

Reinhart Kondert

## The Germans of Colonial Louisiana: A Bibliographical Essay

Numerous articles and books have been written documenting the role of the Germans in Louisiana's colonial history. These works, as might be expected, vary greatly in quality. Some are of the highest scholarship, others the product of amateurs and propagandists. It is a bibliographical maze that even the most seasoned historian must negotiate with care. It is the purpose of this essay to critically evaluate the published secondary sources that deal with this topic and to sort out those works which have value from those that are essentially worthless. Such an exercise will enable the prospective students in this field to establish bibliographic guideposts on which to chart their own scholarly endeavors. For specialists and nonspecialists alike, an essay such as this might provide, as well, an important lesson in the art of writing history. It is the lesson that the great German historian, Leopold von Ranke, taught his students over one hundred years ago when he admonished them with the famous phrase: "Man muß Geschichte schreiben, wie es eigentlich gewesen ist." It is an admonishment which was clearly ignored by many writers included in this survey.

Any bibliographical essay which endeavors to evaluate the works of authors who have contributed to the history of Louisiana's colonial Germans must begin with an assessment of the writings of J. Hanno Deiler. Deiler was a professor of foreign languages at Tulane University at the turn of the century who dedicated his life to uncovering the role of the German people in Louisiana's past. He became Louisiana's most prolific and passionate writer on this topic. His commitment to his cause led him to publish about ten essays, pamphlets, and books in his beloved field.<sup>1</sup> Only one of Deiler's many literary contributions actually dealt with the Germans in the colonial era. This was his celebrated work, *Die ersten Deutschen am unteren Mississippi und Creolen deutscher Abstammung* (New Orleans: Im Selbstverlag des Verfassers, 1904), which appeared five years later in an expanded English version as *The Settlement of the German Coast*

of Louisiana and the Creoles of German Descent (Philadelphia: Americana Germanica Press, 1909).<sup>2</sup> Through this book Deiler established his reputation as the leading expert on the history of the Germans in Louisiana's colonial past. As we shall see, it was a reputation not entirely deserved.

In his groundbreaking work, Deiler examined the arrival of the first Germans on Louisiana soil under the aegis of John Law and the Company of the Indies and their subsequent role through the colonial era. Deiler determined that many thousands of German *engagés* (contractual laborers), were brought to the Louisiana colony and that a sizeable German settlement was established along the Mississippi's banks some twenty-five miles above New Orleans. This large German colony, which the French referred to as the *Côte des Allemands*, quickly flourished and became, according to Deiler, the agricultural breadbasket of the colony. This role they performed throughout the colonial era. Nevertheless, despite their economic importance, the Germans never attained an equivalent cultural or social significance. This was due to the fact they had arrived as illiterates and were, therefore, subjected to an almost instant Gallicization process. It is here, in his discussion of this assimilation process, that Deiler makes his most important historical contribution. Being unable to write down their names, the Germans were forced to transmit this important part of their identity orally to the French scribes and record keepers. Thus, on the shiplists and the later census tables, German names were instantly transformed into French variants. Through this Gallicization of German names, where Huber became Oubre, Troxler was turned into Troxclair, Traeger was changed to Tregle, Zehringer was transformed into Zeringue, and Zweig was actually translated into Labranche, it is possible that historians before Deiler diminished or overlooked entirely the German presence in colonial Louisiana.<sup>3</sup> In all, Deiler traced over seventy "French" names back to their German originals. In doing so, he performed an invaluable service for future generations of historians.

Despite Deiler's remarkable achievements, primarily as a genealogist and linguist, his place within the historiography of colonial Louisiana is shaky. Indeed, as a historian, he left much to be desired. Many of his conclusions, primarily those concerning the numbers of Germans involved in the migration to the Louisiana colony, were based on erroneous research and false speculation. Ultimately, Deiler came to believe that ten thousand Germans were recruited by the agents of the Company of the Indies for settlement in Louisiana, that out of these ten thousand, about six thousand actually departed French ports for the New World, that some two thousand of these Germans survived the hardships of the Atlantic crossing to land on the beaches of the Mexican Gulf, and that, finally, eight hundred lived to become permanent settlers in the

Mississippi delta. We know that these are highly inflated figures and that we must speak in terms of hundreds rather than thousands. We also know that these settlers did not come in waves spanning the years 1718-21, as Deiler maintained, but that they all arrived in 1721.

How had Deiler arrived at his erroneous conclusions? It appears that in his eagerness to accept those inflated numbers, he relied on dubious French and German secondary sources which exaggerated the German influence. He chose to accept these sources rather than the official census tables and other primary accounts which were available to him<sup>4</sup> which clearly indicated that the total population of the German community never exceeded three hundred individuals in the first decade of its existence. It is possible that a handful of German settlers were scattered in various regions of the Louisiana colony and were thus not counted in the official census tolls, but their number would have been negligible, at best. Instead, Deiler chose to rely on such French observers as André Penicaut, Pierre de Charlevoix, and Guy Soniat Dufossat. Penicaut was a French carpenter stationed in the colony at the time of the arrival of some of the Germans who indicated in his memoirs that twelve thousand Germans had been shipped to Louisiana in the 1720s by the directors of the Company of the Indies.<sup>5</sup> Charlevoix, a Jesuit priest traveling through the lower Mississippi region in those years, suggested in his journal that nine thousand Germans were brought to Louisiana.<sup>6</sup> Dufossat, a naval officer who was stationed in Louisiana in the middle of the eighteenth century, who may have been the most reliable source, wrote in his history of Louisiana that six thousand Germans departed from French ports for life in this part of the world.<sup>7</sup> It is also possible that Deiler chose to be influenced by certain German authors, such as H. A. Rattermann, an otherwise respected German-American intellectual of the late nineteenth century who stated in his article, "Die Mississippi Seifenblase: ein Blatt aus der Geschichte der Besiedlung des Mississippi Thales," *Der Deutsche Pionier* 7, 7 (September 1875): 267, that seventeen thousand Palatinate Germans were persuaded by John Law to leave their homelands for Louisiana.<sup>8</sup>

Deiler's acceptance of these inflated figures, apparently made legitimate through their publication in an otherwise excellent book, severely retarded historical inquiry into the field of German ethnic studies in Louisiana's colonial past. For many years thereafter, writers working in this area began with the premise that Deiler's views could not be questioned. They found it difficult to shake his conclusions that thousands of Germans had emigrated to Louisiana and that their influence was, therefore, pervasive.

Who were some of the authors that followed Deiler's line? There was, for example, Heinrich Walter, a German historian, who remarked in his article, "Die Ursprünge der deutschen Siedlungen am Mississippi,"

*Vierteljahrsheft des Vereins für das Deutschtum im Ausland* 6 (1910): 282, that ten thousand Germans were sent by the Company of the Indies to settle Louisiana and that their descendants were as "numberless as the sands in the ocean." Reverend Louis Voss, a native of New Orleans and an acquaintance of Deiler, perpetuated this same theme—that the Germans arrived in the Louisiana colony in droves—in his short pamphlet, "The German Coast of Louisiana," which appeared in *Bulletin No. 9 of the Concord Society* (1928): 1-19. In it he wrote that "many French Creoles are largely Germans" and that it was the Germans who almost single-handedly "changed the colonial wilderness into a paradise." Yet another writer who adopted wholesale the arguments of Deiler was Frederick G. Hollweck whose article, "Origins of the Creoles of German Descent," *St. Louis Catholic Historical Review* 2 (April-July 1920): 114-22, betrays its indebtedness to Deiler by its very title.

There were others who were slightly less beholden to Deiler but who, nevertheless, displayed his influence. Lyle Saxon, the highly respected author, journalist, and raconteur, reaffirmed the belief that the German colonists were highly industrious and productive as agriculturalists by proclaiming in his brief essay, "German Pioneers in New Orleans," *The American-German Review* 7, 3 (February 1941): 28-29, that German farmers "twice saved the city [New Orleans] from famine" (possibly true but never substantiated). There was also an essay written by J. M. Lenhart entitled "German Catholics in Colonial Louisiana (1721-1803)," which appeared in *Central-Blatt and Social Justice* 25 (June 1932): 17-19, 53-55, 89-91, and 127-29, that showed considerable independence from Deiler by its broader chronological scope and greater reliance on primary sources. Nevertheless, Lenhart propagated the theme, clearly borrowed from Deiler, that the Germans were omnipresent in colonial Louisiana and that they exercised an influence that corresponded to their inflated numbers.

Finally, there was the short essay by Jacob Heinz, "Kurpfälzer Blut in Louisiana," *Pfälzisches Museum: Pfälzische Heimatkunde* 22 (1926): 12-16. Heinz, like Lenhart, retained his distance from Deiler by drawing conclusions based on a greater variety of sources (French colonial archives). Thus, Heinz was able to reject Deiler's notions that many thousands of Germans were recruited for settlement in the Louisiana colony. Even so, while being able to discard Deiler's figures on German immigration to Louisiana, Heinz was unable to abstain from accepting other false assertions made by Deiler. Thus, for example, Heinz acceded to Deiler's belief that the first shipments of Germans were made already in 1719, and that a large contingent of German farmers settled on John Law's huge Arkansas estate in 1720.<sup>9</sup> By accepting these unfounded conclusions, and by making every effort to emphasize that the bulk of Louisiana's German immigrants were from the Palatinate region of Germany, Heinz seriously undermined the effectiveness of his article.

Deiler's influence, made more secure by writers such as those discussed above, extended into the works of some of Louisiana's most respected scholars. Henry E. Chambers,<sup>10</sup> Edwin Adams Davis, and Joe Gray Taylor are examples of authors apparently influenced by Deiler. The latter two in particular betrayed at least a trace of the Deiler hyperbole when they commented on the nature of the German contribution in Louisiana's colonial past. Davis, in his *Louisiana, a Narrative History* (Baton Rouge, 1965), p. 58, wrote that the "Germans probably saved the Louisiana colony" (a conjecturable statement, at the very least). Taylor was less effusive in his praise of the Germans, but, nevertheless, suggested a similar sort of role for these people when he stated that the introduction of settlers from outside France was probably "the most important contribution that the Company of the Indies made." This was the conclusion reached by Taylor in his highly regarded *Louisiana, a Bicentennial History* (New York, 1976), p. 10. Both of these books reached an audience of countless readers by virtue of the fact that they were adopted as textbooks in several Louisiana universities.

Davis and Taylor, as well as the other writers mentioned above, might well have been able to avoid some of their misconceptions about Louisiana's colonial Germans had they been willing (or able?) to extend their scholarly gazes beyond Deiler. Within three years after the publication of Deiler's, *The Settlement of the German Coast*, a convincing refutation of his conclusions was penned by Alexander Franz, a leading German historian and an expert on the colonization of Louisiana under French rule.<sup>11</sup> In an exhaustively researched article ninety-two pages in length, Franz offered a decisive rebuttal to Deiler's main presumptions concerning the numbers of Germans that arrived in the Louisiana colony. Franz published his conclusions in one of America's leading journals dealing with German-American affairs, the *Deutsch-Amerikanische Geschichtsblätter* 12 (1912): 190-282. Its title was "Die erste deutsche Einwanderung in das Mississippital, eine kritische Würdigung." Using essentially the same sources that were available to Deiler, Franz correctly surmised that fewer than thirteen hundred Germans boarded the ships of the Company of the Indies for settlement in Louisiana and that fewer than three hundred survived to be successfully transplanted along the banks of the Mississippi. In arriving at his conclusions, Franz relied especially heavily on Jean-Baptiste de la Harpe's, *The Historical Journal of the Establishment of the French in Louisiana*,<sup>12</sup> and to a lesser extent on such other contemporary accounts as Charles Le Gac's, *Immigration and War, Louisiana: 1718-1721*,<sup>13</sup> and the already mentioned accounts of Charlevoix and Penicaut. Through a critical reading of these sources, Franz reconstructed a list of all ships, and the probable number of passengers on each, that sailed from France to Louisiana between 1718 and 1721. He determined that a total of seventy-nine vessels had transported 7,020

passengers to Louisiana in those years, and that of this number no more than thirteen hundred could have been German. Subsequent losses on the gulf's beaches caused by exposure, starvation, and diseases reduced this number to fewer than three hundred who survived to become the inhabitants of the *Côte des Allemands*.

Franz's summations proved correct in all of their essentials. It was a formidable work of scholarship. His figures needed only to be confirmed by the official records available in the French colonial archives. Such confirmation came twelve years later with the publication of René le Conte's, "Les Allemands à la Louisiane au XVIIIe siècle," *Journal de la Société des Américanistes de Paris* 16 (1924): 1-27. Relying almost entirely on the official governmental archives, Le Conte determined that sixteen hundred Germans (a slightly larger figure because he includes in his number some Swiss and Alsatians not counted by Franz) were sent to Louisiana by the Company of the Indies between 1719 and 1721. With greater certitude than Franz, Le Conte was able to specify which ships sailed from France with German passengers, how many were on board, when they departed, and when they reached their destinations. Although a few minor discrepancies between Franz and Le Conte did exist,<sup>14</sup> their overall conclusions were remarkably the same. There was now no longer any doubt as to the wrongness of Deiler's assertions.

Not surprisingly, the scholarly conclusions of Franz and Le Conte were not immediately incorporated into the mainstream of American scholarship dealing with Louisiana history and its ethnic elements. As indicated, textbooks on Louisiana history still reflected Deiler's thinking well into the 1970s. On the whole, Louisiana's historians were not inclined, or perhaps not equipped, to deal with the discoveries of apparently "obscure" (though highly reputable), foreign historians. Although the findings of Le Conte were eventually brought to the attention of American students of Louisiana history through the translation of his article by Glenn Conrad in 1967,<sup>15</sup> Franz's article, the more substantial of the two, remained hidden in almost total obscurity for at least another decade. For American scholars of Louisiana history, the work of German experts seemed nonexistent.

In the meantime, as the discoveries of Franz and Le Conte were languishing in relative obscurity, a German geographer-historian from the University of Kiel produced, what turned out to be, the most important work yet on the Germans of the colonial era. For the first time, an effort was made by a trained scholar to cover in one volume the entire panorama of the German experience in colonial times, and to do so with an almost total reliance on the French and Spanish colonial archives. The monograph in question was Helmut Blume's, *Die Entwicklung der Kulturlandschaft des Mississippi-deltas in kolonialer Zeit, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der deutschen Siedlung*, Kiel, 1956. Blume had given a

hint of his impressive scholarship on the Germans of Louisiana with the publication of a brief essay in the *Jahrbuch der deutschen Gesellschaft für Amerikastudien* 1 (1956): 177-83, entitled "Deutsche Kolonisten im Mississippidelta," which appeared just prior to his main work.

Blume was perhaps the first historian writing on the Germans of colonial Louisiana who was not appreciably influenced by Deiler. He wrote neither to condemn nor to praise his important predecessor. Nor was he in any way limited to the parameters established by Deiler in terms of content, context, and chronology. Blume went significantly beyond Deiler, as well as the other authors mentioned thus far, by examining the historical, economic, and geographic background of the German settlement. Of particular interest to Blume were the geographical factors influencing the development of the Germans as farmers. According to Blume, French and Spanish colonial officials repeatedly encouraged the German farmers, as well as the large concessions, to grow cash crops for export—crops such as indigo and tobacco. Although some success was attained in raising these crops, especially on the larger concessions, the Mississippi River delta region proved, on the whole, to be unsuitable for these crops. Throughout the colonial era, German agriculturalists concentrated on producing the vegetables, fruits, and meat products to satisfy the markets of New Orleans.

Blume also examined the role of slavery and its relationship to the development of the sugarcane industry on the German Coast. It was during the late Spanish era that many farmers turned their attention to growing this plant, as more sophisticated refining methods were being developed by such inventors as Etienne de Boré. Although a number of farmers began to experiment with sugarcane, it was not until after the American takeover that the real shift toward large scale sugarcane production dependent on slavery occurred.<sup>16</sup> Blume's study, although primarily concerned with economic matters, also offered much useful information on political and cultural aspects of the German colony. It was in every respect an impressive work based on research completed in the archives of Paris, Madrid, and Seville, as well as other important research centers.

Like Franz and Le Conte before him, Blume found little reception of his works in this country. Several decades passed before his contributions in this field began to gain recognition. Starting in the 1970s, the present writer began to incorporate some of the ideas of Blume in his own research on Louisiana's Germans. More recently, a translation of Blume's book into English has appeared in print, giving his monograph the kind of publicity it deserves.<sup>17</sup> These developments will not only enhance our understanding of the German role in Louisiana's past, but should also, perhaps once and for all, break Deiler's hold in this area of research.

Partially as a result of coming into contact with the writings of Blume, the present author began his own researches into the history of the Germans of this region. Inspired by Blume, and recognizing that virtually nothing good on Louisiana's colonial Germans existed in English (with the exception of Conrad's translation of Le Conte's article), I embarked on my own research enterprises. As I became aware of the literature in this field, I soon realized the presence of Deiler's pervasive influence, and thus felt compelled to begin my work with a critique of this man's findings. Three essays followed whose main purpose was to reveal the deficiencies of the great pioneer of German studies in Louisiana. The first essay, "German Immigration to French Colonial Louisiana: A Reevaluation," in *Proceedings of the Fourth Meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society 4* (April 1979): 70-81, ridiculed Deiler's notion that thousands of Germans were sent to Louisiana between 1718 and 1721. Then came "Germans in Louisiana: The Colonial Experience, 1720-1803," *Yearbook of German-American Studies* 16 (1981): 59-66, which contained a critique of Deiler, but which also went beyond that to provide a brief historical overview of the German colonial involvement. Finally, the short essay, "Louisiana's German Pioneers: The Early Years," *New Orleans Genesis* 22 (April 1983): 135-42, again briefly revealed Deiler's distortions, but recounted as well the modest agricultural successes of the Germans in the early years.<sup>18</sup> All three essays relied heavily on the previously neglected works of Franz, Le Conte, and Blume, as well as the archival holdings of the University of Southwestern Louisiana's Center for Louisiana Studies.

Other efforts to advance the state of scholarship in this field of interest followed. These efforts were less concerned with disproving Deiler than with broadening the areas of research. Of particular interest was the role played by Charles Frederick D'Arensbourg in the founding and early history of the German colony. D'Arensbourg's name was frequently mentioned in the official archival records, catching, for example, the eye of Governor Bienville, who described the former as an "intelligent, valorous, and handsome figure." Indeed, Bienville thought so highly of this Swedish officer that he placed him in charge of the German Coast settlement, where he served as commander and judge for forty-seven years.<sup>19</sup> These and other conclusions, as well as an overall assessment of D'Arensbourg's place in the history of the German colony were made in my article: "Charles Frederick D'Arensbourg (1693-1777)," *New Orleans Genesis* 20 (September 1981): 395-401.

Four years later I developed the theme that I had touched upon in the previous article—the role of D'Arensbourg and his people in the 1768 rebellion against Spain. This topic was expanded into an article and published in *Louisiana History* 26, 4 (Fall 1985), with the title: "The German Involvement in the Rebellion of 1768." This work elaborated on the causes for the German participation in the abortive revolt against Spanish



authorities. The Germans joined the rebellion to oust the Spanish principally for three reasons: Governor Antonio de Ulloa's "highhanded" expropriation of grain from German farmers (to feed the newly arrived and destitute Acadians); Ulloa's restrictive economic decrees and monetary policies which were viewed by the Germans as a threat to their well-being; and D'Arensbourg's close familial ties to the conspiracy's main leaders.

All of my research and writing efforts were brought together with the publication of a book-length monograph on the history of Louisiana's colonial Germans. This slender work appeared in 1990 as volume five in the series, *American-German Studies*, edited by Cornelius Sommer and William C. McDonald, and published by the Academic Publishing House of Stuttgart, under the title *The Germans of Colonial Louisiana, 1720-1803*. My concluding study on the Germans of colonial Louisiana suggested that these people, though small in number, influenced the land they settled in a positive way. Their most significant impact came as tillers of the soil. They were one of the colony's chief agricultural producers, providing, above all, the capital city with some of its food requirements. In other areas of endeavor, the Germans played a much more negligible role. Politically, they were important only briefly during the rebellion against Spain. Culturally speaking, they appeared almost nonexistent. It is interesting to note that the Germans left behind hardly a single document in their own language (with a few exceptions)<sup>20</sup> pointing to their presence in the Louisiana colony.

A number of additional studies on Louisiana's colonial Germans have appeared in the last two decades that suggest that the level of scholarship in this area of interest has finally come into its own. An examination of these works will round out our bibliographical survey. The first is an article by Glenn Conrad evaluating the arrival of Alsatian immigrants to Louisiana in the 1750s. Conrad's conclusions were published as an essay entitled, "Alsatian Immigration to Louisiana, 1753-1759," and appeared in *New Orleans Genesis* 14 (June 1975): 221-26. According to the author, roughly one hundred German-speaking Alsatians emigrated to Louisiana and settled down among their compatriots on the German Coast. They were political and religious exiles (most of them were Lutheran), who were given the choice of life in distant Louisiana or imprisonment and torture in France. They were forced to abjure their Protestant faith, and accept the Catholic religion before their departure to the New World. They arrived in Louisiana in three stages over the years 1753, 1756, and 1759. Those who left in the latter two years apparently followed their relatives who had departed earlier. These immigrants were readily received by their compatriots and the colony's officials. Governor Louis Billouart de Kerlerec, who presided over their arrival, openly praised these immigrants in his reports to the home government. Their

arrival added significantly to the overall productivity of the German Coast region and, no doubt, helped the German colony to revitalize its ethnic identity.<sup>21</sup>

Another recent scholarly contribution by Conrad was a translation of a chapter entitled "L'Immigration Allemande," which appeared originally in Marcel Giraud's *Histoire de la Louisiane Française*.<sup>22</sup> Conrad's translation was published as "German Immigration," and appeared in the journal *Louisiana Review* 10 (1981): 143-57. The article offered to its English readers the most authoritative account yet of the initial German immigration to Louisiana. Ultimately, this translation changed very little the overall picture of the German colonization of Louisiana that had been provided by Franz, Le Conte, and Kondert in their earlier works. However, some interesting details not known before were brought out in Conrad's translation, thereby helping a wider reading audience to understand more intimately the nature of the German immigration to colonial Louisiana. Conrad's translation disseminated Giraud's conclusions on such important matters as the exact number of Germans recruited by the Company of the Indies, the origins of these recruits, where they assembled, and why so many of them died and how they died, before, during, and after the Atlantic crossing.

Adding significantly to our understanding of the origins of the first "German" colonists who settled in Louisiana are two articles that examined the part played by the Swiss immigrants. David Hardcastle's "Swiss Mercenary Soldiers in the Service of France in Louisiana," *Proceedings of the Fourth Meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society* 4 (April 1979): 82-91, brings into focus the role of Swiss troops in the Louisiana colony. According to Hardcastle, Swiss mercenaries were avidly recruited by the French government for service abroad. Swiss soldiers were renowned for fighting abilities. Colonial officials considered each Swiss soldier to have the value of three of his French equivalents. About two hundred Swiss workers and soldiers arrived in Louisiana in 1721 as part of a contingent known as the Merveilleux Company (also called the Von Wunderlich Company). Some of these men married German girls and settled down among their German-speaking compatriots on the German Coast when their terms of enlistment had expired. These Swiss, like the Alsatians, must have contributed to strengthening the colony's ethnic cohesiveness. At the very least, they helped to keep alive the German language.

The last article to be considered is Ellen C. Merrill's "The Swiss and German Connections: The First Migration to the Gulf Coast Under French Colonial Rule," *Gulf Coast Historical Review* 3, 2 (1988): 42-61. Merrill's study offers an insightful look into the methods employed by agents of the Company of the Indies as they attempted to entice Swiss workers and soldiers for settlement in Louisiana. For the most part, these agents were

unscrupulous propagandists (such as Merveilleux), who misleadingly painted life in Louisiana as a paradise on earth. Much of Merrill's research was completed in Switzerland, where she was able to uncover many of the original broadsides that were being disseminated by the Company's salesmen. Merrill's translations of some of these propaganda tracts, as well as her thoughtful analysis of the reaction that this literature evoked from Swiss officials (who tried desperately to halt this traffic in human beings, to the point of offering a large reward for the capture of Merveilleux), provide a fascinating view of the recruitment methods and responses in early eighteenth-century Switzerland.

What conclusions can we draw now that we have completed our bibliographical survey? One thing is certain, and this point bears repeating, the roughly thirty works that we have reviewed vary greatly in quality. The "scholarship" employed ranges from the first rate to the amateurish. To a large extent, Deiler, with whom we began our discussion, exemplifies both of these extremes. He was both an insightful scholar and a gullible dilettante. He has probably not been the only historian who has combined these attributes. Certainly, his German nationalism caused him to make many mistakes. Nonetheless, we must credit him with bringing the history of the colonial Germans into the limelight. Many who followed him in his field of endeavor were not his equal. They lacked his insights and passion and passed on only his distortions. But, there were others who were creatively inspired by Deiler, who made the necessary corrections and added new discoveries. Among the latter were certainly Franz, Le Conte, Blume, Conrad, and several others.

Where does the scholarship of the Germans of colonial Louisiana go from here? There are a number of topics that could be beneficially pursued by students interested in this general area of study. I would suggest that much more work needs to be done on the question of the religious backgrounds of the German colonists, and the issue of religious toleration among the German Coast's inhabitants. D'Arensbourg, their leader, was Lutheran. Many others were adherents of various Protestant persuasions. Approximately 20 percent of the original three hundred German settlers were Protestants. The one hundred Alsatians who came in the 1750s were originally Lutheran before their forced conversion to the Catholic faith. Did any of these Protestants make any effort to practice their faiths in the New World? History suggests that they would have. Throughout time, men and women have been willing to sacrifice everything for the right to worship as they please. Were Louisiana's Protestants so different? Perhaps Protestant congregations did worship in private. Whatever the case, this entire question bears further examination.<sup>23</sup>

Another topic which could be pursued with greater precision is the economic role of the Germans. How did they fit into the overall economy of the Louisiana colony? Did they ever transcend their purely local agricultural importance? Blume suggested that a few farms reached plantation status at the end of the Spanish era, some with fifty or more slaves. Did they produce crops for export? And what kinds? What was the relationship between the growth of the German Coast's economy and the free-trade policies adopted by the Spanish in the 1780s? Other questions could be asked concerning the development of slavery. By 1803, there were almost thirty-three hundred slaves on German farms. What kinds of masters were the Germans? Where did most of these slaves come from? Did slavery grow more quickly on the German Coast than elsewhere? And so on.

Also, there is the important issue of assimilation. Yes, German names disappeared quickly. But what about the German language? How long was it spoken on the German Coast? Eye witness observers traveling through the German Coast region reported not only that German was spoken there, but also related that the Germans had retained many of their customs and ways as late as the early years of the nineteenth century. Perhaps their cultural and physical assimilation did not occur as rapidly as Deiler and others had maintained. The sources clearly indicated that the German Coast's inhabitants were set apart in their manners and in their physical appearances from the rest of the population, even at the time of the American takeover.<sup>24</sup>

Other questions could, of course, be posed. The enterprising student will find the necessary documentation to answer some of these questions in the secondary sources evaluated above, in the records of Dupre Library's Center for Louisiana Studies at the University of Southwestern Louisiana, and in the overseas archives of Louisiana's colonial masters. If this essay can offer the necessary inspiration for a further examination of these, and other, issues raised, it will have performed its requisite purpose. If the prospective researcher performs his duties properly, he will have attained the noble heights to which Ranke called the members of his profession.

*University of Southwestern Louisiana*  
Lafayette, Louisiana

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Deiler wrote the following works on the Germans of Louisiana: *Germany's Contribution to the Present Population of New Orleans. With a Census of the German Schools* (New Orleans, 1886); *Das Redemptionssystem im Staate Louisiana* (New Orleans, 1901); *Zur Geschichte der Deutschen Kirchengemeinden im Staate Louisiana. Mit einem Census der New Orleanser*

*deutschen Schulen und der fremdgeborenen Bevölkerung von 1850 bis 1890* (New Orleans, 1894); *Louisiana, ein Heim für deutsche Ansiedler* (New Orleans, 1895); *Geschichte der Deutschen Gesellschaft von New Orleans. Mit einer Einleitung: die Europäische Einwanderung nach den Vereinigten Staaten von 1820 bis 1896. Jubiläumsschrift* (New Orleans, 1897); *Die Europäische Einwanderung nach den Vereinigten Staaten von 1820 bis 1896. Special Edition* (New Orleans, 1897); *Eine vergessene deutsche Colonie. Eine Stimme zur Verteidigung des Grafen de Leon, alias Bernhard Müller* (New Orleans, 1901); *Geschichte der New Orleanser deutschen Presse* (New Orleans, 1901); and the two works listed in the text.

<sup>2</sup> The republication of this book in 1970 suggests that Deiler's views on Louisiana's colonial Germans have remained current in some circles. See his *The Settlement of the German Coast of Louisiana and the Creoles of German Descent*, with a preface, chronology, and index by Jack Belsom (Baltimore, 1970).

<sup>3</sup> Examples of historians who did not accord the Germans their proper due were: Charles Gayarré, *History of Louisiana*, 4 vols. (New Orleans, 1965); Francois-Xavier Martin, *The History of Louisiana, from the Earliest Period* (New Orleans, 1882); and Alcée Fortier, *A History of Louisiana*, 4 vols. (New York, 1904).

<sup>4</sup> The Louisiana Historical Society acquired transcripts of documents (only twenty-nine typescript pages) from the French colonial archives relating to shiplists and early census tables in December 1904. These were used by both Deiler and Alexander Franz (see n. 11) to reconstruct their findings on the numbers of German colonists brought to Louisiana between 1718 and 1721 (with different results of course).

<sup>5</sup> See André-Joseph Penicaut, *Annals of Louisiana* in Benjamin Franklin French, *Historical Collections of Louisiana and Florida* (New York, 1869), 151.

<sup>6</sup> See Pierre F. X. Charlevoix, *Journal of a Voyage to North America*, 2 vols. (Ann Arbor, 1966), 2:247.

<sup>7</sup> See Guy Soniat Dufossat, *Synopsis of the History of Louisiana: From the Founding of the Colony to the End of the Year 1791*, trans. Charles T. Soniat (New Orleans, 1903), 15.

<sup>8</sup> See also Rattermann's *Gesammelte Ausgewählte Werke* (Cincinnati, 1912), 147-53. One other German author who might have influenced Deiler to some extent was Rudolf Cronau, *Drei Jahrhunderte deutschen Lebens in Amerika. Eine Geschichte der Deutschen in den Vereinigten Staaten* (Berlin, 1909), p. 12, where he maintains that 3,000 German immigrants landed in Louisiana in the 1720s.

<sup>9</sup> See Arnold S. Morris, "The Myth Of John Law's German Colony on the Arkansas," *Louisiana History* 31, 1 (1990): 83-87.

<sup>10</sup> See his *Mississippi Valley Beginnings, an Outline of the Early History of the Earlier West* (New York, 1922), 66-68.

<sup>11</sup> For Franz's main work on Louisiana's colonization under French rule, see *Die Kolonisation des Mississippitales bis zum Ausgang der französischen Herrschaft* (Leipzig, 1906).

<sup>12</sup> Jean Baptiste de la Harpe, *The Historical Journal of the Establishment of the French in Louisiana*, trans. and ed. Glenn R. Conrad (Lafayette, 1971).

<sup>13</sup> Charles le Gac, *Immigration and War, Louisiana: 1718-1721*, trans. and ed. Glenn R. Conrad (Lafayette, 1970).

<sup>14</sup> As indicated, Franz and Le Conte disagreed slightly on the number of Germans sent to Louisiana because of their differences on who should be counted as German. They also disagreed on when the German colony was founded along the western shores of the Mississippi. Le Conte said June or July 1721. Franz, who made the better case and who examined the question much more thoroughly, insisted that the founding of the German settlement occurred in February 1722.

<sup>15</sup> See René le Conte, "The Germans in Louisiana in the Eighteenth Century," trans. and ed. Glenn R. Conrad, *Louisiana History* 7 (1967): 67-84.

<sup>16</sup> A detailed discussion of the relationship between slavery and the cultivation of sugar cane in colonial and antebellum Louisiana can be found in Helmut Blume, *Zuckerrohranbau am unteren Mississippi* (Regensburg, 1954).

<sup>17</sup> Helmut Blume, *The German Coast During the Colonial Era 1722-1803 (the Evolution of a Distinct Cultural Landscape in the Lower Mississippi Delta in the Colonial Era)*, trans. and ed. Ellen C. Merrill (Destrehan, LA, 1990).

<sup>18</sup> This article was originally published in French translation. See Reinhart Kondert, "Les Allemands en Louisiane de 1721 à 1732," *Revue d'Histoire de l'Amérique Française* 33, 1 (June 1979): 51-65.

<sup>19</sup> Additional information on D'Arensbourg can be found in H. J. de la Vergne, "Charles Frederick D'Arensbourg," *Publications of the Louisiana Historical Society* 7 (1913-14): 124-26. De la Vergne's brief discussion of the German commander did not merit being included in the text of my bibliographical essay. An extensive record of the civil proceedings over which the German leader presided can be found in Elizabeth Becker Gianelloni, *Calendar of Louisiana Documents: The D'Arensbourg Records, 1734-1769, St. Charles Parish* (Baton Rouge, 1965).

<sup>20</sup> A total of only three documents in the German language have been discovered by researchers that date back to the colonial era. Blume found a marriage contract between Christoph Hubert and Catrine Foltz written in the German script dated 9 September 1747. Deiler uncovered a building contract of 1763 which stipulated that Andreas Bluemer had agreed to build a house for Simon Traeger "for 2,000 livres, a cow, a heifer, and a black calf." In a third document of 1795, the inhabitants of the German Coast protested the levying of slave indemnities. The grammar and spelling in that document were extremely poor, suggesting that the authors of that petition were barely literate. See Blume, *Die Entwicklung der Kulturlandschaft*, 105; Deiler, *The Settlement of the German Coast*, 118; and Anne A. Baade, "Slave Indemnities: A German Coast Response, 1795," *Louisiana History* 20, 1 (Winter 1979), 102-9.

<sup>21</sup> Also helping to maintain the ethnic vitality of the German Coast was the arrival of a group of Maryland Germans in 1769. These eight families (fifty-seven individuals), settled at Fort Iberville along Bayou Manchac. They were placed here by Governor Alejandro O'Reilly as an outpost helping to guard the border against British incursions. Later, many of these Germans moved and joined their compatriots on the German Coast. Deiler mistakenly believed that the Maryland Germans reached Louisiana in 1774. The official records proved him wrong. For the most recent information on the Maryland Germans, see Reinhart Kondert, *The Germans of Colonial Louisiana*, 61-63.

<sup>22</sup> See Marcel Giraud, *Histoire de la Louisiane Française*, vol. 4, *La Louisiane Après le Système de Law (1721-1723)* (Paris, 1974), 154-67.

<sup>23</sup> Deiler examined the religious history of Louisiana's Germans at great length, but he concentrated his study on the nineteenth century. Only eleven pages of his one-hundred-and-forty-five-page monograph deal with the colonial Germans. See his *Zur Geschichte der Deutschen Kirchengemeinden im Staate Louisiana* (New Orleans, 1894). There is a good English translation of this work. See J. Hanno Deiler, *A History of the German Churches in Louisiana*, trans. and ed. Mary Stella Condon (Lafayette, 1983).

<sup>24</sup> Two interesting descriptions of the German Coast and its inhabitants are given by C. C. Robin and Berquin Duvallon. Both were Frenchmen who visited the German Coast between 1802 and 1805. Robin remarked that the "Germans lived in the midst of the French and preserved their taciturn character, their language and their customs." Duvallon noted that the "Germans are somewhat numerous, and are distinguished by their accent, fair and fresh complexion, their inhospitality, brutal manners, and proneness to intoxication." See C. C. Robin, *Voyages dans L'Intérieur de la Louisiane*, vol. 1 of James Alexander Robertson, ed., *Louisiana Under the Rule of Spain, France, and the United States*, 2 vols. (Freeport, 1910-11), 224; and Berquin Duvallon, *Travels in Louisiana and the Floridas, in the Year 1802, Giving a Correct Picture of These Countries*, trans. and ed. John Davis (New York, 1806), 78.