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German Immigrants, the Revolution of 1848, and the Politics of Liberalism in Antebellum Richmond

In 1857, the German community in Richmond organized a festival in honor of Major General Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, a German hero of the American Revolution. The festival should have served a dual purpose for the German community in Richmond: in a time when many native-born Americans in the United States, associated with the nativist American Party, doubted the loyalty and reliability of the foreign newcomers, Richmond Germans sought to link the heritage of their country to the American Revolution.¹ In addition the organizers used the festival to strengthen the links of the city's German community with the traditions of Jacksonian Democracy.

The keynote speaker for the first von Steuben festival was Oswald Heinrich, a refugee from the 1848 uprisings in Germany. In his speech he extolled both patriotism and industry of the German element in the city. He admonished his American listeners that "the industry of the Germans . . . transformed the districts of our new fatherland into blooming fields. And do not the Germans gather around the floating banners of that party, which makes the principles of the founders of the republic our own, and protects freedom and equality against attacks and monopolies?"² On the surface, it should not come as a surprise that a refugee of a revolution fought for, among other things, individual liberties, should throw his lot in with the Democratic Party in the United States. However, since the Democratic Party not only claimed the heritage of Jacksonian Democracy but also provided the major platform for the defense of slavery and Southern nationalism at the time, the fact that Heinrich was a Forty-Eighter merits more attention. As we will see, Heinrich's career is not entirely untypical for many German Richmonders who dabbled in radical politics in Germany and subsequently found a new political home in the Jacksonian wing of the Democratic Party.³

Traditionally historians explain the alliance between antebellum German immigrants and the Democratic Party with the latter's active opposition to the nativism of the Whig and later American Party. This, however, was not the case in Richmond. Both parties had openly supported and encouraged immigration, and consequently, nativism played only a minor role in the city's politics.⁴ For example, mayor Joseph P. Mayo, a Know Nothing of Irish lineage, campaigned before Irish immigrants for reelection in 1855 by castigating the Know-Nothings. In the same way Irishmen elected Thomas Wynne, who ran on the Know-Nothing ticket, as superintendent of the gasworks in the same year.⁵ Clearly, in the case of Richmond an alternative explanatory framework needs to be found to explain the alliance between the city's Democrats and its German immigrant allies.

This essay will argue that the positions and respect these Germans gained and enjoyed in Richmond's social and civic life suggest a higher level of tolerance towards political liberals exhibited by Southern authorities during the sectional crisis than previously assumed. The existence, however brief, of a radical democratic political organization in the city and the enduring presence of the socialist *Turnverein* throughout the antebellum and Civil War period indicates that a Southern political culture, which became more and more autocratic in terms of its defense of slavery, could provide a hospitable climate for liberals and democrats as long as the latter refrained from questioning the legitimacy of the peculiar institution.⁶

Indeed, it seemed that the political establishment in Richmond had come to terms with German immigrants steeped in the liberal tradition of the revolutionary events of 1848. Vice versa, German immigrants must have found (or forced themselves to find) a referential framework in the republican ideology of the antebellum, Southern wing of the Democratic Party which made the institution of slavery less offensive to or even compatible with their own liberal tradition.⁷

Throughout the antebellum period, Richmond Democrats appealed to aspects of republicanism that would not challenge the legitimacy of the institution of slavery, and yet correspond to and promise amelioration of the Germans' experience of tyrannical subjugation in their homeland. The Democrats' anti-tariff policies and their firm opposition to financial monopolies reverberated among Germans who had emigrated before 1848, and whose countrymen struggled for tariff-free zones and a more liberal economy at home. Having their own quest for an independent and unified Germany in mind, many German immigrants could identify with the rising sentiments of Southern nationalism that stressed such rights as national sovereignty and self-determination.⁸

The political philosophy of the Democratic Party in Richmond intersected with those other Forty-Eighters who also considered themselves "liberals" and "radicals," but who tried to erect a political system "between the anachronisms of autocracy and the horrors of revolution." They aspired to political participation through which they could "exercise a salutary restraint on the ruler with-

out becoming subservient to the lower classes."⁹ These liberals did not want to substitute the tyranny of princes with what they considered an unchecked tyranny of the masses, a political outlook eminently compatible with the ideology of Southern Democrats.

Germans who would constitute the core of Richmond's antebellum German community came to the city in the late 1830s and complemented a small number of German merchants associated with one of the large tobacco wholesale houses in northern Germany.¹⁰ In 1835, the James River and Kanawha Canal Company contracted for German and Irish workers to work on a canal project to connect the James with the Ohio River, a project that never came to full fruition. The work conditions on the canal were so hazardous, however, that most imported laborers departed the project soon after it started. After a strike for higher wages and a devastating death toll among mostly Irish hands, the majority of Germans among the canal work force panicked and left the canal site, many of them seeking their fortune in Richmond.¹¹

Over the next twenty-five years German immigrants created a cohesive ethnic community. Richmond remained a popular location to settle down for German immigrants as the German-born population in the city rose proportionally faster than the native white population. By 1860 almost 25 percent of the white population in Richmond was foreign born, half of them German.¹²

Veterans of canal construction were instrumental in creating the first religious and relief organizations for Germans in Richmond. Johann Lange founded the *Deutsche Krankengesellschaft* (German Society for the Relief of the Sick) in 1841, a relief society which disbursed more than \$23,000 in benefits between 1841 and 1891 to its members. Canal workers were also instrumental in organizing the first German Lutheran church in 1843. A second Lutheran church, a Jewish Synagogue and a Catholic church soon followed.¹³

Germans did everything to create their own ethnic enclave in the city. By 1853, the German neighborhoods were sprinkled with beer halls and beer gardens, so much so that Samuel Mordecai, an astute observer of Richmond affairs in the early 1850s, estimated that "the number of Saloons . . . is barely exceeded by that of clothing shops, kept also by Germans." Johann Lange was so taken by the business prospects of opening a saloon that he tore down the walls of his shoe shop, put up some tables and chairs, and opened his beer hall "Harmonia."¹⁴

Beer halls and saloons also provided the infrastructure for social, and later, political organizations.¹⁵ The *Socialer Turnverein*, a gymnastics club with overtly left wing political sympathies, and the singing society "Gesang-Verein Virginia" found their homes in Steinlein's Monticello Hall and August Schad's beer hall. Louis Rueger, August Schad, and Johann Lange, all saloon owners at the time, were also instrumental in organizing a German militia unit, the German Rifles, in March 1850.¹⁶ By forming an ethnic militia company for the defense of the city, Germans showed both pride in their heritage and loyalty to the larger Richmond community.

Finally the successful publication of a German language newspaper rounded off community building by Richmond Germans. After some fruitless attempts to publish a German-language newspaper in the city, Burghardt Hassel, a printer and immigrant from Hesse, set up shop in Richmond and on 1 June 1853, the *Richmond Anzeiger* appeared for the first time. The *Anzeiger* strongly leaned towards the local Democratic Party, and, in alliance with the Democratic *Richmond Enquirer*, would be instrumental in veering the German community towards support of secession in 1861.¹⁷

By the late 1840s and early 1850s, German immigrants constituted a visible presence in Richmond's cityscape. City chronicler Mordecai told of neighborhoods where "more German names than any other appear over the doors . . . and to judge by the conversations heard in the streets, one might be at a loss to know whether German or English is the language of the country."¹⁸ Thus, by the time word came of the spring uprisings in Germany in 1848, Richmond Germans were well underway to build a socially stratified ethnic community which kept a delicate balance between the preservation of their inherited culture and the building of bridges to Richmond's social and political establishment.

The events of March 1848 in France provoked an exuberant reaction among native Germans and Democrats in Richmond. The editors of the *Richmond Enquirer* admired the "calm, but decisive Revolution in France," that is "destined to work mighty moral effects upon the whole world . . . They are a reflex of the genial influences of our own liberal institutions."¹⁹ Thus the editors were quick to establish a causal link between the American revolutionary heritage and the events transpiring in Europe.

Establishing the principles of the American Revolution as a defining influence on revolutionary movements abroad is nothing new in American history. From the American Revolution on, many Americans were "imbued with an unqualified faith in the doctrine of progress" and assumed that "the American example would automatically and imperceptibly conquer Europe."²⁰ Indeed, as early as 1842, another Richmond publication, the *Southern Literary Messenger*, foresaw a republican uprising in Europe based on the American model. The editors asserted that the European monarchies have been undermined "by the influence and example of self-government exhibited by the United States," and it would be only a matter of time until these old institutions would receive the "coming shock to crumble into ruin."²¹

Yet, the Democratic editors, when addressing matters concerning the revolutions in Europe, shrewdly singled out the issues of free trade and individual opportunity as the corner stones of their and the Europeans' republican vision; and the party that advocated free trade and by implication economic opportunity was the Southern Democratic Party. Since a Democrat was in the White House at the time, the editors of the *Enquirer* argued that the revolution in Europe might have occurred a century later "than would have been the case if Mr. Clay had been elected over Mr. Polk." They then went on to quote Schiller

who once wrote that "where the ship sails, the wide world's goods sails with her.' Commerce and political freedom are handmaidens, ever vigilant to seeking and administering to suffering humanity." It also helped that the revolution in France started on 22 February, the birthday of another revered Virginian native, George Washington.²²

For Democrats, mentioning Schiller and Polk in one paragraph was not as absurd as it might seem to us today. The opening of borders and tariff-free exchange of goods also meant exchange of ideas, in this case republican ideas. Thus, according to the editors of the *Enquirer*, Polk's expansionist and free trade policies served as an inspiration for European revolutionaries. At the heart of this entrepreneurial republicanism was the unconditional protection of personal property and freedom of movement. For Southerners, however, talk of protection of personal property always served as a thinly veiled euphemism for the protection of slavery. Therefore, Southern Democrats regarded the expansion of slavery into new territories as a natural right well within the American traditions of republicanism and Manifest Destiny.

The European uprisings came on the heels of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo which formally ended America's war with Mexico and resulted in the acquisition of California and New Mexico. For President Polk as well as such literary figures as Walt Whitman and James Fenimore Cooper, America's war with Mexico seemed part of a worldwide mission to extend democratic ideals beyond her borders, and her triumph confirmation of the superiority of democratic institutions.²³ Polk's dispatch to the delegates of Germany's first parliament in Frankfurt, and his decision, as the world's sole government, to extend diplomatic recognition to the short-lived German republic, illustrates his belief that the revolutions in Europe were part of a global process of democratization.²⁴

Southerners in general, and Virginians in particular, were just as enthusiastic about German liberalism's impending triumph as Northerners; and none more so than Ambrose Dudley Mann. A native of Hanover County and a West Point graduate, Mann was the United States agent to Bremen from 1842 to 1846, when he was given special powers by the Polk administration to negotiate commercial treaties with all German states except Prussia. When the German parliament assembled in Frankfurt, he became a special agent for the Polk administration to keep a "vigilant eye . . . on our interest during the formation of this union." While in Frankfurt, Mann tried to advise the Frankfurt assembly on the American system of government, and, at one point, had a draft of a potential German constitution printed and presented to the German parliament.²⁵

The German community in Richmond held views similar to Mann's and greeted news of the revolution with enthusiasm. To celebrate the occasion, Germans planned an international parade in honor of the events in Europe. Delegates of each nationality carried their national standards, and speeches were given in several languages during a mass meeting at the First African Baptist church. Every German was expected to procure a rosette of the national colors

of black, red, and gold. The procession's main themes were national German unity and international solidarity with the revolutions in Europe. There prevailed a sense among Richmond Germans that Germans now had achieved in their homeland what Americans did seventy years earlier, namely to forge a nation and state based on republican principles.²⁶

Support for the revolutions in Europe was not consigned to Democrats and Germans in Richmond alone. On 15 April, leading citizens, including the mayor, and the publisher of the Whiggish *Richmond Dispatch* called a public meeting in honor of the events of the spring of 1848. The purpose of the meeting was to organize a mass meeting and pass resolutions of sympathy for the republicans in France and Germany.²⁷ Although the committee to plan the mass meeting was selected, nothing ever came of it. Probably by the time the mass meeting was to take place the revolution in Europe had taken a turn with which the organizers of the meeting could hardly have sympathized.

By July 1848, the coverage of the revolution in the Richmond press had changed considerably. The *Enquirer* now reported on "serious outrages by the peasantry, six thousand of whom have formed a band and commenced the work of conflagration, pillage, and assassination." The provisional government in France was now "tyrannical."²⁸ As late as 1852 the *Dispatch* would bemoan a revolution entirely gone sour, blaming the failure on the "pretended Republicans of France . . . Never was a glorious cause ruined so completely, by a set of babbling idiots and impractical scoundrels." Real republicans would have "established a Republican government, which should protect life and liberty." Richmonders felt that little was left of the "calm and decisive" revolution of March 1848, and for them, the "refreshing breeze of liberty from the banks of the Seine" had turned into a mobocratic stench.²⁹

For Southerners developments in Europe were proof that mass democracy without constitutional guarantees was fatal to any republic. Additionally, the image of bands of peasants roaming through Europe was a reminder of a class of people living amongst them which periodically rose in violent upheavals. Undoubtedly, incipient fear of slave rebellions at home induced sympathy for a beleaguered aristocracy whose political demise many Richmonders had celebrated only a few months earlier. The republicanism advocated by Southern Democrats was one that linked the free movement of property and ideas with republican virtue, not unrestricted access to the body politic without constitutional guarantees of protection from abuses.

Richmonders reflected this attitude in their reception and treatment of political refugees of different political convictions. Refugees like Oswald Heinrich or Wilhelm Flegenheimer were warmly received in Richmond and inhabited prominent positions in the city's civic and social life. Heinrich, who came to Richmond in the early 1850s after brief stints in Tennessee and the Carolinas, was a veteran from the uprisings in his native Dresden. Once in Richmond he mainly supported himself as a teacher. One of the recent historians of Virginia's German community makes only fleeting comment that Heinrich, although a

Forty-Eighter, did not "indulge in radical politics." During the Civil War Heinrich held a position in the Confederate Mining Office. In postwar Virginia he held the position of superintendent of the lead works of Austinville and the Midlothian Coal Mines in Chesterfield County.³⁰

Wilhelm Flegenheimer from Leutershausen in Baden came to Richmond in November 1851 as a twenty-year-old. As a youth Flegenheimer rebelled against his father, an ultra-orthodox Jew, who wanted Wilhelm to become a rabbi. Wilhelm took up a clerkship instead and later started an apprenticeship with a grocer. When the revolution came he served briefly under Franz Sigel and was eventually taken prisoner by the Thirty-Eighth Prussian Regiment after the Battle of Großsachsen. Following an intervention by one of his old lycée teachers, the Prussian army released him and he returned home. Shortly thereafter he left Baden for the United States.³¹

Although he was not persecuted thereafter Flegenheimer apparently decided to leave Baden for political reasons. When a friend asked him to come to France with him to open a business of their own he rejected the offer. According to his autobiographical reflections, he was "bent on the idea of going to a free country, which accorded with my notions of democracy and government by the people instead of monarchs."³² Once in Richmond, he traveled throughout the South, making a living teaching penmanship and writing cards before returning to Richmond in 1859. In 1861 he was hired to transcribe Virginia's Ordinance of Secession. The admirable performance of the task brought him accolades from Richmond's secessionist press and was considered proof for his Southern patriotism.³³

Flegenheimer's career and standing in Richmond's community stood in sharp contrast to that of Karl Steinmetz, a fellow Badener and refugee from the revolution. He came to Richmond in 1850 and founded the "Freie Gemeinde," a radical social democratic association advocating universal suffrage, the abolition of the presidency, the abolition of the death penalty, and the eight-hour day. Most threatening, however, was the organization's support of the abolitionist writings of Kentuckian Cassius Clay.³⁴

The size of the organization's membership is not entirely clear as the numbers cited by Richmond's newspapers were notoriously unreliable and influenced by each paper's political agenda. In an attempt to diminish the importance of the group, the editors of the *Richmond Enquirer* estimated the membership to be around twenty-five. By contrast, the nativist press in Richmond, led by the *Whig* and the *Penny Press*, in their attempt to discredit the political standing of the entire German community in Richmond, gave the impression that a majority of Germans belonged to the association.³⁵ In any case, the Richmond Freie Gemeinde never appealed to a majority of Germans and never played more than a brief and marginal role in Richmond's political life. More traditional elements of the city's German community eventually chased Steinmetz out of town. Steinmetz moved on to Cincinnati where he died in 1852.³⁶

However brief and marginal the existence of the Freie Gemeinde may appear, there are some indications that the Gemeinde had ties to the established German community in the city as well as to the Democratic Party. The Gemeinde held their meetings in Steinlein's Monticello Hall, and there is some evidence that Simon Steinlein, the proprietor of Richmond's Monticello Hotel, as well as some brewers in the city were affiliated with the organization.³⁷ For a brief period of time, the Gemeinde was also associated with the German Democratic Association, an organization made up of German Democrats to drum up German support for the Democratic Party before elections. Joseph Hierholzer, a German-born grocer and head of the Association, claimed that the abolitionist members of the Freie Gemeinde were expelled from the association in 1850.³⁸

Moreover, the socialist Richmond Turnverein, which shared at least some of the Freie Gemeinde's political goals, continued to be a respected organization in the social fabric of Richmond's German community. When one of the more conservative German organizations in the city attempted to ostracize the Turnverein because of its radical politics, the members of the Gesangverein stood firmly behind the inclusion of the gymnastics society. The minutes taken at the Gesangverein meeting made clear that it was especially the older members of the organization who showed solidarity with the Turners.³⁹ This suggests that there existed a lingering sympathy within both the German community and the Democratic Party for the ideals of 1848, even if it stopped short of embracing the most radical demands of that generation.

In its basic tenets, Southern Democrats shared the classic liberalism of many radicals of 1848. The men of the extreme left in and outside of Frankfurt's Paulskirche considered themselves to be classical liberal individualists. Men like Julius Froebel or Gustav Struve assumed that the individual possessed inherent natural rights which the state was obliged to protect and guarantee. This required a state with limited powers. The institution of federalism, the separation of powers as well as judicial review were deemed necessary instruments to secure a limited government. In the long run, these men believed that universal suffrage and a representative government were the best guarantors of liberty.⁴⁰

According to these men, laws and constitutions should protect individuals, political minorities, and above all, private property. In addition, members of the left adhered to a theory of history which made progress contingent on the free movement of people. Above all, however, the political thought of these men was permeated with the theme of individual rights and their protection.⁴¹

Intellectually these men were far from the politics and methods of the Jacobins. Their idea of egalitarianism was not that of Robespierre but of the early days of the French Revolution. As Heinrich Ahrens elaborated in St. Paul's Church,

we are dealing here only with civic equality, not with that crude, materialistic, communistic, equality which seeks to do

away with all natural differences in intellectual and physical endowment and to neutralize their consequences in employment and in the acquisition of wealth. Civic equality is founded on rights and justice Hence the proposition that all men are equal before the law does not imply that a consistently uniform system of legislation levelling all differences ought to be introduced. It means rather that to all persons and things established in the same position the same laws must apply.⁴²

Thus, it was unthinkable for these radicals to endorse peasants striving to redistribute land from extortionary land owners or artisans who called for the abolition of the budding factory system.⁴³ A constitutionalism extolling the progressive virtues of a free economy and the sanctity of private property seemed incompatible with redistributionist efforts of peasants or the medieval corporate ideals of the artisan class.⁴⁴

Richmonders who observed the constitutional debates in Europe would have detected similarities in the political controversy revolving around constitutional reform in Virginia and the extension of slavery to new territories and states. Proponents of Southern states' rights and later secessionists, suspicious of Northern intentions in regard to the peculiar institution, made every effort to debate the question of slavery's extension within a constitutional framework, stressing freedom of movement and goods and the protection of private property. Both South Carolina's ordinance of secession and Jefferson Davis's inaugural address try to make a Southern audience believe that Southern thinking was steeped in the western tradition of a liberal republicanism, a republicanism championed the last time in open rebellion in 1776 and 1848. Both documents skillfully play down the importance of slavery in their reasoning to sever the ties of union.⁴⁵

There is, of course, good reason to hide the issue of slavery behind a mask of constitutional debate on limited government, private property, and free trade. Southern Democrats needed to shore up support for their cause among white non-slaveholders, artisans and yeomen farmers. To that extent a constitutional convention held in Richmond in 1851 introduced universal white male suffrage in Virginia, thus giving all white men a stake in the political fortunes of the Commonwealth.⁴⁶

How, then, should one evaluate the political passivism of a silent majority of refugees, a number of whom, like Flegenheimer and Heinrich, chose to settle in the slave South? The examination of both German radical and Southern states' rights politics suggests that Forty-Eighters in Richmond saw no need for political action since they regarded the republican vision for which they fought in Germany already a reality in the United States. In addition, there is strong evidence that many Germans in Richmond came to share the racial perceptions

and values of native born Richmonders.⁴⁷ Moreover Southern racial prerogatives were not always at odds with those of German revolutionaries. Indeed, in revolutionary circles racism, nationalism, and political liberalism sometimes went hand in hand.⁴⁸ One may only think of Julius Froebel's definition of the "*Kulturfähigkeit*" of different races or Wilhelm Jordan's exhortation in Frankfurt on the superior qualities of the German race compared to its Slavic neighbors.⁴⁹ Thus, having mostly internalized Southern racial prerogatives, and being dependent on the institution of slavery in their day-to-day dealings, Forty-Eighters and other Germans in Richmond saw no need to oppose a regime that granted them all the republican rights they had fought for in their homeland.

As the comparison of republican visions of 1848 with Southern states' rights doctrines has indicated, Richmond's Germans could side with the South during the sectional debates of the 1850s because they tended to view the South's struggle against Northern domination as a constitutional struggle against abusive and arbitrary federal legislation. Forty-Eighters who would volunteer for the Union army made no sense to patriotic Southerners of German birth. Lange remarked with bitterness during the war that "Germans who had fought at home for their freedom in 1848 helped here to suppress our freedom and our states' rights."⁵⁰

In this context, Hermann Schuricht, the editor of the *Virginnische Zeitung*, could justify the pro-Southern attitude of Richmond's Germans post-factum by arguing that "they [the Germans] never embraced the Southern cause in order to protect the interests of slave holders, but they were ready to defend the political and commercial independence of the States."⁵¹ In similar spirit, the *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung* reprinted letters by Germans living in the South, admonishing fanaticism in the North, and pointing out that even Southerners of German birth "who disapproved of slavery would fight to defend states' rights and the guarantees of the constitution."⁵²

This is not to say that an overwhelming number of Germans, both Forty-Eighters and older immigrants, did not fight valiantly for the principles of the Union during the Civil War. In addition, the alliance of Richmond Germans with the Confederate cause was short lived. While two German companies entered the fray for the South they only served the first year of the war. And, as the economy in the city worsened, and civil liberties increasingly became victim of an ever more authoritarian Confederate government, many Germans decided to leave Richmond for the North, or to simply sit out the war and wait for better times.⁵³

Yet, the evidence presented here suggests that the ideology that divided the nation along sectional lines also ran through the German communities across the Southern states. While a considerable number of Richmond Germans were and remained loyal to the Union during the Civil War, many of them, and not only in Richmond, voluntarily joined Confederate army units. While Richmond supplied two all-German companies to the Southern cause, entire Texas and Louisiana battalions were made up of German immigrants.⁵⁴

Additionally, the defense of slavery seemed not necessarily incompatible with liberal republican politics in the mid-nineteenth century. Indeed, Ambrose Dudley Mann, champion of German revolutionaries and, later, unreconstructed secessionist, preferred to live out his days in European exile rather than to come back to a defeated postwar Virginia under Reconstruction.⁵⁵

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Notes

¹ Klaus G. Wust, "German Immigrants and Nativism in Virginia, 1840-1860," *Twenty-Ninth Report, Society for the Germans in Maryland* (Baltimore, 1956): 31-50; Philip M. Rice, "The Know Nothing Party in Virginia, 1854-1856," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 55 (January 1947): 61-75, 159-67.

² Don Heinrich Tolzmann, ed., *The German Element in Virginia: Hermann Schuricht's History* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, Inc., 1993), 32.

³ Another prominent German with a revolutionary background who ended up embracing Southern nationalism and slavery wholeheartedly was Karl Minnigerode. He had been imprisoned in Prussia for revolutionary activities in the 1830s, and he turned his back on Germany in 1839. Minnigerode came to Richmond in 1844, where he rose to be pastor of the prestigious St. Paul's Church, the place of worship for Jefferson Davis and other high ranking Confederate officials during the Civil War. Throughout the war Minnigerode was a friend and firm supporter of President Davis. Friedrich Kapp, a Forty-Eighter who met Minnigerode in the 1850s, wrote that he was a "fein gebildeter Mann, in der deutschen Politik linker als der radikalste Fortschrittsmann, aber in amerikanischen Dingen weniger für das Zuckerbrot als die Peitsche." Friedrich Kapp, *Aus und über Amerika: Thatsachen und Erlebnisse*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Verlag von Julius Springer, 1876), 2:374.

⁴ As a recent historian of the city noted, "Richmond's American Party represented not so much an anti-immigrant stance as a desperate attempt by local Whigs to stay distinct from Democrats and remain part of a national party coalition." Marie Tyler McGraw, *At the Falls: Richmond and Its People* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 129.

⁵ Norman C. McLeod, "Not Forgetting the Land We Left: The Irish in Antebellum Richmond," *Virginia Cavalcade* 47 (Winter 1998): 42.

⁶ The careers of these men also seem to contradict some prevailing notions about the political convictions of German immigrants in the South as well as the nature of the radicalism the revolutions of 1848 produced. Historians and contemporary nineteenth-century observers have often associated German immigrants to antebellum America with the cause of abolitionism. Referring to Germans in the South, a newspaper editor in Louisiana claimed that it is "to their [the Germans'] interest to abolish slavery. These men come from nations where slavery is not allowed and they drink in abolition sentiments from their mothers' breasts." Cited in Roger Shugg, *Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana: A Social History of White Farmers and Laborers During Slavery and After, 1840-1875* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1939), 119-20. Similarly, early twentieth-century germanophile historians of German-Americans unequivocally asserted the impeccable abolitionist credentials of antebellum Germans in the United States, see Albert Bernhard Faust, *The German Element in the United States*, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1909), 1:137; Julius Goebel, *Das Deutschtum in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika* (München: J. F. Lehmann, 1904), 59; and George von Bosse, *Das heutige deutsche Element in den Vereinigten Staaten* (Stuttgart: C. Belsersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1904), 255. This paradigm more or less held steady until today. Contemporary historians frequently assume hostility towards the peculiar institution among German immigrants because "men and women who had fled the landlord-dominated societies of Western Europe were hardly predisposed to sympathize with the planter class" (Ira Berlin and Herbert Gutman, "Natives and Immigrants, Free Men and Slaves: Urban Workingmen in the Antebellum

American South," *American Historical Review* 88 [December 1983]: 1197).

⁷ Another antebellum Southern city with a fair number of German liberal immigrants was New Orleans. Robert C. Clark, Jr., "The German Liberals in New Orleans (1840-1860)," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 20 (January 1937): 137-51. Clark, however, does not deal with the issue of slavery and reduces German liberalism to nationalism only. German liberals, he argues, were "German nationalists inspired with the humanitarian views of Herder, the nationalistic ideals of Fichte and the revolutionary doctrines of Young Germany" (138).

⁸ Revolutionary emphasis on Lockean liberalism and nationalism also suggests a re-evaluation of the nature of Forty-Eighter radicalism in general. Recent work by American historians has emphasized the role the Forty-Eighters played to enhance working class radicalism in the United States and promote abolitionism within the American labor movement. For example, see Bruce Levine, *The Spirit of 1848: German Immigrants, Labor Conflict, and the Coming of the Civil War* (Urbana, IL, and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Levine, "In the Heat of Two Revolutions: The Forging of German-American Radicalism," in *Struggle a Hard Battle: Essays on Working Class Immigrants*, ed. Dirk Hördler (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1986), 19-45; and Steven Rowan, "Franz Schmidt and the 'Freie Blätter' of St. Louis, 1851-1853," in *The German-American Radical Press: The Shaping of a Left Political Culture, 1850-1940*, eds. Elliott Shore, Ken Fones-Wolf, and James P. Danky (Urbana, IL, and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 31-48. In Germany, working-class radicals associated with Marx and Engels's newspaper, the *Rheinische Zeitung*, were a minority among German revolutionaries. Workers, of course, played a prominent, if not dominant part, in the revolution. Yet workers did not act homogeneously as a class. Indeed, workers varied in their political convictions as much as the bourgeois participants of the uprising. See Wolfgang Schieder, "Die Rolle der Arbeiter in der Revolution von 1848/49," in *Die Deutsche Revolution von 1848/49*, ed. Dieter Langewiesche (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983), 322-41. By focusing on labor radicalism among Forty-Eighters, historians sometimes tend to neglect other issues such as nationalism and economic liberalism that loomed equally large during the spring days of 1848. Revolutionaries did not only debate the merits of a unified Germany but also territorial expansion into Denmark, Poland, and Austria-Hungary. Curiously, some members of the oppositional left in Frankfurt counted among the more aggressive supporters of territorial expansion. See Günter Wollstein, "Mitteleuropa und Großdeutschland - Visionen der Revolution 1848/49," in *Die Deutsche Revolution von 1848/49*, 237-57, esp. 242-47. For a more detailed account, see his *Das "Großdeutschland" der Paulskirche: Nationale Ziele in der bürgerlichen Revolution 1848/49* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1977).

⁹ Theodore S. Hamerow, *Restoration, Revolution, Reaction: Economics and Politics in Germany, 1815-1871* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), 62.

¹⁰ Virginius Dabney, *Richmond: The Story of a City* (1976; repr., Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 15; Klaus Wust, *The Virginia Germans* (1969; repr., Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1989), 204-5.

¹¹ Peter Way, *Common Labour: Workers and the Digging of North American Canals, 1780-1860* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 55, 265; Johann Gottfried Lange, "The Changed Name or the Shoemaker in the Old and the New World: Thirty Years in Europe and Thirty Years in America," pp. 65-76, Ms, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA. Not accustomed to physical labor Lange had to admit that working on the canal was "hard work. Our hands were not used to shovels which made them blister and gave me callouses that the blood ran through our fingers. And it was so hot that when we came back after lunch to pick up the shovels that we had left lying in the sun we could not touch them. A German . . . had loaned me money and encouraged me to leave the canal and open up a business in the city. I accepted the offer since I saw that every day eight to ten people, poisoned by the bad food, died of dysentery" (76).

¹² U.S. Bureau of the Census, *The Eighth Census of the United States, 1860*, Richmond City, in Norman McLeod, "Free Labor in a Slave Society: Richmond, Virginia, 1820-1860 (Ph.D. diss., Howard University, 1991), 35-36.

¹³ Tolzmann, ed., *The German Element in Virginia*, 41. Curiously Lange does not mention the founding of the Krankengesellschaft in his autobiography, but he mentions that he was still president of the association in 1857 (Lange, "The Changed Name," 122).

¹⁴ Samuel Mordecai, *Richmond in Bygone Days* (Richmond, VA: G. M. West, 1860), 246; Lange,

"The Changed Name," 114-16.

¹⁵ For the importance of the saloon for immigrant and working class life in the nineteenth century, see Klaus Ennslen, "German-American Working-Class Saloons in Chicago: Their Social Function in an Ethnic and Class-Specific Cultural Context," in *German Workers' Culture in the United States, 1850 to 1920*, ed. Hartmut Keil (Washington, DC, and London: The Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988), 157-80, and Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours For What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 35-64.

¹⁶ Tolzmann, ed., *The German Element in Virginia*, 53-4; Lange, "The Changed Name," 99. Klaus Wust calls the Richmond Sozialer Turnverein a "Gymnastics Club with adult-educational aspects." Wust, *The Virginia Germans*, 208. In reality the *Turnverein* was associated with its national umbrella organization, the Sozialistischer Turnerbund. Its preamble, which reiterated racial egalitarian principles, would cause trouble for the Richmond chapter during the secession crisis. While local *Turnvereine* from the lower South seceded from the national organization after the latter's unequivocal declaration in favor of abolitionism in 1855, the Richmond chapter tried to stay loyal to the national organization by keeping a low public profile in Richmond during the Civil War. Robert Knight Barney, "German Turners in American Domestic Crisis," *Stadion* 4 (1978): 351-56. On the national Turners in the United States, see Augustus J. Pahl, "The Turner," in *The Forty-Eighters: Political Refugees of the German Revolution of 1848*, ed. A. E. Zucker (New York: Russell & Russell, 1950), 79-110, and Carl Wittke, "The Turner," in his *Refugees of Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1952), 147-60. For the influence the Turners exerted on a German-American socialist culture, see Ralf Wagner, "Turner Societies and the Socialist Tradition," in *German Workers' Culture*, 221-40. The German Rifles would eventually become Company K of the First Virginia Infantry Regiment during the initial stages of the Civil War. Michael Bell, "The German Immigrant Community of Richmond, Va., 1848-1852," (M.A. thesis, University of Richmond, 1990), 74.

¹⁷ Lester J. Cappon, *Virginia Newspapers, 1821-1935: A Bibliography with Historical Introduction and Notes* (New York and London: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1936), 164.

¹⁸ Mordecai, *Richmond in Bygone Days*, 246.

¹⁹ *Richmond Enquirer*, 31 March 1848.

²⁰ Merle Curti, "The Reputation of America Overseas," *American Quarterly* 1 (Spring 1949): 64.

²¹ *Southern Literary Messenger* 8 (July 1842): 6, cited in Curti, "The Reputation of Americans Overseas," 65. The editors of the *Messenger* showed considerably better foresight than the U.S. representative in Berlin, Andrew Jackson Donelson, who, two weeks before the barricades went up in Berlin, wrote to James Buchanan, then Secretary of State, that "the Germans do not like to make a reform by means of revolution. They love the substance but prefer to receive it as a concession from the King, without the risk of civil war" (Andrew Jackson Donelson to James Buchanan, 4 March 1848; "Documents: The American Minister in Berlin on the Revolution of March, 1848," *American Historical Review* 23 [January 1918]: 357).

²² *Richmond Enquirer*, 14 April 1848.

²³ Robert W. Johanssen, *To the Halls of Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 50-51, 58.

²⁴ Pahl, "The Turners," 92. For a survey on the reactions of Americans to the Revolutions of 1848, see Merle Curti, "The Impact of the Revolutions of 1848 on American Thought," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 93 (June 1949): 209-15. The Polk administration's official stance towards the events in Europe, however, was one of cautious enthusiasm and non-interference. Andrew Jackson Donelson, the U.S. minister to Berlin, who moved to Frankfurt in August, wavered between excitement about the impending victory of German republicans and nervous anxiety about the political chaos and instability a violent overthrow of the German princes might bring with it. His major task was not to advise German liberals on republican forms of government but to initiate a commercial treaty with a new German republic devoid of crippling internal customs duties that characterized her predecessor, the German Confederation. In this regard the U.S. government did indeed have a vested interest in the success of a liberal revolution in the German lands. R. C. McCrane, "The American Position on the Revolution of 1848 in Germany," *The Historical Outlook* 11 (December 1920): 333-39.

²⁵ James A. Padgett, ed., "The Letters of Judah P. Benjamin to Ambrose Dudley Mann," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 20 (July 1937): 741; Mills T. Kelly, "The Mission of Ambrose Dudley Mann to Hungary in 1849: A Test of Non-Intervention," (M.A. thesis, The George Washington University, 1988), 16-37; quote on p. 27. Mann was intellectually and politically in tune with a movement among young congressmen who called for a moral foreign policy towards the revolutionary regimes in Europe. Led by Stephen A. Douglas, the Young America Movement called for the United States to go beyond sympathetic neutrality and actively support fledgling European republican governments, especially Hungary's struggle for independence. America should help to introduce "a new and better political order in the world," and, if necessary, should intervene militarily to ensure the success of European republicans. Merle Curti, "Young America," *American Historical Review* 32 (1926-27): 34, and his "The Reputation of America Overseas," 81. What distinguished Mann from the others was the fact that he was a Southerner and staunch defender of slavery. Southerners in Congress, both Whigs and Democrats, opposed a more active foreign policy on behalf of Europe's fledgling republics, not out of lack of sympathy for republican movements overseas, but for fear that a more active foreign policy would result in a stronger federal government, and if conducted consistently, would eventually embroil the United States in war with Russia. Curti, "Young America," 37; Donald S. Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America: A Study of Sectionalism and Foreign Policy* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1977), 100-2.

²⁶ *Richmond Enquirer*, 25 and 31 May 1848.

²⁷ *Richmond Enquirer*, 18 April 1848.

²⁸ *Richmond Enquirer*, 11 July 1848.

²⁹ *Richmond Dispatch*, 18 January 1852.

³⁰ Wust, *The Virginia Germans*, 210; Tolzmann, ed. *The German Element in Virginia*, 33.

³¹ William Flegenheimer, "Biography of William Flegenheimer," pp. 1-10, Ms, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.

³² *Ibid.*, 11.

³³ The *Richmond Whig* wrote about the transcript that "a more splendid specimen of ornamental penmanship has seldom, if ever, been presented to our inspection" (28 May 1861). The editors of the *Richmond Dispatch* called Flegenheimer an "esteemed patriotic citizen" and his work "a beautiful specimen of calligraphy" (17 June 1861); see also *Richmond Dispatch*, 29 May 1861.

³⁴ Wust, "German Immigrants and Nativism in Virginia," *op. cit.*, 41-42. A copy of the political platform of the group can be found in John C. Rives, ed., *Appendix to the Congressional Globe*, n. s., 33d Cong. 2d Sess., vol. 31 (Washington, DC: The Government Printing Press, 1855), 95.

³⁵ *Richmond Enquirer*, 2 February 1855. Tolzmann, ed., *The German Element*, 34-36. Steinmetz himself seemed to have inflated the number of members in his articles he wrote for the left leaning *Baltimore Wecker* in which he described the Freie Gemeinde as an influential and mass-based political organization (Herbert Aptheker, *The Unfolding Drama: Studies in U.S. History* [New York: International Publishers, 1978], 41).

³⁶ *Richmond Enquirer*, 2 February 1855; Wust, *The Virginia Germans*, 212.

³⁷ Tolzmann, ed. *The German Element*, 34-36.

³⁸ *Richmond Dispatch*, 3 and 5 February 1855.

³⁹ Richmond Gesangsverein, "Minute Books, 1854-1859," 30 January 1856 and 21 November 1856, Ms, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.

⁴⁰ Rainer Koch, *Demokratie und Staat bei Julius Froebel, 1805-1893: Liberales Denken zwischen Naturrecht und Sozialdarwinismus* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1978), 110-19.

⁴¹ Peter Wende, *Radikalismus im Vormärz: Untersuchungen zur politischen Theorie der frühen deutschen Demokratie* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1975), esp. 100-17.

⁴² Cited in Hamerow, *Restoration, Revolution, Reaction*, 169.

⁴³ Even radicals who favored a reform of property relations were extremely weary of mass democracy. Friedrich Hecker and Gustav Struve, invariably called "communists" or "putschists" by their opponents, while demanding "a share in the profits of labor" for workers and artisans, also called for "security of property" and "prosperity, education, and freedom for all"; and both refused to admit workers or peasants to their councils (Hamerow, *Restoration, Revolution, Reaction*, 66, 119).

⁴⁴ The radicals achieved some of their goals in the constitution passed in Frankfurt on 28 March

1849, the "Fundamental Rights of the German People." The constitution granted sanctity of private property, defined the rights of citizenship, granted universal suffrage for a lower chamber of parliament, and gave each citizen the right to live wherever he liked, to purchase any property, and to pursue any occupation.

⁴⁵ South Carolina's Ordinance of Secession is presumably based on the premise that the Northern states had abandoned the principles of the American Revolution of 1776. But the authors are quick to reduce the achievements of the Revolution to "one great principle, self government—and self-taxation." The federal government was deemed despotic because it passed federal laws which "infringe upon jurisdiction reserved for local government," when it should have only passed laws "limited to objects of common interest to all sections." Presumably these "objects of common interest" refer to the protection of such natural rights as the holding of property and individual liberty common to individuals of all sections. Slavery was not mentioned by name until well into the fifth page of the document. "The Address of the People of South Carolina, Assembled in Convention, to the People of the Slaveholding States of the United States," in *South Carolina Secedes*, eds. John Amasa May and Joan Reynolds Faunt (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1960), 82-92. Jefferson Davis, in his inaugural address as president of the Confederate States, made even less of slavery as the dividing issue between North and South. He too viewed the Confederate States as the true heir to the "constitution formed by our fathers." The new constitution would secure "the rights of person and property, . . . the freest trade which our necessities will permit, and the . . . fewest restrictions upon the interchange of commodities." Since the federal government of the old union had abrogated these rights, and in a true democracy the government rests upon the consent of the governed, the people of the South had a right to abolish the government "whenever it became destructive of the ends for which [it] was established." Throughout his address Davis did not mention the institution of slavery a single time. Jefferson Davis, "Inaugural Address," *Journal of the Congress of the Confederate States of America*, 7 vols. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1904-1905), 1:64-66.

⁴⁶ The debates during the convention on whether to give all white men of age the right to vote took on radical class rhetoric previously unheard of in political forums of the South. Henry Wise, a one time Congressman and future governor of the state exhorted in populist class rhetoric, attacking the "monied aristocracy," the smell of which stunk "in the nostrils of my mind, as well as my body." For Wise, the issue was one of the "right of the people against the right of money—Mammon against Liberty—and may God in his mercy, help the people in this fight" ("Virginia Reform Convention: Supplements to the *Enquirer*, *Whig*, *Times*, *Republican*, and *Republican Advocate*," Supplement 13, 17 February 1851, and Supplement 29, 7 April 1851, Virginia State Library and Archives, Richmond, VA). Wise's commitment to universal white male suffrage, however, was rooted in less than unselfish reasons. A large slaveholder himself, he realized that the loyalty of the white working class to the Southern social and economic system was necessary for the survival of the system (Supplement 29, 7 April 1851).

⁴⁷ Johann Lange, like many of his fellow Richmonders, regretted that the slave trade had ever been started, by New Englanders, as he ominously noted. Yet he believed that slavery in general had many rewards and advantages for African-Americans. During the Civil War he reported in his autobiography that he "as a German never had much use for the negroes; and I always wondered why the Germans, who never in their life had seen a negro, could bring these sacrifices for them, since no true Yankee went to war and wanted to use the negro for political purposes only" (Lange, "The Changed Name," 87, 202).

⁴⁸ The standard interpretive paradigm for German nationalism before 1871 is that the early German nationalism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was informed by Enlightenment thought and thus had an emancipatory and antidespotic character and only turned into a conservative and aggressive nationalism during the 1860s and 1870s. See Heinrich August Winkler, "Der Nationalismus und seine Funktionen," in his *Nationalismus* (Königstein: Verlegergruppe Athenäum, Hain, Scriptor, Hanstein, 1978), 5-48; and Christoph Prignitz, *Vaterlandsliebe und Freiheit: Deutscher Patriotismus von 1750-1850* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1981). However, there is at least some evidence that a nationalism based on aggressive expansionism and racial antagonism had its roots as far back as the 1750s. See Hans Peter Herrmann, Hans-Martin Blitz, and Susanna Mossmann, *Machtphantasie Deutschland: Nationalismus, Männlichkeit und Fremdenhass im Vaterlandsdiskurs*

deutscher Schriftsteller des 18. Jahrhunderts (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1996). Brian Eric Vick, in a recent dissertation, argues the middle ground between those two positions. He asserts that the German parliamentarians constructed a notion of German nationhood so as to include Danes, Poles, and Austrians. On the other hand he has to admit that this construction served, at least partly, the purpose to exert political and cultural dominance over Germany's non-German neighbors (Vick, "Conceptions of Nationhood Among the 1848-1849 Frankfurt Parliamentarians" [Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1997]).

⁴⁹ For Froebel, slavery was a question of "culturhistorische Zweckmäßigkeit." Forced servitude was legitimate for peoples who could not or refused to participate in the "Civilisirung der Erdoberfläche." According to Froebel, African-Americans and Native Americans fell into this category. He opposed slavery on the basis that it had outlived its utility and promoted the immigration of German artisans and yeomen (Julius Froebel, *Aus Amerika*, 2 vols. [Leipzig: J. J. Weber, 1857], 1:132, 146, 120). Jordan, referring to the Poles, argued similarly to Froebel by asserting that Germans had proven their superiority through agricultural colonization of the East, or what he called the "Eroberung mit dem Pflug" (Günter Wollstein, "Mitteleuropa und Großdeutschland— Visionen der Revolution 1848/49," 244-46).

⁵⁰ Lange, "The Changed Name," 144. The editors of the *Richmond Dispatch* thought along the same lines when they commented on the Forty-Eighters who volunteered for the federal army thus: "Strange that they who have often fought so bravely though unsuccessfully against invasion, should become invaders: that they who have so promptly rallied under any revolutionary flag that has been spread to the breeze in Europe should so readily become the chief military instruments of a despotic power; that they who have found in this country a refuge from tyranny should seek to deprive the Southern states of their rights and liberties" (*Richmond Dispatch*, 17 July 1861).

⁵¹ When the war broke out, Schuricht told the editor of the *Richmond Enquirer*, of which the *Virginnische Zeitung* then was a supplement, that he only would go on writing under the condition that he never would have to write an editorial defending slavery. At the same time, however, Schuricht editorialized against "northern fanatics inclined to sacrifice a cultural part of the southern people to the terrorism of an uneducated and inferior race" (Tolzmann, ed., *The German Element in Virginia*, 40-41; Wust, "German Immigrants and Nativism in Virginia, 1840-1860," 50).

⁵² *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, 15 June 1855.

⁵³ See Gregg Kimball, "Place and Perception: Richmond in Late Antebellum America," (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1997), esp. chap. 8; and Werner Steger, "'United to Support, But Not Combined to Injure': Free Workers and Immigrants in Richmond, Virginia, During the Secessionist Crisis, 1847-1865," (Ph.D. diss., The George Washington University, 1999), esp. chap. 6.

⁵⁴ Ella Lonn, *Foreigners in the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1940).

⁵⁵ Mann served as a diplomat for the Confederate States in England, Belgium, and the Vatican. Mann stayed in France after the defeat of the Confederacy and wrote his memoirs before he died (Padgett, ed., "The Letters of Judah P. Benjamin to Ambrose Dudley Mann," 742; Kelly, "The Mission of Ambrose Dudley Mann," 32-34).