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Introduction: Philadelphia, 2017

Between 1815 and 1820, almost 15,000 German immigrants entered the United States, with arrivals peaking in 1816/17.¹ They were leaving a European continent that, with Napoleon's final defeat at Waterloo in 1815, had finally found peace after more than two decades of war. However, much of that continent, as well as its people, were exhausted. In the south western states of the newly recognised German Confederation, village harvests had continually supplemented Napoleon's armies, and community reserves had been emptied. A series of extreme geological and meteorological events in other parts of the globe compounded these problems. Volcanic eruptions, culminating in the Tambora event of April, 1815, had significantly adverse effects on weather in the northern hemisphere during the Napoleonic Wars, and in their immediate aftermath.² In 1816, the year that exhausted south west German communities had finally hoped for their first reprieve from war and weather in a generation, they were presented with biblically described weather conditions, widespread crop failure and the early onset of a hard winter. When combined with increased taxation, pressed from every community to pay off royal war debts and expand government offices, it looked, for many, as if reprieve at home might never come. Tens of thousands headed east and west, with only a small fraction reaching the goals they set out for, in a movement that became a transformative crisis.³

The migration movement that occurred from the German south west across the Atlantic, predominantly to Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, is well documented. Each aspect of this moment has been given close attention, be it the broader meteorological context, the testimony of the migrants themselves, the structure, course and logistics of the movement, or its wider context in German-American history.⁴ The event was transformative not only in changing patterns of transportation in the Atlantic for future German migrants, but in seeding many of the migration networks that operated between old and new world for the rest of the 19th century. On the American side, it led to the first attempts to legally manage and co-ordinate European immi-

gration. This attempt was enshrined in the first U.S. passenger laws, created in 1819—a direct result of the 1816/17 crisis. In 2016 and 2017, a number of events took place in both Europe and the United States to commemorate the event. The collected essays here were initially presented in Philadelphia in the summer of 2017, at a conference that was generously sponsored by the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung.⁵ They offer new perspective, insight and findings about this transformative moment, and helped form a broad discussion about the context of the 1816/17 migration, its connectivity to the 18th century German-American movement that preceded it, the 19th century era of mass migration that followed it, and how modern scholars approach the issue of historical migration.

The papers collected in this volume shed new light on a number of aspects of the post-Napoleonic event, often named the ‘Tambora crisis’ in climate research, and are contextualised within the broader frame of German Atlantic movement. Pointing out that climate and weather crisis had a formative influence on the history of German engagement with the New World, Marianne S. Wokeck’s essay explores migration as an adaptive strategy, framing the ‘18th century’ of German-Atlantic migration between the extreme weather events of 1709 and 1816/17. In doing so the essay questions how migration as personal and community strategy was shaped by these events, encouraging scholars to use such instances as focal points for understanding migration systems. Andrew Zonderman then goes on to explore the peak age of the 18th century German-Atlantic ‘redemptioner’ system through the prism of German merchants and agents who, upon arrival in Philadelphia, pursued commercial enterprises through wider engagement—including passenger shipping—with the British Empire.

The story of the ship *Hope* demonstrates, in distressing detail, what happened in 1817 when the redemptioner system which brought Germans to Philadelphia on credit, collapsed into speculative trading, rather than organised transport. Until now, the standard story of passenger abuse during the 1817 crossing has remained that of the ship *April*, infamous for the mortality it caused.⁶ In bringing forward the story of the *Hope*, David Barnes not only provides the historiography with a new case study, but brings to light the role of the Philadelphia Lazaretto in alleviating the suffering of many migrants during the 1817 movement—a crisis on American shores as well as those of Europe.

That crisis created the decisive legal changes that would signal the end of the redemptioner trade. In Europe, crisis in the Netherlands and transit territories of Prussia led to state-led impositions on migrants that effectively stopped the flow of speculative migration attempts. James Boyd explores these changes alongside the concomitant legal measures of the US navigation

law, in 1819, and changing American economic context after 1818, which made a return to any form of redemptioner system unprofitable and unpractical. In light of these changes, further changes to passenger law in European ports—haunted by the experience of 1816/17—ensured that when German emigration began to re-emerge around 1828, it did so under the fee-paying, competitive passenger system recognisable as the 19th century immigration model.

The volume closes with the paper ‘Serial Sources in Excess’, a contribution from Konstantin Huber that will be invaluable to historians and scholars investigating German-American history. From the district archive in Baden-Württemberg’s Enzkreis, Huber has given tireless support to historical research into the German-American emigration question, as well as German social history. His contribution here, a revelation for many attendees in Philadelphia in 2017, explains and unlocks the value of huge volumes of material available to researchers in the German south west. The sources in discussion will support untold future research into German-Atlantic migration, and clearly harbour enormous potential for future historical discovery.

This volume now appears at the bi-centenary of the first U.S. Passenger Laws, passed in 1819, which were one of many critical social and political responses to the crisis of 1816/17. It is hoped that these essays will provide scholars of German-American history with fresh material insight into the events of 1816/17 (and beyond), and will introduce to the field manifold nuances that both contributed to the 18th century German-Atlantic system, and contributed to its displacement as a result of the Tambora crisis.

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Notes

¹ Hans Jürgen Grabbe, *Vor der Großen Flut: Die europäische Migration in die Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika, 1783–1820* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2001), 60.

² Although by far the largest, Tambora was not the only major volcanic event of the Napoleonic era—there were at least 8 others, including an event of unknown origin in 1808/9, which began to effect weather patterns in Europe during 1812. This may have been the cause of failed vintages in 1812/13/14. See *ibid.*, 32-34; also Jihong Cole-Dai, David Ferris, Alysso Lanciki, Jöel Savarino, Mélanie Baronie, ‘Cold Decade (1810–19) caused by Tambora and another (1809) Eruption’, *Geophysical Research Letters* 36.22 (2009).

³ At least 33,525 departures were recorded in Baden and Württemberg from January 2017 until July 2017. 11,205 from Württemberg headed to Russia, the Habsburg Empire and Prussia, leaving slightly over 22,000 America-bound migrants from the two states—sig-

nificantly more than reached the USA across the 1815–20 period, let alone the single year of 1817. Baden numbers were 16,321 Jan–May 1817, Württemberg 17,205 (6,000 to the U.S.) from Jan–July. Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart (HSAS) E146 Bu1783; Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe (GLK) E236 2871.

⁴ On the ecological context, see recently Rüdiger Glaser, Iso Himmelsbach and Annette Bösmeier, ‘Climate of migration? How climate triggered migration from southwest Germany to North America during the 19th century, century,’ *Climate of the Past* 13 (2017): 1573–92 and on effects within Germany generally Wolfgang Behringer, *Tambora und das Jahr ohne Sommer: Wie ein Vulkan die Welt in die Krise stürzte* (München: C. H. Beck, 2017); on migrant testimony, and as an overview of the movement from individual and official perspective, the defining work remains Günther Moltmann *Aufbruch nach Amerika: Friedrich List und die Auswanderung aus Baden und Württemberg 1816/17, Dokumentation einer sozialen Bewegung* (Tübingen: Wunderlich, 1979); on the structure of shipping and trade that carried the migration, see Grabbe, *Flut*.

⁵ ‘Fleeing Europe, Finding Philadelphia: German Atlantic Migrants and the Crisis of 1816–17’ was held at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and German Society of Pennsylvania, July 17–18, 2017, with the support of Fritz Thyssen Stiftung, grant no 30.17.0.063GE, this publication is supported by the subsequent grant from the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung no. 60.19.0.038GE.

⁶ Robert P. Swierenga, Henry Lammers, ‘Odyssey of Woe: The Journey of the Immigrant Ship *April* From Amsterdam to New Castle, 1817–1818,’ *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 118.4 (1984): 303–23.