

Eleanor L. Turk

### Prince Henry's Royal Welcome: German-American Response to the Visit of the Kaiser's Brother, 1902

German Kaiser William II had ordered a new yacht from a New Jersey ship works, and it was due to be launched in February 1902. On New Year's Day of 1902, through the American ambassador, he had invited Alice Roosevelt, the vivacious daughter of the new American president, Theodore Roosevelt, to christen it *Meteor III*. When word of her acceptance came, William decided, on 12 January, to send his brother, Prince Henry, to America to join Miss Roosevelt at the launching ceremony. The proposed visit was not intended to be a formal state affair. Rather, it was a gesture of friendship extended to the new president, in office only three months following the assassination of President McKinley.<sup>1</sup>

The German government certainly did not want Prince Henry conducting any personal diplomacy while he was there. The chancellor, Bernhard von Buelow, wrote in his memoirs:

Before his departure I had sent him a long communication in which, among matters, I explained that no political activity was expected . . . . He, himself, was not expected to bring back either a political treaty or a commercial agreement, or any form of concession either economic, political, or territorial. The aim of his journey was, in the main, to please the Americans and win their sympathies.<sup>2</sup>

The Kaiser also wanted his brother to "please the Americans." In particular, he did not want Henry to emphasize German-American themes. He wanted Henry's activities to reflect an interest in all of American culture. William II was afraid that Henry might be "taken in tow and monopolized by . . . German-American societies during his stay." He made his wishes known



Prince Henry of Prussia, *Chicago Tribune*, 23 February 1902

to the German ambassador in Washington and to the United States State Department, asking their assistance to carry out his wishes.

Nevertheless, the *Illinois Staats-Zeitung's* headline on 12 January announced:

Kaiser Wilhelm und Präsident Roosevelt wechseln äusserst freundschaftliche Telegramme. Der Kaiser theilt dem President mit, dass er den Prinzen Heinrich zu dem Stappellauf seiner Yacht sendet.<sup>3</sup>

Within a week the Illinois paper began reporting on plans for a gala reception for the prince in Chicago, with German-Americans taking a prominent role in the proceedings. Invitations to the prince rushed in from cities as far south as Florida, and west to Missouri. The German-language *Louisville Argus* expressed delight over the brief half-hour that Henry would be in their city, and urged the local arrangements committee to use it well.<sup>4</sup>

In New York City, Mayor Low appointed a citizens' arrangements committee. Gustav A. Schwab, American agent of the Norddeutscher Lloyd Steamship Company, nominated Low as its chairman. Carl Schurz also agreed to serve as second vice chairman. A similar group was established to host the officers and crews of the steamer *Kronprinz Wilhelm*, which would bring Prince Henry, of the royal yacht *Hohenzollern*, which would be his home away from home, and of the *Deutschland*, which would return him to Germany. The famed American admiral Alfred T. Mahan oversaw that committee.

Prince Henry's arrival in New York was delayed one day by a monster storm at sea. He arrived the morning of 24 February 1902. The *New York Times* described the scene as the American Atlantic fleet, commanded by Admiral Evans, waited outside New York Harbor for the arrival of the *Kronprinz Wilhelm*:

There were violent winds sweeping over the harbor then, and no indications that the weather conditions would be more favorable. The few hotels along the bay shore of Staaten Island had filled up, however, with determined guests, most of German extraction, who refused to be deterred by weather from catching even a glimpse of the vessel carrying a scion of the royal house of the fatherland . . . . [I]t was practically impossible to make way in the blinding sheets of rain, sleet, and snow. Out of the purple haze the watchers . . . caught the shadowy outlines of the big liner cautiously threading her way around the Horseshoe . . . . At 10:05 o'clock the *Kronprinz* had reached the Narrows, and the head of the glittering company caught his first view of New York.<sup>5</sup>



PRESIDENT  
ROOSEVELT  
RECEIVES  
PRINCE HENRY



THE  
PRINCE  
ARRIVES AT  
WHITE  
HOUSE



THE PRESIDENT  
AND PRINCE HENRY  
AT DINNER



IN FRONT  
OF THE  
WHITE HOUSE

Roosevelt receives Prince Henry. *Washington Post*, 25 February 1902.



ROYAL GUESTS AT MOUNT VERNON.

Mt. Vernon. *Washington Post*, 28 February 1902.

Henry's itinerary through his departure on 11 March was extraordinary. He spent several days in New York City, and had brief overnight stays in Washington, Chicago and Boston. In between, traveling in a special six-car train, he made an eight-day, 4,358-mile whistle-stop tour to over twenty-five cities in twelve states, most of them in the German-American heartland.<sup>6</sup> It was the first visit to the United States by European royalty since the incognito tour of the English Prince of Wales in 1860 (which many Americans, because of the secret nature of the visit, took to be insulting). Overjoyed at this gesture of the German royal house, the Americans lionized Prince Henry. They turned his visit into a national festival, an occasion to mark the coming of age of the United States as an equal partner in the arena of international diplomacy.

Clearly, Kaiser William need not have worried about the German-Americans monopolizing his brother. But their response to the royal visit reveals much about their own role and their self-image as Americans of German descent. We focus here on three aspects: Henry's reception by German-Americans in New York City and in Chicago, which the American English-language press dubbed as "private entertainment by the Germans," and the response of the crowds at the whistle-stop cities across the German-American heartland. These three venues reflect the viability of German-American organizations, the persistence of German-American sentimental ties with their former homeland, and their focus on the cultural rather than the political aspects of the prince's visit. Whereas the Americans made sure that Henry hobnobbed with the Roosevelts, the Morgans, the Vanderbilts and other "lions" of politics, industry and society, the Germans focused on demonstrating to the prince how much of their cultural legacy they had transplanted to the United States, and how much they had achieved through it.

The New York German-Americans began by bringing together representatives of their major organizations. Delegates from German-American societies across the state, representing more than 250,000 members, met in the Terrace Garden of New York City to plan a reception for the prince. From eight hundred representatives, they selected a twenty-five-man steering committee to plan the best way of entertaining him. The organizations represented on this committee reflected the spectrum of German-American formal cultural activities: the German Press Club; Morrisania Library; Kriegerbund; German Soldatenbund; Plattdeutscher Volksfest Verein; United Singers of Brooklyn; German Wissenschafts-Gesellschaft; United Bowling Club; Schützenbund; New York Turnverein; Central Turn Verein; Manhattan Schützenbund; United Singers of Hudson County; Columbus Pleasure Club; and the United Lodges of I.O.H. One delegate suggested a *Kommers*, another a grand musical festival by the United Singing Societies. When one of the delegates

read from a press clipping which stated that the Kaiser wanted "as little of the German-American as possible in the reception," Mr. von Skal, representing the German Press Club, responded, "I think it would be well for us to get our information direct, and not depend upon the English press for it."<sup>7</sup>

Their final plan also included a "monster" torchlight parade followed by a reception at the Arion Hall at 59th Street and Park Avenue. They estimated that 30-50,000 might participate in the march. The expenses of the parade could be met by assessing each torch-bearer fifty cents. But this motion was voted down in favor of inviting an honorary committee of 125 men to finance the occasion. When this reception concluded at nine o'clock in the evening, the prince would move to a banquet at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel hosted by the *New York Staats Zeitung*.<sup>8</sup> Archbishop Corrigan of New York accepted the *Staats Zeitung's* invitation to the banquet. And, since the occasion was to take place during Lent, he even agreed to the request of the paper's editor, Hermann Ridder, to grant special dispensation to Roman Catholics who wished to attend "to eat either fish or meat at this dinner, but not both."<sup>9</sup>

The actual event on 26 February was somewhat more modest, but nonetheless impressive. First, the prince and his party were received in the Arion Hall by the members of the steering committee. Dr. Louis Weyland spoke on behalf of them all, welcoming Henry and nicely summarizing the sentiments of:

millions of Americans of German descent who could not let this auspicious occasion pass without greetings from the depths of their hearts to the illustrious visitor, the representative of the German Emperor and the country of their birth. They felt bound to prove to your Royal Highness that, while they are loyal citizens of their adopted country, they are bound by gratitude of the old Fatherland.<sup>10</sup>

Then, 8,500 torch-bearing men marched pass the reviewing stand on the balcony of the Arion Hall. The parade had six divisions. First came the veterans, the *Deutscher Kriegerbund* Band leading five contingents of the *Kriegerbund* from New York, New Jersey and Long Island. Next came the singers, Engel's Band leading six large sections of quartets, *Männerchor*, *Liedertafel*, *Liederkrantz*, Fife and Drum Corps, the *Williamsburg Boss Bakers's* *Gesangverein*, and others, more than sixty organizations in all. The third section of the parade represented thirteen *Volksfest Vereine* which kept German regional heritage alive in the New World. The fourth division paraded representatives of eleven *Schützenbunde*. The Turners occupied the fifth place in line, shoulder to shoulder with representatives of the Young Men's Christian

Association, the Fencing Club Colmania, and the New York Pastry Bakers's Society. Bringing up the rear were a number of recreational and religious organizations, the United Bowling Club, the Aschenbrodel Verein, the United German Brethren, the German-American Coachmen's Club, and, of course, the Master Brewers' Society and the original Brewers' and Coopers' Benefit Society. In all, there were twenty-four bands, about 2,800 veterans, and 3,000 singers who proudly braved the frigid cold to march past the prince.<sup>11</sup>

Still chilled from the two-hour vigil on the balcony of the Arion Club, the prince left with his entourage for the Waldorf Astoria Hotel and the press banquet hosted by the *Staats Zeitung*. More than 1,200 attended, the largest gathering of "newspaper makers" to date in American history, and most of the guests were connected with German-American newspapers. There were numerous speeches, and, by the end of them, Henry had evidently lost interest. Smoking incessantly and eating olives, he chatted casually with Mark Twain. He made his way to the exit just before midnight.<sup>12</sup>

These "private entertainments" of the prince by the German-Americans contrasted sharply with the plans made by the arrangements committee appointed by New York City's Mayor Low. At the mayor's behest, Maurice Grau, manager of the Metropolitan Opera, staged a stunning five-hour gala on the evening of 25 February. It included the first act of *Lohengrin*, the second act of *Carmen*, the third act of *Aida*, the second act of *Tannhäuser*, the first act of *La Traviata*, and the third scene of *El Cid*. Virtually every member of the opera company sang for the prince, while the exclusive guest list paid from \$100 to \$250 for the more visible seats and boxes.<sup>13</sup>

On 26 February, Henry had a luncheon with one hundred "lions of industry" at Sherry's Restaurant. The guests included J. P. Morgan, John D. Rockefeller, and W. K. Vanderbilt. The luncheon was a private affair, by invitation only, and arranged at the request of Kaiser William. He wanted his brother to meet informally with men who shaped United States business and trade.<sup>14</sup>

Henry, who had briefly visited President Theodore Roosevelt at the White House upon his arrival, returned to the capital on Thursday, 28 February, to carry out a variety of ceremonies—visiting the Congress, Mount Vernon, Annapolis, and joining other formalities. It was from Washington that he left the following afternoon to begin his whirlwind whistle-stop tour. Despite the brevity of his stops, great crowds lined the track and paced the railroad stations to see and greet him: 20,000 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where the Brass Band and German Singing Society of Allegheny County graced his ten-minute pause; 40-50,000 at Cincinnati, Ohio, for his twenty-minute visit; 30-40,000 awaited him at Chattanooga, Tennessee, where he disembarked to visit Lookout



Mountain; several thousand at Louisville, Kentucky; 15,000 for the fifteen minutes allowed in Indianapolis, Indiana. Although there were no crowd estimates for his four-hour stay in St. Louis, Missouri, it was reported that, "[f]rom the time he entered Union Station until his departure for Chicago, he received a continuous ovation." He was also honored there by the Deutscher Militärverein, the Kriegerverein of St. Louis, and the Veteranenverein of Springfield, Missouri.<sup>15</sup>

At six-thirty in the evening of 3 March, Prince Henry arrived in Chicago, Illinois. On his way to his hotel, he was suddenly bathed in the brilliance of hundreds of electric lights turned on just for him. Along Michigan Avenue a phalanx of German veterans simultaneously lit torches to light his way.<sup>16</sup> That evening the city regaled him with a magnificent ball. It was the social event of the season, and the following day *The Chicago Tribune* printed the full alphabetized guest list, complete with a brief description of the gowns and jewelry of each of the women guests.<sup>17</sup>

## Flags for the welcoming of Prince Henry.

With what joyful eagerness each loyal hearted American whose home was once in the dear old Fatherland anticipates the coming of "Unser Heinrich," and how each longs to participate in his welcome to Chicago.



We've a special importation of flags for the gala event—pretty insignia of greeting which every Chicago home will take pleasure in displaying.

Big and little flags of Germany and the United States in silk and bunting, mounted on model standards.

Also flags of all the nations, so that you can have the characteristic decorations for ship launching when the Kaiser's yacht glides out upon the waters under the magic of Miss Roosevelt's touch.

**Big unmounted flags in bunting, too. Flags from 10c upwards.**

*Chicago Tribune*, 25 February 1902.

While this was going on, however, 10,000 Polish-Americans met in halls over the city, under the auspices of the Polish National Alliance, to protest German treatment of the Polish minorities within the German Empire. "The name of Prince Henry and the mere mention of the honor being shown him brought out jeers and yells of anger," the *Tribune* reported.<sup>18</sup> No word of this reached the prince, who arose the following morning to visit the Lincoln Monument and to attend a gala reception and Männerchor concert at the Chicago Germania Club. Here, the *Tribune* pointed out, all the speeches and toasts were conducted in the German language.<sup>19</sup>

At two in the afternoon on 4 March, Henry left Chicago for Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where an honor guard of 1,000 German veterans met him. An additional 200,000 turned out to see him progress to a downtown reception and banquet at the Hotel Pfister.<sup>20</sup> Leaving Milwaukee at ten that evening, Henry's train traveled back through Chicago and whisked the prince into the last half of his whirlwind tour. On 5 March he had whistle stops in Buffalo, Niagara Falls, Rochester and Syracuse, New York. At ten in the morning on Thursday, 6 March, he arrived in Boston, Massachusetts. He delivered presents from the Kaiser to the Germanic Museum at Harvard University. The highlight of the Boston stay was Harvard's conferral of a special degree on the prince in an unusual non-academic ceremony. After the familiar evening festivities with the "Boston Brahmins," Henry left on Friday, 7 March, via stops in Albany and West Point, New York, to return to New York City. That evening at the Arion Hall, Henry was treated to an old-fashioned German *Kommers* evening of rousing songs.<sup>21</sup>

Henry's triumphal tour was almost at an end. In his final two days in New York City, Mr. and Mrs. Ogden Mills invited him and his immediate entourage (thirty people) to an intimate breakfast and musicale on 8 March.<sup>22</sup> At luncheon he was entertained by the prestigious members of the University Club on Fifth Avenue.<sup>23</sup> Mrs. Cornelia Vanderbilt, acceding to the wish of the Kaiser that Prince Henry be entertained by "some representative American family," invited the Prince and some select guests for dinner on 9 March.<sup>24</sup>

On the following day the German Society of New York honored the prince with a great banquet, its 1,720 guests the largest ever accommodated to that date in the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. The appreciative banquet guests consumed 200 quarts of soup, 7,200 oysters, 500 chickens, 450 pounds of fish, 2,000 pounds of beef, and 600 ducks!<sup>25</sup> And while Henry was the guest of honor, the focus of the speeches was on the achievements of the German Society. "Our society celebrates this evening the one hundred eighteenth year of its existence," its president, Gustav Schwab, told the prince. It was founded by General von Steuben, the German hero of the American War for Independence; it helped to

build the barricades around New York City in 1794 against threatened retaliatory attack by the British; it collected money for medical care of Union soldiers during the Civil War; it established a German savings bank in 1859, a German hospital in 1861, and a German Legal Aid society in 1875. Schwab concluded with two toasts, the first to the president of the United States, the second to the German emperor.<sup>26</sup>

The magnificent banquet of the German Society of New York marked the conclusion of Prince Henry's triumphal tour. He had wined and dined with the cream of American high society, power and wealth. He had also observed the great success of German-Americans' adaptation to their new homeland. He had also seen their achievements in commerce and industry. They had retained much of their cultural heritage, and were proud to display it in all of its diversity.

Undoubtedly, much of the warmth of Prince Henry's welcome can be attributed to the positive reputation and self-image of Americans of German descent. And their abiding pride in their cultural heritage complemented the royal dignity which Prince Henry carried so well. The ability of the German-Americans to marshal, and pay for, hundreds of cultural and social organizations to assist with the tour and tributes made the German-American presence highly and positively visible to all who read the newspaper accounts of Henry's visit.

Kaiser William had, perhaps underestimated the achievements and attitudes of his former compatriots. He had, as well, underestimated the high regard in which they were held in their new homeland. Instead of tarnishing Prince Henry's activities, they heightened America's appreciation of the German Prince by exuberantly sharing the cultural diversity of the German-American presence. At the same time, there were no displays of disloyalty to their adopted homeland. Indeed, in these early days of the twentieth century, the celebration of Prince Henry's visit gave no hint of the future animosity between the two nations, or of the suffering which German-Americans would experience because of it. The American moguls and the German-Americans of all levels shared in the festivities, mutually enjoying the flair and fervor with which the United States conducted Prince Henry's royal welcome.

*Indiana University East*  
Richmond, Indiana

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this article I am using the Americanized spelling of the German names, since these were the ones which appeared most frequently in the American press.

<sup>2</sup> Bernhard, Prince von Buelow, *Memoirs of Prince von Buelow*, vol. 1, *From Secretary of State to Imperial Chancellor, 1897-1903*, F. A. Voigt, trans. (Boston, 1931), 660.

<sup>3</sup> *Illinois Staats-Zeitung* (12 January 1902), 1.

<sup>4</sup> "Prinz Heinrich Kommt," *Louisville Argus* (30 January 1902), 2.

<sup>5</sup> *The New York Times* (24 February 1902), 1.

<sup>6</sup> "Prince Henry's View of His Trip," *The New York Times* (8 March 1902), 2.

<sup>7</sup> "German-Americans Meet," *The New York Times* (20 January 1902), 2.

<sup>8</sup> "In Honor of the Prince," *The New York Times* (27 January 1902), 2.

<sup>9</sup> "Prince Henry's Reception," *The New York Times* (12 February 1902), 9.

<sup>10</sup> "Greeting of Men of German Blood," *The New York Times* (27 February 1902), 1.

<sup>11</sup> "Parade for the Prince," *The New York Times* (27 February 1902), 3.

<sup>12</sup> "Press of America Honors Prince Henry," *The New York Times* (27 February 1902), 1.

<sup>13</sup> "Opera for Prince Henry," *The New York Times* (10 February 1902), 8, gives details of the plans for the performance. Ticket prices for the gathering were staggering. Boxes cost \$250 each, orchestra chairs \$30 each, balcony seats from \$10 to \$12.50, standing room \$5.00.

<sup>14</sup> "Prince Welcomed by Chiefs of Industry," *The New York Times* (27 February 1902), 1.

<sup>15</sup> *The New York Times* (2 March 1902), 1, 3.

<sup>16</sup> "More Ovarions for the Prussian Prince," *The New York Times* (4 March 1902), 1.

<sup>17</sup> *The Chicago Tribune* (4 March 1902), 3.

<sup>18</sup> "Poles Voice a Grievance," *The Chicago Tribune* (4 March 1902), 4.

<sup>19</sup> "Germans Greet Prince Henry," *The Chicago Tribune* (5 March 1902), 3.

<sup>20</sup> *The New York Times* (5 March 1902), 9.

<sup>21</sup> "Prince at 'Commers,'" *The New York Times* (8 March 1902), 2.

<sup>22</sup> "The Prince Entertained by Mr. and Mrs. Mills," *The New York Times* (9 March 1902), 2.

<sup>23</sup> "Prince Guest at Dinner," *The New York Times* (8 March 1902), 1.

<sup>24</sup> "Mrs. C. Vanderbilt, Jr., The Prince's Hostess," *The New York Times* (10 March 1902), 1.

<sup>25</sup> "Prince Henry to the German Society," *The New York Times* (9 March 1902), 1.

<sup>26</sup> "Behind the Scenes with 'Oscar,'" *The New York Times* (9 March, 1902), 1.