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Web content

Franco Tondi

Wisconsin, Texas, Pennsylvania

The most teutonic American states





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Preface

The United States have always had to tackle enormous flows of refugees who arrived in large numbers in North America, especially throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. They mostly consisted of German, at first, but successively also of Irish, Polish, and Spanish immigrants. The concept of “melting pot” (in German: *Schmelzziegel*) has been frequently employed referring to the acculturation and integration of such immigrant groups (Gleason 1964: 16). (As for acculturation processes of German immigrants in the United States, see my previous work: “Assimilation and Acculturation Patterns of German Ohioans”, Tondi, 2016).

The popularity of this term can undoubtedly be ascribed to a performance taking place in Washington D. C., on October 5th, 1908 by Israel Zangwill: *The Melting-Pot* (Shumsky 1975: 27). Its use, however, goes back to 1782, to a work by Jean de Crèvecoeur, named *Letters from an American farmer*: «He becomes an American by being received in the broad lap of our great Alma Ater. Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men» (Emerson 1913: 115–116). The concept of melting pot has, however, been criticized and doubted by numerous scientists since the 1970s and 1980s, and several ethnic groups have blamed it, as well. It has generally been regarded as a sort of utensil of an Angloamerican elite aiming to destroy the values and traditions of ethnic minority groups by favouring an «Anglo conformity» (Gordon 1972: 29). Today it is by far more customary to speak of «ethnic pluralism» referring to conviviality of ethnic groups in the American society where their traditions often do not dissolve in the melting pot but their former cultural identity is partially retained (Doerries 1986: 15).

Issues, such as political participation, religious and linguistic independence, and economic integration of ethnic groups have always been grappled by both North America and Europe. The definition of the term acculturation, *tout court* being an approximation of different cultures, sometimes seems to be somewhat unclear or even controversial. It had initially been employed by anthropologists and ethnologists who wanted to delineate a sort of cultural change erroneously considered a menace for civilized societies by the end of the 19th century. In recent years acculturation has also been frequently used by sociologists and historians. The current definition of the concept of acculturation stems from the theoretical considerations of American scientists, such as Robert Redfield, Melville J. Herskovits, and Ralph Linton who published “A Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation” in 1936. In this work they asserted that «Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first hand contact with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups» (Redfield 1936: 38).

In addition, acculturation is a term which has been sporadically used in German historical literature until the 1980s. Consequently, an erroneous assessment often arose according to which Germany, compared with North America, had been exempt from grappling acculturation problems.

The Germans form the United States’s most significant ethnicity, in terms of their numbers (see my previous works), albeit the Irish and Hispanic communities are rather noteworthy, as well. The present work, which is intended as a contribution to American social history, does not simply want to delineate the history of the German immigration to North America, or to analyze the psychological, social, and political motivations of the immigrants, but one of its prominent objectives is to describe and especially to comprehend the immigrants as new citizens of the American society, the dominant society. It has occurred a sort of cultural clash of several minorities in the American society, which in turn underwent considerable changes during the acculturation process;

thus, it was not characterized by reluctance against integration and acculturation by most ethnic groups.

A dominant society usually represents the dominant, the prevalent culture, which not necessarily has to constitute the absolute numeric majority of the population. The concept of dominant society, furthermore, being frequently a mainstream, i. e. a pluralistic society, refers to a society accepting the dominant culture as their own (Friedmann 1974: 24). The acculturation process is not exclusively characterized by a sort of aversion of minority groups, as far as integration is concerned, but it is correlated with rather considerable variations affecting the dominant society that in this specific case is the American one.

As for the exact numbers of German immigration and immigration of other countries to the United States (from 1820 to 1920), the "U. S. Department of Commerce" provided an accurate illustration:

Table 1. U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, Washington D. C. 1975: 106.

Year	Immigration from Germany	Immigration from any other country
1820	968	8385
1821	383	9127
1822	148	6911
1823	183	6354
1824	230	7912
1825	450	10199
1826	511	10837
1827	432	18875
1828	1851	27382
1829	597	22520
1830	1976	23322
1831	2413	22633
1832	10194	60482
1833	6988	58640
1834	17686	65365
1835	8311	45374
1836	20707	76242
1837	23740	79340
1838	11683	38914
1839	21028	68069

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Year	Immigration from Germany	Immigration from any other country
1840	29704	84066
1841	15291	80289
1842	20370	104565
1843	14441	52496
1844	20731	78615
1845	34355	114371
1846	57561	154416
1847	74281	234968
1848	58465	226527
1849	60235	297024
1850	78896	369980
1851	72482	379466
1852	145918	371603
1853	141946	368645
1854	215009	427833
1855	71918	200877
1856	71028	200436
1857	91781	251306
1858	45310	123126
1859	41748	121282
1860	54491	153640
1861	31661	91918
1862	27529	91985
1863	33162	176282
1864	57276	193418
1865	83424	248120
1866	115892	318568
1867	133426	315722
1868	55831	138840
1869	131042	352768
1870	118225	387203
1871	82554	321350
1872	141109	404806
1873	149671	459803
1874	87291	313339
1875	47769	227498
1876	31937	169986
1877	29298	141857
1878	29313	138469
1879	34602	177826
1880	84638	457257
1881	210485	669431

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Year	Immigration from Germany	Immigration from any other country
1882	250630	788992
1883	194786	603322
1884	179676	518592
1885	124443	395346
1886	84403	334203
1887	106865	490109
1888	109717	546889
1889	99538	444427
1890	92426	455302
1891	113554	560319
1892	119168	579663
1893	78756	439730
1894	53989	285631
1895	32173	258536
1896	31885	343267
1897	22533	230832
1898	17111	229299
1899	17476	311715
1900	18507	448572
1901	21651	487918
1902	28304	648713
1903	40086	857046
1904	46380	812870
1905	40574	1026499
1906	37564	1100735
1907	37807	1285349
1908	32309	782870
1909	25540	751786
1910	31283	1041570
1911	32061	878587
1912	27788	838172
1913	34329	1197892
1914	35734	1218480
1915	7799	326700
1916	2877	298826
1917	1857	295403
1918	447	110618
1919	52	141132
1920	1001	430001

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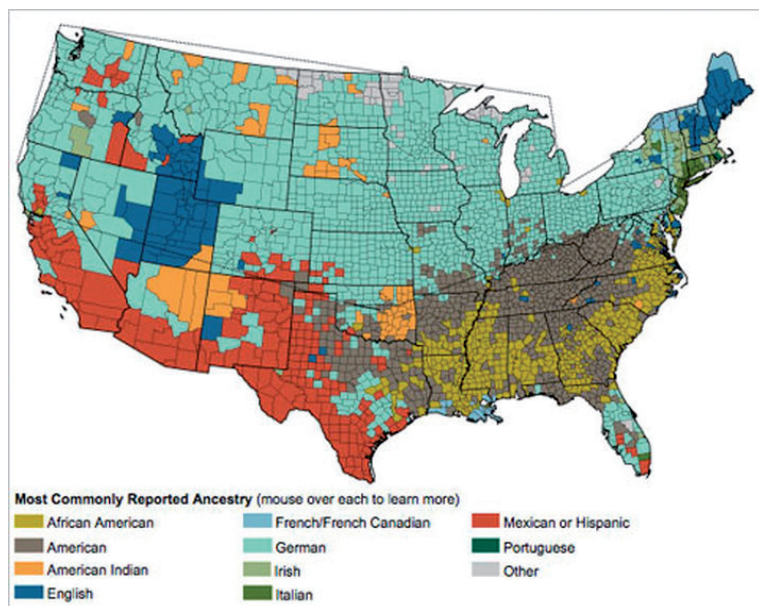


Figure 1. Different ethnicities residing in the United States.

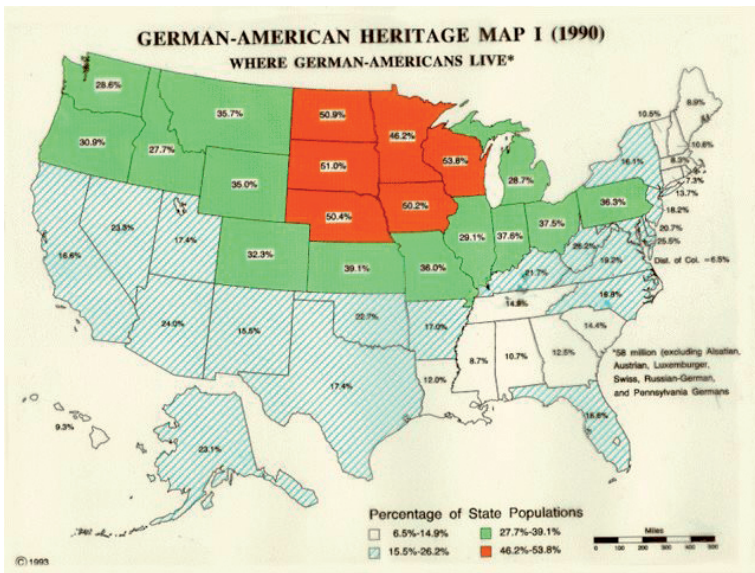


Figure 2. This map highlights the locations of the major German settlement areas.