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## **BACK STORY**

### **Preserving a part of the city's German past**

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The first German immigrants began settling in Maryland in the 17th century. By 1723, they were living along the Chesapeake Bay, in what became Baltimore, before the city was laid out in 1729.

They were so numerous that four of the seven members of the town council were Germans, and the first official "town clock" was in the steeple of the German Reformed Church, near today's City Hall.

The early Germans in Baltimore made their living as carpenters, cobblers, teachers, tailors, physicians, piano-makers, sugar refiners, glass-makers and tobacco merchants.

With revolution sweeping Europe in 1848, the German exodus from the Old World to the New broadened and continued for decades.

North Atlantic steamers disgorged their steerage passengers of immigrants at Locust Point - to such an extent that by 1900, Baltimore boasted a German population of 34,000.

And by 1914, on the eve of World War I, 94,000 Germans lived in the city, making up 20 percent of the population.

So profound was the German influence in the city that through the 1920s, a third of the city's public schools included German as part of the regular curriculum, and one in four Baltimoreans could speak German fluently.

And with the large German population came a pressing need for German-language newspapers.

In 1840, Frederick Raine, a German from a family of skilled printers in Westphalia, landed in Baltimore after working as an apprentice in a newspaper office in Münster.

Raine, who was about to turn 18, recognized this need, and, in 1841 established and began printing *Der Deutsche Correspondent*, a weekly German-language newspaper.

He began with eight subscribers, and soon Der Deutsche Correspondent established a devoted following and grew in circulation - so much so, that it quickly outstripped the two other German newspapers being published in the city.

"His newspaper, the Correspondent, was the paper with the greatest influence on the Germans in Baltimore; it lasted longer than any of the other German newspapers in Maryland," wrote historian Dieter Cunz in his book "The Maryland Germans: A History," published in 1948.

"It grew from a weekly to a biweekly, and finally to a prominent daily paper," Jenny Ferretti, who is directing the digitization project of Der Deutsche Correspondent at the Maryland Historical Society, wrote in the society's newsletter last year.

Ferretti writes that Raine was held in "high regard for providing a first-class newspaper to the German-speaking population of the region."

Gov. Oden Bowie was so taken with Raine's dedication to public service that in 1868 he extended to him the honorary title of colonel.

Raine's newspaper not only reported on local events and political campaigns, but also world events such as the 1848 revolution in Europe, the U.S. Civil War, the Franco-Prussian War, and events in Asia and Europe.

Raine became an influential and prominent Baltimore citizen, served on the City Council and was U.S. consul in Berlin from 1885 to 1889.

Raine's newspaper could boast a circulation of about 15,000 during the 1880s and 1890s, but times were changing.

With the outbreak of World War I and America's entry into the war, Der Deutsche Correspondent fell victim to the backlash from anti-German feelings that swept the nation.

Subscriptions and advertising declined so precipitously that Annie V. Raine, a niece of its founder and owner, decided to close the paper.

On April 28, 1918, the last editions of the Correspondent rolled off the presses.

In an article on its demise, The Baltimore Sun reported that the Correspondent had printed articles that "were regarded as verging upon sedition and disloyalty, if not being actually such. The Correspondent attempted to reply and maintain its loyalty."

The Sun reported that Evan A. Heinz, the paper's managing editor, had "nothing to say" about its end and was departing Baltimore for the North, where he had taken another job.

The Bayrische Wochenblatt hired some of the Correspondent's employees, and the two

papers merged into a weekly called the Baltimore Correspondent.

Because the name Correspondent was kept alive by the merger, historians claimed at the time the Baltimore Correspondent folded in 1976 that the Baltimore paper was the nation's second-oldest German-language newspaper.

Ferretti, who has a bachelor's degree in photography from the Maryland Institute College of Art and trained in digitization at the Smithsonian Institution, is facing a daunting task that she seems to be enjoying.

The historical society is the repository of the most substantial known collection of the Correspondent, which fills some 98 bound volumes.

"They're very old with a lot of the paper's edges shredding, but not the text. The pages are a yellow-orange and they are fragile," she said. "And they smell dusty."

Ferretti said that by the end of the day, her hands are black from working with the papers.

The work digitizing the papers, which began in 2008, is being accomplished with a grant from the Charles Edward Hilgenberg Fund of the Baltimore Community Foundation and the support of John Hilgenberg and his family.

The total number of pages to be digitized is a staggering 84,000 and, Ferretti reports, some 48,000 have been completed.

Eventually, her work will be available to readers and scholars on the Internet while preserving a valuable piece of the city's German past.

Aiding in the work and performing the actual digitization is the Crowley Co. in Frederick.

Before the valuable bound copies depart the society's West Monument Street headquarters, Ferretti rewraps them in Tyvek so they can safely travel to Crowley, where they are laid flat and scanned from above; the images are stored in a computer that is backed up by several additional servers.

There was a sense of urgency regarding the project, Ferretti said, because of the deterioration of the newsprint.

"The ultimate goal is to have them translated into English, and this process is called OCR or optical character recognition," said Ferretti, who hopes this final process, depending on funding, could be completed within the next five years.

Ferretti said that oftentimes after newspapers are scanned, the original bound copies are destroyed. This will not be the case here, she said; all bound copies will be returned to the society and safely stored.

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