

German Americans on the Middle Border From Antislavery to Reconciliation, 1830–1877

Zachary Stuart Garrison

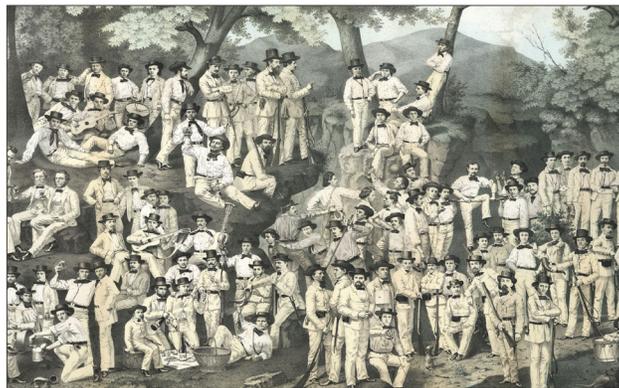
“Zachary Stuart Garrison offers a thorough and engaging study of the ways in which German Americans on the Midwestern border responded to the issues of slavery, sectionalism, and the Civil War. In the process, Garrison includes an original explanation of how nineteenth-century understandings of nationalism, liberalism, and abolitionism developed in a transatlantic context.”—Andre M. Fleche, author of *The Revolution of 1861: The American Civil War in the Age of Nationalist Conflict*

German Influence on Emancipation and Black Citizenship

Before the Civil War, Northern, Southern, and Western political cultures crashed together on the middle border, where the Ohio, Mississippi, and Missouri Rivers meet. German Americans who settled in the region took an antislavery stance, asserting a liberal nationalist philosophy rooted in their revolutionary experience in Europe that emphasized individual rights and freedoms. By contextualizing German Americans in their European past and exploring their ideological formation in failed nationalist revolutions, Zachary Stuart Garrison adds nuance and complexity to their story.

Liberal German immigrants, having escaped European aristocracy, viewed slaveholders as a specter of European feudalism. During the antebellum years, many liberal German Americans feared slavery would inhibit westward progress, and so they embraced the Free Soil and Free Labor movements and the new Republican Party. Most joined the Union ranks during the Civil War.

After the war, in a region largely opposed to black citizenship and Radical Republican rule, German Americans were seen as dangerous outsiders. Facing a conservative resurgence, liberal German Republicans employed the same line of reasoning they had once used to justify emancipation: A united nation required the end of both federal occupation in the South and special protections for African Americans. Having played a role in securing the Union, Germans largely abandoned the freedmen and freedwomen. They adopted reconciliation in order to secure their place in the reunified nation. Garrison's unique transnational perspective on the sectional crisis, the Civil War, and the postwar era complicates our understanding of German Americans on the middle border.



GERMAN AMERICANS ON THE MIDDLE BORDER

FROM ANTISLAVERY TO RECONCILIATION, 1830-1877

ZACHARY STUART GARRISON

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Zachary Stuart Garrison teaches history at Chaminade College Preparatory School in St. Louis, Missouri. He previously taught at the University of Cincinnati and Lindenwood University and worked at *Ohio Valley History*.

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List of Illustrations

Acknowledgments

Introduction: *Im Abendlande*

1. **Building a *Neuen Deutschland*: The Dreissiger Immigration and the Origins of German Liberalism on the Middle Border**

Describes German liberal nationalism, including the concept of *bildung*, and of the first wave of German immigration to the Middle Border, beginning in the 1830s.

2. **The Politicization of German Liberals: The Revolution of 1848 and the Second Wave of German Immigration**

An overview of German political and ideological attitudes toward slavery, arguing that the roots of antislavery on the Middle Border can be found among German liberals, especially after the arrival of immigrants influenced by the revolutions of 1848.

3. **“I Was an Enthusiastic Democrat in Those Days”: Free Soil, Free Labor, and the Realignment of German Liberals, 1852–1856**

Discusses German transition away from the Democratic Party, especially the proslavery element, and toward the nascent Republican Party following the turmoil created by the sectional crisis during the 1850s.

4. **“Continuous Vigilance Is the Price of Freedom”: Antislavery Germans and the Election of 1860**

Detailed analysis of German support for Republicans during the election of 1860 across the Middle Border as Germans connected liberal nationalism with antislavery and pro-Unionism.

5. **The West’s Most Loyal Unionists: Union, Emancipation, and German Soldiers’ Motivations**

Surveys German motivations for joining the Union ranks, arguing that ideology played a significant role among Germans along the Middle Border. Also outlines German opinion on emancipation during the war’s early years.

6. **Rebel Bushwhackers and the “Damned Dutch”: Radical Germans and the Deeper Roots of Missouri’s Guerrilla War**

Argues that guerrilla warfare in Missouri was heavily influenced by the presence of German liberals advocating for antislavery and Union.

7. **The Radical Turn: Abolition and the Crisis of German Liberalism**

Assesses German support for the growing Radical Republican movement as questions on slavery, emancipation, black enlistment, and African American rights enveloped the Middle Border.

8. **“A Terrible Mistake Was Made”: The Retreat of German Liberalism**

Argues that Germans ultimately retreated from radical positions that continued to divide the nation in the postwar period, opting instead to focus on local and regional economic and political debates. This led to support for the Liberal Republican movement, and eventual return to the Democratic Party.

Conclusion

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