylvania, “where settlement in the Delaware River valley, and eventually some 150 miles (…) to the north and west, created the most concentrated German-speaking culture in British North America” (Roeber, 720).

Most immigrants during the colonial period had adapted to life within the cultural context of America while still holding on to some of their inherited beliefs, values and traditions. “The English language quickly dominated trade and business; German was retained at home and in religious services,” Roeber explains. The immigrants of this period, even though they came from different socio-economical backgrounds, “tended to group together on a religious basis,” rather than based on their origin (Roeber, 721).

The nineteenth century saw a renewed interest in German emigration to the still rather young United States of America, reaching the high point of another wave of immigration after the failed 1848 revolution in Germany. “Cultural transfer and adaptation began in earnest in the 1830s (…) with the arrival of both Catholic and Lutheran émigrés in 1839, followed by the fleeing revolutionaries of 1848.” Among the groups of immigrants of this period were “Catholic Swiss and Austrians who settled in Ohio, Indiana and Missouri, and ‘Old Lutherans’ from Saxony who (…) settled in Missouri (they organized the Missouri Synod in Chicago in 1847), [who] helped to shape the contours of mainstream German-speaking cultures” (Roeber, 722).
Although many of the eastern states actively tried to recruit skilled German immigrants, most of them sought their fortunes in the Midwest. “By 1882, when some 250,000 arrived, the ‘German Triangle’ within lines connecting Cincinnati, Milwaukee and Saint Louis was populated by German-speaking Lutherans, Catholics, Jews, and freethinkers.” The decade between 1880 and 1890 would see a total of 1.4 million German immigrants. By this time, many more immigrants had moved to urban centers, totaling about 50% of America’s German-born population by 1900 (Roeber, 723).

As the result of this nineteenth century period of immigration, Don Yoder sees “two German-speaking worlds, which impinged on each other and were conscious of each other’s presence, yet remained separate. These were on the one hand the world of the Pennsylvania Dutchman and on the other the world of what they called ‘Deitschlenner,’ the European German or immigrant German” (Yoder, 1). Whereas the Dutchman saw himself as American of German descent, living his everyday life combining American and German culture, the ‘Deitschlenner’ saw himself as a German living in America, holding on to his German everyday life in his new American surroundings. This group made no attempts to assimilate into mainstream American society, but rather remain separate from it as much as would be possible. As German-Americans, the ‘Deitschlenners’ would later dominate the German settlement efforts in the American Midwest and lay the foundation of much of what is today considered to be German in America (Yoder, 1-3).

During the nineteenth century, many of the German settlers supported the idea of establishing organized settlements on America’s frontier. Most of these were romantics and liberal thinkers who still lived in one of the many German states struggling for
national unity and cultural identity. In 1819 Ludwig Gall envisioned the plan of a German immigration society, but after he failed to secure any support from the Prussian government, he took it upon himself to lead 240 German immigrants to Indiana on America’s western frontier. According to von Senger und Etterlin he journeyed through the German settlement areas of Pennsylvania and Ohio in an effort to gain support for “…a plan to create ‘Deutschheim’, a German city, which was to become the nucleus of further German penetration” (Senger und Etterlin, 151).

To Friedrich List, a young accountant hired by the State of Württemberg to analyze the reasons for mass emigration from Germany’s southwest in the early eighteen-hundreds, German settlers in the New World could “…become both, producers of raw-materials for the home-country as well as consumers of manufactured goods from Germany” (Senger und Etterlin, 148). According to von Senger und Etterlin, List, like many of his contemporaries, was convinced that German settlers in the United States would be able to preserve and maintain their language, identity, and their German cultural way and heritage. This would give them an important role in the imperialistic efforts of the states of the German Customs Union.

German settlement in America was of great economic importance to the German states and to German trade companies as well. To the states, emigration to America would provide them with a foothold in the New World, assuming they could maintain their influence and rule over the emigrants and their settlements. To many companies trading with the Americas, the fairs they collected from the emigrants made their shipping routes more profitable. The transportation of emigrants ensured that their ships would be carrying cargo in both directions during their voyage across the Atlantic, thus
making the import of American goods like sugar, cotton, or tobacco cheaper and more affordable to more people, thus increasing the demand for more imports. Another positive effect on the German economy was the rising demand for goods manufactured in Germany, not only by the increased number of German immigrants living in America, but also by other settlers (Senger und Etterlin, 147-149).

With this in mind, organized German settlement in the United States and its territories, and even the possible establishment of a German republic in the Americas was the dream of many nineteenth-century German liberals. But they also realized that emigration would lead to the loss of a number of skilled workers and manpower to the homeland. Following another wave of emigration after 1830, many of them therefore demanded that Germans going to America or those already living there should be organized in a fashion “useful to themselves and to the fatherland. At least their ‘Germandom’ should not be lost for the nation” (Senger und Etterlin, 149).

According to von Senger und Etterlin, “possibly no one did more to arouse the public’s attention to the necessity of so doing than Hans Christoph von Gagern”, the representative of the Netherlands at the German Bundestag in Frankfurt (Senger und Etterlin, 148-149). In many documents, he demonstrated to the German parliament the need for unified emigration efforts. He was convinced that German immigrants would be better off settling together and he even attempted to gather data from the New World attempting to locate regions that would be most suitable for organized German settlement and colonization. However, von Gagern was never a supporter of the idea to establish a separate German entity on the North American continent, but much rather he hoped that the German settlers would “… become a colony of Germany in the ancient Greek way.
They were to be autonomous spin-offs of the mother country, bringing German culture to the prairies and generally raising America’s conscience of, and friendship with, Germany” (Senger und Etterlin, 149). This sentiment was later echoed by the German Settlement Society of Philadelphia. In founding Hermann on the Missouri frontier they attempted to establish a refuge for German culture in America, a German ‘Athens in the Midwest.’

Von Senger und Etterlin elaborates that not German independence, but rather regional predominance on America’s western frontier was the goal of many liberal proponents of an organized German settlement effort. He explains that “the notion of colony, by and large, took on the meaning of settler colony” (Senger und Etterlin, 149-150). As a result of this, many German immigrants settled in the then frontier states, establishing the foundation for a strong German heritage and influence in many states in the Midwest. This is a continuation of the role German settlers played in the settlement of the western frontiers of the old colonies. According to Faust, “[the historian] will find the German element on the frontier line at any stage of its progress westward, securing and defending it, or pushing it onward as did the Palatines before the Revolutionary War” (Faust Vol. I, 434).

Karl Follen was another strong proponent of a German homestead in the New World, but although he formulated his call for a “…’free abode [Freystätte] for oppressed Germans’…” (Senger und Etterlin, 151) in the early 1820s, he abandoned his ideals shortly after arriving in the United States and accepting a teaching position at Harvard. Neither Follen nor Gall succeeded in creating much of a German settlement movement towards the western frontier. Another German idealist however managed to spark the fire
that led to the establishment of fairly large-scale emigration and settlement societies in Germany: Gottfried Duden. Settlement and emigration societies had been established in America as well as in Germany itself. The five most prominent emigration societies were established in Berlin, Mühlhausen/ Thuringia, Frankfurt/ Main, Solingen, and Giessen. Settlement societies, whose goal it was to establish German settlements on America’s western frontier, were organized in many American cities with large German populations. Examples are the German Settlement Society of Philadelphia (founded in the 1820’s), the Chicago Land Association (founded in 1853), and the Cincinnati Association (formed by Cincinnati Turners in 1855), to name just a few of the societies instrumental in organizing the towns referred to in this study.

Duden had arrived on the Missouri frontier in 1824, where he established a farmstead, which in his eyes should serve as a model enterprise for his fellow countrymen. Upon his return to Germany in 1829, he published his Bericht über eine Reise nach den westlichen Staaten Nord-Amerikas. This overwhelmingly enthusiastic account of his Missouri experience caused a large increase in the number of German immigrants into the newly established state of Missouri. Following the many hardships large numbers of the frontier settlers had to endure; Duden was later heavily criticized for drawing an all too idyllic, idealistic and romantic picture of life on the western frontier. But, nonetheless, the quest for a ‘New Germany” on America’s frontier was on.

As a result of Duden’s accounts, the young state of Missouri became the destination of choice for many new immigrants from Germany after gaining statehood in 1821. German settlers from the eastern United States, who were looking for a better fortune on the western frontier, also chose Missouri as their new home. In his book
Exploring Missouri Wine Country, Brett Dufur calls Missouri “a veritable Eden for the poor and landless.” He sees the state’s “rich soils, expansive waterway connections, timber and abundant game” as the dominant factors for attracting tens of thousands of German immigrants to Missouri (Dufur, 17).

Many of the Germans who settled in Missouri were well educated and from the higher social classes. As a result, they became known as ‘Latin Farmers.’ These ‘Latin Farmers’ came to Missouri due to the efforts of several settlement societies that established settlements in Missouri during the first half of the nineteenth century. The *Giessener Gesellschaft* settled a group of about 500 Germans in Warren County, close to the location of Duden’s farm. In nearby Franklin County, the Berlin Society founded the town of Washington, while the Solingen Society established its settlement on Tavern Creek. Inspired by these successes, the German Settlement Society of Philadelphia established the town of Hermann on the banks of the Missouri River in Gasconade County in 1838 (Gerlach, 24-25).

Missouri, however, was not the only location on the western frontier that saw organized German settlement efforts. Other states in the American Midwest, as well as Texas, California and Oregon were seen as possible locations suitable for the settlement of large numbers of German immigrants, supported by settlement societies like the Central Emigration Association located in Düsseldorf and Cologne. These associations actively sought financial support from German state governments and agencies. Most, however, were not very successful in securing the financial and political support for establishing successful German settlement colonies on a large scale. Financing these
endeavors was still mostly left to private sponsors and the actual financial efforts of the settlers themselves (Senger und Etterlin, 153-156).

The most successful settlement association to manage to enroll the financial and political support from German officials was the Verein zum Schutze Deutscher Einwanderer in Texas (Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas). This association was the result of a meeting of a small group of princes and German nobles on April 20, 1842 at Bieberach on the Rhine, under the leadership of Carl, Count of Castell (Nuhn, 16). Due to the involvement of German princes and nobles in its undertakings, this society was more commonly known as the Adelsverein (Society of Noblemen). The society concentrated all its efforts on finding land suitable for settlement in Texas in order to open Texas as a market for German trade and goods as well as a way to alleviate the problems caused by overpopulation in their states. Under the leadership of Prince Carl of Solms-Braunfels the society purchased tracts of land in Texas and successfully established the settlements of Carlshafen, (later called Indianola) in 1844, and not without many hardships and under many difficulties the town of New Braunfels in 1845. The town of Fredericksburg was established later the same year under the leadership of Solms’ successor Hans Ottfried von Meusebach. Other settlements founded by the Adelsverein are Bettina, Castell, Schoenburg, and Leiningen (Nuhn, 16-17).

In 1851, the Adelsverein published an information package including a pamphlet with detailed instructions for settlers, maps, and a copy of the April 1850 committee report as part of the Adelsverein’s recruitment efforts. After initial success, the society ceased all of its operations in 1852. Overall, more than 10,000 German immigrants arrived in Texas as a result of the society’s settlement and recruitment efforts, even
though their overall goal, the establishment of a German Texas, or an independent Texas with a strong German element was never achieved (Senger und Etterlin, 164-165).

The Prussian government pursued a much more ambitious and far-fetched settlement and expansion plan. In 1837, the Prussian representative to Mexico, Friedrich Baron von Gerolt, was approached by the Mexican government and asked to purchase the territory of Alta California for the Prussian crown. Mexico had just lost Texas and was trying to “anticipate the seemingly inevitable and […] make a profit…” Von Senger und Etterlin reports the estimated sale price to be about $6,000,000. But even though both sides put forth a serious effort to reach an agreement in this matter, Prussia declined Mexico’s offer in the 1840s. Von Senger und Etterlin speculates that Prussia’s main reason for declining to purchase California was Prussia’s lack of a navy to effectively colonize and to protect the westernmost territory on the American continent (Senger und Etterlin, 156-157).

The Chicago Land Association (founded in 1853), and the Cincinnati Association (formed by Cincinnati Turners in 1855), were both involved in the founding of another German ‘utopia’ on the western frontier: New Ulm, Minnesota. The idea for the establishment of New Ulm was conceived in September 1853 by “[s]ix German students in an evening school in Chicago (…) and their instructor Wm. Fach, at the suggestion of Beinhorn…,” who was one of the students (Ubl, 1). Under Ferdinand Beinhorn’s leadership, the group established the Chicogoer Landverein aiming “…to locate a townsite somewhere in the Northwest, the only stipulation being that it be located alongside a navigable river and that there be ample timber in the area” (Tolzmann, 195).
The group advertised their plans twice in the *Illinois Staats-Zeitung* in an effort to solicit support for their plans and then managed to grow to about 800 members by March 1854. They soon set out to locate a suitable site for their settlement. After two failed attempts to establish settlements in Michigan and Iowa, they later agreed on a location in Minnesota, where the town of New Ulm was officially established on 30 May 1855. Just one year later, the Chicago Society sold all their property in New Ulm to the Cincinnati based Turner Settlers’ Society, which arranged for more settlers to arrive in New Ulm and before year’s end organized a local *Turnverein* (Ubl, 1-4). The goal of the Cincinnati Association had been to “found a German-American Turner community in the Northwest, where members could establish a home for themselves and future generations. Only members of good character devoted to the principles of reform (…) could join” (Tolzmann, 195). “New Ulm,” as Jörg Nagler states, “is the only community founded with the ideological concept mainly influenced by and derived from the socialist Turner Movement” (Nagler, 180).

For the vast majority of German emigrants to America, escaping their economic or political circumstances was the main reason to leave the German states for a better life for themselves and their families. When talking about Germany during these periods of emigration, one must however keep in mind that at this time there was no coherent Germany as we know and understand it today. Germany was not a political unit, but rather a loose association of independent states and principalities, with little in common. What united them was the sense of belonging to a common cultural nation. It was a Germany of regions and regional identities, not of one unifying nationality. Their inhabitants did not share common German identity, but rather saw themselves as Hessian,
Westphalian, Saxon, Fanconian or Prussian, much like many Germans still do to this day. Germany did not exist on any map; it mostly existed in the minds and dreams of German intellectuals.

To many immigrants, the experience of being part of a nation state was new. The only thing that bound them was a common language, despite obvious differences and dialects. These émigrés brought with them their regional identities and traditions and fused them together with their new American experiences. Instead, the residents in the numerous German states felt a cultural unity, dating back to the Middle Ages, in which their country was a unified empire, dominating the European continent. They were not united by being citizens of the same national state, but united as members of the same national culture and cultural identity. Until the empire’s founding under Bismarck in 1871, Germany was everything but united. Bismarck’s empire however did not include the Hapsburg’s Austro-Hungarian Empire and thus this ‘small-German solution’ did not include a large number of the members of the German cultural heritage circle.
CHAPTER 1

HERMANN, MISSOURI

Beginnings

During the first half of the nineteenth century, Missouri was one of the premier destinations for German settlers relocating from the crowded eastern states, as well as for large numbers of new arrivals from Germany. This was not in a small part due to the enthusiastic writings of Duden as well as the accounts of other settlers. These German settlers brought with them their distinctive German flavor, culture and traditions, which still play an important role in the lives of many of their descendents today (Schroeder 1977, 291).

By the early 1800s, most of the Germans who had settled along with immigrants of other nationalities in the American East and South had lost their German cultural identity. Unless they lived in distinctly German surroundings, they had almost completely become assimilated into American society without leaving any trace of their German heritage. They had become “undistinguishable from the native stock” (Faust Vol. I, 434). Unlike many of these earlier immigrants, most of the German settlers arriving in the Mid-West after 1800 did not want to assimilate into American society, but rather preserve their German heritage and identity. These newly arrived German immigrants saw with disappointment that “their kinsmen, whom they found here, ... [had] strangely changed, very much Americanized, and their language … was almost as unintelligible to the newcomer as the English itself” (Bek, 2). As their reaction to this, “many of those
who urged and led settlement to Missouri saw themselves not as new Americans but as new Germans,” Schroeder explains (Schroeder 1977, 291).

The German Settlement Society of Philadelphia

Hermann, Missouri is located less than 100 miles west of St. Louis on the banks or the Missouri River. The town with a population of less than 3,000 is the heart of the Missouri Wine Country in the hills of the Ozark Plateau. It was established in 1836 by the German Settlement Society of Philadelphia, the “largest and most successful patriotic German-American settlement association in the U.S.” (Senger und Etterlin, 161).

The idea to found a German colony in Missouri was not a new one. However, it is necessary to note that “the history of the founding and settlement of the Hermann Colony in Missouri is in many ways unique,” as Schroeder points out (Schroeder 1998, 11). Prior to Hermann’s founding, attempts were made by other settlement societies, among them the Berlin and Giessen Settlement Societies, to attract large enough numbers of settlers to establish German colonies, but most of these venues failed for a multitude of reasons. Even though these settlement societies were successful in establishing their towns, they were unable to attract the numbers of skilled settlers needed to fulfill their organizations’ dreams. The fact that many of the settlers were so-called University-educated ‘Latin Farmers’ also contributed to the failure of these projects. Even though these ‘Latin Farmers’ initially did not lack the financial resources or the motivation to succeed in settling on the frontier, they did lack the farming skills needed to be successful in converting frontier land into farmland. “Some of the dreams of these wealthier immigrants,” Burnett and Luebbering write, “were idealistic and impractical.” Therefore, they had to either hire poorer German immigrants to do the labor needed to run their
farms, or learn the necessary skills themselves. Many of these settlement societies also lacked the practical experience to successfully complete their plans. This, coupled with an economic depression in 1837, which ruined many of these ‘Latin Farmers,’ led to the failure of most previous attempts to establish a German colony in Missouri (Burnett and Luebbering, 23-26).

Despite facing problems similar to the Berlin and Giessen Settlement Societies, the German Settlement Society of Philadelphia still managed to found a colony in Missouri, which was successful in preserving German culture and heritage into the twenty-first century, even if it never quite realized the grand vision of its founders. The German Settlement Society of Philadelphia was formally organized in Philadelphia, PA, on 27 August 1836, by the Deutsche Gesellschaft a German organization that had been founded in Philadelphia in December 1764. The new society’s declared purpose was “the establishment of a colony in some portion of the United States, preferably in the ‘Far West,’ … which should be characteristically German in every particular” (Bek, 1). As its official organ, the society chose the Philadelphia-based German-language newspaper Alte und Neue Welt, which had been founded two years earlier. The paper’s editor, Johann Georg Wesselhoeft was among the settlement society’s founders. Most of the society’s members and supporters had recently immigrated from Germany themselves and they “missed so keenly those things so dear to the native German” (Bek, 1). They were convinced that it would be possible to “enjoy both the advantages of America and the pleasures of the Fatherland,” if they could live in a place where they would be partially isolated from the mainstream American society and from immigrants of other ethnic and cultural backgrounds and heritage (Bek, 2).
The new society quickly attracted the support of “many well-established German-American businessmen, journalists, lawyers and other professionals,” who shared its ultimate goal, which as the society’s later president William Schmoele stated was “to unify the Germans in North America” (Senger und Etterlin, 161). The society’s first meeting convened on 03 June 1836 and established a committee whose purpose it was to draft a constitution. In his book *The German Settlement Society of Philadelphia and its Colony Hermann, Missouri*, Bek reports that it was also during this meeting that Thomas Padaraque, whom he suspects to have been involved in some type of land speculation in Texas, suggested the society focus its settlement efforts on Texas. Texas had gained its independence from Mexico only one year earlier and had not yet become part of the United States, and the society therefore felt that the political situation in Texas was too unstable and as a result set aside Paradaque’s proposal (Bek, 6-7).

Only seven days after the initial meeting, the committee met again and elected as its chairman Pastor Heinrich Ginal, who “seems to have entertained the hope of creating a Christian communal settlement patterned after George Rapp’s Harmony Society,” Schroeder states. Rapp’s Harmony society with its settlements in Pennsylvania and Indiana was well known for its achievements and its prosperity. Nevertheless, as Schroeder continues, “Ginal’s proposal was rejected in favor of establishing a settlement based on a free-enterprise system in which manufacturing and agriculture would go hand in hand to provide economic balance and as much self-sufficiency as possible” (Schroeder 1998, 13).

Such an undertaking needed to solicit the support of a sufficient number of backers in order to be successful. According to Bek, “the society was to be for the people
and by the people.” Anyone interested in supporting the society also had to be convinced of its sincerity and that it was not just pursuing some disingenuous scheme. For the purpose of raising the money necessary for such a settlement project without any single investor being able to obtain a controlling interest in the undertaking, a stock company was established. Its purpose was to sell shares in the society (Bek, 11-12). Each of these shares would entitle its holder to “a lot or a forty-acre farm in the proposed settlement and its future community buildings and factories,” Schroeder summarizes. “Plans were made to ensure that those without sufficient means to purchase shares would be able to obtain them by working in the colony,” he continues. After agreeing to this method of raising funds, the committee discussed and drafted a constitution for the settlement society and presented it to its membership (Schroeder 1998, 13).

On 27 August 1836, the constitution and by-laws of the German Settlement Society were formally adopted. Besides stating the expressed purpose of the society, this document also established the price of shares to be $25 for the first thousand and $30 for the next thousand. It was also established that no matter how many shares were owned by any individual, each shareholder would only have one vote in society matters. This was another way of insuring that no shareholder would be able to control the society’s business or the future settlement’s affairs. The constitution and by-laws also set forth provisions for the future payment of society buildings in the new settlement by allowing members to trade in shares as a method of payment. Among the offices of the society was a ‘Committee of Deputies’ whose duties were to “visit and examine the states and regions of North America … to ascertain whether and to what extent and which parts of
them are suitable for a German settlement.” This committee was also charged with sending regular reports of its findings to the home society in Philadelphia (Bek, 26-31).

Within two weeks of the adoption of the constitution and by-laws, more than 350 shares valued at $25 a share had been sold in the society. This financial success far exceeded the expectations of the society’s members. Their dream seemed to be well on its way to becoming a reality (Schroeder 1998, 13).

The German Settlement Society was officially recognized and incorporated by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania early in 1837. Its next challenge would be to find a site suitable to establish their settlement. Bek reports that “Illinois, Indiana, Pennsylvania and Missouri had long been considered as having suitable locations.” In March 1837, the society sent C. G. Ritter to Washington, DC, to set up meetings with land agents and government officials to inquire about available tracts of lands suitable for settlement. He returned on 11 March with “much valuable information, but … had not interviewed the Congress.” Encouraged by Ritter’s reports, the society authorized its deputies to scout for possible settlement locations in Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, Michigan and Missouri (Bek, 48-50).

**Searching for a New Home**

The deputies departed on 14 April 1837, after they had been instructed to “first go to the region of the Wabash … and from there go directly to the state of Missouri where they shall … send to the Board of Managers a report giving the results of their investigations in the states of Indiana, Illinois and Missouri.” The scouts were instructed to send reports to the Board of managers at their own discretion, but “… at least once every 8 days.”
authorizations for the trip, allowing the scouts total expenses of up to $950.00 for all travel arrangements as well as contracts and possible down-payments of any tracts of land they may select. The Board also laid out the specifics of what the society would require of a tract of land to be suitable as a site for their future settlement. Only a tract of land “not less than 25,000 acres in area” was to be considered. Another requirement was that the land would be located on a “navigable river … as to afford space for the establishment of a commercial city.” Agricultural considerations were also of great importance in selecting the land. The scouts were asked to pay special attention to whether the land would be “advantageous to the growing of grain, wine and fruit and to the raising of cattle and sheep” (Bek, 51-54).

This scouting expedition meant that the society had taken concrete steps to fulfill its mission to found a German settlement of the frontier. This initial step was met with great expectation and enthusiasm. Following the deputies’ departure, Schroeder writes, “only three of the eagerly awaited weekly reports … were received in Philadelphia, and it was not until they returned on July 12 and prepared their final report, submitted on July 17, that details of their mission became known” (Schroeder 1998, 15).

In their General Report the scouts explain in some detail their findings and their recommendations for purchasing land in the state of Missouri, located on the Gasconade River, approximately five miles from its confluence with the Missouri River, circa 90 miles west of St. Louis. Although only one bank on the Gasconade would be protected from flooding and therefore suitable as site for a settlement, the scouts recommended the society purchase both banks in order to ensure the settlement would not be subject to competition by other settlements founded in too close proximity. It was also reported
that lead and iron ore could be mined in the area. Limestone, which could be used as building-material, was also readily available. The site’s geographic features ranged from river plains to steep hills, making the recommended land suitable for both, agriculture as well as for the establishment of a commercial city. More detailed descriptions in both German and English can be found in Bek’s accounts (Bek, 58-61).

As a result of the recommendations the scouting committee made in its report, the society dispatched one of its board members, George F. Bayer, schoolmaster with the Zions Gemeinde in Philadelphia, to arrange the land purchase for the society. He departed for St. Louis on 27 July 1837, after he had been instructed to inquire about the availability of the site and what possible arrangements could be made to pay for it. In the event the desired site was unavailable or unsuitable for carrying out the society’s plans, Bayer was instructed to arrange the purchase of an alternative location along the Cuivre River, which the scouts had also recommended in their report. Should both sites be unavailable or unsuitable, Bayer was instructed to “find some tract suitable and available to the Society” (Bek, 65-69).

**On the Missouri Frontier**

By the time Bayer arrived in Missouri, the proposed tract of land along the Gasconade River was no longer available in its entirety. Many of the parcels had already been sold, making the purchase of a single contiguous settlement site practically impossible. He therefore purchased 11,300.54 acres of land farther east and outside the originally proposed site. The majority of the land, 11,012.54 acres of Congress land, was bought for $14,077.54 and the additional 288 acres for $1,535 from private landowners. These 288 acres were located along Frene Creek, about seven miles downstream from the
confluence of the Gasconade and the Missouri rivers. Schroeder continues by stating that one area landowner “refused to sell his property and subsequently became a source of irritation to the colonists, who wanted to establish a settlement that would not only be German in every particular but also one over which they would have full control” (Schroeder 1998, 15-17).

Most of the land Bayer purchased was not very suitable for farming. The terrain was quite hilly and the soil near the proposed town site was rather poor. Other parcels located some distance from the proposed town site, which made transportation and communication rather difficult, possessed very good soil and were suitable for farming. Commenting on Bayer’s selection of land, Bek states that “to the unprejudiced observer it seems quite doubtful that Bayer was a good judge of land. He was by profession a schoolmaster. Most probably he knew more of ‘the three R’s’ than of the business of buying land for a corporation” (Bek, 77).

The official notice of Bayer’s successful purchase of a tract of land in Missouri was announced at the society’s meeting in Philadelphia on 05 October 1837. During this meeting a name for the new settlement was discussed as well. Since it was clear that the name would have to be something unmistakably German, it was proclaimed “‘[t]hat the city to be built on the land purchased by the German Settlement Society shall receive the name HERMANN,’” as Bek quotes from German Settlement Society records (Bek, 80). Schroeder explains that the name Hermann was chosen “in honor of the old Germanic hero, the leader of the Cherusci, whose Teutonic tribesmen had defeated three Roman legions … in Westphalia in the year A.D. 9” (Schroeder 1998, 17).
The German Settlement Society soon realized that it was necessary to have a permanent representative in Missouri who would supervise all of the society’s affairs on site. As a result, George Bayer was appointed to serve as the society’s general agent in Missouri for a one-year term. He was responsible for handling the society’s business on the land they purchased, most of which was still in his name, before he officially transferred the land to the society. A committee was assembled to define the duties and responsibilities of the general agent. He was to travel to the colony as soon as the society would require him to do so. It was his duty to carry out all necessary transactions regarding the purchase, sale, and assignment of land, keep detailed ledgers and records, and send detailed quarterly reports and accounts to the society’s executive committee in Philadelphia. The general agent was charged with setting up a governing committee for the colony on site as soon as ten colonists would arrive and work together with this governing committee, whose purpose was ultimately to review the business and transactions of the general agent. His duties also included the surveying of all society land and in important incidences to act on the society’s behalf without awaiting specific instructions from Philadelphia. He was not allowed to conduct any other business but that of the society, except for farming for personal profit. The society also deemed it important that the general agent could carry out his duties in both the German and the English language (Bek, 92-93).

Schroeder comments that “Bayer was charged with overseeing everything relating to the development of the colony, including obtaining food and supplies for all residents, (…) and handling complaints. He was also to enforce the regulations that had drawn up in Philadelphia regarding the construction of buildings” (Schroeder 1998, 17-18).
Bayer’s compensation for his duties as general agent was determined as well. He was promised a salary of $600.00 per year, the option to purchase a tract of up to 80 acres of land at cost to the society, traveling expenses for himself and his family in the amount of up to $300.00, and an unfinished home within city limits as a gift (Bek, 80-84).

**The Early Days of Hermann**

The first seventeen colonists, nine adults and eight children arrived on the Missouri frontier on 06 December 1837. They had left for Missouri soon after the society had announced the purchase of its land. Schroeder reports that “they arrived at the desolate wilderness site on the Missouri River on the last boat of the season, (…) to face a winter that they were able to survive only with the help of American settlers in the area” (Schroeder 1998, 17).

Since all of the colony’s land was in Bayer’s name, and all of the society’s business in Missouri had been handled by him, he was “the only person with the authority to lay out and assign lots to people” (Burnett and Luebbering, 28). Bek reports that the colonists pleaded with the mother society in Philadelphia for instructions, since they found nothing but wilderness on the land where they arrived. They desperately needed shelter, but according to Bek, “they were not certain that the houses, they erected, with great toil, stood on parts of two lots, instead of one” (Bek, 93). Burnett and Luebbering state that “another group of colony members planned better. Instead of showing up in the wilderness in the middle of winter, they came as far as St. Louis, looked for temporary work, and waited for Bayer” (Burnett and Luebbering, 28).

Bayer had become ill after leaving Philadelphia, and was delayed in Pittsburgh. He did not arrive on the settlement site until sometime before the end of March 1838.
Schroeder states that upon his arrival, “[Bayer] found extremely dissatisfied colonists and overwhelming responsibilities as he tried to establish a stable basis for the struggling settlement” (Schroeder 1998, 17).

Without actually having seen the land Bayer purchased, the society’s board of managers decided to divide the land into two classes, to be sold for the price of $2.00 and $3.00 per acre. This price was almost four times higher than comparable land on the frontier. The board also ruled “that every owner should build a house valued at $300 on his lot or lots during the first year of ownership. The lots bordering on the wharf (…) were required to have a house valued at $500 by the expiration of the first year. Failure to comply with this decree forfeited the property to the society,” as Bek reports (Bek, 87).

The founders of Hermann were convinced that their town would one day rival any city on the American continent. They had grand plans for their colony, which are reflected in the fact that they laid out Hermann’s Market Street, the town’s major thoroughfare, ten feet wider than its namesake in Philadelphia. They proposed to erect market houses in the center of the street; a plan that never fully materialized. They laid out their town firmly believing it would some day eclipse St. Louis, the gateway to the West, less than 100 miles downstream from Hermann. The board of managers in Philadelphia drew up detailed plans for a city, complete with public squares and residential areas, schools and churches, site unseen and without knowing anything about the actual topography of the site and its potential for future usage. Promenades, 150 feet in width, were planned to run east and west along the town. Four squares, named for Goethe, Herder, Wieland and Schiller, were planned for each quarter of the city. The main streets were to be named for German and American intellectuals, historical figures,
and statesmen, such as Gutenberg, Mozart, Franklin, and Washington. The society resolved “that no slaughterhouses, no factories for the production of glue, candles, soap, oil, turpentine, gunpowder or starch, or any other institution whereby lives of the neighbors are endangered or inconvenienced, shall be permitted to be established within the city” (Bek, 89).

Bek describes the society’s plan for Hermann to be “very commendable to demonstrate their enthusiasm and zeal but it certainly was impractical and extremely visionary.” Bek continues by stating that “before a year had elapsed the board of managers had received intelligence that their plans were inapplicable to the new town. The actual conditions had foiled their ideals.” The envisioned promenades were never built and the grand parks were never were planted. Market Street, however, was actually laid out ten feet wider than Philadelphia’s Market Street, and in its center there was ample space to build market houses. After learning that their ambitious plans for their grand city could not be carried out because the site’s geography would not allow it, the board of managers resolved in their meeting on 12 April 1838 that Bayer should provide them with an accurate topographic map of the site as well as with a plan for the city of Hermann (Bek, 87-88).

Bek comments that “quite naturally, the failure on the part of the General-Agent to arrive at the colony on scheduled time did even more than work hardship to the pioneer settlers, it shook the confidence, not only of the enrolled members but also of those about persuaded to join the organization” (Bek, 95). As result of a breakdown in communications, the colonists on the frontier had no knowledge of Bayer’s illness to be the reason for his delayed arrival. Bek quotes a letter one of the colonists, D.
Widersprecher, had sent to Philadelphia on 22 February 1838, to underscore their growing frustration and despair. Widersprecher wrote that among the settlers “in general the opinions concerning the settlement are not favorable and if the work is not pursued with zeal and patriotism, no great expectations can be realized from it.” The letter continues with the complaint that the colonists “have already been waiting in vain for several months upon the arrival of Mr. Bayer, and are placed in a rather uncertain situation.” He summarizes the situation by stating that “this affair has suffered greatly in that no one is present to supervise the business” (Bek, 95-96).

Widersprecher’s letter gives exceptional insight in the views that the first seventeen colonists had about George Bayer and it also helps explain some of the “extraordinarily presumptuous and unjust demands [that] were made upon him [by them].” According to Bek’s comments, “those who had spent the comfortless winter of 1837-38 on the banks of the Missouri, not only desired, but demanded special favors of the agent.” They appear to have expected to receive special considerations as compensation for their hardships, a demand the society’s officers in Philadelphia clearly did not want to give in to. They did not want to establish any kind of precedent, but to enforce strict adherence to the society’s resolutions. In his 12 April 1838 response to the letter Bayer had sent to Philadelphia on 28 March, the society’s president, Schmoele, writes that “the Society cannot and will not in any respect tolerate privileges for individual members,” and he charges Bayer to “attempt to settle cases of this kind that may arise in the most favorable and mildest way” (Bek, 96-98).
Initial Growth

More colonists arrived in Hermann during the spring, totaling 230 settlers by year’s end. Bek therefore calls 1838 “the banner year of the colony as far as numerical growth was concerned” (Bek, 98). This initial success to attract colonists to the Missouri frontier inspired the society to increase their recruitment efforts. Schroeder reports that the society commissioned over one thousand notices to be printed in an effort to attract more settlers to the colony. Five hundred of these notices were sent to Germany to recruit friends and relatives of its colonists and shareholders. Five hundred more were sent to foreign seaports frequently used by German emigrants, to be distributed on vessels bound for the United States. The society later also opened offices in Cincinnati, Louisville and St. Louis, in an attempt to increase promotional and recruitment efforts for its colony (Schroeder 1998, 18).

Undoubtedly, Bayer was hardly able to fulfill all of the duties required of him. Bek even comments that Bayer “was not competent to cope with the many-sided problems.” He sees the high expectations the society had for their agent’s activities as evidence of its inexperience in matters regarding the establishment of a settlement on the frontier. Bayer’s term as general agent at Hermann was certainly a difficult one, filled with conflicts and disharmony between the agent and the settlers. He did not manage to convince them to co-operate with him in working towards the greater common goals and principles on which the organization had been founded. This was also the result of the fact that “they lacked the ability to adjust themselves to primitive conditions, were often and in many things extremely impractical, and worst of all were selfish, fault finding, [and] without the good of the cause at heart,” as Bek comments (Bek, 101-102).
Serious complaints about the conditions in Hermann caused the society to pass a resolution on 08 June 1838, sending to Bayer a request for an immediate special report concerning the colony, “as the Society was very dissatisfied with the conduct of the general agent, and these reports were to be repeated every 14 days” (Bek, 104-105). Schroeder comments that only six days prior to passing this resolution, the board of managers in Philadelphia had decided on 02 June that too much had been asked of Bayer and that he was unable to carry out all of his obligations. The board therefore proposed to hand over the legislative matters concerning the colony as well as its management to the settlers themselves. Bayer was opposed to this action, because “he believed it was premature to expect self-government from the settlers.” Throughout the summer of 1838, the settlers at Hermann continued to push for more control over their colony and for the necessary authorizations from Philadelphia (Schroeder 1998, 18).

Bayer’s difficult term as general agent expired in October 1838. He had fallen in disfavor with many members of the board of managers and was not very well regarded among the colonists in Hermann. The complaints and accusations brought against him by many of the colonists, although most of them were false and without merit, managed to raise doubts about Bayer’s performance among the society’s board of managers as well as its shareholders. Bayer’s appointment was not renewed and a committee of trustees was set up instead. This committee “took over the responsibility for conducting its [= the colony’s] financial affairs, making purchases and handling the sale of shares” (Schroeder 1998, 18).

A letter published on 15 May 1839 in the Alte und Neue Welt provides an account of the town of Hermann roughly one and one-half years after the first settlers had arrived
in the colony. The letter was written by three Hermann residents and lists the colony’s total population to be 450, with new settlers arriving every day. There were 90 finished stone and timber-framed houses in Hermann, as well as a post office, five stores, and two hotels. The letter also reports that construction had started on a schoolhouse and that the lots for two churches had been selected. As far as social and cultural activities in early Hermann are concerned, a chorus, a brass band, and two shooting societies are listed in the letter as well. It also makes mention of steamboats landing on the Hermann wharf, an industry which greatly aided the development of the town and played a big role in the lives of many of its residents for more than a century. Bek sees this account as proof that “fundamentally the society was sound,” and that “despite the petty protests offered by some of the participants, to existing conditions at Hermann, the colony grew apace” (Bek, 134-135).

Transfer of Power from Philadelphia to Hermann

Upon their arrival in Hermann, many of the settlers, dissatisfied with the conditions they found, and distrustful of Bayer, called for more influence in the day-to-day operations, administration, financial, and legal affairs of the colony. They pushed for a transfer of power from the mother society in Philadelphia to the colony itself. This move was not only received with reluctance in Philadelphia, but it also divided the colonists in Hermann itself (Schroeder 1998, 18).

Bek comments that those who called for the colony’s early separation from the parent society were driven by mostly selfish motives and that they displayed an unexpected level of ungratefulness towards the founders of the German Settlement Society of Philadelphia and to their noble ideas. He sees the push towards self-
government as premature, an observation in which he agrees with Bayer’s opinion on the issue. Bek also blames this early push towards separation from Philadelphia for ultimately causing the society’s grand plan to establish a German city, which would rival any city in America, to fail. He states that “in proportion as the old fighters for the good cause were pushed into the background, in that proportion general interest waned,” and argues that the separation should have taken place at a later date, “if for no other reason than the prestige, which the undertaking derived from the connection with highly-esteem[d] Germans, residing in the very cradle of Germanism in America [=Philadelphia]” (Bek, 136-138).

The transfer of power from Philadelphia to the colonists in Hermann was set in motion when the Board of Managers gave in to the settlers’ call for self-governance in July 1838, when it resolved to develop a plan for the transfer. The board called on Hermann residents J. Leupold, E. C. Staffhorst, W. Senn, M. Krauter, and W. L. Heinrich to organize a meeting of all colonists for the purpose to organize and elect an executive committee to take over most of the duties of the general agent. The executive committee’s report concludes with the prospect of a quick transfer of power from Philadelphia to the executive committee to be established in Hermann, depending upon said committee’s performance (Bek, 138-141).

The success and the speed of the transfer of power from Philadelphia to Hermann were now in the hands of the colonists themselves. The special committee assumed control over all of the affairs of the colony on 8 October 1838, when Bayer’s term as general agent had expired. The transfer however did not happen as quickly as anticipated and in a letter written by the special committee on 27 December, the parent society in
Philadelphia is accused of neglecting its obligations towards the colony and of mismanaging the society’s affairs. The committee charges that not the parent society deserves to be given credit for the early success of the colony, but rather the early settlers, who managed to successfully establish the town of Hermann despite the difficulties of dealing with the parent society in Philadelphia. The committee claims “that the Settlement has not attained a much higher standing, which it might have reached, had not unpardonable blunders and neglect on part of Philadelphia hemmed its progress.” The letter continues by blaming the parent society for the delay in incorporating the city of Hermann and concludes with the stern demand that all affairs of the colony be transferred to Hermann without any further delays (Bek, 147-149).

Supporters and opponents of this transfer of power to Hermann were predominantly at odds over the impact this move would have on those settlers who had purchased and cultivated tracts of land outside the proposed city limits of Hermann. Bek comments that the residents of the city of Hermann itself were mostly supportive of a swift and speedy separation of the colony from its parent society. The settlers on the farms and in the rural areas outside the designated city-limits, on the other hand, were mostly in support of prolonged control of the parent society in Philadelphia over the Missouri colony. They were concerned that as a result of a transfer of control over the society’s lands to the city of Hermann their interests would be neglected and that all decisions would be dominated by the interests of the city itself. The opponents pointed out that if the society’s lands were to be divided into a city and its surrounding rural areas, the purpose of the society would have failed and that the settlers who chose to cultivate farmland rather than settle into city life would be betrayed. They were opposed
to the idea that only the town residents would become the sole beneficiaries of the society’s undertaking and that the rural settlers would be left out and abandoned. Daniel Trautwein, as Bek quotes, pleaded against the transfer, stating “we should be one body, remain one body, enjoy mutual privileges, whether we prefer to live in the country or in the city” (Bek, 150-151).

Concerns were raised whether the laws of the state of Missouri would guarantee the unincorporated settlers the same rights as those living in the city. Therefore, the board of trustees in Philadelphia postponed the transfer until this issue could be resolved. They sent the board’s treasurer Adam Schmidt to Missouri to look into this matter in the spring of 1839. He was charged with investigating the issue whether Missouri law would prohibit the rural population in the Hermann area to exercise the same voting rights as the residents of the incorporated city itself. Schroeder concludes that during his fact-finding mission to Missouri, “Schmidt found no law that would disenfranchise members of the society living in rural areas” (Schroeder 1998, 18-19).

Schmidt’s journey was the turning point in the argument concerning the transfer power and control over the society’s colony from Philadelphia to the settlers in Hermann. Upon his return to Philadelphia in June, he recommended that a transfer be carried out without further delays. In July 1839, the committee charged with arranging the transfer of power published a lengthy and detailed report, reiterating “it is the unanimous wish of the Mother-Society that the transfer of the Administration take place as soon as possible.” The report identifies reasons for the delay in the transfer and states the concern that such a transfer could only take place “…in a manner which secures the rights of all members and affords universal satisfaction…” (Bek, 155).
In an attempt to resolve all issues pertaining to the transfer, the committee sided with the majority of colonists by arguing that since it had been the society’s sole purpose to establish a German settlement, the need for maintaining the society had seized to exist after the town of Hermann had been successfully founded and after it had been formally incorporated according to the laws of the State of Missouri. The committee expresses the view that it would be “… very desirable that as a final goal of the undertaking of the Society, the City of Hermann (...) might now merge with the Society so that the City of Hermann might be synonymous in every respect with the Settlement Society.” The report continues by listing a number of advantages this consolidation would have. It also addresses a number of concerns the committee required being resolved before the consolidation could be finalized (Bek, 158).

In response to this report, the colonists sent a report of their own to the society, addressing the issues and concerns raised by the transfer committee, and in turn offering their own solutions to these issues. This report appears to have satisfied the committee in Philadelphia, which in return hired attorneys to assist in the preparation of the necessary legal documents for the consolidation. On 17 September the society in Philadelphia passed a resolution that all of the society’s property should be handed over to the City of Hermann, contingent upon a number of requirements the city had to meet. These included the payment of the society’s remaining financial obligations of $1,300.00, to which the colonists eagerly agreed. This resolution marked the beginning of self-governance for the settlers in Hermann and effectively the end for the society in Philadelphia. As a result, on 12 December 1839, some three and one-half years after its founding, the Deutsche Ansiedlungs-Gesellschaft zu Philadelphia was officially
dissolved and the consolidation between the society and the City of Hermann was completed at the society’s last general meeting (Bek, 158-175).

At the time of its dissolution, the society had more than 650 shareholders. Many of them held several shares. They were not limited to Hermann and Philadelphia, but, as Schroeder states, they were “from forty towns in eleven states and Canada.” Following the dissolution of the Philadelphia Society, the citizens of Hermann were now the masters of their own destiny. For many of the settlers, their dream of freedom and self-governance had finally become a reality (Schroeder 1998, 19).

**Continued Growth and Development**

According to Bek, the settlers were mainly motivated by reasons other than carrying out the society’s original mission, when they pushed for the transfer of power. Soon after gaining their independence from the mother society in Philadelphia, they began modifying and re-interpreting the original purpose of the settlement as well as the plans that had been drawn up in Philadelphia. Rather than viewing them as selfish, Bek comments that the settlers “wisely enough foresaw a continual struggle against insurmountable odds ahead of them, should they strive to carry out the plans to the letter.” He continues by giving them credit for successfully “fostering and upholding things German” despite of all the hardships they had to endure and the unfavorable conditions they had to overcome (Bek, 203).

After its initial growth, the completion of the Pacific Railroad through Hermann along the south bank of the Missouri River in 1854 marked a new era for the town, not only offering an alternative to the river boats as means of transportation, but also connecting Hermann to other towns in Missouri and beyond (Schroeder, 25). The two
decades between 1840 and 1860 also saw the construction of the vast majority of the houses that today constitute Hermann’s Historic District, as Anna Kemper Hesse demonstrates with her detailed list of historic Hermann buildings entitled Centenarians of Brick, Wood and Stone (Kemper Hesse 1981).

Much of what makes the town of Hermann what it is today can be traced back to this early period of growth. Although the framework had been put in place by the mother society in Philadelphia, the determination and ingenuity of the colonists clearly must be credited for the town’s successful development. Hermann may not have developed into the German metropolis its founders had envisioned, the colonists nonetheless managed to preserve a piece of German heritage, manifested mostly in the town’s architecture and the townspeople’s way of life. During this period of early growth, not only the foundation for Hermann’s appearance was laid, but also many of the town’s institutions and organizations were founded. Political entities were organized, schools and churches were chartered and built, businesses and industries developed and numerous clubs and civic organizations were established at this time. The beginning of Hermann’s storied history as a winemaking town can also be traced back to this time.

Following the separation from the society, the City of Hermann found itself in possession of thousands of acres of land, which had been purchased when Hermann was still expected to develop into a city, which would rival St. Louis or any other city in the Midwest. As it became evident that this honorable goal of the Philadelphia Society would likely not become a reality, more practical solutions had to be found in regards to this land, which started to become a burden for the young city hindering its growth and progress. A decision was made to sell off any lands the city had no use for. Bek quotes
the minutes of a meeting of the trustees on 28 April 1843 as stating that “‘the lands of the German Settlement Society be sold to the highest bidder, in 40 acre tracts,’” for a minimum price of $2.25 per acre. In the interest of a quicker disposal, the asking price was reduced to cost for the society at $1.25 per acre (Bek, 203-204).

Almost a decade after the consolidation the city still had not managed to settle all of the former society’s affairs. In the process, shareholders rights had been violated and the old constitution had temporarily been ignored. In an effort to finally bring this matter to an end, on 6 May 1848 the committee passed a resolution imposing a one twelve month ultimatum for all remaining shareholders to claim their lands or to make arrangements regarding their shares. Anyone missing the 1 May 1849 deadline would forfeit their claims. This resolution still did not settle all remaining land issues and Bek states that at the time of the publication of his work in 1905-07, the town still had “some land whose owners never saw their possessions” (Bek, 204-206).

As money was scarce in Hermann in the early years, but land was abundant, the city found some innovative ways to compensate for services rendered to the town. Much of the work done for the city, such a construction on the courthouse, building dams to protect the city from flooding, digging wells or clearing lots was compensated in land grants rather than money (Kemper Hesse 1981, 5). Bek lists entries into Hermann’s Tagelöhner Buch showing land grant payments to Carl Bear and F. Muehlbach as examples for this highly innovative practice. As late as 1847, land grants also supplemented the salary paid to the Hermann schoolmaster (Bek, 216-217).
Organization of City Government

The consolidation of the society with the City of Hermann had given the citizens of Hermann full control over their own affairs. One very important requirement for the transfer of power from the society in Philadelphia to the settlers was that the city of Hermann had to be officially incorporated in accordance with the laws of the State of Missouri. The settlers in Hermann had already initiated the first steps towards the incorporation of Hermann as early as the spring of 1838, immediately after beginning to settle in the area. They were very interested in being afforded the same rights and privileges as other incorporated towns in Missouri. They sent a formal petition for the incorporation of their town to the County Court of Gasconade County in October 1838, which held the power to incorporate towns within its jurisdiction. The court approved their petition on 4 February 1839 and also defined the official boundaries of the newly incorporated town. The town’s affairs were to be executed by a committee of five trustees, who were to be elected by the residents for a term of one year. All other offices were to be appointed. The court appointed the first trustees until proper elections could be held in May 1839. At their first meeting on 18 May, the trustees implemented the practice of keeping their records and minutes both in German and in English. This practice was adhered to for many decades to come (Bek, 231-233).

Five years after being incorporated by the County Court for Gasconade County, the Missouri State Legislature was petitioned for a special charter of incorporation, which Hermann received on 4 February 1845. This new charter gave the town’s board of trustees extensive powers and ensured that all of the town’s offices were to be elected and no longer filled with appointments. The new charter also redefined the town’s
boundaries. Even though the State of Missouri had changed the procedures concerning the incorporation of towns and their classification in its new constitution in 1875, this charter remained in effect until 4 April 1905, when the voters of Hermann decided to adopt the new rule. On 16 May 1905 elections were held for the new offices the new system called for and August Wohlt was elected the first Mayor of Hermann. The first four elected aldermen were Bohlken, Gaus, Moebus and Schuch (Bek, 232-236).

The new rules of incorporation, under which the town is still governed today, classified Hermann as a forth class city. Hermann’s elected offices today are the offices of Mayor, Aldermen, City Collector and Municipal Judge. The Board of Aldermen appoints the City Administrator, the City Clerk, the Chief of Police, the City Attorney and the City Treasurer.

County Seat and County Courthouse

Hermann quickly grew into the largest settlement in Gasconade County and as early as 1841, the town’s settlers began negotiations to become the county seat, a distinction the small hamlet of Mount Sterling held at the time. They proposed to build a brick courthouse to replace the log structure, which served as county court house in Mount Sterling. They also offered financial incentives to Mount Sterling to agree to the change. As result of these efforts, in 1842 Hermann became the county seat of Gasconade County, further cementing the importance of Hermann in the region. Money was raised to build the proposed courthouse, and construction of the building began (Bek, 206). The two-story neoclassical building was erected on a high bluff above the Missouri River, overlooking the town of Hermann. It would be in use until 1896, when it was
replaced by a new structure, which sits atop the same bluff and still continues to serve as county seat for Gasconade County today (Kemper Hesse 1998, 51).

Whereas the city used its practice of payment for services by land grant for the construction of the old courthouse as well (Kemper Hesse 1981, 5), the new courthouse was paid for in full by a generous gift by the prominent Hermann merchant Charles D. Eitzen, who in his will had left the city $50,000.00 for its construction. Eitzen’s gift makes the Gasconade County courthouse in Hermann probably one of the few, if not the only privately funded county courthouse in the nation (Heckmann Shrader 1984, 284).

Bek writes about Charles D. Eitzen, who’s bust today still adorns City Park, a public park he also donated to the city, “he was ever a blessing to his contemporaries and his munificent gifts to the town school, the churches, the town, the lodge of Free Masons, the county and various other organizations make all men of Hermann and Gasconade County his lasting debtors” (Bek, 207).

**Newspapers in Hermann**

Schroeder states that even during the years following the consolidation, “promotion of Hermann continued in the German and German American Press, regularly drawing new settlers to the colony, often German professionals and artisans as well as farmers and businessmen.” He continues stating that “from its earliest years, Hermann was characterized by an intellectual ferment and diverse cultural life rarely achieved outside the large cities,” and that “when the German writer Franz Löhr toured America in the mid-1840s he found that ‘in Hermann, which has now a population of almost 1,000 inhabitants, there is an active and happy German life and one feels at home there in the freedom of our fellow countrymen’” (Schroeder 1998, 23).
All of these statements clearly show that especially in the early years, Hermann became a place where German culture and German ways would find a new home in the New World. This meant that the intellectual needs of the Hermann settlers needed to be attended to as well. Eduard Mühl and Carl Strehly, who were brothers-in-law, moved to Hermann from Cincinnati in July 1843, bringing with them to the Missouri frontier their printing press. Only one month later they printed the first issue of their liberal biweekly German language newspaper *Licht-Freund*, which they had established in Cincinnati three years earlier, making it the first German newspaper in Missouri to be published outside of St. Louis. Mühl had come to the Missouri frontier, as Bek states, because “he longed for a home close to the bosom of unpolluted nature for a quiet spot where he might better hear the promptings of his real self within.” Together with Strehly, Mühl “hoped to disseminate the light of truth among his countrymen,” an effort which did not lead to the economic success of the *Licht-Freund*. In 1845, Mühl and Strehly gave up the *Licht-Freund* and in its place established the weekly *Hermanner Wochenblatt*, which was a much more successful undertaking. Following Mühl’s death in 1854, Strehly sold the *Hermanner Wochenblatt* to Jacob Graf, who changed the name to *Hermanner Volksblatt*, under which it was published until 1928, when it ceased to exist. In 1877, the Graf family also founded the English language Advertiser-Courier, which the family still publishes today. This newspaper is the result of combining the Gasconade Courier and the Gasconade County Advertiser, which had both been founded in the 1870s (Schroeder 1998, 23; Newspapers in Hermann).
Education in Hermann

“Education was always important in Hermann,” Burnett and Luebbering explain, “because it was a way to preserve German culture” (Burnett and Luebbering, 29). It is therefore not surprising that the colonists were very concerned about the education of their children early on, especially since many of the early settlers on the Missouri frontier were highly educated people. Prior to the opening of the first school, George Bayer held classes in a room rented in the Oehlschläger home. The first school in Hermann was built in 1839 with the help from the Philadelphia society and opened on 26 August. F. A. Hemme was hired as the town’s first teacher for an annual salary of no less than $300.00, after he showed sufficient proficiency in German and in English, with a clear emphasis on instruction in German. Basic school materials were purchased and the board of trustees also resolved to pay regular visits to the school to check on its progress (Bek, 212-216).

The importance the colonists placed on the education of their young is underlined by the strong financial support the German School received from its inception. The colonists knew that it would not be sufficient to rely on the young state for financial support of their school. Therefore, they established a permanent fund to ensure their schools financial security. Johann Heinrich Koch laid the foundation for the school fund when on 19 December 1839 he generously donated one share in the society to the City of Hermann “for the true welfare of the German youth (...) and to use the income of the building site or tract to be selected for the benefit of a German School in Hermann, as they deem most suitable for the promotion of a good and genuine education of the youth there” (Bek, 219).
The Hermann School District was organized in the spring of 1842 and a new school was built, which would become known as the district school. The organization of the school district also meant that now the funding of education, school construction and maintenance was a public matter and the school no longer depended on the generosity of private citizens. The city sold more land to benefit the school fund and on 8 August 1842 the citizens of Hermann voted to grant 1,170.63 acres of the city’s land to the Hermann School District as a donation. Another grant of land to the independent school fund was made on 6 June 1847. The German School at Hermann was formally chartered by the Missouri General Assembly in 1849 and was granted an exception to the requirement that all lower grade classes had to be conducted in English. This officially established a German School in Herman whose established goal it was to pass on the German language and the cultural heritage of the town’s founders (Bek, 217-220).

A new schoolhouse was built in 1871, for the first time uniting the German school and the district school (English school) under one roof. The long standing practice of separate instruction in German and in English continued on in this new building and was not discontinued until the time of WWI. A high school was established in 1898 in a brick building in Schiller Street. The high school received a new home in 1924, which was enlarged in 1941. The 1871 schoolhouse was used to house the elementary school until the enlargement of the high school in 1941 (The Hermann Public Schools). In 1955 the German School, as the building is now referred to, was deeded to Historic Hermann Inc. and was eventually tuned into a Museum (Kemper Hesse 1981, 26). In 2000, the Gasconade County R-I School District built a new modern high school in Hermann to serve the needs of its students in grades 9-12.
Clubs, Groups and Civic Organizations

Although hard work and determination marked the days of the colonists in Hermann, they still found the time to enjoy life. Early Hermann had a surprisingly well developed *Vereinsleben* with its various clubs and social organizations, reminiscent of life back in Germany. Bek writes that “from the very beginning Hermann has had musical organizations, that have contributed to the enjoyment and edification of its inhabitants” referring to a letter dated 15 June 1839 which mentions a brass band in the young settlement (Bek, 251-254). A Hermann Municipal Band still exists today. The Apostle Band, possibly the most popular of the musical societies in early Hermann, and named so because of its twelve members who “played instruments imported directly from Germany” was organized in 1882. The *Hermann Männerchor* is believed to have been founded during the first years of the colony as well. The choir’s first mention was in 1844, when they received permission to use the school after hours for practices. In 1875 another choir, the *Harmonie Society*, was established (The Arts and Culture in Hermann).

Together with the musical societies, these singing societies played a vital and very important role in the cultural lives of the residents of Hermann as well as other German communities in America much like similar societies did in towns and villages throughout Germany. They added tremendously to the town’s many celebrations. These Sunday gatherings in the park with German music and dance, German food and drink were in stark contrast to the traditionally austere Sunday observations of the American Protestants. They caused some conflict between the Hermann Germans and their non-German neighbors, but this did not deter them form carrying on their tradition of a ‘joyful Sabbath.’ These celebrations also attracted many visitors to the “Little Germany” who
arrived by steamboat or special Sunday trains in Hermann from near by St. Louis as well as other places and towns. Bek reports “every summer from six to eight Sunday railroad and boat excursions …” were bringing the mostly German visitors to Hermann. They came to Hermann to enjoy German celebrations such as Maifest, Weinfest, first celebrated in 1848, the Schützenfest, which was celebrated in the early years of Hermann by the local Schützenverein, a traditional German sharpshooters and rifle club, the County Fair, Fast Nacht and many other festivities and gatherings traditionally organized by various clubs on a Sunday (Bek, 246).

The Concert Hall, built in 1878 by Phillip Kuhn and John Pfautsch, used to house a concert hall on the second floor, a dining room and tavern on the first floor. Until 1916 it also had a traditional beer garden in an adjacent lot. During the 1980s the tavern was said to be the “oldest tavern in continuous use west of the Mississippi.” Dances and theater performances were held in the upstairs hall of the two-story brick building as well (Heckman Shrader 1984, 252).

A theater club, the Erholung was organized in 1847. The Erholung presented German language plays, mostly by the classical playwrights Schiller and Goethe about every four weeks in a building of their own on Market Street. By 1876 the Erholung had become known as The Thalia Amateur Theatrical Society. Besides indulging in intellectual pursuits, many of the younger Hermann men were members of the Hermann Turnverein. This German gymnastic society held their first public performance in 1867 (The Arts and Culture in Hermann).

Missouri attracted many of the democratic minded, freethinking German patriots, who became known as the “Forty-Eighters,” who arrived in America after the failed 1848
democratic revolution in Germany. Some of them settled in or near Hermann. True to
their backgrounds as freethinking German liberals, the residents of Hermann were in
general opposed to slavery. Their political loyalty was to Lincoln’s Republican Party and
therefore during the Civil War, a conflict that deeply divided Missourians, they staunchly
supported the cause of the Union. As a result of this, Hermann “suffered threats against
its people and businesses by Southern sympathizers.” Jacob Graf, the editor of the
*Hermanner Volksblatt* was even arrested by state authorities and warned to cease
publishing his abolitionist views and articles that were critical of the military leadership.
Hermann saw a period of strong economic growth following the end of the Civil War.
This success was for the most part thanks to Hermann’s wine industry, which we will
discuss later (Schroeder 1998, 27-28).

In April 1852 Eduard Mühl and fifty other political activists, all freethinking
Hermann liberals, founded a local chapter of the *Verein Freier Männer*. The purpose of
this organization, as its name aptly suggests, “was to stimulate independence of thought,
to encourage fearless investigation, to hold up as beacon lights liberty, truth and justice;
to teach right living by precept and example.” Mühl remained the organization’s tireless
leader until his death only two years later on 7 July 1854. Bek reports that the society
disbanded shortly thereafter (Bek, 255-263). Among Hermann’s other fraternal
organizations that were founded around this time were The Knights of Pythias, the
Masonic Lodge and the Robert Blum Lodge, No. 46 of the Independent Order of Odd
Fellows, which was established in April 1850 (Bek, 55).
Religious Life

The 1840s and 1850s also saw the establishment of many of the churches and congregations, which can still be found in Hermann today. The town’s founders had from the early beginnings included society lots for the building of churches as well as for schools and public parks. The three oldest congregations in Hermann are St. George Catholic Church, the Hermann United Methodist Church and St. Paul United Church of Christ. Besides serving the spiritual needs of Hermann’s residents, these congregations also played an important role in preserving the townspeople’s German culture and language, as most churches also organized a multitude of social functions and many religious services were held in German long into the twentieth century.

St. George Catholic Church

In 1840 the Catholic parish of St. George was established, making it the oldest congregation in Hermann today. Thirty-three of Hermann’s earliest settlers were German Catholics and as early as 1840 they sought to establish a church in the colony. In 1845, construction on the first Catholic Church building began on the site of the present church. The church, which was laid out facing from north to south, was 50 foot long and 36 feet wide, was completed in 1850. The parish’s first resident priest arrived in Hermann in 1849. In 1866, a 14-foot brick addition, serving as sacristy and sanctuary, was added to the south side of the church (St. George’s Catholic Church).

After the Franciscan Friars of the Sacred Heart Province of St. Louis took over the spiritual leadership of the parish in 1875, the interior of the old sanctuary was remodeled. The three ornate Gothic altars for the church, which were later moved into the new sanctuary, were carved from locally grown trees by two of the Franciscan Lay
Brothers. Around 1900, the current bell tower was added to the old church, which served the Hermann Catholic community, until it was replaced by the present church in 1916. The new sanctuary’s stained glass windows depicting the Seven Spiritual and the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy, as well as the Rose Window in the rear of the church were purchased in 1924. Of these stained glass windows, ten were made in Germany. The Franciscan Friars service to St. George Parish came to an end in July 2002, when a Diocesan priest was appointed to serve the parish.

A Catholic parish school was established in 1868, which forms the basis for the parochial elementary school, which still exists today (Heckmann Shrader 1984, 278). Two years later, in 1870, the parish erected a permanent school building. From 1875 to 1877 the Franciscan Brothers staffed the school. They were followed by the Sisters of St. Francis from Lafayette, Indiana, who served St. George’s School until 1989. From 1989, a School Sister of Notre Dame, St. Louis Province served St. George’s until the school’s first lay principal was hired in 1993. From 1950 to 1970, St. George’s also operated a Catholic High School, which closed due to declining enrollment (St. George’s Catholic Church). Today, St. George Catholic Grade School serves approximately 200 students who are enrolled in grades K through 8.

**St. Paul United Church of Christ**

Hermann’s second oldest congregation, St. Paul United Church of Christ, can trace its beginnings to 1841, but was formally founded on 24 November 1844. It came into being when two of Hermann’s early churches, the *Allgemeine Deutsche Kirche* (Universal German Church) and the *Evangelische Kirche* were combined to form St. Paul’s Evangelical Church. The members of these two congregations had Lutheran,
Rationalistic and German Reformed backgrounds. Most of Hermann’s early colonists were freethinkers and followers of the German Reformed Church. They had left Philadelphia, “seeking freedom from the oppression of the dominant English population around Philadelphia” (Sellenschutter, 2-3).

The current St. Paul Church is located on the hillside purchased by The Evangelical Congregation of Hermann and Vicinity in 1841. The sanctuary’s cornerstone was laid 5 December 1844, with much of the building materials and labor being donated by the city of Hermann as well as by many of the townspeople. A parsonage, which was in use until 1919, was constructed south of the church in 1852. Through the Basel Mission Society, the young congregation also received financial support from Evangelical churches in Germany. Church records show that $320 in mission money was used to purchase a pulpit for the sanctuary and to build a balcony inside the church. However, financial issues plagued the young congregation, which was forced to dissolve and reorganize for failing to meet financial obligations in 1861. At this time, the members of St. Paul also adopted a new constitution, implementing stricter membership requirements for the congregation (Sellenschutter, 3-4).

By 1858 a church organ was purchased from St. Peter’s Church in St. Louis. In 1893, a new 1300 lbs. bell was purchased and a bell tower was added to the sanctuary, which also received new windows. The smaller old bell, which had been obtained in 1846, was given to the City of Hermann and placed in the old City Hall building. Pastor Koenig organized a Sunday school in 1892. Prior to the congregation’s 50th anniversary in 1894, William Bek was chosen to be St. Paul’s new pastor. He served until his death in 1899. In 1900, the congregation was incorporated under the laws of the State of
Missouri, and in 1901, after 57 years of independence, St. Paul finally joined the Evangelical Synod of North America, a step that had been voted down repeatedly prior to this date (Sellenschutter, 5-7).

The old church was electrified in 1902 and finally replaced by the current sanctuary in 1907. Recommendations for the construction of a new church had been made as early as 1903, since the old sanctuary was oftentimes not large enough for the congregation. For financial reasons, however, the recommendation was voted down, as was a 1904 plan to erect a new church but to save money by incorporating the existing bell tower. Finally in 1907 the construction of a new church with a new bell tower was approved. The final services to be held in the old church were celebrated on Tuesday, 23 February 1907. The site was cleared for construction and the cornerstone for the current sanctuary was laid 15 June 1907. The new church was built of solid brick at a cost of $23,000, and it was dedicated only six months later, on 22 December 1907. A second bell weighing 600lbs was also added in 1907 (Sellenschutter, 7-10).

Sellenschutter reports that in 1910 the congregation decided to hold one English language service per month on the evening of the third Sunday, ending the 66-year tradition of conducting all church services exclusively in German. In 1925, a change was made to hold one Sunday morning service per month in English. Beginning in 1930, all services were held alternating in German and in English, since 1947 all services have been conducted in English, with the exception of special occasions, such as Maifest still today (Sellenschutter, 10-12).

The congregation celebrated its 75th anniversary in 1919. A new parsonage was built that same year, after plans for this project had been made as early as 1917. Rev.
Rudolph H. Kasmann, who served the congregation from 1912 to 1944, wrote a German language history of St. Paul’s for the occasion of the congregation’s seventy-fifth anniversary. In 1934, the congregation became St. Paul Evangelical and Reformed Church, when the German Reformed Church merged with the Evangelical Church nationwide (Sellenschutter, 11-13).

Following the merger of the Evangelical and Reformed Church with the Congregational Christian Church in 1957, the congregation became St. Paul United Church of Christ. In 1955, a residence adjacent to the church property was purchased for use as the new parsonage. 1960 marked the beginning of a major renovation project at St. Paul’s, after similar efforts had been voted down repeatedly in the past. The 1907 sanctuary was completely renovated, the interior was remodeled completely, new entrances were added and an annex was constructed connecting the sanctuary and the old parsonage, creating more space for administration and classroom facilities (Sellenschutter, 14-16).

On Sunday, 2 September 1990 the annex and old parsonage were severely damaged by a fire set by an arsonist. The church sanctuary escaped fire damage, but required major clean up as result of the smoke damage it suffered. Following the fire, the damaged structures were replaced by new construction, which was completed in 1992, housing church administrative offices, classrooms and multi-purpose rooms. This construction and renovation project gave St. Paul its present day appearance. In 1994, two years after the completion of the new construction, St. Paul celebrated 150 years of German Evangelical faith, tradition and heritage in Hermann (Sellenschutter, 21-28).
Throughout its history, St. Paul United Church of Christ has preserved many of the traditions of its German founders, but none as visible as the tradition to crown the church’s steeple or bell tower with a weather-vane in the shape of a rooster. Sellenschutter reports that a 15 by 18 inch copper rooster sat atop the cupola of the first church and was moved in 1893 atop the newly constructed bell tower. A larger version, approximately 2 feet tall, later replaced the first specimen, and still today crowns the steeple of St. Paul Church (Sellenschutter, 6).

Hermann United Methodist Church

The third oldest congregation is the Hermann Methodist Church, founded in 1844. The congregation’s early services were held at irregular intervals and in different locations, such as the Wehmer home or the Presbyterian Church on West Fourth Street. Since the young congregation could not employ a regular minister, it was initially served by the Berger Methodist Church. In 1885, the church became self-sustaining for several years, before again closely associating itself with the Jefferson City German Methodist Church and at times with the Big Springs Methodist Church (Wulff).

Under the leadership of Rev. M. Nutzmann, in 1883 the congregation built a brick sanctuary, located at First and Market Streets. Rev. B. V. Bluff credits Mr. and Mrs. Christ Wehmer’s generosity for the construction of the first church. Not only did the elderly couple make an initial donation of $5,000 for the construction of the sanctuary, they also bequeathed their estate to the church. Following Dr. Ellis’ association with the church in 1895, the congregation saw a period of growth leading to the need to renovate the old sanctuary in 1924. The building was remodeled and enlarged and a basement for Sunday school classes was added (Wulff).
Services at the Hermann Methodist Church were held in German as well as English, until in 1925 the German and the English Methodist Church Conferences merged and all services were held in English. In 1939 the congregation became part of the newly formed United Methodist Church (Wulff). The congregation moved into its present modern church on Highway 100 in 1969. The old Methodist sanctuary now serves the congregation of the Hermann Christian Church (Heckmann Shrader 1984, 280-281).

A Baptist congregation was established in Hermann in the early 1950s, building a church in 1982. The Lutheran ‘Shepherd of the Hills’ congregation formed in 1892, building a church in 1983 (Heckmann Shrader, 280-281).

The official City of Hermann Community Information Packet currently lists eight houses of worship for Hermann. These are the First Baptist Church, the Hermann Christian Church, the Hermann United Methodist Church, the New Life Church, St. George Catholic Church, St. Paul United Church of Christ, the Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church and the United Pentecostal Church.

**Business and Industry**

Due to its location on the banks of the Missouri River, Hermann’s potential for development and growth was very limited from the beginning. The site the society’s general agent Bayer had selected was neither suitable for industry, nor for large-scale agriculture, due to the characteristics of the area’s soil as well as its topography. Dorothy Heckmann Shrader assumes that Bayer selected the town site on the Missouri and Gasconade Rivers because it “is reminiscent of the Rhine, with the town nestled within an amphitheatre of hills, the foothills of the Ozarks, and the Missouri river at the base”
(Heckmann Shrader 1984, 292). Hermann remained a rural community that learned to make the best of its location and turn the site’s shortcomings into the charm that attracts tourists to the town today. Hermann had many of the industries typical for a frontier river town, but its residents also realized early on that the town’s location and the site’s conditions were ideal for growing grapevines and producing high quality wines.

Although Hermann’s founders had laid out a broad Market Street with a wide central median with the intent to build a series of covered market houses in the center of the street, only one of these was actually ever constructed. The Market House, a two-story brick building, was completed in the center of Market Street, just below Fourth Street, in March 1858. According to Bek, by this structure visitors “are at once reminded that (…) [they] are dealing with a peculiar settlement – different from all its neighbors.” He explains that the Market House “… furthermore stands as an undeniable proof that the people once entertained the loftiest hopes for their creation. The fact also suggests itself that the founders of the settlement were of foreign extraction, to whom such institutions were familiar and apparently a necessity, even in a smaller town.” Early plans for such central market houses were made in 1854, which according to Bek is surprising, because “[b]y this time it was clearly understood that Hermann would not be a great city.” However, Bek speculates that “[i]t must have been due to the fact that many of the residents were formerly Grossstädter and of foreign birth” (Bek, 242).

The business of the Market House was supervised by a market master, who was also responsible for the enforcement of the market regulations, which the trustees had admittedly modeled after the ones of St. Louis’ market houses. The lower floor of the two-story brick structure offered stalls for eight butchers and provisioners. They were
sold to the highest bidder at $3.80 to $5.00 per year. The second floor, consisting of one single large room, was used as city hall as well as for various other large town meetings (Bek, 242-243). The building served as site for city council meetings until the construction of Hermann’s old City Hall in 1906, located atop of Market Street. While the building’s second floor served as city hall, the first floor served as Hermann’s firehouse (Kemper Hesse 1998, 40). Hermann’s first volunteer fire company was organized in 1859. At the time of the company’s 125th anniversary in 1984, it had 35 members, who volunteered their time and services in times of need. A new firehouse was built in 1971 on Highway 100 (Heckmann Shrader, 277).

In 1895, the J. D. Danziger Brewing Company was one of Hermann’s largest employers. It was located in the eastern part of town in the buildings now occupied by the Hermannhof Winery. Hermann’s earliest brewery was founded prior to 1856 by Jacob Knobel on Front Street. By 1877, a new owner had taken over the business and the brewery’s annual production was at 454 barrels per year. Only eleven years later, in 1888, the annual output had increased almost tenfold and reached 4,000 barrels. Early Hermann’s other industries included coopers, lime burners, lumber companies, a shoe factory, mills, agriculture, a grain elevator, and the wine industry Hermann is still famous for today (Kemper Hesse, 46-70).

The Missouri River

From the town’s earliest beginnings, riverboats on the Missouri River played an important role in Hermann’s history. As mentioned above, Hermann’s first seventeen colonists arrived on the Missouri frontier on 06 December 1837 on the last boat of the
season. Riverboats soon became the town’s major means of transportation and continued to do so until well after the arrival of the Pacific Railroad in 1854 (Schroeder 1998, 17).

The industry also provided a means of earning a living for many Hermann residents. Many were involved in the shipbuilding industry that developed on the Hermann wharf, whereas others profited from Hermann’s role as an important stop on the river, thanks to the town’s location on the major shipping routes on the Missouri River. According to Heckmann Shrader, during “the heyday of the steamboat era more than 30 steamboats were either built at the Hermann wharf or purchased and brought in to enter the freight business” (Heckmann Shrader 1984, 292).

Riverboats also played a role Hermann’s earliest days as a tourism destination. A weekend excursion up the Gasconade River to a spot called ‘Heckmann’s Mill’ was a popular past time, not only for Hermann residents, but also for visitors. Steamboats carried many visitors up the river to Hermann from St. Louis, who were mostly German and came to enjoy the many German festivities Hermann had to offer, or simply to enjoy a Sunday afternoon by the band stand in City Park (Heckmann Shrader 1984, 292).

Trade on the Missouri River, from St. Louis to Omaha and all the way to Fort Benton, Montana, was a major industry in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Thanks to its advantageous location on the river, Hermann was able to profit from the river trade. Hermann’s riverboat captains were among the highest paid on the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. Captains Joe La Barge, Bill and John Massie, and John and Jim Gunsolitis were among Hermann’s most famous sons in that business. Besides being a profitable river port and wharf, Hermann was also the site of the 1843 Big Hatchie riverboat disaster. The steamer Big Hatchie exploded at Hermann’s wharf, killing over
70 of its passengers; most of whom were German immigrants making the river voyage to the western territories. Most of the victims were buried on the city’s cemetery in unmarked gravesites (A Period of Growth and Development).

Prior to the building of the highway bridge in 1929, the only way to cross the Missouri River at Hermann was by steam ferry. John and Fred Graf operated the first such ferry, the “W. A. Knapp.” Prior to the “W. A. Knapp” beginning its service, Mr. Carl conducted a hand-operated ferryboat across the Missouri. The last ferry to cross the Missouri River, at the time of the construction of the aforementioned highway bridge in 1929 was the gasoline powered “Loutre Island” (A Period of Growth and Development).

For 50 years, the Hermann Ferry and packet Company, founded in about 1880 by Henry Wohlt and his two sons August and Gustav Wohlt, and William L. Heckmann Sr., was one of the major players in Hermann’s riverboat business. The company ran riverboats on the Gasconade, Osage and Missouri Rivers and was possibly one of the most successful riverboat businesses operated in Hermann, at times paying as much as 200% returns on its investments (A Period of Growth and Development). It was dissolved on 31 December 1935 (Heckmann Shrader 1994, 268).

The steamboat business was one of Hermann’s most profitable businesses in Hermann until the railroads brought an end to the industry by 1920. Overall, some 40 steam- and gasoline-powered riverboats and some 30 barges were built at the Hermann wharf prior to the end of the riverboat industry at Hermann (A Period of Growth and Development). The above mentioned gas powered boat “Loutre Island” was the last one to be built at the Hermann wharf in 1920, bringing to an end a legacy of 51 years of boat building at Hermann (Heckmann Shrader 1994, 268).
Today’s River Memorial commemorates and honors the contributions of Hermann’s riverboat captains to the town’s early growth and development and its prominence as a steamboat stop on the Missouri River, adjacent to the highway bridge at the town’s entrance. The centerpiece of the monument is the 9-foot pilot wheel of the steamer “John Heckmann.” Built in 1920, the “John Heckmann” was the last steamer to be built in Hermann. It was reportedly lost in 1929 in an ice breakup (Heckmann Shrader 1984, 292).

**Viticulture**

Although it never evolved into an ‘Athens on the Hill’ where German language, culture, values, and ways would find a new home in the New World, Hermann nonetheless found a way to put itself on the map. This did not occur as the results of the residents’ efforts of preservation but rather thanks to their spirit of innovation. Besides all the industries typical for a mid-western town the size of Hermann, soon after its inception, the small town developed a highly successful wine industry and became a major player in the area of American viticulture. In his book *The State of Missouri*, published in 1904, Walter Williams writes that “no better grape soil can be found than the loess hills on the Missouri River” (Williams, 134).

Throughout the town’s history, time and again, Hermann’s wine industry helped to save the town’s economy and ultimately its survival. Besides Hermann’s unique old-world architecture, reminiscent of a small town in Germany, its vineyards, wineries and wine festivals attract thousands of tourists to Hermann every year.

The history of American wine is as old as the history of European Settlement in North America. In his book *Exploring Missouri Wine Country*, Brett Dufur writes, “…
the written history of North American vineyards begins with the legend of Leif Ericsson’s voyage to an unknown land in 1000 A.D.” Dufur recalls one version of this legend, in which a German member of Ericsson’s party, Tyker, had discovered grapevines during the voyage, which reportedly led Ericsson to name this new-found land ‘Vineland.’ He comments however that Ericsson’s party probably did not actually find grapevines, since they landed in what is Newfoundland today, but rather wild berries (Dufur, 16).

In other parts of the continent, however, settlers found excellent soil and weather conditions to grow large varieties of native, imported and hybrid grapes and to produce a wide variety of wine. While most colonial forefathers seemed to prefer whisky, rum, or beer to wine, Thomas Jefferson was among the young country’s most prominent proponents of winemaking. Jefferson reportedly made several unsuccessful attempts to establish vineyards at his Virginia plantation Monticello (Wine Wizard’s History of North American Wines).

Faust writes that not only “from the earliest time the Germans made attempts to cultivate the grape. They tried it in Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Ohio, Indiana, Missouri, California, and elsewhere.” He continues explaining that also “in the evolution of native varieties of the American grape, Germans have contributed a prominent share.” Hermann provided many of these contributions to American viticulture, like the development of the so-called ‘Norton’s Virginia’ grape under the expert guidance of George Husmann, who later would also become an important person in California’s wine industry (Faust Vol. II, 39-45).
Hermann was by no means the first place in Missouri where vineyards were planted and wines were made. As early as 1829, Gottfried Duden wrote about the abundance of grapevines in his Report of a Journey to the Western States of North America. Dufur writes that many of the German immigrants who were settling on America’s Western frontier “… carried carefully-wrapped clippings from their old world vineyards” (Dufur, 17-19).

Early on, winemaking became a very important industry in Hermann. Bek states that “though no great yields are mentioned for the first years, yet the trial must have promised generous returns” (Bek, 238). Jacob Fugger had introduced the Isabella grape to Hermann in 1843 (The Wine Industry). This grape is believed to have originated in South Carolina and was planted by Hermann colonists who relied to its reputation of being very tenacious. However, as Dufur states, “Isabella didn’t produce the results they desired, so it was abandoned for varieties like Catawba and Norton” (Dufur, 18).

Hermann’s trustees became actively involved in promoting the establishment of vineyards in the colony as early as 25 November 1844, when they, as Bayer reports, resolved “‘that those persons who reside here be allowed to take up vacant lots, belonging to the town, for the purpose of cultivating the vine.’” Attached to this offer were three main conditions. The first condition was that the lots had to be paid for in full without interest after five years, with one-fifth of the payment being due each year. Secondly, everyone taking up lots was responsible for paying the required taxes for them and no one person was allowed to have more than a total five of these lots. The third condition established the requirement to entirely plant these lots with grapevines, with the first two-fifth of the lots to be planted within the first two years. Penalty for not fulfilling
the requirement of planting these lots with vines would result in forfeiting the lot and having to pay ten percent of the purchase price in interest to the town. Soon thereafter these conditions were modified. The time limit to pay off the lot was extended to ten years, with the first payment not being due until year five of the deal. Under these conditions, 600 wine lots were purchased at the standard rate of $50.00 per lot, guaranteeing the town a steady flow of income during its early decades of development (Bek, 238-239).

The willingness of Hermann’s trustees to offer most generous terms for the acquisition of town lots together with the colonists’ know-how in regards to agriculture and viticulture, in conjunction with their enterprising spirits in developing grapevine varieties that could strive under the topographical conditions found there, laid the foundation for what would soon become one of Hermann’s leading industries. In 1847, Carl Teubner established a commercial wine grape nursery just east of Hermann. That same year, Michael Poeschel and Franz Jacob Langendoerfer planted their first vineyards. Later that year, Teubner married George Husmann’s sister Josephine (Kemper Hesse 1998, 82-88).

Although many other grape varieties were planted in Hermann, the Norton may have had the biggest impact on the town’s wine industry. Among the varieties grown in Hermann were the Delaware and the Concord, which were grown in abundance. Among the locally developed varieties are Elvira by Jacob Rommel, Hermann by F. Langendoerfer, Martha by Samuel Miller of Bluffton, Missouri Riesling and Grein Golden by Nicholas Grein, and Dry Hill Beauty by the Robyns (The Wine Industry).
The Norton, which Faust claims “was practically discovered by the Germans of Missouri” as a “variety of great commercial prominence for its wine-producing qualities,” was introduced to Hermann in 1843 independently from Virginia by Dr. Kehr and from Cincinnati by Mr. Heinrichs and Mr. Wiedersprecher. Faust quotes George Husmann’s writings from 1864, in which he states that “the vine seemed a rough customer, and its fruit very insignificant when compared with the large bunch and berry of the Catawba.” Husmann continues by pointing out that the Norton however was much more resistant to the growing conditions found in Hermann as well as to mildew and rot, which could easily destroy the more popular Catawba. He states that Mr. Longfellow, whom he considers “the father of American grape culture” deemed the variety “worthless” when asked for his opinion of it and that therefore many of Hermann’s winegrowers replaced the Norton with other, more popular varieties. Husmann explains that he himself, Jacob Rommel, Poeschel, Grein and Langendoerfer, however, did continue to grow and further develop the Norton and that “after a few years more wine was made from it in larger quantities, found to be much better than the first imperfect samples, (…) equal, if not superior, to the best Burgundy and Port” (Faust Vol. II, 41-42).

Faust credits Husmann, who was born near the German port city of Bremen in 1829, with being instrumental in the tremendous success of Hermann’s wine industry (Faust Vol. II, 43). His parents, Martin Husmann and Louise Charlotte Wesselhoeft, had brought him to America in 1837. They had purchased shares in the society in Germany and arrived on the Missouri frontier shortly after George Bayer had purchased the land for the town site of Hermann. Martin Husmann first settled on land he purchased from the
government east of the colony site. He only later claimed his town lots inside the colony. “George Husmann,” Kemper Hesse writes, “spent his youth working on his father’s farm and with his brother-in-law Carl Teubner, learning all he could about grape-culture” (Kemper Hesse 1998, 82).

Husmann left Hermann in 1849 to seek his fortune in California during the gold rush years, but he returned to Hermann in 1851, after his brother-in-law Carl Teubner died and his sister asked him to take over the operation of their estate (Faust Vol. II, 43). After taking charge of the property on behalf of his sister, George Husmann “developed a nursery and fruit tree farm that became known throughout Missouri as a model business. (...) The nursery provided grape plants and fruit trees, along with a whole range of exotic plants … and seeds … to customers throughout the country” (Kemper Hesse 1998, 83).

Besides running the Teubner estate, Husmann also founded several businesses of his own. “His work was interrupted only by the [civil] war, in which he served as lieutenant and quartermaster of the Fourth Missouri Regiment of Volunteers,” Faust writes. He returned to Hermann in 1865 and published his first book, Grapes and Wine in 1866 (Faust Vol. II, 42). Many others would follow. His work The Cultivation of the Native Grape and Manufacture of America Wines, first published in 1866 in New York, would undergo several revisions and reprints. In 1869 he began to publish the American Grape Culturist, “which at the time was the only periodical in the United States concerned exclusively with grape culture and wine making” (Kemper Hesse 1998, 83).

Husmann was appointed to the University of Missouri’s Board of Curators (then Missouri State University) in 1870. He was also a charter member of the state’s Horticultural Society and the State Board of Agriculture. He later founded the Husmann Nurseries in
Sedalia in 1872 and was appointed to a faculty position at the University of Missouri in 1878, which he resigned when he eventually moved to California in 1881 to manage the Talcoa Vineyards in Napa County. In California, Husmann continued his scientific work, which he had begun in Missouri and helped stop the spread of the *phylloxera*, which had been devastating European vineyards in the later 1860s and early 1870s. He died on his own ranch in Chiles Valley, CA in 1902 (Faust Vol. II, 44-45).

*Phylloxera vastatrix* is a louse, a “tiny aphid that at one stage of its complicated life cycle feeds on the vine roots and kills the vine” (Oz, 18). Since there is no cure or protection against *phylloxera*, the only way to prevent it’s spread it to graft the desired vine variety onto a resistant rootstock. *Phylloxera* had come to France from America when French vintners imported American vines and planted them in their vineyards. Although the American rootstock was resistant to the louse, the traditional European vines were not and became devastated by it, almost wiping out France’s entire wine industry. After inspecting the infected French vineyards in 1871, Missouri entomologist Charles V. Riley recommended grafting French varieties onto resistant American roots, which proved a viable remedy for the aphid’s spread. Dufur states that “millions of cuttings of Missouri rootstock were shipped to save the French vine industry from disaster.” Many of these rootstocks came from Husmann’s nurseries (Dufur, 20).

Besides George Husmann, Hermann Jaeger, a winemaker from Neosho, MO, was also instrumental in helping to save the French wine industry. They worked together on developing *phylloxera* resistant vines. In 1889 Jaeger was rewarded for his efforts when the French awarded him with the Cross of the Legion of Honor and the National Order of Knighthood (Satterfield).
Hermann was home to numerous other notable vintners. Jacob Rommel, who was among the first group of settlers to arrive in Hermann in December 1837, was also one of the first Hermann vintners to cultivate the Norton variety, early realizing its potential. He is credited with creating several red and white wine varieties. His son, Jacob Rommel Jr. has also been credited with creating numerous grape varieties that would not only thrive in the Hermann soil and produce significant harvests, but also were resistant to *phylloxera*. Edward Kemper, Nicholas Grein, Franz Langendoerfer, Samuel Miller and William Poeschel also made valuable contributions to Hermann’s wine industry (Kemper Hesse 1998, 84-85).

Kemper was also instrumental in providing France and other European countries with *phylloxera* resistant rootstocks. He developed his Hermann nursery into very successful “mail-order business, shipping hundreds of thousands of rootstock to Europe, Mexico and throughout the United States,” Kemper Hesse writes. She supports her statement by referring to the nursery’s records, which show that Kemper had purchased tens of thousands of cuttings for his nursery from local growers in just one year (Kemper Hesse 1998, 106).

Hermann’s first significant grape harvest had occurred in 1848. The residents of Hermann used this occasion to celebrate the town’s first *Weinfest* at Michael Poeschel’s Stone Hill Vinery, attracting throngs of visitors, German and non-German, from far and near. The festival, which became an instant tourist event, included a harvest parade with bands, a float depicting Bacchus, the god of wine, music and dancing (Bek, 238-340). That year, Hermann’s wineries produced approximately 1,000 gallons of wine. By 1855, Hermann had approximately 500 acres of vineyards, shipping wine within the region and
“But wine,” Dufur writes, “in Hermann didn’t become a huge money-maker until after the Civil War. It was in 1866 that Missouri surpassed Ohio as the second largest wine growing state in the Union. By 1869, 42 percent of America’s wine was produced in Missouri” (Dufur, 19). Annual production reached 350,000 gallons as early as 1869, and Hermann wineries were shipping their products throughout the United States, and even abroad (The Wine Industry).

Dufur credits Hermann’s location on the railroad with having contributed to the prosperity and success of the town’s wine industry, although the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 not only made it possible for Hermann wineries to ship their wines throughout the U.S., but it also opened the eastern markets for California wines (Dufur, 19).

Records for 1904 show that one twelfth of the wine sold in America came from Missouri wineries, totaling 3,068,780 gallons. The majority of this, approximately 2,971,576 gallons, was produced in Gasconade County, predominantly in Hermann and its surrounding areas (Bek, 237).

**Stone Hill and Hermannhof Wineries**

Although the Hermann wine region is home to many local wineries, the town’s two most historic and well known wineries are the Stone Hill and Hermannhof wineries. Michael Poeschel established Stone Hill winery in 1847. From 1861 to 1878 he operated the winery together with his business partner John Scherer. The main building that dominates the estate today dates to this period. The 60 x 60 foot two-story brick building was constructed in 1869 to house the main offices and warehouse for Stone Hill. Today it is home to the winery’s gift shop and tasting room. In 1878 W. Herzog and G. Stark
became partners in the business taking over control of the entire company in 1883, when the name Stone Hill Wine Co. was adopted. After Herzog pulled out of the business in 1893, it was reorganized and incorporated in 1898 selling $225,000.00 worth in stock (The Wine Industry).

Stone Hill has an extensive system of underground cellars, which at the time of the winery’s heyday was considered to be the largest in the world. The winery’s shipping cellar was constructed in 1861 and enlarged in 1882. The cellar “is arched like a tunnel, with the older part being made of stone and the newer part of brick.” The fermentation cellar is located directly under the main house and the third cellar was built in 1874. It was constructed to as a storage cellar “and contained the ‘twelve apostles’ – twelve casks varying in capacity from 1500 to 3000 gallons, with the likeness of an apostle carved upon the head of each.” It also housed two other casks with capacities of 4,483 and 4,552 gallons. Stone Hill produces award-winning wines, recognized for their quality in numerous national and international competitions, operated thirty-five acres of vineyards and purchased additional grapes from other local growers (The Wine Industry).

By 1905, Stone Hill’s capacity had reached eight cellars and an annual production of 750,000 gallons of wine. Williams mentions that Stone Hill had also produced the bottle of wine used to christen the battleship Missouri, which would in 1945 become the site for Japan’s surrender, officially ending the Second World War (Williams, 389). Stone Hill’s extensive system of wine cellars took over 20 years to construct. Prior to the winery’s closing as result of the implementation of the Prohibition in 1920, which banned the sale and production of alcoholic beverages in the U.S., Stone Hill’s annual output had
reached 1,250,000 gallons annually, making it the second largest winery in America and the third largest such operation world wide (Heckmann Shrader 1984, 288).

The winery’s production equipment was dismantled and its storage casks destroyed, and the thirty-five acres of vineyards were converted to other uses. William Harrison converted the former wine cellars into a mushroom business and Stone Hill Wineries became Stone Hill Farms (The Wine Industry). When Ottmar Stark ordered the winery shut down and its vineyards and equipment destroyed, Hermann’s local economy was virtually ruined, Dufur states. When Prohibition was finally repealed in 1933, “Missouri’s wine industry was nothing but a memory” (Dufur, 21).

It was not until 1965, that Stone Hill’s new owners Jim and Betty Held reopened the winery. Although Stone Hill is once again Hermann’s largest winery, it is nowhere near the 1,250,000 gallons annual capacity it once had. In 1995, production had reached 150,000 gallons annually, approximately 40 percent of its pre-Prohibition output. Stone Hill once again produces numerous award-winning wines growing over 80 acres of mostly America hybrid grapes and once again the Norton, the grape that had helped put Hermann wine on the map in the early years. Because of its significant role in Missouri and American winemaking, as well as for the impressive size of its wine cellars, Stone Hill now is listed on the National Historic Register (Dufur, 66-69).

Another prominent traditional Hermann winery is Hermannhof, on the eastern edge of the town. The original building dates back 1848, when a combination brewery/winery was built. It was completed in 1852, when winemaking became just a side-business to the brewery. Hermannhof shared its fate with all other Hermann wineries and was shut down during the Prohibition. Following Prohibition, Hermannhof lay dormant,
until the current owners, James and Mary Dierberg purchased the estate in 1978 and brought it back to life. They restored the estate’s 10 cellars and once again produce award-winning wines. Hermannhof’s annual production has reached over 50,000 gallons of wine today. Hermannhof Winery also operates the Hermann Festhalle, which is only a short distance from the main buildings. The Festhalle houses a multitude of events throughout the year (The Hermannhof Winery Story).

Architecture

Besides its wineries, Hermann’s German architecture is among the key factors that contribute to the town’s attractiveness to tourists. Dufur attributes the survival of many of Hermann’s historic buildings, which give the town its unique charm and character, and draws thousands of tourists to the area, to the economic downturn Prohibition had caused. When Ottmar Stark ordered all vineyards and winemaking equipment at Stone Hill to be destroyed, Hermann’s economy virtually collapsed. “Instead of destroying older homes and building new ones,” he claims, “the old buildings were continually lived in and kept up, which allows us to appreciate early German construction even today.” One could call this historic preservation caused by economic hardship and necessity (Dufur, 21).

Heckmann Shrader writes that the town’s architecture is “distinctly German, perhaps even more so than Germany itself.” She explains that the early settlers built their homes in the styles they knew from Germany (Heckmann Shrader 1984, 267). Although a small number of the town’s old homes are built from sandstone or limestone quarried in the area, most of Hermann’s historic buildings were constructed using locally made brick, which has a distinctive soft orange hue to it (Architecture in Hermann). Although the first homes built were simple log and wood-frame structures, a brick kiln is documented
as early as 1839. Kemper Hesse writes that “at the turn of the twentieth century, the appearance of Hermann, its businesses, and town residences was in many ways reminiscent of the nineteenth-century villages in Germany (...), with many of the brick buildings built flush with the sidewalk, leaving more room for family gardens in the back” (Kemper Hesse 1998, 37). Since winemaking and beer brewing were an important industry in early Hermann, many of the homes were constructed with vaulted cellars, as can be seen in the historic Strehly House on West Second Street, which was begun in 1842 and is now part of Hermann’s Deutschheim State Historic Site (Architecture in Hermann; Deutschheim State Historic Site).

Hermann’s historic homes display a variety of German architectural styles, which must be explained by the fact that the town’s settlers did not come from just one German region, but rather from many German regions, bringing with them their regional building styles and preferences. Anna Kemper Hesse states that between 1860 and 1870 “a change in house types and placement of buildings occurred.” She explains this with either changing taste of the second-generation of Hermann residents, who may have been more influenced by the architecture found in nearby American cities rather than ancestral German villages, or as a result of increased prosperity (Schroeder 1998, 30).

Examples and detailed descriptions of historic structures in Hermann can be found in Kemper Hesse’s detailed study of historic buildings, entitled *Centenarians of Brick, Wood and Stone*. It was first compiled in 1969 in an effort to add the historic district in Hermann to the National Register of Historic Places (Cotton, 2).

The booklet is a listing of Hermann’s “early homes, (...) which are still standing and gives a brief history of persons or events when available. No attempt is made to
describe them in the technical language of the architect.” All of the buildings included in this list were built prior to 1877, before a change in the town’s building pattern occurred (Kemper Hesse 1981, 5).

Most German building characteristics and building traditions were much more evident in the houses’ details rather than their overall architecture. Anna Kemper Hesse is reported to have noted that a study she conducted determined that within Hermann’s Historic District no two homes had cornices that were alike, giving testimony to the craftsmanship, skills and creativity of the craftsmen who created the brickwork on the homes’ facades. The significance of the German architecture of Hermann is also the subject of the publications of Charles van Ravenswaay, who also spent considerable time studying the architecture of Hermann’s historic buildings. In his 1930s study Missouri: A Guide to the Show-Me State he “noted the German casement windows, the wide doorways to accommodate wine casks, the placement of the gabled ends of the houses to the streets, and other evidences of German influences.” In 1961, van Ravenswaay continued his study of Hermann architecture, which is included in his book The Arts and Architecture of German Settlements in Missouri: A Survey of a Vanishing Culture, in which “he discovered many reminders of the German artisans who were drawn to Hermann in the mid- and later nineteenth century” (Schroeder 1998, 30-31).

The creation of the Historic District of Hermann was the result of a renewed civic pride and an interest in the town’s heritage, following the Brush & Palette Club’s 1952 revival of the town’s traditional Maifest celebration had turned into a tourist attraction at a larger scale. The plans to enter the old part of Hermann into the National Register of Historic Places began in 1968. In the spring of 1969, the Brush & Palette Club hosted a
workshop on the value of historic preservation of the St. Louis Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. The 22-block area of the Historic District of Hermann was included in the National Register of Historic Places on 1 February 1972 (Kemper Hesse 1981, 35).

Hermann’s Brush & Palette Club, Inc. was not originally conceived to make historic preservation its focus. Rather it was established in 1952 as a group of art students, who met monthly in order to paint Hermann buildings and scenes. They were determined to do something about the deterioration of many of the town’s old buildings. In 1952, in an effort to raise funds for the renovation and restoration of the Rotunda and the Bandstand in City Park, the group decided to organize Maifest. To raise awareness of Hermann’s rich German heritage, Anna Kemper Hesse wrote a historic pageant to be part of the celebrations. The event was reported on in the St. Louis media, attraction thousands of visitors to Hermann, making it a great success, not only for historic preservation efforts in Hermann, but in selling the town as a tourism destination as well. From 1952 to 1964 all Maifest celebrations included such historic pageants, raising sufficient finds to allow the club to buy and to restore the two historic buildings that since 1978 make up the Deutschheim State Historic Site; the Strehly House and the Pommer-Gentner House. Tourism would be the way to a means in the efforts of historic preservation in Hermann for years to come (Organizations).

**Hermann Today**

Although Hermann never grew into the German metropolis in the New World, the dreams its founders to build a German city that would be second to none in America has nonetheless come true to some extent. Hermann does not stand out by virtue of its size,
but rather of its uniquely German character and its strong sense of German culture and heritage. Since its founding, Hermann has managed to maintain a character that is reminiscent of a small wine making town in Germany itself. Just like that of many a German town, Hermann’s year is filled with numerous celebrations and events that pay tribute to the heritage of the town’s early settlers.

At the time of the 2000 Census, Hermann had a population of 2,674. Of the town’s residents, 54.5% (1,454 persons) claimed German ancestry. Of Hermann’s 1,282 housing units, 437 (34.1%) were constructed between the town’s founding in 1837 and 1939 (U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000).

Today, tourism plays an important role in Hermann’s efforts to preserve the town’s German character its founders had so carefully planned for. It has grown into one of the town’s major industries, providing it with the revenue needed to maintain its historic buildings. Tourism also provides a stage for many of the early German traditional celebrations of Hermann, such as the Maifest spring celebration and the annual fall celebration that started with the Weinfest, and has now become Oktoberfest. Today, the Hermann Chamber of Commerce, and several civic organizations market the town as a German tourist destination. Hermann also has two official domains on the Internet. They are the Historic Hermann, Missouri site at http://www.hermannmissouri.com and the City of Hermann’s Official Internet site at http://www.hermannmo.com. The Historic Hermann, Missouri web page advertises Hermann’s designation as “Missouri’s Bed and Breakfast Capital,” listing over forty lodging establishments in the area of Hermann’s Missouri Wine Country. It also contains a listing of the town’s various stores and restaurants. More detailed information about the history of winemaking in the Missouri
can be found either on the individual wineries’ Internet pages or on the Hermann Vintner’s Association Web Site, called The Hermann Wine Trail, at http://www.hermannwinetrail.com (HermannMissouri.Com).

Hermann, though clearly a tourist destination, does not rely exclusively on the tourism industry as the basis for its economy. The town is not just a tourist town, but rather a Midwestern town like many others, which was founded by German settlers, and today has a healthy economy, based on manufacture and wholesale trade for over forty percent of its employment and income. In addition to more than twenty Bed & Breakfast establishments in Hermann itself, the town also offers accommodations in two locally owned motels. There are currently no national motel chains operating in Hermann. Two campgrounds also offer visitors the opportunity to vacation here. The City of Hermann Official Internet site also lists nineteen mostly privately owned restaurants and eating establishments, including three coffee shops. Hermann’s nine wineries and two breweries also attract many visitors. Visitors come to Hermann mainly for the town’s substance, its rich pioneer and German immigrant history, as well as the role the town played in the history of winemaking in America and its role as a riverboat town on the Missouri River. The town’s rich history is on display in five museums, among them the Historical Museum in the old German School House and the Deutschheim State Historic Site (Historic Hermann, Missouri).

**Deutschheim State Historic Site**

Deutschheim State Historic Site consists of two historic Hermann homes, the Pommer-Gentner house and the Strehly house, which were given to the Missouri Department of Natural Resources by Hermann’s Brush and Palette Club in 1978. Deutschheim’s
purpose is to capture “the culture and heritage of the German people who migrated to Missouri in the mid-to late-19th century” (Deutschheim State Historic Site).

The Pommer-Gentner house was built in 1840 in the German neoclassical style. The two-story brick building is one of Hermann’s oldest surviving homes. The interior is kept in the style of the 1830s and 1840s. The barn in the back yard displays tools and gardening implements that were typically used during the nineteenth century. The Strehly house was built by Carl Strehly in 1840. It underwent several additions and modifications in the three decades following its original construction. Until 1854 it housed Strehly’s and Muehl’s printing business. A winery with a vaulted brick wine cellar was added in 1857. Today it exhibits the life of the German-American middle-class between 1865 and 1880. The gardens behind both houses are kept to reflect a period garden, using plants which could be found in most Hermann gardens during the town’s early years. Deutschheim also hosts special programs and exhibits to illustrate the lives of Missouri’s German settlers during the nineteenth and early twentieth century (Deutschheim State Historic Site).

Hermann uses its historic atmosphere and architecture as the backdrop for many festivals and celebrations, which serve the dual purpose of celebrating the town’s heritage and citizens on the one hand and of attracting and entertaining visitors on the other hand. Although these festivals serve a tourism purpose, they are not merely put on for tourist entertainment. Here, Hermann combines the substance of German cultural heritage with the surface of a German-style festival, such as the town’s annual Oktoberfest celebration. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Hermann boasts a rich musical and theatrical tradition, which has its origin in the early days of the city’s founding. This tradition is
still alive and well today and is well represented by the Hermann Apostle Band and the Hermann Municipal Band, which receives funding from the city. With the newly established Clara Eitmann Messmer Amphitheater, located in downtown Hermann on Gutenberg Street, the city has a new venue for music performances, which will add to the town’s summer events calendar. The amphitheater was made possible through the private donations of long-time Hermann resident Clara Eitmann Messmer, “who wanted to return something to Hermann.” The facility was officially dedicated on 31 May 2006 and will be the location for performances throughout the summer, continuing the rich tradition of Hermann’s former music performance venue, the old bandstand in City Park (Historic Hermann, Missouri).

The park is also the location of the Rotunda, which was recently placed on Missouri’s ten most endangered historic places in 2005. In response, the Brush & Palette Club initiated a fundraising effort to secure sufficient money to adequately restore this “unique one-story brick eight-sided structure on a stone foundation.” The Rotunda is believed to be the oldest publicly owned building in Gasconade County and was originally part of the Gasconade County Agricultural Association’s fairgrounds, which were established in 1860. Together with the old bandstand, the Rotunda became property of the city when it purchased the fairgrounds in 1923 and became the central location for most Hermann festivals and celebrations. By 1950 the building had fallen into such disrepair, that it was slated for demolition. A group of civic-minded Hermann residents, members of the town’s Brush & Palette Club, however realized the historical importance of the old building and set out to save it from its impending fate. In June 1951 they received permission from the city council to raise the necessary money to preserve the
building. “Funds for the restoration were generated by creating a May Festival, and enlargement of the end-of-school picnic or Maifest to which former residents and students were invited to remind them of their rich heritage. This marked the beginning of modern era tourism in Hermann” (The City of Hermann Official Web Site).

Maifest, however, is just one of annual celebrations in Hermann today. The city’s calendar of events is full of celebrations, ranging from community fundraising events such as the Chili Supper at the Hermann Firehouse #2, the Annual Chili Cook-Off & Washer Tournament and the different church picnics to the traditional Fasching Costume Ball, German-style seasonal Christmas celebrations and the Hermann Oktoberfest, which is celebrated throughout town on all October weekends. Other festivals, like the Hermann Christmas Lights Festival Weihnachtsstrasse, the seasonal Hermann Garden Tours and the Hermann Arts Council’s Herbst Fest together with a multitude of events related to the annual grape harvest at the wineries in and around Hermann also add to the great variety of community events that can be enjoyed by visitors and locals alike. Many of the towns and villages in the Hermann Wine Region also have their own community events, in which Hermann residents participate (Historic Hermann, Missouri).
CHAPTER 2

THEME TOWNS: LEAVENWORTH, WASHINGTON AND HELEN, GEORGIA

Although on the surface the towns of Leavenworth, Washington and Helen, Georgia may appear to have a much more coherent and authentic German look and feel than Hermann and Frankenmuth do, this is where the similarities end. Unlike Hermann, neither Leavenworth, nor Helen was actually founded by settlers from Germany or with a German cultural background. In fact, neither town’s “German history” began until the 1960s, when residents in both towns independently of one another decided to give their struggling towns an Alpine Bavarian inspired architectural and themed make-over, in order to attract tourists in an attempt to ensure their dying towns’ survival.

Even though Leavenworth and Helen are over 2,500 miles apart on opposite sides on the United States, their similarities are rather striking. Not only do both towns boast an alpine Bavarian architectural theme; they also owe their survival to an ability to re-invent themselves in the face of adversity. Both towns can trace their beginnings to the logging industry and to the railroad and both were threatened in their existence when these industries left at approximately the same time in the 1920s. It was also roughly the same time period when engaged residents decided that something needed to be done in order to rescue their respective towns and find new ways to secure their survival and began an alpine-inspired architectural remodel of their towns.
LEAVENWORTH, WASHINGTON

Leavenworth is located 118 miles east of Seattle in Washington’s Cascade Mountains, close to the center of the state, along State Highway 2 and at the confluence of the Icicle and the Wenatchee Rivers. Part of Chelan County, Leavenworth has an average elevation of 1,100 feet. The town’s surrounding mountains with their steep slopes and peaks reaching over 8,000 feet provide the backdrop for an Alpine themed town that rivals many a Bavarian, Austrian or Swiss village (Konhorst).

At the time of the arrival of the first land surveyors, during the second half of the nineteenth century, the area surrounding the current town of Leavenworth was inhabited by the Native American tribes of the Chinook, Yakima and Wenatchi. The latter are the namesake of the Wenatchee River. In the language of the Yakima tribes, ‘wenatchi’ reportedly denotes a river that originates in a canyon (The History of Leavenworth Washington).

Growth and Decline of a North-Western Railroad Town

Unlike the towns of Hermann, Missouri and Frankenmuth, Michigan, the mountain town of Leavenworth was not established as the result of its founders’ political or religious idealism, but rather out of plain necessity and pragmatism. Leavenworth owes its existence to the railroad. The first permanent settlers in the Icicle Valley were the German brothers Johann and Nicholas Emig, but they were not part of any kind of an organized German settlement effort. The first wave of pioneer families arrived in the Icicle Valley in 1884, establishing the valley’s first white settlement, “Icicle,” which was located at the confluence of the Wenatchee River and Icicle Creek (Roberts, 2).
The original settlement of Leavenworth was laid out in 1893 as a pioneer railroad village. The Great Northern Railroad Company had begun laying railroad tracks through the valley and over Stevens Pass in 1892, following the path where Highway 2 is located today. By this time, a number of businesses, such as a general store, saloons, restaurants and blacksmiths’ shops had already been established in Icicle. When it became known in October of 1892 that the Great Northern Railroad would establish a division point just south of Icicle, the future for the new settlement looked very promising. The Great Northern Railroad built side tracks, a round house, coal bunkers and a depot on the land it had purchased, laying the foundation for the rapid growth of the future settlement. At the same time, the Okangan Investment Company, under the leadership of Captain Charles Leavenworth, purchased the land and “platted the townsite where Leavenworth now stands. The new town was named Leavenworth, in honor of the [company’s] president.” The townsite was heavily wooded, “but within a few months the land was cleared and a number of businesses and residence houses were built” (Steele, 729-730).

In its first decade, this new boomtown saw a period of continuous growth, with a post office, stores, banks, and boarding houses being established. As early as February 1893, Leavenworth had already grown to a population of over seven hundred. Steele explains that as a result of Leavenworth’s early success, “[a]ll of the business houses at Icicle were removed to the new site and many outsiders came to engage in business” (Steele, 730).

The large quantity of available timber in the area, as well as the continuous growth of the new town led the Woods Brothers to build Leavenworth’s first saw mill in early 1893, satisfying the high demand of lumber for the construction of new homes and
businesses, and creating seventy-five jobs. As early as April 1893, less than six months after its founding, it already became necessary to expand the original settlement, which was carried out by the Leavenworth Real Estate and Improvement Company. Further town expansion projects were undertaken during the early boom years to accommodate the needs of a continuously growing railroad and logging town in the Pacific Northwest (Steele, 730).

Leavenworth’s early boom attracted all different kinds of people who were seeking their fortunes. Many of them were businessmen looking to profit from the newly established railroad town, while others came to find employment with the Railroad Company. Frank Reeves established the town’s first newspaper, the Leavenworth Times, as early as the spring of 1893, which was followed later that same year by Maj. A. S. Lindsay’s Leavenworth Journal. Both papers ceased to exist in 1898, and it was not until January 1904 that the town’s current newspaper, the Leavenworth Echo, began publication (Ralston, 384).

Formal education in Leavenworth began in 1893, when Miss Mary Ralston, who had been teaching in a log cabin in Icicle since 1891, began holding classes in an old store building on 1 May. Her brother had owned and operated the first cable ferry across the Wenatchee River, connecting Icicle with the newly founded Leavenworth. This also marked the beginning of Leavenworth’s school district, with George Hood, H. Blinn and Adam Emig serving as the district’s first administrators. Only two years later, in 1985, the town’s first school house, a two story framed structure, was erected (Ralston, 385; Roberts, 7).
The spiritual needs of the town’s residents were first tended to with the founding and construction of Leavenworth’s Congregational Church in 1893. After being served on a temporary basis by what Ralston calls “transient ministers,” Rev. R. A. Rowley became the congregation’s first permanent preacher in 1894. His successor, Rev. J. A. McCrosky, took over the leadership of the congregation in 1895. Rev. McCrosky’s wife took on a prominent role in the congregation’s Ladies Guild, the first such organization to be founded in Leavenworth (Ralston, 385).

Ralston continues her account of early Leavenworth by stating that by 1929, “at the respectable age of 35 years she [=the town of Leavenworth] is a beautiful town of 2000 population with many beautiful homes, one Catholic and two Protestant churches, a school (…), substantial business houses, an excellent water supply, paved streets, cement walks, electric lights and telephones.” She concludes by giving detailed biographical sketches of the Icicle Valley’s earliest settlers, including her own biography, which includes details of the conditions under which she began teaching in the area’s early school (Ralston, 386-397).

The 40-acre tract that Captain Charles Leavenworth had purchased when the development of the railroad town he named for himself began had quickly grown into a bustling boomtown typical for the American West around the beginning of the twentieth century. Frank Losecamp, a local businessman, had been granted the town’s first post office in his store, which was located where the Edelweiss Inn stands today. Many hotels, boarding houses, saloons, brothels and other establishments typical for a railroad boomtown sprang up quickly to accommodate the needs of the town’s newcomers. Mike Lynch provides an account of one such lodging establishment, Mrs. Anderson’s Lodging
House, which is cited extensively by Roberts to illustrate life in early Leavenworth (Roberts, 8-12).

After some of the town’s earliest timber-framed buildings were destroyed by fires, Leavenworth’s first brick building was erected in 1906. Many other wood structures were soon replaced by the sturdier and safer brick buildings during the following years. Around this time, “[e]legant homes were built on the river’s edge and Leavenworth took on the appearance of the prosperous town it was fast becoming.” The town grew steadily with the prosperity the railroad and the logging industry provided (Roberts, 17).

However, as rapidly as Leavenworth grew, just as rapid would be the town’s decline in the 1920s. The Great Northern Railroad decided to give up its route from Spokane to Everett through Icicle Valley and Tumwater Canyon, pulling up tracks in 1927. The decision to abandon and to replace this route was the result of the treacherous conditions the Great Northern Railroad’s trains faced during the winter months when the Cascades’ heavy snow pack made train travel very dangerous. Frequent snow slides would lead to numerous delays and train derailments; some with disastrous consequences. One such train wreck on this route, which was caused by a massive snow slide, was the Wellington disaster of 1 March 1910. Two trains were swept of the tracks by a massive mile-wide avalanche, claiming the lives of 96 people, most of whom were railroad employees. Still today the Wellington disaster ranks among the deadliest train wrecks in American history (The History of Leavenworth Washington).

Following the Great Northern Railroad’s decision to tear up the tracks through Tumwater Canyon and to construct a new, less treacherous route through Chumstick Canyon, it was only a matter of time before Leavenworth faced its first major economic
crisis. The railroad division point was moved to Wenatchee in 1922, making the rail installations in Leavenworth obsolete. Many of the town’s residents followed the jobs to Wenatchee, putting a sudden end to Leavenworth’s rapid development. The old railroad bed that was left behind after the tracks had been torn up was utilized for the construction of State Highway 2. But the town would never be able to fully recover from the massive blow its economy had taken as result of the loss of the railroad. Only on special occasions would trains still travel to Leavenworth on the remaining track that now ended there (Roberts, 19).

The Great Northern Railroad also left behind Tumwater Dam, which it had built in 1908. This dam, made from over twelve thousand barrels of cement, was built in Tumwater Canyon near Leavenworth to create the reservoir needed to provide the waterpower for one of America’s largest hydroelectric plants ever built west of Niagara Falls. The plant was intended to produce the power for four electric powered locomotives General Electric had designed to pull railroad cars through the three-mile long Stevens Pass, which until then had to be done by coal powered locomotives. Although the old power plant and its two 4000 horsepower generators have since been removed from the site, Tumwater Dam still stands today (Roberts, 21-22).

**Timber and Saw Mills**

Besides being a railroad boomtown, Leavenworth’s early growth was also aided by the establishment of the town’s logging industry, which flourished due to the availability of vast dense forests in the Cascades, the possibility to transport the timber and lumber via railroad to any part of the continent, as well as the sufficient electricity and water power to operate large scale saw mill operations. As was the practice in many parts of the
United States, where the local waterways were used to transport logs, the Wenatchee River was also used to float large quantities of freshly cut timbers from the Cascade Mountain sides to the saw mills of Leavenworth. Peter Davis and the brothers Chauncey and Lafayette Lamb founded the Lamb Davis Lumber Company; Leavenworth’s largest logging company, in 1903. As part of their company, they obtained deeds for over 34,000 acres of densely forested land. Their saw mill on the banks of the Wenatchee River near the town would eventually grow into one of the largest saw mill operations in the entire State of Washington. The Lamb Davis Company also constructed a dam across the Wenatchee River near the present day Cascade Hospital, to create a large millpond for storage of the logs that were to be milled in their operation. The dam which has since been removed, following the Lamb Davis Company’s closure, caused silt and other sediments from the river to collect in the millpond, creating what is known today as ‘Blackbird Island.’ Today, the 15-acre island is a favorite and “quiet sanctuary in downtown Leavenworth for residents and visitors who stroll the nature trails” (Roberts, 23-25).

In 1906, only three years after its founding, the Lamb Davis Company had grown to employ over 250 workers at their saw mill and logging camps in the area, greatly contributing to the growth of Leavenworth. To accommodate its employees and their families’ needs, the company built a boarding house, company store and administrative offices. Two years later, it became necessary for the Lamb Davis Company to build railroad tracks 26 miles up the Chumstick Valley, to allow transportation of the timbers cut in that area to the mill. Simply floating them on the river was no longer an option for transporting all cut logs to the mill. Robers reports that “[i]n addition to logs it hauled
freight and, beginning in 1910, passengers from ‘up Chumstick’ who enjoyed day trips to Leavenworth.” This rail line remained in operation until the 1920’s (Roberts, 26-27).

The Lamb Davis Company closed its milling and logging operations in Leavenworth by 1916. Only one year later, in 1917, milling and logging operations resumed on a smaller scale. The mills new owner, the Chicago based Great Northern Lumber Company, modernized the equipment, but after only ten years of operation, the mill closed its doors again; this time forever. All of the tracts of forest more readily accessible for logging and transporting timbers to the mill had been logged off, and operations had lost profitability. All facilities were dismantled, except for the dam across the Wenatchee River, which, as Roberts reports, “was a constant aggravation to the sport fishermen who claimed it interfered with the fish runs.” It remained standing until it was destroyed under mysterious circumstances in the 1930s. Although the days of large-scale logging in Leavenworth came to an end in 1927, smaller logging companies continue to operate in the area today (Roberts, 27-28).

Less than forty years after the town’s founding, Leavenworth’s boomtown days had come to an abrupt end and the town’s survival was in question. The local population declined since many who lost their jobs moved away, while others followed their jobs that had been relocated to another town. However, despite these two major economic setbacks, and the rapid decline of local businesses, Leavenworth managed to survive. Tourism would become a newly found source of income for area residents and would ensure Leavenworth’s survival more than once. Ski Jumping put Leavenworth on the national map in this sport. The first tournament in this sport was held in 1928, but only with limited interest from visitors. However, only two years later, in 1930, the
tournament drew a crowd of over 4,000 spectators to watch the competition. Leavenworth had found another industry to ensure the town’s survival. Much of the success of Leavenworth’s ski jumping competition must be credited to a few outstanding individuals in this sport, such as Hermond and Magnus Bakke, of Norwegian descent, who arrived in Leavenworth in the early 30’s. The hill where the annual competitions would be held until they seized in the early 1970’s now bears their name: Bakke Hill (Roberts, 34-38).

**Fires**

Fire has been a constant threat to Leavenworth from its early days, and still today wildfires in the forests surrounding the town have repeatedly come very close to causing severe damage and economic ruin. The earliest reported structural fire in Leavenworth claimed a frame building housing a jeweler and a barbershop in November 1894. However, Steele reports that the loss this fire caused was minimal. Two years later, on Thanksgiving Day 1896, seven buildings, including businesses and hotels that were located on the same block where the earlier blaze had occurred, were destroyed by fire, causing estimated losses of up to $30,000. Another fire occurred in December 1902. This fire devastated the houses and business owned by G.C. Merriam, J.W. Poag, Dr. Hoxsey, G.C. Christensen and Mrs. Beamish. Another fire threatened the entire town in January 1904, but it could be put out after destroying only six buildings (Steele, 730-731).

Following its Bavarian makeover, the town’s existence was once again threatened by fire in 1994, when “it seemed that all of Chelan County was burning.” Leavenworth was threatened by four fires, which in late July and early August all together scorched
over 165,900 acres of forest. Roberts reports that local fire fighting efforts were supported by multiple state and federal agencies, the National Guard, as well as fire crews from 26 states. This fire endangered not only the physical structures of Leavenworth itself, but also the town’s economic fabric, as tourism, its major industry, had come to a screeching halt, since the fire occurred in the middle of the summer tourist season. Images of smoke-filled Leavenworth bustling with National Guardsmen and crowded with fire engines were broadcast around the nation and reflected the town’s dreary economic outlook, if marketers would be unable to convey to the world that although the fires had destroyed much of the natural beauty of Leavenworth’s surroundings, it had spared the town itself, which was now once again open for business (Roberts, 66-67).

Alpine Beginnings

During its relatively short history, the town of Leavenworth has already proven time and again that it is a survivor. It survived the several fires, the departure of the railroad and the discontinuation of large-scale industrial logging in the Cascade Mountains. The town’s survival can be mainly credited to its ability to adjust to changes and to its citizens’ will to overcome hardship. Leavenworth can be characterized as a town that survived because its reaction to hardship was to re-invent itself anew rather than to give up.

After the boomtown days of this remote railroad and logging town had ended in the late 1920s, a new industry was needed to save its economy. Tourism, such as the above mentioned ski jump competitions, would slowly become a way for residents in the area to earn a living.
Alpine or Bavarian themes appeared in the area as early as 1930, when then Leavenworth mayor William Hansen built the original “Alps,” a candy and gift shop at the town’s outskirts, along Highway 2. Since traveling Highway 2 was a time-consuming and rather adventurous ordeal, Hanson built “The Alps” to offer travelers a rest stop, where they could purchase food, drinks, gas, supplies, or simply take a break from driving. In addition, he built eight cabins by the river, making “The Alps” a travel destination in its own right, rather than just a stopping point (Roberts, 30).

In 1963, Archie and Esther Marlin bought the property and began producing and selling candy at the site. Extensive remodeling following a 1978 fire gave “The Alps” its present appearance. Fires in 1993 and 1994 came dangerously close to the property, but did not destroy it. “The Alps” also survived threats from floodwaters rushing down Tumwater Canyon in 1990 and 1996, which damaged the roadway, but spared the buildings. Esther Marlin supplemented the family’s income by selling oil paintings mostly depicting nature scenes of Tumwater Canyon and the surrounding area. Their son, Archie Jr. followed in her footsteps. Archie Sr. was also instrumental in establishing Leavenworth’s ‘Art in the Park’ events (Roberts, 31-32).

Roberts describes the Leavenworth of the 1940s and 1950s as a “wonderful place to live, but a very difficult place to earn a living.” Although blessed with scenic beauty and mountain charm, the town’s economic reality was everything but pretty or inspiring. The grim economic hardships of most small mountain towns in Washington could also be felt in Leavenworth. As mentioned above, after the closing of the rail yards and the end of large-scale logging, most residents either packed up and moved to where new jobs were, or continued to live in town, but sought employment elsewhere. “Front Street,”
Roberts continues to describe the economic reality of Leavenworth during these decades, “just two blocks long, had over a dozen empty storefronts.” People, who lived there, worked and shopped elsewhere, especially since recent improvements to Highway 2 had shortened the driving time to Wenatchee to thirty minutes (Roberts, 40-41).

Ted Price, one of the people most influential in Leavenworth’s Bavarian makeover, describes the town’s economic conditions in 1960 as follows: “Progress had passed it by. It was even dubbed a welfare town. One by one, businesses were closing, leaving empty storefronts and buildings in disrepair. (…) [V]ery little merchandise remained on the shelves of Leavenworth’s stores and townspeople began to shop in nearby towns.” The State of Washington, Price continues, had condemned the town’s high school, and the question where to build a new school had proved to be a very divisive matter, making the united effort needed to ensure the town’s survival even more difficult (Price, 31-32).

Ted Price and Bob Rogers bought the “Coles Corner Café,” located near Stevens Pass on Highway 2 a few miles outside of Leavenworth, from Ward Harris in 1960 and remodeled it in a Bavarian style. Rodgers had been fond of alpine architecture, as he remembered it from post-World War II Europe. They later added an alpine style motel to their business. They renamed the property “The Squirrel Tree” and used Rodgers’ photographs of the European Alps as inspiration for their efforts to attract guests and tourists to the nearly bankrupt restaurant. Price and Rodgers decided to call the result of their combination of various alpine style elements ‘Swiss Bavarian’ (Price, 15-18).

Price and Rodgers paid very close attention to detail in their makeover of “The Squirrel Tree” property, a quality that they would also adhere to in their renovation of the
properties they would buy and remodel in Leavenworth later. The immediate success of their ‘Swiss Bavarian’ style restaurant, which continued to serve purely American cuisine, encouraged them to make plans on a larger scale. The two business partners decided to expand and added a gift shop and souvenir stand in front of their restaurant that same year, and a ‘Swiss Bavarian’ motel, “The Squirrel Tree Chalet,” the following year (Price, 18-28).

The construction of the motel was originally just one element of a grand plan to develop a Bavarian village at the intersection of Highway 2 and Lake Wenatchee Road. This project was another brainchild of Rodgers and Price, who worked tirelessly in an effort to promote the area and to attract more visitors to the Leavenworth region. They purchased more land in an effort to realize their vision of Bavarian style restaurants and shops, but had to give up their ambitious plans in 1963 due to the fact that they were unable to purchase all of the land adjoining to their property they would have needed to make this dream a reality. Although this meant the end of their plans for a Bavarian village at “Cole’s Corner,” it marked the beginning of Rodgers’ and Price’s vision of a Bavarian Leavenworth itself. “This setback didn’t stop my dreaming, though,” Ted Price recalls. “Instead, it forced me to realize my vision elsewhere, maybe to create a theme town in nearby Leavenworth” (Price, 25-28).

Project L.I.F.E.

After years of decline in the 1950s and 1960s, in 1962 Project L.I.F.E. (Leavenworth Improvement For Everyone) began looking for solutions to the town’s problems. Roberts explains that the implementation of Project L.I.F.E. was the result of a presentation by a guest speaker from the University of Washington’s Bureau of Community Development,
which had been sponsored by the Leavenworth Chamber of Commerce. She recalls that “those present were inspired by the message that local citizens working together could pull the little town out of its doldrums.” Fifteen committees were formed and each committee was charged to study a specific aspect of life in Leavenworth. These committees were advised by a consultant from the University of Washington (Roberts, 41-42).

The University of Washington’s Bureau of Community Development had successfully advised other towns to recover from their grim economic situations. The hopes that they could also find success in Leavenworth were therefore very high and not without basis. Former Mayor Bob Brender was selected to chair Project L.I.F.E. during the constituting meeting in October 1962. The project name had been suggested by Joan James, who was also a member of the Vesta Junior Women’s Club. It was understood that the University of Washington’s Bureau of Community Development would not actually tell the Leavenworth residents what to do, but act in an advisory and consulting capacity along the way to analyzing the town’s problems as well as finding solutions or ways to deal with them (Price, 36).

“Project L.I.F.E. was an ambitious, long-term, self-help project that studied not only Leavenworth, but the surrounding area- in essence, every element of life in Upper Wenatchee Valley,” Price recalls. “The project committees (…) included education, planning, churches, libraries, youth, agriculture, trades and services, beautification, labor and industry and parks and recreation.” A committee to study tourism, its impact on the region as well as ways to increase the number of visitors to the Upper Wenatchee Valley was initially not included. It was only later added at the insistence of Ted Price, who
ultimately saw tourism as a viable industry for Leavenworth. Price reports that upon its completion approximately two and one-half years after its implementation, Project L.I.F.E. was deemed by the University of Washington’s Bureau of Community Development their most successful study of its kind (Price, 36-37).

The tourism committee was chaired by tourism’s most vocal proponent, Ted Price himself. He recalls that most Project L.I.F.E. committee members were not sold on the idea to approach tourism as an industry, such as logging and agriculture. Those who did support a more active role in developing tourism in the valley thought more along the lines of improving and expanding the existing sports and recreation infrastructure, such as scenic overlooks, sports facilities, the above-mentioned ski hill, as well as fishing locations and hiking trails. Price, however, had something more drastic in mind. He was imagining a Bavarian makeover of the entire town of Leavenworth to make the town itself the tourism destination, not its scenic natural surroundings. He recalls that such a proposal was usually met with mostly negative reactions, ranging from skepticism to outright opposition (Price, 37-38).

Price recalls that the tourism committee held their most important meeting on 15 June 1964. Members from other committees were invited in an effort to get their support for plans to attempt to pursue tourism as a viable industry for Leavenworth. This meeting mainly addressed the issues of an autumn leaf festival and an alpine themed makeover of the town itself. After long and difficult discussions, the establishment of an autumn leaf festival, an event designed to draw tourists to the Upper Wenatchee Valley to enjoy the spectacular and colorful display of fall foliage in the Cascade Mountains, was approved. As highlight for the new event the presentation of the Sears-Roebuck Foundation Award,
which had recently been won by the Leavenworth Vesta Junior Women’s Club, was proposed, hoping that such a presentation would be even more reason for visitors to come to Leavenworth. The discussion concerning an alpine-themed makeover of the town remained less fruitful, although a consensus was finally reached “that it would be feasible to remodel Leavenworth as an Alpine theme town and thereby develop tourism as an economy.” This resolution was, however, not included in the meeting minutes. Nonetheless, a first step, even if only a very small one, into the direction of an alpine makeover of the town had been taken (Price, 38-39).

His frustration over the lack of support for his alpine visions of Leavenworth led Ted Price, encouraged to do so by the University of Washington’s new community consultant Dirk Anderson, to seek work on the Project L.I.F.E. Labor and Industries Committee in order to promote his ideas of tourism as a viable industry for the town there. Price explains some of the resistance he and Rodgers were facing for their alpine themed makeover proposals with the fact that the local residents still saw them as outsiders who were trying to tell the Leavenworth residents what to do, or as being interested in the town’s economic rescue simply for own personal financial gains (Price, 40-43).

**Leavenworth Goes Alpine**

Project L.I.F.E. resulted in Project Alpine, a private effort, supported by the municipality, to clean up the town of Leavenworth and give it an alpine Bavarian theme. Other themes proposed as the result of the study had been a Western theme, or a Gay Nineties theme. Again others supported a Scandinavian makeover, inspired by the town of Solvang in California. However, numerous meetings later, the opposition to the alpine makeover
subsided, and support slowly grew. Now it was time to let actions follow words. Among the first business owners in Leavenworth to agree to a Bavarian makeover was the owner of the “Chickamin Hotel,” LaVerne Peterson. She decided to remodel her fire-damaged downtown property in an alpine style. The resulting renovation is today’s Edelweiss. The first property to be successfully completed in the new theme was Watson’s Electric shop, owned by Pauline and Owen Watson. Rodgers and Price also purchased and remodeled property in the center of Leavenworth. The Tannenbaum Building is one of these properties (Roberts, 42-43).

Roberts explains that “as the town grew more comfortable with the project, Leavenworth assumed the appearance of a Bavarian village.” She also points out that the decisions to invest money into the makeover of the appearance of a struggling or failing business must have been a difficult and risky one, potentially leading to financial ruin. Roberts states that many banks were not willing to loan money for such an idealistic renovation project whose success was far from certain, so that many of the property owners had to either dip into their savings or insurance policies, or find other creative ways to fund their projects. “One has to admire the courage of the group of farsighted individuals that galvanized the small town into action,” she comments (Roberts, 43).

It was very important to the six business owners, who took the first steps in the transformation of Leavenworth by remodeling their properties, that all projects would be guided by close attention to detail. It would simply not be enough to add alpine or Bavarian elements or details to the existing buildings and try to pass the town as Bavarian. Price characterizes authenticity as an essential requirement if the whole transformation should succeed. He also acknowledges that authenticity could not be
achieved without intensive financial commitments from the business owners and the municipality. This, according to Price, led to more controversy. However, he continues “we had to vigorously oppose anything less than an authentic remodeling. To create a successful Bavarian village we would have to be as thorough and accurate as we could in all details of construction. A high level of craftsmanship was definitely needed” (Price, 43-44).

While Ted Price worked on the Project L.I.F.E. tourism committee, Bob Rodgers was serving on the U.S. Highway 2 Association, which he also helped to establish. The U.S. Highway 2 Association’s goal was to attract visitors to the towns along U.S. Highway 2 between Everett and Spokane during the 1961 Seattle World’s Fair. The effort was fuelled by the hopes that many Seattle visitors would travel to their destination via scenic Highway 2 and stop along the way and thereby bring tourism money to the struggling region. These hopes, however, were not realized. This led to increased efforts to advertise the region to vacationers all over, in an attempt to make Leavenworth a destination in its own right rather than merely a stop en route elsewhere (Price, 29-30).

Their involvement in the U.S. Highway 2 Association proved very beneficial to Leavenworth, when in 1964 Rodgers and Price were able to utilize some of the contacts they had established through the association with state government officials. They helped organize what they called a ‘tourism school.’ These were essentially workshops on how to increase tourism in Leavenworth and how to make it a viable industry. “The tourism school,” Price explains, “became an essential program for helping everyone (…) to understand all aspects of tourism as an industry and to foster a gradual acceptance of this industry in Leavenworth.” The main message the presenters conveyed was that there
were essentially “two primary things visitors take home with them – what they see and memorable feelings about the friendly people they meet” (Price, 45-46).

These two key points underline the fact that not only the surface of a tourism destination is important, but also the substance of the place. For Leavenworth this meant it was not enough to merely look Bavarian, but also create a hospitable atmosphere that would make visitors feel welcome and cared for and give them the overall impression of being transposed to a true Bavarian town. This was not a small undertaking for a struggling town, but the projection of a fourteen-fold turnover of each tourism dollar spent in Leavenworth was definitely a strong motivation. Other proposals put forth by the Project L.I.F.E. Labor and Industry Committee, however, still excluded tourism as an industry and proposed to make every effort to attract traditional industries, such as manufacturing and processing plants that would provide numerous jobs to Leavenworth (Price, 46-48).

Still not willing to give up, Rodgers and Price decided that it was time to set an example for the rest of the town. They purchased seven properties in Leavenworth and intended to transform them into alpine buildings. Inspired by the success of Solvang, they were ready to lead by example. Joined by LaVerne Peterson, Pauline and Owen Watson and Vern Herrett, who all committed to give the alpine style a try when they decided to remodel their Front Street properties downtown in 1965, this marked the beginning of Leavenworth’s lifesaving transformation. On 10 June, Pauline Watson presented sketches she had made of some buildings in town to show what it could look like after a successful Bavarian makeover to an assembly of approximately twenty Leavenworth residents. Among them were several downtown property owners, Mayor
Bon, Chamber of Commerce President Brender and Vera and Russell Lee, the publishers of Leavenworth’s newspaper, The Leavenworth Echo. During this meeting, those who were not quite ready yet to begin a remodel of their properties agreed, however, that if they were to undertake any future renovations, those would adhere to the alpine style of the earlier remodels (Price, 49-54).

Project Alpine was established to oversee the remodels and to ensure that they would be carried out with as much authenticity as possible. The group decided to use LaVerne Peterson’s hotel remodel as the showcase example for the entire project, mainly due to its prominent location on Front Street, easily visible from Highway 2 and because a finished Bavarian hotel would make a great tourist attraction in and by itself. This step was broadly publicized, locally by The Leavenworth Echo and statewide via press releases from the Washington State Department of Commerce and Economic Development, establishing Peterson as the spokesperson and primary contact for the undertaking. There still was opposition to the Bavarian makeover and according to Price, the University of Washington Project L.I.F.E. Consultant, Mike Wolfe of the Department of Architecture, was strongly opposed to adopting a Bavarian theme. According to Price’s recollection he commented: “’You can’t do that – you’re not a German town. It would be dishonest to take a German theme. You’d end up a cuckoo clock town.’” The group pressed forward despite this warning that they would merely create a town that pretends to be something it is not: German (Price, 54-55).

Wolfe’s words express a concern that tourists coming to Leavenworth would not be fooled into thinking that they had actually stepped into an authentic Bavarian village if all the business owners were doing is to create a German façade, as they are very much
aware of the fact that the German section at Disney’s EPCOT is merely German on the surface, but has no German substance to it whatsoever. If Leavenworth wanted to be more than just a façade, they had to create a Bavarian atmosphere without being dishonest with the visiting tourists. They had to portray the life and atmosphere of a Bavarian town without pretending to be one.

The first group of business owners who undertook the alpine remodel received no help from any of Leavenworth’s city officials. Due to the dire economic conditions, the town had neither a city planner nor a city manager. The city council and the town’s volunteer planning commission, neither of whom would have had any experience in such a makeover anyway, were also not about to help in such an undertaking they did not fully believe in. The remodeling pioneers were left to their own devices entirely. They did not know how to begin the desired projects, nor where to find architects willing and experienced in the sort of project they were about to undertake. So they gladly accepted any help they could get. This help came from two architectural designers, Earl Peterson from Solvang and German-born Heinz Ulbricht from Seattle. The expertise both men brought to Project Alpine was instrumental in its success. “Both Heinz Ulbricht and Earl Peterson proved that genuine talent for design and insistence on excellence, as well as a broad knowledge of the Bavarian style,” Price states, “were far more important for Leavenworth than accreditation as architects” (Price, 56-61).

Earl Peterson had been instrumental in re-designing Solvang into a Danish-themed town. He had been to Leavenworth in 1964 and had been keeping up with the town’s progress. He was ready to become actively involved in the transformation effort as well as to invest into the local real estate market. Peterson, who offered to work on the
alpine designs for the building makeovers without requiring any sort of payment, underlined the importance of authenticity, quality of craftsmanship and attention to detail in such a transformation and insisted that the project should only go ahead if it was going to be done right. Otherwise, he warned, it should not be done at all, since an uninspired makeover would do more harm than good. Other experts who came to Leavenworth as part of Project Alpine’s preparation for construction also echoed Peterson’s sentiments. “They told us not even to think about remodeling unless we were prepared to do a comprehensive, first-class job of creating a Bavarian village,” Price recalls (Price, 56-60).

Heinz Ulbricht, who came to Leavenworth about one month after Earl Peterson arrived, also had experience in European style architecture. One of his projects had been the Old English Inn in British Columbia. Price explains that “he was more knowledgeable about details of Old Bavarian construction than anyone (...) [he had] ever known.” Ulbricht also offered to work on building designs for free and only charge a very small fee for them, if the design was actually used in the building remodel. He was ready to start working on the project immediately. Within a few months after the town’s makeover actually started, he and his family relocated to Leavenworth permanently. One of Ulbricht’s designs was selected for LaVerne Peterson’s remodel of the “Chikamin Hotel” into the *Edelweiss* (Price, 60-64).

After the planning phase, work on the first six properties would begin in earnest in the fall of 1965. What had until now only existed on paper or in some people’s minds was soon to become a reality: an alpine-themed look in Leavenworth. These properties were the Watson Electric Building (remodeled as *Alpen Haus*), owned by Pauline and Owen Watson, the “Chikamin Hotel” (remodeled as *Edelweiss Hotel*), owned by
LaVerne Peterson, the Bakery Building and the Coontz Building (remodeled as Tannenbaum Building”), owned by Rodgers and Price, the cascade Drug Store Building (remodeled as Der Sportsman) and the PUB Building (remodeled as Hotel Europa), owned by Vern and Ann Herrett. After the Leavenworth City Council approved the plans for the remolds, work could begin. Originally, the “Chikamin Hotel” was supposed to be the first building to be transformed. However, the plans Earl Peterson had drawn up for the project before returning to Solvang were rejected by city council due to public safety concerns. Having to start over with the hotel project moved the Watson Electric Building, re-designed by Ulbricht, into the number one spot. Scaffolding went up on 14 September 1965 and the project had begun in earnest. Ulbricht also designed a new set of plans for the “Chikamin Hotel,” which meant this project could now begin as well. Looking back at the makeover, Price states “Heinz [Ulbricht] proved to have an unerring sense of what was right for Leavenworth. (…) Heinz deserves the highest praise for making it possible for the building owners to move ahead with construction as quickly as possible” (Price, 63-66).

In order to help the property owners in Leavenworth to achieve a very high level of authenticity, craftsmen with expertise in European styles and building techniques came to Leavenworth to teach the local builders, carpenters and contractors the building techniques they needed to pull off a successful remodel. The Watson Electric Building would be the only remodel to be completed in 1965, but as soon as the winter snows melted, the five other renovation projects began. These projects gave most residents their first ever glance at European style architecture and soon proved to be a tourist attraction in themselves, not to mention that they also created employment and income for
construction workers from Leavenworth and surrounding towns. Upon its completion, the *Edelweiss Restaurant* was the first place in town to offer authentic Bavarian fare, inspired by a menu from the “Rheinlander German Restaurant” in Portland, Oregon (Price, 66-74).

This transformation of Leavenworth’s Front Street not only fuelled more debate between the supporters and opponents of the remodel, it also led to much welcome publicity, mostly to appear in newspapers throughout the entire state and later in newspapers in other parts of the country. This coverage even led to inquiries about the possibilities of establishing new businesses in town. The makeover of the first six Front Street properties also caused five more owners to remodel or at least spruce up their property. These were the Barber Shop Building, owned by Chuck and Vera Bergman, the Larsen Drug Store, owned by Enoch and Evelyn Larsen, the Seattle First National Bank’s local branch, the Corner Supply Building, owned by Dale and Barbara Seaman and Leavenworth City Hall, which received a new coat of paint (Price, 77-82).

During a trip to Germany later that year, Rodgers and Price not only purchased a great number of authentic German, Austrian and Swiss merchandise for their stores, Price also used this opportunity to take as many photographs as he possibly could hoping to be able to utilize them to recreate many of the architectural details they photographed during the Leavenworth remodel. They also purchased some traditional Bavarian costumes, which would serve as the inspiration for the outfits for the Leavenworth Royal Bavarian organization. Re-energized they returned to the task at hand, and Price suggested the town should erect a band stand to be used for town gatherings, festivals and as an entertainment venue in the middle of downtown park, located between Front Street and
Highway 2. The city used to have such a band stand in it early years, but it had since been removed. Whether this project would become a reality was questionable however, since the city was unable to provide the necessary funds. Only a generous donation of $1000.00 from Carolyn Schutte, a close friend of Rodgers’ and Price’s, which was matched by the Vesta Junior Women’s Club out of their Sears prize money and much volunteer labor, this bandstand project could be realized after all. Construction began in late 1966 and it was finished the following year and served as the centerpiece for many a town celebration (Price, 86-99).

The first successful remodels inspired everyone involved with Project Alpine. Even skeptics were now able to see what the proponents of the makeover plans had been talking about all this time and how it could turn out. The revitalization efforts seemed to be bearing fruits. The publicity the project had received had also put Leavenworth on the map and onto many people’s radar screens. Inspired by this early success, the idea came up to enter Leavenworth into the LOOK Magazine sponsored All American City Award contest as early as 1996. Upon advice from Project L.I.F.E. consultant Nyberg, the decision was made not to enter the competition until the following year, when more progress would have been made and the changes would have taken root. So in 1967, Leavenworth submitted an application to enter the All American City Award competition and was that year selected as one of the top finalists for the award. Project Alpine’s hard work and efforts were rewarded when in 1968 the town of Leavenworth was awarded the distinction of All American City by LOOK Magazine (Price, 99-100).

During the first five years of Leavenworth’s alpine makeover, there were no guidelines or code requirements in place to ensure that new construction or building
renovations in the town’s commercial district would also be carried out in the new architectural theme. Prior to 1970, before the city implemented an official design review board, all Bavarian remodels were done voluntarily and all design elements for the projects were done merely by recommendation from the experienced property owners. In early 1968, Leavenworth mayor Bon asked Bob Rodgers to develop guidelines for acceptable architectural details and design elements in an effort to define what was ‘alpine’ or ‘Bavarian,’ and to develop proposals for a design review board. “Bob was to consider designs for all architecture, signs, decorative motifs and other details, including exterior building designs, signs building materials, lighting and other features,” Price recalls. After two years of trying to solve all legal aspects involved in such an undertaking, the Leavenworth Design Review Board was put in place in July 1970, with its guidelines slated to take effect in early 1971. To further support the Bavarian makeover, Leavenworth City Council changed existing and implemented new sections of the town’s building codes, as needed for the most achievable authenticity of each remodel project. General Telephone and the county utility also supported the makeover by replacing their utility lines above ground with new underground lines (Price, 100-103).

While work on transforming more Leavenworth businesses into alpine buildings was underway, it soon became clear that the town’s natural beauty also needed to become part of the overall plan for the remodel. Today, Blackbird Island and the river front are part of Leavenworth’s overall appearance, but at the time of the beginning of the remodel, not much attention was paid to these properties, most of which were in private hands. A comprehensive recreation plan for Leavenworth was implemented, also mostly due to the hard work of Ted Price. He recalls: “[I]n 1965 I learned of a Washington state
plan to help communities acquire and develop waterfront property for recreational purposes.” Under this program, Leavenworth could apply for a grant to purchase Blackbird Island and privately held riverfront property and develop it into a recreational area, which would surely have a positive impact on the town’s efforts to develop a thriving tourism industry. In order to apply for grants under this program, however, a town had to be able to present a municipal parks and recreation plan. Under Price’s leadership, such a plan was developed and on 28 October approved by the city council. With this plan approved, an application for state funds was made, and approved in April 1967. Only one month later, Blackbird Island was purchased with additional funds received from the county for $10,000.00. That same year, a large parcel of riverfront property became available following the death of its owner, R. B. Field. The above-mentioned Carolyn Schutte purchased the property and in August 1972 deeded its riverfront to the City of Leavenworth for use as a riverfront park. A bridge was built to access the island and a European style riverfront promenade, complete with benches, flowerbeds, sidewalks and streetlights was constructed, making the park a beautiful recreation area for tourists and locals alike (Price, 129-143).

**Leavenworth Today**

Today, Leavenworth is a thriving tourist town of Bavarian festivals and alpine style businesses. The people involved in “Bavarian Leavenworth” make a serious attempt to copy and imitate various aspects of a Bavarian lifestyle, such as participating in music events and groups, a German style *Stammtisch*, food, costumes, and furnishings. They also offer a number of educational programs, such as the “Bavarian for a Day” program for high school students. The transformation of Leavenworth from a struggling former
logging and railroad town into a Bavarian Village does not only attract a large number of tourists, but has attracted a number of Germans and German-Americans to successfully relocate to Leavenworth and get involved in business ventures and cultural events. The town’s uniform alpine Bavarian-inspired architectural appearance is regulated by strictly enforced city building codes.

According to the 2000 Census, Leavenworth’s population had reached 2,074, showing an increase in the town’s population since its Bavarian makeover. Only 25% of the town’s population claim German as their primary ancestry (506 residents). Although the town is German in its outward appearance, its percentile of citizens with German ancestry is less than in Hermann or Frankenmuth. Retail trade is with 20.6% the town’s largest industry, employing 186, closely followed by 185 employed in the area of arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food service (20.5%). Together these tourism-related categories make up over 40% of all of Leavenworth’s industries. Out of the existing 1,069 structures in Leavenworth, slightly more than 50% were built in the years following the town’s Bavarian makeover. New construction in Leavenworth saw an almost constant increase of around 13% during the 1970s (169 units) and 1980s (146 units) doubling during the 1990s (approximately 300). Almost half of the town’s existing structures were built during those three decades. The 1970s, the first decade following the decision to go alpine, saw the construction of 169 new structures, a large increase from only 47 structures being built during the 1960s, of which most had been built following the decision to remodel the town. These numbers only include new construction and do not take into account the many older buildings that were remodeled in the Bavarian style. The transformation of a stagnant economy into a boomtown was
very successful. In 2000, the median household income in Leavenworth had risen to $35,692 (US Census Bureau, Census 2000).

Leavenworth’s Bavarian facades and spectacular mountain settings today serve as the backdrop for many special events and celebration entertaining visitors and local residents alike. Among these events are the annual Autumn Leaf Festival, the Christmas Lighting and the above mentioned Art in the Park events. Art in the Park was first held in May 1966. Honi Roberts recalls that the very first event “generated nine dollars profit.” It gave local artists the opportunity to showcase and sell their paintings. During its infancy, the event was mostly carried by Archie Marlin Sr. the owner of the above mentioned Alps. “Thirty years later,” Roberts commented in 1996, “Art in the Park is a well established tradition from early May until late October. (...) Art in the Park is non-profit and their revenues provide upkeep and flowers galore in City Park, funding for elementary school art programs, and it sponsors four scholarships annually for creative students who see an art career in their future” (Roberts, 47-48).

The annual Autumn Leaf Festival can trace its beginning to 1964 when the festival was planned to coincide with the presentation of the Sears-Roebuck Foundation Award to the Vestas. It took began on 19 September 1964 and ran until 27 September and proved to be a great success. “A tremendous crowd gathered in town,” Price recalls, “perhaps the largest ever outside the annual Leavenworth Championship Ski Jumps. (...) There were thousands of people in town – and that was before a single Bavarian style building was to be seen!” The festival has since evolved; culminating in the ‘Grand Parade,’ which today features numerous marching bands and floats from all throughout the Pacific Northwest and Western Canada. A ‘Royal Lady’ is elected each year, honoring her
outstanding contributions and service given to Leavenworth. The town’s own float has
from the early years on been accompanied by the ‘Royal Bavarians,’ a group of volunteer
men who – at their own expense – represent Leavenworth as the town’s good-will
ambassadors. They all wear Bavarian inspired costumes, which Price calls

The town now has clearly become a tourist destination in its own right, far
surpassing anything the businessmen who pushed for the town’s remodel could have
imagined. Leavenworth has on the surface become an alpine village, whose visitors are
not interested in the town’s logging and railroad history; most of them are probably
completely unaware of this aspect of the town, but merely in the experience the Bavarian-
themed town has to offer the casual tourist. Detailed tourist and visitor information is
available on the Internet on the Leavenworth Chamber of Commerce web page at
http://www.leavenworth.org. According to the Chamber of Commerce, Leavenworth
today boasts about thirty hotels, of which three are owned and operated by national hotel
chains. Twenty-seven Bed & Breakfast establishments or German-style Pensionen and
sixty more cabins or vacation rental properties offer a variety of accommodations for the
varying tastes of tourists visiting the area. The official Leavenworth Chamber of
Commerce Internet page also lists about thirty eating establishments, featuring a variety
of fares, ranging from traditional American to German and European cuisine, to Mexican,
Italian and Chinese, offering something for every palate. Six fast-food places and five
bakeries offer additional places to dine or snack. Leavenworth also offers its visitors a
variety of shopping opportunities with approximately eighty different stores and specialty
shops, of which some offer imported German, Swiss and Austrian gifts and decorative
articles. Two museums, the Leavenworth Nutcracker Museum, and the Upper Valley Museum, which depicts the local history of the Icicle Valley and the Leavenworth area, also add to the town’s attraction to tourists (Leavenworth Chamber of Commerce).

Most visitors, however, are attracted to Leavenworth by one or more of the many festivals offered throughout the year, which use the Bavarian-themed architecture of Leavenworth as a backdrop. Therefore, the pressure is on tourism organizers to offer something for everyone all the time. This is reflected in the annual Leavenworth calendar of events, offering such regulars, as the above-discussed Village Art in the Park, running from May through mid-October, the Leavenworth Summer Theater performances in July and August, and the Leavenworth Community Coffeehouse, on two Fridays each month from January through May and September to December. Maifest, the annual Leavenworth Oktoberfest, celebrated on three weekends from late September through Mid-October and the Washington State Autumn Leaf Festival in late September and the annual Christmas Lighting Festival also attract thousands of tourists every year. Especially during Maifest and Oktoberfest celebrations, visitors feel that they get to experience an authentic German celebration. Other festivals, such as the Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest, the Annual Hog Loppet ski trek, the Wenatchee River Salmon Festival and the Hazel Wolf Environmental Film Festival are not German-inspired events. Although they without a doubt utilize the town’s Alpine-themed architecture as a backdrop, they are not primarily intended to present an ethnic experience, but rather fill the calendar of events with events that attract visitors from every walk of life to Leavenworth. The town’s detailed annual calendar of events, which also outlines all of the different festivals and other happenings in Leavenworth, shows that visitors can find a
different event or festival almost every other weekend virtually throughout the year (Leavenworth Chamber of Commerce).

HELEN, GEORGIA

Beginnings
The small mountain town of Helen is located in Georgia’s White County on the banks of the headwaters of the Chattahoochee River. It is nestled in a valley at the southern end of the Appalachian Mountains at an altitude of 1,440 feet, about 85 miles northeast of the city of Atlanta. Highway 75, which follows the so-called Unicoi Road, an ancient Native America trading route, runs through the center of the town. Although its population is not much larger than 400, it is estimated that Helen attracts more than 1 million tourists annually to its shops, events and hotels. With an average temperature ranging from 40º F in the winter to 75º F in the summer, Helen is a popular tourist destination with numerous natural attractions, such as Unicoi State Park or Anna Ruby Falls, nearby (Adams, 7).

Gold Mines, Saw Mills and the Railroad
Just like Leavenworth, Germans or German-speaking immigrants played no role in the founding of Helen. The town’s origins go back to American pioneers who began settling in the northern Georgia Mountains in the early nineteenth century. “This very small and as yet, unnamed community,” as Anderson and Vandiver put it, became a boomtown when the Missouri-based Byrd-Matthews Lumber Company chose it as the location to open a large-scale saw mill operation in 1912. The railroad would soon follow the saw mill and according to Anderson and Vandiver, when it was time to select a suitable name, the original surveyor of the townsite, a Mr. McComb, reportedly chose the name of his daughter, Helen, as the official name of the town (Anderson and Vandiver, 1-6).
Prior to the establishment of the Byrd-Matthews Mill and the incorporation of Helen, the area had been under Cherokee control until in 1819 a treaty agreement between the government and the Indians made it a part of the state of Georgia. The Nacoochee Indian mound near the intersection of GA Highways 17 and 75, south of Helen is a reminder of the region’s Native American past. This mound marks the location of Nacoochee, an old and significant Cherokee settlement. “It was at the crossing of two important Indian trails: the Unicoi from the Hiawassee area and beyond to the north; and the Soquee or northeastern trail,” Scruggs explains. The Unicoi Trail, which in 1813 would be developed into the Unicoi Turnpike toll road, must be considered one of the major regional highways of its day. There is evidence, however, suggesting that native tribes had been living in the region for thousands of years. The Cherokee themselves took over this land from the Creek after having been driven out of their own lands as far north as Virginia by white settlers (Scruggs, 11-13).

After becoming a part of the State of Georgia, the land in the present day location of Helen was divided into lots, and afterwards entered into a land lottery in 1820, in which male Georgia citizens and eligible veterans or widows could draw lots in hopes of receiving land. The Helen area, which was then part of Habersham County, was divided into lots 38, 39 and 40, approximately 250 acres in size. Gedney reports that it was common practice for the winners of the lottery not to settle the lands themselves, but rather to sell them off to interested buyers. “By 1830,” he continues, “various members of the England family had owned all three of them” (Gedney, 35-40).

By this time, Nacoochee had been well established as the main settlement in the area. Located on a ford across the Chattahoochee River, it had a post office, blacksmith
shop, a gristmill and a saw mill. It was also the location the United States military used in 1838 as a collection point where they would gather the Indians who lived in the area and send them on their way to re-settle in Arkansas and Oklahoma as part of the so-called ‘Trail of Tears.’ The “Old Sautee Store,” which is still one of the area’s attractions today, was built in 1873. For this time Scruggs lists four landowners in the Helen location: the Widow England, Pitner, Bell and Connolly (Scruggs, 35-40).

One of the settlements founded by these early settlers was the town of Robertstown, located just one mile north of Helen. Though it was not officially incorporated until 1913, the same year as Helen, Robertstown’s first settlers, John Trammell and his family had arrived from South Carolina in 1821. In 1860, he donated some of his land he had purchased in the area for the construction of Chattahoochee Methodist Church. Charles Roberts, for whom the town was later named, purchased the land in 1890 and established a winery and greenhouses there (Gedney, 38-40).

In 1828, gold had been discovered in Duke’s Creek, marking the beginning of the gold rush in the Helen valley. In 1830, the population of Habersham County more than doubled to over 10,600 as a result of a large influx of prospectors to the area. When exactly the first gold was found in the area is not known for certain. Scruggs reports that the discovery of gold is surrounded by many tales, of which two are being widely accepted as truth. Although the circumstances of the discovery of the first gold differ in both tales, they do establish Duke’s Creek as the location of the find. As a result of this gold rush, many mines were established. Most of these were surface mines, such as the Nacoochee Hydraulic Mining Company, which was established in 1857. It extended its operations into the area of Helen today (Scruggs, 17-18).
The gold rush in the Helen valley however was short-lived. The initial surge would only last until about 1840. The story of the England Mine, which had been established in 1830, can be used as an example for many of the mining operations in the area. After initial success, gold would become much harder to come by and they would cease operation after most investors lost their investments. Although mining did still continue on a smaller scale, all local mining operations were finally halted by executive order during World War II. Ever since then, the remaining mining operations have mainly been a tourist attraction or a private enterprise (Gedney, 38-40).

Besides gold mining, the logging industry also played a big role in the area’s development, since the wooded mountains surrounding the Helen valley provided an excellent source of high quality timbers. “In northeast Georgia the Blue Ridge Mountains were covered with a virgin growth of trees up to six and seven feet in diameter,” Scruggs explains. “This vast area was ready to be ravished but its isolation,” she continues, “which had so far protected it, had to be conquered” (Scruggs, 27).

Speculators had started buying up tracts of land in the area around the turn of the century. Surveyors for the St. Louis, Missouri, based Byrd-Matthews Corporation, recommended the construction of a saw mill operation on the Chattahoochee River, just north of Nacoochee. To transport the timbers to the mill, rail lines could be easily laid into the mountains in all directions. Another rail line would be necessary to transport the sawed lumber from the mill to the existing railhead in nearby Gainesville (Scruggs, 27).

In 1911, Missouri businessman John Mitchell purchased a large tract of land in the area, including the sites of today’s towns of Robertstown and Helen, which he founded within two years of his initial purchase. As he laid out his towns, Mitchell sold
some of his land to the Byrd-Matthews Company for the location of their saw mill, which opened in 1914. Besides its milling operations, the Byrd-Matthews saw mill also built homes in town for some of its workers and managers. Other homes and businesses followed. Among these was the first store in Helen, opened by Dandy Vandiver in 1912. Mitchell also constructed the 23-room Mitchell Mountain Ranch, a luxurious resort hotel, overlooking the emerging city he had just recently founded. The hotel, which had such modern amenities as indoor plumbing, marked the beginning of tourism in Helen. After being purchased by Charles and Will White in 1921, the hotel was expanded to more than double its original size and renamed the Mountain Ranch Hotel. “In its heyday,” Gedney reports, “it was a popular summer resort; among the up-scale amenities offered were a nine-hole golf course, tennis and shuffleboard courts, a spring-fed swimming pool, horses and trails, and a large pavilion where both guests and locals enjoyed Wednesday and Saturday night dances.” The hotel remained a favorite tourism destination until it was destroyed by fire in 1945 (Gedney, 47-50).

“The first areas to be cut,” Gedney states, “were on the headwaters of the Chattahoochee River.” Although milling operations were very successful at first, the Byrd-Matthews mill soon ran into some problems and in 1917, the company was purchased by the Morse Brothers of Rochester, New York. The mill would become one of the largest milling operations east of the Mississippi, reaching a capacity of 125,000 board feet daily. “The entire mill was self-sufficient,” Gedney explains. “Waste wood from cutting operations was used to power the steam boilers housed in a separate building which sported five tall smokestacks.” The mill was supplied with wood from numerous logging camps, which the company had established in the mountains. These camps were
all connected to the mill via rail lines, some as far away as 40 miles to the east of Helen (Gedney, 52-54).

When the Byrd-Matthews/ Mores Brothers Mill closed in 1931, the boomtown of Helen plunged deep into the Depression. With the exception of its large boilers, the mill was disassembled and shipped to Mexico, but a few smaller mills remained. Much of the mill’s remaining land and buildings, such as its power plant, were purchased by Charlie Maloof, who established Helen’s Circle Mill. It ensured that not all milling related jobs were leaving Helen and remained in operation until it was destroyed by fire in the early 1950s. Another of Helen’s mills, the Dogwood Shuttle Mill, which had been established in 1936 by T.J. Tallant, closed in the early 1960s. Lumber mills were not the only industry in Helen. The Smethport Extract Company of Virginia had opened a tannic acid plant in 1923, but it was forced to close only five years later, due to financial problems. Following the plant’s closure, the United States Forest Service purchased much of the company’s lands to include then in a new National Forest. Mining for gold would also once again become a profitable, although short-lived operation in Helen, after gold prices were raised by 70% by the government in 1933. One of the mining operations that had remained since the gold mining days of the 1800s was Helen’s old Hamby Mining Ditch, which was revived by W.G. Hudson after 1933. Hudson ran the mine with some success, until all mining operations were suspended during World War II. Another mine, the Franco-American Gold Mining Company, which ran a hard rock mining operation, was not as successful as Hudson’s washing operation, and closed with a loss shortly after it began its operation (Gedney, 54-61).
As mentioned above, with the saw mill, the railroad came into the Helen Valley. The Gainesville and Northwestern Railroad Company (G.&.N.W.R.R.) began laying their tracks from Gainesville through the Helen Valley in 1912. “The use of ‘Northwestern’ in the name is a bit curious, since the line actually ran northeast rather than northwest,” Gedney states. “However,” he explains, “the Missourians who built it came from the northwest. The name suited them and, since it was their railroad, they simply chose a name they liked without apparent regard to actual geographic considerations” (Gedney, 56).

This curiosity shows some similarity in the decision to later transform Helen into a German-themed Alpine village, since the town’s beginnings were neither German nor Alpine. The G.&.N.W.R.R. line, which ended in Robertstown, opened in early 1913. Besides transporting lumber, the railroad also offered a passenger service, which was something residents in White County had been waiting for since a rail line had been established in Habersham County in the 1880s. As it became apparent, however, that the expected boom in industry and tourism was not going to happen, passenger service was cut in half within less than four years. Similar to Leavenworth, after the closing and dismantling of the saw mill in Helen, the end of the rail line was not far behind. The railroad began to retreat towards Gainesville in 1935. By 1936 the G.&.N.W.R.R. had pulled up all of its tracks in White County, which had not been too reliable to begin with, and the rail bed would in many places be used for the construction of new roads (Gedney, 56-58).
Economic Decline and Rebirth

Helen’s boomtown days had come to an end. With its major industry departed and the railroad removed, the town’s survival was in question. During these years, the National Forest Service obtained much of the land around Helen. Highway 75 was constructed in the 1930s and paved in 1941/42. A new concrete bridge over the Chattahoochee River was constructed in 1938. During the depression, Charlie N. Maloof proved to play an important role in Helen’s survival. A native of Beirut, Lebanon, Maloof had arrived in the area in 1913, when he opened a general store in Helen. After the mill closed, Maloof purchased much of its land and established the above-mentioned Helen Circle Mill, providing employment for many of the town’s remaining residents. With the mill property, Maloof purchased many of the houses built by the mill for its workers, which he in turn sold to its residents, permitting them to pay off the properties over many years. He was involved the local banking business and in Helen city politics for over thirty years. He also served on the White County Commission, helping to bring many infrastructure improvements to Helen, as well as a low-income housing project. “Helen,” according to Scruggs, “owed its existence during those trying years to this man” (Scruggs, 37).

After all the disastrous economic setbacks the town had been hit with, the economic situation in Helen improved during the 1950s and 1960s. Somehow this small town managed to survive, even thought its population had dramatically declined. Helen also approved the sale of alcohol in the late 1950s. Jimmy Wilkins came to Helen in the 1950s where, aided by Charlie Maloof, he founded the Wilco Hosiery Mill. In the early 1960s Wilkins founded the Orbit Manufacturing Company, where he began making
women’s apparel. Both companies provided much-needed jobs to the town. Economic recovery brought about efforts to clean up downtown Helen and to attempt to make the town a more attractive business location (Gedney, 66-68).

Unicoi State Park, one of the major recreation destinations in the area, was opened in 1954 under the supervision of the National Park Services. The park is located approximately three miles north of Helen on Smith Creek and also owes its existence to the untiring work of Charlie Maloof. Following a vast extension of the park around 1970 it now extends to the city limits of Helen and can be accessed via a hiking trail near the city’s library. “The focus of the park,” Gedney explains, “is a beautiful 53 acre lake nestled deep in the valley of Smith Creek where the soaring ridges of Tray Mountain rise abruptly on either side as dramatic backdrops” (Gedney, 73).

As part of the park’s expansion, a new swimming area, eighty-four new campsites, a 60-room lodge and twenty-five rental cabins were established. The lodge has since been enlarged and privatized and now offers a restaurant, one hundred guestrooms and meeting facilities for over four hundred people. Another natural tourist attraction in the area is Anna Ruby Falls, a pair of unusual waterfalls where the Curtis and York Creeks flow together. The site was acquired by Captain J.H. Nichols after the Civil War, who named the falls in honor of his only daughter. Anna Ruby Falls is accessible by a hiking trail and also offers picnic areas as well as a gift shop today (Gedney, 74-76).

**Helen Goes Alpine**

Similar to the alpine makeover of Leavenworth, the impulse to ‘go alpine’ came from local business owners. During one of their regular lunches in the spring of 1968 Pete
Hodkinson, Bob Fowler and Jim Wilkins remarked that something needed to be done to make Helen more attractive to tourists and investors alike. Although they agreed that “… something, almost anything, had to be done to rejuvenate the town,” this is where their conversation ended. “What they saw was depressing.” Scruggs reports. “A ragbag of dilapidated store fronts being constantly bypassed by a stream of tourists headed to the mountains and lakes to the north” (Scruggs, 6). If only they could turn Helen itself into a tourist destination rather than a stop on the road, most of the town’s economic problems could be solved.

Just one year later, in 1969, the same group decided to ask artist John Kollock, who lived in nearby Clarkesville, to draw up plans for a remodeled Helen. Kollock, who during his career in the US military was stationed in Bavaria, came up with plans to give Helen an Alpine makeover. As a result of this private initiative, most of the older buildings were converted by the end of the same year. This was the major turning point in the history of Helen. With the Alpine makeover, new businesses, mainly Alpine or German specialty stores, opened up in Helen, as well as a large number of hotels and lodges (Adams, 2).

By the 1960s the population of Helen had decreased to about 250. Local residents shopped elsewhere and many also had jobs outside of town. An industry needed to be found that would help ensure the town’s survival, and just as in Leavenworth, tourism was chosen as a way out of poverty and dismay. “The Mountain Ranch Hotel,” which had been Helen’s tourist resort during the early years, had burnt down in 1945, virtually ending tourism as an industry in the dying town. Although people were able to spend the night at the small “Chattahoochee Motel,” this was merely a place to spend a night while
traveling elsewhere, rather than a place to spend an entire vacation. Visitors had no other reason to even stop in Helen other than to get gas, food and drinks at the two local restaurants and maybe stop and shop at the outlet stores. There was also a post office, a drug store, W. Brown’s Gas Station and convenience store, a laundromat, Chief’s Garage, the bank and a few other businesses. This was the extent of what Helen had to offer (Gedney, 5).

Kollock was very excited about the prospect of an alpine makeover for Helen. Within a week of being asked to make suggestions for sprucing up Helen, he returned with sketches of Bavarian inspired facades and buildings, and to his surprise found business owner Jimmy Wilkins so enthusiastic about the proposed alpine makeover of the town that he immediately endorsed the idea. Unlike Leavenworth, where the initiative of an alpine remodel fell on much early opposition, the Helen city council was supportive of the proposal from the beginning. Though there was some skepticism at first, Gedney reports that “… all of the downtown business owners soon agreed to convert their buildings” (Gedney, 6).

This was a very risky undertaking, since there was no guarantee that they would see any return on their investment, and no one knew whether an ‘Alpine Village’ in the North Georgia Mountains would attract tourists at all. However, within a few weeks, the planning phase was complete and work on the remodeling could begin. “With the initiative of Pete Hodkinson, the handy notion of John Kollock, the decisiveness and financial support of Jimmy Wilkins and the unanimous participation of local businessmen like Warren Brown, Chief Westmoreland, J.S. Chastain, Dot Watson and Charlie Maloof, the Alpine enterprise was ready to go forward,” Gedney comments. Less than a month
after conceiving the idea of an alpine makeover, Helen builders Roy Sims and J.S. Chastain began work on the first buildings, trying to turn Kollock’s sketches into reality (Gedney, 6-7).

The first building to undergo an alpine transformation was the outlet store owned by Jim Wilkins. Garage owner “Chief” George Washington Westmorland Jr. also agreed to remodel his property right away. The project continued to go full steam ahead and by the end of 1969 most of downtown Helen had been transformed into an alpine-themed village. “Success came quickly,” Gedney remarks. “As something new in the mountains, the town became a magnet for reporters and throngs of tourists who followed close behind. Helen made a great story: a small town, without government help, remakes itself in record time in a remarkable display of civic cooperation.” In 1970, all utility lines were placed underground and new business began moving into Helen. The once dying town had transformed itself into a boomtown once again. The city’s efforts were rewarded not only with economic success, but also with much publicity and praise. The town received numerous awards and much acclaim and recognition. Helen gained the attention of other cities in dire need for economic revitalization. It served as an example for a successful remodel. The number of Helen businesses tripled within the first three years of the alpine makeover, far surpassing even the highest expectations of all involved (Gedney, 7).

Surprised by the immediate success of their ‘Alpine Village,’ located within two hours from the Atlanta Metro area in the beautiful surroundings of the North Georgia Mountains, the residents of Helen were now confronted with other challenges. It became necessary to improve the town’s infrastructure to accommodate the more than one million
visitors annually. New water lines were needed and sewer lines were buried underground, replacing the old septic systems that had been common in Helen. A new wastewater treatment facility was built as well to handle all the sewage. The Helen Chamber of Commerce was established and the city government was reorganized. Public parks and green areas were established, beautification projects implemented and parking lots for all the visitors were laid out. It also became necessary to entertain visitors if they were supposed to stay longer than just overnight. The annual Oktoberfest celebration was born and has become a major event within the Helen calendar (Gedney, 7).

No project of this magnitude would have ever been possible without a driving force behind it. In Leavenworth, Bob Rodgers and Ted Price were the major forces behind the town’s Bavarian-themed makeover. In Helen, Pete Hodkinson III was the motor of much of the town’s transformation and public relations efforts. “A charismatic figure with a penchant for risk and flair for promotion,” as Gedney describes him, “Pete [Hodkinson] put all of his energies into the Alpine Village.” He always had new ideas for projects or how to further improve Helen. He worked hard in ensuring that the town would be as authentic as possible to a Bavarian village, where local businesses are owned by local merchants and not by large national corporations. “Franchises would not be allowed, nor would competition – there would be only one of each kind of shop. (…) Helen would not become a tacky tourist trap or ‘be like Gatlinburg’” (Gedney, 7-9).

Hodkinson’s visions, however, such as a 36-hole golf course, a trolley line or a musical theater, would not be realized, as Pete lost his life in a ballooning accident during an event intended to promote Helen in 1976. “With Pete’s death,” Gedney comments, “the early period of Alpine development was over.” With Pete Hodkinson no longer
pushing for ‘purity,’ Helen’s development would go in a slightly different direction. Today, there is a smaller golf course, but no trolley line and no music theater were ever built. Franchise businesses and hotels have also found their way into Helen, but they all must adhere to the town’s strict alpine design guidelines and requirements as well (Gedney, 10-11).

**Helen Today**

Helen, today a town of over 400, boasts over 1,200 guest beds alone, a total of more than 2,500 in the surrounding county. Festivals, like the annual *Oktoberfest* as well as its location about one and a half hours outside of the metropolitan area of Atlanta, surrounded by state parks and national forests, play a major role in making Helen an attractive tourism location. Helen’s *Museum of the Hills* tells the story of the Helen valley during the pioneer days. The town boasts an alpine-themed atmosphere with its half-timbered houses with large roof overhangs and decorative woodwork, paintings and flowers. Though most of the architectural style elements used in the makeover of Helen are authentic and can be found on many Bavarian houses in the different regions of the state, many of Helen’s buildings combine style elements that are clearly from different regions and would not be found as such in any alpine setting. Much of these style discrepancies, such as half-timbered facades with alpine rooflines appear to be on earlier remodels. As time passed and the Helen residents became more experienced in all matters alpine or Bavarian, other buildings however could very easily have been transplanted from Bavaria to northern Georgia. A detailed description of Helen-style alpine art and architecture can be found in Aubrey Adams’ walking tour of Helen entitled *Alpine Art in America – Helen, Georgia.*
According to the 2000 Census, Helen had grown to a population of 430, showing a remarkable increase in its population over the past thirty years. Since the town’s alpine remodel, the population has more than doubled and Helen has once again become a boomtown. With 64 residents (13.7%), only a small minority claim German as their primary ancestry. This is remarkably less than in Hermann (54%) or Frankenmuth (52.9%). Retail trade with 52 employed (24.5%) is the town’s largest industry, followed by 46 employed in the area of arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food service (21.7%). Together these tourism-related categories make up approximately half of all of Helen’s industries, employing 96 individuals. Out of the existing 322 housing units in Helen, more than 75% were built in the years following the town’s alpine remodel. The 1980 saw by far the largest construction boom with little over one-third of all of Helen’s structures having been built during that decade. The 1970s, the first decade following the decision to go alpine, saw the construction of 51 new structures, approximately 16% of the town’s current structures. The transformation of a dying town into a boomtown was very successful. In 2000, the median household income had grown to $32,917 (US Census Bureau, Census 2000).

Helen has become a tourist destination in its own right, just as had been the purpose of the decision to go alpine. Almost doubling the population in three decades should be seen as a positive yet hardly planned result of the alpine transformation. The Alpine Village Shoppes’ Internet page explains the town’s dramatic success as follows: “Nestled in one of Georgia’s most beautiful valleys, along the banks of the Chattahoochee River is Alpine Helen. There is nothing like it in Georgia. That must be why we have over 2 million visitors annually” (Alpine Village Shoppes).
These numbers of an average 1.8 to 2 million visitors annually, an extraordinary number for a town of merely 400 residents, are backed by the Alpine Helen – White County Convention & Visitors Bureau. Their Internet site, which lists all available tourist information for Helen and its surroundings, is available at http://www.helenga.org. The Greater Helen Area Chamber of Commerce also provides much useful visitor information on their Internet site located at http://www.helenchamber.com. The White County Chamber of Commerce Internet site, which can be viewed at http://www.whitecountychamber.org, also provides much information about tourism in Helen and surrounding areas. The Alpine Helen – White County Convention & Visitors Bureau site lists accommodations in nineteen hotels and motels, of which eight are owned and operated by national chains. This is a vast improvement of the above-mentioned small Chattahoochee Motel, which offered the only accommodations in Helen less than four decades ago. There are also nine Bed & Breakfast establishments, forty cabins and thirteen Condos and other vacation rental places in the Helen area, offering visitors a very diverse number of options for their overnight stay, also paying attention to the natural beauty of the Helen valley. Helen offers thirty-two restaurants and eating establishments, serving a variety of foods, including German, European and traditional American dishes. Nationally franchised fast-food restaurants are also available. Shopping has also become a major tourist attraction in Helen. More than fifty specialty stores and two shopping centers, the “Alpine Valley Complex” and the “Alpine Village Shoppes,” offer a variety of goods, including imported German gifts and decorative items. However Pete Hodkinson’s original goal to ensure that no two shops would offer the same selection of
goods has long since been abandoned (Alpine Helen – White County Convention & Visitors Bureau).

Although Helen boasts the “Museum of the Hills,” depicting early Northern Georgia Mountain history, most of the up to two million annual visitors are not drawn by the role Helen played in the logging industry or the railroad history of the Helen valley. Since there are no visible remains of the railroad and the saw mills that ones dominated the town, history tourism is not their motive. The vast majority of visitors come to Helen for its shopping, restaurants and the many events scheduled throughout the year to entertain visitors in front of the strictly designed backdrop of an alpine village. These visitors are usually unaware of the substance of Helen; they only see the town’s alpine surface.

Among its annual festivals, the Helen Oktoberfest draws by far the largest number of visitors to the headwaters of the Chattahoochee River. The Oktoberfest is celebrated in the Festhalle and beer garden on the banks of the river every weekend from the middle of September through the first weekend in November. The Alpine Helen-White County Chamber of Commerce Internet site lists all of the annual events; most of which are designed to underline and enhance the alpine or Bavarian experience the visitors search for in Helen. These events also utilize the town’s architectural theme and natural surroundings as a backdrop. Besides the annual two-month long Oktoberfest, tourists are entertained at other annual events of which the major ones are Fasching, the German version of Mardi-Gras-style celebrations, the Mayfest, the Helen-Atlantic Hot Air Balloon Race, Bavarian Nights celebrations on every weekend throughout the summer tourist season, as well as various Christmas events, such as a Christmas lighting
ceremony and a holiday parade. Detailed calendars of events can be found on the three above-mentioned Helen area tourist information Internet sites (Alpine Helen – White County Convention & Visitors Bureau; Greater Helen Chamber of Commerce).

Besides large-scale festivals and celebrations, specifically designed to draw large numbers of visitors to Helen on selected dates throughout the year, the area offers many other seasonal activities, such as hiking, fishing and mountain biking in Unicoi State Park and at Anna Ruby Falls, panning for gold at Dukes Creek Mine, tubing on the Chattahoochee River, or local theatre performances. Recreation, as well as shopping, is also a very important element in Helen’s tourism efforts (Alpine Helen – White County Convention & Visitors Bureau; Greater Helen Chamber of Commerce).
CHAPTER 3

FRANKENMUTH, MICHIGAN

Beginnings

The next “Little Germany” is the town of Frankenmuth, Michigan. Frankenmuth is an example of a town founded upon religious principles, but not adhering to any form of communal life. Situated on Highway 83 on the banks of the Cass River, six miles east of Interstate 75 in eastern Saginaw County, 25 miles north of Flint and 14 miles south of Saginaw, the City of Frankenmuth is also the administrative seat of Frankenmuth Township (City of Frankenmuth And Frankenmuth Township Joint Growth Management Plan, 1-1 to 1-3).

In 1845, a group of fourteen Lutheran colonists set out from the Bavarian region of Franconia (Franken) to found the town of Frankenmuth in an attempt to introduce Christianity to Michigan’s Chippewa Indians and to provide spiritual comfort to the German settlers in the Midwest. The town’s name, meaning “Courage of the Franconians,” pays tribute to them and to the obstacles they had to overcome during their journey to the Michigan frontier. The related settlements of Frankentrost, in 1846; Frankenlust, in 1848; and Frankenhilf, now Richville in 1850, which were established not far away from the principal settlement of Frankenmuth, also served as Lutheran missionary posts (Stevens, 30).

Today, typical Alpine Bavarian architecture, which was added to the town’s appearance beginning in the late 1950s, following the remodel of the Bavarian Inn, to give the town a more ‘authentic’ German appearance, provides the backdrop for a variety
of festivals and attractions which showcase Frankenmuth’s Bavarian heritage and support the city’s nickname “Michigan’s Little Bavaria.”

**Lutheran Missionary Efforts in the Midwest**

The idea of a missionary settlement in Michigan was born in response to a call for help in his missionary efforts by the German Lutheran missionary Friedrich Conrad Dietrich Wyneken, who was active in the American Midwest. Born in Hannover in 1810, and educated in theology, Wyneken arrived in Baltimore in July, 1838, “to volunteer for service among the Lutherans in the New World.” Upon his arrival in Fort Wayne, Indiana, in September of the same year, he took over the recently vacated position of pastor of St. Paul’s Lutheran Church. He also ministered to the Zion Church at nearby Friedheim. However, as Herman F. Zehnder states, “he organized congregations in the vicinity and made trips to minister to the spiritual needs of Lutherans all over Indiana, Ohio, and southern Michigan” (Zehnder, 13).

In frequent appeals, called *Notrufe*, Wyneken called on all German Lutherans in the homeland for help in his pastoral and missionary efforts among the natives in the New World. He sought to convince more ministers and missionaries to volunteer their efforts and come to America and tend to the Lutheran faithful as well as to aid in the Christianization of American natives. His appeals, so Zehnder, “did not fall on deaf ears,” and as a result, “[g]roups were formed in the cities of Bremen and Stade to assist the brethren in America.” These groups circulated Wyneken’s appeals and writings among Lutheran congregations throughout Germany (Zehnder, 13).

Pastor Wilhelm Löhe of Neuendettelsau in the Bavarian province of *Mittelfranken* learned of Wyneken’s appeals in 1840, when reading a twelve-page tract containing parts
of Wyneken’s pleas for help, which was published by the aforementioned group in Stade. The group asked their readers for assistance in the Lutheran missionary efforts in America. Reading this tract sparked an interest in Pastor Löhe to find out more about the religious conditions in the United States and its western territories. Zehnder states that as the result of this tract, Löhe “was led to become not only the founder of Frankenmuth but also the great benefactor of American Lutheranism in the Midwest” (Zehnder, 13).

Born in Fürth in 1808, Löhe was educated at the Melanchthon Gymnasium in Nürnberg before studying theology in Erlangen and Berlin. Encouraged by his very religious mother, he decided to become a missionary pastor and was ordained in 1831. He served at Kirchenlamitz, a small rural congregation, before becoming pastor of Neuendettelsau in 1837, where he remained until his death in 1872. “This was hardly the ministry setting that Wilhelm Loehe had envisioned. He had wanted to serve in a large city so that he might touch the lives of many troubled people,” John G. Deterding writes. He continues by stating that Löhe “soon came to realize, however, that God could use him mightily from this quiet village which, under his leadership, soon became a center for Christian charitable and missionary outreach. He had a deep-seated passion and vision for sharing the message of Christ with the nations of the world.” Therefore, Wyneken’s appeal for aid led Löhe to resolve that he could best be of assistance “by sending missionaries who could seek out the scattered Germans who had migrated to the new land. At the same time, they could give a Christian witness to the American natives” (Deterding, 8).

Löhe wanted to make sure that Wyneken’s appeal would reach as many people as possible. He decided to write his own plea for help in form of an article which he had
printed in the *Sonntags-Blatt*, a newspaper which was published by his friend Johann Friedrich Wucherer in Nördlingen and which was widely read in Franconia. Löhe’s efforts were successful. He received over $250.00 in gifts and donations from readers of the *Sonntags-Blatt* within the first week after the article had been published. Inspired by Löhe’s article, Adam Ernst, a journeyman shoemaker by trade, presented himself to Löhe, volunteering for missionary work in America. Löhe began preparing Ernst for “teaching school among the Germans in America,” in July 1841. In November 1841, Löhe reluctantly permitted Georg Burger, a friend of Ernst’s, to join in the training, although Löhe reportedly doubted Burger’s talent for missionary work. “They were taught Bible history, doctrine, ethics, symbolics, catechetics, world and church history, liturgics, geography, English, penmanship, and American history,” until they completed their training in the summer of 1842 (Zehnder, 14).

On his visit to Germany, hoping to solicit more help for his missionary endeavors, Wyneken also met with Löhe, who introduced him to Ernst and Burger, whom he encouraged to go to America. They departed for Bremen on 11 July 1842, where they embarked on their voyage to America on 5 August aboard the “Phillip the First,” becoming “the first representatives of what was to become an ever increasing stream of pastors to supply the struggling Lutheran Church in America.” They reached New York seven weeks later on 26 September, where they made contact with Pastor C. H. Stohlmann of St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church. Pastor Stohlmann introduced Ernst and Burger to Pastor Friedrich Winkler of Newark, who convinced them to accompany him to Columbus, Ohio, where he was about to take a position as professor at the Evangelical Lutheran Seminary of the Ohio Synod. Deviating from their original plans, the two men
went with Winkler to Columbus, where Ernst managed to establish a school, and Burger enrolled in the seminary. After only one year of operating his school, Ernst left the position to become the pastor at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Marysville, Ohio and in October 1843 Burger became the pastor of a congregation in Hancock County, Ohio.

“Thus the appeal of Wyneken had brought its first to emissaries to America,” Zehnder concludes. “Wilhelm Lohe and his friends had made the beginning. (…) And this beginning was to lead directly to the founding of Frankenmuth (…)” (Zehnder, 14-15).

Ernst and Burger were only the first two in a number of missionaries who left Germany to minister to the German Lutherans in America and who sought to bring Christianity to America’s native tribes. The next two men to journey to the New World were Wilhelm Sihler and Paul Baumgart, who departed in the fall of 1843. Sihler became pastor of in Pomeroy, Ohio, Baumgart replaced Ernst in running the school he had established in Columbus. These two men were followed by three more missionaries on 18 June 1844, when Georg Wilhelm Hattstaedt, Georg Conrad Schuster and John Georg Zwerner departed for America. Löhe had given Hattstaedt, who became the pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Monroe, Michigan, specific instructions “to visit the Saxon Lutherans in Missouri with a view to entering into closer relationships and cooperative work with them to ascertain the possibility of establishing congregations near Indian tribes in Michigan for the purpose of carrying on missionary work among them” (Zehnder, 18).

Arriving at Trinity, Hattstaedt joined the Michigan Synod, which had been founded in 1840 by Friedrich Schmid of Ann Arbor. In 1844, following the advice of Father Frederic Baraga, Schmid had begun his missionary work among native tribes in
the vicinity of Sebewaing. Missionaries Johann F. Maier, Georg Sinke and J. J. F Auch assisted him in his efforts. Auch would later play an important role in organizing the settlement of Frankenmuth. Johann Simon Dumser from the Basel Institute joined this group in June 1845 (Zehnder, 18).

**Frankenmuth – The Idea of a Missionary Settlement is born**

In 1844, the mission-minded intellect of German Pastor Wilhelm Löhe devised the experimental idea of sending a group of devout Christians to establish a missionary colony among the natives so they could learn from their example and their Christian way of life, rather than from the teachings of traditional missionaries (Frankenmuth History – The Development of Frankenmuth). Such an undertaking, however, had to overcome a number of obstacles. Löhe had to find a group of men and women who were not only suitable as Christian role models, but who also were “willing to leave their families and homeland to make a new way of life among strange people in a far-away land” (Deterding, 9).

From corresponding with Hattstaedt and Schmid himself, “Loehe learned that the northern area of Michigan was ideal for his colonization plan and missionary work among the Chippewa Indians, also called Ojibways.” Following Löhe’s request, Schmid and Auch visited the Saginaw Valley to search for a suitable site for a missionary settlement. They selected a site on the banks of the Cass River, about 15 miles south of the city of Saginaw. Löhe was assisted in his efforts to assemble a group of suitable colonists by Lorenz Loesel, a young man Löhe had met several years earlier (Zehnder, 18-19).
Löhe also found a leader for the group that was to establish Frankenmuth in the person of Friedrich August Craemer, who sought out Löhe after hearing about Wyneken’s appeals and Löhe’s efforts to help. When Craemer visited Löhe in Neuendettelsau in the fall of 1844, he was a professor for German Language and Literature at Oxford University. Born in Kleinlangenheim on 26 Mai 1812, Craemer was educated in theology and languages at the Universities of Erlangen and Munich. As a result of the Frankfurt insurrection, he was sentenced to imprisonment in 1833, because of his membership in a fraternity. He was exonerated in 1839. Craemer had studied Greek, Latin, English and Norwegian, and became quite proficient in the language of the Chippewa after going to America. Löhe was convinced that he had found a capable leader for his group in Craemer, without whose leadership, “the plan of Lohe may well have remained nothing more than a dream and an ideal of a visionary” (Zehnder, 20).

Deterding describes Craemer as a “pious and adventuresome pastoral candidate [who] was fascinated by the appeal to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to a strange people in a far-away land.” He continues by stating that “Loehe was impressed with Craemer’s zeal, his academic background and his youth. (...) Loehe was satisfied that Craemer possessed those leadership strengths that made him a natural for this assignment” (Deterding, 11).

Löhe and Loesel sought to recruit a group of young settlers because only they would have the resiliency required for the hardships involved with such an undertaking. In addition to Craemer, they succeeded in finding thirteen young men and women to join them in Margarethe Walther, Johann Georg Pickelmann, Margarethe Auer, Johann K. Weber, Kunigunde Bernthal, Martin Haspel, his wife Anna Margarethe Leinberger
Haspel, their two-year-old daughter Margarethe, Maria Lotter, Johann List, Johann Bierlein and Leonhard Bernthal. Most members of this group were driven by two major motives. Predominantly, they sought to spread God’s word among the American natives. The other factor that drove eight of these young men and women to participate in such an undertaking was, as Deterding phrases it, “the very powerful force of young love and a desire for marriage and family living.” Due to economic circumstances, Bavaria had enacted strict marriage laws, requiring a young couple to demonstrate sufficient assets to support a family on its own, in order to receive permission to marry. As Deterding continues, “Loesel and three of his friends who were unable to marry in Bavaria … could be married on board ship as soon as they had left the country. It didn’t matter to them … that they would be deprived of the usual wedding celebration with family and friends. They were in love. Love always finds a way” (Deterding, 11).

With the group of fourteen colonists-to-be assembled, Löhe was one step closer to realizing his dream of a missionary colony among the Chippewa. Deterding comments that Löhe would probably have led the group himself, “had it not been for his family responsibilities.” After the death of his wife in 1837, he was left to raise the couple’s four children by himself and could therefore not go to America. He was nonetheless able to serve as the group’s spiritual leader. During the winter of 1844-1845, the group of colonists held weekly meetings every Saturday and Sunday under Löhe’s leadership. Besides discussing details regarding of the founding and government of their colony, and their travel plans for their journey from Bavaria to Michigan, Löhe instructed them in matters of the faith, doctrine, hymns and ecclesiastical life. He also provided them with an 88-paragraph constitution for the church they planned to found in their colony. Löhe
wanted to ensure that the colonists were fully prepared in worldly as well as spiritual
matters (Zehnder, 21).

Prior to their departure for Michigan, the colonists managed to secure assistance
from the Inner and Foreign Mission Society of the Nürnberg area, which had resolved at
a 4 December 1844 meeting to provide financial assistance in the amount of
approximately $600.00 to the Michigan Synod to assist them in their missionary efforts
among the Indians. The colonists also received pledges of support for their remaining
journey from New York to the selected colony site in Michigan at this meeting (Zehnder,
21).

Following a farewell service in Neuendettelsau on 5 April 1845, the group of
twelve colonists left for the port city of Bremen, where they arrived on 11 April. Löhe
had sent Julius Trautmann, Adam Detzer and Eduard Romanowsky with them as his
emissaries. The group was to be joined in Bremen by Friedrich Lochner, another
ministerial candidate, and Friedrich August Craemer, who was ordained as a Lutheran
minister in the Cathedral of Schwerin on 4 April, one day prior to the colonists’
departure. During their journey to Bremen, where they arrived on 9 April, two days prior
to the arrival of their fellow colonists, Craemer and Lochner received many gifts and
monetary donations for their missionary cause. Craemer was installed as the pastor for
the Frankenmuth colony on 14 April, less than a week prior to their departure for
America (Zehnder, 21-22).

Since every passenger was responsible for their own provisions for the
transatlantic voyage, other than the customary limited amount of water that was provided
on board, the colonists immediately began purchasing “a large supply of Zwieback (a dry
bread), potatoes, beans, smoked fish, salt pork, ham, sausages, rice, coffee, tea, prunes, and other dried fruit,” which, in order to prevent molding, they stored in used brandy barrels. They also purchased some red wine. Zehnder also states that besides their personal belongings, the colonists carried “a large painting of the crucifixion, … two bells, … a black funeral processional cross …, red altar and pulpit paraments, an altar crucifix …., two candlesticks, Communion vessels, a large pulpit Bible, a catechism and small hymnbook, … and some prayer-books and books containing sermons.” Craemer also carried his small personal library and some theological books with him (Zehnder, 22).

Aboard the “Caroline” – A Test of the Courage of the Franconians

On 20 April 1845, the fourteen Frankenmuth colonists boarded the “Caroline” and departed for the America. The aforementioned ministerial candidates accompanied them. The group’s voyage however was soon plagued with difficulties, which tested the courage of the Franconians. Only a few hours after leaving port, the drunken river pilot of the “Caroline” stranded the ship on a sandbank in the Weser River. This meant that the group of passengers, totaling about 70, had to wait for the high tide to roll in the next day, before they could continue their journey (Frankenmuth History – The Development of Frankenmuth).

The colonists did not lose faith in their undertaking, but used this delay wisely. Pastor Craemer performed the weddings of the aforementioned four couples who could not be married under Bavarian law. While waiting for the ship to continue its journey, Johann List wed Maria Lotter, Lorenz Loesel wed Margarethe Walther, Johann Weber wed Kunigunde Bernthal, and Johann Pickelmann wed Margarethe Auer (Deterding, 11).
The colonists were fortunate enough to find a friend of their cause in the “Caroline’s” captain, Captain Volkmann, who “[b]ecause of his Christian interests, his ability as a physician, and his kindly treatment of the colonists … endeared himself to Craemer and Lohe.” He provided them with a space on the vessel’s middle deck, which was separated from the other passengers by a board wall, so they could have some privacy to perform their prayer services and Bible studies (Zehnder, 23).

This unfortunate sandbank incident proved to be only one of many obstacles the colonists would have to overcome and endure on their voyage to Michigan, underlining the courage they displayed in engaging in such an undertaking, which is so aptly expressed by the wise choice of the name Frankenmuth, the courage of the Franconians. After getting off the sandbank, Captain Volkmann piloted his boat down the Weser River to the entrance of the English Channel where he intended to take a southern route into the open Atlantic. However, after crossing back and forth at the entrance to the English Channel for days, unfavorable and stormy weather conditions, forced him to change the course and instead sail around Scotland and take the northern route around the British Isles (Zehnder, 24).

On 29 April the “Caroline” finally reached the open seas of the Atlantic, where the vessel’s passengers would have to endure more storms and spend many days below deck, where conditions were dark, damp and miserable. Baggage that was being thrown around the deck among the passengers by the violent waves added to the dangerous conditions aboard. Captain Volkmann reportedly confided in Craemer “that in his 32 years of service he had never met with such violent storms” (Zehnder, 24).
Crew and passengers aboard the “Caroline” had to survive yet another potentially disastrous encounter when their vessel collided with an English trawler in the night of 13 May. Although the collision caused considerable damage to both ships, the “Caroline” sailed on towards America. Due to contrary winds, the ship was pushed north towards Newfoundland, where Captain Volkmann had to navigate through icebergs and dense fog for three days (Zehnder, 24).

Conditions on the vessel deteriorated towards the end of the 50-day journey. The food went bad and almost every passenger, including Craemer, became ill during an outbreak of smallpox, which claimed four lives aboard the ship. Among the dead, who had to be buried at sea, was two-year-old Margarethe Haspel, the daughter of Martin and Anna Margarethe Leinberger Haspel, reducing the number of colonists to thirteen. She was the last victim of the smallpox epidemic and died 7 June, only one day before the “Caroline” arrived at New York harbor. The girl had to be buried at sea in the middle of the night, while the ship was anchored only two hours outside of New York harbor, so it could pass the mandatory health inspection upon arriving in New York. Pastor Craemer conducted the burial service (Zehnder, 13-27).

Throughout their ordeal aboard the “Caroline,” the colonists remained true to their faith in God and to their mission of bringing God’s word to the Indians. The group celebrated religious services and continued their study of the scripture under Craemer’s leadership, even including other passengers if they were interested. Craemer also taught English to anyone who wanted to learn from him (Zehnder, 24-25).

Within the limited confines aboard the Caroline, Craemer became acquainted with 27-year-old Dorothea Benthien, who was traveling with her five-year-old son, and
her brother and sister-in-law to Ft. Wayne, IN. She joined the colonists in their religious services and before long, Craemer and Dorothea grew closer and fell in love. They resolved to keep their decision to marry upon their arrival in America a secret until the end of their voyage. When Craemer finally announced their engagement to the colonists, their reaction was mostly negative. The Frankenmuthers were in shock that their pastor and spiritual leader intended to marry a woman with her past and in their eyes questionable character. “They feared,” so Deterding, “that the purpose of their pilgrimage was being destroyed.” The colonists questioned his judgment and his ability to make the decisions necessary to lead their undertaking to success, but Craemer did not give in to their fears and concerns. His engagement to Dorothea strained the trust they had in their pastor (Deterding, 13).

Craemer wrote to Löhe that their attitude towards Dorothea and their marriage plans irritated him and that this was not a matter that concerned them, but rather a private one. “He resented the implications that he should have consulted them,” Zehnder writes. Craemer had made up his mind and nothing the colonists could say would stop him from going ahead with the plans to marry her. The colonists’ spirits were very low as they approached America (Zehnder, 25-26).

**New York to Michigan**

The “Caroline” sailed into the port of New York on 8 June 1845. The following day, the passengers were inspected by a physician for diseases and cleared to go ashore into New York City, where the group was greeted by the pastor of New York’s Trinity Church, Theodore Brohm, who had himself immigrated from Saxony. Brohm was closely associated with Pastor C.F.W. Walther of St. Louis, MO, who himself had also
immigrated to America in 1839. Over the opposition of the colonists, Craemer and Dorothea Benthien were married on 10 June by Pastor Strohlmann in St. Matthew Lutheran Church. The addition of Dorothea and Heinrich increased the group of colonists to fifteen (Zehnder, 27-28).

Only two days later, in the evening of 12 June 1845, the colonists embarked on the second leg of their strenuous journey towards their final destination in Michigan. They boarded the steamer “Knickerbocker,” on which they intended to travel from New York City up the Hudson River to Albany. After arriving in Albany the next morning, they boarded the train to Buffalo. Their courage was soon to be tested again. Just as their train left Albany, it collided with a freight train carrying coal. Fortunately, none of the colonists was injured, nor were any of their belongings damaged in the wreck. They had to return to Albany and decide which course of action to take. They had the option of either taking the next train later that day, or of taking a canal boat. The decision was not reached without controversy, further demonstrating the tension that had developed between Craemer and the Frankenmuthers. “Craemer felt that the colonists ought to see the hand of God in what had happened and should not try the railroad a second time.” The matter was put to a vote, and the colonists decided to take the next train, mostly because they would have had to spend an extra $15.00 if they had decided to take the canal boat. Although Craemer did not agree with their decision, he gave in to the majority; however he was very disappointed and upset that they had ignored his counsel. “On the way to Buffalo Craemer continued to complain that they were not showing him the proper respect,” which deepened the rift that had appeared between the group and their spiritual leader even further (Zehnder, 30-31).
The colonists arrived in Buffalo late the next day and spent the night at John Frederick Kruse’s *Gasthaus*, which had been recommended to them as a safe place to stay. They departed from Buffalo the following day, 15 June, traveling by steamboat on Lake Erie, and arrived two days later, on 17 June 1845 in Monroe, where the fifteen Frankenmuth colonists “first set foot on Michigan soil and were hospitably received by their fellow Lutherans.” Pastor Hattstaedt and his congregation had been awaiting the group’s arrival. While the colonists spent time socializing and visiting with their fellow Germans in Monroe, Craemer almost immediately traveled with Hattstaedt and the four ministerial candidates to Ann Arbor to meet with Pastor Schmid, where the men discussed in detail their plans for their Frankenmuth settlement, and their missionary endeavors among the Indians. The men also decided the futures of the four ministerial candidates. They decided that Edward Romanowsky would succeed Sihler, who had recently moved to Ft. Wayne, at Pomeroy, Ohio and that Lochner would take over as pastor of a Lutheran congregation in Toledo. It was also decided that Jakob Trautmann would serve a congregation near Danbury, Ohio and that Adam Detzer would begin working as a traveling missionary in northeastern Indiana and in northwestern Ohio (Zehnder, 30-31).

The colonists remained in Monroe until 27 June, when they traveled by steamboat to Detroit, where they were awaited and housed by members of Pastor Friedrich Winkler’s congregation. Deterding comments that “[o]ne can imagine how grateful the Frankenmuthers were to be hosted by friends who had previously endured the rigors of trans-Atlantic travel, and had successfully established homes in the new world” (Deterding, 14).
The group stayed in Detroit until 3 July, when then boarded the sailing ship “Nelson Smith” to take them to Saginaw. Their trip on Lake Huron around the thumb of Michigan was delayed for one day when the ship’s crew reportedly anchored the boat on an island, went ashore and partook in the traditional Independence Day celebrations, while the colonists were left alone on board. This delay would be the last of many on their trip to their new home in Michigan. However, it would not be the last obstacle they had to overcome. The “Nelson Smith” arrived at the mouth of the Saginaw River on 10 July 1845. Due to adverse winds, it was impossible for the captain to sail his ship the last 15 miles to Saginaw. Therefore, the colonists had to pull the vessel by ropes the rest of the way from Bay City to Saginaw City, where they were met by Johann Auch, one of Pastor Schmid’s Indian missionaries (Zehnder, 31-32).

Auch had arranged for temporary housing for the colonists in Saginaw City. He had rented a house large enough for the entire group. The plan was to use this house as “their temporary shelter until they could relocate to Frankenmuth, which at the time was nothing more than a forested hill on the banks of the Cass River” (Deterding, 14). Some of the colonists went to the area selected for their settlement, approximately 12 miles south of Saginaw, to survey the lands and select the site for the Frankenmuth colony. They finally “selected a slightly hilly area which reminded them of the Native Mittelfranken.” The colonists bought a tract of 680 acres of Indian land from the government, where they built a temporary shelter. At a purchase price of $1,700.00 the land was well within their means. Nearly four months after they had left Neuendettelsau, the fifteen colonists finally moved all of their belongings to Frankenmuth on 18 August (Frankenmuth History – The Development of Frankenmuth).
Michigan at the Time of the Colonists’ Arrival

At the time of the colonists’ arrival on the banks of the Cass River in Michigan’s Saginaw Valley on 18 August 1845, life on the Michigan frontier was much different from what the settlers from Germany were acquainted with. In 1840, only five years prior to their arrival, Michigan had a population of approximately 212,267, which would grow to 397,654 by 1850. Michigan had only gained statehood in January 1837. Saginaw County had been established two years prior. According to J. T. Blois’ description of early Saginaw County, its population was 920 people at the time. By the time of the 1850 census that number had risen to 2,651. Zehnder uses H. R. Greenholt’s 1939 dissertation, A Study of Wilhelm Loehe, His Colonies, and the Lutheran Indian Missions in the Saginaw Valley, as the basis for his description of Saginaw County and the local Natives at the time of the founding of Frankenmuth. Zehnder states that “[i]n regard to climate, topography, drainage, and soils, Michigan was favored by nature. The otherwise northerly climate was modified by the prevailing westerly winds from the Great Lakes, thereby producing moderate temperatures and permitting a great variety of flora and fauna.” In some respects, Michigan’s climate is similar to the climate in many German regions. The state also had abundant natural resources a good supply of available drinking water (Zehnder, 33-35).

Frankenmuth’s summers are usually sunny and warm, sometimes humid. The winters are cold and snowy. Its soils are very fertile, nearly level, and make for excellent farmland. They are considered to be “among the highest quality in the state.” The Cass River and its tributaries drain most of the area and also provided the early settlers with the waterpower needed to run mills. At the time of the founding of Frankenmuth, most of
the area was covered with dense forest, consisting mostly of “elm, swamp white oak, white ash, both red and silver maples, basswood and some shagbark hickory, red oak, and ironwood,” in the more poorly drained areas, and “white pine, red and white oaks, beech, aspen, and yellow and white birches” grew in the sandier soils. “These soils also supported black cherry, sassafras, Juneberry, and some sugar maple.” Several types of berries were also native to the area. Dense areas of forest provided an ideal habitat for multiple species of animals, some of which were hunted for their pelts, making the area attractive for trappers and fur traders (City of Frankenmuth and Frankenmuth Township Joint Growth Management Plan, 1-4 to 1-12).

Because of its adverse and cold climate, as well as hostile Indian tribes, Faust states that “[t]he northern and western parts of Michigan long remained untouched by American pioneers.” One of the first Germans to settle in Michigan was Friedrich Baraga, who had decided to become an Indian missionary in 1830. After learning the language of the Ottawa tribe, he traveled the northern part of the Michigan peninsula and established his mission in Arbre Crochu. He was appointed Bishop of the Northern Indian Missions in 1853. Baraga died in Marquette in 1868 (Faust, Vol. I, 463).

Faust states that there was evidence supporting the assumption that Michigan’s early German settlers probably arrived in the area in the decade between 1830 and 1840. He quotes Dr. Hammer, a missionary and Catholic priest, who wrote in 1839 that German life as it existed in many other regions in America could be found in only three places in Michigan. The first place he lists is Detroit, which at the time two German congregations, one Catholic and one Protestant. The other two places were Ann Arbor and the Westphalia colony near Lyons in Ionia. The height of German immigration into
Michigan was between 1850 and 1854, during a period which “mark[ed] the crest in the wave of German immigration of the nineteenth century before 1880” (Faust, Vol. I, 460-464).

The Chippewa Indians

Prior to the arrival of the first European settlers in the Saginaw Valley, the area was being highly disputed by three Indian tribes. The Pattawattomie and the Chippewa, had united against the Sauks and in an intense war effort either annihilated most of them or drove them into exile. The area was still Indian land when the first Europeans, mostly traders and trappers, began to arrive in the area in the early eighteen hundreds, some of which settled in an area near the mouth of the Saginaw River, to the north of Frankenmuth. Only when Governor Lewis Cass signed the Treaty of Saginaw with the Chippewa Indians in 1819, did most of the land in the Saginaw Valley become part of the Michigan territory. Nearly 20% of the Michigan’s Lower Peninsula was deeded to the United States in this treaty. The area of Frankenmuth, however, was specifically not included in the territories ceded to Michigan. “Article 2 of that document sets aside various parcels for the exclusive future use of the Chippewa Nation. Among those was one of 8,000 acres ‘at the village of Otusson,’” which according to a 1822 survey by Joseph Fletcher “must have been within the bounds of present Frankenmuth.” It was not until 1837, the year of Michigan’s statehood, that another treaty, negotiated by Henry Schoolcroft, “reclaimed from the Chippewa the various grants reserved for them in the Saginaw Treaty,” thus making these lands available to the Frankenmuth colonists in 1845 (City of Frankenmuth and Frankenmuth Township Joint Growth Management Plan, 1-11 to 1-12).
Arrival in the Wilderness – The Founding of Frankenmuth

Pastor Schmid had originally suggested that the colonists should carry out their mission work among the Indians by working from Frankenmuth and going to the Indian villages in the area to preach and teach. Craemer, however, disagreed with this approach. He was convinced that the natives could learn more about Christianity and life as a Christian, if they lived among the Lutheran colonists. Therefore, he recommended establishing an Indian school in Frankenmuth, to which he would invite children from the Indian villages to attend. He was convinced that it would be better to have more control over the Indian children than letting them remain with their parents and just see them for instruction. Schmid, who had already sent the two missionaries, Sinke and Dumser, to teach among the natives at the Indian village of Sebewaing, questioned Craemer’s ability to instruct Indian children within a white colony. Craemer’s dislike of the mission at Sebewaing had grown even stronger when he had visited there on account of Dumser having fallen ill (Zehnder, 50).

Of the 680 acres of land they had purchased, the colonists reserved 70 acres for the establishment of their Indian Mission. The rest was intended for use as farmland for the colony. The men went to clear the site for settlement and to erect a community log house as temporary shelter until individual houses could be built the following year. “The temporary community shelter,” Deterding reports, “a 30’ by 30’ log structure that would house the entire colony until individual homes could be built, was ready for occupancy by mid-August.” He describes the communal log house shelter as follows: “the roof of their community house was not rain-proof. The windows were covered with old rugs. The community cooking and sleeping facilities were a challenge to the dozen
young adults who needed to manage without many of the comforts which they had
known.” Deterding explains that the colonists’ lack of privacy throughout the cold winter
months “provided all the incentive needed by the colonists for a massive home building
project that got under way with the spring thaw” (Deterding, 16-17).

The layout of the colony led to more disagreement between Pastor Craemer and
the colonists. He wanted to lay out the settlement in the fashion of a traditional Bavarian
village, where the houses are situated in close proximity to another, in the midst of the
surrounding farmland, following Löhe’s original suggestion for the colony. He wanted to
allocate 32 acres as the village site, suggesting that each home should sit on a four-acre
lot. The church was also to be allocated a four-acre property. Craemer’s plan also
recommended reserving lots for more than 80 houses for subsequent immigrants. This
village layout would have also made it easier to maintain a cohesive Lutheran
community, with the main church in the village center (Zehnder, 51).

The colonists, however, favored a different layout, which was ultimately carried
out. They preferred that each family would live on their own farm, scattered about the
colony’s lands. Auch, who had originally supported Craemer’s plan for Frankenmuth,
gave in to the settler’s wishes, causing an argument between the two men that would lead
to a rift between them. Auch left the colony on 14 August and returned to Saginaw,
where he explained to the colony women, who had remained there until the log house
would be ready for occupancy, what had occurred. Craemer had become ill and was
taken to the nearby town of Bridgeport on 14 August. Before his departure, he left the
colonists with instructions that did not sit well with them. “The colonists,” Zehnder
comments, “felt insulted by his remarks and declared that they had no intention of
listening to him any longer” (Zehnder, 52).

When Craemer returned to Saginaw City to meet with the colonists, he continued
his argument with Auch, who was very well liked among the colonists for his many skills
as well as for his personality. They implored Auch not to leave the colony, which
infuriated Craemer even more. He was also at odds with Dumser, one of Schmid’s
Indian missionaries, over questions of Lutheran doctrine. The rift between the colonists
and their pastor grew so deep that they threatened to excommunicate him as they sided
with Auch and Dumser. The colonists would not have any contact with Craemer for
several weeks (Zehnder, 52-53).

After completing their temporary shelter, which would serve as their home
throughout their first harsh winter on the Michigan frontier, on Monday, 18 August 1845,
the colonists packed up all their belongings and moved them on an ox cart to
Frankenmuth, finally arriving at their new home almost five months after leaving
Germany (Deterding, 16).

Meanwhile Craemer, due to his poor health, remained in Saginaw City for another
month, leaving the settlers in Frankenmuth without their spiritual leader. Dumser and
Auch had gone to Sebewaing to help in the construction of a new mission house there.
After his fever had subsided, Craemer arranged a date for the colonists to come to
Saginaw City to pick up his family and his possessions, so he could begin his work as
pastor of the Frankenmuth colony and his missionary work. When the colonists did not
come for Craemer and his family as agreed upon, he went to Frankenmuth by himself a
week later to find out what had happened. He was surprised not only by the warm
welcome he received, but also to find out that the colony’s wagon had broken down and their oxen had run away and therefore they could not go to Saginaw to pick him up. Craemer returned to Saginaw City and on 4 October he and his family finally joined the settlers in Frankenmuth, where he immediately began his work. He was disappointed to find out that the settlers had forgotten most of the eighty-eight paragraphs of their church constitution, which they had signed prior to their departure from Neuendettelsau (Zehnder, 54-55).

Only a few days after Craemer had arrived in Frankenmuth, Adam Ernst and George Schuster came to the colony. Ernst had been asked by Löhe to investigate the complaints and concerns the colonists had communicated to him in a letter. Schuster had given up teaching in order to pursue the ministry. Ernst was able to mitigate the situation and ease the conflict between the colonists and Craemer, finding that both sides had been at fault. Since Craemer had become ill again, Schuster stayed behind, to assist him with his work during the upcoming winter. During his stay in Frankenmuth, Schuster realized that the problems he had learning English and the language of the Chippewa would mean the end of his missionary ambitions. Instead, he later decided to become pastor of a German congregation (Zehnder, 55-56).

After clearing more of the settlement site, the colonists built a second log house to serve as temporary chapel and home of the pastor and his family. This structure would later serve as Frankenmuth’s Indian School. They placed the two bronze bells they had brought with them in a belfry beside the church. They were able to ring them for the first time on New Years Eve 1845 to welcome the New Year. The bells would be used to ring for morning and evening vespers on weekdays and for Sunday morning worships
The chapel was 30’ by 20’ and the congregation held their first church service on Christmas Day 1845. Loesel and List had been elected as trustees for the congregation (Zehnder, 57).

Following the first winter, the settlers began to build their individual homes. Each settler was assigned approximately 120 acres of land upon which they built log huts as temporary shelters, which they replaced with frame houses as soon as they were able to. After clearing some of their land for agriculture, many settlers began growing crops and vegetables. Some also planted fruit trees and began raising cattle. Frankenmuth finally began to look like a frontier settlement. By the end of June, twelve Indian students, seven girls and four boys, were attending the Frankenmuth Indian School (Zehnder, 56-59).

**More Colonists Arrive**

The letters the first Frankenmuth colonists sent home to their friends and families inspired some of them to organize into a second group of emigrants under Löhe’s spiritual leadership, much larger than the original group of fourteen. Emigration was especially attractive to young people who could not see a future in mid-nineteenth century Germany. Again, for some of the couples joining this second group of colonists the prospect of marriage, which would have been an unattainable goal for them had they remained in Bavaria, was a big factor in their decision to emigrate to Frankenmuth (Deterding, 25).

In an effort to facilitate the settling of new colonists in Frankenmuth, Craemer recommended that anyone who was planning on settling in Frankenmuth should send their money in advance so that land could be purchased for them prior to their arrival. In
Germany, Löhe also made arrangements with J. Schröder, his agent in Bremen, for the second group of emigrants as early as 15 January 1846. He had hoped to again obtain the services of Captain Volkmann, who had been so good to the first group of colonists. If Volkmann, however was unavailable, because the new ship he was supposed to take command of had not yet been finished, other arrangements would have to be made. How many people were interested in emigrating to Frankenmuth can be seen in the list of 78 men, women and children, Löhe had also sent to Schröder. Of these 78, six were ministerial candidates. This number would grow to an impressive 100 by the time of the group’s departure: ten candidates and 90 men, women and children. How many colonists actually participated in the second group, however, cannot be accurately determined (Zehnder, 59-62).

The large number of people wanting to emigrate should have been a sign of the success of Frankenmuth and the idea behind its founding. One of Löhe’s chief complaints, however, was that the majority of the people wanting to go to Frankenmuth as part of the second group mostly wanted to emigrate for personal and economical reasons, and had not the original “missionary cause at heart.” Therefore, Löhe had to discourage many from participating, because “[h]e felt they were interested only in the material and economic advantages they would enjoy in the New World” (Zehnder, 62).

The members of the new group were also from the region around Nünberg; twenty from Rosstal alone. The group met up in Nürnberg on 6 March 1846 from where they departed for Bremen and Bremerhafen, via Leipzig and Hannover. They arrived in Bremen on 12 March, where they waited for Volkmann’s new vessel to be finished. When the ship was still not ready for voyage after they had been waiting for over a week,
the group decided to make other arrangements. They purchased passages on a converted tobacco freighter, which however did not have enough room for everyone, so that the group had to split up and only eighty colonists and the ten ministerial candidates could travel together (Zehnder, 62-63).

Their vessel left the port of Bremerhaven on 22 March 1846. Four days prior, ten couples, who had been engaged to be married, exchanged their wedding vows at Pastor von Haffstengel’s home. They also took the northern route along Scotland, as did the first group of colonists. Conditions aboard were miserable, made worse by the smell of the tobacco, which was still very prevalent in the ship’s cargo holes, which now housed the passengers. Drinking water supplies were limited and rain was a welcome way to replenish them. “On the fifth day out, 6-month-old Margaret Vates died and had to be buried at sea,” in a ceremony presided over by Pastor Lehmann. But this voyage also saw the birth of Katherine Zehnder, the fourth child of Mr. and Mrs. John Zehnder. On 9 May, after seven weeks at sea, the colonists reached New York Harbor, from where they intended to travel via Albany to Buffalo. Due to various customs and transportation problems, some members of the group had to stay behind. They all would meet up again in Detroit, from where they intended to embark on the “Nelson Smith,” the same sailboat that transported the first group of colonists a year earlier. The “Nelson Smith” transported them Saginaw City, where they finally arrived on 26 May after a five-day voyage (Zehnder, 64).

The colonists in Frankenmuth had no idea as to when the new group of settlers would arrive, so they did not send anyone to meet them in Saginaw City. Ignorant as to their final destination, the newcomers set out by wagons and on foot to Frankenmuth, not
sure how far they would have to travel, what road conditions they would have to endure and what would await them once they arrived. Their disappointment can only be imagined, since they probably expected a place resembling the German villages they were familiar with. The place they encountered must have appeared to be far worse and more desolate than even the poorest village they may have known from their homeland. The newcomers had to be housed, which was no easy undertaking. They stayed in the old communal log cabin, the chapel, and in the cabins the colonists had already built, but there was barely enough shelter for everyone. In an effort to build a new life for themselves, the new arrivals began clearing land, building more shelters, and planting crops as soon as they could (Zehnder, 65).

The group of 90 to 100 new colonists “not only gave new courage and joy to the first settlers; it also brought with it problems for the pastor and the community,” Zehnder comments. “This second group … was not motivated by the high ideals and objectives that had motivated the original group.” They did, however, build a new larger log church, 42’ long and 26’ wide, with three windows on each side. The first service in the new church was held on 26 December 1846. The next day, three Indian children were baptized in the new church. Zehnder comments that “brighter days lay ahead for Craemer, deeper devotion and dedication on part of his people. They, too, had to find themselves anew and adjust themselves to their new environment” (Zehnder, 65).

On 29 July 1846 Johann Pickelmann was the first child to be born in Frankenmuth. The first death in the colony was the son of Lorenz and Margarethe Loesel, who died only eight days after he had been born on 20 August 1846. August and Dorothea Craemer also saw the birth of a son in December 1846. With these new
additions, the foundations had been laid for Frankenmuth to become a thriving settlement. “By the time the colony was six years old,” Deterding writes, “it included eighty cabins and farm-houses, a saw mill, a flower mill, a physician, three merchants, and a post office” (Deterding, 26).

The Colony Continues to Grow

News of the success of the Frankenmuth colonists attracted other German Lutherans to the Saginaw Valley. Emigration, though not an easy step for most, was still for many the only way to make a better life for themselves, despite of the dangers and risks it involved. The above mentioned restrictive German marriage laws, which required young couples to have a set amount of money, property and other assets, made emigrating especially attractive to young couples who would have to wait for a very long time to qualify for a marriage license, if they would ever qualify. Following Löhe’s recommendation, not all of the new colonists settled in Frankenmuth itself. He believed that the Lutherans’ missionary efforts would be more successful if the emigrants lived not in one large town, but rather in a group of smaller villages. As a result of this settlement policy, other groups emigrating under Löhe’s leadership founded the settlements of Frankentrost (1847), Frankenlust (1849), and Richville [formerly Frankenhilf] (1851) in the vicinity of Frankenmuth, which served as the economic and spiritual center for this group of settlements (Zehnder, 117).

The young settlement continued to grow steadily, as more colonists arrived from Bavaria. By 1847 Frankenmuth had a population of 153. The German school had 25 children in attendance, while the Indian school had 21 students enrolled. Church records for this year show that 11 German and 12 Indian children were baptized. By the
following year, the population had grown to 203, and by 1852, 345 people lived in Frankenmuth, 43 of which were school-aged children. The steady increase in Frankenmuth’s population made it necessary for a new house of worship to be built. The old log church had become too small and could no longer adequately serve the Frankenmuth colony. Therefore, in 1852, a new church was built. The frame church was 72’ in length, 40’ in width and 24’ in height, with three windows on each side. Since it had no steeple or bell tower, “…[i]t looked like a large Quaker meeting house.” The old log church was later converted into a schoolhouse. The two church bells were placed in a covered structure in front of the new church. The interior was plain and Spartan, without organ or chancel. A heating stove would not be added until the year after (Zehnder, 119).

The new sanctuary was dedicated in September 1852. Pastor Craemer had left Frankenmuth after five years of faithful and dedicated service in March 1850. He accepted the call to become a professor at the Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne, where he served until 1891, even after the institution had moved to St. Louis, MO in 1861. Craemer’s successor as pastor of St. Lorenz was Karl Roebelen, who accepted the position on 2 May 1851, after the position had been vacant for 14 months. Roebelen had arrived in Ft. Wayne in September 1846 to join the seminary, which was to open the following month, after Löhe had trained him in Neuendettelsau. In 1847, Roebelen accepted a position in Liverpool, OH, where he served until his departure for Frankenmuth (Deterding, 28-29). The frame church was remodeled and enlarged in 1864. New balconies, a new lectern, altar, a chancel and a pulpit were installed. An organ had been purchased in 1861 (Zehnder, 120).
The Frankenmuth colonists drew up a set of laws and regulations to govern “civil matters as well as responsibilities toward the church regarding the contributions of labor wood and money,” on 29 January 1850. Furthermore, this “document covers matters such as voluntary labor to the community, building of roads and fences, damage done to animals and by animals and indemnities to be paid, … how disputes are to be settled, and the like.” All colonists signed this document which remained in force until 1858. Frankenmuth was not officially incorporated as a village according to Michigan statutes in January 1908. The village offices under the articles of incorporation were those of president, clerk, treasurer, justice of the peace, and assessor (Zehnder, 121-122).

Before Frankenmuth Township was established in 1854, Frankenmuth was part of Bridgeport Township. Most of the township’s land was cleared by 1866 and according to 1877 records, by this time all lands had been purchased, almost exclusively by immigrants from Germany (Zehnder, 125).

**Business, Industry, and Infrastructure**

In 1847, George A. Ranzenberger opened a general store, marking the first business in Frankenmuth. The same year, the Hubinger brothers constructed a dam across the Cass River and opened a saw mill. In 1848 they also opened a flower mill. Frankenmuth’s first post office was opened on 26 September 1851, “when George A. Ranzenberger was officially appointed postmaster,” and operated a post office in his general store. In October 1865, John M. Hubinger was named the town’s second postmaster, and the post office moved into his store. The practice of establishing the post office at the place of business of the postmaster came to an end in 1924, when Frankenmuth’s first permanent post office building was constructed (Zehnder, 122-124).
The Hubinger brothers’ early dam was built from timbers, which still remain at the core of the current Cass River Dam today. The dam was later purchased by the ‘Star of the West Milling Company,’ who in turn sold it to the city of Frankenmuth in the early 1950’s. Although the dam no longer serves its original purpose of harnessing water power for Frankenmuth’s growing milling business, it still continues to regulate the river’s water levels, allowing for many recreational uses as well as the operation of Frankenmuth’s two riverboats (City of Frankenmuth and Frankenmuth Township Joint Growth Management Plan, 7-11).

Henry Reichle opened the town’s first hotel, the Exchange Hotel, in 1856, which is now occupied by Zehnder’s Restaurant. The opening of the Exchange Hotel marks the beginning of tourism in Frankenmuth, which is today one of the town’s major industries. At this time, a trip to Frankenmuth, although it is located only about 15 miles south of Saginaw, was a full day’s undertaking, due to the dense forests and lack of paved or developed roads in the area. Therefore, lodging facilities, as well as meal services were a necessity, and offered a welcome source of primary or secondary income to many Frankenmuthers. The need for larger scale meal and lodging facilities grew even more after lumberjacks moved into the densely wooded area of the Saginaw Valley following the end of the Civil War. During a relatively short period of about 15 years, these lumberjacks cleared most of the dense forests in the area, making room for wider roads as well as providing sufficient building materials to further the colony’s development and continued growth. The new roads provided easier access to Frankenmuth, in turn bringing more traders and visitors to the area (Historic District Report, Frankenmuth, Michigan, 4).
In 1875, only thirty years after its founding, Frankenmuth had grown into a thriving settlement. The town boasted 25 businesses. According to Zehnder, there was “a hotel, two breweries, a saw mill, a flower mill, a tannery, four wagon and blacksmith shops, a furniture shop, two shoemakers and cobbler, a drugstore, four general stores, one harness shop, two meat markets, and a shingle mill, plus a number of other business enterprises.” Zehnder also lists the over 30 businesses Frankenmuth had by in 1895, 50 years after the town was founded, as well as the year they were established (Zehnder, 124-125).

Prior to the construction of the first wooden bridge across the Cass River in 1858, the colonists used a couple of rowboats that lay on either side of the river, transporting themselves across. An iron bridge replaced this wooden covered bridge in 1893. Another bridge was erected near St. Lorenz Church in 1883. The industrial revolution and the advent of automobiles following 1895 also had an effect on Frankenmuth and its residents. Roads had to be improved in order for cars to be able to drive on them. Main Street and part of Tuscola Street were turned into plank roads. The road between Flint and Saginaw had already been developed into a plank road by 1852. They were all turned into gravel roads in later years. Frankenmuth was also connected to Michigan’s railroad system in 1902, when the Saginaw-Detroit railroad Company extended their tracks to the town. Until then, city leaders had kept the railroad out of Frankenmuth, because they were worried about the undesirable side effects a rail line could bring with it. Rail service to Frankenmuth, however, was short-lived. It was discontinued in 1928, when trucks and passenger cars replaced the rail as main means of transportation for the Frankenmuthers (Zehnder, 125-128).
Frankenmuth’s business community grew and flourished during the town’s early decades. Theodore Fischer settled in Frankenmuth in 1880 to work for John G. Hubinger. He married two years later and in 1884 he purchased the Exchange Hotel, which he sold to Richard Robbel in 1888, when he built the Union Hotel in 1894, which was later remodeled and expanded into today’s Frankenmuth Bavarian Inn, directly across the street from the Exchange Hotel. In 1894, Fischer built Fischer Hall, a venue used for all sorts of private and public events. According to Zehnder, both hotels became famous for their chicken dinners in the 1920’s and 30’s (Zehnder, 128-132).

**Mills in Frankenmuth**

Another business leader, who contributed greatly to the growth of Frankenmuth, was American-born Franz Ranke, who came to Frankenmuth in 1859. He built a cider mill and wine press in 1889. Later, he added a jelly factory to his enterprise. Another important business venture of Ranke’s was the Frankenmuth Light and Power Company. Zehnder reports that at first, “electric power was available only from six in the evening until midnight; the reason was that the same water wheels that turned the turbines were used during the day for milling” (Zehnder, 132).

The cider mill would remain in business for 54 years. In 1894, Ranke also began to process wool in the back of his mill to offset low profits from his cider mill. By 1903, his mill would produce mittens, socks, blankets, batting and yarn. Yarn production was the company’s key business during the early 1900s. On 10 December 1910, Ranke sold two-thirds of his company to William Abraham and Ben Felgner, who joined him in the day-to-day operations of the mill. The woolen mill’s profits saw a steady increase. It especially profited from contracts with the government to manufacture products for the
war effort during World War I. The mill predominantly produced socks and mittens for the troops fighting in France. Only four years after taking in the two new partners, the mill grossed about $16,500. In 1917, the amount more than doubled to $41,000 and the following year it more than doubled again to $94,000 (Woolen Mill History).

At the end of the war, the company shifted its focus to producing comforters from the wool batting it produced, marking an important transition period in the company’s history. The production of yarn, mittens and socks ended in 1948. In the same year, the old cider mill and jelly factory portion of the mill was torn down to make place for a new retail store for the woolen mill’s products. The Abraham family, who had taken over control of the company, sold it to Gary and Carol McClellan in 1977. Increased tourism during the 1980’s brought the mill increased business, making it necessary to renovate and expand the retail store. The interior received a Bavarian décor and the store’s back wall was replaced with panes of glass, offering the customers an insight into the mill’s operations. In 1994, the year of its centennial, the mill underwent major renovations and expansions. The company expanded again in 2001, making more room for its products, which are also available for sale online (Woolen Mill History).

Frankenmuth’s other very successful mill, which is still in operation today, is the ‘Star of the West Milling Company,’ which was founded by John M. Hubinger in 1870. Hubinger sold his interests in the business to a group of approximately 50 area farmers in 1903, which in 1929 restructured the company into a stock corporation. In the 1930’s, the company operated two mills in Frankenmuth, a lower mill by the Cass Rover Dam, and an upper mill at the corner of Hubinger and Tuscola Streets. In 1933, electric power, which had already been widely installed throughout Frankenmuth by this time, replaced
waterpower at the lower mill by the dam, making the mill’s three water wheels obsolete. A new concrete silo with a capacity of 50,000 bushels of grain was added to the upper mill in 1937. A new lager silo was added during the 1960’s (Krafft, 87-89).

Frankenmuth was also home to saw and lumber mills. Since the beginning of the logging industry in the dense forests of the Saginaw Valley, the Cass River had been used to transport logs to the region’s sawmills, by simply floating them down the river. The Hubinger Mill was in operation since 1848. In the early 1900’s, the mill was converted from water to steam power. By the 1930’s, the company sold lumber, roofing materials, coal, and ice. The ice was cut on the Cass River during the winter and then stored for summer delivery. It was covered with sawdust, making it possible to preserve the ice well into the summer months (Krafft, 99-100).

The Veitengruber Brothers’ Mill was another producer of lumber in Frankenmuth. In the beginning, the mill sawed logs into usable lumber. Later, the manufacture of doors and sashes was added to the operation. The mill’s main product, however, would become round boxes to store and transport cheese. These four-piece boxes usually held a 30 pound loaf of cheese. Many of the mill’s boxes were used by the local cheese plants. The majority, however, was produced for use by large cheese manufacturers, such as Beatrice Foods or Kraft Cheese. The Veitengruber brothers sold their mill in 1928 to Albert Schreiner and William Reindel. The mill, which is now no longer in operation, was located on West Genesee Street, about five blocks from Main Street (Krafft, 100-101).
Frankenmuth’s Breweries

Another of Frankenmuth’s oldest industries is the production of beer. John M. Falliers, who had come to Frankenmuth from the Bavarian town of Zambach, founded the first brewery in town. He operated The Frankenmuth Brewery from 1857 to 1864. His short-lived operation had a brew kettle with a capacity of less than 200 gallons. “The quality of the beer,” Zehnder comments, “was not equal to that which the colonists had enjoyed in Germany. But there was beer!” The business was reopened by John G. Rupprecht sometime prior to 1870. Sometime before 1877, Rupprecht sold the brewery to Peter Schluckbier. How long the brewery remained in operation this time is not known (Zehnder, 172-172).

A second brewery, which is still in operation today under the name of Frankenmuth Brewery, L.L.C., was the Cass River Brewery. It was founded by William Knaust and Martin Heubush in 1862, making it the second oldest brewery in the State of Michigan, second only to Stroh’s in Detroit, which dates back to 1851. Knaust and Heubush sold their business to John G. Geyer in 1874. The Geyer family would own this operation, renamed Geyer Brothers Brewing Company for almost a century, until in 1966 the controlling interest in the business was sold to a group of investors from Saginaw and Bay City. The facilities underwent expansions in 1890, in 1936, and in 1938. The brewery’s old steam engine was put on display as part of the collection at Henry Ford’s Greenfield Village Museum in Dearborn, Michigan in 1935. By 1970, the brewery’s annual capacity was approximately 30,000 barrels (Zehnder, 173-174).

The brewery was renovated and reopened in 1988 by Ferdinand M. Schumacher as Frankenmuth Brewery, L.L.C., and already reached an annual output of 12,000 barrels
by 1994 (Yenne, 65-66). The historic brewery buildings were almost entirely destroyed by a tornado in 1996. Today, the Frankenmuth Brewery, L.L.C. operates its brewery and restaurant in its new building, which was constructed in 2003 on its historic site at 425 South Main Street, overlooking the Cass River. They offer a gift shop, brewery tours, and river cruises on the “Pilsner Princess Riverboat.” The new building contains remnants of the historic brewery, which are being displayed throughout (Frankenmuth Brewery, L.L.C.).

A third brewery, the Frankenmuth Brewing Company, was organized in 1899, when John Adam List called a meeting of interested investors in Fischer Hall. The company was incorporated, with List serving as its first president. Brewery operation began in 1900 with a brew kettle with a capacity of 60 barrels. Frankenmuth Brewing Company’s annual output was about 10,000 barrels. Brewing operations in Frankenmuth came to an abrupt end on 30 April 1918, when the State of Michigan enacted a Prohibition Amendment to its State Constitution, “prohibiting the manufacture, sale, and possession of alcoholic beverages,” two years before the Eighteenth Amendment was added to the U.S. Constitution to enact Prohibition nationwide (Zehnder, 176-177).

As result of Michigan’s prohibition law, the brewery ceased production from 1918 to 1924, when it was sold to Otto Rosenbusch of Detroit, who converted it into the Frankenmuth Products Company. Like most other former breweries, it produced malt extracts, which were legally intended for baking. “This extract of grains [however],” as Zehnder explains, “was the base for ‘home brew.’” According to Zehnder, “not one drop was ever used for baking purposes” (Zehnder, 175-177).
Rosenbush sold the company to William Stromer and Otto Trinklein in 1828. They expanded operations to a capacity of 3600 gallons of malt extract per day, and began selling their product throughout Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio. Frankenmuth Products Company continued their malt extract production at full capacity until Prohibition was repealed in 1933. To raise the capital needed to convert the company back to the production of beer, Trinklein and Stromer sought investors from Bay City and Saginaw. E. J. Whyte and W. B. Freidinger joined the renamed ‘Frankenmuth Brewing Company’ as partners, and only one year later, together with a group of investors from Detroit, bought out the shares held by Stromer and Trinklein. The brewery was expanded to an annual capacity of 100,000 barrels, and converted into a joint stock company, which was publicly traded at the Detroit Stock Exchange (Zehnder, 175-176).

This was the beginning of a period of continued modernization and expansion for the Frankenmuth Brewing Company. By 1947, the annual capacity had been expanded to 500,000 barrels, after a new 400-barrel brew kettle had been installed. The company was sold to the International Breweries, Inc. in 1955, who in turn sold it only one year later to the Carling Brewing Company Ltd. Who, as part of a $5.5 million expansion and modernization program, increased the plant’s annual capacity to 700,000 barrels (Zehnders, 176-177). By 1979, when Carling Brewery was owned and operated by G. Heileman Brewing Company, the plant had been expanded yet again to an annual production of over 800,000 barrels (Historic District Report, Frankenmuth, Michigan, 4).

The brewery was finally closed in 1990 because it had become too unprofitable to operate, having survived a number of previous consolidation and closing attempts. Brewing and bottling operations seized in 1989 and all reusable brewery equipment was
sold (Krafft, 73). The buildings of the G. Heileman Brewing Company were removed in 2000 to make room for Phase I of a new shopping center, the Frankenmuth River Place, which was dedicated in 2001 (Significant Dates in Frankenmuth, 9).

**Cheese Making in Frankenmuth**

Beer is not the only product manufactured in Frankenmuth. The town is also known for its cheese and meats, its sausages in particular. At the heyday of cheese production, the Frankenmuth area was home to eight cheese plants, producing the yellow-curd cheese, typical for the town. One of the town’s cheese factories, the Frankenmuth Cheese Manufacturing Company, was originally founded in 1884. It was reorganized in 1894 under the leadership of John Galsterer, with William Smith as the plant’s cheese maker. During the same year, the company produced 257,538 pounds, or 5,343 wheels of cheese. The ‘Frankenmuth Cheese Manufacturing Company’ closed its plant in 1940. The Veitengruber Brothers’ Mill produced the wooden boxes the cheese was shipped in (Significant Dates in Frankenmuth, 9; Zehnder, 181-182).

Frankenmuth’s cheese making tradition is still continued today by the Frankenmuth Cheese Haus, which offers over 140 different cheeses, some of which are manufactured on site, and are available online and can be shipped throughout the United States. Besides the local Frankenmuth Cheeses, the Frankenmuth Cheese Haus is best known for its cheese spreads and chocolate cheeses (Frankenmuth Cheese Haus).

**Sausage Making in Frankenmuth**

Butchering and sausage making also have a great tradition in Frankenmuth, which is still carried on today. In the earliest days of the colony, most settlers butchered for home use. Others butchered for farmers who preferred to have this work done rather than do it
themselves. One of the latter was John Kern. As Frankenmuth continued to grow, so did the need for commercial butchering and sausage making. Christian Freudenstein, who had settled in Frankenmuth in 1851, became the colony’s first commercial sausage maker. Zehnder states that Freudenstein’s advertisement on the occasion of Frankenmuth’s fiftieth anniversary in 1895 listed “pork sausage, blood and liver sausage, frankfurts and weiner sausages, cervelat, headcheese, sulzen, sauer tongue, etc.” as some of the varieties he had for sale in his shop (Zehnder, 181).

John Rupprecht was the sausage maker at the General store operated by Kern and Hoerauf. In 1922, Bernhard F. Rupprecht Sr. purchased the sausage plant built by Otto Donner in about 1915. “It was his [=Rupprecht’s] sausage that put Frankenmuth on the map as a place where you could buy excellent sausage of every kind,” Zehnder explains (Zehnder, 181).

In 1948, Rupprecht’s four sons built a new sausage store at 316 S. Main Street. “This building was the first to be built in the Franconian-Bavarian style of architecture in 1948. The City of Frankenmuth has since become nationally known for its predominance of this style” (Historic District Report, Frankenmuth, Michigan, 16). Today, Willi’s Sausage Company, Inc. occupies the building, offering over 100 varieties of sausages, as well as lunchmeats, jerky, and cheeses retail as well as wholesale (Willi’s Sausage Company, Inc.).

Frankenmuth’s other sausage business, Kern’s Sausages, Inc, at 110 W. Jefferson Street offers 32 kinds of Bavarian-style sausages, which are produced on site. The store also offers a variety of cheeses, German food items, wines, beer, and baked goods (Kern’s Sausage Inc.).
Frankenmuth’s Houses of Worship

It is not surprising that the Lutheran faith still remains the largest denomination in Frankenmuth, since the town was founded by a group of Lutheran missionaries intending to attract other Lutheran settlers to the region in order to model Lutheran life to the Indians in Saginaw County. Smaller United Methodist and Catholic congregations were not organized until over a century after Frankenmuth’s founding. The first two structures built by the Frankenmuth colonists were their communal log shelter and the first version of St. Lorenz Lutheran Church, their first log chapel in the forest. These two structures laid at the very center of early Frankenmuth and today St. Lorenz still remains the spiritual center for most Frankenmuthers.

St. Lorenz Lutheran Church

The log chapel of 1845 was replaced by a 74’ by 40’ framed church in 1852. It was enlarged and remodeled in 1864, when a chancel and balconies were added. The congregation of St. Lorenz continued to grow steadily, and towards the end of the 1870, it had become impossible for the frame church to accommodate all worshippers for the traditional Sunday service. The idea of building a second church in Frankenmuth was seriously considered, but ultimately not carried out, since it would end the fellowship of all Lutherans in Frankenmuth. Therefore, a new, larger church had to be built. Ground was broken in early 1879 and the cornerstone for the new church was laid on 10 August 1879, the church calendar’s festival day of the third-century martyr St. Lorenz. The new 126’ by 63’ brick structure was large enough to once again accommodate the entire congregation. Its design was Gothic in style, featuring a 168’ high tower and spire. The new church, built at a cost of $22,000.00, was dedicated on 26 and 27 August 1880.
Pastor Craemer returned to Frankenmuth to be the guest speaker at the dedication ceremony (Deterding, 29-33).

Besides some minor renovations, such as the installation of electric lights in 1914 and the addition of modern restrooms in the church’s basement in 1919, “the church sanctuary remained virtually unchanged for 85 years until the major transept addition was erected in 1965.” The congregation’s old cemetery was filled by 1884. It is the gravesite of many of Frankenmuth’s early colonists, as well as of some of the Indian children of the Frankenmuth mission who had succumbed to an outbreak of smallpox. Many of the older graves, however, can no longer be located with certainty. Therefore, a memorial of fifteen white crosses, memorializing the town’s first fifteen settlers, was erected in old cemetery. A new cemetery was laid out to the west of the new church (Deterding, 33).

A new altar was added prior to the congregation’s 50th anniversary celebration in 1895, while the pulpit that had already served in the old frame church remained in use. A two-story brick parsonage was erected adjacent to St. Lorenz Church in 1886, and would be used until 1956 (Deterding, 36-38). It was replaced by a new ranch-style building in 1959 (Deterding, 56). The brick church also featured a new, larger pipe organ, which was replaced by a larger instrument in 1930. When St. Lorenz underwent its 1966 renovation and enlargement, a new organ was installed as part of the project. St. Lorenz also boasted a male choir, a bass choir, and a mixed choir, which had all been organized prior to 1880 (Deterding, 70-71).

Frankenmuth was a mostly self-sufficient colony. Although its residents did interact with the non-German residents in the area, they did not do so in a social context. They wanted their colony to remain purely German-Lutheran, maintaining their German
language and ties to Germany itself. Therefore, the use of German as everyday language as well as the language of worship remained prevalent until 1934, when Pastor Albert Klammer began holding the first regular worship services in English. This move allowed for fellowship with the non-German Lutherans that had moved to Frankenmuth in the meantime. English more and more replaced German as the language of business and worship, and by 1995, over 95% of the congregation attended English worship services (Deterding, 37-41).

As early as 1858, St. Lorenz Lutheran Church of Frankenmuth broke with the liturgy of Löhe, also abandoning his catechism, as the Missouri Synod had done already. This break was the result of the concessions the congregation had agreed upon in order for Rev. Ottmar Fuerbringer, who at the time was the president of the Northern District of the Missouri Synod to accept the position of pastor at St. Lorenz (Zehnder, 135). St. Lorenz today is not only one of the charter members of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, which had been established in 1847, it also ranks among the largest Lutheran congregations in North America, reaching an average worship attendance of 2,196 per week in 1993 alone (Deterding, 103). By 2005, St. Lorenz Lutheran Church had grown to a membership of nearly 5,000 faithful. During the same year, St. Lorenz Christian School, which offers classes from preschool through junior high school, had an enrollment of approximately 600 students (St. Lorenz Lutheran Church).

**St. John’s Lutheran Church**

The founding of St. John’s Lutheran Church as Frankenmuth’s second Lutheran congregation is to some extent the result of St. Lorenz’s abandonment of Löhe’s liturgy, dissatisfaction with a number of procedures at St. Lorenz, as well as the dissatisfaction
with the Missouri Synod and its position on a number of social issues. St. John’s was established on 30 November 1879, by 26 charter members from St. Lorenz, St. Paul’s in Birch Run and from St. Bethel’s in Middle Franken (Zehnder, 141-144).

These two parishes were joined by a group “of members of St. Lorenz, (…) who were dissatisfied with certain procedures at St. Lorenz and the Missouri Synod, (…) regarding life insurance, marriage to a deceased spouse’s brother or sister, the charging of interest on loans, membership in the Arbeiter Verein, and similar matters that touched the business and social life of people.” Tensions and conflicts within St. Lorenz and the Frankenmuth community also contributed to their decision to leave St. Lorenz and organize Frankenmuth’s second Lutheran congregation, especially since refusal to accept certain decisions of the congregation in spiritual as well as civil matters as final, could lead to excommunication (Zehnder, 143).

Rev. John Fritz, who was a member of the Pittsburgh Synod, became the first pastor at St. John’s Lutheran Church following its founding in November 1879. In 1880, the congregation built a 37’ by 66’ frame church, which had a tower with two church bells in it, on W. Tuscola Street, approximately one mile west of St. Lorenz. The laying of the church’s cornerstone was celebrated on 30 June. The ‘frame-church,’ as opposed to the ‘brick-church’ (St. Lorenz), was dedicated on 7 November 1880. A pipe organ was purchased from St. Michael’s in Richville (the former Frankentrost), in 1914. Zehnder comments that St. Michael’s in turn had previously purchased this organ from St. Lorenz (Zehnder, 144-145).

Records show that the congregation did not show a substantial growth during its early years. By 1895, it had only 28 voting members, almost the same number as 15
years earlier. In 1910, St. John’s joined the Wisconsin Synod. Originally, Rev. Fritz had wanted to join the Missouri Synod, but was prevented from doing so by Ottomar Fuerbringer, the pastor at St. Lorenz. Therefore, prior to 1910, St. John’s and St. Lorenz did not share altar and pulpit fellowship. Zehnder notes that in 1970, even though the Wisconsin Evangelical Synod and The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod are no longer in fellowship, “this is not a matter of contention in the community.” Services at St. John’s were conducted in German until 1960. In 1969, a new parish center was built behind the church building (Zehnder, 144-147).

Even after the dedication of the new parish center, the space available for worship, fellowship and education was not sufficient for the needs of St. John’s Congregation. Plans to either build a new church on the current site, or to relocate the church and parish center to a new site were being pursued. In 1985, the congregation purchased a 40-acre farm on Genesee Street, approximately one mile east of Frankenmuth’s Main Street. The front 12 acres of the property, housing the new church and parish center, were annexed by the City of Frankenmuth, while the remainder of the property is still in Frankenmuth Township (Our History).

The first phase of the parish relocation, the construction of a new parish center, was begun in September 1996. The first worship services on the new site were held in August 1997. The parish center’s fellowship hall/ gymnasium was used for church services while the new church was under construction as the second phase of St. John’s relocation. The new fan-shaped sanctuary has room for a congregation of approximately 400. Both buildings share a common foyer. The altar of the old frame church, as well as other historic artifacts of St. John’s found a new home in the complex’s Heritage Chapel,
which is adjacent to the new sanctuary. The new St. John’s Lutheran Church was dedicated on 8 October 2000 (Our History).

**United Methodist Church**

The first non-Lutheran congregation to be organized in Frankenmuth was the Frankenmuth United Methodist Church, which was organized by 68 charter members on 4 February 1962, nearly 120 years after the town’s founding. The church is the result of numerous Methodist families, who were among the many non-Lutherans moving to Frankenmuth in the late 1950s and early 1960s. They had either found employment in Frankenmuth, or decided to live there because they liked the community, even though they worked elsewhere. The congregation’s first pastor was Rev. James Allen Smith, who served the congregation from February 1962 until December 1965. Following first services on 4 March 1962 in Frankenmuth’s East Genesee Street Elementary School, the congregation held many of its early meetings at the homes of its members. In 1965, a parsonage was built at 346 East Vates, on 7 ½ acres of land, which had been purchased in the northern part of Frankenmuth. The parsonage’s basement served the congregation as a meeting place during the week, while weekend services continued to be held at the Elementary School, until a church was built in 1967. Frankenmuth’s United Methodist congregation, whose membership had grown to 180 by 1970, held their first services in their new church on 24 November 1968 (Zehnder, 148).

**Blessed Trinity Catholic Church**

Blessed Trinity Catholic Church, the second non-Lutheran congregation in Frankenmuth, was organized in the late 1960s. Until then, the Catholic families that had moved to Frankenmuth following World War II had to attend Mass either in Saginaw, Birch Run,
or Bridgeport. The first Catholic Mass was celebrated at the Frankenmuth High School Gymnasium on 23 April 1967 by Father Joseph F. Favara of St. Christopher’s in Bridgeport, since the new congregation was to be a mission of this parish. Less than two weeks later, on 2 May, the first official organizational meeting was held. The name Blessed Trinity Catholic Church was announced on 21 May 1967. Before the 208-member congregation built its church on the land it had purchased on West Tuscola Street in 1968, Blessed Trinity Catholic Church began to hold Mass regularly at the United Methodist Church on 13 April 1969. Father Joseph F. Favara continued to serve as priest of the young parish (Zehnder, 149-150).

On 1 June 1975, the congregation broke ground for their own church, which was completed and formally dedicated on 12 September 1976. In 1987, Blessed Trinity Catholic Church and Frankenmuth’s United Methodist Church entered into a formal Covenant, sharing in weekly worship during Lent, and holding a joint Vacation Bible School during the summer (Blessed Trinity Catholic Church Parish Facts).

Father Charles Keho became Blessed Trinity’s second pastor in 1973. He served until 1979, when Father Chester Pilarski became the parish’s third pastor and served until 1986. His successor, Father Bill Taylor, served at Blessed Trinity until 1995, when Father Fred Kawka, began his service as the parish’s fifth pastor (Blessed Trinity Catholic Church Parish Facts).

In 1992, the church sanctuary was enlarged to add more seating for the continuously growing parish family. A new educational wing was added as well. The project was completed in 1993. As the Blessed Trinity Catholic Parish continued to grow, new church facilities became a necessity. Today, the parish counts about 580
households in Frankenmuth and vicinity. To accommodate the 1,500 strong parish family, a new sanctuary was needed (Blessed Trinity Catholic Church Parish Facts). In 2005, the congregation dedicated its new worship space and parish facilities at 958 E. Tuscola Road (Blessed Trinity Catholic Church – Frankenmuth, Michigan).

Frankenmuth Bible Church

Frankenmuth’s fifth, and youngest congregation, is the Frankenmuth Bible Church, located at 565 Churchgrove Road. The congregation began meeting for home Bible study in 1981. In early 1982, Robert Mains became to congregation’s first pastor. He continued to serve in this capacity until his retirement in May 1992. Prior to the construction of the current church, the congregation held Sunday services at List Elementary School. In 1986, the congregation purchased the Churchgrove property, on which it began construction of their own worship center in 1989. In 1991, the worship center was finished and on 10 November the first services were held in the new facility. However, services had already been held in other rooms of the building upon their completion. In 1992, Pastor Nathan Mains became senior pastor of the congregation (The History of The Frankenmuth Bible Church).

Frankenmuth’s Lutheran Indian Mission

Although it had been the primary purpose if the founding of Frankenmuth, Lutheran missionary work among the local Indians was short-lived. The Saginaw Treaty of 1819 listed as one of its conditions that all Indians would be sent a blacksmith and a missionary. The first attempt to bring Christianity to the natives in the Saginaw area is reported for about the same time, when a Mr. Hudson unsuccessfully began his missionary work among the Chippewa, just prior to the American troops’ arrival on the
Saginaw River in 1822. Zehnder assumes that the natives soon became dissatisfied with the many rules and restrictions that would have been imposed upon them by Hudson, causing his missionary efforts to remain without success. (Zehnder, 38-39).

Immediately after establishing Frankenmuth in 1845, Pastor Craemer initiated contact with Indian tribes in the Saginaw Valley. James Gruett, who, born to an Indian mother and a French-Canadian father, spoke French, English and Chippewa, aided Craemer in his endeavors. Craemer’s efforts soon yielded initial success, as several Indian children began attending the missionary school in Frankenmuth, and he also managed to baptize 31 Indian children. Soon after the arrival of more settlers in the Saginaw Valley, however, the living conditions for the natives rapidly deteriorated, so that they decided to pack up their villages and relocate in other areas, which better accommodated their Nomad tribal lifestyles (Deterding, 18-21).

Rev. Eduard Baierlein, who had begun his missionary training in Dresden in 1843, arrived in Frankenmuth in June 1847, where the then 28-year-old was to assist Craemer’s missionary efforts. Soon after his arrival, “Baierlein and others soon realized that the ‘colony method’ did not attract the Indians. To be successful the missionary needed to live with the Indians at their campsites. They needed to be taught English - not German as had been attempted.” Following Chief Bemassikeh’s invitation, Baierlein and his wife soon moved to the Indian settlement of Bethany, where they became members of the tribe and continued their missionary work until their departure for India in 1853 (Baierlein, 9-14).

In contrast to Baierlein’s missionary approach at Bethel, the missionaries in Frankenmuth adhered to their approach of attempting to draw Indians into their
settlement and their school. They continued to instruct these Indians in German, while adhering to their German customs, traditions and way of life, since they were concerned “that if they let go of their heritage, traditions, and language, they would lose their theological grounding, as well” (Baierlein, 9-13).

Ernst Miessler, who had come to Bethany in 1851 to assist Baierlein in his missionary efforts, replaced him in 1853. Miessler carried on his work until 1869, when all missionary work at Bethany was terminated. Today, a white cross marks the location of the mission church in what is now a cemetery at the site of the Bethany Indian Mission near St. Louis, Michigan (Deterding, 21).

Missionary work in Frankenmuth itself had come to an end as early as 1850, when Pastor Craemer left the colony to accept a call to join the seminary in Ft. Wayne as a professor. Most of the Indian children who had attended the Frankenmuth mission school had already been transferred to Bethany after its founding in 1848. The few remaining Indian pupils then attended the regular ‘German School’ (Zehnder, 82).

**Education in Frankenmuth**

Education has always played an important role in Frankenmuth’s history. The first log church, which had been built in 1845, also served as the colony’s first schoolhouse. School facilities were intended for use by the Indian mission as well as for the education of Frankenmuth’s youths. Reverend August Craemer served as the colony’s first schoolmaster. Due to the nomadic lifestyle of the natives of the region, missionary efforts were soon suspended, and education focused solely on the Indian children who had moved to Frankenmuth, as well as the colonists’ children, who until 1857 were taught using only German as the language of instruction. After Frankenmuth’s first
public school was established in 1857, English was taught as well. This was the beginning of a rather unique and unusual school system, which combined public school instruction with parochial school instruction (City of Frankenmuth and Frankenmuth Township Joint Growth Management Plan, 1-12).

As both educational systems continued to grow, this combined educational approach came to an end in 1901, when the legal mandate of separation of church and state forced Frankenmuth to establish a true public school system. The schools of Frankenmuth Township merged with the schools in the town itself in 1948, thereby creating the Frankenmuth School District. In 2002, the services of this school district cover an area of 64 square mile with an enrollment of 1285 students (City of Frankenmuth and Frankenmuth Township Joint Growth Management Plan, 7-29).

St. Lorenz was not only the town’s center of worship for many decades; it also was the center of education in Frankenmuth. Out of the log church and school had grown an educational system that was supported by the township as well as the congregation. The town’s ‘German School’ was supported by public funds when Frankenmuth Township was created in 1854. Four years later, an ‘English School,’ also supported by public founds, was established. The colonists realized early on that although their town was self sufficient and German was the language spoken in town, their children could only benefit from learning English, especially if they were to become engaged in business with the non-German speaking population of the neighboring towns. Pastor Craemer had also supported this idea when he visited Frankenmuth in 1858. The ‘English School,’ became the town’s first true ‘public school,’ as it was funded entirely from public funds, and did not receive any support from private donations or church funds. Although it was
tax money, the funds still came from the people who also provided the funds for the ‘German School’ (Zehnder, 153).

Many of the town’s children attended both schools. In the early years, however, only pupils in the higher grades attended the 'English School,' for half-days, while still attending the ‘German School’ during the other part of the day, thus in effect making the ‘English School’ a supplemental language school while most basic instruction still took place in German in the ‘German School.’ The first teacher at the ‘English School’ was Carl Pfeiffer, who began teaching at the school in English in 1858. His salary was paid by the township. By 1861, however, he held the basic instruction for all grades at the ‘English School’ in German, while he taught English classes in the afternoon (Zehnder, 153-154).

As Frankenmuth continued to grow, the need for more teachers increased as well. Zehnder states that the established pattern of cooperation between both schools continued. “Bilingual Lutheran teachers, if at all possible, were ‘called’ by the church and salaried by the township,” he explains. This way the children could still receive a German education, which was supplemented by English language study. In 1900, St. Lorenz only paid the salary for one teacher at their ‘German School.’ The township funded all other teachers of the parochial schools as well as the ‘public school’ teachers. “Because of the socioreligious character of the township,” Zehnder comments, “no one seemed to mind” (Zehnder, 154).

In several instances, schools were built in direct proximity, so that students and sometimes even teachers were able to commute between the buildings of the ‘German School’ and the ‘English School’ for their classes. However, as mentioned above, this
two-tiered educational system came to an end, when in December 1901 the Frankenmuth schools were forced to adhere to Michigan’s compulsory education law of 1900, which prescribed that pupils were to attend school for at least 100 days of instruction annually. As result of this action, the congregation of St. Lorenz took over the education of grades one through seven, without any form of financial assistance of the township. Thus, the ‘English Schools’ offered only eighth grade instruction. This also ended any form of cooperation and exchanging students and instructors between both school systems. This action meant a virtual end to ‘public education’ in grades one through eight in Frankenmuth (Zehnder, 154-155).

English was now taught alongside German in Frankenmuth’s parochial schools. In 1912, the congregation of St. Lorenz supported eight such schools. To fund these schools, ‘church school districts’ were established. Eighth grade classes were added to the parochial schools during the 1920s. The ‘English Schools,’ which still only offered the eighth grade, continued to be funded by the township though tax revenues, levied in smaller school districts in which the schools were located, making them true ‘public schools’ (Zehnder, 155).

Both school systems experienced efforts of centralization during the 1920s. The St. Lorenz congregation constructed a new school building in 1827. However, this consolidation was not completed until 1948, leading to the dissolution of the smaller ‘church school districts.’ A new public school, accommodating grades one through eight was built in 1925. The school was later expanded to include grades nine and ten. Prior to this expansion, students wishing to attend school beyond eighth grade had to commute to Saginaw. Until 1938, they had to pay their own tuition for attending Saginaw schools.
Prior to 1940, they also had to organize their own transportation. In 1950, the Frankenmuth School District was forced to establish its own high school, when the Saginaw School District stopped accepting students from Frankenmuth. The district built a new high school in 1952 (Zehnder, 155-157).

During the following decades, other school districts in the area consolidated with the Frankenmuth School District, which today serves about 1,300 students. At the same time, St. Lorenz elementary school had an enrollment of 520 in 2004. Lorenz L. List Elementary School was built at 805 East Genesee Street in 1961. After two additions, it currently has a capacity of 500 students. In 2005, the school’s enrollment was at 373 pupils in grades K through 4. The school district’s E. F. Riedmueller Middle School at 965 East Genesee Street was built in 1979. Accommodating grades 5 through 8, it had an enrollment of approximately 350 pupils in 2005 (City of Frankenmuth and Frankenmuth Township Joint Growth Management Plan, 7-29 to 7-31).

The district’s oldest school is Frankenmuth High School, which was built and opened in 1953. Three additions have significantly enlarged the original facilities. The school with a capacity of 800 pupils is located at 525 East Genesee Street. Its 2005 enrollment was 570 pupils (City of Frankenmuth and Frankenmuth Township Joint Growth Management Plan, 7-31).

St. Lorenz’ former Central School building, which was constructed on Main Street in 1927 to consolidate the congregation’s middle schools, was converted into the current School House Square shopping mall in 1980/81 (Significant Dates in Frankenmuth, 9).
The consolidation of the St. Lorenz schools was the result of a process that was begun in 1926 and continued through 1948. In 1950 the 1927 school building was expanded to accommodate all remaining parochial classes. A new church school was built on West Genesee Street in 1958, which was expanded several times to accommodate all students in the St. Lorenz school system. Following the new school’s addition in 1969, the Main Street School was sold to the Frankenmuth School District.

“The little school founded by Craemer and Flessa in 1846,” Zehnder concludes, “has now [in 1970] become the largest Lutheran Elementary School in America.” St. Lorenz Elementary School continues to play a significant role in Frankenmuth’s educational system. The school had 520 students enrolled in 2004 (City of Frankenmuth and Frankenmuth Township Joint Growth Management Plan, 7-29).

Frankenmuth’s Bavarian Architectural Makeover

When the Bavarian inspired architecture, which now dominates much of Frankenmuth’s town center, first appeared in the town seems to be somewhat unclear. Different publications list different dates to mark the beginning of the town’s Bavarian makeover. Whereas the Historic District Report, Frankenmuth, Michigan, published by the Frankenmuth Historic Preservation District Study Commission in 1979 states on page 16 that Rupprecht’s Sausage Store at 316 S. Main Street (now Willi’s Meat Market) “…was the first [building in Frankenmuth] to be built in the Franconian-Bavarian style of architecture in 1948” (Historic District Report, Frankenmuth, Michigan, 16) the Frankenmuth Chamber of Commerce lists 1957 as the year of the Rupprecht’s Sausage Store’s Bavarian architectural makeover in the Significant Dates in Frankenmuth section on page 9 of its 2005 edition of their A Nice Place to Live- Frankenmuth, Michigan’s
Therefore, in this study, we shall neglect the Rupprecht’s Sausage Store’s Bavarian architectural makeover, and use the well documented Bavarian architectural makeover of the Fischer Hotel into the Frankenmuth Bavarian Inn by the Zehnder family, which began in 1958, as the beginning of the remaking of the small Michigan town of Frankenmuth into “Michigan’s Little Bavaria” (McEwen, 154).

Elmer Fischer sold the Fischer Hotel to the Zehnder family in 1950. A Bavarian inspired addition to the existing structure in 1958/59 marked the beginning of the transformation of the Fischer Hotel into the Bavarian Inn (McEwen, 154). The Inn celebrated the opening of the new Bavarian style dining room, as Zehnder explains, “with a gala Bavarian party, with genuine Bavarian entertainment.” This Bavarian gala also marks the origin of the annual Frankenmuth Bavarian Festival, held during the second week in June, which had seen a steady increase in participants and visitors alike since 1961, reaching over 100,000 visitors by 1969 (Zehnder, 195).

The Zehnder family continued the Bavarian Inn’s architectural makeover by adding the hotel’s prominent Glockenspiel Tower in 1967 and a total exterior façade makeover in an Alpine Bavarian architectural style in 1969. This architectural conversion marks the beginning of the construction and remodel of several businesses and hotel/ motel establishments in an Alpine Bavarian inspired architectural style (Zehnder, 184-185).

The Historic District Report, Frankenmuth, Michigan, published by the Frankenmuth Historic Preservation District Study Commission in 1979, notes about the
Bavarian Inn that “[a]lthough many additions and alterations have been made to the original structure, the existing lobby and office of the Bavarian Inn are housed in that original structure.” The report also comments that the Bavarian Inn “has become nationally known as a quality representation of Bavarian Architecture” (Historic District Report, Frankenmuth, Michigan, 22).

Although it may have been the Zehnder family’s most significant hotel remodel and makeover, the Bavarian Inn was not their first themed hotel renovation project. William Zehnder, Sr. acquired the New Exchange Hotel in 1927 or 1928 and then completely remodeled the building and named it Zehnder’s Hotel. “The front exterior was made to look like Mount Vernon, the home of George Washington” (Zehnder, 184). After numerous renovations and expansions, this Williamsburg Colonial architectural theme, as the Historic District Report, Frankenmuth, Michigan characterizes it, has been maintained, being completely contrary to the Alpine architectural style which is otherwise being promoted in Frankenmuth (Historic District Report, Frankenmuth, Michigan, 22).

**Frankenmuth Today**

After the Alpine remodel of the Bavarian Inn, more buildings in Frankenmuth, private businesses, like the Schnitzelbank Shop or the Frankenmuth Clock Company, as well as public buildings, like the Frankenmuth City Hall or Visitors Center, were either renovated or newly constructed in an Alpine architectural style. The town’s founders would hardly recognize the Frankenmuth of today, nor would they be familiar with the Alpine Bavarian style of architecture, which today is predominant in the business district of the town, and which led to its nickname “Michigan’s Little Bavaria.” Tourist
marketing efforts for Frankenmuth today attempt to focus on the town’s Bavarian origin and playing up the town’s Alpine Bavarian architectural theme as the backdrop to many a Frankenmuth celebration.

At the time of the 2000 Census, Frankenmuth had a population of 4,838. About 2,552 residents (52.9% of the town’s population) claim German as their primary ancestry. This number very similar to Hermann and decisively larger than that on Leavenworth or Helen. Together, tourism-related categories make up less than 25% of Frankenmuth’s industries. This shows that the tourism industry is of significantly lower importance for Frankenmuth’s economy than it is in either Helen or Leavenworth. Out of the existing 2,245 housing units in Frankenmuth, almost 90% were built in the past three decades. The town’s business district’s alpine makeover does not appear to have had any visible impact on new construction. In 2000, the median household income was $51,153. Tourism, although important for Frankenmuth, is far less important to the town’s economy than it is in Helen or Leavenworth. Total school enrollment at the time of the census was at 960 (US Census Bureau, Census 2000).

Just as Hermann, Frankenmuth has also clearly become a tourism destination, but tourism has not become the town’s major source of income, as shown above. Other industries employ the majority of the Frankenmuth workforce. Tourism, though important, is not the town’s primary source of income, as it is in Leavenworth and Helen. Detailed information about the city and its surroundings is available on the Frankenmuth Official Visitor Information Internet page at http://www.frankenmuth.org. Frankenmuth today offers the visitor a choice of accommodations in thirteen hotels and motels in town, of which three are affiliated with national hotel chains and eight more in the vicinity of
the town, of which five are operated by national chains. There are no Bed & Breakfast accommodations listed online, much in contrast to Hermann, where almost no hotels or motels can be found. Frankenmuth offers its visitors a large variety of shopping in over twenty-six specialty stores in the city itself and another thirty-five stores available in the Frankenmuth River Place, a recently established shopping center near the center of town. Twelve restaurants and four fast-food places, offering a large variety of food options, including the famous Frankenmuth Chicken Dinners, are available to the visitor. Two breweries, the Black Forest Brew Haus and Grill and the Frankenmuth Brewery L.L.C. and two local wineries, Chateau de Leelanau and St. Julian Wine Co. are very popular among Frankenmuth visitors. The town boasts two museums aiming to educate and entertain visitors, Michigan’s Own Military & Space Museum, and the Frankenmuth Historical Society. Another major tourist attraction in Frankenmuth is Bronner’s CHRISTmas Wonderland, billed as the World’s largest Christmas store (Frankenmuth Official Visitor Information).

Although Frankenmuth does have the substance of German cultural history, since it was founded by German Lutheran missionaries, most visitors today come here for the Bavarian-themed architecture, which dominates the downtown business district, although this Alpine style of architecture can be found nowhere in the proximity of Neuendettelsau or the entire region of Franken in northern Bavaria. It is characteristic of the alpine regions of Bavaria’s south, in close proximity to the Alps, Austria and Switzerland. They also come for many of the town’s festivals and celebrations, which use this Bavarian theme as a backdrop throughout the year. In the case of Frankenmuth, historic substance has given way to modern surface, which now covers up most of the town’s true history
and heritage. The substance is however not entirely gone. The town’s celebrations, which are mostly intended to attract tourists to Frankenmuth, are to some extent rooted in the town’s history with the early settlers. The year’s main events are Zehnder’s Snowfest in January, the World Expo of Beer and the Lumberjack Festival in May, the Bavarian Festival, together with the Oktoberfest the town’s largest event, in June, a Volkslauf as part of the Fourth of July festivities, a Farm Fest and the Summer Music Fest in August, a Blues Bash and an Auto Fest in September, the weekend-long Oktoberfest in Mid-September and a Holiday Celebration and Candlewalk at the end of November as part of the Christmas Season. The Bavarian Festival, the oldest celebration in town, goes back to the official opening of the Bavarian-themed addition to Zehnder’s Fischer’s Hotel/Bavarian Inn in 1959. Detailed descriptions of these and other Frankenmuth events are listed on the Frankenmuth Festivals Home Internet site (Frankenmuth Official Visitor Information; Frankenmuth Festivals Home).
CHAPTER 4

AMERICA’S “LITTLE GERMANIES” AND THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

Visitors’ expectations of all of these “Little Germanies” can be summed up in one simple phrase: they must be German in every particular. It is as simple as that. But that is also where it starts to get complicated, as German in every particular means different things to different people. To some it means the German surface of a place; its facades and décor. To others, it means the substance of a historic settlement; its past and history, even if its appearance is indistinguishable from any non-German place in America today. Surface is irrelevant to this group. Yet others interpret this to mean that both substance and surface must be in place. It must look and feel German, only then do they see a “Little Germany” as German in every particular.

The four “Little Germanies” selected for this study fulfill these expectations in different ways. Hermann successfully preserved its architectural and cultural heritage. The town still carries on many of the traditions of its founders and it has remained aware of its past. It does not try to be anything it is not; it is a “Historic Settlement” and embraces its past wholeheartedly. The “Theme Towns” Leavenworth and Helen are German in every particular by having transformed themselves into the authentic replica of an alpine-Bavarian village. Their carefully designed facades and decorations leave little to be desired. The festivals they organize make excellent use of the backdrop the towns provide, and its citizens make every effort to be as German as they can possibly be. Frankenmuth has also re-invented itself, just as Helen and Leavenworth did, however it did not need to create an assumed identity; it already had the historic German substance
to build on. It transformed itself from “Historic Settlement” to “Theme Town” when it attempted to supplement its substance with a more authentic surface. Following the inception of the second German Empire after 1871, Germany itself made every effort to be ‘German in every particular’ as it tried to create a unifying identity by looking into its storied past and emulating the Middle Ages as a romantic ideal for the young country’s future.

It is the undeniable reality that when it comes to tourism and successful tourist marketing among America’s “Little Germanies,” surface appears to have triumphed over substance. German – or more precisely – alpine/Bavarian-themed towns are more successful in competing for a share of the tourism market than the majority of the historic German settlements throughout the United States. Visitors are clearly more interested in what they perceive to be an authentic German experience, atmosphere and theme than in the genuine and historic German cultural heritage still alive in America today. Towns like Leavenworth, Helen and Frankenmuth realized this early on and established themselves as highly successful destinations in the experience tourism market. Many Americans of German descent are unsure about their ethnic traditions and cultural heritage and therefore all too easily embrace what they perceive to be genuine and traditional German heritage, culture, customs and fare without question. It is not the historic and cultural correctness that counts, but rather the perception and assumed authenticity that matters. Reality has given way to perceived reality or ‘hyperreality,’ which according to Jay L. Lemke is the term used by Italian author and scholar Umberto Eco to describe people’s “fascination with imitation realities that are somehow more appealing than the everyday real world.” In his work Travels in Hyperreality, Eco raises
the complex question “why anyone would prefer a Disneyland village to a real one, as we may wonder why a child prefers a doll to a playmate” (Lemke).

The related question why the well-designed German-themed tourist destinations with no German substance, but merely a German surface are more successful than the authentic German heritage locations in America, seems to have a very simple answer: tourists feel that they receive a much bigger, maybe even better, return for their money in the “Theme Towns” listed in this study, including Frankenmuth, than in the “Historic Settlements.” The “Theme Towns” cater to what the tourists want and expect from their visit to these towns. Their whole tourism efforts are dictated not by what the towns historically have to offer, but rather by what the tourists demand of the towns. These demands are fairly easily identified: the “Little Germanies” must offer a picturesque, stereotypical alpine/ Bavarian appearance, a safe and family-friendly environment that offers a large variety of food and drink, shopping, lodging and entertainment; in short, they must be German in every particular, while still providing all of the comforts of home and all of the modern American amenities and conveniences tourists are used to. Ideally they will be able to eat their hamburger and drink their diet-soda in an alpine-style restaurant, complete with dirndl-wearing waitresses and beer hall music playing in the background. They expect the well-designed German surface to provide the backdrop for entertainment coupled with an individualized German experience without the hassle of actually having to travel to Bavaria.

An attractive architectural backdrop alone is seldom enough to attract sufficient numbers of visitors to make tourism a viable industry. Therefore even authentic “Historic Settlements” must supplement their substance by offering their visitors a
variety of entertainment opportunities to attract them to come at least once; ideally as repeat visitors. They use their historic settings and sites as a stage setting to produce festivals and events that serve two functions: to bring in tourist dollars as well as to enrich the lives of their own residents.

Williamsburg and Santa Fe: The Creation of a Heritage Tourism Location

The financial and marketing success of the three categories of “Little Germanies” in the United States as tourist destinations is based upon the successful interplay of various factors. Among these factors are a general interest in cultural and heritage tourism destinations, the towns’ historic and cultural preservation efforts, and the apparent appeal of the German – as well as German-American – culture and cultural heritage to the American traveler. Americans today have more time and money available than in the past, and they are looking at travel as one of the ways to enjoy them. This causes increased growth in the ever expanding tourism industry, and an increase in the number of tourist destinations, ranging from upscale resorts to rustic campsites, and from family amusement parks to historic sites. Tourists visiting historic or heritage sites look for an experience in their travel just as much as any other tourist. But the experience they are looking for is different from the experience thrill seekers and extreme travel proponents want. They are not looking for thrills, but rather to satisfy their curiosities about the cultural or heritage location they are visiting. They are seeking the experience of history and of traditional ways of life, be they realistic or perceived. Nostalgia and the cliché of a “better past” draw visitors to historic sites. Here they can see life in the past without actually having to live it. The importance of heritage travel for the entire tourism industry must not be underestimated (Kerstetter, Confer and Bricker, 91-104).
Heritage tourism can offer locations with culturally significant heritage, be it perceived or authentic, the financial means necessary to fund historic preservation efforts, as well as to market their location in an effort to attract more revenue increasing visitors. This explains why so many American towns have “rediscovered” their cultural roots, implement historic preservation efforts, and market their location to potential visitors. But the location does not only benefit economically from rediscovering and attempting to preserve its past, it also has the potential tendency draw the town’s population closer together. The newly won awareness of their own heritage may give them a sense of pride and identity. Also, cooperation amongst the various groups and elements within a heritage location’s population is a factor which should not be underestimated (Kerstetter, Confer and Bricker, 91-104).

One of America’s earliest and most prominent heritage tourism destinations is Williamsburg, Virginia’s colonial capital. Its creators perceived Colonial Williamsburg as a national shrine, a shrine to the beginnings of the American democracy. According to its board of trustees, it is Colonial Williamsburg’s mission “to re-create accurately the environment of the men and women of 18-th century Williamsburg and to bring about such an understanding of their lives and times that present and future generations may more vividly appreciate the contribution of these early Americans to the ideals and cultures of our country” (Colonial Williamsburg).

Colonial Williamsburg was, and still is, selective with the history it re-creates, restores and conveys to its visitors. The history of Williamsburg, as well as every other historical site and museum present, is always today’s interpretation of events past. This interpretation tends to be influenced by the point of view of the interpreter, as well as by
the purpose for presenting and preserving history. History is thus not only repeated time and again, but also re-written and re-interpreted by whoever presents and interprets it. According to Richard Handler and Eric Gable, “Colonial Williamsburg’s social historians have been clear (...) that they consider history making to be an interpretative or constructionist endeavor rather than an objective one.” History is not simply a number of facts or events. What makes these facts and events relevant to people today is their meaning within the greater context of things and themes. “History is not the ‘real thing,’” Handler and Gable express, “but an interpretation of the past as we understand it now” (Handler and Gable, 220-225).

Williamsburg was not the only historic state-capital with a unique and distinctive character to receive a historical makeover. Santa Fe, New Mexico’s territorial capital, also experienced a tourism-inspired cultural revival, which shows some similarities to the later transformation of Frankenmuth into “Michigan’s Little Bavaria.” Santa Fe’s makeover, however, would be much closer to its cultural and historical past and development than that of Frankenmuth, yet both would be heavily based on cultural and social stereotypes and misconceptions, which these makeovers would reinforce.

Located in relative isolation in the north-central New Mexico mountains, Santa Fe had been the Spanish and later Mexican provincial capital for centuries. Prior to the New Mexico Territory’s entry into the United States in 1912, Santa Fe also served as the territorial capital. “Between 1880 and 1925, its role as governmental center disappeared, and its status grew as a place that fashioned itself as unique in an age of mass production. The territorial capital of New Mexico, an anomaly among American holdings on the
continent in its demography, tricultural heritage, and even its patterns of language, Santa Fe held an inverted promise for industrial America” (Rothman, 81).

This ancient town was home to Native, Hispanic and Anglo cultures, which co-existed side by side, seemingly harmoniously. At least this is the image of Santa Fe that was marketed to tourists throughout the United States. This made Santa Fe so unique among American cities and attracted many wealthy Americans to the city in their search for harmony and a simpler life in a confusing, increasingly industrialized world. Rothman calls this “the invented Santa Fe.” He comments that this, however, was just a misperception. “Santa Fe promised a different formula than did industrial America, but ultimately it only recapitulated the same structure behind a seductive and well organized mask” (Rothman, 81).

Santa Fe’s transformation could be categorized as that of a historic settlement into a theme town. Edgar L. Hewett’s efforts intended to transform Santa Fe into a tourist destination where visitors would be able to experience a town with a mix of culture unique in the entire United States and also experience the culture of an almost extinct people, America’s Native tribes. Santa Fe, and also the small northern New Mexico town of Taos, was very well known throughout the entire country, even if most Americans had never been there. This was the result of intense marketing and publicity efforts, mainly spearheaded by Hewett and Fred Harvey, who owned a chain of restaurants, hotels and travel service centers along the Atchinson, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad’s (AT&SF) rail lines. Harvey had made a name for himself as the so-called “Host of the Southwest.” These publicity and marketing efforts included postcards travelers could mail home to their friends and families from any of Harvey’s travel centers along the railroad, to
posters, billboards, display ads and calendars. They all depicted the same romanticized and idyllic glimpses into southwestern life and could be found almost everywhere in America. These materials used mostly works from artists in the Taos and Santa Fe regions, which not only portrayed the area as a beautiful spot of land worth visiting, but also as a destination with a striving and successful art scene. Combined with the numerous travel writings of other authors and the efforts of local art guilds and associations, like the Taos Society of Artists (1915-1927), the marketing campaigns not only successfully attracted tourists to visit this region, but also enticed many artists to settle there. They were also useful in informing readers who did not live in region “of the artistic colonization of the Southwest” (Eldridge, Schimmel and Truettner, 13-14).

Fred Harvey had teamed up with the AT&SF railroad company to build restaurants, shops and lodging accommodations at their railroad stops. In the Southwest, where the arrival of the railroad and its accompanying industries had had a significant impact on the lives and culture of the Native tribes, Harvey set out to capture the essence of tribal culture and to market it to passengers on the AT&SF line. In an attempt to profit from the tribal culture and the natural and architectural uniqueness and beauty of the region, Harvey and the AT&SF set out to preserve this quickly vanishing essence of the Southwest, and Northern New Mexico in particular. This, however, as Leah Dilworth argues, was not an attempt to accurately preserve the Southwestern culture as it was, but, and here Santa Fe shares a distinct communality with Colonial Williamsburg and also Disney’s “Main Street America,“ the way it should have been. “Fred Harvey and the AT&SF,” she explains, “were nostalgic not for what was actually destroyed but for an Indian that never existed; in the interest of selling tickets and hotel accommodations in
the region, the two corporations constructed a version of Indian life that reflected and spoke to American middle-class desires and anxieties” (Dilworth, 143-144).

Hewett’s “combination of culture and show transformed Santa Fe and its environs into a place new and different in American society. Santa Fe possessed genuine mystique; it had been the town at the end of the rainbow, a mythic place that had become legend” (Rothman, 85-86). The town’s culture would be its savior. The fact that it would have to be molded and re-designed to fit Santa Fe’s promoters’ ideas was secondary. Tourism was quickly embraced by the city’s Anglo element.

By 1909 they were convinced that tourism would be an easy and logical pursuit. All they essentially had to do was to market themselves, their town and their way of life to tourists and afford these upon their visit an insight into Santa Fe life and culture. Hewett, of course, would play an instrumental role in this undertaking. He would be a major voice in the redesign of the city and in the determination of which culture would be presented to tourists. The Santa Fe Hewett that intended to market still had to be created. The town’s Spanish Colonial style architecture did not obstruct the views and vistas of the town’s surroundings’ natural beauty. It added to the quaint and unique appearance visitors came to see. Virtually every street scene, like the old Spanish architecture or Indians selling authentic goods and artifacts on the plaza, “created an authentic past for the upper middle class.” This past had long since disappeared anywhere else in the United States, where much of the industrial society’s focus had been progress at all cost. In Hewett’s Santa Fe, this pre-industrial past was still alive and well and for everyone to observe, experience or live. “To the upper classes, Santa Fe became a revelation. Compared to the soot-choked air of Pittsburgh or the bustle of New York, it seemed
sleepy and undisturbed. (…) To many, this strangely sophisticated town was somehow alluring. It appealed to anyone who had reservations about the pace of the industrialized world” (Rothman, 90).

One result of translating historic Santa Fe into the postmodern world of tourism was the creation of the Pueblo Revival architectural style, made prominent by artists like Hamilton Rapp and John Gaw Meem. This architectural style placed its emphasis on traditional elements of the adobe structures prominent in Northern New Mexico. To these traditional style elements they added distinctly modern features identifying the structure as new, but in a line of succession connected to the past. The Pueblo Revival style became popular during the first decade of the twentieth century. Among the earliest major re-design projects using this style was the University of New Mexico’s main campus in Albuquerque from 1905 to 1909 (Rothman, 90-91).

Although inspired by the historic architecture of Santa Fe, and born out of a combination of preservation and tourism marketing, the new building style was far from historic. It was neither authentic, nor was it indigenous to the region. It was an artificially created architectural theme used as an overlay in Santa Fe, creating the illusion of historical authenticity and on the surface a quaint backdrop for tourists to enjoy. This also holds true for the renovation of one of the country’s oldest public buildings, the Palace of the Governors on the Santa Fe Plaza, which was renovated in the Pueblo Revival style in a preservation effort between 1909 and 1913. The building was stripped of its Victorian style architectural elements and returned to what was believed to be a more authentic façade, effectively reversing the building’s historic evolution and freezing it in time (Eldridge, Schimmel and Truettner, 106-107).
Hewett successfully engineered Santa Fe’s architectural makeover into a historical and culturally significant town. “He brought cultural institutions, revamped existing buildings and structures and turned them into museums, revived crafts, fairs, and other vestiges of the past and created an intellectual framework to mediate the experience.” He managed to give the mythical idea and symbolism of Santa Fe an architectural embodiment; giving “that iconography a physical manifestation.” The town’s architectural theme now provided the backdrop that was necessary to develop a healthy tourism industry in Santa Fe. It also provided the atmosphere that attracted more artists to move into the area. Pueblo Revival or Santa Fe style architecture was now required for any building façade in the old town. How the interior would be designed, did not matter, as long as the exterior appearance was in line with the town’s architectural theme, allowing some parallels to be drawn between Santa Fe and Frankenmuth and to a smaller extent also Helen and Leavenworth (Rothman, 94-96).

Unlike Colonial Williamsburg, where preservationist efforts froze a town in a selected point in time in its past and removed all signs of development from that point on up to the present as well as hid all modern conveniences from the visitors’ sight, the architectural makeover of Santa Fe was less drastic, but nonetheless successful. Whereas the focus in Santa Fe was preservation of structures that were all still there, the focus in Williamsburg was mostly the recreation of buildings that had long since disappeared from the town’s neighborhoods while preserving those buildings that still fit the planners’ ideals.

When supply meets demand, a place’s tourism industry will likely flourish. Therefore, the themed attractions that are willing to offer tourists all they demand, no
matter the cost and authenticity, have a much easier time to succeed in tourism than those places that are concerned with genuine heritage. Carefully designed heritage-themed attractions very effectively appeal to a visitor’s emotions. Immediately upon entering the towns of Leavenworth, Helen or Frankenmuth, visitors get the impression that they are in a Bavarian style alpine village or town. German and Bavarian flags, architectural elements on the buildings, signs, German language used in decorations and advertisements, as well as German restaurant fare and arts and crafts for sale in the gift shops all appeal to the tourist’s emotions and aid in the creation of the perception of a genuine German experience. Most visitors do not analyze what they see or experience. They merely observe their surroundings and may not question the authenticity of what they saw or experienced until much later after the visit. This helps to explain how Frankenmuth can be so successful in marketing itself as “Michigan’s Little Bavaria,” presenting itself in an alpine-Bavarian architectural theme without having to address the fact that it is located in an entirely flat and mountain-less landscape. As long as Frankenmuth successfully portrays itself as an alpine town and provides its visitors with what they expect and perceive to be a genuine Bavarian or German experience, the absence of mountains that make the alpine architecture of most of Frankenmuth’s downtown businesses look oddly out of place is of no real concern to either side. From an aesthetic standpoint, Frankenmuth more than compensates for the lack of authenticity of its surrounding landscape (Postrel, 6).

The special experience a visit to any heritage site can produce is matched, and sometimes even surpassed by well-designed heritage places. They mask their lack of authenticity with a brilliantly detailed façade that compensates for most other
shortcomings. This sensory appeal takes the place of rational analysis of the place. Good design has replaced historical truth in these “Theme Towns,” aiming to provoke the visitors’ emotions and thereby adding to the pleasant tourist experience by allowing the tourists to establish a perceived connection between themselves and their heritage and identity, and the place. The emotions they evoke in a visitor range from a feeling of discovery of an unfamiliar surrounding for some, to a feeling of a comfortable familiarity and even home for others. It is this range of appeal to so many different types of tourists that makes ethnic and cultural tourism destinations, no matter whether they are historic or not, so successful among the traveling public. Anyone can find a place to travel to where he or she feels they will enjoy themselves the most. A destination’s ability to cater to each tourist’s personal taste is ultimately what makes this destination successful (Postrel, 6-12).

**Why is the Past so Attractive?**

Postrel explains that “[a]esthetics conjures meaning in a subliminal, associational way, as our direct sensory experience reminds us of something that is absent, a memory or an idea” (Postrel, 6). Therefore it provides an individual or a group with a very valuable tool in an effort to find a connection to their own cultural identity. It gives them the feeling that they are connecting with their cultural, historical or ethnic traditions through their tourism experience. Beginning in the 1960s, specialty tourist attractions, such as the recently remodeled German-themed towns of Helen, Leavenworth and Frankenmuth, were ready to offer tourists the tourism experiences they sought by allowing them an insight into a different world, just as Colonial Williamsburg or New Salem, Illinois, offered an insight into a different time, a simpler time than their own. This holds true
today just as much as it did a few decades ago. Postrel proclaims that “…recent cultural, business, and technological changes are reinforcing the prominence of aesthetics and the value of personal expression. Each new development feeds others. The result feels less like the culmination of a historical trend than the beginning of a new economic and cultural moment, in which look and feel matter more than ever” (Postrel, 38-39).

Consumers today have the choice of an unimaginable variety of goods and services offered to them. Just like a customer at any given day can walk into any home improvement warehouse and enjoy what Postrel calls “aesthetic abundance,” consumers today, no matter where they live, have access to the same immense variety of articles offered on the mega-box-stores’ or wholesale clubs’ shelves. “The most obvious sources for today’s aesthetic abundance, are rising incomes and falling prices” (Postrel, 41).

The same also holds true for today’s tourism market. Almost anywhere in the United States the tourist can find personal or personalized experiences. They can explore local and regional history in a multitude of museums or enjoy the country’s beautiful landscape in numerous State- and National Parks. A German cultural experience, however, is a much more rarely available commodity. Therefore, the few places in America which claim to offer this experience draw larger numbers of visitors. The basic principle of the interchange of supply and demand also holds true here. The more complete German experience a town claims to provide, the more successful it is in drawing in one-time or repeat visitors. More affordable and a larger variety of different accommodations at these locations and lower entertainment expenditures, coupled with more expendable personal income make increased tourism in these places possible. The more people have an opportunity to travel, especially abroad, the more aesthetic
abundance they are exposed to. As more tourists have the disposable income to travel abroad, many of them begin to realize the variety of places available on the tourism market. During their travels abroad they have the opportunity to see a larger variety of places and architectural styles in a smaller land-area than they would ever be able to do when traveling on America’s highways and by-ways. However, many tourists traveling in America may “complain that every place looks like every other place” (Postrel, 48) with their identical fast food franchises and lodging establishments which use uniformity to convey an air of familiarity independent from their location. Most McDonald’s or Taco Bell franchises, as well as most La Quinta Hotels or Howard Johnson’s Motels, look the same throughout the United States. No matter whether one travels in New England, the Midwest, or the Deep South, it is hard to miss the McDonald’s Golden Arches or the mission-inspired architectural style unique to the La Quinta Hotel chain, which though familiar and very recognizable, looks oddly out of place everywhere outside the Southwest.

Tourists returning from trips abroad often experience places that have not yet fallen victim to the same kind of homogeneity found in many places in America today and seek to visit places they hope can offer them similar experiences in their own country. Therefore, tourism interest in historic preservation efforts and open-air style historical museums, as well as theme parks with a cultural or historical theme, reflect what seems to be a desire to “relive” or experience, what the so-called “good old days” were like. This romanticized desire to take a step back into the past attracts people to places like Colonial Williamsburg, or other historic sites. Most visitors to these locations however are either unaware of, or simply not interested in the fact that they do not
actually travel back in time, but merely experience a historic display in front of a historic backdrop, which still has all the modern conveniences of their homes in suburbia, from which they tried to escape for a brief moment. They can be considered artifacts through which we perceive the past, not actually bring it back to life. These historic locations are not actually created by history, but rather creations of our desires of what we wish history were like (Lowenthal, 116).

David Lowenthal explains this interest in the past by saying “we seek refuge from the uneasy present, the uncertain future in recalling the good old days, which take on a luster heightened by nostalgia. Memory highlights selected scenes, making them so real and vivid we can scarcely believe they do not actually survive” (Lowenthal, 104). This nostalgic desire to escape from the present into a more pleasant past seems to increase in times of economic crises or rapid changes in society. The Industrial Revolution and the increase in the working class population were one of these periods of change and upheaval in society. The period following World War I, which was marked by the tremendous impact of technological changes on labor and industry, and social changes, like the temperance movement, increase in religious fundamentalism, and political reforms is the same period which saw the romantic and idealistic dream that produced Colonial Williamsburg and Greenfield Village. The widespread availability of affordable modes of transportation through the mass production of automobiles, combined with a large increase of widespread wealth, led to a dramatic increase in the mobility of the majority of Americans, who were ready to leave their homes and travel to any place they could imagine. The road system expanded dramatically, giving birth to a whole convenience industry connected with the automobile, like service plazas, diners, motels
and more, which made travel more convenient than ever before. Following World War II, especially during the decades of the Cold War, a time when a nuclear holocaust was always a definite possibility, many Americans were also looking for calm in this uncertain world. Perceived idylls offered an escape and a distraction from the perceived reality. It is therefore not surprising that it was at the height of the Cold War between the late 1950s and the late 1960s that Helen, Leavenworth and Frankenmuth could successfully transform their appearances into alpine-themed towns. They offered society the opportunity to escape into a world away from reality: a romantic world, German in every particular.

_Deutschlandbild – The Image of Germany and German Cultural Identity_

Speaking of ‘Germany’ during the periods of emigration to America during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is problematic, since there was no Germany as we know it today. There was, at the end of the eighteenth century, among the German intellectual establishment, the longing for a unified German people in a German nation state, much the same as America or France. This longing for a unified German nation state found its expression in the many national festivals, like the _Wartburgfest_ in 1817 or the _Hambacher Fest_ in 1832, manifesting the “Teutonic sentiments – not to say hopes” (Gentry, 9).

These festivals expressed a mythical connection between nineteenth-century Germany and the country’s heroic past: the pure and idealistic Germany of the Middle Ages. They were seen as a means to connect to Germany’s glorious past; a way to connect to its “legitimate political and cultural roots.” Nineteenth-century patriotic
circles idealized the Middle Ages - Gentry uses this term to also include the early Germanic tribal periods – “as a kind of Golden Era of Germanness” (Gentry, 10).

To them, Germany had a historic mission, which it had long since forgotten. The values of honor and trust, as embodied by the Germanic tribesmen, who under Arminius, also known as Hermann, defeated the Romans on German soil in a legendary battle in the Teutoburg Forest, were seen as the values of a true German. Following the victory of the unified armies of the German states over Napoleon’s French troops in 1813, the hope for a re-unified German nation in one single country to include all German speaking people of Europe grew, even if Switzerland was going to be excluded (Gentry, 10).

Being German during tribal times meant being free, honorable, and noble, if one was to include only the warrior classes and the nobility. It also meant being opposed to all things foreign, which included the Roman faith. Therefore, among many patriotic circles, Protestantism was seen as the true German religion (Gentry, 10-11). Bismarck exploited this sentiment when he proclaimed the Protestant Prussian King as emperor of the new Germany, while excluding the Catholic Habsburgs and their Austro-Hungarian empire.

Following Prussia’s victory over France in 1871, “nothing stood in the way of establishing a new empire and of proclaiming Wilhelm I. as German emperor.” The victory over arch-enemy France only added to the symbolism of the moment. However, the establishment of the second empire hardly achieved the unification of Germany. Other than creating a Prussian-led monarchy, not much was accomplished. Also, the empire born out of the dreams and longing of the German people, was short-lived. The
empire could not succeed as it was founded “on the idea of a state based on brutal
execution of power and an exaggerated nationalism” (Gentry, 22-24).

But even now, Germany was far from unified. There was no Germany to speak
of. Other than a common language, with all its variations and dialects, there was not
much to unite Hessians, Württembergers, Prussians, Saxons, Westphalians, and
Bavarians. But they were not only separated by a multitude of borders; they were also
divided by their religious beliefs. The wounds of the Reformation and its aftermath were
still not healed. And even within their states, they were divided by numerous socio-
economic factors. The different classes did not interact much, nor did they have much
reason to.

In an attempt to forge a political union, the Germans living within the borders of
the second empire attempted to create a national identity. They therefore looked at the
Middle Ages as a projection of what was to come in Germany’s future. This movement
was mainly influenced by conservative German romantics, like Schlegel, Görres, Baader,
Schelling, to name only a few, and was accompanied by a religious - predominantly
Catholic - revival. This movement began as a reaction to the French Revolution and the
ideals of the “Age of Reason” and reached its highest expression in southern Germany;
mainly in Catholic Bavaria. It was an attempt to deal with the loss of social structures by
celebrating a common German identity. The development of this conservative romantic
national movement in Germany is outlined in detail by Paul Gottfried in his book
Conservative Millenarians.

The German self-image, which was used in an attempt to unify a multitude of
independent German states into the cultural union of the German Empire of 1871, was
the same presented by the young empire at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. At this time, the second German Empire was still in its infancy, a mere twenty-two years old. Bismarck’s Germany presented itself in a very romantic, nostalgic, mythical, almost fairy tale-like fashion, a Deutschlandbild which has prevailed almost un-changed until today. The German building, which had been designed especially for display at the fair, was “the handsomest and most expensive of all the foreign edifices. (...) The building [was] a combination of several styles (...). Bay windows, projecting balconies and turrets [lent] it a most picturesque appearance, closely resembling an old German city-hall, such as may be seen even now in some ancient towns of the empire” (White, 549).

The items on display in this setting were mostly representative of medieval Germany in its heyday during the Holy Roman Empire with its emperors, such as Charlemagne or Friedrich Barbarossa. With its exhibit of books and documents, Germany presented itself as the proverbial Volk der Dichter und Denker [= nation of poets and thinkers]. A second exhibit was of modern religious art and artifacts. The German village on the Midway Plaisance, consisting of a number of farm houses, representative to the various regions of the empire, and a village garden including bandstand with room for more than eight thousand people, continued this romantic image of Germany. Bismarck’s empire attempted at length to present itself as a peaceful fairy tale land; the perfect idyll. The items displayed representative of the German nation, or the image the Germans had of themselves, completed this image (White, 571-572).

Therefore, it is not surprising that the German exhibits in Chicago were the most expensive of all of the foreign participants. This nostalgic, romanticized image of an idyllic medieval and traditional Germany is still the prevalent image of Germany today.
Because of this, romantic castles on the Rhine, walled medieval cities like Rothenburg ob der Tauber, quaint Bavarian towns like Oberammergau, and peaceful farming communities with half-timbered houses like those that can be found in Westphalia, are still the most prominent image of Germany throughout the world, especially in America. This stereotype has been strongly reinforced and intensified since the post-World War II occupation of southern Germany by the American armed forces. The beer-drinking, lederhosen-wearing, sauerkraut-eating, pipe-smoking Bavarian grandfather is still the stereotypical image of the German male.

It is this image of Germany most Americans are familiar with and which draws so many to visit America’s “Little Germanies,” especially those with a carefully designed and well-planned German-inspired architectural theme. Since many Americans will probably never travel abroad to enjoy the pleasures of Germany proper, they try to do the next best thing: “enjoy a little bit of Germany close to home,” as a billboard on Interstate 70 advertises the character and atmosphere of Hermann, Missouri. It is this chord, that the towns of Frankenmuth, Helen, Leavenworth and the like attempt to strike with their potential visitors, and they do so very successfully. The visitors to the “Theme Towns” are not looking for a piece of German-Americana, mostly not even for an authentic German experience. They merely want to be entertained in a German-themed manner in front of a German-style backdrop in the middle of the familiar American landscape within a convenient distance to their own home. To them, a visit to these “Little Germanies” appears to be like a visit to a theme park; without the rides of course. This experience is being intensified through various festivals and special events, which support the theme of the towns and use its setting as a backdrop.
“Little Germanies” like Hermann, New Ulm, or the Amana Colonies actually combine both types of tourism locations. During special events, festivals, and celebrations, during which they attract vast numbers of visitors, they act as “cultural” entertainment venues. To visitors during the course of the year outside of the festival circuit, these locations serve as cultural and heritage tourism destinations. In order for the “Historic Settlements” to increase their attractiveness as cultural and heritage tourism destination, they have to engage in historic preservation efforts, if they do not want to end up as merely another “cultural” theme park. The key to economical success for the historic “Little Germanies” is a careful balance between the historic preservation of their cultural and ethnic heritage and the tourist marketing of their special German themed events, festivals, and activities. German culture seems to be very appealing to a large number of Americans, not simply due to the fact that the Germans were the largest non-English speaking ethnic group to immigrate into the United States. These “Little Germanies” offer a variety of things to many people on a recreational as well as an educational level, and if nothing else, the visitors can take home the impression to have experienced a little bit of Germany without having to go through all the trouble to actually go there.

“Identity,” as Postrel explains, “is the meaning of surface.” It is what makes a place attractive to visitors and a town a viable tourism destination. Historic German settlements across the United States derive their identity from the history of their founding, their development as well as from the cultural heritage of their early settlers. Geographic location is also a factor in defining a place’s identity. A mountain village in the plains is just as hard to comprehend as a Wild West village would be on a sandy
beach. Natural surroundings therefore contribute just as much to a place’s identity as its historic development. Not every American town that was founded by German immigrants has the potential to be a viable tourist destination. Other than size and location, their identity must be such that it is of interest to potential tourists. It must be different than most other places around. Otherwise, if there is nothing special or significant about a place, there is no reason to visit it (Postrel, 102).

It is the identity of America’s historic “Little Germanies” that makes them viable tourist destinations. Although they were all founded by German immigrants or settlers, America’s true “Little Germanies” all have unique identities. Hermann is uniquely different in its history and its significant contributions to winemaking in Missouri, America and the world. The Amana Colonies have an identity much different from most other “Little Germanies,” as they were founded as a group of religious farming communities that has found a balance between agricultural production and the manufacture of modern appliances. The aesthetic appeal of these varied identities of America’s historic “Little Germanies” is undeniable as the major factor in their success as tourism destinations. Postrel explains that “inanimate objects and public environs are in fact more valuable when they offer aesthetic identities. (…) Without aesthetic signals, it would be harder to find what we wanted or complement our own personalities” (Postrel, 105).

Tourism destinations provide us with a highly specific product. The destinations we chose are an expression of our individual interests and therefore to some extent also a manifestation of our personal identities. They allow us to experience something that would otherwise not be available to us. The specific identities and aesthetic personalities
of all of America’s “Little Germanies” afford tourists more unique and more individual tourism experiences than many other American travel destinations. “They give individuals the ingredients with which to create or affirm our own aesthetic personas, to experience and express something about who we are. By appealing to different tastes and personalities and evoking different associations, style differences add value to commercial [as well as tourism] experiences” (Postrel, 106).

These towns allow very personal tourist experiences. Their aesthetic identities allow for visitors to more closely relate to them. The “Theme Towns” have been very successful in creating their towns’ aesthetic identities. They have carefully designed a stage setting which is not only aesthetically pleasing but which also allows visitors to enter into what they perceive as an authentic German experience. The “Historic Settlements” derive their aesthetic identity from their historic buildings and character, which they maintain through various historic preservation efforts. All of these “Little Germanies” use their architecture and facades as the backdrop for presenting tourists with an experience that is German in every particular.

**Bavaria to the Rescue**

“Theme Towns” such as Leavenworth and Helen have found a unique niche in America’s tourism market, in which they have established themselves as highly successful tourist destinations. They appeal to the aesthetic aspirations of a specific segment of the travel market. “Aesthetic aspirations inevitably express some sort of dissatisfaction,” Postrel comments. They are an expression of the desire to see, hear, feel and experience something different from the ordinary that surrounds them every day. They seek a brief escape into a different world. Las Vegas, Nevada has mastered the art
of catering to these aesthetic aspirations of many travelers, as have theme parks as well. Just as Las Vegas, theme parks and Colonial Williamsburg claim to offer the visitor a glimpse into another world, no matter how brief and limited it may be, so do America’s German “Theme Towns.” These towns’ surfaces draw meaning from their purpose rather than their authenticity. “The meaning of surface is not Meaning in some grand, metaphysical sense. Aesthetics does not tell us what our purpose should be. At most, it communicates something about what those purposes are, reminding ourselves and the world of what we think is important. Still, we often invest enormous value in look and feel, treating surface signals of identity as equivalent to identity itself” (Postrel, 118-121).

It is interesting, yet not entirely surprising, that the Germany these “Theme Towns” portray is not an urban industrial Germany, but rather a very highly selective rural idyll, which can only be found in some small areas in Bavaria and in southeastern Baden-Württemberg. This Alpine/Bavarian-inspired theme these towns chose, however, reinforces some of the stereotypes many Americans have of Germans. In fact, “the image of German speakers (…) has varied (…). The dominant stereotypes around which images were grouped by both German speakers and others fell early on under the supposed characteristics of Prussia versus Bavaria or Austria: efficient, intellectual, managerial, and militarily ambitious versus musical, easygoing, religious, and good-natured,” Roeber explains (Roeber, 719-720). This is all the more surprising since not very many immigrants originated in the Bavaria so adored and idolized by many American tourists today.

Yet even the pastoral idyll re-created by these “Theme Towns” is very selective in nature. It replicates many of the positive aspects of the peaceful simple country life,
while eliminating such unpleasantries as the smell of cows or manure piles, much like Colonial Williamsburg in the early days neglected to address many of the simpler aspects of every-day colonial life; an issue which has since been addressed and remedied. The idyll of the Bavarian village aims to evoke a certain innocence and calmness among visitors which they can hardly find in their urban homes. Therefore, it is not surprising that Frankenmuth, Leavenworth and Helen all owe their success as tourist destinations at least in part to the fact that they are within easy reach of major metropolitan areas, such as Detroit, Seattle or Atlanta. As we discussed above, even Hermann owes some of its early success as a tourist destination to the fact that it was within easy reach of riverboat excursions, or later on railroad day trips originating in St. Louis.

The Bavarian countryside had escaped the destruction of Germany during World War II relatively unscathed. Whereas most urban and industrial centers of the country lay in ruins, rural Bavaria was comparatively quick to recover. For the American GIs who were stationed in southern Germany as part of the Allied Occupation Forces, the sight of an almost intact Bavarian countryside must have been a welcome change from all the destruction and devastation they undoubtedly encountered elsewhere during their stay in Germany. Without a doubt, these images stayed with them even long after they returned home to America. This is evidenced by that fact that two individuals who played key roles in the alpine makeovers of Leavenworth and Helen; Bob Rogers and John Kollock; both developed a deep appreciation for Bavaria when they were stationed there or visited during their time in the US military.

During the aftermath of World War II, the mostly intact Bavarian idyll had an air of the a-historic. Rural Bavaria offered an escape from the reality of post-war
destruction; an escape into an idyll reminiscent of a peaceful pre-Nazi Germany. It appeared to have remained untouched by the turmoil of war and the destruction of the collapse of the Third Reich. In a time when large sums of money were needed to finance the cleanup and reconstruction of Bavaria’s destroyed cities and infrastructure, drawing attention to its untouched regions was a way to draw visitors to Bavaria, creating an influx of money that could be used for the rebuilding effort. Bavaria therefore needed to rebuild itself as the fairytale-kingdom it once was under its kings, like Ludwig II., who built many of Bavaria’s most splendid castles (Neuschwanstein, Herrenchiemsee, and Linderhof).

In this context, it is also interesting to note that the state of Bavaria itself was a somewhat artificial and arbitrary creation when some 90 political entities were unified by Napoleon in 1806. This unification led to the search for a common Bavarian identity, showing many similarities to search for a German national identity following the unification of Germany in 1871. Ludwig II., as well as his grandfather Ludwig I. before him, also looked at Germany’s past to create Bavaria’s future identity. This is manifested in the architecture of their buildings. Whereas Ludwig II. sought his inspiration in German mythology and the legendary times of the Nibelungen, Ludwig I. had been the first German ruler to erect a national monument to Germanness, when he had the Walhalla, a Germanic hall of honor, built near Regensburg. The structure, built in the architectural style of ancient Greece, was to display “the busts of all of Germany’s greats from Arminius to Goethe.” The Walhalla was open in 1842, but Ludwig had reportedly begun to develop this idea in 1807 (Gentry, 12).
The Bavarian idyll, its natural and architectural beauty as well as its friendly people, most GIs encountered while they were stationed in Germany, appears to have struck a chord with them. It undoubtedly influenced their view of Germany as a whole and of the German people as well. Upon their return to American they surely told their friends and families about what they had seen and experienced. In this context the sudden arrival of “Little Bavarias” like Frankenmuth, Helen and Leavenworth on the American tourism market in the late 1960s, when Germany had become a close and respected ally during the height of the Cold War, rather than being the defeated aggressor it had been only two decades prior, allowed many of these former GIs to relive some of their German or Bavarian experiences. These “Theme Towns” also allow them to share those experiences with their families close to home and to also introduce them to Germany as they saw it. Since traveling to Germany was a highly improbable proposition, visiting these “Theme Towns,” either overnight or for a day trip, offered an interesting alternative.

**The Hyperreality of German “Theme Towns”**

In our attempts to escape our daily routine and the reality of our every-day life, we often seek experiences, like those offered in Helen or Leavenworth, in Umberto Eco’s “hyperreality.” He sees this desire to make the copy more perfect than the original as a typical American trait. In this respect, Leavenworth and Helen are examples for places “where the American imagination demands the real thing and, to attain it, must fabricate the absolute fake; where the boundaries between game and illusion are blurred … and falsehood is enjoyed in a situation of ‘fullness’” (Eco, 8).
The appearance of reality rather than reality itself is a theme that can be used to characterize the success of themed towns and amusement parks everywhere. It also describes the approach many American museums employ in their efforts to attract visitors and get their message across to them. The reconstruction of Colonial Williamsburg as a copy more perfect than the original could have ever been in colonial times is also a prominent example of this phenomenon. This approach also explains the fact that the German “Theme Towns” Helen, Leavenworth and Frankenmuth are more successful in their tourism efforts than America’s German “Historic Settlements.” In Eco’s eyes, America is “a country obsessed with realism, where, if a reconstruction is to be credible, it must be absolutely iconic, a perfect likeness, a ‘real’ copy of the reality being presented” (Eco, 4).

This definition fits our “Theme Towns” very well. They are carefully designed artificial environments with alpine or Bavarian themes that are sometimes more Bavarian than Bavaria itself. Their attempts to be German in every particular may lead to them being more German than Germany itself. In hyperreality, the lines between substance and surface are not always clearly distinguishable. Americans, Eco explains, are drawn to historic places and culturally significant sites, no matter whether they are authentic or recreated, because “there is a constant in the average American imagination and taste, for which the past must be preserved and celebrated in full-scale authentic copy; a philosophy of immortality as duplication. It dominates the relation with the self, with the past, not infrequently with the present, always with History and, even, with the European tradition.” Eco uses the example of replica of the Oval Office in a number of presidential libraries across the country as an example of this drive to recreate an original in a better
way, if by no other means that by using modern construction techniques, which did not yet exist when the original was built, or by simply better maintaining them, since they are not subjected to the daily use of the original (Eco, 6-7).

Compared to historic German settlements, German-themed towns are more successful in attracting tourists, because they are more perfect re-creations than the originals. They are the result of what Eco calls “reconstruction mania” and the “industry of absolute iconism” (Eco, 16). German “Theme Towns” are not restricted by historic preservation concerns and they can reinvent themselves whenever the tastes of the traveling public changes, as long as they can maintain their overall architectural theme. Historic settlements do not have this luxury. They can merely offer different events in their efforts to attract tourists. Changing their town’s surface is not an option for them. They have remained, and must remain, true to their heritage. Frankenmuth made a dangerous gamble when it decided to adopt a Bavarian theme for its business district. It gave up its historic surface in favor of a faux alpine one. Frankenmuth’s substance, however, its significance as a German-Lutheran missionary settlement on the Michigan frontier, has remained unaltered overall. It has, however, become secondary to the town’s new surface identity of “Michigan’s Little Bavaria.”

The Bavarian experiences these places offer is just as authentic, or more precisely: inauthentic, as a paddle-wheel steamboat ride on the Mississippi River today. Although these tours are intended to offer its participants the nostalgic experience of a time long past, nothing could be farther from the truth. The steamers used today are obviously equipped with the most modern technological features, safety equipment and navigational devices, thereby making the experience an inauthentic one, but even if one
were to embark on a true historic steamer, the experience would nonetheless be an inauthentic one, since the river banks are not those of the golden days of steamers, but those marked and shaped by twentieth and twenty-first century architecture and design. The German-American towns that can be categorized as “Historic Settlements” have obviously also not been frozen in time. They too have been affected and changed by the course of time and modern technologies. But at their core their “history still exists and is tangible” (Eco, 29).

They have maintained their German cultural heritage and still embody the spirit of their founders. Although altered by the course of time, they have remained German heritage tourism destinations. They represent the generations of Germans who settled in America seeking a new beginning and as in the instance of Hermann, a new home where they would be able to preserve and nurture their German cultural heritage and identity, which they saw threatened in other parts of the country. They are originals and do not have to portray something they are not. “Elsewhere, on the contrary, the frantic desire for the Almost Real arises only as a neurotic reaction to the vacuum of memories; the Absolute Fake is the offspring of the unhappy awareness of a present without depth” (Eco, 29-31).

Whereas these “Historic Settlements” have a true identity, which developed over time, the “Theme Towns” are exploiting the identities they created, which not every visitor can easily identify as an obvious fake, for profit. “In fact,” Eco explains, “once the fetishistic desire for the original is forgotten, these copies are perfect” (Eco. 39). When it comes to tourism success, these recreated places have far surpassed the “Historic
Settlements,” as the fact that Helen attracts far more visitors annually than Hermann proves.

These towns embody the myth of the alpine Bavarian paradise and sell it quite well. Unlike at a historic site, where the visitor is a mere passive observer, the tourist visiting one of these “Theme Towns” becomes a participant in the theme. Unlike at a theme park, where visitors know that they are not going to experience a real city, Helen and Leavenworth do not have any obvious boundaries informing visitors that they are about to enter into a re-created setting. In fact, these “Theme Towns” expend tremendous effort to convince their visitors of the exact opposite. They want to convey the illusion that their towns are real and true, or at least just as Bavarian as it gets in any American town. As soon as visitors enter these towns, just as they would any other town in America, “the studied illusion takes over” (Eco, 40-43). Helen and Leavenworth successfully blend the reality of their businesses with their theme. Their storefronts and signage are carefully designed to match the overall theme and even the business names were often chosen to complete the illusion.

**German in Every Particular**

The success of these “Theme Towns” as tourism destinations is not based on their substance, i.e. their German cultural heritage or historical significance, but rather on their surface. Their carefully planned, well designed and neatly maintained architectural facades and overall complete appearance are what attracts tourists to these places. They are what these towns use in their advertising and public relations efforts. Their Internet pages are filled with pictures and sometimes even sounds that portray a German or alpine Bavarian ambience not found anywhere else in America. Their only function is to
provide visitors with the illusion of an authentic German-style tourism experience. They have little or no substance other than the occasional German dish, beverage or gift shop item, or the visiting German music group or folk dance company, who provide temporary substance to the towns’ surface.

As we outlined in our description of Hermann, as a historic settlement, the town is an example of substance rather than surface. In Hermann, visitors can experience a historic German settlement and see a multitude of examples of historic German architecture in America. The town’s genuine value is not its facades and outward appearance, but rather its overall cultural and historical significance, especially in the area of American viticulture. Hermann’s historic homes bear witness to the town’s past. Although they serve as the backdrop for many of the town’s events, they are more than the mere surfaces found in Helen, Leavenworth or even in Frankenmuth. They were built out of utility, not as tourism marketing tools. Their intact survival, which is now aided by the city’s historic preservation efforts, is a testament to the town’s residents’ awareness of the value of their heritage and history. Hermann’s residents from early on realized the value of substance over surface, as the settlement was born out of cultural and historic preservation efforts, as we discussed earlier. Frankenmuth is an example of a town that has shifted its emphasis from substance to surface with its architectural makeover into “Michigan’s Little Bavaria.”

These four towns cater to the various interests and desires of the large American tourism market and must compete with innumerable other events and attractions available. To be successful, these have to be sufficiently German in theme and appearance to fit in with the towns’ overall theme, but they also have to be appealing to
visitors from all walks of life and from all ethnic, cultural and economical backgrounds. This requires paying close attention to aesthetics. The more German and the more complete the experience appears to be to the tourists, the more successful the town’s tourism efforts will be. How authentic the experience is plays little or no role in a location’s success. All that matters is the perception of the consuming tourists. This phenomenon that the German-themed surface appears to outweigh the actual German-American substance “is dangerously seductive, because it allows the sensory to override the rational,” Postrel explains (Postrel, 68).

If value lies not in the substance, but rather in the well-designed and highly appealing package which is a mere surface, the appeal of aesthetics has become outright dangerous for America’s authentic German heritage. The example of Frankenmuth makes this obvious. By placing an enormous emphasis on the town’s Bavarian theme rather than its actual history as a Lutheran missionary settlement in its tourism marketing efforts, the town’s true historical integrity has been overshadowed. Critics may decide that Frankenmuth has sacrificed its substance on the altar of financial gain in favor of its surface. The question, however, if Frankenmuth really can be both, substance and surface, will only be answered in the face of time. However at the present, the surface seems to have a clear advantage, and will lead to the complete disappearance of Frankenmuth’s substance, if civic leaders and private initiative do not halt this process. This process is made possible by the attention paid to aesthetics in tourist marketing efforts. “Aesthetics, in this view, is nothing more that a tool for manipulation and deceit” (Postrel, 68).
This, of course, is a very pessimistic view of tourism in America’s “Little Germanies” on the one hand and of the future of America’s German cultural heritage on the other hand. If substance will ultimately be replaced by surface, all historic preservation efforts that are driven by tourism efforts are doomed from their very onset. “In this view,” so Postrel, “modern commerce, because it appeals to consumers as visual, tactile creatures, is deceptive and decadent. The claim is unfalsifiable, since the more we try to proclaim the real value we attach to look and feel, the more we demonstrate just how duped we are. Legitimate value must come from objective characteristics,” which in the case of the “Little Germanies” would be their German heritage and the experience they offer their visitors (Postrel, 69).

Surfaces in and of themselves do not have any value. They are merely for visual effect. Therefore they are not required for a heritage site. The history of the place, its substance alone, is sufficient to provide its value and appeal to visitors. Any existing surface is merely enhancing the experience. This helps to explain the appeal of sites like the Civil War Battlefields at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, where not much remains from the Civil War days, yet the substance of the place alone is its value. Re-creating such a site by building a Civil War-inspired theme park, as had been proposed elsewhere, but ultimately not carried out, would take away from the site’s value, just as White’s City in its heyday used to diminish the value of a visit to Carlsbad Caverns National Park. In such substance-rich places, “surfaces are meaningless, misleading distractions of no genuine value” (Postrel, 71).

People base many judgments of first impressions, which are usually visual clues. These judgments may prevent us from actually seeing the substance and lead us to
perceived experiences, rather than real ones. “Our love of sensory delights is crowding out more cognitive pleasures. And it is creating a world of falsehoods.” This statement can help us understand the success “Theme Towns” have among tourists, although these places are merely facades and backdrops for carefully choreographed events. They provide a staging ground for an artificially created reality, which many tourists perceive as authentic without questioning its value, solely based upon their first impression of these towns’ surfaces. They assume that just because the surface appears to be German, the experience must be as well (Postrel, p. 71).

America’s “Little Germanies” appeal to a large segment of the tourism market, because they offer a product that is different from the majority of destinations. If from a consumer’s perspective aesthetic variety is of value and this in turn translates into a willingness to spend more money on trips to these destinations, this provides a positive outlook for tourism in these German-themed towns. “If the goal is happiness,” Postrel formulates, “form is itself a function. Pleasure is as real as meaning or usefulness, and its value is as subjective” (Postrel, 80).

Surface is important to all three categories of “Little Germanies,” just to a differing degree. Substance, however, is of almost no consequence to the “Theme Towns,” since they are artificial creations and basically have almost no substance at all. Most of their substance is either created for tourism purposes or is merely in the perception of the tourist.

Although the surface itself may not provide much information about the substance of a place, it is without a doubt what attracts most visitors. The ability to separate surface and substance “is the first step to avoiding the deception that critics of aesthetics so fear”
This is essential in evaluating tourist destinations and the experiences they provide. Places like Colonial Williamsburg, though they have the historic substance of being the Colonial capital of Virginia, the town tourists can visit and experience today is merely a recreation of what once was. The facades of most of its structures are not authentic, but rather authentic replicas. The place itself is not historic, but the interpretation of history. Therefore any visitor should know that they are not stepping back in time to experience a colonial settlement, but that they are walking about among recreations of historical facades observing historical displays interpreting, not reliving, life in colonial times. The same holds true for the Frankenmuth and to a lesser extent also for Helen and Leavenworth. These towns are American interpretations of alpine or Bavarian villages, no matter how accurate these representations may be. Architectural details and authentic costumes add to the overall appeal of these towns’ surfaces, but do little to create any true substance. Although a surface cannot create substance, it can still have value in its own right (Postrel, 89-92).

For the survival of America’s German cultural heritage, and for the continued success as tourism destinations, it is essential that America’s “Little Germanies” find a viable compromise for the co-existence of the substance which created them and the surface which will allow them to attract sufficient tourism revenue to fund historic preservation efforts aimed at maintaining their substance. Only such a balance can ensure that their substance will be available for generations yet to come. Surface alone has a very slim chance for survival, since “[w]e judge people, places, and things at least in part by how they look. We care about surfaces.” It is not sufficient to declare that surfaces are “false and worthless,” Postrel continues, since this “is merely another form
of deception” (Postrel, 75). Many tourists seek a combination of both elements. They seek a place with a carefully designed surface to set the mood for their experience and the substance to provide them with the experience itself; the experience of a place that is German in every particular.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Printed Materials


**Online Materials**


Photographs
All photographs used in the Appendix were taken by the author himself.
APPENDIX

HERMANN, MISSOURI

Festhalle

The German School Building (1871)
Deutschheim State Historic Site – Pommer-Gentner House (1841)

Deutschheim State Historic Site – Strehly House (1844-1864)
Stone Hill Winery – Main Mansion (1869)

Hermannhof Winery
LEAVENWORTH, WASHINGTON

Front Street

City Hall
Café Christa/ European Imports

Band Stand / Maypole
HELEN, GEORGIA

Hofer’s Bakery

Swiss German Plaza
Helen Welcome Center

Bergland Shopping Center
FRANKENMUTH, MICHIGAN

Bavarian Inn Lodge

Bavarian Inn
Frankenmuth Cheese Haus and Fischer Opera House (right)

Saint Lorenz Lutheran Church
VITA - DIRK LEHMANN


In August 1992, Dirk Lehmann enrolled in the University of Missouri-Columbia, where he received his MA in German Language and Literature in 1994. He spent the summer of 1993 as the Intern at the German Summer School at Middlebury College in Vermont.

Upon completion of his MA, Dirk Lehmann continued his graduate education when he enrolled in the German Program at The Pennsylvania State University to pursue his doctorate in German, with a focus on German Cultural Studies in August 1994. He completed his doctoral dissertation German in Every Particular? – From Historic Settlement to Theme Towns: Examples of “Little Germanies” in America in May 2007.

In August 1999, Dirk Lehmann accepted a position to teach German at New Mexico Military Institute in Roswell, New Mexico. He currently holds the position of Associate Professor of Languages at New Mexico Military Institute.