

# THE GERMAN SOCIETY OF MARYLAND

DIE DEUTSCHE GESELLSCHAFT VON MARYLAND

## VEREINSNACHRICHTEN

**MARCH 1999**

**Volume I, Issue 21**

### **COME TO THE ANNUAL MEETING--- ON FRIDAY, APRIL 9 AT ZION**

Plan to attend the annual meeting of the Society in the dining room of the Zion Church, City Hall Plaza. Doors open at 6:45 pm. Dinner at 7 pm. Meeting starts promptly at 8 pm. Guaranteed to finish by 9 pm. No charge for the food and drink, which will feature a German cold buffet, beer, wine, sodas and coffee. This event is always a lot of fun. We especially urge our new members to come and meet their compatriots. Bring your family and your friends who may be potential new members. To help us make sure there is enough food and drink, please call the office (410-685-0450). Leave your name on the answering machine and the number of people in your party. If you can bring a dessert, let us know by leaving a message on the machine. In prior years, the desserts have been a highlight of the event. For details of the meeting, see official notice page 3.

### **SCHNITZELBANK CHART IS READY**

The German Society and the Edelweiss Club have sent their version of Schnitzelbank to the printer! Artist Dutch Niemann and publisher Ted Potthast, both members of both organizations, studied many versions of the classical German folk song and selected a series of images for our edition of the chart, under the supervision of Betty Niemann. The chart is printed on gold cardboard in black letters and is approx. 2' x 3'. It is available to members of the two organizations for \$3, and to non-members for \$5. Plan to get your copy at our annual meeting or at the annual picnic. Sample 8½"x14" versions will be distributed at the annual meeting. Call the office and request a sample copy. The poster can be mailed for \$3 plus postage and cost of mailing tube.

### **GRASSL AND MILLER TO PRESENT REPORTS AT MINN. SYMPOSIUM**

German Society of MD members Gary Grassl and Bradford Miller will present papers at the **April 22-25** annual symposium of the Society for German-American Studies. It will held this year in New Ulm, Minnesota. Mr. Grassl's paper is entitled "Johannes Fleisher, Jr. M.D.: The First German and the first Botanist at Jamestown, Virginia." Mr. Miller will present "The German Community in Washington, D.C., in the 1850's". Mr. Grassl is the president of the German American Heritage Society of Greater Washington and Mr. Miller is its past president. Ingeborg Carsten-Miller, a poet and also a member of our Society, will present a "Poetry Reading" at the symposium.

### **OTHER UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS**

Robert Diedoff, former president of the Steuben Society of America, will speak on "The challenge facing German-Americans as we approach the new millennium" on Sunday, **March 14** at 2 PM in the Concordia Church (Vereinigte Kirche), 1920 G. Street, NW in Washington.

Dr. LaVern J. Rippley, Editor of the Society for German American Studies Newsletter, will speak at the German Embassy on Friday, **June 18** at 7:30 PM on "German-American Culture in Crisis: Germans in America, 1916-18."

The German American Heritage Society will present "The German collection, art and architecture of the Library of Congress: a Guided tour of the Jefferson Building, neighboring German-American sites" and luncheon at Cafe Berlin, 322 Massachusetts Ave., NW., Washington on Saturday, **April 17**.

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***"The purpose of the German Society of Maryland is to preserve and promote the German heritage, language and traditions through educational, social and benevolent programs; and to develop the unity and continuity of the German American community in the State of Maryland."***

**VEREINS KALENDAR****GERMAN SOCIETY**

April 9	Annual Meeting
April 15	Board Meeting
June 12	Annual picnic
July 8	Board Meeting
Aug. 20-23	German Festival, Baltimore
Sept. 12	Defenders' Day Lunch, Karavan
Oct. 7	Board Meeting
Nov. 12	Awards Banquet

**GERMAN RADIO KLUB, INC.**

April 11	Spring Dance Overlea Hall 1-5
Sept. 14-17	Niagara Falls Bus Tour
Dec. 12	Xmas Dance Overlea Hall 1-5

**OTHER EVENTS**

June 26-July 4	Kutztown Festival
Sept. 29	Feast of St. Michael
Oct. 9-10	Oktoberfest
Nov. 11	Feast of St. Martin

**DATE CHANGED FOR SOCIETY'S ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET**

The Society's annual banquet will take place this year on the second Friday in November (the 12th) rather than the usual first Friday. The location is also changed to the Adlersaal at Zion Church. The reason for this year's change was to reduce the ticket prices from last year's \$100 fare per couple. A number of members had to miss the event because of the price. The new location will permit a lower price, which has not yet been set. However, that decision will be made by April 9, at the annual meeting. Ticket sales will then commence. The capacity of the Adlersaal will mean that the number of tickets will be strictly limited and sold on a first-come, first-served basis. So, the early birds will get the tickets.

**TUNE IN TO THE WEEKEND GERMAN RADIO PROGRAMS ON 730 AM**

The German Radio Hour, Sundays at 2 pm and 8 pm and Saturday at 3 pm.

The Edelweiss Hour, Sundays at 9 am

**PICNIC: JUNE 12 AT BLOB'S PARK  
MAKE IT A FAMILY AFFAIR !!**

Plan now to bring your family and friends to our annual picnic. There's lots of space (200+ acres), unlimited parking and a very large pavilion, So rain or shine, the picnic will go on. Blob's Park was built on a Bavarian theme. With German music and lots of beer and wurst, the atmosphere will be just right for a day of fun and Gemütlichkeit. Plan to make it a **family reunion**. The ticket price is \$12 for adult, \$6 for high school and college students, with children under 12 free. Set aside this Saturday afternoon in June for a great time.

**HIGH SCHOOL AWARDS IN MAY**

The German Society annually rewards those high school students who achieve excellence in the national German language exams with prizes at an academic affair. The date and place will be announced soon. The committee hopes to be able to hold it at Western Maryland College, in conjunction with a dinner. We're hoping that a large contingent will be present to encourage the young people to continue their study of German language and culture.

**I WOULD HAVE GONE, but**

...nobody asked me. How often, after hearing of an interesting event, do you say to yourself; "I wish I had known about it"...or, I wish I had gone." So often we hear about club events, bus trips, group excursions, picnics, but we don't plan ahead and take action to attend. Then afterwards, we hear what fun it was and we're sorry we missed out. Make yourself a resolution: as soon as you see an announcement, make plans with a friend or family member to attend, mark it on your calendar and call to reserve a ticket. Do this now -- for the German Society's annual meeting, for our picnic, for the festival, the awards banquet, etc. If you put it off because you need someone to go with you or if you need transportation, call our office and talk about it. We'll try to find someone to go with you or take you. If you are already planning to attend a function, call a friend and persuade them to go too. You'll help increase the quality of their lives as well as your own.

## NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the German Society of Maryland will be held on April 9, 1999, at 8 PM in the dining room of the Zion Church of Baltimore, City Hall Plaza, Baltimore, Maryland. The meeting will be preceded by a dinner for the members and their guests.

The agenda of the meeting is as follows: (1) Election of six members to the Board of Directors; (2) voting on proposed amendments to the bylaws of the corporation; (3) report of the Treasurer; (4) reports of the committee; (5) such other matters which may be brought to the floor, time permitting. The following amendments to the bylaws will be submitted to the membership for its action:

1. Amend Article II, §1.

Present:

§1. The Society shall hold an annual meeting in February for election of Directors and transaction of general business. The time, place and hour of the meeting shall be fixed by the President or Acting President. Ten days notice of the meeting shall be given by the Secretary.

Proposed:

§1. The Society shall hold an annual meeting not later than April 15th of each year, for election of Directors and transaction of general business, at such time, place and hour as shall be fixed by the President or Acting President. Ten days notice of the meeting shall be given by the Secretary.

2. Amend Article V, §2.

Present:

§2. The following Committees shall be elected by the Board of Directors from among its members: an Executive Committee of three or more members and a Finance Committee of three or more members.

Proposed:

§2. The following Committees shall be appointed by the President from among the members of the Board of Directors: an Executive Committee of three or more members and a Finance Committee of three or more members. From time to time, the President may appoint additional members to such committees and remove members as he deems appropriate.

3. Proposed new Article V, §10. §10. The nominating committee shall consist of the past presidents of the Society who are in good standing and such other members of the Board of Directors who shall be appointed by the President.

4. Proposed new Article VI, §3. §3. The nominating committee shall prepare a list of candidates to serve as members of the Board of Directors of the Society and shall nominate such persons as Directors at the annual meeting of the members. Subsequent to the annual meeting of the members, the committee shall prepare a list of candidates to serve as officers of the Society and shall nominate such persons at the first meeting of the Board of Directors following the annual meeting of members.

**CHRISTEL VAN DER BERG, SECRETARY**

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## GERMAN-AMERICANS AIDED LIBERTY & PROSPERITY

Ernst Ott, President of DANK (German-American National Congress), stressed the need for our ethnic organizations to achieve the internal and external strength we need to be respected and reckoned with. He recently wrote: "This means we have to be more than just a 'Gemutlichkeitsverein' with a Beer, Bratwurst and Sauerkraut menu. The image of Germans as being mainly Dirndl and Lederhosen figures or the "bad guys" need to be rectified and remind the American public of the many contributions German-Americans have made to the liberty and prosperity of our Nation.

This requires major resources -- idealism, time and financial contributions -- to be devoted to these efforts."

## HENRY BERGE, SCULPTOR, AGE 90

Henry Berge, a Baltimore artist who mastered bas-relief, died Dec. 3. He was the grandson of a German gravestone carver who immigrated to Baltimore in 1872. Henry was born and raised near Clifton Park, the son of acclaimed Baltimore sculptor Edward Berge. Henry's long career includes six works on public display in the city, a record unequaled in the city's history. His statue "St. Francis" can be seen at the Kernan Hospital and his bronze bust of Gov. J. Millard Tawes at the State Office Building. His father, who died in 1924, created "Sea Urchin", depicting a child holding a clam, which stands in Mt. Vernon place, in the block where our Society's office is located. It is one of the city's most familiar pieces of sculpture.

## PROF. RIPLEY HISTORICAL LECTURE AT GERMAN EMBASSY JUNE 18

Prof. La Vern J. Ripley of the German Dept. of St. Olaf College will present a free lecture at the German Embassy at 7:30 p.m. on June 18, 1999. The topic: *German-American Culture in Crisis: Germans in the U.S.A in the years 1916-1918.* Seating is limited. For reservations please call 202-298-4388. For program details call 301-421-3937. Sponsored by the German-American Heritage Society of greater Washington, D.C.

## DR. SCHMEISSNER, UGAC-USA BOARD MEMBER FROM MARYLAND

Dr. Volker Schmeissner, a member of our Society and prominent in regional German-American affairs, now serves as a member of the national United German American Committee-USA, with headquarters in the Philadelphia suburbs. Dr. Schmeissner is the only Marylander on the UGAC board. He is a professor of German in a northern Virginia university. He also supervises the Baltimore Kickers language school. Our Society is a member of UGAC. The following language included in its mission statement: "We foster a positive image of Americans of German-speaking heritage by focusing on their historical contributions to American society, as well as the benefits to the United States of America stemming from German culture, science and industry.

**"IS LANGUAGE FUN? SI! OUI!** ... so reads a headline in a local newspaper. A private company that teaches French and Spanish to elementary school children is thriving in the Baltimore suburbs where 300 children are enrolled in six-week sessions, and similar companies are reporting growing interest. But nowhere do we find "Is language fun? Ja!"

The USA is one of the few countries in the world that does not offer language at the elementary school level, despite the fact that younger children pick up languages faster than older children. One teacher, Cleary Grimm says: "It's the brain before the age of 10. They can master the languages."

A local high school teacher approached our society, inquiring whether we could support a program to introduce German to students about to enter high school. The problem is that the youngsters children are pre-disposed to French and Spanish and it is hard to persuade them to elect German.

If the German language and culture is to be preserved on the local scene, our Society and other German organizations will have become involved. While we give some minor support to the Zion German Language School, we must do a lot more, and aim especially at children. The Baltimore Kickers Club does excellent work with its German classes. But the key is to make classes available to the children in their earliest years.

**PROFILES OF DIRECTORS****EDWIN O. WENCK, AB,BD,JD**

Ed Wenck has been an active member of our Society for nearly 20 years and a director for 10. He is a lawyer, an artist and a minister in the German Reformed Church. His education includes Baltimore Polytechnic Institute, a bachelors degree from Catawba College in Salisbury, N.C., a divinity degree with graduate studies at Lancaster Theological Seminar, a Law degree from the University of Baltimore, studies at the Maryland Institutes and another bachelor's degree from Towson University. He is an Adjunct Professor at the University of Baltimore School of Law and an Adjunct Professor in the Univ. of MD School of Medicine, Dept. of Psychiatry. He also serves as a supervisory attorney for the Legal Aid Bureau.

He spent 9 years as minister of the Faith United Church of Christ and Trinity Reformed Church, in the 1960's and in the past year served as Interim Pastor of Faith and St. Mark's United Church of Christ, which he assisted in its successful merger with a sister church and launched a new building program.

Ed served as a senior prosecutor in Baltimore City for 23 years. In that position he founded its Sex Offense Unit, one of the first in the nation. He supervised the major felony division and handled such celebrated cases at the Mudge Paper Co. contract murder case, the Murphy Homes drug-murder trilogy and the 5-victim Woodland Ave. murder case. He also served as the training director of the State's Attorney's office.

His great-great grandfather, Andrew Wenck, came from the village of Iba in the Hessenwald area of Germany near Bad Hersfeld, immigrating to Mt. Jackson, Va. through the port of Baltimore. Another great grandfather, Ernest Nothnagel came to the US in 1898, also from Hesse, and settled in Stanton, VA. Ed has traveled to Germany, visited the ancestral villages and maintains contacts with his cousin, Herbert Wenk, an architect and engineer who lives near Iba.

Ed wife, Patricia, is a Baltimore City Asst. State's Attorney. He is the father of two sons, Edwin O., II and Eric Andrew.

**HON. GERARD W. WITTSTADT, SR.**

Judge Wittstadt serves as the Counselor to the Society and has been a member for 22 years and a director since 1980 and has served as vice-president. He is the president of The Society for the History of the Germans in Maryland, a "sister" organization to our society for the historical society's 112 years of existence. He received both his bachelor's degree and his Doctor of Laws degree from the University of Maryland. He served as an Assistant Attorney General of Maryland and as a Judge of the Maryland District Court. He currently is engaged in the private practice of law in the firm of Wittstadt and Wittstadt, with his two sons, Mark and Gerard Wm., Jr. He and his wife, Dr. Rosemary H. Wittstadt also have three other children, Rosemary W. Padget, Ann W. Watson and John K. Wittstadt. Gerry has served on many committees, served as an official at the annual ecumenical service and has often been the chairman of our prestigious Annual Awards Banquet.

His great-grandparents immigrated from Bavaria, arriving at the port of Baltimore in 1871. He has family in Würzburg and Nürnberg with whom he maintains regular contact, having visited them on his many tours to Germany.

**Great(5) nephew of Baron deKalb  
Maryland Revolutionary War Hero**

The earliest relative of Judge Wittstadt to come to America was his great (5) uncle, Major General Baron deKalb, in 1777. Baron Johannes deKalb served in the Continental Army as the Commanding General of the Maryland and Delaware Lines. General deKalb died as a result of wounds sustained in the Revolutionary War Battle of Camden, South Carolina. He was born in Hüttendorf, a village near Nürnberg in 1721, was a Knight of the French Order of Merit, and a Brigadier General in a German division in the French Army. He was the senior French officer who brought 12 other officers (including General Lafayette) to America to fight in the Revolution. A statue of Baron deKalb, mounted on horseback and holding his sword aloft, stands on the ground of the Maryland State House in Annapolis, on a tiny parcel of land owned by the United States.

## HOW MAYOR KURT SHMOKE GOT HIS GERMAN NAME

A representative of hizzoner, The Mayor of Baltimore, welcomed The Society for the History of the Germans in MD and regaled them with the story of how the Mayor received his German ancestry. The mayor's great-grandfather whose last name was Smoke, moved his family into a southern town. Shortly, he was approached by a pillar of the community whose name was also Smoke. The pillar insisted that he change his name, since he would not permit a black family to share his name. Word spread throughout the community. A German farmer, whose name was Schmoke, was appalled by this state of affairs. He went to mayor's great-grandfather and offered to let him use his own family name. And that's how an African-American mayor obtained his German heritage.

## GERMAN PIONEER HERITAGE MUSEUM FOR CINCINNATI

The German-American Citizens League of Greater Cincinnati recently broke ground for its German Pioneer Heritage Museum in West Fork Park in Cincinnati's Green Township. The museum's home will be a hand-hewn log structure donated by the Feist family in Delhi, Ohio which has been taken apart and reassembled in Cincinnati. It will serve as the focal point of German culture in Cincinnati and will serve as a testament to the pioneer element of German Cincinnati's cultural origins. The building will include a classroom for German language instruction and history of German-American contributions to the city.

## DAVENPORT TO OPEN GERMAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE CENTER

Davenport, Iowa, once reputed to be the most German city in the Middle West, will open a German-American Heritage Center in 1999. Working closely with fund raising consultants and a construction manager, a renovated building will be the cornerstone in the revitalization planning of downtown Davenport. The mission statement of the group responsible for the project is: "To preserve our German-American heritage for generations to come." The center will offer educational and social opportunities to the city.

## WHAT DO THEY KNOW OF OUR GERMAN HERITAGE?

Consider the 1999 crop of incoming college freshmen. They were born in 1981.

1. They were 9 when the Berlin wall went down.
2. They have no recollection of Ronald "Dutch" Reagan's era.
3. They were 10 when the Persian Gulf War was waged & know nothing of Germany's role in it.
4. What they know of Germans, they learned from TV: a man named Hitler was bad; he was German; so Germans must be bad.
5. Their grandfathers flew the Berlin airlift.
6. They no little of Baron deKalb, who lead "The Maryland Line" in the revolutionary war.
7. They've heard of Beethoven, Brahms, Bach and Mozart, but don't know they spoke German.
8. In school they learned only "politically correct" German history, i.e. about the holocaust.
9. The Vietnam War is as much ancient history as the Revolutionary War.
10. Their lifetime has always included AIDS.

A main goal of the German Society is to pass on our German heritage. It is an uphill battle. Unless members of organizations such as ours spend time and money to educate the young in our heritage, our ethnic traditions will be forever lost.

## ISAAC MYERS, MARYLAND 19TH CENTURY BUSINESS PIONEER

Born in Baltimore in the late 1840's, Isaac Myers worked hard, owned his own shipyard with 300 employees, owned a coal yard, started a newspaper, founded a union and a building and loan association. was a grand master in the Masonic Order, wrote a Masonic handbook and died in 1891. In February he was lauded, lectured and written about in Maryland schools and newspapers. The Living Classrooms Foundation is creating a memorial for him in historic Fells Point. It is not often that a good German name like Myers gets much publicity in our politically correct milieu. Why now? Isaac Myers wasn't German. He was born a free black man in Maryland, a slave state and qualifies for adulation during February, Black History Month.



## HOW GERMAN ORGANIZATIONS CAN SURVIVE NEXT CENTURY

Writing in *The Ambassador*, the newsletter of The United German-American Committee of the USA, its vice-president, Dr. Peter Kador wrote: "Membership has historically been fueled by new immigrants who seek out our German-American organizations because they represent a piece of the "Heimat" they have left behind. Now, our organizations are dying because we generally have minimized the involvement of our children and grandchildren in our organizations. How can we save our German-American organizations and insure their future? This can only be done by actively seeking out and welcoming Americans of German descent into our organizations. We must take advantage of the renewed national interest in ethnicity to help these Americans of German descent discover their "roots". This requires regional and national efforts that publicize the contributions of German-American immigrants that make people aware of the history of German-Americans that foster studies of the German language and culture, and that foster closer contact with the German-speaking nations..."

## MAJOR EVENTS IN GERMANY

1999 is an important year for the Germans. The new currency, the EURO is introduced. The seat for government and parliament moves from Bonn to Berlin. It will celebrate the 50th anniversary of its constitution, the "Grundgesetz", and the 250th anniversary of Goethe. The German Embassy will present a wide scope of lectures, concerts and films to present both the changes and the continuity of German culture. The activities are described on the Embassy's website: <http://www.germany-info.org>

## EU - EUROPEAN UNION

In 1910 the "liberals" in England were talking up the concept of a "United States of Europe," as a new idea invented by them. Writer G. K. Chesterton complained that the liberals ignore the presence in the past of "huge ideals, unfulfilled and sometimes abandoned ... They keep them entirely out of their newspapers and out of their history books." They will not admit that a United States of Europe is a "thing which existed literally in Roman and medieval times....that international hatreds are really very recent, the mere breakdown of the ideal of the Holy Roman Empire".

## CONGRATULATIONS

To President John K. Aymold, Jr. and wife Barbara on the birth of their first grandchild, Allison.

## MENCKEN ON PRESIDENTIAL FOIBLES OF HIS DAY

Presidential shenanigans were not unknown in Mencken's day. He helped expose the charges against Pres. Warren Harding. Harding's mistress, Nan Britton, by whom he had a daughter out of wedlock, wrote a book about her years with Harding, but no one would publish it. It described assignations in a closet in an anteroom of the Oval Office. She had it printed at her own expense, but no critics would review it and no booksellers would handle it. In fact, the vice squad raided the printer and seized the book plates. Mencken, appalled at this form of establishment censorship, undertook to review it in *The Evening Sun*, July 18, 1927. This opened the floodgates and the book became a best seller. Of clandestine love affairs by "men of high eminence", Mencken wrote that it is "surely not a secret to anyone who has been working newspapers as long as I have. They are more apt to have them, in fact, than more obscure men, for women pursue them with greater assiduity and they themselves stand in greater need of sentimental relaxation." ( H. L. Mencken, known as "The Sage of Baltimore", prominent in American literature and proud of his German heritage, was a member of our sister group, The Society for the History of the Germans in Maryland.)

## SUBSCRIBE TO GERMAN LIFE MAGAZINE - GSOM DISCOUNT

**German Life** is a bimonthly national magazine published in Maryland and dedicated to German Americana and German art, travel and cuisine. A discounted price of \$15.95 per year is available through the German Society, provided the Society recruits 10 or more subscribers. Many members of the Society already receive this magazine and are universally delighted with it. It provides information very helpful to the fulfillment of the Society's purpose of promoting our German heritage. If you would like to subscribe, leave your name and address on the Society's answering machine (410-695-0450) and our office secretary will mail you the order form. Please do so by April 9th.

Founded 1783  
Incorporated by Act of the General Assembly  
of Maryland, Chapter 100, Feb. 3, 1818



## The German Society of Maryland

OFFICE OF THE SOCIETY

P.O. Box 22585 Baltimore, MD 21203-4585

410 685-0450

### OFFICERS

1998-1999

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2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President  
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### WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

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Robert (Bob) Colvin  
Annie Hein  
Nancy K. Koepsell  
Dr. Angela Lauman  
Wilhelm Lohmann  
Annemarie Lohmann  
Rose E. Potthast-  
Geppi Rice  
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James Frederick  
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Frederick Waire  
Mabel Waire  
Carol L. Weiss  
Ernest J. Weiss, III

### Statement of purpose

This newsletter is intended to inform our members of current activities of the Society and the Maryland German-American community; of select national events of ethnic interest; of items of local and national history from a German ethnic perspective; and to encourage the study and preservation of the German American heritage, particularly as it has evolved in the State of Maryland.

### MAIL TO:

### APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Zipcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Referred by: \_\_\_\_\_

"I hereby apply to be a member of the German Society of Maryland".

Annual dues \$15. Spouse may be included at no extra cost. Make check payable to "The German Society of MD" P.O. Box 22585, Baltimore MD 21203-4585

This newsletter is published by The German Society of Maryland, an organization founded in 1783 and incorporated in 1817 by Act of the General Assembly of Maryland. It is a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation pursuant to the provisions of §501(c)(3) of the International Revenue Code. The Society is a member of Der Deutschamerikanischer Bürgerverein von Maryland, D.A.N.K. (German-American National Congress), The United German-American Committee of the USA, Inc. and other civic groups which promote German-American culture and heritage. Members and friends are encouraged to submit items of interest to Theodore J. Potthast, Jr., Editor at 1819 Leadburn Rd., Towson, MD 21204-1830 or fax 410-832-2903