

CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

A STUDY OF WILLIAM KOZEN AND THE IMMIGRATION OF THE KOZIN FAMILY
TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A RESEARCH STUDY SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HISTORY DEPARTMENT

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“What, then, is this new man, the American? They are a mixture of English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, Germans, and Swedes. From this promiscuous breed, that race, now called Americans, have arisen.”¹ Immigration to the United States began before the United States formed. People from across the globe traveled at great length to become part of what was dubbed the American dream. The American dream brought one family in particular to the United States, the Kozins. Departing the remains of the German Empire at the conclusion of the First World War from the port in Bremen, Germany, William Carl Kozin migrated to the United States in search of something better.² Germans throughout the new German Republic were making their way to port cities to travel to the United States in search of a new home and a new way of life.

Local history at its very nature is a look into the past within the confines of a localized inquiry, such as the need to research family members in order to construct a genealogy.³ The selection of the Kozin migration to the United States is of particular interest to the author because of genealogical roots. According to Kammen, “The need to know propels most of us into local history research. We question, we have been asked to find out, we are curious – and we end up in the local archives.”⁴ The roots of the Kozin family will help the researcher understand not only German traditions and

¹J. Hector St. Josh de Crevecouer, “*Quotes about Immigration*” in The American Immigration Home Page (<http://www.bergen.org/AAST/Projects/Immigration/index.html>).

²Declaration of Intention, “*Form 2203*” in the U.S. Department of Labor, Naturalization Service, 25 February 1919, Muskegon, Michigan, in interviewers possession.

³Caraol Kammen, *On Doing Local History*, (New York: AltaMira Press, 2003), 122.

⁴Ibid.

culture, but also religious leanings that have been passed down the generations, through the family hierarchy. As with all good research, the past must be carefully examined before the present can be understood.

Prior to the unification of Germany into the German Empire in 1870, Germany existed as a “nation of many states.”⁵ Various regions of the German nations lived under a wide range of economic conditions. The southern region had strict inheritance laws that effectively shrunk family farms as all surviving family members receive equal shares on the family fortune, which continued the dismemberment of family farms.⁶ Such problems received attention when a factory was built in the community and the need for additional workers became known.⁷ Society was changing rapidly during the late 1800s. “Four major factors had altered their society in Europe: a dramatic population increase, the spread of commercial agriculture, the rise of the factory system, and the proliferation of inexpensive means of transportation such as steamships and railroads.”⁸

The timing was ripe for the immigration of Kozin. Kozin was born in the German town of Gelsenkirchen, which is located in the German state Westphalia, on January 10, 1894.⁹ According to Wikipedia, the town of Gelsenkirchen became an important

⁵“The German Constitution,” in *A History of the Western World 1715 to the Present*, ed. Shepard B. Clough (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1969), 1047.

⁶Willi Paul Adams, *The German-Americans* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1990), <http://www.ulib.iupui.edu/KADE/adams/cover.html>.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Stanley K. Schultz, lecture for American History 102, Spring 2006, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

⁹Declaration of Intention.

industrial hub in the Rhineland and “raised to a city in 1875.”¹⁰ During his adolescent years, Kozin worked as a lathe hand in one of the local factories in the city. It was during this time that the German Empire was mobilizing for war and Kozin was working in a factory that was producing war materials to support the Army. “I am not sure why my father was not a soldier in the German Army. He always told us growing up that he was of royal blood, which seemed really interesting at the time, but after looking back, I am not sure why a member of the royal line was even working in a factory.”¹¹ Following the conclusion of the war, Kozin immigrated to the United States, leaving the port city of Bremen on the vessel Hanover.¹² Kozin was not alone on his journey as 5,000 Germans leave the port every other day for the United States.¹³

Kozin entered the United States in November of 1919 at the port city of Baltimore, Maryland.¹⁴ From this port city, he had several options to locate and settle down, and he chose the State of Wisconsin, and more importantly, the City of Racine. “I asked my father, why Racine. This seems like such a small place compared to the rest of the country. His only reply was the Church and opportunity.”¹⁵ It is known that at the time, States competed for Germans to migrate to their state, especially in the Midwest. The Federal Government sent out questionnaires to the Governors asking them to name

¹⁰<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gelsenkirchen>

¹¹Francis Lorraine Poch, interviewed by author, 8 July 2006, Howell, Michigan.

¹²Declaration of Intention.

¹³Kathlyn Gay, *The Germans Helped Build America*, (New York: Julian Messner, 1971), 16.

¹⁴Declaration of Intention.

¹⁵Francis Lorraine Poch

their most desired immigrant group as a future settler, and around half of those questioned specified German.¹⁶ States went a step further from a survey in direct advertising, in German, to the German people. These “Special Reports on Immigration” covered prices for land purchase, crop value and photos.¹⁷ In addition, common knowledge amongst the German people was American Business cycles, wages, food prices, and standards of living that played a role for immigrants coming to the United States.¹⁸

The move to Racine, Wisconsin was a simple decision for Kozin. This community had an already-existent German population, which is evident with the baptismal papers of Kozin’s second-born daughter, Francis Lorraine. This official record from the local Lutheran church was typed completely in German.¹⁹ According to another German immigrant during the late 1800s, “...when you come to America, just imagine you were moving to Stuttgart, that’s how many Germans you can see here.”²⁰ So too was the atmosphere in Racine, where Kozin felt comfortable raising a family with an established German culture. As a people, Germans moved to rural areas, such as Racine, Wisconsin,

¹⁶Ruth Holland, *The German Immigrants in America: their Culture and Contributions in the New World* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1969), 44.

¹⁷Ibid., 45.

¹⁸*Waves of German Immigrants Embrace America* in *The German Embassy in Washington, D.C.*

http://www.germany.info/relaunch/culture/ger_americans/paper.html

¹⁹Baptismal Papers for Francis Lorraine Kozin, Racine, Wisconsin, in interviewers possession.

²⁰Anna Maria Schano, *A German American Family Changes Its Assessment of American Life*, in “Major Problems in American Immigration and Ethnic History, ed. Jon Gjerde, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 109.

to mirror the conditions of Germany without the political upheaval that existed back home.²¹

As a people, the Germans who immigrated to the United States found a new home and maintained their German way of life. Americanization had begun for the German population.²² The process of assimilation saw the solid German way of life begin to fade away as secular, political and social pressures began to mount on daily life for the German-Americans.²³ The process of assimilation was hurried during the First World War as the use and teaching of the German language was barred in schools and industry.²⁴ With regard to the thought to remigration, such as people from Mexico, Greece and Italy, the Germans who came to the United States had every intention of remaining in the country and raising a family.²⁵

Kozin was of the mindset to remain in the United States and raise a family. He remembered the time when the Germans back home in Germany did not want immigrated Germans to return home. As stated by Otto von Bismarck, “I am strongly against supporting emigration; a German who throws off his fatherland like an old coat is for me no longer a German; I am no longer interested in him as a fellow

²¹*Immigration to the USA*,
<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAEgermany.htm>.

²²La Vern J. Rippley, *Amerliorated Americanization: The Effect of World War I on German-Americans in the 1920s*, in *America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred-Year History*, ed. Frank Trommler, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 217.

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴*Ibid*, 221.

²⁵*Ibid*, 223.

countryman.”²⁶ Realizing he was no longer wanted back home, Kozin proceeded to raise a German-American family in Wisconsin. He raised three children in Racine until the 1930s, when he moved the family to Detroit, Michigan. “I do not recall why we moved from Racine to Detroit, though I think it was because Detroit was a much larger city and my father had an easier time finding work to provide for us.”²⁷

With regards to why Kozin immigrated to the United States, like many other Germans, the principle factor was the search for a better way of life during the troubled times of the newly established Weimar Republic. As a nation-state, the new German Republic was in ruins, its economy hurt by the destruction of its industrial capacity following the war. Reparations to the Allied Powers were also a corner piece in the shattered economy as inflation ran high, along with unemployment. As noted earlier, thousands of Germans immigrated daily to the United States in search of better jobs and a new home to raise a family. The same can be said for Kozin, as his factory was used as part of the German war machine and was in ruins. He longed for a better standard of living, and the opportunity arose to show his hard work and he took the opportunity, and settled in Wisconsin.

In conclusion, Germans did not immigrate to the United States entirely in search of a new way of life. What they were looking for was opportunities to advance and understood that with rising inflation in the newly established Weimar Republic, life may be easier and better in the United States. For William Kozin, the choice was simple. His factory was destroyed and his home was now in a region of Germany controlled by the

²⁶Reinhard R. Doerries, *Empire and Republic: German-American Relations Before 1917*, in *America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred-Year History*, ed. Frank Trommler, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 4.

²⁷Francis Lorraine Poch

Allied powers as part of the Treaty of Versailles. His way of life in a factory needed to change, and his move to the United States allowed for this change. His culture, however, was not lost. His church was predominantly German and practicing the Lutheran faith. His work habits continued to be strong as well, and he passed those German traits on to his family.

Outline

- I. Introduction
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Tables

Table 1. German Immigration since 1820			
Decade	Total Immigration	German	% of Total
1820-29	128,502	5,753	4.5
1830-39	538,381	124,726	23.2
1840-49	1,427,337	385,434	27.0
1850-59	2,814,554	976,072	34.7
1860-69	2,081,261	723,734	34.8
1870-79	2,742,137	751,769	27.4
1880-89	5,248,568	1,445,181	27.5
1890-99	3,694,294	579,072	15.7
1900-09	8,202,388	328,722	4.0
1910-19	6,347,380	174,227	2.7
1920-29	4,295,510	386,634	9.0
1930-39	699,375	119,107	17.0
1940-49	856,608	117,506	14.0
1950-59	2,499,268	576,905	23.1
1960-69	3,213,749	209,616	6.5
1971-80	4,493,000	66,000	1.5
1981-88	4,711,000	55,800	1.2
Totals	49,753,412	7,028,258	14.1

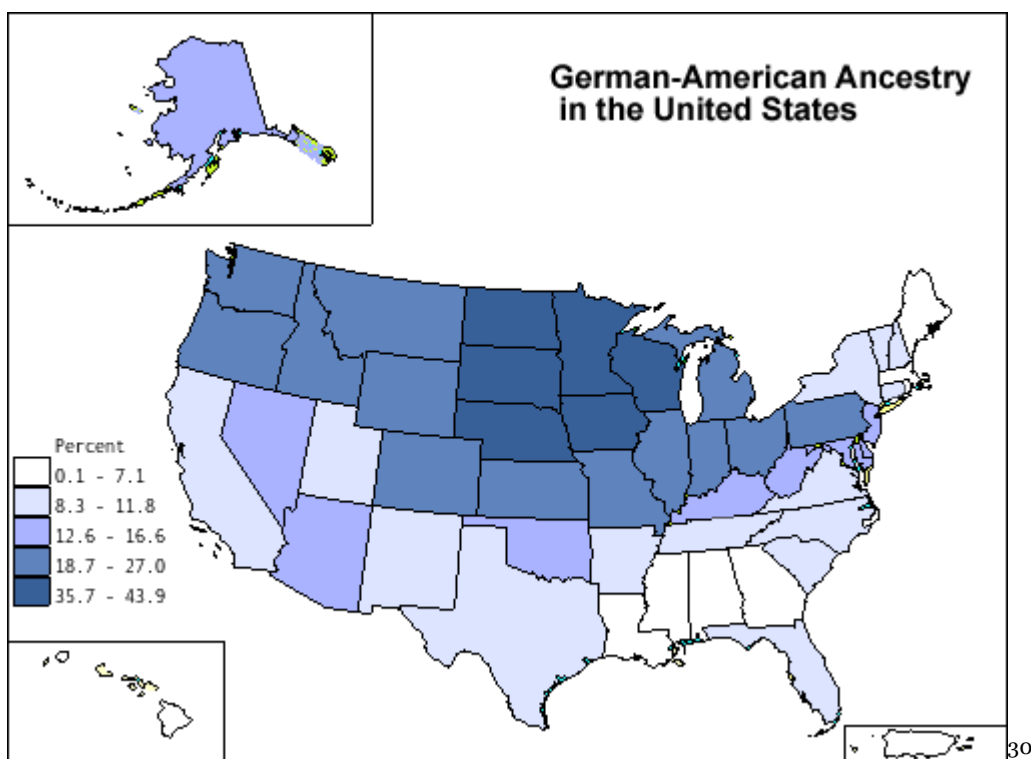
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²⁸[**Source:** *U. S. Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970, Washington, D. C., 1975, 15; U. S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1990, Washington, D. C., 10*], at <http://www.ulib.iupui.edu/KADE/adams/chap2.html>

Table 2. Distribution of German-born, 1850-1960 (In percent)

Region	1850	1860	1920	1960
New England	1.2	1.8	3.0	3.9
Middle Atlantic	36.0	30.0	30.1	38.5
East North-Central	39.1	39.8	35.1	25.3
West North-Central	9.0	16.6	17.4	7.1
South Atlantic	6.6	3.6	2.4	5.8
East South-Central	3.0	2.0	1.0	0.9
West South-Central	4.6	2.9	2.8	2.2
Mountain	-.-	0.8	2.0	2.9
Pacific	0.6	2.5	6.1	13.2

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²⁹[Source: Cathleen Conzen, "Germans," (1980), 412.], at <http://www.ulib.iupui.edu/KADE/adams/chap3.html>

³⁰[Source: German Ancestry Figures 2000], at http://www.germany.info/relaunch/culture/ger_americans/paper.html

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