

A LETTER FROM CINCINNATI'S COMMITTEE
FOR THE NEEDY IN GERMANY TO JAKOB GRIMM

by
Heinz Röllecke
Visiting Professor, University of Cincinnati

During the years 1846-47 a great famine prevailed in almost all parts of Europe followed by increasing prices and increasing unrest. As a result of these wretched conditions the rate of emigration to America, especially to German-American centers such as Cincinnati, greatly increased. Many Germans sought a new home, but not all of them could afford the expensive fare across the Atlantic. The German governments could afford very little support to the poor, and the desertion of entire villages and communities as a result of this mass emigration gave cause for concern and alarm.

In America many segments of German-American society were quick to offer their assistance to their unfortunate former countrymen. In Cincinnati a Committee for the Needy in Germany (Kommittee für die Nothleidenden in Deutschland) was founded, whose officers were: Henry Roedter, president; J. H. Ronnebaum, vice president; J. B. Moormann, secretary; N. D. C. Moeller, treasurer. The main address of their effort was given as 29 Main Street.

A large-scale fund drive yielded, \$2,774.57 by April 12, 1847, an impressive sum for that time. The Cincinnati Volksblatt, a German Democratic newspaper founded and directed by

the Committee's president, reported on the decision of the Committee on April 15, 1847 to collect the funds and immediately divide them into five equal parts to be sent to the cities of Osnabrueck, Berlin, Dresden, Duesseldorf and Darmstadt for their respective provinces. Circular letters signed by seven members of the Committee were addressed to two well-known personalities in each of these German cities. The contact persons in Germany were mostly mayors, delegates, and bishops of the respective provinces. As contacts in Berlin the Committee chose Friedrich von Raumer, a noted historian (1781-1873), and the world renowned Jakob Grimm (1785-1863).

The following letter to Jakob Grimm is contained in the archives of the Staatsbibliothek Berlin:

[Envelope]

Post marks (1) Cincinnati (2) MY 14 1847 (3) Aachen 16.5
(4) 19.5 (Berlin)

Avis.

Herrn Jakob Grimm zu

Berlin

Germany

via Boston by British steamer.

Die Unterstützung

der Nothleidenden in

Deutschland betreffend.

[Letter]

Cincinnati St. Ohio, 17 Apr. 1847.

Herrn

J. Grimm

zu Berlin.

Geehrtester Herr!

Die Unterzeichneten, als Committee einer am 12ten dss Mts gehaltenen Versammlung der hier wohnenden Deutschen, haben die Ehre, Sie zu benachrichtigen, daß als Beitrag zur Linderung der Noth in Deutschland in hiesiger Stadt, soweit, eine Summe 2774 57/100 Dollars¹ gesammelt und in gleichen Theilen nach fünf verschiedenen Gegenden Deutschlands zur Vertheilung bestimmt wurde; zu deren zweckmäßigsten Verwendung in Ihrer Gegend das hiesige deutsche Publikum Ew. Wohlgeboren in Gemeinschaft mit Herrn Friedr. von Raumer zu Berlin ausersehen hat, mit dem Sie sich deshalb gefälligst in Benehmen setzen wollen. Die ganze Summe der gesammelten Beiträge wurde an das Haus J. Berenberg, Gossler u. Co zu Hamburg abgeschickt, mit der Ordre, den jedesmaligen Betrag eines fünftels an solche seiner Correspondenten zur weiteren Besorgung zu überweisen, die den zur Vertheilung ernannten Herren am nächsten wohnen. Durch jenes Haus also, resp. deren Correspondenten, werden Sie demnach seiner Zeit das Geld, sowie ein dasselbe begleitendes ausführlicheres Schreiben zugestellt erhalten, aus dessen Inhalt Sie sodann das weitere ersehen werden.

Gegenwärtiges Schreiben soll nur als Avisbrief dienen.
 Mit ausgezeichnete Hochachtung Ihre Ergebensten
 Dr. Adolph Bauer. Arno Kattenhorn. Henry Joedter.
 Jos. Schwegmann. G. Wylick. Zach. Auer. John Leist

Die Portogebühren wollen Sie von den zukommenden Geldern zu entnehmen belieben, da wir hier nicht durchaus frankiren können.

The post marks on the envelope indicate that the letter was forwarded by the British steamer on May 14, 1847, reached the German border at Aachen on May 16 and arrived in Berlin three days later. The actual circular letter was sent later. The Volksblatt reported that the money collected was to be distributed to the needy without consideration of religion, since it had also been given without consideration of religion.

On April 14, 1847 the Cincinnati Trust Company drew a bill of exchange for the amount (free of charge) on Boston and sent it to the banking house of Johann Berenberg, Gossler and Co. in Hamburg.

The Volksblatt published a touching letter of thanks to Dr. Adolph Bauer in Cincinnati from Osnabrueck dated June 23, 1847, which the latter received on August 6, 1847. This letter related the conditions caused by the famine in Westphalia and other areas whose poorer inhabitants would be helped with the money sent. The letter closes: "For now we can only express our deepest and strongest feeling of joy and gratefulness; joy in as much as we as Germans can be

happy about the living proof, coming to us from so far away, of a still existing German sentiment and concern for the old fatherland; and gratefulness for the fact that you, gentlemen, have honored us to be the voice of the humane attitude of men, whose trust must honor and elevate us."

The undersigned members of the committee were mostly well-known Cincinnati businessmen of German descent. The Cincinnati city directory of 1846 gives the following information:

Dr. Adolph Bauer:² East Walnut between 6th and 7th;
 Arno Kattenhorn: business "Kattenhorn and Ficker, grocers",
 30 Lower Market; Henry Roedter:³ Attorney and notary, south
 side of Court St. between Main and Sycamore (See also: Cin-
 cinnati: The Queen City, 1788-1912, Volume IV, 1912, pp. 911-
 915); Joseph Schwegman: Coffee house, no. 4 Sycamore; G. Wylick:
 not listed; Zacharius Auer: business "Auer and Cohen, clothiers,"
 between Sycamore and Broadway on Front St.; John Leist:
 Leather Store, west side of Main between 7th and 8th.

The money raised through concerts, theater performances, private donations (from \$1 to \$51.35) and primarily by churches of various denominations was collected by volunteers in the ten wards of Cincinnati.

The spirit of humanitarianism has remained undiminished in Cincinnati over the years, for at the close of World War II, exactly 100 years later, innumerable CARE packages brought help to a destroyed Germany and her needy people.

FOOTNOTES

¹The rate of exchange at the time was: 1 Mark = 35.25 cents

²Bauer wrote under the pseudonym, "Der Alte." He was born in 1809 in Augsburg and died in 1868 in Cincinnati. He received his M.D. in America in 1838 (three years after his emigration) and set up a practice in the Queen City. Several of his articles and poems appeared in the "Alte und Neue Welt" (Phila.), "Volksblatt" (Cinci.), F. Hassaurek's "Hochwächter," Konrad Nies' "Deutsch-Amerikanische Dichtung," and in "Der Freisinnige" which he co-edited with F. L. Emmerth. Cf. Robert E. Ward, Dictionary of German-American Creative Literature (in press).--Ed.

³Heinrich (Henry) Rödter wrote under the pseudonym, "Gracchus." He was born in Neustadt an der Hardt on March 10, 1805. While studying law at Munich he met Siebenpfeifer and Dr. Wirth who influenced him to join the Turner movement and take part in the Hambacher Fest. In 1832 Rödter arrived in Cincinnati, and subsequently worked in other cities in Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky (primarily as a German-American journalist). He was one of the founders and the first editor of the Volksblatt, and edited several other newspapers. A biographer, poet, political and social essayist, Rödter's articles in the Volksblatt during 1836 inspired the movement which led to the German-American conventions of 1837-42. Cf. Ward, op. cit.--Ed.

GERMAN-AMERICAN RESEARCH

The University of Calgary (Alberta, Canada) has instituted a Research Centre for Canadian Ethnic Studies which publishes a journal entitled Canadian Ethnic Studies. This new publication contains vital information on Canada's German-speaking element.

THE MAX KADE
GERMAN-AMERICAN DOCUMENT
AND RESEARCH CENTER

Kenneth Spencer Research Library
University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas 66044