

**Address by German Ambassador Klaus Scharioth
at the Festival Banquet Celebrating the 400th
Anniversary of German Settlement in America
Williamsburg, Virginia, April 19, 2008**

Madam Mayor Zeidler, Secretary Smith, General Schachthöfer, Members of German-American Societies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you very much for inviting me to participate in this wonderful celebration. I am happy to be here with you.

First of all, I would like to express my warm thanks to the regional German-American societies and, in particular, to the organizing committee for its excellent preparation of this celebration. This event would not have been possible without your enormous commitment.

As today's event shows once again in exemplary fashion, the German-American societies have a very important task – the task of preserving and fostering the traditions of our country and the German language in the United States. The societies deserve special credit for their long and extraordinary commitment, in some case, for well over one hundred years. You can look back with pride and satisfaction on all you have achieved. And for that, I wish to express my sincere thanks

The 400th anniversary of Jamestown: That means 400 years of America, 400 years of German-American friendship, and 400 years of shared history.

For a minute, let's go back in history even one hundred years further, so we can witness the birth of the name "America."

It was the German cartographer Martin Waldseemüller, who in 1507 drew the *Universalis cosmographia* in St. Dié, Lorraine, which is now a part of France. Fascinated by the reports of the Italian discoverer Amerigo Vespucci – who was the first to assume that the then-newly discovered territories must be a continent – Waldseemüller drew it as a continent of its own and named it "America" on his map – the first time ever the name "America" appeared on a map. We can thus rightfully consider the two Europeans, Martin Waldseemüller and Amerigo Vespucci, the godparents of America.

It is now almost exactly one year ago today (April 30, 2007) that I had the pleasure to participate in the event, at which German Chancellor Angela Merkel ceremoniously turned over this extraordinary Waldseemüller map, which is viewed as the birth certificate of America, to the Library of Congress, where it occupies a special place of honor.

1507 and 1607-08: These are just two key dates in German-American relations. Since then, we have witnessed the history of Germans in America, which is indeed impressive. Very few know that people of German ancestry are the largest ethnic group in the U.S.: At the last census in 2000, 43 million Americans stated that they had German

roots – by far the largest single group of origin. But before all it is impressive, because of the numerous outstanding and diverse contributions that Germans and German Americans have made to this unique success story called “United States of America.”

As President Ronald Reagan said in 1981 about the German immigrants and German Americans “. . . with strong hands and good hearts, these industrious people helped build a strong and good America.”

This quote impressively captures the sentiment expressed at today’s earlier event, where, at the remains of the Glasshouse in Jamestown, we commemorated the first German pioneers, who, together with British settlers, established the first “industrial operation” in the British part of America, when they built four melting furnaces along the banks of the James River. Like so many others later on, they brought highly skilled craftsmanship, boundless energy and a strong work ethic.

But the contributions that Germans have made to the development of this nation are, of course, by no means limited to the beginnings of the glass-making industry in Jamestown. Allow me to recall a few other examples from American political, economic, and cultural life:

More than 120 years after the founding of Jamestown, Johann Peter Zenger of the Palatinate (1697-1746) became perhaps the first champion of American freedom of the press. In the *New York Weekly Journal*, he accused the colonial government of corruption in 1733 and was consequently thrown in prison in 1734. But, he was later vindicated by the jury court – a precedent-setting case which laid the foundation for freedom of the press in the U.S.

One of the most renowned and highly respected immigrants to the United States of America was and is Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben (1730-94), who played a crucial role in the American War of Independence.

Born in Magdeburg in 1730, he served 17 years in the Prussian army. In 1777, Steuben became acquainted with the American ambassador in Paris, Benjamin Franklin. On Franklin’s recommendation, he came to North America, where the American War of Independence had broken out two years before, and joined the Continental Army.

At Valley Forge, he took over leadership of the Continental Army, in which consistent, disciplined, and efficient structures were practically non-existent. In 1778, Steuben began rebuilding the army tactically and operatively and created a system of discipline, organization, and training for the troops.

Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, who for a time served as George Washington’s Chief of Staff, is considered the architect of American independence from a military perspective, because he succeeded in transforming the quarreling and militarily inexperienced groups of volunteers into a powerful, professional army. Not far from here, he accepted the first British offers of capitulation. Today, the famous Steuben parade is still held in his honor every September along Fifth Avenue in New York.

A few years later, in 1848, the revolution in Prussia and other parts of Germany lead to the convening of a German National Assembly in Frankfurt’s Paulskirche. Revolutionary hopes of transforming the loose “German Confederation” into a unified and democratically constituted Germany were soon dashed by the conservative-minded establishment. Many of the liberal patriots became political refugees, and thousands

went into exile to America, the country whose revolutionary ideals had served them as an example. Among those many 1848ers was Carl Schurz, a strong leader and very influential among the German Americans of his time, an advocate of freedom and bipartisanship, and a fierce opponent of slavery. He later became Secretary of the Interior and is often described as an "American patriot of the German kind."

When we now hear names such as Astor, or Heinz, just about every one of us associates them with America, American wealth, and American economic power. Their ancestors, however, were among those German emigrants who left for America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to start a new life in this country.

For example, Johann Jakob Astor (1763-1848) was a German emigrant who became the wealthiest man in the United States during his lifetime through fur trade and real estate. According to Forbes Magazine, his wealth would be worth \$115 billion in today's money, making him the fourth wealthiest person in American history. Today, the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, as well as some American city names such as Astor, in Florida, or Astoria, in Oregon, can be traced back to the Astor family.

Henry J. Heinz was born in 1844 to German parents, who emigrated from Kallstadt, Germany. As you all know, one of his company's first products was ketchup. The company continued to grow and is now one of the biggest food companies in the world.

In the field of politics, I would like to mention former Secretary of State Dr. Henry Kissinger as an outstanding example. Henry Kissinger, who was born in Fürth in 1923, emigrated to the United States with his family in 1938. After a brilliant academic career at Harvard University, Kissinger became Richard Nixon's National Security Advisor after his election in 1968. He ultimately served also as Secretary of State in 1973, a position, which he held until 1977, also in Gerald Ford's Cabinet. In 1973, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Henry Kissinger for his efforts to end the Vietnam War.

In the cultural science sphere, we encounter names such as Ludwig Mies Van der Rohe or Walter Gropius, who are widely regarded as the pioneering masters of modern architecture, first at the "Bauhaus" in Germany and later of what is known as the International Style. Linked to them in spirit is Helmut Jahn, a German-American architect who has designed dozens of important buildings throughout the world. Some of his projects were One Liberty Place, formerly the tallest building in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and the Sony Center at Potsdamer Platz in Berlin.

Most of you might have seen some works by Helmut Newton, born Helmut Neustädter in Berlin in 1920. He was one of the most famous fashion photographers of the twentieth century, known in America and around the world for his erotic and artistic style.

Among the many German immigrants with a Jewish background, who were forced out of Germany and came to the United States mostly in the 1930s, were names such as Albert Einstein, who in 1933 renounced his German citizenship and moved to the United States to take the position of Professor of Theoretical Physics at Princeton. Thereafter, he became an American citizen.

At least as important as these outstanding examples are the rich and close people to people relations which we share today and which run through all aspects of society.

Annually, about 8 million people travel between our two countries in business or as tourists, artists, scientists, and students. Every day, millions of phone calls and more than 10 million e-mails cross the Atlantic, and, because of this tight communication network, our two countries are growing ever closer together.

I am especially pleased that the university exchange between the United States and Germany is a particularly vibrant sign of these close relations. Alone in the last five years, the number of U.S. students in Germany has risen by a third, to 6,900. On this side of the Atlantic, approximately 8,700 Germans were studying in the United States last year.

Moreover, a host of government and private organizations support our bilateral student exchange in such a sheer abundance that millions of friendly encounters can take place in classrooms and with host families on both sides of the Atlantic every year.

German continues to be the third most popular foreign language in the United States and the number of students learning German at universities is on the rise again. Particularly with respect to fostering the German language, this shows how the German-American societies are working hard at the grass-roots level to ensure that German cultural contributions do not disappear in this country. When German-American societies successfully operate German language schools, the so-called Saturday schools, when they award scholarships and promote the German language in a variety of ways, then this is a trend which makes me very happy and which we would like to support as much as possible.

Allow me at this juncture to point out that in 2008 we are celebrating not only the 400th anniversary of German settlement at Jamestown but also other important dates in our shared German-American history: the 60th anniversary of the Berlin Airlift and of the implementation of the Marshall Plan.

The German people will always remember the American heroes who saved 2 million Berliners from the cold and hunger in 1948 and 1949. They brought everything to allow people to survive: from potatoes to a whole power plant. One thing in particular, however, caught the imagination of the German people and explains why the planes were affectionately referred to as "candy bombers." American pilots like Lt. Gail Halvorsen tossed candy tied to small hand-made parachutes to the children curiously waiting at the edge of the airport while the planes landed at Berlin-Tempelhof.

These actions triggered a wave of support – Halvorsen and his crew soon had 850 lbs. of candy daily to drop from their planes. By the end of the Airlift, some 25 aircraft crews had dropped a total of 23 tons of candy over Berlin.

These Airmen, and the roughly 17 million American soldiers and family members who since 1945 have lived in and grown fond of my country, but who have also brought the American way of life to Germany – these Americans are the basis for the very positive image of Americans in Germany and Europe. At the same time they brought back with them their positive experiences in Germany to the United States.

The Marshall Plan raised a war-wracked West Germany up out of the ashes and reintegrated it into the community of nations following years of Fascist brutality. The chapter on the Marshall Plan reads like a fairy tale in the history of Germany.

The moral effect of support from the European Recovery Program was as important

as its material value. Other countries might have received even more. But what was unique and what impressed Germans was that the victor helped the defeated who had been the aggressor, back up to his feet.

The Marshall Plan enabled West Germany to return to the international community. The loans were given on the condition that the Europeans pull together and meet regularly within the Organization for European Economic Cooperation. Thus, former enemies were persuaded to sit down at the same table – an important step on the path to European integration.

Looking back in history, one can view the Airlift and the concerted efforts of the Marshall Plan as the start of the close and trustful German-American partnership and friendship that we enjoy today.

Today, Germany and the United States, two of the world's strongest democracies and leading economies, stand shoulder-to-shoulder as they confront new challenges, just as they stood together on freedom's frontline throughout the Cold War. From fighting international terrorism, to bringing peace to Afghanistan, the Balkans, the Middle East, and other regions of the world, to combating nuclear proliferation, controlling global warming, and securing the energy supply, Germany and the United States are united in their commitment to solve these global challenges together for future generations. And let me add: we can only solve them if America and Europe work together – there is no alternative. The strong German-American partnership and friendship, based on shared fundamental interests and values, benefits not just our two countries but also transatlantic ties and the international community as a whole.

Germans will never forget America's indispensable role in postwar reconstruction, in protecting Western Europe during the Cold War and helping to overcome the division of Germany and Europe. We know that without the United States it would have been impossible to achieve German Unity in 1990 and a reunited Europe thereafter.

This close tie and community of values shared between our two nations and peoples is the result of a centuries-long shared German-American history and should be a commitment to continue actively shaping the German-American partnership and friendship for the future, to continue carrying the spirit of the first pioneers of Jamestown. Thank you!

