

ABSTRACT

LECHNER, STEVEN E.B. *Recalling Ethnic Yorkville: The Histories, Heritage Practices, Imaginaries, and Identities of Two Ethnic Communities in One Urban Neighborhood* (Under the direction of Dr. David A. Zonderman).

Recalling Ethnic Yorkville examines the histories and heritage practices of two hybrid communities – German Americans and Hungarian Americans – with deep connections to Yorkville, an urban neighborhood on Manhattan’s Upper East Side. The working-class ethnic enclaves these migrants constructed in the late-nineteenth century survived for nearly a century until succumbing to the forces of gentrification during the last third of the twentieth century. Book I traces the active and declension phases of the enclaves, while foregrounding the dynamic and transnational nature of the hybrid identities by which each cohered. It also tracks the development of a politically compliant, socially conformist, and artificially linear story that portrays Yorkville’s ethnic constituencies as having melted away into undifferentiated Americanness, a result hailed as consistent with the nation’s need for socio-cultural unity. This imagined past reinforces nationalizing myths such as the melting pot metaphor, a largely racialized distortion that depicts Euro-Americans as the “good” immigrants by which all subsequent newcomers must be judged. Moreover, by proclaiming ethnic Yorkville’s death, the dominant narrative ignores the communities’ contemporary heritage afterlives. Book II, through four case studies, reconnects these ethnic heritage practices to their historical roots, analyzes their present manifestations, and explores the complex relationship between ethnicity and place. This intervention is intended to transcend problematic tropes about America’s immigration past to enrich our public discourse concerning its immigration present and future.

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Recalling Ethnic Yorkville: The Histories, Heritage Practices, Imaginaries, and Identities
of Two Ethnic Communities in One Urban Neighborhood

by
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother Rose Marie Nicometo. She supported my decision to pursue a doctoral degree in public history at North Carolina State University just as she had every major decision I made in my life. My mother worked harder than any person I have ever known, laboring without complaint so that I might have a chance to taste success. As a young woman growing up in Oakfield, New York she earned a teaching scholarship, although circumstances prevented her from chasing that dream. Nevertheless, in her seventies, she returned to the school system from which she graduated to serve as its most beloved substitute teacher and bus aide. The life of “Grandma Rose” had come full circle.

My mother played an active part in this project. Each draft chapter I shared with her gave us an opportunity not only to discuss the history and heritage of Yorkville, but to delve deeper into our family’s migratory past. In 1913, my maternal grandfather, Antonio Nicometo, barely seventeen years old, left his native Celano, Italy, a village carved right into the Apennine Mountains, in pursuit of a new life in America. Lena LoBue, my maternal grandmother, was born in 1908 in Western New York shortly after her parents emigrated from central Sicily. They were twenty-six and fifteen respectively when they married in 1923. In July 2020, nearly a century later, my mother rejoined her parents. Completing this dissertation after her sudden and unexpected passing has been the most emotionally difficult thing I have ever done. I find peace in having shared so much of this experience with her over the past three years. *Ti amo madre.*

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“Don’t be afraid of death so much as an inadequate life,” German playwright Bertolt Brecht once warned. This dissertation stems from my quest to embrace curiosity, pursue knowledge, and live fully whatever the obstacles. A passion to explore ideas takes root and blossoms through our relationships with others. That is, an intellectual journey is a social enterprise. It is my highest honor, therefore, to acknowledge the women and men who have played significant roles in shaping *Recalling Ethnic Yorkville*. I am forever in their debt.

I could not have completed this project without the love and support of my family. My lovely and talented wife, Jennifer Moeller Lechner, demonstrated uncommon patience, sagacity, and wisdom throughout this process. Her ideas improved the final product and her encouragement saw me through difficult times. My daughter, Grace, and son, Abera, lived with this project as a constant interloper. I thank them for their patience and love. I hope my risk taking will inspire them to pursue their dreams. Jeanne Moeller, my mother-in-law, provided feedback on drafts and brought to bear her formidable copy-editing skills. Finally, a special thank you to my older sister, Tammy Lechner, who showed me the power of storytelling through her acclaimed career in photojournalism.

I express my deepest appreciation for my advisory committee members. Dr. David Zonderman, the committee chair, guided me while shepherding NC State’s History Department through innumerable challenges including a global pandemic. His experience and wisdom helped me turn abstract ideas into concrete historical arguments. Dr. Katherine Mellen Charron pushed me to transcend my self-imposed limits. From the smallest detail to the most fundamental claims, the fruits of her insight appear in every part of this dissertation. Dr. Akram Khater, an expert in the daunting field of migrations studies, challenged me to think deeply about the ways a single neighborhood connects to larger collectives and ideas. He also made it possible for the Moises A. Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies to

fund a key research trip. Finally, Drs. Shea McManus and Dru McGill showed me the merits of anthropological theory and methodology. Book II's style and substance reflects their advice.

Several scholars outside my advisory committee deserve mention for their contributions to my intellectual development. Drs. Charles Bolton and Greg O'Brien guided me through my M.A. experience at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. They taught me to think like a historian and showed faith in my ability to continue my academic journey. Dr. Tammy Gordon, NC State's Director of Public History, modeled how to build and nurture relationships between the academy and history-making and history-consuming publics. Dr. Craig Friend of NC State and Dr. Watson Jennison of UNCG helped improve my writing. Dr. Herb Strentz, my mentor at Drake University, once told me that pursuing truth is a quest without end requiring courage and humility, a lesson I have carried with me ever since.

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I wish to acknowledge the archivists and other professionals who broadened this project's evidentiary scope. I especially thank Kate Feighery, director of the Archdiocese of New York's Archives and Records, and Dwight Johnson, of the New York City Municipal Archives. I extend the Hungarian expression "nagyon szépen köszönöm," meaning thank you very much, to Olga Cupp, who translated primary sources from Hungarian to English. Her work helped me to understand the perspectives of key historical actors within Hungarian Yorkville.

In closing, I thank all those women and men connected to Yorkville's ethnic past who shared their time and stories, most notably Kathryn Jolowicz, *the* Yorkville historian, and Viktor Fischer, one of Hungarian New York's leading figures. Jolowicz provided me with a front row seat to observe and analyze the heritage afterlives of German Yorkville. Fischer helped to ensure the accuracy of Hungarian names and terms and offered insight into Hungarian culture and history. Ethnic Yorkville lives on through the spirit and sacrifice of women and men such as this. Lastly, I note the hospitality of Katrina Dengler, the president of the Kolping House, who made it possible to stay in Manhattan during multiple research trips. It has been an honor to spend time in Yorkville and I look forward to maintaining a relationship with this special slice of New York City.

BIOGRAPHY

Steven E. B. Lechner, a Ph.D. candidate in Public History, authored this dissertation entitled “Recalling Ethnic Yorkville: The Histories, Heritage Practices, Imaginaries, and Identities of Two Ethnic Communities in One Urban Neighborhood.” Book I of this work explores the origins, development, and decline of the German American and Hungarian American enclaves once prominent in Yorkville, a formerly working-class neighborhood on Manhattan’s Upper East Side. This historical interpretation also tracks the emergence and persistence of a hegemonic narrative, constructed principally by New York’s print press, that influences social memories of Yorkville’s ethnic past. This imagined past reinforces nationalizing myths such as the melting pot metaphor, a largely racialized distortion that depicts Euro-Americans as the “good” immigrants by which all subsequent newcomers must be judged. Book II critically examines contemporary heritage practices arising from these enclaves. Its four case studies – Kathryn Jolowicz, an amateur historian dedicated to preserving memories of German Yorkville; the German-American Steuben Parade that marches up Fifth Avenue each September; the Magyar Ház, Gotham’s Hungarian cultural headquarters; and Hungarian Yorkville’s Christian faith communities – emphasize the complex relationship between ethnic identity and place attachment.

Lechner serves as an adjunct history instructor at William Peace University in Raleigh, North Carolina. Prior to entering North Carolina State University’s public history program, he taught social studies and civics at the high school level. Lechner gravitated to education after practicing law in Maine for a decade. He earned a Juris Doctorate *summa cum laude* from the University of Maine School of Law, an M.A. in History from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, an M.A. in Communications from Drake University, and a B.S. in Parks, Recreation, and Tourism from the University of Missouri. Lechner hails from Saugerties, New York, located in the Mid-Hudson Valley. He and his wife, Jennifer Moeller Lechner, will celebrate their silver wedding anniversary in May 2021. Their daughter, Grace, attends Boston University, and their son, Abera, is completing his eighth-grade year.

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INTRODUCTION

If one knows where to look, it is possible to spot contemporary heritage practices arising from and connected to the German American and Hungarian American communities once prevalent in Yorkville, a neighborhood on Manhattan's Upper East Side. On most Saturday mornings, boys and girls dutifully enter a red brick structure on East 82nd Street known as the Magyar Ház to attend Hungarian language school or their weekly Hungarian Scouting meeting. Each Sunday morning, just a few strides down the same street, two to three dozen conservatively attired parishioners enter the Independent Hungarian Reformed Church of New York to receive spiritual guidance from Árpád Drótos, a Hungarian-born pastor, delivered in the Magyar tongue. Reading a community calendar online or in local newspapers might reveal an exhibition and lecture by the self-described Yorkville historian, Kathryn Jolowicz, a longtime resident of the neighborhood, who fuses memoir and historical interpretation to wax nostalgic about German Yorkville. And, on the third Saturday of September, one can soak in the lederhosen, dirndls, floats, bands, and lager as part of the German-American Steuben Parade, which terminates at East 86th Street, once hailed as Yorkville's Sauerkraut Boulevard.¹

These heritage practices, despite deploying generalized notions of German and Hungarian identity and heritage, carry the potential to flesh out, complicate, and increase interest in the history of "ethnic Yorkville." Yet, the stubbornly dominant social memory of the neighborhood's ethnic past that such practices attempt to commemorate does not lead to such outcomes. The division between ethnic

¹ Assigning the label "German" to specific individuals or subgroups is imprecise. For instance, the nation-state of Germany did not officially emerge until 1871. Thus, the German-speaking immigrants who came to America prior to 1871 did not hail from a unified German state. Moreover, even after political unification, many German-speaking people lived outside of Germany's political boundaries. Also, many German immigrants and their descendants were Jewish. Given all these matters, when discussing the historical record, the term "German" will refer to self-identification as much as possible. The term "German-speaking" may be used to widen the lens where and when appropriate. The label "Hungarian" presents its own set of challenges. From the mid-nineteenth century through WW I, the Kingdom of Hungary was a semi-autonomous political partner within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Kingdom was much larger than the present-day nation-state, as the Treaty of Trianon stripped Hungary of an immense part of its territory at the conclusion of World War I. Magyars, or ethnic Hungarians, comprised the majority of the Kingdom of Hungary's population. However, several other ethnic minorities resided in the Kingdom of Hungary, including Germans, some of whom were German Jews. Generally, the term "Hungarian," as used in connection with Yorkville, refers to both Christians and Jews who identified as such. However, differentiating between these groups at specific times is a relevant part of exploring questions of identity and memory.

Yorkville's history and memory and the veiled connections between its heritage practices necessitates both a synthetic historical interpretation of ethnic Yorkville and attention to the parallel development of the ethnic Yorkville imaginary over time. It also depends upon a thick description of the contemporary heritage practices created and nurtured by German Americans and Hungarian Americans who claim some connection to ethnic Yorkville not only to recover their hidden histories and meanings and messages, both explicit and implicit, but also to illuminate the connections between ethnic Yorkville's historical past and its heritage present. This study describes and analyzes these intersecting modes of recalling ethnic Yorkville – archival history, social memory, and heritage practices –to engage with salient issues in migration studies such as ethnic identity, intra-ethnic conflict, ethnic adjustment to dominant socio-cultural paradigms, transnationalism, and how notions of “race,” as a dynamic social construction, influenced the uneven processes by which European immigrants gained acceptance as “white” and as “Americans.” Moreover, it contributes to public history queries about how and why dominant tropes about America's “immigration history,” such as the melting pot thesis, are constructed, articulated, challenged, defended, and subject to change over time as well as the relationship between place-related ethnic histories and ethnic heritage practices.²

RECALLING ETHNIC YORKVILLE'S SENSE OF PLACE

Recalling ethnic Yorkville begins with unpacking the concept of place, an essential vector of memory. Place comprises three features: geospatial location; natural and man-made materiality; and stories privileging it as subject or setting. The three maps below show Yorkville's position with Manhattan's broader cityscape:

² The term “ethnic Yorkville,” as used herein, signifies Yorkville's German American and Hungarian American communities, particularly during the active period of the ethnic enclaves from the late nineteenth century to the 1960s. During the period covered by this study, Yorkville was a polyglot that included not only Germans and Hungarians, but those identifying as Irish, Czech, and Slovak, as well as native born New Yorkers who did not identify with these ethnic groups. This study focuses on Germans and Hungarians because they constituted the two most prevalent groups that, generally, demonstrated the strongest ties to their respective ethnic identities over the longest period.



Figures 1 and 2. The maps designated as Figures 1 and 2 are modified versions of the Yorkville map appearing on the neighborhood's Wikipedia page. Yorkville, Manhattan (Last edited August 19, 2020). In Wikipedia. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yorkville,_Manhattan.



Figure 3. The map designated as Figure 3 is adopted from the Wikipedia page labeled “List of Manhattan Neighborhoods.” List of Manhattan Neighborhoods (Last edited August 20, 2020), In Wikipedia. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Manhattan_neighborhoods.

According to its commonly recognized metes and bounds, Yorkville runs east to west from the East River to Third Avenue, and north to south from East 96th Street to East 72nd Street, covering an area of nearly 320 acres. On the south, East 72nd Street forms a porous boundary with Midtown Manhattan. Just west of Yorkville lies an area known variably at the “Gold Coast” or the “Silk Stocking District,” exemplified by Fifth Avenue’s high rise apartments buildings, as well as Central Park, New York’s renowned urban oasis. Yorkville’s working-class residents operated within wholly different socio-

economic circumstances compared to those residing in or near this affluent area, rendering Third Avenue a notional yet palpable line of class division. For several decades, Yorkville's demographic composition also differed starkly from its northern neighbor, East Harlem. Once home to the *other* Little Italy and a thriving Jewish community, migrants from Puerto Rico gravitated to East Harlem after World War II, generating sobriquets such as "Spanish Harlem" and "El Barrio." In 1967, Deirdre Carmody of the *New York Times* declared East 96th street "as divisive a line as the wall that separates the two Berlins."³ Clearly, location, a relational aspect of place, has influenced Yorkville's distinctive reputation as a Manhattan neighborhood of working-class white ethnics.⁴

Yorkville's imagined social organization, another aspect of place, has also influenced recollections of the neighborhood. Social memory tends to depict Yorkville's once-prominent white ethnic groups as residing in micro-neighborhoods clustered around specific boulevards. According to claims of inter-ethnic segregation, East 79th Street, otherwise known as Goulash Boulevard, denoted the Hungarian neighborhood, whereas Germans congregated on or near 86th Street. The residential locations of these ethnic groups, leaving aside the artifice of perceiving each group as homogenous in the first place, were much more complicated than these simplistic mental maps suggest. Nonetheless, the ethnic Yorkville imaginary clings to these rigid divisions to deliver simplified, digestible narratives depicting Euro-American newcomers clustered in separate, foreign spaces. This artificially linear

³ Deirdre Carmody, "East 96th: Wall Between Worlds," *New York Times*, July 27, 1967, 20.

⁴ Thomas F. Gieryn, *Truth-Spots: How Places Make People Believe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 2; Alison Pan, "Crossing the Border: Art and Change in East Harlem," *Journal for Cultural Research* 12, no. 1 (Jan. 2008): 40; Gerald Meyer, *Vito Marcantonio: Radical Politician, 1902-1954* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 1-5. Pan, "Crossing the Border," 40. Even today, East Harlem's diverse residential population that includes migrants from China and the Caribbean differs from Yorkville's high proportion of residents who identify as white. Pan, "Crossing the Border," 40. According to the 2010 census, its population was just under 78,000, representing a modest increase of 1.5% from 2000. Yorkville's population density was 244.2 inhabitants per acre as of 2010. Four miles of urban terrain separate Yorkville from the former site of *Kleindeutschland*, later known as the Lower East Side, where German-speakers and migrants from the Kingdom of Hungary once proliferated. "NYC Planning Community Profiles," New York City Department of City Planning communityprofiles.planning.nyc.gov; "NYC 2010: Results of the 2010 Census: Population Growth and Race and Hispanic Composition," New York City Department of City Planning, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/data-maps/nyc-population/census2010/pgrhc.pdf>.

interpretation claims that the eventual incorporation of these migrants into generalized categories of white ethnics and then white Americans reinforces faith in the nation's melting pot.⁵

Defining Yorkville by its geospatial coordinates, however, does not fully satisfy the quest to understand this place on a deeper level. Materiality, the second feature of place, has been a powerful tool for recalling ethnic Yorkville and tracking its changing countenance. In *The Power of Place*, Dolores Hayden opines that each urban landscape evinces its own amalgam of materiality, as traces of the old mix with newer construction. Hayden argues that "[t]hese parts of older landscapes can be interpreted to strengthen people's understandings of how their city has developed over time."⁶ This understanding, she suggests, holds the promise of fostering curiosity, engendering empathy, or even opening possibilities for connections transcending racial, ethnic, or class lines.⁷

Guided by Hayden's vision for social change through public history practice, this study's historical and heritage elements note the role and status of ethnic Yorkville's built environment, a brief description of which is offered here for illustrative purposes. Well into the nineteenth century, Yorkville's constructed landscape consisted merely of large estates lining the East River, with most of the area remaining undeveloped. Hence, Yorkville was at once the domain of New York's landed gentry as well as its beaconing frontier. Led by the German-owned breweries that swallowed up much of northern Yorkville, the neighborhood's urban landscape started to fill in after the Civil War. As the twentieth century drew near, developers lured northward would-be urban pioneers, especially those living downtown, with the promise of newly built brownstones and apartments in the so-called new

⁵ Joseph Berger, "On the Upper East Side, Memories Fueled by Strudel," *New York Times*, April 7, 2006, E29; "Lost City's Guide to Yorkville," *Lost New York City Blogspot*, April 13, 2009, <https://lostnewyorkcity.blogspot.com/2009/04/lost-citys-guide-to-yorkville.html>; Barry Popik, *The Big Apple*, (website), "Hungarian Boulevard or Hungarian Broadway (East 79th Street in Yorkville)," September 23, 2008, https://www.barrypopik.com/index.php/new_york_city/comments/about_the_site_editor/; Given the numerical superiority of Yorkville's German-speakers relative to other groups during its purported Golden Age, social memory often designates 86th Street as Yorkville's nucleus, a mark of distinction that persists today.

⁶ Dolores Hayden, "The Power of Place: Claiming Urban Landscapes as People's History," *Journal of Urban History* 20, no. 4, (1994): 466.

⁷ Ibid; Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1995), 2-43.

tenements. German-speaking émigrés from Hungary trekked uptown, building churches, banks, restaurants, and grocery stores in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.⁸

Little remains of ethnic Yorkville's constructed landscape. It is therefore difficult to recall the past by gazing at the present. St. Joseph's Catholic Church, founded in 1873, a monument to Yorkville's immigrant-led building period, still serves Germans and Hungarians with masses in their native languages. Voluntary associations such as the New York Turn Verein, with its peculiar mix of athletic training and radical politics, migrated from lower Manhattan to Yorkville in 1898. Eighty years later it continued its march north by moving to the Bronx unable to keep pace with Manhattan's rising rents. The Liederkrantz, a German singing society, in contrast, maintains its East 87th Street property in which it hosts concerts and meetings of the German-American Steuben Parade's planning committee. Demonstrating the exalted status of foodways, the two most prominent German enterprises still operating in Yorkville are the Heidelberg Restaurant, featuring staff donning Bavarian dress, and Schaller & Weber, an old-school German butcher shop. These establishments sit side-by-side just steps from Yorkville's former German epicenter, the corner of Second Avenue and East 86th Street. Pursuant to the law of scarcity and visceral connections to foodways, these two businesses receive inordinate attention as symbols for ethnic Yorkville's oft-noted living remnants. Among Hungarian Yorkville's material remnants are the Independent Hungarian Reformed Church and the Magyar Ház, a cultural center otherwise known as the Hungarian House, both on East 82nd Street.⁹

⁸ While "wild" Yorkville disappeared long ago, Carl Schurz Park, named for the celebrated German American statesman and U.S. Senator, provides bucolic relief near the neighborhood's northeast corner. Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel, *The Landmarks of New York*, 5th Ed. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011), 87; Peter T. Lubrecht, *Carl Schurz, German-American Statesman: My Country Right or Wrong* (Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2019), 165; Ilona Stölken, *Das Deutsche New York: Eine Spurensuche* (Leipzig: Lehmsstedt Verlag, 2013), 107-118; George Von Skal, *History of German Immigrants in the United States and Successful German-Americans and their Descendants* (New York: F.T. & J.C. Smiley, 1908), 98, 103.

⁹ Paul Basu and Simon Coleman, "Introduction: Migrant Worlds, Material Cultures," *Mobilities* 3, no. 3 (Nov. 2008): 313-30; "About St. Joseph's." St. Joseph's Church, Yorkville (New York City), <https://www.stjosephsyorkville.org/about/>; Shawn G. Kennedy, "Ethnic Makes Way for Modern," *New York Times*, September 16, 1984, A1; Joseph Berger, "Towers Crowd Yorkville: 'We Could be Living Anywhere Now,'" *New York Times*, July 30, 2019, A24; "Welcome," New York-I Magyar Ház/Hungarian House of New York, accessed May 1, 2020, <http://www.hungarianhouse.org/en/>.

THE ETHNIC YORKVILLE IMAGINARY IN STYLE AND SUBSTANCE

Stories, the third feature of place, represent the most common mode of recalling ethnic Yorkville. There are few living who experienced firsthand ethnic Yorkville's heyday from the 1930s through the 1950s, when East 86th Street purportedly resounded with German music and theatrical productions, and aromas emanating from Hungarian restaurants and shops wafted down East 79th Street. Exacerbating the paucity of lived memories, urban historical scholarship has paid scant attention to this neighborhood or its ethnic past. Ethnic Yorkville, usually only its German element, appears in limited form in narrowly focused nonfiction works, such as those relating to Prohibition-era New York or the pro-Nazi German American Bund once headquartered on East 85th Street. Short on firsthand accounts and loosed from rigorous historical interpretation, inherited and uncritical narratives exert unfettered control over how ethnic Yorkville is recalled, especially by those unattached to the ethnic communities.¹⁰

How place-related narratives assume their shape and wield power within the public sphere is therefore a key area of inquiry in this study. Social memory theory distinguishes between individual and collective memories, providing insight into the latter. Susan Crane succinctly defines collective memory as "a conceptualization that expresses a sense of the continual presence of the past."¹¹ Jeffrey Olick, a Holocaust scholar, emphasizes that people often recall in community, that is, within a social context. In this sense, individual recollections may aggregate to produce *collected* memories. In almost all cases,

¹⁰ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, Rev. and trans. ed., ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992 [1941]); Sarah Gensburger, "Halbwachs' Studies in Collective Memory: A Founding Text for Contemporary 'Memory Studies'?", *Journal of Classical Sociology* 16, no. 4 (2016): 396-413; Michael Ian Borer, "From Collective Memory to Collective Imagination: Time, Place, and Urban Redevelopment," *Symbolic Interaction* 33, no. 1 (2010): 96-100; In fact, amateur historian Anthony Lofaso's *The Origins and History of The Village of Yorkville in The City of New York* is the only historical monograph featuring the neighborhood of Yorkville. Lofaso's well-researched work sketches the neighborhood's social, political, commercial, and infrastructure history from the days of New Amsterdam to the 1870s and 1880s. Lofaso makes passing reference to the German-speakers who settled in the area during the last third of the nineteenth century and omits from his narrative other immigrant groups such as Hungarians and Czechs. My efforts to discuss this dissertation with Lofaso through his contacts with the New York Public Library system were unsuccessful. Anthony Lofaso, *The Origins and History of The Village of Yorkville in The City of New York* (New York: Xlibris, 2010).

¹¹ Susan Crane, "Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory," *American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (1997): 1373.

however, “groups provide the definitions, as well as the divisions, by which particular events are subjectively defined as consequential,” a societal vetting process Olick refers to as *collective* memory.¹² Thus, collective or social memory constitutes a circumscribed version of the past; it discards more stories than it carries forward to achieve a sense of cohesion. Put another way, forgetting defines the process more than remembering. Social memory can generate an incomplete record through negligence or intent, although discerning state of mind in this realm remains challenging. The sheer complexity of social memory in a nation as diverse as the United States and in New York’s distinctly multicultural milieu suggests that collective recollections of urban neighborhoods such as Yorkville develop through an admixture of accident and scheme, of omission and commission. This work introduces multiple actors operating on various levels who have harvested and influenced the ethnic Yorkville imaginary over the past century, including media elites like the *New York Times* and the *Daily News*, travel guide publishers, WPA researchers and writers, and preservation organizations. It also examines how ethnic Yorkville, as imagined in social memory, props up meta-discourses such as the melting pot trope, claims that America is *a nation of immigrants*, and New York’s self-image as *the city of immigrants*.¹³

The ethnic Yorkville imaginary operates as a reductionist narrative, despite recurring claims by its purveyors that it reveals a “hidden history.” Generally, it conveys the past through two techniques: tableaux and an episodic, selective chronology. Gotham’s print press wielded asymmetrical power in setting the tone for imagining Yorkville in ethnic terms, often writing in the manner of foreign correspondents sending dispatches from the colony back to the metropole. In their hands, the imaginary flashed as a set of images of a timeless place where people from Central and Eastern Europe, residing in well-delineated ethnic enclaves, carved out culturally foreign and overtly traditional spaces where nary a

¹² Jeffrey K. Olick, “Collective Memory: The Two Cultures,” *Sociology Theory* 17, no. 3 (Nov. 1999): 341.

¹³ Olick, “Collective Memory,” 333-43; Jeffrey K. Olick, *The Politics of Regret: On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 92-118; James V. Wertsch and Doc M. Billingsley, “The Role of Narratives in Commemoration: Remembering as Mediated Action,” in *Heritage, Memory and Identity*, eds. Helmet Anheier, Yudhishtir Raj Isar (London: Sage Publications, 2011), ix-xi; Paul Connerton, *How Modernity Forgets* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 2-35; Paul Connerton, “Seven Types of Forgetting,” *Memory Studies* 1, no. 1 (2008): 59-71.

word of English was spoken. Generic and stereotypical scenes of Germanness – beer halls with clanging steins, restaurants with singing waiters, men reading German-language newspapers, and concert halls playing Wagner or Beethoven – often stood in for historical facts. Amateur historians, bloggers, and tour book writers continue to echo these scenes, creating consensus through regurgitation.

These tableaux authored by outsiders coexist with and add color to an episodic and highly selective chronology of ethnic Yorkville. In its standard form, it starts with a creation myth: the 1904 explosion of the General Slocum, a local passenger ship, which took the lives of more than one thousand German Americans in the East River. An oft-repeated claim holds that Germans moved uptown en masse to escape the horrible memories of losing their loved ones, making German Yorkville a community forged out of tragedy. Hungarians and other groups supposedly followed their German counterparts in the first decades of the twentieth century, thus forever relegated to a supporting role in ethnic Yorkville's subsequent history. The chronology then skips to the Great War, which purportedly threatened to erase German Yorkville as anti-German sentiment swept through Gotham, and its accompanying story pays greater attention to the coercive actions of federal, state, and municipal authorities, all of which pursued an Americanization agenda, than to the agency of Yorkville's German-speaking residents. It doubles down on the theme of existential crisis by hopping to the Second World War, inaccurately alleging that the German American Bund, a pro-Nazi movement with a Yorkville address, marched in uniform up and down the Upper East Side with impunity. Any consensus chronology tends to break down in the depiction of the postwar period. Images of the neighborhood's thriving restaurant and entertainment scene overlap with lamentations about its vanishing ethnic residents. Regardless of when the declension narrative begins, the story invariably portrays a neighborhood in its death throes sometime during the last third of the twentieth century, its built environment evaporating almost without a trace; and its foreign element joining the bridge-and-tunnel crowd or melting into indistinguishable white Americans as a result of the irrepressible forces of

assimilation. Concluding that ethnic Yorkville died decades ago, those who parrot the ethnic Yorkville imaginary show little understanding of or interest in connections between ethnic Yorkville's past and the contemporary ethnic heritage practices deriving therefrom.¹⁴

ETHNIC IDENTITY AND YORKVILLE'S GERMAN AMERICANS AND HUNGARIAN AMERICANS

This study purposefully deploys the term "ethnicity," as well as its cognate, "ethnic," in reference to the two groups within its purview: German Americans and Hungarian Americans.¹⁵ Ethnicity is a multivalent term used variably as an historical signifier, self-description, ascribed classification, and empirical category. It encompasses the dynamic social process of self-identifying or being identified by others as belonging to a collective putatively distinguishable from other collectives based on a shared sense of cultural assertions, beliefs, and practices, including historical memories, language, ritual, religion, and foodways, usually accompanied by claims of common ancestry or national origin. This definition endorses the notion that ethnicity is socially constructed. It acknowledges individual agency regarding ethnic identity, an ethnic group's parameters for inclusion and exclusion, and processes whereby external actors ascribe ethnic labels to individuals or groups. This formulation's breadth and elasticity carve out ample room to evaluate historical as well as contemporary manifestations of

¹⁴ Orm Øverland, *Immigration Minds, American Identities: Making the United States Home, 1870-1930* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 1-10.

¹⁵ As a specific term, "ethnicity" did not gain wide purchase in the United States until after World War II. As early as the 1830s, however, German-speaking migrants who settled in New York started to develop a shared sense of Germanness reflected in commercial, social, and political institutions. Enclaves such as *Kleindeutschland* in lower Manhattan and subsequently parts of Yorkville on the Upper East Side and Ridgewood in Queens emerged as distinctive German American spaces. Gotham's Hungarian population also tended to settle together in micro-neighborhoods, including the Houston street area of lower Manhattan and subsequently the central portion of Yorkville. Unless otherwise noted, the use of the terms ethnic and ethnicity refer, in a basic sense, to these collectives, through which people negotiated hybrid identities based, at least in part, on direct or indirect bonds with the Old World. Stanley Nadel, *Little Germany: Ethnicity, Religion, and Class in New York City, 1845-80* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990); Béla Vassady, "The 'Homeland Cause' as Stimulant to Ethnic Unity: The Hungarian-American Response to Károlyi's 1914 American Tour," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 2, no. 1 (Oct. 1982): 44; John Kosa, "Hungarian Immigrants in North America," *Canadian Journal of Economic and Political Science* 22 (1956): 365-68.

ethnicity. Put another way, this study sees ethnicity as something people do as much as who they think they are. In this sense, ethnic identity is processual.¹⁶

Migrants from Central and Eastern Europe who came to settle in Yorkville in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries often coalesced economically, politically, socially, and geospatially around notions of ethnic identity. They formed benevolent societies, fraternal organizations, singing and athletic clubs, and established newspapers, banks, and insurance companies using or relying on designations such as “German” and “Hungarian.” Émigrés exercised agency at the personal or familial level over their identities through choices about where to reside, where to work, where to send children to school, and whether to affiliate with ethnic voluntary associations. At the same time, white Protestant agents of New York’s municipal government, the city’s English-language newspapers, social workers, charity organizers, and scions of “Old New York” projected their own views about the ethnic identity of individuals or groups in their midst, frequently demarcating Germans and Hungarians in pejorative terms.

Intersections of ethnic identity and adjustment to the socio-cultural milieu and political economy of the United States, Greater New York, and the neighborhood of Yorkville are paramount concerns in this study. Scholars of migration studies, in its formative years from the early twentieth

¹⁶ Kathleen Neils Conzen, David A. Gerber, Ewa Morawska, George E. Pozzetta, and Rudolph J. Vecoli, “The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A.,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 12, no. 1 (Fall 1992): 3-41; Glazer and Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, xiii-ixvii; *The Invention of Ethnicity*, ed. Werner Sollors (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), xiii-xx; James J. Connolly, “Immigration and Ethnic Politics,” in *A Companion to American Immigration*, ed. Reed Ueda (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 58-76; Marilyn Halter, “Ethnic and Racial Identity,” in *A Companion to American Immigration*, ed. Reed Ueda (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 161-176. Examples of the definitions of ethnicity reviewed for this study include those offered by scholarly institutions such as the American Sociology Association (“refers to shared culture, such as language, ancestry, practices, and beliefs”), those put to use by the U.S. Census Bureau – ethnicity is a classification “determin[ing] whether a person is of Hispanic origin or not” –, and those articulated by theorists like Kanchan Chandra and Steven Wilkinson – ethnicity identity constitutes an “arbitrary subset of categories in which descent-based attributes are necessary for membership.” These disparate and situational definitions act as reminders that one must use ethnicity prudently, as its plasticity makes it susceptible to neglectful imprecision or misuse. “Race and Ethnicity,” American Sociological Association, [https://www.asanet.org/topics/race-and-ethnicity#:~:text=topic%2Dimage_race.&text=%E2%80%9CRace%E2%80%9D%20refers%20to%20physical%20differences,ancestry%2C%20practices%2C%20and%20beliefs](https://www.asanet.org/topics/race-and-ethnicity#:~:text=topic%2Dimage_race.&text=%E2%80%9CRace%E2%80%9D%20refers%20to%20physical%20differences,ancestry%2C%20practices%2C%20and%20beliefs;); “Research to Improve Data on Race and Ethnicity,” U.S. Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/about/our-research/race-ethnicity.html>; Kanchan Chandra and Steven Wilkinson, “Measuring the Effect of ‘Ethnicity,’” *Comparative Political Studies* 41 no. 4 (Apr./May 2008): 520.

century through the 1950s, argued that European-born migrants, or at least their descendants, would eventually shed their “Old World” ways and assimilate to Anglo-American cultural norms and practices. Sociologists from the Chicago School wrote the lyrics of urban determinism in the 1920s, arguing that city life accelerated the assimilation process. Historian Oscar Handlin put this line of reasoning to music in his seminal work, *The Uprooted*, published in 1955. Handlin connected an unforgiving and irrepressible assimilative process to the rigors of industrial capitalism. This interpretive bent paid little heed to local particularity, ethnic agency, and transnationalism, three essential elements of migration studies. John Bodnar’s 1985 monograph, *The Transplanted*, a critical response to Handlin, urged scholars to attend to granular details and distinctive qualities of places of origin, motivations for emigration, and places of settlement. Proponents of Bodnarian particularism put the local context of reception, such as facts on the ground in a specific locale, on equal footing with macro-structural concerns such as industrial capitalism, national immigration discourses and legislation, and geopolitics.¹⁷

Yorkville’s German Americans and Hungarian Americans exercised agency in numerous ways. They seized opportunities to work in the neighborhood’s burgeoning businesses such as breweries and cigar factories, made decisions about when to move in and out of the Upper East Side, sought to influence municipal elections, took stances on Tammany Hall’s machine politics, comprised the rank-and-file of labor organizations, marketed their shops and restaurants across Gotham, and built relationships with new waves of migrants entering their community. Within the context of New York, a

¹⁷ Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1951); Donna R. Gabaccia, “The Minnesota School and Immigration History at Midwestern Land Grant Universities,” *Journal of Migration History* 1 (2015): 171-99; Jon Gjerde, “New Growth on Old Vines: The State of the Field: The Social History of Immigration to and Ethnicity in the United States,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 18, no. 4 (Summer 1999): 40-65; William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, ed. and abridged by Eli Zaretsky (1918, repr., Urbana: University of Illinois Press, c1984); Kathleen Neils Conzen, “Thomas and Znaniecki and the Historiography of American Immigration,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 16, no. 1 (Fall 1996): 16-25. John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985). Intense interest in the process by which foreign-born migrants and their progeny adjust to their new environment dates back to politically charged debates regarding national immigration policy during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Proponents of closing the Golden Door expressed concerns that so-called new immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe seemed ill-equipped to assimilate to mainstream American life. See, e.g., Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race or The Racial Basis of European History*, 4th rev. ed. (1916: repr. North Stratford, NH: Ayer Company Publishing, 2006).

“continuous gateway” of migration, as well as their specific neighborhood of Yorkville, German Americans and Hungarian Americans adroitly assessed the threats and opportunities of their specific local environment and acted accordingly. Their actions and decisions constitute a significant part of what makes their stories distinct but are too often omitted from the ethnic Yorkville imaginary’s preoccupation with the forces of assimilation.¹⁸

An approach acknowledging particularity must analyze how local ethnic communities influence and connect to wider cultural, social, and political networks. Transnationalism considers how such networks transcend the confines of the nation-state, sometimes linking ethnic localities with homelands and diasporic imagined communities. As noted by Akram Khater, transnational connectivity within migrant communities did not emerge anew from modern breakthroughs in transportation and communication but has long been an integral aspect of the migration experience. Khater argues that earlier examples of transnationalism are noteworthy in large part because migrants had to work harder to develop and maintain such connections. Ethnic localities are also nodes within translocal networks. During its apex, Yorkville acted as a commercial center for German Americans in the Bronx, Ridgewood, Queens, and Franklin Square, Long Island. For Hungarian Americans, Yorkville had a similar magnetism while also sharing prominence with New Brunswick, New Jersey, Bridgeport, Connecticut, and Washington, D.C., as part a Northeastern ethnic corridor.¹⁹

¹⁸ Mary Waters and Philip Kasinitz, “Immigrants in New York City: Reaping the Benefits of Continuous Immigration,” *Daedalus* 142, no. 3 (Summer 2013): 92-97; John R. Logan, Wenquan Zhang, and Richard D. Alba, “Immigrant Enclaves and Ethnic Communities in New York and Los Angeles,” *American Sociological Review* 67, no. 2 (Apr. 2002): 299-302; Kathryn M. Galchutt, “Lutherans in Harlem,” *Anglican and Episcopal History* 74, no. 1 (March 2005): 50-51; David F. Remington, *Ashbel P. Fitch: Champion of Old New York* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011), 1-33.

¹⁹ Donna R. Gabaccia, *From the Other Side: Women, Gender & Immigrant Life in the U.S., 1820-1990* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994); Donna R. Gabaccia, *Italy’s Many Diasporas* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish, and Jewish Immigrants in the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Szanton Blanc, “From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (Jan. 1995): 48-63; Akram F. Khater, “Becoming “Syrian” in America: A Global Geography of Ethnicity and Nation,” *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 14 no. 2/3 (Fall/Winter 2005): 299-331; Cornelia Wilhelm, “From Community and Place to Network and Space: The Transnational Dimension of Immigration in American Jewish History,” *American Jewish History* 101, no. 4 (Oct. 2017): 545-51; Susan Eckstein, “Deepening and Broadening Transnational Immigration Analyses: Commentary on Roger Waldinger’s The Cross-Border Connection,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38, no. 13 (2015): 2291-98; Ewa Morawska, “Disciplinary Agendas and Analytic Strategies of Research on Immigrant Transnationalism: Challenges of Interdisciplinary Knowledge,” *International Migration*

Study on migration have focused much attention on the generational loss or retention of ethnic identity. In the 1970s, for example, cases of visible ethnic identity among third- and fourth-generation European-Americans called into question the inevitability of assimilation, provoking a politicized discourse on the so-called “new ethnicity” in academia, media, and throughout society.²⁰ In Yorkville, for example, German Americans continued to nurture the Steuben parade, created in the mid-1950s, and Hungarian Yorkville’s Magyar Ház, opened in 1966, entered its second phase following the deaths of its founding generation. The persistence of ethnic events and institutions like these interested sociologists seeking to explain the apparent durability of ethnic identity in modern America. Herbert Gans, a storied member of this subgroup, coined the term “symbolic ethnicity” to explain this phenomenon. Gans, Mary Waters, and other proponents of this theory argue that later generations of Euro-Americans had the luxury of exercising a notable degree of choice about whether and on what terms to engage with ethnic identity. Waters stressed that the mixed European ancestry of most Americans supplies a veritable menu of options. Symbolic ethnicity’s general call to evaluate the continuity and dynamism of ethnic identity over time is valuable. Importantly, it also brings into the equation social constructions of race, for symbolic ethnicity theorists point out that the privileged social status of “whiteness” makes ethnic choices possible. This powerful argument provokes inquiry into when, how, and to what extent European migrants and their descendants gained entry to the American social category of “white.”²¹

Review 37, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 611-40; Alejandro Portes, “Conclusion: Toward a New World – The Origins and Effects of Transnational Activities,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22, no. 2 (Mar. 1999): 463-77.

²⁰ The merger of multiple trends in the 1960s and 1970s called into question the inevitability and linearity of assimilation, while also giving rise to the label, “white ethnic.” Generally, this term stood for second- or third-generation descendants of the so-called new immigrants (e.g., Italy, Poland), who entered the country between 1880 and 1924. Nathan Glazer and Patrick Moynihan’s 1963 book, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, observed that many white ethnics in urban environments continued to prioritize and identify partially with their Euro-American roots. In 1972, Michael Novak’s *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics* attempted to raise the consciousness of white ethnic Catholics, who, Novak asserted, had been denied the full fruits of American prosperity and democracy despite eschewing the divisive tactics of the African American Civil Rights Movement. America’s mainstream media ran stories on the “new ethnicity” that referred to white ethnics as “hard hats,” “anti-intellectuals,” and occasionally as “white racists.” Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1963); Michael Novak, *The Unmeltable Ethnics: Politics and Culture in American Life, Second Ed.* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1996).

²¹ Herbert J. Gans, “Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2, no. 1 (1979): 1-20; Mary Waters, *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Richard D. Alba, *Italian American: Into the Twilight of Ethnicity* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1985); Richard Alba and

Symbolic ethnicity, however, also perpetuates misconceptions and suffers from blind spots. The concept treats ethnic identity as the sole province of the individual, an ode to personal autonomy. If we believe, however, that ethnicity was formed in the past pursuant to social processes, including macro- and micro-level modes of cultural transmission, would not the same be true of the present? Moreover, symbolic ethnicity, channeling classical economic theory, rests on the predicate of a perfect marketplace of ethnic representations from which the rational subject can choose to be whatever he or she desires. However, this imagined free market of identity does not exist, as numerous factors, much of them place-specific, determine available options, fix probable costs and benefits, and otherwise influence decisions. Ethnic identity is contingent. Last, labeling certain types of ethnic engagement as “symbolic” threatens to reify essentialized versions of ethnicity, a seemingly ascriptive endeavor. Symbolic ethnicity breathes life into assimilation theory by implicitly marking terminal points of ethnic authenticity.²²

For all these reasons, this study cannot rest on the conclusions of the symbolic ethnicity theorists to the extent they tack away from particularism but can draw inspiration from the questions they pose. Thus, this work follows a similar path as that charted by Yiorgos Anagnostou, whose monograph *Contours of White Ethnicity* focused on the social category of Greek American. Anagnostou used the spirit of symbolic ethnicity, especially its emphasis on “usable pasts,” to explore “why and how selective pasts are retained, reworked, dismantled, discarded, or contested in the making of ethnicity,” not to declare certain cultural representations inauthentic or shallow.²³ Given that history and heritage

Victor Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991); Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race: Racial Oppression and Social Control* (New York: Verso, 1994); Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); and Tanfer Emin Tunc, “Recapitulating the Historiographical Contributions of Matthew Frye Jacobson’s *Whiteness of a Different Color* and Gail Bederman’s *Manliness and Civilization*,” *Rethinking History* 12, no. 2 (June 2008): 281–288.

²² Gans, “Symbolic Ethnicity,” 1–20; Waters, *Ethnic Options*.

²³ Yiorgos Anagnostou, *Contours of White Ethnicity: Popular Ethnography and the Making of Usable Pasts in Greek America* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2009), 2

share the stage in this project, Anagnostou's line of questioning undergirds the critical analyses of the German American and Hungarian American heritage practices featured in Book II.²⁴

RECALLING YORKVILLE'S HISTORIOGRAPHICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FAMILY TREES

This study's research goals are to flesh out the histories of German Americans and Hungarian Americans connected to Yorkville, to juxtapose those historical interpretations with the ethnic Yorkville imaginary, and to describe how this past is reflected in contemporary heritage practices. As no work of history can claim completeness, these objectives require appropriate choices. Scores of books and articles have shaped this work, but a small cadre warrant mention as historiographical forebears.

In focusing on a single place, this study represents a work of local history with wider implications. Historian Joseph Amato opined that "[p]eople of every place and time deserve a history."²⁵ Stanley Nadel's *Little Germany* gives credence to this adage. Nadel chronicles one ethnic neighborhood in Manhattan, *Kleindeutschland*, in a dense monograph with detail about the economic and social lives of the German Americans who literally and figuratively built the place. Moreover, his explanation of the neighborhood's multicausal decline, featuring external pressures and internal agency, models analytical nuance. Given that Yorkville came to be viewed as the capital of German New York in the twentieth century, this dissertation humbly continues Nadel's historical narrative of German New York. Hasia Diner's *Lower East Side Memories*, which also focuses on a single ethnic neighborhood, privileges social memory. Diner addresses how and why American Jews came to esteem the Lower East Side as hallowed ground as their place of origin in the United States by examining various ways of recalling the place,

²⁴ Ibid.; John Stone and Kelsey Harris, "Symbolic Ethnicity and Herbert Gans: Race, Religion, and Politics in the Twenty-first Century," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40, no. 9 (2017): 1397-1409.

²⁵ Joseph A. Amato, *Rethinking Home: A Case for Writing Local History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2002), 3.

people, and time. Diner's work demonstrates the merits of investigating the intersections of place, ethnicity, and memory.²⁶

Three additional works influence this dissertation's comparative approach. John Bodnar argues that single group migration histories too often decontextualize and artificially separate an analytically constructed set of migrants, whereas, multi-group studies, especially those involving a shared setting, allow for comparative analysis. He, along with Roger Simon and Michael Weber, modeled this advice in *Lives of Their Own*, a history of working-class African Americans, Italians, and Poles set in Pittsburgh. Sociologist Ewa Morawska, in *For Bread and Butter*, pursued similar goals through more interdisciplinary means in a monograph that deftly introduces readers to the complex and multifarious Central European collectives who came to settle in Jonestown, Pennsylvania in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Maria Kefalas's *Working-Class Heroes*, of more recent vintage, is set in a blue-collar Chicago neighborhood. She contends that scholars ignore the history of white ethnics at their own peril, for continuing their historical trajectories into the modern period offers insight into the confluence of race, place-attachment, and urban dynamism, all of which complicate pithy conclusions about white working-class racism.²⁷

Methodologically, traditional historical research grounds this study. Book I, and a significant proportion of Book II, rely on public archival sources such as newspaper articles, institutional records, oral histories, and speeches. Private archival collections of the ethnic Yorkville diaspora or others connected in some way with the neighborhood's once prevalent German and Hungarian communities fill in gaps and provide necessary details. Indispensable are secondary sources relating to a wide array of

²⁶ Stanley Nadel, *Little Germany*; Hasia R. Diner, *Lower East Side Memories: A Jewish Place in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

²⁷ John Bodnar, Roger Simon, and Michael P. Weber, *Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians, and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900-1960* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 1-9; Ewa Morawska, *For Bread with Butter: The Life-Worlds of East Central Europeans in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, 1890-1940*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Maria Kefalas, *Working-Class Heroes: Protecting Home, Community, and Nation in a Chicago Neighborhood* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003).

subjects ranging from the history of New York City to nineteenth century German emigration to twentieth century Hungarian geopolitics to theoretical works pertaining to migration studies.

To accommodate this dissertation's interest in ethnic Yorkville's heritage, Book II's analysis relies on qualitative data and analytical insights generated by ethnographic techniques. Specifically, participant observation of the Steuben parade, Kathryn Jolowicz's exhibit and lecture on German Yorkville, and Hungarian language worship services provided an emic perspective of these contemporary heritage practices. Likewise, formal and informal interviews of those closely associated with the contemporary heritage practices produced additional data and sparked ideas. Scholars such as Clifford Geertz have extolled the virtues of marrying historical and anthropological methodologies. This project constitutes a modest attempt to follow their advice to gain a greater understanding of the contemporary ethnic heritage practices as well as how those relate to the histories of Yorkville's German and Hungarian communities. To be clear, using ethnographic techniques is not equivalent to the embedded fieldwork routinely deployed by anthropologists. Rather, in this case, periodic engagement with these ethnic heritage practices complemented the rigorous historical research described above.²⁸

The core tenets of critical heritage studies animate this dissertation's evaluation of these contemporary ethnic heritage practices. The concept of critical heritage studies carefully examines the processes by which cultural heritage is constructed, deployed, contested, and defended. In addressing these matters, it foregrounds Foucauldian and Gramscian analyses of asymmetrical power relationships among stakeholders. Historian John Bodnar and heritage scholar Rodney Harrison provide crucial guidance in this regard. Both scholars deploy a dichotomous formulation to analyze cultural heritage practices, differentiating between official or formally sanctioned cultural heritage and vernacular forms

²⁸ Clifford Geertz, "History and Anthropology," *New Literary History* 21, no. 2 (Winter, 1990): 321-35; Lejla Voloder, "Introduction: Insiderness in Migration and Mobility research: Conceptual Considerations," in *Insider Research on Migration and Mobility: International Perspectives on Researcher Positioning*, eds. Lejla Voloder and Liudmila Kirpitchenko (Burlington, VT: Farnham, 2014), 1-17; Rhys Isaac, "Ethnographic Methods in History: An Action Approach," *Journal Historical Methods* 13, no.1 (1980): 43-61.

existing outside of and sometimes pushing against them. While the reality of cultural heritage production does not adhere neatly to theoretical binaries, Bodnar and Harrison provoke inquiry into the inequalities within heritage-making ecosystems based on political positionality, socio-economic status, and other differentiating features that create and affect power and access.²⁹

Laurajane Smith's concept of the authorized heritage discourse (AHD) adds theoretical heft to the matter. Smith conceives of the AHD as a Western-centric set of ideas, proclivities, and practices aimed at sanitizing, declawing, beautifying, and streamlining cultural heritage to render it easily digestible, noncontroversial, essentialized, and broadly supported. On the national scale, the AHD works to ensure that heritage unifies citizens under a commonly accepted understanding of the nation's core heritage claims. This study does not apply the AHD as a rigid analytical framework, but rather draws inspiration from the concept to identify and consider how and perhaps why the ethnic Yorkville imaginary omits certain voices and interpretations it deems not sufficiently celebratory. The ethnic Yorkville imaginary exemplifies how the AHD manifests on the local level, especially in its tendency to adhere to and ratify nationalizing mythologies such as the melting pot metaphor, which in turn feed misguided notions of "good" European immigration of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries versus "bad" immigration from Mexico and Central America during recent decades.³⁰

RECALLING YORKVILLE'S PRINCIPAL CLAIMS

With the concept of recalling as a framework, this dissertation interprets ethnic Yorkville's history from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, tracks the development of the dominant narrative about this past, and critically examines contemporary ethnic heritage practices arising from or

²⁹ John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 13-20; Rodney Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 14.

³⁰ Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 9-42.

associated with this past.³¹ In the process of meeting these objectives, it explains how and why recalling Yorkville's ethnic past privileges social memory over evidence-based historical interpretation. It argues that popular depictions of ethnic Yorkville, marked by tableau-like representations of German Americans and Hungarian Americans as well as an episodic chronology, emerged from a century-long pattern of recalling this neighborhood's ethnic legacy led by New York's white mainstream print press. The tableau representations depict ethnic Yorkville as a timeless but bounded place peopled principally by Germans and Hungarians living in well-delineated and fortified enclaves. The dominant narrative claims that these groups created culturally foreign and overtly traditional spaces contrasting sharply with Manhattan's dynamism and modern sensibilities. The imaginary's episodic and selective chronology aims to show that the forces of Americanization ground down ethnic Yorkville and assimilated its foreign occupants, a process which it describes as unfortunate but ultimately necessary and unavoidable. This narrative of the rise and fall of an ethnic neighborhood eventually ossified into a politically compliant and socially conformist narrative, advancing nationalizing and mythologized immigration discourses such as the melting pot metaphor while simultaneously bolstering New York's claimed status as a paragon of multiculturalism. Yorkville was and is a place with a public biography generated more by the vagaries of social memory than history. Little to no room exists in this imaginary for contemporary heritage practices arising from or related to this neighborhood's ethnic past, as they do not fit with the seemingly settled notion that ethnic Yorkville died or melted away long ago. Accordingly, the public history element of this work seeks to illuminate these ethnic heritage practices, and to reintroduce them as

³¹ The concept of recalling grounds this study. Recalling connotes distance, loss, or even rupture; we recall that which no longer exists as it once was. Recalling the past, whether done individually or in communion with others, encompasses a broad array of actions ranging from fond memories meant to soothe the spirit or nurture community to politicized claims about the past brandished as weapons in contemporary power struggles. Recalling can happen unexpectedly, stimulated by a scent, scene, or comment, or can be planned or purposeful. Recalling, as a present participle, suggests an ongoing process, albeit one variable among actors and over time. When we recall we also forget, as our recollections lack completeness. We recall trends, triumphs, tribulations, decisions, and material objects. Place, people, and time, however, are the dominant matters filling our minds, for these three vectors of memory organize how we engage with the past and imbue the process with meaning and texture.

integral parts of the public conversation about the merits, meanings, and broader implications of recalling ethnic Yorkville.³²

RECALLING YORKVILLE'S PUBLIC HISTORY IMPLICATIONS

This project reinterprets and supplements existing historical narratives of Yorkville's German American and Hungarian American communities. Especially through its explication of contemporary ethnic heritage practices, it demonstrates how and why Yorkville's ethnic past continues, albeit in altered forms, in the present. As such, it contributes to broader issues pertaining to public history theory and practice. Theoretically speaking, it provides a rich case study through which to examine how dominant or hegemonic narratives are constructed and what consequences flow from their deployment. Deconstructing the narrative-making process, while valuable in its own sake, can also fuel efforts from below to disrupt or amend these narratives.

Additionally, this dissertation's conclusions and the process from which they manifested offers insight into several areas of public history practice. For example, Book II's focus on contemporary ethnic heritage practices leans heavily on the communities themselves to explain how and why they do what they do. The tenets of shared authority, as set forth by Michael Frisch, informed both the ethnographic techniques as well as the writing process. Closely related is the degree to which this project seeks to exemplify the value of granularity of so-called ordinary lives. In other words, the dissertation, where possible, highlights lesser known or heretofore invisible women and men within Yorkville's German American and Hungarian American communities.³³

³² Emily R. Cabaniss and Abigail E. Cameron, "'Unassimilable and Undesirable': News Elites Discursive Construction of the American Immigrant during the Ellis Island Years," *Discourse & Society* 28, no. 6 (2017): 614-634; Minelle Mahtani, "Representing Minorities: Canadian Media and Minority Identities," *Canadian Ethnic Studies Journal* 33, no. 3 (2001): 99-133; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983).

³³ Michael H. Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).

The final three points, discussed in more detail in the dissertation's conclusion, speak to the potential public history uses of this project. New York City's preservation community has recently shown intensified interest in Yorkville's ethnic past. FRIENDS of the Upper East Side, for instance, published *Shaped by Immigrants: A History of Yorkville* in 2018, which presented the neighborhood's ethnic past largely through its lost and extant built environment. The questions this dissertation raises, the information it gathers, and even its conclusions could contribute to further explorations of ethnic Yorkville's past within Gotham's preservation community or provide evidence to assist targeted efforts to protect and designate certain properties. Also, this project is keenly aware of and endorses Dolores Hayden's call to unlock the potential energy of grassroots histories tied to place. To date, the German American and Hungarian American communities have not collaborated or coordinated to any significant degree on cultural heritage projects. Perhaps seeing their communities presented together in this form might inspire collaborative projects capable of putting their histories into conversation in the public sphere in ways that complicate the story and broaden the audiences.³⁴

Lastly, given public history's laudable concern with how the past might speak to the present, this study and similarly situated works complicating European immigration, adjustment, and heritage, can contribute to America's contemporary immigration debate. For several years, this debate has commanded headlines, heated up social media, and acted as a wedge issue within the American body politic. In the 2016 presidential election cycle, for instance, the political right, led in volume, vitriol, and disinformation by Donald Trump, claimed that recent immigrants, especially those from Mexico and Central America, have a higher propensity to carry disease or commit crimes, and that unchecked immigration imperils American democracy through illegal voting. Trump's demands for a "wall" on America's southern border with Mexico tied a material objective to this problematic rhetoric.³⁵

³⁴ Hayden, *Power of Place*, 2-43.

³⁵ Jeesun Kim and Wayne Wanta, "News Framing of the U.S. Immigration Debate during Election Years: Focus on Generic Frames," *The Communication Review* 21, no. 2 (2018): 89 – 115; Robert Warren and Donald Kerwin, "National Interests and

Those wielding these arguments often seek safe harbor in one of America's most cherished but abused myths: the melting pot metaphor, which argues that European migrants of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries assimilated completely to a putative "mainstream" Anglo-American culture. Adherents of this belief distinguish the "white" European migrants of yore from contemporary counterparts of color hailing from Mexico and Central America. In this dichotomy, the Europeans – even those who did not achieve the status of "whiteness" until later – are remembered as having entered the U.S. "legally," worked hard, learned the language, doggedly pursued upward mobility, welcomed assimilation, and comprehended the benefits of becoming fully American. Implicitly this vision holds that contemporary migrants can be described in converse terms, which creates a "good" versus "bad" immigration binary with real world, and too often tragic, consequences. Paradoxically, then, those who rely on this dichotomy deploy America's immigration past to argue against select immigration in the present or future. Projects that complicate the history and heritage of European migration offer a means to disrupt the melting pot mythology's divisive tendencies.³⁶

RECALLING YORKVILLE'S ORGANIZATION

This dissertation is organized into two "books." Book I constitutes a periodized history of ethnic Yorkville presented in four chapters. Book II introduces select aspects of ethnic Yorkville's contemporary heritage practices. Book I begins with a brief introduction as well as ethnic Yorkville's prehistory, including sketches of *Kleindeutschland* and Little Hungary, the German and Hungarian enclaves in lower

Common Ground in the US Immigration Debate: How to Legalize the U.S." *Journal On Migration And Human Security* 5, no. 2 (2017): 297 – 330; Hugh Mehan, "The Discourse of the Illegal Immigration Debate: A Case Study in the Politics of Representation," *Discourse & Society* 8, no. 2 (Jan. 1997): 249-70.

³⁶ Nida Bikmen, "Still a Nation of Immigrants? Effects of Constructions of National History on Attitudes toward Immigrants," *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 15, no. 1 (2015): 282-302; Gregory W. Streich, "Discourses of American National Identity: Echoes and Lessons from the 1910s-1920s," *Citizenship Studies* 13, no. 3 (2009): 267-87; William D. McCorkle, "Using History to Inform the Modern Immigration Debate in the United States," *Journal of International Social Studies* 8, no. 1 (2018): 149-67; Ian Tyrrell, *Historians in Public: The Practice of American History, 1890-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Hayden, *The Power of Place; Letting Go?: Sharing Historical Authority in a User-Generated World*, 1st Edition, eds. Bill Adair, Benjamin Filene, and Laura Koloski (New York: Routledge, 2011).

Manhattan. Chapter 1, *Recalling Ethnic Yorkville in Bloom: 1840s through the First Decade of the Twentieth Century*, analyzes the origins and early development of ethnic Yorkville. It features German American uses of Yorkville spaces as festival grounds in the 1850s, chronicles German and Hungarian migrations uptown, and introduces pan-ethnic projects in each community during the early twentieth century. Chapter 2, *Recalling Yorkville in the Summer Heat: World War I to World War II*, addresses the threats posed to Yorkville's German and Hungarian communities during the Great War and how subparts of these communities attempted to mitigate such threats. Attention is also given to the influence of homeland politics on each community during the interwar period, as reactions to Hungary's Horthy government fractured Hungarian New York and the rise of fascism in Germany divided German Yorkville and harmed its reputation. Chapter 3, *Recalling Ethnic Yorkville's Autumn Colors: WW II through the 1960s*, emphasizes how America's entry into the Second World War demanded that Yorkville's German and Hungarian communities publicly demonstrate their loyalty to and support for the Allied cause. The two communities' paths diverged in the postwar period. German Yorkville waned under the stress and strain caused by narratives emphasizing the presence of pro-Nazi groups in the neighborhood prior to the war, whereas Hungarian Yorkville gained strength via waves of migrants displaced by the war and later fleeing Hungary's communist regime. Chapter 4, *Recalling Ethnic Yorkville in Wintertime: The 1970s to the Present*, assesses the protracted decline of Yorkville's German and Hungarian communities, including their gradual loss of commercial entities. This chapter highlights the efforts by residents and restaurant and shop owners to stem the tide of rapacious developers who sought to incorporate Yorkville into the affluent area to its west.

Book II's examination of the contemporary heritage practices connected to ethnic Yorkville's past also has four chapters. It begins with a brief introduction setting forth the theoretical underpinnings of the analyses. Chapter 5, *Telling Heritage: The Role of Storytellers, Memory Keepers, and Local Historians in Interpreting and Conveying Ethnic Yorkville's Past*, analyzes various forms of

telling ethnic Yorkville's history. More specifically, it sketches the history of ethnic Yorkville's bardic tradition in which a series of voices from inside the community sought to influence narratives about the neighborhood's once prevalent ethnic groups. Kathryn Jolowicz, the self-described Yorkville historian, provides a case study in the origins, practices, and values of an amateur historian and memory keeper. The chapter closes by introducing storytelling techniques owing more to ethnic Yorkville's built environment, such as tour books and walking tour guides.

Chapter 6, *Marching Heritage: History and Heritage in New York's German-American Steuben Parade*, takes Yorkville's ethnic identity on parade. The German-American Steuben Parade, an annual event including thousands of marchers and performers from throughout Greater New York as well as German-speaking areas of Europe, has deep roots in German New York. Thus, this chapter chronicles the long course of German parading and festive culture in Gotham, exploring its intersections with political legitimacy and social capital. This chapter connects this past to the creation of the German-American Steuben Parade in the mid-1950s, and analyzes how that event has changed over the past six decades. Tracking the parade's historical trajectory clarifies the disjuncture in the relationship between Yorkville as a crucial site of German American heritage and a parade that has increasingly diverged from its localized past.

Chapter 7, *Housing Heritage: The Magyar Ház and Hungarian New York's Quest for an Ethnic Headquarters*, discusses how Hungarian New Yorkers' decades long quest to create a headquarters for the city's Hungarian community fell victim to intra-ethnic conflict driven, in large part, by homeland politics. This chapter also describes how waves of exiles, émigrés, and refugees, displaced by World War II and the subsequent onset of communist rule in postwar Hungary, altered the demographic and ideological makeup of Hungarian New York, including the Yorkville enclave. A small but influential group of exile elites initiated multiple political and cultural projects that laid the groundwork for the Magyar Ház, which opened in 1966. For more than a half century, this institution has endeavored to represent

Hungarian American identity and culture in New York, in the process eliding the communities' radical political traditions as well as the role played by Hungarian Jews.

Chapter 8, *Believing Heritage: Cultural Heritage in Ethnic Yorkville's Places of Worship*, explores the intersection of organized religion and ethnic cultural heritage practices by focusing on two of Hungarian Yorkville's longstanding places of worship: The First Hungarian Reformed Church and St. Stephen of Hungary Roman Catholic Church. Part I introduces and analyzes the origins of these two churches including their connections to homeland causes or institutions, pressures to Americanize, and internal power struggles. Part II examines the churches during their mature years. The careers of two charismatic pastors of the First Hungarian Reformed Church – Rev. Dr. Géza Takaro and Rev. Dr. Imre Kovács – provide a way to assess the influence of homeland concerns and Cold War geopolitics on local ethnic religious identity during the mid-twentieth century. On the other hand, St. Stephen's highwater mark as an ethnic anchor institution in Hungarian Yorkville during the 1950s and 1960s coincided with battles to retain the church's status as a national parish even as increasing numbers of non-Hungarians joined the congregation. Part III focuses on the divergent contemporary experiences of these two faith communities. It juxtaposes the First Hungarian Reformed Church's successful preservation efforts, including a listing on the National Register of Historic Places and protected status under New York's landmark law, against St. Stephen of Hungary's putative death, marked by the New York's Archdiocese's decision to merge the national parish with a nearby territorial parish and the resulting effort by many Hungarian Americans to find alternative means to preserve their ethnic faith community.

As a study focusing on specific groups associated with a specific place, this dissertation is subject to the critique of being too narrow, or even provincial. The following chapters address this concern by demonstrating, both in Book I's historical interpretation and Book II's exploration of contemporary ethnic heritage practices, that "going small" can problematize boundedness in constructive ways that

ultimately produce broader, nuanced, and more inclusive histories. These histories, in turn, provide means to critically engage with the received wisdom that celebrates uncritically Euro-American migration history and misuses this past to advance political programs of exclusion.

BOOK I: THE HISTORIES AND IMAGINARIES OF ETHNIC YORKVILLE'S GERMAN-AMERICAN AND HUNGARIAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

INTRODUCTION

Until recently, written accounts of Yorkville's ethnic past consisted of a scattered and disconnected assortment of old newspaper clippings, memoirs, and websites. No synthetic history existed. That changed in 2018, when FRIENDS of the Upper East Side Historic Districts (FRIENDS), a nonprofit membership organization founded in 1982 and "dedicated to preserving the architectural legacy, livability, and sense of place of the Upper East Side," published *Shaped by Immigrants: A History of Yorkville*.¹ A blend of photography and text billed as the first ever comprehensive history of Yorkville, *Shaped by Immigrants* acts as the centerpiece of FRIENDS's renewed commitment to preserving the neighborhood's past, especially its multicultural legacy. FRIENDS is in the process of drafting an "umbrella context statement" regarding Yorkville's history, ready for use in future preservation applications. FRIENDS felt a sense of urgency in this work due to the city's completion of two Second Avenue subway stops at 86th and 96th streets, which opened on New Year's Day 2017. They, like many others, believed the subway links would irrevocably alter Yorkville's feel by making it a more attractive locale for Manhattan's professional set. Their concerns were justified. Realtors and developers now tout Yorkville, long seen as an antiquated holdout to Manhattan's rapidly changing urban landscape, as the next hot space ready for a total architectural and socio-economic makeover.²

It remains unclear whether FRIENDS's Yorkville campaign might unlock the "power of place," a concept Dolores Hayden defined as the "power of ordinary urban landscapes to nurture citizens' public

¹ "About," *Friends of the Upper East Side*, accessed December 1, 2019, <https://www.friends-ues.org/about/>.

² "Now Available-Get Your Copy of Shaped by Immigrants: A History of Yorkville," *Friends of the Upper East Side*, accessed December 1, 2019, <https://www.friends-ues.org/now-available-get-your-copy-of-shaped-by-immigrants-a-history-of-yorkville/>; *Shaped by Immigrants: A History of Yorkville* (New York: Friends of the Upper East Side, 2018); Nick Paumgarten, "The Second Avenue Subway Is Here! The Début of New York's Newest Train Line Took Place at Noon on New Year's Day—Ninety-seven Years After It Was First Conceived," *New York Journal*, February 5, 2017 (February 13 & 20, 2017 Issue), accessed on December 3, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/02/13/the-second-avenue-subway-is-here>; Lindsay Turley, "Ring in the New Year with the Second Avenue Subway," *Museum of the City of New York*, January 3, 2017, accessed December 20, 2019, <http://mcny.org/story/ringing-new-year-second-avenue-subway>; Philip Mark Plotch, "Waiting More Than 100 Years for the Second Avenue Subway to Arrive," *Journal of Planning History* 14, no. 4 (2015): 309-328.

memory, to encompass shared time in the form of shared territory.”³ Hayden sounded a clarion call more than two decades ago to rediscover the neglected pasts of working-class urban neighborhoods, in all their messiness and contestation, so that civic identity might reflect and elevate the value of diversity. For several decades, the ethnic Yorkville imaginary has curbed the potential of Yorkville’s ethnic, working-class past to accomplish this laudable goal. Through reduction and repetition, this imagined, packaged, and highly selective account has supported municipal and national mythologies relating to immigration, most notably the melting pot metaphor, while largely missing opportunities to deepen our understandings of the intersections of place, identity, and memory in America’s immigration history. Inspired by the actions of FRIENDS and the spirit of Hayden, the following four chapters present a historical interpretation of ethnic Yorkville focusing on the experiences of German Americans and Hungarian Americans connected to the neighborhood driven by the archival record. It also tracks the parallel development of the ethnic Yorkville imaginary to show how, and in some cases why, these two modes of recalling ethnic Yorkville diverge in specific ways. Interpreting Yorkville’s history while also noting dominant collective memories reinforces a fundamental but crucial tenet of public history theory and practice: places have histories, interpretations of the past recoverable through archival records and reliable evidence, but they often ignite memories owing more to nostalgia and popular mythology.⁴

Book I’s history begins with a brief description of the origins of New York’s German and Hungarian communities. A periodized portrayal of ethnic Yorkville through its four seasons follows this background: “Springtime”: 1840s through the first decade of the twentieth century; “Summer”: the years immediately preceding the Great War to Pearl Harbor; “Autumn”: America’s entry into World War II through the 1960s; and “Winter”: the 1970s to the present.

³ Hayden, *Power of Place*, 9.

⁴ Ibid.; *Shaped by Immigrants*.

KLEINDEUTSCHLAND: NEW YORK'S ORIGINAL GERMAN ENCLAVE

From the mid-nineteenth century into the first decade of the twentieth century, German ethnic identity in New York remained constantly contested and always in flux. During the 1850s, more than 70,000 German-speaking immigrants per year came to America, a phenomenon James Bergquist dubbed “the first great wave of German immigration.”⁵ Consequently, Manhattan became the third largest German-speaking city on the planet. By 1855, Germans comprised sixteen percent of its population. Many mid-century migrants were members of the 48ers: Jews, Catholics, and Protestants who emigrated due to the political fallout from the failed 1848 revolutions, which sought to displace Central European monarchs. In addition, tens of thousands of German-speakers came to America due to crop failures, depressed grain markets, and the loss of home-based occupations such as hand-loomng.⁶

Most German newcomers who arrived in New York from the 1840s through the 1860s settled in an area of lower Manhattan that assumed the moniker *Kleindeutschland* or “Little Germany.” Therefore, the roots of *Kleindeutschland* pre-date the unification of the German nation-state in 1871. Downtown Manhattan’s eleventh and seventeenth wards doubled in size from 1845 to 1855 due principally to an influx of German-speaking migrants. Most of *Kleindeutschland*’s Germans found work within the city’s burgeoning textile industry or in semi-skilled jobs such as shoemaking and cabinetmaking, with wives and husbands sometimes laboring side-by-side. A few pursued

⁵ James M. Bergquist, “German-America in the 1890s: Illusions and Realities,” in *Germans in America: Aspects of German-American Relations in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. E. Allen McCormick (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 3.

⁶ Carl Wittke, *The German Language Press in America* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky, 1957), 2-7; Robert Ernst, *Immigrant Life in New York City, 1825-1863* (New York: King’s Crown Press, 1949), 41-42; Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 44; Farley Grubb, *German Immigration and Servitude in America, 1709-1920* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 376, 392; LaVern J. Rippley, *The German-Americans* (Boston: Twayne Publishing, 1976), 21, 84; Bruce Levine, *The Spirit of 1848: German Immigrants, Labor Conflict, and the Coming of the Civil War* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 63-93; Frederick M. Binder and David M. Reimers, *All the Nations Under Heaven* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 47; Walter D. Kamphoefner, “German Emigration Research, North, South, and East: Findings, Methods, and Open Questions,” in *People in Transit: German Migrations in Comparative Perspective, 1820-1930*, ed. Dirk Hoerder and Jörg Nagler (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 20; Ira Rosenwaite, *Population History of New York City* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 40. Hawgood singled out 1855 as the point when the German element started to “live not in the United States, but in German America.” To be sure, Germans-speaking migrants planted numerous ethnic communities throughout the Ohio River Valley, the Corn and Wheat Belts, and Texas during the mid-nineteenth century. While German New Yorkers operated within the greater context of German America to varying degrees, Gotham’s urban setting presented a distinctive set of challenges and opportunities. Hawgood, *The Tragedy of German-America*, xviii.

entrepreneurial opportunities as bakers, grocers, and saloon keepers.⁷ New York's native-born population tended to lump all German-speaking migrants together and characterized Kleindeutschland as an exclusively Germanic space. Their contemporary observations failed to recognize the area's non-German-speakers and paid no heed to Central Europeans' geographic and religious heterogeneity. Also, Kleindeutschland was never the sole locus of German New York. German emigres were distinctly mobile during the 1850s and 1860s, establishing ethnic beachheads in Brooklyn, Queens, and northern New Jersey. In the 1860s, Yorkville joined a loose confederation of German neighborhoods when it emerged as a viable option for a burgeoning set of skilled workers including many German-speaking craftsmen.⁸

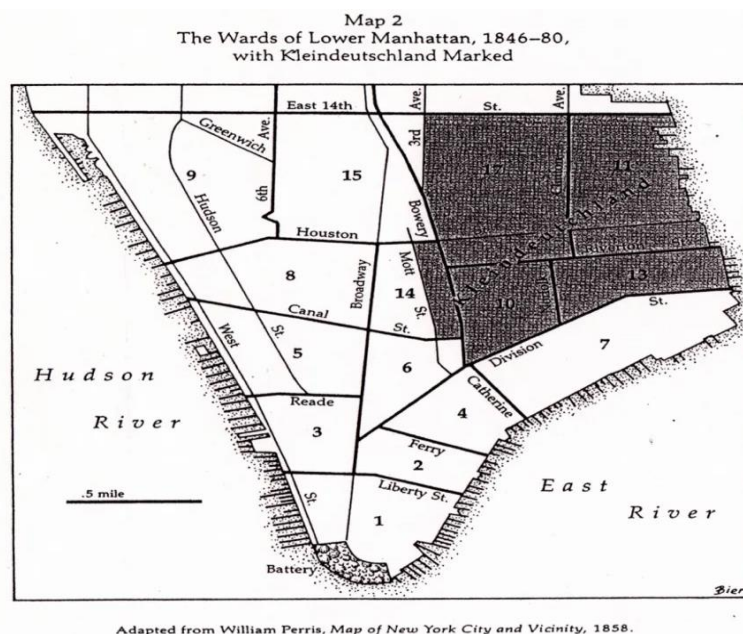


Figure 4. This map depicts Kleindeutschland within the wider territory of Lower Manhattan. It appears in Frank Jacobs, "The Short Life of Little Germany, New York's First Ethnic Enclave," *Big Think*, June 22, 2014, <https://bigthink.com/strange-maps/663-death-of-little-germany-how-a-ship-sank-an-enclave>.

⁷ Stanley Nadel, *Little Germany: Ethnicity, Religion, and Class in New York City, 1845-80* (Urbana, University of Illinois, 1990), 13-46; Ernst, *Immigrant Life in New York City*, 41-42; Wilhelm, "From Community and Place to Network and Space," 65-67; Spann, *The New Metropolis*, 154; Stansell, *City of Women*, 44-45

⁸ Nadel, *Little Germany*, 13-46; Binder and Reimers, *All Nations Under Heaven*, 47-48; Diana Dizerega Wall, "Examining Gender, Class, and Ethnicity in Nineteenth-Century New York City," *Historical Archaeology* 33, no. 1 (1999): 103; Ernst, 42; Edward K. Spann, *The New Metropolis, New York City, 1840-1857* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 108-109; Jay P. Dolan, *The Immigrant Church: New York's Irish and German Catholics, 1815-1865* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 38-41; Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 745.

LITTLE HUNGARY: NEW YORK'S ORIGINAL HUNGARIAN ENCLAVE

During the nineteenth century's final two decades, with Kleindeutschland firmly in place, Jewish and Christian Hungarians created and nurtured a mixed community in an area of lower Manhattan around East 14th Street known as "Little Hungary." This micro-neighborhood owed much to the culture of religious coexistence nurtured within the Kingdom of Hungary. From the creation of the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy via the 1867 Compromise to the empire's dismemberment after the Great War, Magyars, or ethnic Hungarians, dominated a semi-autonomous polyglot in Hungary, which included significant numbers of Romanians, Germans, Slovaks, Croats, Serbs, and Rusyn (Ruthenians). Starting in the 1870s, Magyar political elites attempted to tighten their grip on minority populations through Magyarization, a hegemonic cultural and social program that made Hungarian the state's sole bureaucratic and educational language, and promoted the predominance of Magyar heritage through dance, music, and literature. The impact of Magyarization on language acquisition and transmission was evident in the percentage of Budapest residents who spoke only Magyar, which more than doubled from 1880 to 1910. Many Jewish Hungarians acquiesced to or actively participated in this hegemonic system, with some even adopting Magyar surnames. For cooperative Jews, Magyarization presented economic and social opportunities to ascend within Hungary's burgeoning industrial sector.⁹

Migrants who emigrated from the Kingdom of Hungary during the dual monarchy period were normally driven by economic concerns. In contrast, prior to 1880, most members of New York's modestly sized Hungarian community were political refugees who had fled the failed revolt against the

⁹ Zoltán Szasz, "Government Policy and the Nationalities," in *Hungarians and Their Neighbors in Modern Times, 1867-1950*, ed. Ferenc Glatz (Highland Lakes, NJ: Atlantic Research and Publications, 1995), 23-32; R.W. Seton-Watson, *Racial Problems in Hungary* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1972), 171-73, 187; Paul Lendvai, *The Hungarians: A Thousand Years of Victory in Defeat* (London: Hurts & Company, 1999), 330-33; Robert A. Kann, "Hungarian Jewry during Austria-Hungary's Constitutional Period (1867-1918)," *Jewish Social Studies* 7, no. 4 (Oct. 1945): 357-86. It is worth noting that, like Hungarian Christians, the Hungarian Jewish community was not monolithic. For example, a subset of Hungarian Jews were part of the city's Orthodox community and Hungarians dominated a "moderate reform temple" on Lexington Avenue. Adam S. Ferziger, "Hungarian Separatist Orthodoxy and the Migration of Its Legacy to America: The Greenwald-Hirschenson Debate," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 105, no. 2 (Spring 2015): 250-83; Perlman, *Bridging Three Worlds*, 189.

Austrian crown in 1848. From 1880 to 1910, despite the apparent socio-economic promise of Magyarization, approximately fifteen percent of Hungary's Jewish population emigrated, nearly all of them completing their journey in the United States. By 1900, Jewish Hungarians outnumbered non-Jews of Hungarian descent in New York City two-to-one. The vast majority of Hungarian Jews and Gentiles settled in lower Manhattan. The Hungarian district's downtown boundaries were hardly fixed, but the area generally extended from the commercial hub of East Houston Street northward to Tenth Street and eastward to the East River. Historian Moses Rischin described the Hungarian quarter as a zone that was "once indisputably Kleindeutschland," an example of ethnic succession whereby newer waves of migrants replaced more established groups who, based on growing affluence, sought out neighborhoods with higher quality homes and more space.¹⁰

In Little Hungary, Jews and Gentiles not only coexisted and interacted but cooperated in multiple ways due to a sense of shared national identity. One contemporary observer opined that "it is almost impossible to distinguish between the Hungarian Jew and the Hungarian Gentile in New York

¹⁰ Moses Rischin, *The Promised City: New York Jews, 1870-1914* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 76-77; Robert Perlman, *Bridging Three Worlds: Hungarian-Jewish Americans, 1848-1914* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991), 89;; Steven B. Vardy, "The Great Economic Immigration from Hungary: 1880-1920," in *Society in Change: Studies in Honor of Béla K. Király*, ed. Steven B. Vardy and Agnes H. Vardy (Boulder, Co: Eastern European Monographs, 1983), 189-216; Anikó Prepuk, "Jews in Metropolitan Transformations of New York City," *Fulbright Grant 2010-2011*, University of Debrecen and Rutgers, the State University of Rutgers, accessed November 28, 2017, <http://www.fulbright.web2.vhost.hu/book6/prepukaniko.pdf>; Tibor Frank, "Interwar New York – City of Europeans: Forging a New Identity," *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* 16, no. 1-2 (2010): 157. Tyler Anbinder describes the area as extending north to Fourteenth Street, west to the Bowery, Fourth Avenue, and Market Street, with the East River forming a natural border to the east and south. To connect it to the German American story in New York City, Anbinder adds that the Lower East Side was roughly the "same area New Yorkers had called Kleindeutschland in the Civil War era." Tyler Anbinder, *City of Dreams: The 400-year Epic History of Immigrant New York* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016), 354-56. Mario Maffi, a scholar of turn-of-the century Manhattan, described the Lower East Side as "the pale" within which "there lived – or struggled to live – a world apart, a multi-layered social and cultural microcosm [where] each group left its deposits as in geology. Mario Maffi, *Gateway to the Promised Land: Ethnic Cultures on New York's Lower East Side* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 65. By the 1890s, journalists regularly referred to the Lower East Side as the Jewish Quarter, the Hebrew Quarter, and the Jewish East Side, suggesting Jewish statistical and cultural predominance. Many established New Yorkers envisioned this section of downtown Manhattan simply as an overcrowded zone of human misery riddled with nearly uninhabitable tenements and infested with disease and crime. Ira Rosenwaike, *Population History of New York City* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 202; Rischin, *The Promised City*, 129; Howard Markel, *Quarantine! East European Jewish Immigrants and the New York City Epidemics of 1892* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 30; Nancy L. Green, "From Downtown Tenements to Midtown Lofts: The Shifting Geography of an Urban Industry," in *A Coat of Many Colors: Immigration, Globalism, and Reform in the New York City Garment Industry*, ed. Daniel Soyer (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 28-32; Daniel Soyer, "Cockroach Capitalists: Jewish Contractors at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," in *A Coat of Many Colors: Immigration, Globalism, and Reform in the New York City Garment Industry*, ed. Daniel Soyer (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 91.

[because] they mingle indiscriminately, [and] both glory in the traditional freedom and patriotism of the Magyar.”¹¹ Seventy-five percent of Hungarian Jews claimed Magyar as their mother tongue.

Consequently, most Jewish and non-Jewish Hungarians read the same newspapers and a high proportion of Magyars boarded with Jewish Hungarian families. Language may also help to explain why Hungarian Jews did not cling to co-religionist affiliations to the same degree as other Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, a fact underscored by their decision to appoint a Hungarian chief rabbi to oversee religious services for Gotham’s Hungarian Jews in the early 1890s.¹²

Multiple examples of Jewish and non-Jewish Hungarians banding together to form relief organizations, such as the Hungarian Association, and cultural institutions like the First Hungarian Literary Society, or A New-Yorki Első Magyar Önképző Egylet, exist. Majorities of Hungarian Jews and Gentiles also worked together within the lower Manhattan’s expanding garment industry, although more Jewish Hungarians attained positions of upper management and ownership within that sector. During the Little Hungary period, outsiders tended to see Jewish and Gentile Hungarians as forming a single ethnic category. A 1900 *New York Times* article relating to Little Hungary did not distinguish between Jewish and non-Jewish Hungarians, instead focusing on the Maypole dance as a pan-Hungarian cultural expression. “Almost anywhere in town children can be seen dancing in the streets to an organ

¹¹ Louis H. Pink, “The Magyar in New York,” *Charities* 13, no. 10 (Dec. 3, 1904): 262.

¹² Ibid.; Tibor Frank, *Double Exile: Migrations of Jewish-Hungarian Professionals Through Germany to the United States, 1919-1945* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009), 226; Perlman, *Bridging Three Worlds*, 137-38; Rischin, *The Promised City*, 129, 148; Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York: Simon Schuster, 1976), 82; Daniel Soyer, “Introduction,” in *A Coat of Many Colors*, 8; Hasia R. Diner, *Lower East Side Memories: A Jewish Place in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 38; *New York Times*, “Benefit of the Hungarian Association,” December 16, 1894; Deborah Dwork, “Immigrant Jews on the Lower East Side of New York: 1880-1914,” in *The American Jewish Experience*, ed. Jonathan D. Sarna (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1997); *New York Times*, “Terpsichore on East Side,” August 5, 1900; Hutchins Hapgood, *The Spirit of the Ghetto: Studies of the Jewish Quarter of New York* (New York: Schocken Books, 1966); Jacob A. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies among the Tenements of New York* (New York: Sagamore Press, Inc., 1957), 76-87, 88-112. Riis, for instance, distinguishes several groups of ethnic Jews in the Lower East Side, including Russians and Poles, Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*, 77, 107. Historian Elizabeth Ewen comments that social workers who focused on the Lower East Side in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were often surprised “to find well-worked out systems of neighborly support and solidarity in the new communities.” Elizabeth Ewen, *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars: Life and Culture on the Lower East Side, 1890-1925* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1985), 86.

grinder's music," the article begins, "but in no quarter have these impromptu dances developed into such a science as along what is known as "the Hungarian Broadway."¹³

Kleindeutschland and Little Hungary represent ethnic Yorkville's prologue. During the final third of the nineteenth century, more German- and Hungarian-speaking migrants called lower Manhattan home than any other part of the New York. Especially around the turn-of-the century, many inhabitants of these communities traveled northward to resettle in the less-developed area of Yorkville. In the process, they transplanted and continued to nurture broad understandings of ethnic identity fueled by linguistic commonalities and shared cultural practices. Ethnic Yorkville, while not merely a replica of these earlier enclaves, showed some family resemblances in its early days. Ethnic faith communities, businesses, and social clubs relocated or started branches on the Upper East Side. Gradually, Yorkville developed into a successor hub for both communities, and even outsiders looked north when seeking out or discussing Gotham's representative German and Hungarian neighborhoods. The phrases Little Germany and Little Hungary even surface from time to time as appellations for Yorkville's ethnic neighborhoods. Chapter 1 situates the German and Hungarian enclaves in lower Manhattan within the larger story of ethnic Yorkville's origins and early development. It demonstrates that well before the American Civil War, German migrants found Yorkville's wide-open spaces conducive to their ethnic festivals. As lower Manhattan's population exploded during the peak immigration years of the late nineteenth century, these pre-existing connections led these migrants and their descendants to reestablish their ethnic community in Yorkville.

¹³ Robert M. Langer, "Arpad Gerster and Max Thorek Contributions to American Surgery," *Journal of Investigative Surgery* 22, (2009): 162-66; *New York Times*, "Benefit of the Hungarian Association," December 16, 1894; Pink, 262; Perlman, *Bridging Three Worlds*, 137-38, 249; Rischin, *The Promised City*, 129, 148; Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, 82; Daniel Soyer, "Introduction," 8; Diner, *Lower East Side Memories*, 38; *New York Times*, "Benefit of the Hungarian Association," December 16, 1894; Deborah Dwork, "Immigrant Jews on the Lower East Side of New York: 1880-1914,"; *New York Times*, "Terpsichore on East Side," August 5, 1900; Hapgood, *The Spirit of the Ghetto: Studies of the Jewish Quarter of New York*; Jacob A. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies among the Tenements of New York* (New York: Sagamore Press, Inc., 1957), 76-87, 88-112. Riis, for instance, distinguishes several groups of ethnic Jews in the Lower East Side, including Russians and Poles, Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*, 77, 107.

CHAPTER 1
RECALLING ETHNIC YORKVILLE IN BLOOM: 1840S TO THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

It Is Spring

*Spring lets her blue ribbon,
flutter in the breeze again;
sweet familiar scents,
drift with promise o'er the land.
Violets lie dreaming already,
soon to be awakened –.
Listen, from afar the faint sound of a harp!
Spring, it is you!
I can hear you coming!*

Eduard Mörike, 1829¹

“All Yorkville was ablaze,” announced the *New York Times* on October 13, 1889, and “[e]very store which had a German name over its lintel, every house where sons of the Fatherland lived, had lots of lanterns and more flags, and as much light as they could get into their windows.”² Local German Americans used the relocation of one of its many Turn Vereins, clubs conjoining athletic training with egalitarian political ideology, for a public celebration proclaiming their contributions to growing Gotham. As immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe started to pour into New York as part of the so-called “new immigration,” German-speakers reinforced their more established presence. On this damp evening, members of the Central Turn Verein, joined by several other German American clubs and organizations, processed in a line of march from their old headquarters on East 77th Street in Yorkville. Accompanied by a band and drum corps, they methodically stepped in unison past the alighted

¹ “It Is Spring,” Translated by Charles L. Cingolani, 2008,” Charles L. Cingolani, accessed November 15, 2019, <http://www.cingolani.com/3em.html>. Eduard Mörike was born in 1804 in Ludswigburg in Swabia. He was a Lutheran pastor as well as a writer and poet. Mörike’s family claims descendancy from Martin Luther. Contemporary and later composers put some of Mörike’s poetry to music, connecting him to the German folk tradition in multiple ways. One of his best-known works, Mozart on the Way to Prague, describes an imagined episode in the life of Mozart, where he and his wife, Constance, travel by carriage to Prague. Among other things the work ruminates on the ephemeral nature of genius. T.M. Campbell, writing in 1917, said of Mörike, “[t]he people do him the honor of singing his songs while forgetting who wrote them.” T.M. Campbell, “Eduard Mörike: A Neglected German Classic,” *The Sewanee Review* 25, no. 2 (Apr., 1917): 171; see also Herbert Meyer, Eduard Mörike, *Zweite Auflage* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1961); Susan Youens, “Doubters and Believers: Case Studies in the Geistliche Lieder of Eduard Mörike and Hugo Wolf,” *American Journal of Semiotics* 13, nos. 1-4 (1996): 103-146.

² “In the New Clubhouse: The Central Turn Verein Takes Possession of New Quarters,” *New York Times*, October 13, 1889, 2.

headquarters of the Arion and the Liederkrantz, New York's two most prominent German singing societies, toward their grand new space in what was then Yorkville's southern reaches on East 67th Street. Jacob Ruppert, owner of the Ruppert Brewery and one of three lords of lager whose commercial exploits and devotion to institution building helped forge German Yorkville, donated \$750,000, the equivalent of more than \$20 million today, to purchase and renovate this property. The beer magnate, the son of Bavarian immigrants, handed the keys to the new clubhouse to Charles Nehrbas, a Rhinelander brought to New York as an infant who rose to become an attorney, a municipal judge, a leading figure within Democratic circles, and president of the Central Turn Verein.³

The Turn Verein members' departure from central Yorkville symbolized the vitality of German Americans in this Upper East Side neighborhood. Yorkville's German presence had steadily increased for two generations. The good health of its houses of worship and social organizations engendered spin-offs and subsidiaries inside and outside the district. Germans were not withdrawing from central Yorkville. Rather, the neighborhood served as a base camp for further expansion. In the process, these German Americans appended Manhattan's one-time hinterlands to its more settled environs, establishing a network through which Germanness would transcend Manhattan Island.⁴

Yorkville rarely appears within the social memory of German New York's early stages, other than in faint whispers. Occasionally, the ethnic Yorkville imaginary, a set of nostalgic and mythologized memories of Yorkville's ethnic past, reaches back to the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries to introduce the Upper East Side's landed gentry who had German roots, such as the Rhinelanders, Astors, and Schermerhorns. This "great man" historical narrative does little to elucidate Yorkville's

³ "In the New Clubhouse: The Central Turn Verein Takes Possession of New Quarters," *New York Times*, October 13, 1889, 2; "Judge Nehrbas Dead: Carried Off by Consumption Aggravated by the Grip," *New York Times*, March 16, 1890, 13; "Tammany's Formal Approval," *New York Times*, October 20, 1883, 1; Ruppert and Nehrbas embodied the concept of hybrid identity so common within German New York. Each saw their efforts to nurture German cultural identity as part of their broader community involvement, as congruous with engaged citizenship.

⁴ "In the New Clubhouse: The Central Turn Verein Takes Possession of New Quarters," *New York Times*, October 13, 1889, 2.

development as a German enclave, however, other than through the gradual partitioning of the wealthy land barons' immense property holdings. Rather, the common narrative holds that ethnic Yorkville's story cannot start until *Kleindeutschland's* tale ends. That is, received wisdom conveniently affixes German Yorkville's birth to the 1904 General Slocum steamship disaster, the city's worst tragedy prior to the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001. The Ladies Aid Society of St. Mark's Lutheran Church, a prominent place of worship in lower Manhattan, had chartered the General Slocum to take women and children associated with the Sunday-school program to an annual picnic at the Weisser Garten on Long Island. More than one thousand people, three-quarters of them members of St. Mark's, perished when the steamer caught fire in the East River. Beginning in 1905, survivors and community members held an annual memorial service at the Lutheran Cemetery in Middle Village, Queens. Relatives of the deceased, however, continued to suffer long after the incident. They failed to recover any significant monetary relief despite the establishment of a compensatory claims process. William Van Schaick, the captain who abandoned the burning vessel, served approximately four years at Sing Sing prison for criminal negligence, only to be pardoned by President William H. Taft on Christmas Day 1912 over the objections of the Organization of General Slocum Survivors.⁵

Subsequent retrospectives of the General Slocum disaster, commencing in earnest more than a generation later, depicted *Kleindeutschland* as saturated in melancholy and claimed that this collective

⁵ "Yorkville Homes in Earlier Days: Many Well-Known Residents Found Locality Pleasant Place to Live," *New York Times*, August 5, 1934, RE1; Report of the United States Commission of Investigation upon the Disaster to the Steamer "General Slocum," *U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor*, October 8, 1904 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904); "General Slocum Survivors Hold Memorial for Dead," *New York Daily News*, June 16, 1922, 3; "Slocum Memorial," *New York Daily News*, June 7, 1941, 7; "Want No Mercy for Van Schaick: Slocum Survivors Protest against Plan to Parole Aged Steamboat Captain," *New York Times*, February 2, 1911, 1; "Van Schaick Pardoned: Captain of the Ill-Fated Slocum Is Restored to Full Citizenship," *New York Times*, December 20, 1912, 24; Gilbert King, "A Spectacle of Horror: The Burning of the General Slocum," *Smithsonian.com*, February 21, 2012, accessed December 16, 2019, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/a-spectacle-of-horror-the-burning-of-the-general-slocum-104712974/>; "To Aid Slocum Survivors: President Roosevelt Gives Promise to Delegation from New York," *New York Times*, February 6, 1906, 5; "\$1,475,673 Slocum Claims: City Wants \$950 for Draping City Hall – Forty-seven Death Claims," *New York Times*, January 29, 1905, 18. Even though more than a century has passed, dedicated volunteers continued with annual memorial services at the cemetery where several unidentified victims are buried. Lisa L. Colangelo, "General Slocum Victims Remembered 109 Years," *New York Daily News*, June 14, 2013; The memorial to the victims near Tompkins Square depicts two children gazing toward the water, and contains the phrase, "They were earth's purest children young and fair." David W. Dunlap, "In Remembrance of Sorrow from Other Times," *New York Times*, January 25, 2002, E39.

sadness precipitated a German exodus to Yorkville. Syndicated columnist James Aswell, writing in 1935, described Yorkville as a place “which took on its thoroughly German complexion after the tragic General Slocum steamship fire near the turn of the century.”⁶ Aswell asserted that “so many from the community died in the disaster that a mass migration took place uptown – to get away from a neighborhood which reminded [them] only of mourning.”⁷ A 1948 *Daily News* column by Danton Walker repeated the tragic exodus story while adding that “[t]he bierstubes and rathskellers that had closed temporarily, in mourning over the General Slocum incident, eventually shuttered permanently.”⁸ By stating that “[t]he Hungarian coffee houses soon followed suit,” Walker intimated that the Germans’ uptown migration stimulated similar movements by other Central and Eastern European groups.⁹ By the twenty-first century, many recalled the General Slocum disaster as a historical event with hard edges: *Kleindeutschland’s* death in 1904 simultaneously breathed life into German Yorkville. A 2003 piece for the periodical *German Life* illustrates this point. “One result of the fire,” wrote Therese Lanigan-Schmidt “was that the entire population of Little Germany soon moved uptown to Yorkville to escape the ever-present memories of their devastating losses.”¹⁰ Even sources acknowledging the presence of German-speakers in Upper Manhattan prior to the General Slocum disaster downplay the significance of German Yorkville prior to the General Slocum disaster. Ilona Stölken’s 2013 German-language synthesis of German Gotham devotes a single paragraph to nineteenth century Yorkville before presenting an in-depth account of the 1904 tragedy as the district’s origin story.¹¹

Ethnic Yorkville did not materialize *ex nihilo* from the wreckage of the General Slocum disaster, as demonstrated by the story of the Central Turn Verein’s move to its new clubhouse in 1889. While the

⁶ James Aswell, “My New York,” *Shenandoah Evening Herald (PA)*, October 19, 1935, 2.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Danton Walker, “Broadway: Café Cavalcade,” *New York Daily News*, May 8, 1948, 13C.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Therese Lanigan-Schmidt, “The Sinking of the General Slocum,” *German Life* 9, no. 6 (Apr.-May 2003), 28.

¹¹ Danton Walker, “Broadway: Café Cavalcade,” *New York Daily News*, May 8, 1948, 13C; Lanigan-Schmidt, “The Sinking of the General Slocum,” 28; Ilona Stölken, *Das Deutsche New York: Eine Spurensuche* (Leipzig: Lehmann Verlag, 2013), 56-57.

tragedy offered a clear and dramatic beginning, it problematically collapsed the narratives of Yorkville and Little Germany, flattening out differences between the two neighborhoods and creating an artificially linear story. Rather, the two enclaves co-existed for several decades, assisted by transportation innovations such as the extension of the New York & Harlem Railroad from lower Manhattan to Harlem as well as the elevated train system. The German-speaking migrants who ventured to Yorkville well before the 1880s formed a vanguard who transformed this section of Manhattan from a rural, lightly settled area as late as the 1830s, to a prosperous suburban community. In fact, by the late 1880s, Yorkville had matched *Kleindeutschland's* lofty status as a social and commercial center of German life within the flourishing metropolis. Yorkville's ascent and *Kleindeutschland's* decline during the nineteenth century's final decade rendered the former the indispensable node within the German American network, which subsequently extended to all corners of Greater New York. Moreover, Yorkville beckoned other European migrants, Hungarians among them, in search of space, improved housing, and enhanced economic opportunities. Recovering this past yields vital information about how Germans and Hungarians constructed and projected ethnic identity, how they perceived and responded to economic and political threats and opportunities within New York's rapidly changing urban milieu, how they made sense of discrepancies between America's idealistic promises and its harsh realities, and how external audiences came to interpret and describe ethnic Yorkville as a foreign space with a distinct personality.¹²

¹² Lofaso, *Origins and History of the Village of Yorkville in the City of New York*, 200-49; John D. Steven, *Sensationalism and the New York Press* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 59; Charles Lockwood, *Manhattan Moves Uptown: An Illustrated History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976), 305-310; New York City Subway Authority, "Second Avenue El," https://www.nycsubway.org/wiki/The_2nd_Avenue_Elevated, accessed September 28, 2017. In the 1830s, Yorkville was a fledgling village reachable by the New York and Harlem Railroad, which, as the name would suggest, terminated in Harlem. New York's affluent set sometimes ventured to the northern woodlands via Third Avenue propelled by horse-powered sleighs, often partaking in food and drink at Wintergreen's, a popular tavern which served up hot buttered rum and sherry flips. The frontier zone of Yorkville provided a recreational outlet for Gotham's urban dwellers. Lloyd Morris, *Incredible New York: High Life and Low Life from 1850 to 1950* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 11-12; C. Astor Bristed, "The Upper Ten Thousand: Sketches of American Society," (New York: Stringer and Townsend, 1852), 24. It is also worth noting that the designation "Yorkville" was used liberally during the first half of the nineteenth century. For example, the reservoir constructed in the 1840s to hold water from the Croton Aqueduct project was dubbed the Yorkville Reservoir, even though it lay well west of Lexington avenue, at the present location of the Central Park's Great Lawn. Christopher Gray, "A Reservoir Below Causes a Dust Bowl

Although evidence exists of some Central European settlement on the Upper East Side prior to the Civil War, New York's German-speakers first stamped Yorkville through their festive culture. In the late 1850s, German New Yorkers frequently choreographed resplendent outdoor festivals in uptown New York's open spaces, typically utilizing Conrad's Yorkville Park, also known as Conrad's Garden, located at the juncture of 86th Street and the East River, as well as Jones' Woods, an area extending from Sixty-fifth to Sixty-first Streets and bounded by the East River and First Avenue. At these events, Yorkville served as a gathering place for German Americans from *Kleindeutschland*, Yorkville, Brooklyn, and New Jersey. Further, German Americans leveraged these events for political gain by inviting the city's highest office holders to partake in the merriment. In turn, the throngs provided municipal officials with an efficient means to court the ethnic vote, in the process multiplying German Americans' political power and influence.¹³

The celebration of Pfingstmontag, or Whit Monday, in May 1858 provides a glimpse into the sights, sounds, and scale of these spectacles. Twenty-thousand attendees crammed into the two upper Manhattan festival grounds despite foul weather. They listened to German bands and singing societies, consumed German fare in the form of ham, sausage, and veal, and drank plenty of lager. The Yorkville locale attracted German New York's old guard, including the Allgemeiner Sängerbund, a well-established singing club, a coalition of New York's Turn Vereins, and the German Rifle Company. Mayor Daniel F. Tiemann graced the Yorkville contingent by joining in a grand procession around the

Above 1842 'Bathtub' under the Great Lawn Is to Get a Drainage System," *New York Times*, March 10, 1996, RCW7; Christopher Gray, "Gobbled Up by a Great Lawn: The Yorkville Reservoir Was Built in the Middle of Nowhere: Then Along Came Central Park," *New York Times*, February 10, 2013, RE8.

¹³ "New-York City: The Sängerbund at Yorkville--Chief Matsell and Mayor Wood Dine with Them, and Mayor Wood Makes a Speech-Six-Thousand People Present, Immense Quantities of Lager Bier Consumed," *New York Times*, June 3, 1857, 8; Vera Brodsky Lawrence, *Strong on Music: The New York Music Scene in the Days of George Templeton Strong, Vol. III, Repercussions, 1857-1862* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 178-79; "Great German Festival in Aid of the Fund for Erecting a Monument to Baron Steuben," *New York Times*, July 27, 1858, 4; *The Middle States: A Handbook for Travelers, A Guide to the Chief Cities and Popular Resorts of the Middle States and to Their Scenery and Historic Attractions; with the Northern Frontier from Niagara Falls to Montreal; also Baltimore, Washington, and Northern Virginia* (Boston: James R. Osgood & Company, 1876), 32.

fairgrounds and imbibing lager beer whenever requested. Mayor Tiemann, a second-generation German American, also delivered a speech praising German culture and asserting that only Germans could engineer such merrymaking while avoiding the mayhem often caused by alcohol. Frederick A. Tallmadge, General Superintendent of the Metropolitan Police, upped the ante by adding that an Irish event of equivalent size would likely result in numerous fisticuffs. For decades to come, Gotham's newspapers would frequently restate the trope of an innate Germanic tolerance for alcohol, and these claims still echo in events such as the contemporary German-American Steuben Parade.¹⁴

In the 1860s, growing numbers of first- and second-generation Germans made upper Manhattan more than a recreational venue. German-speakers started to venture north from downtown Manhattan in the 1850s, settling in micro-neighborhoods on East 26th Street near Second Avenue, and eventually between East Fiftieth and East Sixtieth Streets proximate to Third Avenue. In 1859, German New Yorkers inscribed the Yorkville area in a material sense by dedicating the first monument in what would become Central Park, in honor of the poet Friedrich Schiller. After the Civil War, increasing numbers of Germans moved into Yorkville, as economic opportunity met expanded housing options. Speculators such as William "Boss" Tweed pounced on Yorkville as improved and extended streets and avenues quickly came online. They built scores of brick row houses, typically three-stories in height, boasting clean Croton

¹⁴ "The Germans and their Festival: Pfingstmontag, the Saengerbunde, the Saengerunde, and the Gesangverein – Twenty Thousand Germans at Yorkville Park and at Jones' Woods, Mayor Tiemann Drinks Lager Beer," *New York Times*, May 25, 1858, 4; Elbridge T. Gerry, *Trial of Hon. Frederick A. Tallmadge, General Superintendent of Metropolitan Police* (New York: Baker & Goodwin Printers, 1858), 1. For other uptown German festivals see "Whitsuntide and Pfingstmontag: Grand Gala Day for the Germans Jollity in our Suburban Retreats," *New York Times*, May 29, 1860, 1; "Among the Germans," *New York Times*, July 5, 1873, 8; "The I.O.R.M.: Festival at Conrad's Park – Handsome Procession and Ceremonies – The Grand Tribe Officers Present – Address by the Grand Secretary – Annual Session," *New York Times*, September 10, 1862, 2; "General City News," *New York Times*, September 4, 1860, 8. There were times when Gotham's print press questioned the image of the ultra-disciplined German. For example, in 1858 a municipal judge claimed that a group of inebriated Germans coming from an uptown festival had harassed female travelers and physically assaulted him on the Third Avenue El. "Justice Osborne Assaulted in the Railroad Cabs," *New York Times*, June 24, 1858, 1.

water and indoor bathrooms. The profiteers devoted much of their marketing efforts to the city's German and Irish residents anxious to better their station¹⁵

The population of the nineteenth ward, which included Yorkville, reached 40,000 in 1865. Yorkville's commercial and residential development, which had clung so tightly to East 86th Street, now fanned out beyond the paved streets. In this same decade, multiple breweries, including ventures owned by George Ringler, Jacob Ruppert, and George Ehret, a brewer who perfected his craft in Heidelberg and Mannheim, launched large-scale operations in Yorkville's northern section sometimes referred to as "Hellgate."¹⁶ These businesses joined an emerging mixture of light industry attracting migrants seeking steady work, many of whom wanted to settle close to their jobs. In addition, Henry Steinway, the renowned piano maker, established a factory just across the East River in Astoria, Queens. Germans, as well as other European-born immigrants, found gainful employment at the Steinway plant, many commuting to work via the East 92nd Street ferry that operated between Yorkville and Long Island City in the 1870s.¹⁷

¹⁵ Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 930; "Central Park: Friedrich Von Schiller Monument," New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, accessed July 8, 2020, <https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/central-park/highlights/13316>.

¹⁶ Social memory of Yorkville's brewing days often fails to mention George Ringler's family-owned brewery. Ringler, born in Friedewald in the Hesse area of Germany, established his brewery in the same general location as Ehret and Ruppert in 1872. All three enterprises were in a growth phase in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, but Ehret and Ruppert increased production at a faster rate than Ringler. F.W. Salem, *Beer, Its History and Its Economic Value as a National Beverage* (Hartford: F.W. Salem & Co. 1880), 235-37; William Steinway Diary, 1861-1896, <https://americanhistory.si.edu/steinwaydiary/annotations/?id=827>, accessed March 1, 2020. Rosa Ringler, the wife of brewer George Ringler, was noted for her charitable giving and commitment to Yorkville's poor throughout the latter nineteenth century. "The Poor Lose a Friend," *New York Times*, March 28, 1887, 8. The geographic tag "Hellgate" is a bit slippery but typically stands for the northern section of Yorkville (the east 90s) as well as the junction point of the East River and the Harlem River just off East 96th street and Carl Schurz Park. The watery version of Hellgate still conjures recollections of the Slocum disaster, for it was here the ship burned and most of its passengers perished. Michael Nichols, *Hell Gate: A Nexus of New York City's East River* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2018), 4, 86-88.

¹⁷ Peter Conolly-Smith, *Translating America: An Immigrant Press Visualizes American Popular Culture, 1895-1918* (Washington: Smithsonian Books, 2004), 28; Noa Kasman, "AHMC of the Month: Central Park's First Monument," *New-York Historical Society*, September 25, 2017, accessed September 26, 2017, <http://blog.nyhistory.org/ahmc-of-the-month-central-parks-first-monument/>; "Local Intelligence: Central Park, What's to be Seen There and How the Money Goes," *New York Times*, August 19, 1866, 8; "Report of the Council of Hygiene and Public Health of the Citizens' Association of New York upon the Sanitary Condition of the City," *Citizens' Association of New York* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1865), 325-27;; George Von Skal, *History of German Immigration in the United States and Successful German-Americans and Their Descendants* (New York: F.T. & J.C. Smiley, 1908), 98, 103; "Obituary--The Late Henry Steinway," *Scientific American* 24, no. 8 (Feb. 18, 1871): 117, Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26040633>; Tim Goyens, *Beer and Revolution: The German Anarchist Movement in New York City, 1880-1914* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 23; Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History*

As Manhattan's population pushed beyond East 59th Street, the northern boundary of development for much of the nineteenth century, a mixture of native-born and foreign-born sojourners added to Yorkville's diversity. Yorkville's growing German population seized opportunities to open shops, banks, and medical facilities that catered to co-ethnics and other newcomers to the Upper East Side. They also attended to their spiritual needs by erecting new places of worship, or, in some cases, relocating churches originally founded downtown. The Immanuel German Evangelical Lutheran Church, started in 1863, was one of Yorkville's first ethnic congregations. German-speaking Catholics, many of whom migrated to Yorkville to work in light industry, began to worship in the now defunct St. Joseph's Orphanage in the 1860s. Archbishop John McCloskey, responding to this group's appeals, authorized the establishment of a German national parish in 1873. St. Joseph's was built and dedicated the following year, and in 1880, a parochial school run by Bavarian nuns opened its doors. In the 1880s, German Evangelicals broke ground on a church on East 84th Street between First and Second Avenues. Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church assumed possession of this property through auction in 1892, and subsequently merged with St. Mark's Lutheran Church, the latter relocating to Yorkville from its lower Manhattan location several decades after the General Slocum disaster. Oftentimes, surveys of Yorkville's residual "ethnic space" deemphasize or omit these places of worship, suggesting that all that remains of ethnic Yorkville is a German restaurant and a butcher shop. Not only were these spaces a vital part of ethnic Yorkville's social dimensions during its peak period, but some continue to welcome pilgrims who return to the neighborhood regularly to experience a religious service in their ancestral tongue, connect with former neighbors, and engage with their heritage.¹⁸

of *New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 938; Diana Shaman, "If You're Thinking of Living In/Steinway, Queens; By Any Name, Residents Find It Friendly," *New York Times*, March 2, 2003, RE5.

¹⁸ "Local Miscellany: Prospects of the Broken Banks, Examination of Thompson W. Decker, Late President of the Third Avenue Bank, the German Up-town and Other Banks," *New York Times*, December 19, 1875, 7; St. Joseph Church remains connected to the neighborhood's migrant past through its monthly German-language mass as well as its decision to host weekly Hungarian-language masses. As for the latter, the church unofficially adopted some of the Hungarian parishioners of the now-defunct St. Stephen of Hungary on East 82nd Street. Saint Joseph's Church, Yorkville (New York City), "History," accessed December 16, 2019, <https://www.stjosephsyorkville.org/history/>; David W. Dunlap, "In the Heart of Yorkville: Life Has Changed for German

Yorkville's Central and Eastern European population increased rapidly during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Most migrants came directly from Europe or relocated from lower Manhattan. Growing numbers of Germans left *Kleindeutschland*, a trend caused, in part, by the influx of so-called "new immigrants" from Southern and Eastern Europe. By the 1880s, the Tenth Ward, once a vital section of lower Manhattan's German enclave, assumed the moniker of the "Jewish Quarter." German migrants' growing affluence also contributed to this movement. Throughout the 1870s and 1880s, German New Yorkers continued to gain traction within the city's skilled trades. Communities such as Yorkville offered upwardly mobile ethnics enhanced economic opportunities, better accommodations with increased living space, as well as the ability to maintain ethnic connectedness. Yorkville became even more attractive when the city extended the Second Avenue Elevated line northward in the 1880s with 86th Street serving as an express station. This technological tethering of Yorkville and *Kleindeutschland* allowed the people, products, and ideas of German Manhattan to flow two ways with a new level of efficiency.¹⁹

The General Slocum thesis inaccurately holds that non-German Central and Eastern Europeans slowly relocated uptown from lower Manhattan only after a critical mass of Germans had abandoned

Catholics, *New York Times*, April 19, 2008, B1; Stölken, *Das Deutsche New York*, 57. Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun, an Orthodox Jewish synagogue on East 85th street, traces its neighborhood roots to 1872, although its current place of worship opened in 1905. Irving Spiegel, "Yorkville Synagogue Marks 100th Year, Rabbi His 50th with Congregation," *New York Times*, October 8, 1972, 38. In this same period, African Americans took up residence in the area immediately north of East 96th Street, normally identified as the neighborhood's upper boundary. A retrospective piece in the *New York Age* in 1925 referred to East 97th Street and its proximate environs as part of the developing community of Yorkville. The presence of a black micro-neighborhood in this area begins to explain why East 96th Street emerged as Yorkville's rigid northern boundary. According to this article, "[i]n the early settling of colored citizens on the East Side, there was a feeling of enmity and misunderstanding that existed within the rank and file of early Americans who were original residents in that section, and colored citizens were forced to fight out their own salvation." "Yorkville's Negro Citizens Have a Bit of N.Y. History: Early Settlers Uptown Took up Abode in East 97th Street 50 Years Ago," *New York Age*, May 25, 1925, 2. In 1868, the German Hospital and Dispensary was constructed at Fourth Avenue, now Park Avenue and East 77th Street. In 1890, an ambulance service (horse-drawn) was established at the corner of First Avenue and East 77th Street. "Hospital History," *Lenox Hill Hospital/Northwell Health*, accessed December 20, 2019, <https://lenoxhill.northwell.edu/about?id=102>; Klaus Wust, *Guardian on the Hudson: The German Society of the City of New York, 1784-1984* (New York: The German Society of the City of New York, 1984), 38.

¹⁹Charles Lockwood, *Manhattan Moves Uptown*, 305-310; *New York City Subway Authority*, "Second Avenue El," https://www.nycsubway.org/wiki/The_2nd_Avenue_Elevated, accessed September 28, 2017; Eunice Fuller Barnard, "New York's Elevated Now Sixty Years Old: The Elevated Inspired Fear," *New York Times*, July 1, 1928, 122. Stölken, *Das Deutsche New York*, 56-57.

Kleindeutschland in the wake of the 1904 tragedy. This claim elides the earlier northern migrations of former inhabitants of the Kingdom of Hungary.²⁰ Events surrounding the death of the Hungarian-born virtuoso violinist, Edouard Reményi, reveal the existence of a Hungarian émigré community in Yorkville prior to the turn of the century. In May 1898, the Yorkville Hungarian Society (YHS), an organization composed of self-identifying Christian and Jewish Hungarian men, led the United Hungarian Societies of New York's effort to honor the world-class musician publicly. Reményi's body lied in repose at their East 78th Street lodge prior to the funeral. Two-hundred members of the YHS led the funeral cortège as it proceeded twenty blocks south from Yorkville to the Lenox Lyceum, the site of the obsequies, where the group joined the Hungarian Literary Society, the Hungarian Singing Society, and the Hungarian Sick and Benevolent Society in a show of ethnic strength and unity. Hungarians were eager to celebrate Reményi, who had fought against Hapsburg rule in the failed revolution of 1848-49 and thereafter lived as a political exile in New York. They hailed his story as their own, a freedom loving people whose values aligned with and brought value to their host country.²¹

²⁰ This included Hungarians but also Czechs and Slovaks. Czechs, often referred to as Bohemians, migrated to Yorkville in the 1880s. In 1888, they erected the Jan Hus Presbyterian Church on East 74th Street. By the 1890s, Yorkville's growing Czech community constructed the Bohemian National Hall on East 73rd Street, a multipurpose venue containing a spacious ballroom, a restaurant, and even a shooting gallery. Czech leaders approved an addition to this building in 1899, in response to concerns that the original space was inadequate to meet the burgeoning community's needs. Christopher Gray, "Cityscape: Bohemian National Hall; On East 73rd Street, A Lingering Vestige of a Czech Heritage," *New York Times*, March 15, 1987, 493; Barbara Crosseite, "In Search of the Czechoslovak East Side," *New York Times*, September 10, 1976, 68; Vlado Simko, "Evolution of Our Ethnic Community in New York City," *KOSMAS, Czechoslovak and Central European Journal* 25 (2012): 103 – 114; "Farewell to Jan Hus Presbyterian Church As We Know It," Bohemian Benevolent Association, accessed on December 15, 2019, <https://www.bohemianbenevolent.org/news/farewell-to-jan-hus-presbyterian-church-as-we-know-it>.

²¹ "Lenox Lyceum Under Long Lease: Amusement Hall to be Controlled by Walter J. Salomon for Twenty-one Years, Owned by J.D. Crimmins Annual Rental of \$50,000 Obtained – Structure Will Probably Be Converted Into a Business Building," *New York Times*, August 16, 1907, 2; "Girl's Picture Adds to Mystery: Acquaintance of Simon Szekely, Union Station Suicide, Seeks to Explain His Motive," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 25, 1904, 11; "Edouard Remenyi Dies Suddenly: The Curtain Rung Down on the Life of the Great Musician at the Orpheum Stage," *San Francisco Call*, May 16, 1898, 10; "Edouard Remenyi's Funeral: Arrangements Completed for Services Over the Violinist's Body," *New York Times*, May 26, 1898, 7; "Remenyi's Body Arrives: Arrangement Completed for the Public Funeral To-morrow," *New York Times*, May 28, 1898, 4; "Burial of Remenyi: Famous Violinist Laid to Rest in Beautiful Evergreen Cemetery," *Boston Globe*, May 30, 1898, 5; "The Funeral of Remenyi: Friends of the dead Musician Crowd Lenox Lyceum to Honor His Memory," *New York Times*, May 30, 1898, 7. It bears mention that Reményi's life speaks to the complex hybridity present within the Hungarian diaspora of this period. While details about the precise date and location of Reményi's birth vary, sources concur that his original surname, Hoffmann, signifies his Jewish lineage. Early in his life, the musical prodigy adopted a Magyar name and identified as a Christian. Gwendolyn Dunlevy Kelley and George P. Upton, *Edouard Remenyi: Musician, Litterateur, and Man: An Appreciation* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1906), 9, 70-73; Karen H. Brown, "Edouard Reményi," *African Arts* 33, no. 2 (Summer, 2000): 11; Corinne Ramey, "Learn to Love Johannes Brahms' Piano Quartet in G Minor," Op. 25, *San Anselmo* 27, no. 5 (Dec 2012): 37-38; "Personal," *Harper's Bazaar* 28, no. 33 (Aug 17,

For ethnic Yorkville, the 1890s represented not only a time to look to the future but also a moment to take stock of the past. In Spring 1896, the Yorkville Männerchor, a male singing society headquartered at the corner of East 92nd Street and Second Avenue, commemorated its fortieth anniversary with weeks of celebratory events. The Männerchor, formed during German New York's nascent years, regularly appeared at early German festivals at Conrad's Yorkville Park, presented concerts throughout the city, and networked with other musical clubs as a founding member of the United Singers of New York. In reporting on these festivities, the *New York Times* stressed how this civic organization had survived several crises, including its near extinction when members joined the Union army during the Civil War. While the Männerchor's perseverance was noteworthy on its own, in the bigger picture it stood for the determination of Yorkville's mid-century German pioneers who had forged a strong and stable ethnic community in what had once been upper Manhattan's hinterlands.²²

Ethnic Yorkville also constituted a political space during its formative years. As early as the 1870s, Yorkville's German community broke into various political factions. While New York's Germans tended to be politically heterogeneous, many in Yorkville backed a reform agenda, which, among other things, questioned the raw political power of Tammany Hall. By the 1880s, the city's Democratic machine took notice, as some of its leaders warned candidates about the growing influence of the German element. Courting the German vote, either directly or by attending German social events, became a mainstay of municipal political practice. Some of Yorkville's German-speakers, however,

1895): 659. Speakers recalled Reményi's participation in the failed mid-century revolution against Hapsburg rule, which caused him to seek refuge in New York. Morris Cukor, a Hungarian American lawyer, even took creative license with the circumstances of the violinist's death, telling the capacity crowd that, "Hungary cannot alone lay claim to owning this great man, but this country, in which, when he died, [for which] he was playing its National hymn, can also claim him." "Burial of Remenyi: Famous Violinist Laid to Rest in Beautiful Evergreen Cemetery," *Boston Globe*, May 30, 1898, 5. That Reményi collapsed while playing a piece from a French ballet would not distract from this golden chance to publicly bolster the image of Gotham's Hungarians. E. Heron Allen, "Eduard Remenyi," *British Periodicals (The Cremora)* (Aug. 1907): 96; "Celebrities in El Dorado: 1850-1906: History of Music in San Francisco Series, Vol. 4, ed. Cornel Lengyel, *Works Projects Administration: Northern California* (1939), 41; Dunlevy and Upton, *Edouard Remenyi*, 101-112.

²² "Yorkville Maennerchor: Its Fortieth Anniversary Has Just Been Celebrated," *New York Times*, March 8, 1896, 23; "New-York Singers Hosts: Opening Concert of the Big Saengerfest Last Evening," *New York Times*, June 24, 1894, 1; "Among the Germans," *New York Times*, July 5, 1873, 8.

gravitated toward alternative political expression. Germans formed the backbone of the city's organized labor movement during the late nineteenth century. Many joined the Central Labor Union, which led an unsuccessful boycott against Ehret's brewery in 1886 due to the owner's allegedly anti-union testimony in an extortion case. A few years later, journeymen brewers sought to boycott George Ehret and his fellow "Lords of Lager," for operating the equivalent of a beer cartel. Others pursued more radical politics. German anarchists often met in the saloons that dotted the stretch of Yorkville from East 71st to East 83rd Streets.²³

In the 1890s, German Americans galvanized around the goal of amending the so-called Excise Law, legislation which from 1857 limited alcohol sales and mandated saloon closings on Sundays. In the late 1880s, German New Yorkers, including those from Yorkville, waged public protests and organized parades to push back against Mayor Abram Hewitt's policy of applying this prohibition to German social events held outside of saloons. In 1895, tensions surrounding this issue reached new heights as German New York splintered on the question of whether to trust Democratic candidates to push through the German position. Unlike their Irish counterparts, German New Yorkers had kept their distance from Tammany Hall. Now, however, a newly formed pro-Tammany faction, the German-American Reform Union (GARU), publicly challenged the German-American Citizens Union, a group bitterly opposed to the city's machine politics, to an impromptu parade "competition." The Yorkville Brewers' Battalion, the Yorkville Bowlers Club, and the Yorkville Maennerchor were among the many German American organizations pledging to support GARU's efforts. GARU reasoned that warring marches would allow New Yorkers to judge for themselves which alliance enjoyed the greatest support. Perhaps only the "lager question" could convince a significant portion of German New York to back Tammany Hall. The

²³ "Local News in Brief: New York," *New York Times*, November 27, 1871, 8; "Candidates for Office: Democrats Preparing for the Local Campaign," *New York Times*, August 30, 1881, 6; "Laboring Men's Complaints: Reports of the delegates to the Central Labor Union," *New York Times*, November 9, 1885, 8; "Cowardly Boycotters: The Secret Fighting against Ehret, the Brewer," *New York Times*, July 13, 1886, 8; "About the Ehret Boycott," *New York Times*, September 4, 1886, 2; "Opposing the Beer Pool: Journeymen Brewers Who Want to Boycott George Ehret," *New York Times*, September 19, 1892, 8; Goyens, *Beer and Revolution*, 22-23.

political activity pouring forth from German New York around the turn of the century was booming, brash, and visible. Moreover, German Americans had the numbers to make a difference. In 1900, prior to the full impact of increased Italian and Jewish immigration, 785,000 Germans surpassed 710,000 Irish as New York's largest ethnic collectivity.²⁴

The political coming of age of German Yorkville also yielded the neighborhood's first family, the Wagners. In 1904, Robert F. Wagner, a native of Naststätten in Germany's Rhineland-Palatinate region, commenced a forty-five-year political career as the state senate majority leader, a justice of the state Supreme Court, and a leading light of the New Deal Coalition within the U.S. Senate. As an immigrant who arrived as a young boy, Wagner's rise personified the upward trajectory of Yorkville, his adopted "hometown." His was the story of a newsboy who honed his oratory skills in the district's public schools, earned a law degree from New York University, and forged a stellar reputation as a member of the bar while only in his twenties. As a Democratic politician, he managed to earn Tammany's endorsement while maintaining arms-length independence. His commitment to reform, developed through his alliance with once-time Speaker of the New York Assembly and eventual presidential candidate, Al Smith, informed his work in Washington, where he sponsored the National Labor Relations Act and the Social Security Act, the core programs of the Second New Deal. While Wagner the elder served in the nation's capital, his son, Robert F. Wagner, Jr., would chart his own political course, eventually ending just down the street at Gracie Mansion, the home of the city's mayor. For both Wagners, German heritage and Yorkville ties embossed their political biographies throughout their careers.²⁵

²⁴ "Revise the Excise Law: German-Americans Will Ask This of the Albany Solons," *New York World*, December 16, 1890, 7. "Germans for Tammany: Thousands of Them Will Parade with Music and Lanterns," *New York Times*, October 30, 1895, 2; David F. Remington, *Ashbel P. Fitch: Champion of Old New York* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011), 46-50, 194-9; Deborah Dash Moore, "Class and Ethnicity in the Creation of New York City Neighborhoods: 1900-1930 in *Budapest and New York: Studies in Metropolitan Transformation: 1870-1930*, eds. Thomas Bender and Carl E. Schorske (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1994), 140.

²⁵ "Former Newsboy for Assemblyman: Campaign of Robert F. Wagner in the Thirtieth District Is Attracting Attention in Tammany and Out," *New York Evening World*, October 14, 1904, 5; "Injunction Stops Subway," *The South Brooklyn Home Talk*, June 17, 1908, 1; "Legislature Is Organized: Senator Robert F. Wagner of New York Elected President Pro-Tempore," *Buffalo Commercial*, January 2, 1913, 2; "500 Friends Dine Senator Duhamel: Silvery Loving Cup Presented to Him at Feast at Stauch's," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 30, 1913, 6; "Legislature Makes No Important Move: Robert F. Wagner Presides Over the Senate as

During the first decade of the twentieth century Yorkville emerged as the cultural and social center of German New York. At the turn of the century, Manhattan Island's population density of just over 143 people per acre was the highest in the world. Overcrowding was particularly problematic on the Lower East Side. Consequently, German Americans spread to all corners of Greater New York at an accelerated rate after 1900, creating a series of residential enclaves. Spatial diversity thus joined religious identity, Old World regional allegiance, Turn Verein membership, political party designation, and socio-economic class distinction as another layer of ethnic heterogeneity within the city's German milieu. Yorkville's expanding population, especially its German contingent, began to covet entertainment venues and meeting spaces in addition to the standard commercial services required by any growing community. East 86th Street's German aesthetic emerged within this context, helping to transform Yorkville into the one place within German New York capable of bringing together constellations of co-ethnics and promoting ideological and social exchange. Yorkville's cultural offerings ranged from saloons and beer gardens with live bands to classical music and theater. In the fall of 1904, the Yorkville Theatre enjoyed its inaugural season. In fitting fashion, its opening week featured a comic-opera starring Ernestine Schumann-Heink, a renowned contralto of German-Bohemian descent.²⁶

No venue within ethnic Yorkville would have a greater impact in the twentieth century than the six-story stone building just down East 86th Street known as the Yorkville Casino. Commissioned and paid for by the Musician's Mutual Protective Union in 1904, this capacious structure quickly assumed an

Acting Lieutenant Governor," *Glens-Falls Post-Star*, August 20, 1913, 1; "Wife of Justice Wagner Dies at Woodmere Home," *Brooklyn Standard Union*, July 28, 1919, 2; "Mrs. Robert F. Wagner," *New-York Tribune*, July 29, 1919, 8; "Coolidge Ax Upstate Whetted for Smith," *New York Daily News*, October 1, 1926, 8; "Wagner Once Immigrant Lad, Off to Senate," *New York Daily News*, December 5, 1927, 6.

²⁶ Roy Lubove, *The Progressives and the Slums: Tenement House Reform in New York City, 1890-1917* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1962), 94; "Union Musicians Move with a Grand Parade: 300 in Their Band and Nearly 5,000 Men in Line," *New York Times*, February 27, 1906, 16; "New Yorkville Theatre Opens" *New York Tribune*, October 4, 1904, 9; "Mme. Schumann-Heink in Comic Opera: She Appears at the Broadway in 'Love's Lottery,'" *New York Times*, October 4, 1904, 9. In addition to the "ethnic" built environment, Yorkville became home to the first branch of the New York Public Library financed by steel magnate Andrew Carnegie in 1902. The Yorkville branch provided resources for the neighborhood's English- and foreign-speaking populations, serving as an important symbol of the neighborhood's diversity. "Yorkville Library Open: First of the Carnegie Series to be Dedicated," *New York Times*, December 14, 1902, 7; L.H. Robbins, "Treasury of Books: Forty Years Old, the Public Library Has responded to Changing Currents of Life," *New York Times*, May 19, 1935, SM10.

integral role in the social and political lives of ethnic Yorkville. In its first twenty years of existence, the Yorkville Casino hosted presidential, gubernatorial, and mayoral candidates and other political players ranging from Socialist party organizers to an Eammon de Valera rally in support of a free Irish Republic. It even served as the backdrop to the eighty-second birthday soiree honoring Samuel Gompers, the noted labor leader. To pay the bills, the Yorkville Casino regularly hosted local dances, dinners, wedding receptions, and trade union meetings. Social memory often portrays the Yorkville Casino as being an exclusively German space, with emphasis usually placed on a chaotic 1938 gathering of the German-American Bund honoring Adolf Hitler's 49th birthday.²⁷ While the Bund meetings constitute a sensational and troubling part of its legacy, the totality of the Yorkville Casino's sixty-year run as a vital neighborhood asset and a shrine to unfettered political speech is much more complex, just like ethnic Yorkville itself.²⁸

As German Yorkville thrived, elites within Gotham's wider German community pursued a quest to construct a durable pan-Germanism equipped to face myriad challenges such as the anti-pluralist "melting pot" ideology, the Prohibition movement, and Congressional threats to terminate open immigration. German New York's elites formed the National German-American Alliance (NGAA) and the

²⁷ This event ended in a headline grabbing melee between Bundists and members of an anti-Nazi coalition consisting primarily of American war veterans. Warren Grover, *Nazis in Newark* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 52; "Seven Are Injured at Nazi Rally Here When Legionnaires Heckle Speaker; Storm Troopers' Blackjacks Rout 100 in Battle in Yorkville Casino – Police Prevent Crowd From Storming Hall – 4 Arrested," *New York Times*, April 21, 1938, 1; "Held in Nazi Fracas, Youth Denies Guilt: German-Born Boy Facing Trial Hopes to Become Citizen," *New York Times*, May 5, 1938, 18. For example, Dana Schulz, writing for 6sqft, an online source conveying news important to New York's architectural and real estate scene, states that the Yorkville Casino was "not casino like we think of today, it was a social center for the German community." Dana Schulz, *Germantown NYC: Uncovering the German History of Yorkville*, 6sqft, July 11, 2016, <https://www.6sqft.com/germantown-uncovering-the-german-history-of-yorkville/>, accessed February 2, 2020.

²⁸ "Tom Hackett," *Variety* 18, no. 8, (Apr 30, 1910): 10; "Gompers Family Holds a Reunion: Four Generations Celebrate the Birthday of Labor Leader's Father," *New York Times*, October 31, 1909, 14; "Musical Union Out for Higher Wages: Though the Theatrical Managers Deny That They Have Yet Received Demands," *New York Times*, March 14, 1908, 2; "Socialists Nominate Their Candidates: John D. Chase for Governor Heads Their Ticket," *New York Times*, June 3, 1906, 7; "Gov. Wilson Scores Roosevelt's Plans: What Colonel Proposes, He Says, Was Tried in Aristotle's Time and Since with Disaster," *New York Times*, September 5, 1912, 1; "Valera on His Tour: Says Ireland 'Lost 3,000,000 Men' in War, All Deceived," *New York Times*, December 1, 1919, 10. DAVIS WINS CHEERS OF 3,000 NEGROES: Prediction of Political Equality Loudly Applauded in Packed Hall," *New York Times*, October 29, 1924, 2; "Mitchel Comes Out for J.A. Hennessy: Mayor Says He and F.D. Roosevelt Are Clean and Militant Leaders," *New York Times*, September 15, 1914, 6; "Sees City's Streets Dirtiest Under Hylan: Socialist Mayoralty Candidate Declares They Menace Health, Especially That of Children," *New York Times*, October 27, 1921, 7; Anthony Connors, "Then & Now: The Yorkville Casino," *New York Daily News*, March 29, 1998, 60; John Koegel, *Music in German Immigrant Theater: New York City, 1840-1940* (Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press, 2009), 367.

United German Societies (UGS) in the early twentieth century to craft and project a pan-German American cultural identity with political aspirations. These organizations deployed a multi-pronged approach of ethnic identity-making. They searched for opportunities to foreground Germans within the American story, penning articles and citing the work of academics researching and writing in the inchoate field of German Studies, such as Albert Faust.²⁹ In addition, they defended Germany's geopolitical decisions principally through a practice of public-facing transnationalism. Germans paraded through Manhattan in front of Prince Henry of Prussia in 1902, hosted the head of Germany's Navy in 1909, and received Mayor William Gaynor's plaudits at a Manhattan-based dinner, in 1913, marking the silver anniversary of Kaiser Wilhelm's reign.³⁰

Deutschtum, a selective and flattened representation of German American identity that elevated German high art, or *Kultur*, and promoted large-scale, highly visible civic events, served as the centerpiece for the elite-led program. This interpretation of Germanness lauded German-language performances at the Metropolitan Opera House and Oscar Hammerstein's Manhattan Opera House as well as the German-led New York Symphony's classical music offerings. Yorkville's cultural and commercial aesthetic, featuring theaters, saloons, and restaurants, presented a dilemma to *Deutschtum's* leaders. On one hand, Yorkville was emerging as a highly visible and vibrant beacon of the city's German life. However, elites worried that the neighborhood's comparatively plebian atmosphere

²⁹ They penned articles in local papers and cited as unassailable authority the work of Albert Faust, the Cornell academic who received awards in the U.S. and Germany his 1909 tome, *The German Element in the United States*. H.W. Boynton, "The Germans in America: Prof. Faust, in a Monumental Work, Considers the Political, Social, and Other Influences of the Germanic Element in This Country," *New York Times*, January 15, 1910, BR1; "The Modesty of German Professors," *New York Times*, January 17, 1916, 10; Albert Faust, *The German Element in the United States with Special Reference to Its Political, Moral, Social, and Educational Influence*, vol. 2 (Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1909).

³⁰ Rippley, *The German-Americans*, 6; Charles T. Johnson, *Culture at Twilight: The National German-American Alliance, 1901-1918* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999), 1-2; Frank Trommler, "Investing the Enemy: German-American Cultural Relations, 1900-1917," in *Confrontation and Cooperation: Germany and the United States in the Era of World War I, 1900-1924*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Schröder (Providence: Berg, 1993), 115-17; Richard O'Connor, *The German-Americans: An Informal History* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1968), 306; Clara E. Schieber, "The Transformation of American Sentiment towards Germany, 1870-1914," *Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 1 (July 1921): 50-74; Alfred R. Calhoun, "Our German-American Neighbors," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, January 16, 1910, 21; "Paraded for the Prince: German Societies to the Number of 320 Turned Out," *New York Times*, February 27, 1902, 3; Concert Audiences Greet Von Koester: Patriotic Demonstration for Germany's Grand Admiral at Metropolitan and Carnegie Hall," *New York Times*, September 29, 1909, 3.

might undermine claims about the superiority of German *Kultur*. In addition, *Deutschtum's* proponents favored grandiose pan-German events over existing festivals celebrating regional distinctions, such as those run by the Bavarians, Plattdeutschers, and others. Fêtes sponsored by the NGAA and UGS ranged from local affairs, such as dedicating Yorkville's Carl Schurz Park in 1910, to participating in citywide celebrations like the 1909 Hudson-Fulton festival, to diasporic affairs such as German Day, or *Deutscher Tag*, commemorating America's first German settlement in Pennsylvania.³¹

Hungarian Yorkville's political influence was still a work in progress during the early twentieth century, a period of significant growth for the enclave. As Hungarian Americans organized themselves into political clubs, office seekers came panning for votes. In 1906, newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst, in the midst of his unsuccessful gubernatorial bid, sought Hungarian support at a flag ceremony of the Yorkville Magyar Trsas es Betegs Egylet, an ethnic benevolent society, held at the New York Turn Verein on East 85th Street. Hearst appealed to the Hungarian Americans' homeland pride by praising Budapest as an exemplar of urban progressivism that was outpacing Gotham. He also leveraged their historical self-image by lauding fifteenth century Magyars for saving Western Europe from the Turks. This blend of modernity and antiquity provided a surefire method for scoring political points, suggesting the neighborhood's ethnic leadership, perhaps Dr. Arpad Gerster, one of the city's foremost surgeons, may have helped to craft Hearst's remarks.³²

³¹ "Music in America," *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, 28, no. 527 (Ja. 1, 1887): 40-41; Carl Schurz Park Conservancy, "A Short History of Carl Schurz Park," accessed October 30, 2017, <https://www.carlschurzparknyc.org/the-history-of-the-park>; *New York Sun*, "Parade in Schiller's Honor," April 30, 1905, 14; *New York Sun*, "German Societies March Up the Avenue, 6,000 Strong," 12; *New York Sun*, "Leisler Oaks Set with Song," April 24, 1911, 9; *New York Sun*, "A Big Day for Germans," October 7, 1912, 9; *New York Sun*, "The Symphony Orchestra," November 11, 1907, 5. "Germans Dedicate Carl Schurz Park: Ninth Annual German Day Chosen by the United Societies for the Celebration," *New York Times*, October 3, 1910, 11; *New York Sun*, "For Williams' Removal," October 8, 1911, 13; *New York Times*, "German-Americans in Convention Here," May 27, 1912; *New York Times*, "German-Americans in Convention Here," May 27, 1912; *New York Times*, "Germans Celebrate the Deutscher Tag: United Societies Gather in Terrace Garden to See Hauptmann's 'Festspiel 1813,'" *New York Times*, October 6, 1913, 16; Elliot Shore, "The Kultur Club," in *Confrontation and Cooperation: Germany and the United States in the Era of World War I, 1900-1924*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Schröder (Providence: Berg, 1993), 127-33.

³² "Hearst at the County Fairs: Candidating Experience He Won't Try Again," *New York Sun*, October 8, 1906, 3; "Arpad Gerster and Max Thorek: Contributions to American Surgery," *Journal of Investigative Surgery* 22 (2009): 162-66. Gerster personifies the hybridity of Hungarian identity in many ways. He was born in 1848 in Kassa, Hungary, now Kosiče, Slovakia. In the nineteenth century, Kassa was a polyglot, with significant German, Hungarian, and Slovakian populations and Jews represented in each of these ethnic collectives. Gerster purportedly was of Swiss ancestry, although while studying in Vienna, Austria and after

Unlike its German counterpart, Yorkville's Hungarian enclave did not occupy the center of the wider community's ethnic network. Rather, the Upper East Side enclave shared influence with Little Hungary at a time when other micro-Hungarian neighborhoods sprung up in Harlem, the Bronx, Yonkers, Brooklyn, and Long Island. As late as 1910, seventeen thousand Hungarian-born New Yorkers lived in Yorkville while twenty-two thousand resided downtown. Little Hungary also continued to boast a more mature and robust commercial sector. Its signature restaurant and namesake, Little Hungary, where Teddy Roosevelt once broke bread with Hungarian Republicans, flashed its neighborhood pride with print ads proclaiming, "We do NOT move uptown. We are HERE TO STAY."³³ Still, a higher proportion of ethnic Magyars compared to Hungarian Jews migrated uptown in pursuit of expanded economic opportunities and better housing conditions, threatening to fracture the Jewish-Gentile coalition. As a result, Yorkville became increasingly associated with Christian Hungarians and downtown Manhattan with Hungarian Jewry.³⁴

Coincident with these migrations, the collective image of Hungarian New Yorkers deteriorated during the years prior to the Great War. Since the mid-nineteenth century, Hungarian New Yorkers, whether Jews and Gentiles, tethered their identity to the image of Lajos Kossuth, the leader of the failed 1848 Hungarian rising against Austria. During Kossuth's visit to New York in the winter of 1851, city

migrating to the United States, he publicly affirmed his Hungarian ancestry by joining ethnic organizations. Gerster resided in Yorkville on East 75th Street. "Person Record: Gerster, Arpad Geyza," *Adirondack Experience*, accessed December 21, 2019, <https://adirondack.pastperfectonline.com/byperson?keyword=Gerster%2C+Arpad+Geyza>.

³³ "Little Hungary" 255-263 East Houston St., In the heart of the Ghetto," *New York Times*, October 30, 1915, 22.

³⁴ Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 991; Perlman, *Bridging Three Worlds*, 138-39; Russell A. Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 221; Selma Berrol, *The Empire City: New York and Its People, 1624-1996* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), 97; Thomas J. Shelley, *The Bicentennial History of the Archdiocese of New York, 1808-2008* (Strasbourg: Éditions du Signe, 2007), 244; "Of Aepfelwein Stubes: The Quaint Little Shops on the East Side of the City," *New York Times*, July 8, 1896, 4. Béla Vassady, Jr., "The "Homeland Cause," as Stimulant to Ethnic Unity: The Hungarian-American Response to Karolyi's 1914 American Tour," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 2, no. 1 (Fall 1982): 44. Around this same time, significant Hungarian enclaves started to develop in New Brunswick, New Jersey and Bridgeport, Connecticut forming a broad Hungarian network. David Listokin, Dorothea Berkhout, and James W. Hughes, "The People of New Brunswick, Population and Resident Profile over Time," in *New Brunswick, New Jersey: The Decline and Revitalization of Urban America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2016), 47-49; Ivan Greenberg, "Vocational Education, Work Culture, and the Children of Immigrants in 1930s Bridgeport," *Journal of Social History* 41, no. 1 (Fall 2007): 149-60.

leaders treated him to a hero's welcome, complete with parades, dinners, and speeches. They praised the Magyar leader as a virtuous and patriotic defender of democracy, ascribing similar qualities to the city's Hungarians. In 1894, the city formally mourned Kossuth's passing with a memorial parade in which multiethnic New York clasped hands with Hungarians.³⁵

The Kossuth memorial notwithstanding, Hungarian New York's collective reputation faced new challenges in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries due primarily to material changes in immigration patterns and responses to them by national and local leaders. Landless peasants comprised a prevailing majority of newcomers from the Kingdom of Hungary during this time, drawing fresh critiques from multiple corners. As early as 1892, diplomat Charles Emory Smith painted such migrants as culturally unassimilable based on their relative lack of formal education and low literacy rates. He also declared them detrimental to the nation's delicate labor markets due to their alleged willingness to accept low wages for a two or three years only to return to the homeland "to stimulate a dozen others to try the same fortune."³⁶ Opponents of open immigration in the mold of Smith, fueled by the pseudo-science of eugenics, gained traction in the early years of the twentieth century. In 1907, immigration restrictionists in Congress passed legislation barring those classified as mentally and physically defective and establishing a commission to investigate the state of America's immigration schema. The resulting Dillingham Commission issued a report in 1911 characterizing Eastern and Southern European migrants

³⁵ "The Kossuth Dinner: Magnificent Banquet – Kossuth's Great Speech Doctrine of Non-Interference – Speeches of the mayor, Judge Edmonds, Col. Webb," *New York Daily Times*, December 12, 1851, 1; "The Welcome to Kossuth: Ceremonies at Staten Island – The Trip on the Bay," *New York Daily Times*, December 8, 1851, 1; "They Mourn for Kossuth: New York Hungarians Will Express Their Grief in a Great Memorial Meeting," *New York World*, March 22, 1894, 5; "The Columbian Bell May Toll: It Has Been Offered for the Kossuth Memorial Services Friday – Details to Be Perfected Tomorrow," *New York World*, March 24, 1894, 2; "To Fly the Flag of Hungary," *New York Times*, March 28, 1894, 3; "Tribute to Kossuth: New York Does Honor to the Memory of the Patriot," *New York Evening World*, April 4, 1894, 1; "In Memory of Louis Kossuth" Hungarian Societies Will Take Part in a Parade—Services at Cooper Union," *New York Times*, March 26, 1894, 1.

³⁶ "Immigration Problems: Earnest Advocates of Radical Changes in the Laws," *New York Times*, November 26, 1892, 5

as “undesirable” and recommending that the federal government implement literacy testing and adopt a quota system.³⁷

As anti-open immigration forces embraced a racialized view of non-Western European groups, they recast the people of Kossuth as “Huns” and “Hunkies,” terms connoting an uncivilized, dirty, unskilled, and even non-white lot. The *New York Times* ran multiple stories accusing the Hungarian government of unloading its basest element on an unwitting America during the first decade of the twentieth century. “Is the Kingdom of Hungary trying to turn to our shores the paupers, wastrels, and criminals of that country?” it asked.³⁸ Marcus Braun, a Hungarian-born immigration inspector and special envoy charged with investigating Hungarian emigration, echoed these claims, earning him a censure in *Amerikai Magyar Nepszasa*, New York’s leading Hungarian daily. Other anti-immigration fearmongers pathologized all Hungarians as lawless, dishonest, disease-ridden, and lazy foreigners whose begging blighted commercial districts like Madison and Park Avenues. Yorkville Hungarians did not escape this anti-Hunky rhetoric. In 1896, the same year Hungary celebrated the millennial anniversary of the nation’s monarchy, a group of Yorkville-based Hungarians filed a judicial application to incorporate the Yorkville Magyar Tarsas Egylet, or the Yorkville Hungarian Social Club. The club’s *raison d’etre* was to preserve the Magyar language, literature, and customs. The judge assailed their goals as tantamount to “sequester[ing] a class of foreign-born citizens from the American community” and “giv[ing] predominance to their attachment to their native land.”³⁹ The accompanying newspaper headline said it all: “A Yorkville Organization That Was Too Hungarian.”⁴⁰

³⁷ Ibid.; Katherine Benton-Cohen, “The Rude Birth of Immigration Reform,” *The Wilson Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (Sum. 2010): 16-22; Ran Abramitzky and Leah Boustán “Immigration in American Economic History,” *Journal of Economic Literature* 55, no. 4 (Dec. 2017): 1311-45

³⁸ “Hungary and Emigration,” *New York Times*, January 3, 1906, 8.

³⁹ “Social Clubs: A Yorkville Organization That Was Too Hungarian,” *Hartford Courant*, December 24, 1896, 7.

⁴⁰ Emily R. Cabaniss and Abigail E. Cameron, “‘Unassimilable and Undesirable’: News Elites’ Discursive Construction of the American Immigrant during the Ellis Island Years,” *Discourse & Society* 28, no. 6 (2017): 614-34; “Hungary and Emigration,” *New York Times*, January 3, 1906; *New York Times*, “Immigration Problems,” November 26, 1892; Steven B. Vardy, “Image and Self-image among Hungarian-Americans Since the Mid-Nineteenth Century,” *East European Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (Sept. 2001): 309-21. The *Amerikai Magyar Nepszasa*, one of New York’s leading Hungarian-language newspapers, expressed the need to discern whether Braun was quoted accurately and whether he genuinely believed this position. In the end, that same publication

Hungarian New Yorkers navigated these turbulent waters in multiple ways. Some, like Hungarian American attorney Morris Cukor, sought to apply Magyarization locally by rebuilding a pan-Hungarian identity inspired by the old Jewish-Gentile collaboration once active within Little Hungary, the downtown enclave. Simultaneously, the Hungarian government devised a variegated approach to stem the tide of Magyar out-migration and to promote the return of its Magyar diaspora. This covert program, dubbed “American Action,” called for the Magyarization of Hungarian American places of worship, school, and banks. Both the Cukor-vision and the Hungarian government’s program promoted an exclusionary vision of Hungarianness that marginalized minority groups from the Kingdom of Hungary such as Slovaks and Rusyns. This closed sense of ethnic identity bore bitter fruit. In 1902, a Hungarian envoy arrived in New York to present two Hungarian flags to local ethnic organizations. Ten thousand Hungarian Americans attended the ceremony in which clerics representing Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, the Reformed Church, and Hungarian Jewry blessed the flags. The Slovak community protested the proceedings as the Hungarian government’s blatant attempt to foment nativism and division within Hungarian New York. E.T. Kohyani, a Hungarian-language newspaper editor, fired back, accusing the Slovaks of subverting the will of the Magyar majority in the U.S. and Hungary.⁴¹ Contests

accepted Braun’s denials, but Braun found it difficult to fully recover his public reputation. At the height of this controversy, Braun authored a letter to the editor clarifying that his concerns were with the government not the people of Hungary, pressed charges of criminal libel against another leading Hungarian New Yorker, Lajos Steiner, and eventually resigned from his post as immigration inspector. “Immigration Post Abroad,” *New York Times*, March 22, 1903, 3; “Alien Influx Increasing,” *New York Times*, June 17, 1905, 2; “Braun to the Hungarians,” *New York Times*, July 1, 1905, 4; Marcus Braun, Letter to the Editor, “Hungarian Immigration: The Home Governments, and Not the People Cause Trouble,” *New York Times*, July 8, 1908, 8; *New York Times*, “Marcus Braun Cries Libel,” December 10, 1905, 3; *New York Times*, “Marcus Braun Is Out,” March 17, 1906, 4. “Pitiful Mendicant Gives Way to the Cunning Beggar: A Special “Slanguage” Used in the New Fraternity and the Old Threadbare Wiles Are Displaced These Days by Ingenious Trickery to Get Alms,” *New York Times*, August 28, 1910, 11; Susan M. Schweik, *The Ugly Laws: Disability in Public* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 165-83; *Budapest and New York: Studies in Metropolitan Transformation: 1870-1930*, edited by Thomas Bender and Carl E. Schorske (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1994), xi; “Social Clubs: A Yorkville Organization That Was Too Hungarian,” *Hartford Courant*, December 24, 1896, 7.

⁴¹ Josef Zseni, a representative of the Hungarian government, sailed to New York to present two Hungarian flags to local Hungarian American organizations that the flags were given in gratitude for contributions by Hungarian New Yorkers to a commemorative statue in Budapest honoring poet Mihály Vörösmarty. *New York Times*, “Hungarians Arrive with Their Flag,” August 31, 1902; *New York Times*, “Flag Is Presented to Hungarian-Americans,” September 2, 1902.

over Hungarian identity persisted throughout the life of Yorkville's ethnic enclave and continue to play a role in the neighborhood's contemporary Hungarian heritage practices.⁴²

Contrary to the General Slocum origin thesis, German New Yorkers forged a relationship with Yorkville well before the turn of the century. At first, they used the space for festivals and social gatherings. Eventually, German-speakers migrated northward or settled directly in the Upper Manhattan neighborhood, giving Yorkville a decidedly German feel by the 1880s. These German migrants and their descendants planted German businesses, churches, and social clubs. The Lords of Lager constructed grandiose breweries that provided hundreds of jobs to newcomers. Hungarian émigrés made inroads into Yorkville during the late nineteenth century and came in larger waves in the first decade of the twentieth century. Ethnic Yorkville's contours took definitive shape during the early twentieth century with German Americans constituting the neighborhood's largest and most politically active constituency. Germans also impacted the built environment. In 1905, the German-run Yorkville Bank, originally established in 1893, rose anew. German-born architect Robert Maynicke redesigned the office building to accommodate the commercial and aesthetic needs of a growing ethnic community. The resulting four-story granite, limestone, brick, and terra-cotta structure came to dominate the corner of Third Avenue and East 85th Street, visibly proclaiming ethnic upward mobility. Soon, however, growing tensions in Europe would threaten to disrupt this vernal trajectory, ushering in the heat and light of ethnic Yorkville's summer season. During this period, extending from the Great War to World War II, ethnic Yorkville would face its starkest challenges and reach its most storied heights.

⁴² Poznan, "Return Migration to Austria-Hungary from the United States," 651; Mark Wyman, *Round-trip to America: The Immigrants Return to Europe, 1880-1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 11; Paula K. Benkart, "The Hungarian Government, the American Magyar Churches, and the Immigrant Ties to the Homeland, 1903-1917," *Church History* 52, no. 3 (Sept. 1983): 312-21; Susan Glanz, "Lives and Deaths of a Hungarian Bank in New York," *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* 20, no. 1 (2014): 138-39.

CHAPTER 2

RECALLING ETHNIC YORKVILLE IN THE SUMMER HEAT: WORLD WAR I TO WORLD WAR II

TO THY CHEEKS THE FIRES OF SUMMER

*To thy cheeks the fires of summer
A burning glow impart;
But winter, cold and frosty,
Lies in thy little heart.*

*But that will change and alter,
Beloved as thou art!
The winter will be on the cheek then
And the summer in the heart.*

Heinrich Heine¹

In mid-February 1917, two thousand German New Yorkers, including representatives of several Yorkville-based organizations, met at the headquarters of the Arion Society, one the city's august singing clubs, to discuss plans for an annual cultural bazaar. Organizers aimed to send funds raised by this event to the German Red Cross. Attendees debated a resolution that called on "German-Americans of New York [to] forego all affairs of a frivolous or entertaining nature."² The question presented was whether events like the bazaar could or should proceed in light of President Woodrow Wilson's decision to end diplomatic relations with Germany. Henry Weismann, speaking for the New York-based National German-American Alliance, a pan-Germanic socio-political organization, advised all of the city's institutional leaders present to speak openly about the matter. Ludwig Nissen, selected by Mayor John Mitchel to serve on the Congress for Constructive Patriotism, urged co-ethnics to postpone the bazaar in an effort "not to do or say anything that will cast the slightest suspicion on any American of German

¹ Harry Heine, subsequently known as Heinrich Heine, was born in 1797 to a German Jewish family in Düsseldorf, then in the Duchy of Berg. According to biographer Hanna Spencer, Jews and Gentiles mixed freely in that city during Heine's childhood. In his late twenties, Heine converted to the Lutheran faith and adopted a "Germanic" name, although he described this change as a necessary step in fully integrating into European society. Heine, who failed as a business apprentice eventually earning a doctorate in law, started writing verse in his teens. By the time of his death in 1856, he had produced approximately 700 poems. *Buch der Lieder* (Book of Songs), published in 1827, is considered his seminal work. Heine wrote most of the poems in this volume while in his twenties, including "Es liegt der heisse Sommer." Spencer calls *Buch der Lieder* the most widely read work in the German poetic cannon. Hanna Spencer, *Heinrich Heine* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), 1-30.

² "German Americans in Loyal Outburst," *New York Sun*, February 5, 1917, 5.

birth or descent in this country.”³ Other German American leaders warned against unwarranted capitulation. Dr. Louis Haupt, the Arion Society’s president, mocked state and local efforts to guard bridges and other sites against potential enemy attacks as “hysterical,” and lamented that “people are losing their heads.”⁴ Dr. Gustave Scholer, head of the Yorkville-based New York Turn Verein, reminded the audience that German Americans had the right to oppose the war as a matter of free speech. These leaders reconvened in March. With the U.S. moving closer to entering the Great War, they canceled the bazaar and declared their loyalty to the American cause. Two months later, they issued a public statement that Steuben Day would replace the city’s annual German Day celebration that October, summoning the heroic legacy of Baron von Steuben, the Prussian-born general who had trained many of Washington’s troops during the Revolutionary War, to shield German New York from potential wartime opprobrium. Ultimately, there would be no Steuben Day in the fall of 1917, and no way to avoid waves of anti-German sentiment.⁵

Recalling ethnic Yorkville’s summer season, the period extending from World War I to the brink of America’s entry into World War II, evokes notions of both light and heat. Light refers to popular tableaux of ethnic Yorkville’s vibrancy, especially in the early thirties, typically associated with the commercial core on East 86th Street. It conjures visions of bierstubes and dance halls, German restaurants and bakeries, foreign-language films and plays, and shops carrying goods imported from Central Europe. Heat, on the other hand, connotes episodes of exogenous shock and existential threat, namely the century’s two world wars. Dominant narratives of ethnic Yorkville rarely dwell on the Great War, deferring to truncated descriptions of coercive patriotism and accelerated assimilation. The

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ “German Americans in Loyal Outburst,” *New York Sun*, February 5, 1917; “United German Societies Meeting,” *New York Times*, March 8, 1917; “No German Day This Year: Organizations Decide to Hold Celebration in Steuben’s Honor,” *New York Times*, May 27, 1917, 4.

standard story, instead, devotes most of its attention to the interwar years, and more specifically to the period when Nazism gained a foothold in Yorkville through the German-American Bund, which maintained a headquarters in the neighborhood. The mere mention of the Bund years calls to mind a sensational cache of images: swastika-laden flags adorning tenement windows, saloon patrons toasting to the Führer, and fully uniformed Bundists goose-stepping with impunity along Yorkville's streets. These two visions – light and heat – produce a jagged, dramatic, and German-centric social memory.

The interpretation offered here adds nuance, richness, and Hungarians to the story of ethnic Yorkville's heated summer days. It highlights the World War I-era's Great Hyphen Debate, which pitted ethnics proud of their cultures and community-building efforts against opponents ranging from deputized vigilantes to Gotham's nativist elite, both of whom equated hyphenated identity with disloyalty. Within this toxic environment, federal and city officials empowered by President Wilson's enemy alien executive order sought to bring a harsh brand of law and order and coercive patriotism to Yorkville's foreign element. The neighborhood's Germans bore the brunt of this wartime animus, as the city's mainstream print press used the war to openly envision a German-less Yorkville. Meanwhile, Hungary's fraught homeland politics and the postwar partition of most of that nation's territory sowed the seeds of division within Hungarian New York's ethnic networks as Yorkville's decidedly Christian element tended to support any action likely to remediate this tragedy.

Germans and Hungarians endured further challenges through the twenties, as Prohibition threatened to compromise the neighborhood's commercial scene and developers envisioned enhancing Yorkville's working-class profile in the name of profit and progress. Despite these obstacles, Yorkville's German and Hungarian enclaves persisted into the thirties, a period normally reserved for discussions of the pro-Nazi Bund. While the Bund's use of neighborhood damaged ethnic Yorkville's reputation, this period also featured the further blossoming of the district's ethnic commercial sector, led by the East 86th Street businesses. After the repeal of Prohibition, ethnic entrepreneurs increasingly marketed their

offerings to non-ethnics and those outside the neighborhood's footprint. Based on German Yorkville's curious coexistence of political extremism and commercial success, the ethnic Yorkville imaginary pays scant attention to the district's Hungarians during the thirties. As a result, the dominant narrative misses the fraught nature of Hungary's interwar politics and the extent to which homeland concerns, especially the goal of reconstituting the Kingdom of Hungary, continued to weigh on the hearts and minds of residents of Hungarian New York, especially those in Yorkville.

ETHNIC YORKVILLE DURING THE WORLD WAR I ERA: THE GREAT HYPHEN DEBATE

The Great War marked a crisis of ethnic identity for the city's Germans and Hungarians. National concerns over hyphenated identity took on special symbolic import within America's preeminent cosmopolis. The logic of anti-hyphenism dictated that subduing Gotham's foreigners at a time of conflict and coopting them to promote pro-war sentiment might catalyze assimilation processes elsewhere. Demonstrating uncommon faith in the marketplace of ideas, earned social capital, and the palatability of dissent, leaders of New York's German and Hungarian communities labored to define and defend pluralistic visions of belonging. They argued that ethnic difference strengthened rather than threatened the American whole. Ethnic elites deployed soft power approaches predicated on enhancing the visibility of carefully choreographed images that linked German and Hungarian cultural understandings to the broader American story. As the European War progressed and Americans chose sides, the city's Germans and Hungarians lost rhetorical ground in the intensified heat of the Great Hyphen Debate. When the U.S. broke off diplomatic relations with and then entered the war against Germany, German New Yorkers experienced a radical and rapid decline in their collective status. Hungarian New Yorkers worked to avoid a similar fate by attempting to translate their distinctive geopolitical perspective to those less familiar with the history and politics of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, positioning themselves as critics of the Hapsburg monarchy. The ethnic Yorkville imaginary presents only a cursory version of

this complex history of the Great War era. It myopically privileges the German experience to the exclusion of Hungarians, regurgitates tropes of the rebranding of German symbols, such as renaming sauerkraut “liberty cabbage,” and barely touches on the key historical actors who tried to help these ethnic communities navigate this tempestuous period.

The onset of armed conflict in Europe in late July 1914 and its rapid metastasis rendered the city’s Great Hyphen Debate combustible. From the summer of 1914 through early 1917, Gotham’s leading dailies warned of German atrocities in Belgium and U-boat attacks on passenger ships, raising moral questions about the combatants and casting doubt on America’s ability to remain neutral. As German and Hungarian leaders spoke publicly on these matters, their constituencies came under greater scrutiny throughout 1915 and 1916 by opponents of hyphenated identity. In May 1915, a municipal judge, responding to concerns that a play about the Franco-Prussian War might foment German dissent in the city, expressed his refusal to pander to the sensibilities of dual identities. Former president Theodore Roosevelt took to the stump in New York in 1916 to denounce the NGAA as an un-American organization. Later that fall, scores of the city’s upper crust gathered at Mrs. Vincent Astor’s plush abode to formulate a strategy to combat the hyphen. Frances Kellor, the chair of the New York-based National Americanization Committee, used this occasion to announce that “as a subject of discussion, the hyphen is dead,” a provocative statement meant to signal that anti-hyphenates wished to eradicate multiculturalism from the city’s socio-cultural ecosystem.⁶

⁶ “Belgians’ Bitter Need of Our Aid: Sir Gilbert Parker Says That Only America Can Save Them from Starvation,” *New York Times*, December 6, 1914, 11; “Shooting Belgian Refugees: Dutch Paper Says Germans Killed 27 Trying to Cross the Border,” *New York Times*, February 13, 1915, 4; “Torpedo Rends Another U.S. Ship in Zone of Sinking of Lusitania,” *New York Evening World*, May 26, 1915, 1; “The Lusitania’s Destruction,” *New York Times*, August 30, 1915, 6; “U-Boats Sank 568 Ships: Germany Declares Enemies Lost 734 Vessels Since Start of War,” *New York Times*, December 21, 1915, 3; “Germany Declares Submarines Sink Thirteen Craft In One Day; Nine British Trawlers the Victims of Two U-Boats,” *New York Times*, July 28, 1915, 1; “U-Boats Sink Three Ships: Swedish Vessel Destroyed: Five British Seamen Missing,” *New York Times*, December 2, 1915, 3; Frederick C. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974), xiii-xvii; Michael A. Lerner, *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 31-32; Phyllis Keller, *States of Belonging: German-American Intellectuals and the First World War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 1-2; Russell A. Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University

With the Great Hyphen Debate's lines of demarcation drawn, ethnic New Yorkers, especially those residing within concentrated enclaves, increasingly found themselves having to relitigate their rights to assemble and dissent. Some groups within German New York, such as the German Culture Society, urged members of the community to remain silent if not compliant on matters of foreign policy. Others marched into the discursive fray with bold strides. The German-language press unabashedly defended ethnic identity and continued interest in homeland politics, while also articulating the logic of American neutrality. In August 1914, the inaugural edition of *The Fatherland*, a weekly dedicated to the neutrality position, immediately sold out its ten thousand copies, with healthy sales at Yorkville's newsstands. Less than a year later, twenty-seven thousand people, the majority German American, attended a "peace rally" at Madison Square Garden where they asserted their patriotism by waving American flags while cheering on pro-neutrality speakers such as former Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan. Henry Weismann, chief defender of *Deutschtum*, with its tactics of visibility and volume, and prominent proponent of pan-Germanism, used the assembly to take a swipe at Teddy Roosevelt's pro-British war mongering while proudly asserting his adoration for "dear old Germany now and forever."⁷ The neutrality campaign led directly to efforts to defeat Woodrow Wilson at the polls in 1916. The city's German-language press led the way by throwing their support to Republican Charles Hughes. At this point, Gotham's mainstream dailies tacked in an anti-German American direction. The *New York Times*, for example, marginalized a pro-Hughes rally attended by five thousand Americans of German and Irish descent as a mass meeting of "propagandists," while the *New York Evening World* warned readers about the "hyphenate campaign" against Wilson. German New Yorkers would soon experience the costs of organizing against the president, who won reelection in November 1916.⁸

Press, 2004), 6-10, 261-76; *New York Times*, "Court Lifts Hyphen Out of Citizenship," May 27, 1915; *New York Evening World*, "Mrs. Vincent Astor's Americanization Dinner for Benefit of Nation," November 16, 1916, 12.

⁷ "27,000 Roar as Bryan Assails Press of N.Y.," *New York Sun*, June 25, 1915, 4

⁸ "German Campaign on Wilson Begins," *New York Times*, October 6, 1916; *New York Evening World*, October 13, 1916, 22; "German Criticizes Embargo Agitator: Official of Culture Society Declares Loud Talk Hurts Fatherland's Cause," *New-York Tribune*, August 4, 1915, 8; Keller, *States of Belonging*, 140-49; "27,000 Roar as Bryan Assails Press of N.Y.," *New York Sun*, June

America's entry into the war transformed *Deutschtum's* strategic plan of promoting *Kultur* with volume and visibility into a liability. The anti-hyphenate sentiment stoked by the war was reimagining the very cultural markers once elevated by the *Deutschtum* movement, such as opera and classical music, as wholly foreign. The *New York Times*, echoing the Committee on Public Information's national stance, added to this foreignization discourse by equating *Kultur* with the ruthless and dehumanizing German efficiency on display on the battlefields of Belgium and France. Locally, socialite Mrs. William Jay, a descendant of the nation's first Chief Justice and daughter-in-law of a Hanseatic merchant born in Hamburg, persuaded the board of the Metropolitan Opera to remove all German performances from the 1917 schedule. Thereafter, she set her sights on ridding Gotham's music scene writ large of German influence. Jay's actions were in line with those who saw German performances in the New York as an affront to American men fighting against Germany. A letter to the editor published by the *New York Times* asked rhetorically, "Is it possible that even the most rabid adherents of German opera can endure to hear, at this crisis, the unlovely guttural language of our enemy, hissed in their faces under the friendly guise of art?"⁹ Despite these efforts to banish German high culture, a few concerts featuring Beethoven, Brahms, and Wagner occurred during the war. Those German American singers and musicians who continued to work in the city while the fighting raged in Europe, found it prudent to publicly affirm their patriotic credentials. In November 1917, Ernestine Schumann-Heink capped off her Carnegie Hall concert of German *lieder*, poems set to classical music, by singing "America" and told the audience about her four sons serving in the American armed forces.¹⁰

25, 1915, 1, 4; Wittke, *The German-Language Press in America*, 164, 238; "German Weeklies Indorse Hughes: The Fatherland and Issues and Events Find Him Acceptable to Teutonic Sentiment" *New York Times*, June 16, 1916, 7; "German Campaign on Wilson Begins: Five Thousand Propagandists Hiss President and Cheer Hughes and O'Leary," *New York Times*, October 6, 1916, 3.

⁹ Myra Maxwell, "German Arms, Not Art: Our Stage No Place for Hun Music While Sons and Brothers Fight," *New York Times*, November 11, 1917, 77.

¹⁰ Committee on Public Information, *Conquest and Kultur: Aims of the Germans in Their Own Words* (Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, 1917), 103-12, accessed October 24, 2017, <https://archive.org/stream/conquestkulturai00note#page/112/mode/2up>; Myra Maxwell, "German Arms, Not Art: Our Stage No Place for Hun Music While Sons and Brothers Fight," *New York Times*, November 11, 1917, 77; *New York Times*, "Kultur and Slavery," March 2, 1918. *New York Times*, "Schumann-Heink Sings," November 4, 1917; *New York Times*, November 7, 1917;

Yorkville constituted the epicenter of this wartime conflict of ethnic identity. The city's anti-German forces reimagined the neighborhood as inherently suspicious and potentially dangerous. As a result, Yorkville's German American residents were falling backward into otherness. The American Patriotic League, a civilian organization dedicated to vigilantly defending the anti-hyphenate precept of 100 percent Americanism, engaged in so-called "slacker raids," during which thousands of volunteers hunted for unregistered aliens in the city. Yorkville presented an especially inviting target. In one Manhattan raid, just three percent of nearly twelve thousand people seized, an overwhelming majority of whom were of German descent, turned out to be unregistered aliens.¹¹

In addition to promoting voluntary vigilantism, President Wilson's executive order classifying all unnaturalized persons at least fourteen years old and born in Germany as enemy aliens, issued on April 6, 1917, unleashed the juridical power of the state. To government officials, Yorkville constituted the largest potential nest of enemy aliens. Manhattan-based federal marshals, accordingly, conducted multiple raids on Yorkville businesses. John Knox, Assistant U.S. Attorney for New York City, decried unregistered German Americans as "contemptible [for] taking all that we had to offer and giving nothing in return."¹² Gotham's mainstream print press used its coverage of the enemy alien registration process to add flavor to an unflattering image of Yorkville, which it dubbed "Little Teutonia," to suggest a den of foreignness and disloyalty. With gazes fixed on unregistered residents, these dailies implied that the entirety of German Yorkville qualified as enemy aliens. Moreover, they portrayed Yorkville's German

New York Times, November 9, 1917; "German-Americans Form Patriotic Union: To Organize 15,000,000 Men, Women, and Children to Help America to Win the War," *New York Times*, June 10, 1918, 11; "Halt German Opera at Metropolitan: Minority of Directors Understood to Oppose Giving Wagner's Works," *New York Times*, November 2, 1917, 13; Edmund A. Bowles, "Karl Muck and His Compatriots: German Conductors in America during World War I (and How They Coped)," *American Music* 25, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 405-40; "Mrs. William Jay Plays 'Trumps' in Fight to Bar Dr. Muck Here," *New-York Tribune*, March 14, 1918, 6; "German Music Stays on Symphony Program: Mrs. William Jay Says Her Protest Was Overruled by Orchestra Leader," *New-York Tribune*, May 1, 1919, 11; "No Wagnerian Music," *The Billboard* 31, no. 5 (Feb 1, 1919): 25; "Mrs. William Jay Dead of Apoplexy: Widow of Distinguished Lawyer --Founded Anti-German Music League in World War," *New York Times*, January 30, 1931, 21.

¹¹ *New York Sun*, December 9, 1917, 53; "Bayonet Arrests Land to DeWoody," *New York Sun*, September 7, 1918, 4; "Gregory Criticizes Slacker Raid," *New York Sun*, September 12, 1918, 4; "42,000 Caught in in Draft Raids; Many Set Free," *New York Sun*, September 4, 1918, 1; "Alderman Lee Threatened with Lynching," *New York Sun*, February 27, 1918, 1.

¹² "Fighting the German Spy System," *New York Sun*, December 9, 1917, 1.

American women, especially those married or older, as brooding, suspicious, and backward, mocking them as “stout haufbraus.” While depicting German American women as more likely to succumb to state power than their male counterparts, such accounts paradoxically assailed them for being unwilling to participate in municipal celebrations of America’s war effort. It appears that many of Yorkville’s German American women drew a line at giving their fingerprints at the local precinct, distinguishing compliance with legal processes from public displays of coerced patriotism such as appearing at pro-war rallies or parades.¹³

German Yorkville’s position deteriorated even more in 1918 and 1919. Gotham’s newspapers openly envisioned a German-less Yorkville well before the November 1918 armistice. A *New York Times* article in the summer of 1918 offered a distorted interpretation of ethnic Yorkville’s historical trajectory to forecast its future. This article made no mention of German American contributions to the neighborhood’s development and growth, failed to list Germans among the area’s contemporary ethnic groups, and located Yorkville’s social core below East 72nd Street, the neighborhood’s oft-cited southern boundary, a world away from the German businesses on East 86th Street.¹⁴ According to this piece, Yorkville’s ethnic composition included “the largest Bohemian settlement in the city” as well as “rapidly growing Hungarian and Greek centers.”¹⁵ The *Times* efforts to write German Yorkville out of existence

¹³ “30 German Women an Hour Are Registered in Yorkville,” *New-York Tribune*, June 19, 1918, 8; *New York Sun*, December 9, 1917, 53; “Bayonet Arrests Land to DeWoody,” *New York Sun*, September 7, 1918, 4; “Gregory Criticizes Slacker Raid,” *New York Sun*, September 12, 1918, 4; “42,000 Caught in Draft Raids; Many Set Free,” *New York Sun*, September 4, 1918, 1; “Alderman Lee Threatened with Lynching,” *New York Sun*, February 27, 1918, 1; “President’s Proclamation for State of War,” *New York Sun*, April 7, 1917, 1; “U.S. Marshals Get 65 Aliens,” *New York Sun*, April 7, 1917, 1; “Screws to Tighten on Enemy Aliens,” *New York Sun*, May 5, 1918, 16; “Police to Register All Enemy Aliens,” *New York Sun*, November 30, 1917, 5; “Many Teutons in Upper East Side,” *New York Sun*, February 15, 1918, 4; “30 German Women an Hour Are Registered in Yorkville,” *New-York Tribune*, June 19, 1918, 8; Christina A. Ziegler-McPherson, *Immigrants in Hoboken, One-Way Ticket, 1845-1985* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2011); “All Enemies Kept from Barred Zone,” *New York Sun*, November 15, 1917, 3.

¹⁴ In a similar vein, a 1924 article written by a settlement worker, which emphasized the working-class nature of Yorkville, lauded the Czechs as praiseworthy among the neighborhood’s Central Europeans. This article fails to expressly mention Yorkville’s German population. “‘Seeing New York’ Tour with Charity Workers,” *New York Times*, May 11, 1924, 8.

¹⁵ “A New Era for Yorkville,” *New York Times*, July 28, 1918, 22.

belied the critical mass of German Americans committed to weathering this fraught period and maintaining their Yorkville enclave.¹⁶

In contrast with German New York, once disparate facets of the city's Hungarians coalesced in the prewar years based not on common domestic concerns but on a shared vision of homeland politics. Just months prior to the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, Archduke of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Count Michael Károlyi, leader of the Hungarian Independence party visited New York on the invitation of two of the city's most prominent Hungarian Americans, Alexander Konta, a banker, publicist, and opinion leader, and Géza Kende, co-editor of Gotham's largest Hungarian newspaper, the *Amerikai Magyar Nepszava* ("AMN"). Károlyi's goals were twofold. He first hoped to gain American support generally for his party's platform of universal suffrage and termination of the dual monarchy by linking these goals to the legacy of Lajos Kossuth, the nineteenth century Hungarian revolutionary. Mayor Mitchel's full-throated endorsement of Károlyi's vision suggested some measure of success.¹⁷ Károlyi also hoped to ignite a sense a nationalism among Hungarian Americans in order to mold them into an overseas diasporic support system capable of financially and rhetorically backing his party.¹⁸

Initially, the trip exposed disunity within prewar Hungarian New York. The old guard, represented by Kende, his co-editor, Géza Berko, and Konta, battled with Louis Tarcai, the editor of

¹⁶ Ibid.; "Sale of \$7,000 in Bonds Saves Verein Concert," *New York Tribune*, April 28, 1919, 1; "Put the Anthem in Verein Program," *New York Times*, April 28, 1919; *New York Evening World*, "Spreading Americanism is New Voluntary Task of Patriotic American Legion," January 26, 1922, 3.

¹⁷ It bears mention that the idea of a fully autonomous and democratic Hungarian state enjoyed wide support in New York's mainstream circles. In 1911, for example, Gotham's social and political elites rolled out the red carpet for Count Albert Apponyi, then head of the Hungarian independence movement. The city's first lady, Mrs. William Gaynor and Mrs. Samuel Untmyer, wife of one of New York's leading civic figures, arranged multiple events honoring the Count as the symbol of Hungary's quest for self-determination. "Big Reception for Count Apponyi," *New York Times*, February 12, 1911, 11. At one such event, Count Apponyi told the Hungarian migrants, "[I]t breaks my heart to see you away from the land of your birth." He continued, "I know there is not employment in Hungary for you all, but I hope that the time will come when we shall have such prosperity there that emigration will cease." "Send Apponyi Home with Silver Wreath: Gift Planned at Dinner at Which 850 Hungarian-Americans Cheer," *New York Times*, February 13, 1911, 20

¹⁸ Béla Vassady, Jr., "The 'Homeland Cause' as Stimulant to Ethnic Unity, 39-64; "To Seek American Sympathy for Hungarian Liberty: Remembering Kossuth's United States Visit, Members of the Independent Party Are Coming to Ask Our Aid for Democracy's Battle against Austrian Autocracy," *New York Times*, July 5, 1914, SM10; "Mitchel Praises Hungary's Fight," *New York Times*, July 14, 1914, 3.

Előre, a Hungarian-language Socialist newspaper, and his coalition of Hungarian American institutions such as the United Magyar Christian Sick and Benefit Societies, for control of the Károlyi visit.

Geographic and socio-economic class differences fueled this contest. The Tarcai faction, based on the Upper East Side, emphasized the needs and values of the working class, both in the city and the homeland. Károlyi and his entourage chose to set up shop in this group's Yorkville-based Magyar Christian Home. In the weeks following Károlyi's visit and after robust debate, the opposing sides found common ground by pledging support for all Hungarian parties committed to universal suffrage. They also developed a concrete scheme to establish "New Hungary Leagues" throughout the United States, with each local entity free to craft its own vision of what a reformed Hungarian homeland might look like. The Great War's poisonous air soon choked this plan as it would dreams of a "new" Hungary.¹⁹

News of fighting in Europe shook Hungarian New York's collective conscience and obscured the path forward. In August 1914, reservists in the Austro-Hungarian army residing in New York amassed in the downtown Hungarian Relief Society, known variably as the Magyar Ház, to prepare to travel overseas to report for duty. Some men expressly disapproved of the conflict while advocating for America to remain neutral. As combatants dug trenches on the Western front, the city's Hungarian leaders tried to balance pleas for constituents to remain loyal to the U.S. with public statements distinguishing Hungary's geopolitical position from those of Austria and Germany, and exclaiming the righteousness of Magyar rule over the Kingdom of Hungary. On the ground, Hungarian Americans wrestled with how to balance support for Wilson in 1916 while also defending the hyphen.²⁰

¹⁹ Béla Vassady, Jr., 39-64; Michael Károlyi, *Fighting the World: The Struggle for Peace* (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1925), translated by E.W. Dickes, 87-91. Károlyi's memoir clarifies his frustration with this internecine feud. He wrote that, "[a]s soon as we drew near to American shores the first reverberations of the quarrels among the Hungarians in America reached us by wireless." He explained that "[o]ne paper telegraphed to request me on no account to speak to the reporter of another paper, as the latter was out to monopolize me." He continued that "a dispute was in progress meanwhile on the pier as to who should actually hand me the bouquet." Michael Károlyi, *Fighting the World: The Struggle for Peace* (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1925), translated by E.W. Dickes, 89.

²⁰ "Swann Warned Jury of Disloyalty: Told Foreman His Statement Would Be 'Bullets in the Backs of Our Men,'" *New York Times*, September 16, 1917, 7; "Hungarians Pledge Loyalty to America: U.S. Senator James Brings Message to Mass Meeting from Wilson," *New York Times*, January 31, 1916, 3; "Hungarians Assure Wilson of Loyalty: President, in Reply, Tell Them He Never Doubted Their Allegiance," *New York Times*, February 24, 1916, 2; "Shut 15,000 Out of Bazaar: Madison Square Garden

The saga of Alexander Konta personifies this delicate dance. Konta cast a complex shadow over Hungarian New York during the early twentieth century. As a successful banker and lawyer, he amassed significant financial and political capital. During the war, he served as foreman to grand jury inquiries into allegedly seditious speech and worked closely with George Creel, the Committee on Public Information's chairman, to found and manage the Hungarian-American Loyalty League. In 1915, Konta used his platform to dismiss critiques of the Magyar majority's oppression of Hungary's minority communities. Near the war's end, facing accusations that he had conspired to assist German interests to covertly acquire an American newspaper, Konta changed his tune. Thereafter, he publicly supported self-determination for Hungary's minorities if his homeland enjoyed identical rights. Most Hungarian New Yorkers could not abide this about-face. Pro-Americanization interests, on the other hand, deployed the Konta story to buoy claims that the foreign-born, regardless of social status, could not be trusted. In trying to walk the wartime tightrope, Konta had displeased everyone. The Great War damaged his reputation and left Hungarian New York, including its Yorkville enclave, in an unsettled state.²¹

So Crowded None Admitted After 8 Last Night," *New York Times*, March 19, 1916; 16; "Hungary May Cause Rift in Teuton Ring: Magyar People, with Traditional Friendship for America, Are Not Unlikely to Insist upon Peace and Democratic Government," *New York Times*, September 16, 1917, SM4.

²¹ "Servia's Claims Absurd, Says Konta," *New York Times*, January 8, 1913, 8; "Mr. Konta Bears Witness," *New York Times*, September 19, 1918, 12; "Konta Explains Letter He Wrote to Dernburg: Interested in Newspaper Deal Only as a Brother – Had No Connection with Brisbane's Purchase," *New York Evening World*, September 23, 1918, 15; "Konta Called Opponent of Wilson Policy: Hungarian Loyalty League Head Is Denounced by Magyars Here," *New York Tribune*, September 26, 1918, 1; "Form New League and Assail Konta: Present Loyalty Organization, Dissenting Hungarians Assert, Is 'One-Man Affair,'" *New York Times*, September 26, 1918, 5; "Teuton Propaganda Inquiry to Resume," *New York Times*, September 27, 1918, 13; "Magyars Here Unite in Fight for Liberty," *New-York Tribune*, October 7, 1918, 2; "Konta Demands to Know Accusers at Senate Inquiry," *New York Evening World*, December 5, 1918, 13; "Alexander Konta, Banker, Is Dead: Had Served on State Board of Parole and as Foreman of Grand Juries," *New York Times*, April 29, 1933, 13. "Throng Mourns Alexander Konta: 1,000 Friends Attend Funeral of Banker and Hungarian American Leader," *New York Times*, May 2, 1933, 18. Despite his compromised reputation, the *New York Times* reported that over one thousand came to mourn his passing at the funeral conducted at St. Stephen of Hungary Catholic Church on East 82nd Street held on May 1, 1933. Several Hungarian American organizations honored the community leader, including Saint Stephen of Hungary Roman Catholic Church and Benevolent Society, the New York First Hungarian Social and Benevolent Society, and the New York Hungarian Young Men's Circle and Singing Society. It is worth noting that even after suffering through this ordeal, Alexander Konta tried to reestablish his public voice during the interwar years. In 1922, for instance, Konta used a lecture he delivered on Lajos Kossuth's legacy to decry the Treaty of Trianon. "decries Hungary's Division: Was Hacked to Pieces at Moment of Freedom, Says Konta," *New York Times*, January 11, 1922, 12.

ETHNIC YORKVILLE IN THE 1920S: A DECADE OF ENDURANCE AND PARTIAL RECOVERY

In 1926, a few years after the end of the Great War, Emery Deri, a *Times* reporter, in an article carrying the sensational title, “Alien Yorkville Re-enters the Union,” noted ethnic Yorkville’s persistence while simultaneously predicting its end. Deri’s piece opened:

Europe in miniature, which withstood for so long the encroachments of standardizing Americanization and gave a peculiar touch of quaintness and individuality to New York’s kaleidoscopic east side, is yielding. Yorkville for well-nigh two decades known to connoisseurs of east side life as the exclusive domain of Czechoslovaks, Hungarians, and Germans, is slowly giving up its strongly accentuated Central European character and gradually merging into a state of colorless impersonality.²²

In the middle of a decade of American opulence, Deri foresaw New York’s Anglo-Americans marching victoriously into Yorkville “with giant stride” as the neighborhood’s immigrants and their children fled across the East River. Native-born interests, Deri asserted, were reclaiming an allegedly underdeveloped part of Manhattan, a step toward putting the island’s finite space to the highest and best use. This jeremiad was the first to track the demise of ethnic Yorkville while labeling it a foreign and backwards place unaware of or unconcerned with its full economic potential. Recurring themes of death and resurrection in portraits of this nature produced over the course of the next century have infused the ethnic Yorkville imaginary with drama, passion, angst, and lament: ingredients that when combined create a nostalgic dish consumed by ethnic insiders and non-ethnic outsiders alike.²³

Despite journalistic interpretations to the contrary, ethnic Yorkville did not die on the fields of Flanders. Rather, Yorkville’s German and Hungarian communities survived the Great War, albeit wounded and altered. Deri’s article does evince, however, the extent to which outsiders salivated at the prospect of midtown Manhattan swallowing ethnic Yorkville during the 1920s. External business interests tended to view the neighborhood as desperately needing commercial modernization. Real

²² Emery Deri, “Alien Yorkville Re-enters the Union,” *New York Times*, October 24, 1926, SM6.

²³ Ibid.

estate developers planned to plant bright new apartment complexes in the heretofore working-class, largely ethnic neighborhood. For those seeking to maximize Yorkville's return on investment, the city's early twentieth century infrastructure projects added to the neighborhood's appeal. The Queensborough Bridge, completed in 1909, provided Yorkville's residents a route across the East River into Queens from East 59 Street. The opening of the Lexington Avenue subway line in 1918 made commuting to and from the Upper East Side easier than ever. In 1920, the city resumed ferry service between East 92nd Street and Astoria, Queens. Fueled by Gotham's transportation revolution, the buying, selling, and renting of residential space accelerated within a more connected Yorkville.²⁴

Some German American entrepreneurs, such as Henry Mielke, the Hamburg-born seller of radios and phonographs, worked with non-German interests to determine the best ways to benefit from this renewed interest in the district while staving off a wholesale transformation of Yorkville's socio-economic and ethnic identities. Mielke helped found the Yorkville Chamber of Commerce, which, over the next several decades, fused together pluralism and profit in subtle and creative ways. Active participation of German business owners in the Chamber of Commerce helped promote the idea that Yorkville's ethnic enclaves could prove integral to the neighborhood's commercial rebirth. While Mielke and his Chamber partners helped preserve ethnic Yorkville, they also pushed the neighborhood away from its organized labor roots and toward a relatively conservative political worldview by, for example, actively lobbying against labor-friendly proposals such as workmen's compensation.²⁵

²⁴ E.B. White, "The Talk of the Town: Yorkville," *The New Yorker*, June 3, 1927, 13; "300,000 See Queens Linked To Old City: New Bridge Ablaze with Red Fire and Electricity in the Evening," *New York Times*, June 13, 1909, 1; "3,000 Children Help Hylan Open Ferry to Astoria: City-Operated Enterprise Wins Support of Business Men; Two Refitted Boats Inaugurate Service," *New-York Tribune*, September 28, 1920, 5; "Like Tunnel Zone: Many Speculators Adding to Their Holdings in Pennsylvania District," *New-York Tribune*, February 6, 1910, 12; "Three Are Found Dead in Gas-Filled Room," *New-York Tribune*, October 27, 1919, 3.

²⁵ "Henry F. Mielke: Yorkville Dealer in Phonographs and Radios Was 64," *New York Times*, June 16, 1935, 28; David Farber, *Everybody Ought to Be Rich: The Life and Times of John P. Raskols, Capitalist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Hearing and Report on Workmen's Compensation in the District of Columbia, Sixty-Seventh Congress-Sixty-Eight Congress (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1926), Workmen's Compensation in the District of Columbia Hearing Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on the District of Columbia, House of Representatives, Sixty-Seventh Congress, First Session, H.R. 4089, February 29, 1924, "Attitude of Business Men's Organizations to Monopolize Funds," 490. Stern et al., *New York 1930*, 29, Architectural historian Robert Stern refers to the 1920s as the modern turn in Gotham's built environment as well as the period where New

As Yorkville's German American business leaders planned their next steps, the rank and file of the German enclave continued to feel the reverberating pings of the Great War. Vigilantism targeting German Yorkville constituted the most extreme threat to the community. In April 1919, upwards of three hundred former doughboys, strangely led by a man wearing a kilt, descended on a gathering of the Bayerischer Volksfest Verein at the Yorkville Casino. These veterans resolved to stop the German concert inside by any means necessary. Only the presence of Richard O'Connor, a plain-clothed police officer, prevented mob violence. O'Connor did, however, tacitly acquiesce to the veterans seizing control of the event. These men stormed into the meeting, planted the American flag on the stage and oversaw an impromptu and coercive Victory Loan drive that yielded pledges of \$7,000. The *New York Herald* gleefully reported that Army yeoman, third-class, Lewis White, led a rendition of the national anthem when the German artist on the stage feigned his inability to play the standard.²⁶

Yorkville's German Americans faced tough choices in this tense postwar environment and throughout the 1920s. Many pondered whether to remain in the neighborhood. While some migrated to the other boroughs, Northern New Jersey, and upstate, a critical mass of German Americans stayed put. During the early 1920s, an influx of newcomers bolstered their ranks, as the Weimar Republic's struggles and Germany's economic woes produced a postwar uptick in emigration. The fate of Yorkville's German American institutions reflected these crosscurrents, with some proving more durable than others. In June 1920, the New York Turn Verein celebrated its seventieth anniversary with an event featuring gymnastics, music, and dancing. More than sixty attendees had belonged to the club for at

York's service economy started to challenge the city's one-time industrial prowess. Given its prior reliance on light industry, Yorkville's path forward in this rapidly changing environment was uncertain.

²⁶ "Put the Anthem in Verein Program: Sailors Also Adorn Flagless Stage at Bavarian Volksfest with Stars and Stripes," *New York Times*, April 28, 1919, 11; "Sailors Revise Programme at Verein Concert," *New York Herald*, April 28, 1919, 1; "German Concerts to Be Held, Despite Protest," *New-York Tribune*, April 27, 1919, 22. In addition to blatant vigilantism, nativist groups such as the reconstituted Ku Klux Klan and an organization calling itself the Royal Riders of the Red Robe ("Royal Riders") rhetorically attacked the Steuben Society and protested against the teaching German in New York area public schools. "Demand for Royal Riders," *New York Times*, November 28, 1922, 23; "Klan Opens War on Paterson Germans," *New York Herald*, November 25, 1922, 3; "Jersey Klan Fights German in Schools," *New York Times*, November 25, 1922, 3.

least fifty years. On the other hand, the Deutsches Verein, a social club founded in 1874, was forced to sell its upper Manhattan property in December 1919. The club could no longer afford its overhead and mortgage payments due to declining membership. As emphasized by Barbara Wiedemann-Citera, the surviving grassroots institutions, especially the singing societies, “rebuilt the bridge to the American public” after the Great War.²⁷

As German Yorkville dug in, pan-Germanism in Greater New York realigned. Congressional attacks had destroyed the NGAA ostensibly for its unflinching stance against Prohibition and highly visible support for American neutrality. In response to this loss, leaders of Gotham’s German community founded the Steuben Society in 1919 to preserve German American culture by apolitical means and through English-language publications. Unlike its ex-partner NGAA, UGS, the New York-based German umbrella institution, survived the war. Under the leadership of Charles Oberwager, a well-respected city magistrate, UGS avoided taking public positions on potentially controversial topics such as the Treaty of Versailles or Germany’s interwar government. Instead, the organization emphasized noteworthy German American achievements such as its celebration of swimmer Gertrude Ederle, the first woman to swim across the English Channel. The city’s German Americans strongly supported German Day’s return in the early twenties under UGS sponsorship. The success of the 1921 German Day held in the Männerchor hall, in fact, forced the 1922 version into the larger Hippodrome. Later in the decade, UGS reintroduced *Kultur* on a grand scale through events such as its 1928 Yankee Stadium ode to Richard Wagner’s music. Based on these activities, the *New-York Herald* diagnosed *Deutschtum* as “scotched,

²⁷ Barbara Wiedemann-Citera, “The Role of the German-American Vereine in the Revitalization of German-American Ethnic Life in New York City in the 1920s,” *Yearbook of German-American Studies* 29 (1994): 110; Lyn Wilkerson, “Yorkville,” in *Historical Cities – New York City* (New York: Caddo Publications USA, 2010); Paul D. Cravath, “Impressions of the Financial and Industrial Conditions in Germany,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 92, (Social and Industrial Conditions in the Germany of Today) (Nov. 1920): 5-12; *New York Sun and New York Herald*, June 7, 1920, 18; “Trophy for Miss Gehrig: Woman Fencer Wins All Her Bouts in Turn Verein Tournament,” *New York Times*, January 29, 1919, 10; “Schaeffler Takes Medal: Defeats Adversaries in Dueling Swords Competition at Turn Verein,” *New York Times*, February 13, 1919, 12; “Gym Championships Draw Many Entries: New York Turn Verein Is Favored to Capture Met. Senior A.A.U. Title Friday Night,” *New York Times*, April 11, 1926, S7; *New York Sun*, “Deutsches Verein Sells for \$440,000,” *New York Sun*, December 7, 1919, 12; “ALT Heidelberg Revived,” *New York Times*, May 31, 1926, 10.

not killed,” suggesting pan-Germanism could survive as a form of ethnic cultural expression provided it did not venture into the political domain.²⁸

Episodic ruptures relating to homeland politics disturbed this cautious approach to rehabilitating German identity writ large in postwar New York, prefiguring the tumult of the thirties. The so-called “Horror on the Rhine” controversy in 1921 revealed that UGS could not prevent all of Gotham’s German Americans from reacting to homeland politics. Claims that African colonial troops deployed by France in the Rhineland had engaged in a series of war crimes, including seemingly baseless allegations of murder and rape, provided a justification for politically minded German New Yorkers to express their displeasure with the Versailles treaty and French occupation of Germany. In February 1921, upwards of fifteen thousand people crammed into Madison Square Garden to hear speakers such as Dr. Edmund von Mach, a former Harvard art history professor, stir up ethnic outrage against the French for allegedly humiliating Germany by using black conscripts. The speakers’ descriptions of these troops as “uncivilized” exposed the racist undertone of these complaints.²⁹

Mayor Hylan, whose citywide campaigns had relied on German votes, issued a permit for the mass meeting over veterans’ groups’ vociferous objections. For hardcore anti-hyphenates, controversies such as the “Horror on the Rhine” demonstrated German Americans inability or refusal to distance themselves from Germany’s concerns. A *New York Times* review of Lida Schem’s *The Hyphen*, a work of fiction centered around German American immigrants in New York, drove this point home. The reviewer

²⁸ “Dinner for Oberwager: Friends Celebrate Magistrate’s Appointment and Relief Work,” *New York Times*, February 17, 1922, 29; “United German Societies Plan Welcome for Trudy,” *New York Daily News*, August 11, 1928, 2; “United German Societies Announce Wagner Festival,” *Brooklyn Standard Union*, July 5, 1928, 9; Wiedemann-Citera, “The Role of the German-American Vereine,” 110; “German-Born in United States Help Berlin: Mass Meeting in New York Calls Attention to Financial Needs of Crumbling Reich,” *Dunkirk (NY) Evening Observer*, October 22, 1923, 1; 5; “Scotched, Not Killed,” *New-York Tribune*, April 27, 1921, 12.

²⁹ Rotem Giladi, “The Phoenix of Colonial War: Race, the Laws of War, and the ‘Horror on the Rhine,’” *Leiden Journal of International Law* 30, no. 4 (Dec. 2017): 847-875; Robert C. Reinders, “Racialism on the Left: A.D. Moreland and the ‘Black Horror on the Rhine,’” *International Review of Social History* 13, no. 1 (Apr. 1968): 1-28; Edwin L. James, “French See German Propaganda Here In Protest on Blacks; None Now on Rhine,” *New York Times*, February 12, 1921, 1; “Ask Ban on Protest Against Rhine Blacks: Veterans Call on Hylan to Stop Meeting Monday to Prevent Colonial Troops,” *New York Times*, February 25, 1921, 4.

described the novel as “deal[ing] with that greatest of all our immigrant problems, the German community . . . a racial group determined to hold itself together and, instead of amalgamating with the life of the country, use its power for the benefit of the nation from which it came.”³⁰ Those with similar views found German Americans’ interest in European politics a stubborn obstacle to their full assimilation into America’s political culture. This language of “race” and political assimilation implied that many Germans had failed to follow the rules of earned whiteness as delineated and monitored by New York’s native-born elites, which, among other things, demanded that the foreign-born turn away from homeland politics and toward hostland concerns.³¹

Political concerns closer to home, especially the fight over Prohibition and its enforcement, proved just as fraught during the twenties. For E.B. White, the Eighteenth Amendment meant the unavoidable death of German Yorkville. In 1927, White, then only two years into his musings for the *New Yorker*, chronicled Prohibition-era Yorkville in this way:

It was interesting to stroll east through Eighty-fourth Street and notice how the old order fadeth. The beer saloons are shoddy and unpainted; dachunds mope under swinging doors, and in the windows are signs, “Cider Depot,” and posters announcing German outings in the Bronx – which is evidently the Yorkville of today.³²

Prohibition caused UGS to make an exception to their apolitical *Deutschtum* campaign. Emboldened by Governor Al Smith’s vocal opposition to the Volstead Act, German Day speakers offered rhetorical attacks on the constitutional amendment a regular feature of the festival. Furthermore, there is ample evidence German Yorkville flouted the legal restrictions on alcohol. Robert Corradini, writing on behalf of the World League against Alcoholism, linked Prohibition and anti-immigrant sentiments succinctly. He described Yorkville during the 1920s as so completely dominated by “the German element . . . that one

³⁰ “Immigration Problems in Recent Fiction,” *New York Times*, January 16, 1921, BR6.

³¹ Ibid.; “1,000 Police Guard Rhine Rally; Eject 12 Protesters: Friends of Germany Are Interrupted in Speeches in Mass Meeting, but Order Is Finally Restored,” *New-York Tribune*, March 1, 1921, 1; “The Referendum,” *Brooklyn Citizen*, October 29, 1926, 4; “Legion Posts in Newark Protest ‘Rhine’ Meetings,” *New York Daily News*, March 9, 1921, 5.

³² E.B. White, “The Talk of the Town: Yorkville,” *The New Yorker*, June 3, 1927, 13.

wonders at times if this is New York or Germany.”³³ Corradini also noted several saloons still operating in the neighborhood well into the decade. Based on these kinds of reports, federal agents frequently raided Yorkville’s gathering places, including the Yorkville Casino, throughout the twenties and early thirties.³⁴ In a single 1931 raid, more than a dozen Prohibition agents nabbed ninety-nine barrels of beer, the bulk of which came from six German American establishments on the northside of East 86th Street, in a single 1931 raid. In the process, German Yorkville’s commercial sector started to accrue a reputation as a site of resistance. Eventually, such labels attached to the residents themselves, with the *Daily News* commonly reveling in the recalcitrance of the “jolly German burghers of Yorkville.”³⁵

Meanwhile, Hungarian Yorkville’s footprint and influence grew during the interwar years. By the early 1920s, over sixty thousand foreign-born and tens of thousands more second-generation Hungarians called Manhattan home, with Yorkville absorbing much of this growth. The neighborhood’s Hungarian enclave now claimed numerical preeminence over Little Hungary, a demographic trend that continued through the thirties. In 1927, New York’s national Hungarian Catholic church, St. Stephen of Hungary, relocated from its original downtown location to East 82nd Street, signaling the tipping point of uptown migration. In this same period, Hungarians carved out a special place in the neighborhood’s sporting culture, a role they would continue to play for decades to come. They manned multiple soccer

³³ Robert E. Corradini, *Saloon Survey – New York City: Changes in Saloon Property after the First Three Years and after Five Years of Prohibition* (Westerville, OH: World League of Alcoholism, 1925), 6-8. “Malt Shops also Raided by Snoopers,” *New York Daily News*, May 24, 1930, 2; “Yorkville’s Stein Songs Stilled by Snoop Raids,” *New York Daily News*, March 22, 1931, 8.

³⁴ Raids intensified in scope and frequency after the federal government interpreted a 1930 Supreme Court ruling as clarifying the illegality of beverages using malt and hops. James A. Morone, *Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History* (New Haven: Yale University press, 2003), 320; “4 Malt Shops also Raided by Snoopers,” *New York Daily News*, May 24, 1930, 2.

³⁵ Thomas Weiskopp, “Prohibition in the United States: The German-American Experience, 1919-1933,” *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute*, no. 53 (Fall 2013): 31-53; Peter C. Weber, “Ethnic Identity During War: The Case of German American Societies During World War I,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (2014): 185-206; “Einstein Routs Musicians: Prohibition Agent Makes Seizures at Yorkville Casino,” *New York Times*, September 29, 1921, 13; “Ethnic Identity during War: The Case of German-American Societies during World War I,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (2014): 185-206; Robert E. Corradini, *Saloon Survey*, 6-8. In 1928, UGS publicly protested and threatened to seek an injunction against a film depicting German soldiers executing a British nurse during the war. “Germans Here Fight Film of Edith Cavell,” *New York Daily News*, April 13, 1928, 6.

teams, boasted some of the city's finest runners, and provided leadership to the trans-ethnic Yorkville Athletic League.³⁶

Despite the Yorkville enclave's development and growth, Hungarians throughout the city continued to struggle to shake images of foreignness. In the early 1920s, Konrad Bercovici, a Romanian American journalist, wrote a series of sketches subsequently assembled into a single volume describing Manhattan's foreign-born enclaves for a largely white, old stock audience. He depicted Hungarians as New York's most distinct ethnic community, calling them "a kind apart." He asked rhetorically, "and what is one to say about the Hungarian quarter, where the children of Attila have kept their own tongue so pure that not a single Anglo-Saxon word has penetrated their speech?"³⁷ He based his assertion of Hungarian "otherness" on their Finno-Ugric language, their penchant for using vivid colors in home décor, the relatively equal status of women within Hungarian families, the emotive qualities of Hungarian music, and the atmosphere of Hungarian cafés, spaces where "one feels the air thick with passion, violent and active."³⁸

News from Hungary's chaotic postwar political climate occupied the hearts and minds of Hungarian New Yorkers more than outsiders' characterizations during the interwar period. In the fifteen months from the Great War's armistice to spring 1920, former Hapsburg rulers, Allied governments, and the neighboring states of Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia had all interfered with Hungarian

³⁶ Robert Perlman, *Bridging Three Worlds: Hungarian-Jewish Americans, 1848-1914* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts, 1991), 136; "Operators Get Quick Return on Apartment: Dispose of Flat in West 184th Street Bought Last Week: Other Houses Sold," *New-York Tribune*, December 28, 1921, 11; "Klein Reelected Head of Yorkville Athletic League," *New-York Herald*, November 4, 1921, 16; "Hacs to Oppose Yorkville Booters," *Central New Jersey Homes News*, June 16, 1957, 26; "Hungarians Oust Brookhattan, 6-3," *New York Daily News*, March 3, 1958, 52; "HAAC to Hold Soccer Tourney," *Central New Jersey Home News*, June 1, 1958, 27. Nationally, the population of foreign-born population reporting Magyar as their native tongue increased substantially between the 1910 and 1920 censuses: 229,094 to 290,419, an increase of 26.8 percent. The trend reversed itself in the following decade, during which this population fell to 250,393, or a decrease of 13.8 percent. U.S. Census Bureau, Table 6, "Mother Tongue of the Foreign-born Population: 1910 to 1940, 1960 and 1970, Release date March 9, 1999, <https://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0029/tab06.html>, accessed January 15, 2020.

³⁷ Konrad Bercovici, *Around the World in New York* (New York: The Century Company, 1924), 17.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 17, 347-66; *City of New York*, Map, "Persons Born in Hungary by Census Tract New York City, 1920," accessed November 29, 2017, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/data-maps/nyc-population/historical-population/1920_hungary_fb.pdf;

sovereignty. During this period, the levers of power shifted from the Károlyi-led democrats to Béla Kun and his communist supporters. In March 1920, seeking some degree of stability, the Hungarian Parliament invited former head of the Austro-Hungarian Navy, Miklós Horthy, to assume the role of Regent. Hungary had become a kingless kingdom. Moreover, pursuant to the Treaty of Trianon, demanded by the Allies, Hungary lost two-thirds of its territory, including a sizeable swathe of Upper Hungary and the entirety of Transylvania.³⁹

In New York, Count Albert Apponyi, a Hungarian politician who had visited during the prewar years to champion his nation's independence, returned to embark on a two-month goodwill tour aimed at winning popular support for amending the treaty. The fifty-year veteran of Hungary's parliament, evoking the mythology that Magyars had once saved Western civilization from the Turks, portrayed his country as "the furthest outpost of civilization" beyond which lies "semi-barbarism."⁴⁰ Only through revision of Trianon Treaty, he insisted, could Hungary play an integral role in assuring European peace. Apponyi's visit did not inspire an American outcry or even much general interest in the treaty controversy. In contrast, the Treaty of Trianon, more specifically a belief in its injustice, would animate Hungarian identity in the homeland and the diaspora to the present day.⁴¹

Despite this ethnic consensus on Trianon, Hungary's interwar politics tended to exacerbate existing fissures within Hungarian New York. These tensions boiled over in the Lajos Kossuth monument controversy of the late 1920s.⁴² The social memory and symbolic capital of Kossuth had long been

³⁹ Julianna Puskás, *Ties That Bind, Ties That Divide: 100 Years of Hungarian Experience in the United States*, trans. Zora Ludwig (New York: Holmes & Meier, 2000), 227-31; John Connelly, *From Peoples into Nations: A History of Eastern Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020), 365-89; Miklós Molnár, *A Concise History of Hungary*, trans. Anna Magyar (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 261-83. The *New York Times* reported about a rash of suicides in Budapest on New Year's Eve 1920, allegedly caused by Hungary's hopeless future. The suicide rate increased during the first few years of the 1920s. "12 Budapest Suicides on Eve of New Year: All Left Notes Telling of Hopelessness Over the Future of Hungary," *New York Times*, January 5, 1921: 14; "Vienna-Budapest Suicides Grow," *New York Times*, May 21, 1924, 3.

⁴⁰ Apponyi Pleads Cause of Hungary: His Country, Contented, Would Do Much to Preserve Peace in Europe, He Says," *New York Times*, September 30, 1923, 4

⁴¹ Ibid.; "Count Apponyi's Farewell Message: What, In His Opinion, Is Wrong with the Peace Treaties, and Why They Should Be Enforced as Liberally as Possible," *New York Times*, November 13, 1923, 20.

⁴² The Kossuth monument controversy was not the only intra-Hungarian squabble of the period. In the wake of the Great War, Eugene S. Bagger, a versatile writer of Hungarian Jewish ancestry who specialized in historical biographies, assailed the wartime

Hungarian New York's lodestar, uniting co-ethnics of different faiths who longed to see and possibly return to a truly democratic Hungarian state. Plans to erect a Kossuth monument on Riverside Drive in Manhattan, however, sparked a public dispute driven by contemporary Hungarian politics. Traditional leaders, such as newspaperman Géza Berko and author Dr. Imre de Josika-Herczeg, saw the Kossuth tribute as means to nurture Hungary-U.S. relations and indirectly remind Americans of the merits of revising the Trianon Treaty. Leading Hungarian Jews, on the other hand, had formed a coalition seeking to use the monument project's visibility to contrast Kossuth with the Horthy regime's allegedly antisemitic policies.⁴³

The fraught politics of public commemoration resulted in these two groups battling during the groundbreaking ceremony in the fall of 1927, as traditionalists, linked closely to Christian elements within the Yorkville enclave, marginalized the anti-Horthyites as "Bolsheviks." The acrimony grew over the next few months, causing the city to deploy forty uniformed police officers augmented by a

Hungarian-language press for its disloyal and disingenuous approach. Bagger accused the New York-based *Amerikai Magyar Népszava* of being unprofessional, lacking creativity, and projecting an "evil" influence on its Hungarian American readership. Robert E. Park, *The Immigrant Press and Its Control* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1922), 73-76; Francis E. McMahon, "Review: An Interpretation of Our Time," *Review of Politics* 3, no. 4 (Oct. 1941): 504-505.

⁴³ During the early 1920s, leading Hungarian Jews in New York coalesced politically to raise awareness about what they saw as antisemitic policies in postwar Hungary. Operating as the Federation of Hungarian Jews in America ("FHJA"), they also fought against domestic signs of antisemitism, denouncing, for instance, rumors of a Henry Ford presidential run in the 1924 election cycle. "Hungarian Jews Plan Aid for Suffering Countrymen," *New York Daily News*, June 1, 1920, 7; "Jews Here Fight Ford for President," *New York Times*, May 31, 1923, 7; "Quiz Candidates on Hungarian Jews: Federation Asks Coolidge, Davis and La Follette If They Will Stop Persecution," *New York Times*, September 7, 1924, 27. This is not to suggest that all Hungarian Jews aligned with these projects. In fact, Samuel Schulman, Rabbi of Temple Beth-El, just outside of Yorkville proper, publicly criticized Samuel Buchler, head of the FHJA, for remarks allegedly made disparaging Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, eldest son of the former president and Republican nominee for Governor. "Rabbi Denounces Buchler's Letter: Rev. Samuel Schulman Calls It a 'Dastardly Attempt to Appeal to Jews as Such,'" *New York Times*, October 30, 1924, 3. Hungarian New Yorkers formulated the idea of a Kossuth monument in the city in the late nineteenth century, going as far as creating the Kossuth Monument Association. It took them thirty years to be in the political and financial situation to make this dream a reality. "John Swinton Takes Suddenly Ill: He Was Addressing a Meeting of the Kossuth Monument Association," *New York Times*, September 17, 1894, 4. The Kossuth monument still stands at Riverside Drive and West 113th Street. New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, "Riverside Park: Louis Kossuth, History" <https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/riverside-park/monuments/879>, accessed January 6, 2020. On the advice and guidance of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (the "IHRA"), this dissertation used the term antisemitism without a hyphen. The IHRA explains that "the hyphenated spelling allows for the possibility of something called 'Semitism', which not only legitimizes a form of pseudo-scientific racial classification that was thoroughly discredited by association with Nazi ideology, but also divides the term, stripping it from its meaning of opposition and hatred toward Jews." International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, IHRA Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial, "Memo on Spelling of Antisemitism, April 2015," https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/memo-on-spelling-of-antisemitism_final-1.pdf, accessed March 11, 2020.

mounted unit and bomb squad at the March 1928 dedication. Complicating this dispute further, a delegation of five hundred Hungarian officials journeyed across the Atlantic to partake in the dedication ceremony. Like Károlyi in 1913, these dignitaries witnessed firsthand the messiness of Hungarian New York's socio-political divisiveness. Twenty-five thousand supporters cheered while a smaller but vocal contingent of anti-Horthyites jeered. The words inscribed on the monument's pedestal underscore the link between this political fight and issues of identity: "Erected by a Liberty Loving Race of Americans of Magyar Origin to Louis Kossuth the Great Champion of Liberty."⁴⁴ The monument committee's use of the term Magyar rather than Hungarian narrowly defined ethnic identity, presaging a struggle that continued to reverberate throughout the twentieth century.⁴⁵

ETHNIC YORKVILLE IN THE 1930S: A DECADE OF EXTREME HIGHS AND LOWS

As a matter of pure demographics, Yorkville seemed like an urban, working-class neighborhood in decline at the start of the 1930s. It had lost more than twenty percent of its overall population over the prior decade. At the same time, the percentage of unnaturalized immigrants in Gotham fell from thirty-six percent in 1910 to twenty-two percent in 1930, due to wartime pressure to file citizenship papers combined with the Immigration Act of 1924, otherwise known as the Johnson-Reed Act, which ended the era of open immigration.⁴⁶ For outsiders, these indicators spelled the end for ethnic Yorkville.

⁴⁴ New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, "Riverside Park: Louis Kossuth, History" <https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/riverside-park/monuments/879>, accessed January 6, 2020.

⁴⁵ Ibid.; "Police Rout 'Reds' in Kossuth Meeting," *New York Times*, November 6, 1927, 27; "Hungarians Coming for Kossuth Fetes: 500 from Budapest Will Take Part in Unveiling of Statue Here on March 15," *New York Times*, February 26, 1928, 33; "Hungarian Group Protests: Asks Boycott of Kossuth Statue Ceremony in Behalf of Hatvany," *New York Times*, March 3, 1928, 36. "Hungarian Premier Is Assailed Here: Anti-Horthy League Denounces Imprisonment of Hatvany for Political Writings," *New York Times*, March 5, 1928, 10; "Protest Welcome to 525 Hungarians: Foes Here of Horthy Ask Mayor to Bar Fete for Delegates to Kossuth Celebration," *New York Times*, March 13, 1928, 8. Throughout the twenties, the Horthy regime cultivated a special relationship with the United States, often resorting to symbolic gestures. In 1928, for examples, Budapest celebrated the America's Independence Day on July 4th, capped off by Horthy himself placing a wreath on the city's George Washington monument. "Observes Fourth of July: Budapest Pays Tribute to George Washington at Monument," *New York Times*, July 2, 1928, 4.

⁴⁶ Mason Williams placed these demographic shifts within the wider rise of the children of the foreign-born, or second-generation. For Williams, the children of immigrants were neither a replica of their parents nor a severance from tradition, but "some new [yet] still identifiable." Mason B. Williams, *City of Ambition: FDR, LaGuardia, and the Making of Modern New York* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013), 78.

O.O. McIntyre, a syndicated columnist whose “New York, Day-by-Day” reached a national audience in excess of one hundred million, pronounced “Yorkville’s Bohemian atmosphere” moribund in 1929. The exotic cuisine, orchestral music, and “real” beer of the neighborhood’s affordable German and Hungarian restaurants had been replaced, he claimed, by elevated prices, “near” beer, and a kind of “prop hokum” borrowed from “Bowery sawdust joints.”⁴⁷

McIntyre changed his tune just one year later, signaling that those external to Yorkville’s ethnic enclaves sensed a turning point in the neighborhood’s fortunes. He seemed ready to admit that he had underestimated the market for German kitsch. Sensing a business opportunity, a new class of German American entrepreneurs opened up “a dozen hofbraus and rathskellers featuring deep drinking mugs, mottoed mats and German dishes” in a one block subsection in 1930.⁴⁸ East 86th Street’s robust bar and restaurant scene was assuming its full form. This commercial district seemed capable of appealing to the ethnic old guard, German newcomers who entered the U.S. before the end of open immigration, as well as those curious whether the German lager flowing from the taps complied with the Volstead Act.⁴⁹

As East 86th Street and its immediate surroundings continued to grow commercially, German Yorkville stood ready for the curtain to drop on the Prohibition era. On May 14, 1932, one hundred thousand men and women marched up Fifth Avenue with Mayor Jimmy Walker in an eleven-hour “Beer Parade,” a bold statement about the need to legalize and tax alcohol. The *New York Daily News* estimated that upwards of two million people witnessed the procession. German Americans, deploying their parading experience, entered multiple floats in the procession. Almost a year later, New York

⁴⁷ O.O. McIntyre, “New York, Day-by-Day,” *Greenville News* (SC), April 29, 1929, 4. McIntyre’s success had brought him from the small town Ohio of his youth to a penthouse on Park Avenue, and he enjoyed nothing more, according to his editor and biographer, Charles Driscoll, than sharing “intimate glimpses into the strange places of the magic city.” Charles Driscoll, *The Life of O.O. McIntyre* (New York: The Greystone Press, 1938), 17.

⁴⁸ O.O. McIntyre, “New York, Day-by-Day,” *Reno Gazette-Journal*, June 3, 1930, 4.

⁴⁹ “Population Growth of New York City by Districts, 1910-1948,” Consolidated Edison, 4; O.O. McIntyre, “New York, Day by Day,” *Waterloo (IA) Courier*, April 29, 1929, 6; O.O. McIntyre, “New York, Day by Day,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, June 29, 1933, 14; William Gaines, “Seen and Heard in New York,” *Appleton (WI) Post-Crescent*, February 22, 1932, 6; Driscoll, *The Life of O.O. McIntyre*, 18, 95-100;; Robert G. Massock, “About New York,” *Havre Daily News* (MT), April 17, 1929, 4; Herbert Corey, “Manhattan Days and Nights,” *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, May 14, 1929, 17.

journalists ventured into ethnic Yorkville to discern its inhabitants' collective reaction to real beer's triumphant return. On April 7, 1933, the *New York Times* reported that:

Yorkville will celebrate tonight, not with drunkenness nor unseemly hilarity, but with clinking steins and rollicking songs. Even the Hungarian colony in the upper Seventies, and the Czechs below them, will join in, although they feel chagrined that the government did not recognize their taste for a palatable wine.⁵⁰

That evening, the Restaurant Franziskaner, located on Second Avenue near East 82nd Street, hosted a massive party attended by UGS representatives, Steuben Society dignitaries, members of German singing and shooting clubs, and public officials who the *Times* referred to as "regular customers." The proprietors of German Yorkville's bars and restaurants had creatively kept the doors open during Prohibition. As a result, their businesses were well-prepared for the neighborhood's next commercial rise once loosed by repeal.⁵¹

Just a few years later, Erich Posselt, a WPA writer and editor, referred to Yorkville as "perhaps the most colorful section of the city" based on "its famous Hofbraus, Beergardens, dance halls, etc. and its people."⁵² Eighty-Sixth Street alone contained more restaurants, bars, and dance venues, according to Posselt, "than you can shake a stick at."⁵³ Diners at venues such as the Austrian Hall, Ivan Frank's Hofbrau, Gloria Palast (Cabaret) Restaurant, and Martin's Rathskeller could enjoy German fare while listening to a wide array of bands and orchestras. Places such as the Platzl Restaurant and Rudi & Maxl's 86th Street Brauhaus promoted a Bavarian aesthetic in interior design and wait staff costumes. The neighborhood also contained movie theaters showing German-language films, such as the Yorkville Theatre at the corner of East 96th Street and Third Avenue. German Yorkville's commercial florescence

⁵⁰ "Yorkville, Where Beer Never Ceased to Flow, Will Celebrate Return of Legality Tonight," *New York Times*, April 7, 1933, 2.

⁵¹ "100,000 Marchers in 11-Hour Beer-ade," *New York Daily News*, May 15, 1932, 2, 6; "Yorkville, Where Beer Never Ceased to Flow, Will Celebrate Return of Legality Tonight," *New York Times*, April 7, 1933, 2. Jimmy Walker's father emigrated from Ireland, making the mayor part of Gotham's second-generation subculture. Williams, *City of Ambition*, 81.

⁵² "A Little Journey through Yorkville," WPA Federal Writers' Project, New York Municipal Archives, Department of Records and Informational Services, Record Sub-Series: German-Dutch Group, Erich Posselt, File 31.

⁵³ *Ibid.*; "German Shops, Restaurants, etc.," WPA Federal Writers' Project, New York Municipal Archives, Department of Records and Informational Services, Record Sub-Series: German-Dutch Group, H.W.G. Gurlitt, File 3.

exemplified a phenomenon replicated throughout New York during the interwar years. According to Mason Williams, “New York’s ethnic communities, long segmented into occupational niches, developed diversified, relatively autonomous ethnic economies.”⁵⁴ Social memories of pre-World War II ethnic Yorkville emphasize images from these venues. They evoke men in lederhosen and women in dirndls, usually decontextualizing these scenes from their specific commercial setting, in the process giving a distorted picture of the omnipresence of this folk aesthetic. To this day, the Heidelberg restaurant on Second Avenue, with its Bavarian adorned workers and architecture, leverages this remembered past to distinguish itself in the present.⁵⁵

Yorkville’s German Americans, buoyed by the success of this night life scene, explored methods for luring outsiders and co-ethnics from other parts of the city to the neighborhood’s ethnic marketplace. The period’s economic pressures demanded that Yorkville’s ethnic commercial spaces transcend their traditional roles as businesses and social spaces meeting only the needs of the neighborhood residents. Butcher shops, booksellers, newsstands, and stores offering imported goods continued to cater to locals, but increasingly viewed the city’s wider German diaspora, often tied to Yorkville through kinship networks, church affiliations, and social institutions, as a crucial customer base. Bakeries, cafés, and family restaurants, while relying on ethnic regulars, also attracted non-Germans hungry for an affordable foray into cultural tourism. In the latter part of the thirties, business leaders operating under the auspices of the Yorkville Chamber of Commerce published the *Blue Book*, a self-described Baedeker, or travel guide, for the neighborhood’s commercial sector. German American

⁵⁴ Williams, *City of Ambition*, 79.

⁵⁵ Wanda Hale, “Yorkville Returns to First-run Films,” *New York Daily News*, September 11, 1934, 46; H.T.S., “The Screen: A German Sherlock Holmes,” *New York Times*, February 13, 1934, 23; H.T.S., “A Merry Hungarian Girl,” *New York Times*, May 21, 1934, 20; David W. Dunlap, “In New York, a Worldwide Message of Humanity: German Life in the City Is Recalled In Pope’s Visit,” *New York Times*, April 19, 2008, B1; “Welcome to the Heidelberg,” The Heidelberg Restaurant, <http://www.heidelberg-nyc.com/#about>, accessed November 11, 2019. The German restaurant scene was not exclusive to Yorkville, although on the Upper East Side it reached its apex. Hans Jaeger, for example, owner of one of Yorkville’s most popular German venues, also operated the Black Forest Inn in Brooklyn’s Bushwick section. “Sylvan Setting Succeeds,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 14, 1937, 23.

businesses predominated in the guide. Phrases such as “If You Can’t Live in Yorkville, Shop in Yorkville,” and “Going to Town – Should Be – Going to Yorkville,” demonstrated the German American business leaders’ desire to enlarge the enclave’s target markets. German Yorkville’s persistence through the Great Depression suggests the success of these multifaceted efforts.⁵⁶

As German Yorkville found its footing through an emphasis on retail shops and bars and restaurants, Hungarian Yorkville faced the twin threats of the Great Depression and divisive political events in Hungary during the 1930s. The economic calamity hit Yorkville’s Hungarian community hard. Joseph Feher, head of the Hungarian branch of the International Workers’ Order, an organization closely aligned with the city’s Popular Front politics, told WPA researchers that many Hungarians could no longer afford to stay in the neighborhood. Some even returned to lower Manhattan, a phenomenon the WPA referred to as “going backwards,” due, presumably, to the Lower East Side’s reputation as an overcrowded district for initial immigrant settlement.⁵⁷ Claire Spitz of the Federal Writer’s Project, implied that, at its current pace of emigration, Hungarian Yorkville might cease to exist in just a few years.⁵⁸

Despite these dire forecasts, a critical mass of Yorkville’s Hungarians remained committed to the enclave they had built. Hungarian families joined Germans and others in utilizing Central Park’s democratized recreational spaces, such as the Hechscher playground, created in 1926. Worshippers filled masses at St. Stephen of Hungary, opened in 1929, as well as services at the First Magyar

⁵⁶ 1936 Blue Book, Address-Telephone-Directory, Yorkville Center,” Published by Yorkville Service, Archives of the New-York Historical Society; 1938 Blue Book, Address-Telephone-Directory, Yorkville Center,” Published by Yorkville Service, Archives of the New-York Historical Society; 1939 Blue Book, Address-Telephone-Directory, Yorkville Center,” Published by Yorkville Service, Archives of the New-York Historical Society.

⁵⁷ “Radiation from New York, WPA Federal Writers’ Project, New York Municipal Archives, Department of Records and Informational Services, Record Sub-Series: Hungarians in NY, Claire Spitz, Box 2, Folder 97, 1936-1940.

⁵⁸ Ibid.; Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 442. In 1937, Feher founded the *Amerikai Magyar Világ*, the *Hungarian Daily World*. Operating from its Fifth Avenue offices, Feher intended for the paper to have a national reach and rise above party politics. “New Hungarian Daily: Paper Here Will Fight Fascism, Support Liberal Policies,” *New York Times*, September 10, 1937, 8.

Reformed Church on East 69th Street and the First Hungarian Baptist Church on East 80th Street. Restaurants combining distinctly Hungarian fare and so-called “gypsy” music abounded in Yorkville. H. Roth, a Hungarian food shop near the corner of First Avenue and 82nd Street sold everything from sheep’s milk cheese to obscure spices to rock candy. The neighborhood contained multiple movie theaters, led by the Tobis, showing Magyar language films ranging from the starkly political to the purely entertaining. Around 1935, Hungarian New Yorkers came together to celebrate a mid-summer event simply dubbed Hungarian Day. Much like the nineteenth century German American outings in Yorkville, Hungarian Day produced an eclectic mix of choral and orchestral music, plays, dancing (including the “Ellenzeki Kor-magyar,” or oppositional round dance), food, and athletic contests ranging from soccer games to wrestling matches to sack races.⁵⁹ External audiences took notice of this socio-cultural activity. Journalist Todd Wright ventured to Hungarian Yorkville to introduce *Daily News* readers to the csárdás, a traditional Hungarian dance, as practiced at the Hungarian Inn on East 92nd Street. Wright squarely placed what he referred to as the city’s new “Little Hungary” within the New York’s larger cosmopolitan milieu, finding “Old World” tradition comforting in a time of hyper-dynamic change.⁶⁰

The prominence of the Hungarian Workers’ Home (HWH), located on East 81st Street, further challenges claims that Hungarian Yorkville was disappearing in the 1930s. Purchased in 1917 as a headquarters for Hungarian labor interests, the four-story HWH featured a ground floor restaurant, as

⁵⁹ Claire Spitz, describing the event for the Federal Writer’s Project, claimed that “[h]uge cauldrons of goulash usually decorate the scene,” with the contents ultimately “ladled out in almost unbelievable quantities.” “Hungarian Day in New York,” WPA Federal Writers’ Project, New York Municipal Archives, Department of Records and Informational Services, Record Sub-Series: Oddities of NY, Claire Spitz, Box 1, Folder 946, 1939-1941, May 17, 1935.

⁶⁰ Rosenzweig and Blackmar, *The Park and the People*, 395-404; “The Screen: A Magyar Film,” *New York Times*, June 5, 1934, 28; “The Screen: At the Tobis Theatre,” *New York Times*, January 8, 1936, 22; “The Screen: At the 86th Street, Garden Theatre,” *New York Times*, September 10, 1936, 29; Jane Holt, “News of Food; Old-Fashioned Yorkville Store Offers Hard-to-Get Spices and Unusual Goods,” *New York Times*, June 13, 1944, 22. The Tobis Theatres Corporation was a German motion picture company with production studios in Berlin, Paris, and Wembley, England. In the early 1930s, Tobis opened nearly two dozen theatres in major metropolitan areas of the U.S. During much of the 1930s, New York-based attorney Milton Diamond ran Tobis. Diamond immigrated to New York from Romania, eventually graduating from NYU Law School. “Tobis to Open 19 Theatres: The Europa Presents Here “Two Hearts,” a Foreign Film,” *New York Times*, July 13, 1931, 20; “Leases the Vanderbilt: Tobis Theatre Corporation to Show German Films in House,” *New York Times*, August 27, 1931, 25; “Milton Diamond, 66, Retired Attorney,” *New York Times*, October 21, 1955, 27.

well as spaces that hosted concerts, art exhibitions, lectures, and English language classes. Moreover, a drama group headquartered at the HWH performed the acclaimed works of Shakespeare, George Bernard Shaw, and Henrik Johan Ibsen, and introduced Gotham to Hungarian playwrights such as Ferenc Molnár. Konrad Bercovici, a Romanian-born writer, stated that “[t]here is no similar institution in the whole city, and it is one of the most frequented places of the Hungarian colony.” Bercovici’s compliment notwithstanding, the HWH faced occasional attacks as a safe harbor for political radicals, including communists and socialists.⁶¹

As the thirties progressed, Yorkville’s German and Hungarian communities once more found themselves facing the local ramifications of a geopolitical storm. In January 1933 Adolf Hitler of the National Socialist party became German Chancellor. Following Germany’s federal election in March, the Reichstag passed the Enabling Act, essentially granting Hitler unfettered political power. The Weimar Republic was dead, replaced by a fascist dictatorship fueled by Hitler’s venomous hate speech. Coupled with the rise of authoritarianism in Italy and Japan, another large-scale war seemed possible if not imminent. It was within this context that a series of pro-Nazi movements emerged in the U.S., eventually making inroads in German Yorkville. More than eighty years later, the presence of pro-Nazi elements in Yorkville dominates social memories about the neighborhood, threatening to erase all that came before and taint all that came afterwards.⁶²

In the late twenties and early thirties, Edmund Fürholzer, a right-wing Bavarian political activist, teamed up with Yorkville resident Edwin Emerson, a Saxon-born, well-heeled ex-war reporter, to

⁶¹ “Hungarian Buy Clubhouse,” *New York Sun*, June 20, 1917, 11; “Boos and Cheers at Karolyi Dinner: Count’s Adherents Vie with Noisy Critics at Stormy Testimonial,” *New York Times*, March 5, 1925, 19; “Admits Political Motives: Dr. Hartmann Says 130 Cities Have Affiliated Soviet Organizations,” *New York Times*, February 11, 1922, 4; “What Is Going on This Week,” *New York Times*, December 27, 1931, 42; Bercovici, *Around the World*, 358.

⁶² Benjamin Carter Hett, *The Death of Democracy: Hitler’s Rise to Power and the Downfall of the Weimar Republic* (New York: Henry Holt, 2018); Sander A. Diamond, *The Nazi Movement in the United States, 1924-1941* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), 38; Claus-Christian Szejnmann, “Nazi Economic Thought and Rhetoric During the Weimar Republic: Capitalism and its Discontents,” *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 14, no. 3 (2013): 355–76.

promote the burgeoning Nazi cause through a local newspaper, the *Deutsche Zeitung*. Local disinterest and the onset of the Great Depression frustrated the venture. Hitler's power grab in early 1933, however, gave rise to an even bolder scheme. Heinz Spanknöbel, a recent immigrant from Hesse who had spent time within a Detroit-based Nazi cell, relocated to New York in late spring 1933. Viewing German New York as a top-down hierarchy with weak leadership, he planned to seize control of UGS so as to force the city's array of German social clubs and organizations to bend to Nazism. Spanknöbel and the pro-Nazi group Friends of New Germany ("FNG") conducted much of their planning in Yorkville. They viewed the neighborhood as the symbolic cultural and commercial hub of German New York, as well as fertile recruiting territory due to the presence of discontented migrants from Weimar Germany.⁶³

Spanknöbel's brash tactics backfired. Soon after arriving in New York, he infuriated the Ridder brothers, principals of the *Staats Zeitung*, New York's largest German language newspaper, by insisting they turn Nazi propagandists. In the process, he gained ardent detractors within the local German language press. Spanknöbel also alienated leading German Jews with his effort to achieve "racial purity" within local organizations. His grand plan to refashion German Day into a clarion call for Nazism further divided locals and drew the ire of Mayor John O'Brien, who, concerned about potential violence, barred German Day just days before its scheduled start following a lengthy testimonial hearing at City Hall. As an outsider, Spanknöbel, displayed a fatal ignorance about the social architecture of German New York in this historical moment. Based on tradition and the ineffectiveness of Great War-era pan-Germanism, the community operated as a loose network of autonomous institutions with UGS reduced to playing a

⁶³ Arnie Bernstein, *Swastika Nation: Fritz Kuhn and the Rise and Fall of the German-American Bund* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2013), 25-34, 50, 67. An offshoot of Friends of New Germany led by Bavarian-born Joseph Schuster introduced the idea of a special unit of uniformed members meant to mimic German stormtroopers. Mark Sherwin, "Off the Record," *New York Daily News*, April 15, 1934, B29; Louis Nizer, *My Life in Court* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1944), 296; "Nazi Rally Set for Tomorrow, 4,000 Expected: Preparations for Mass Meeting at Ridgewood Grove Completed," *Brooklyn Citizen*, April 7, 1934, 2.

ceremonial role. In the end, UGS canceled German Day,⁶⁴ at least the event originally planned, as Spanknöbel slinked back to Germany to avoid American law enforcement.⁶⁵

Spanknöbel's ultimate quest failed, but his actions destabilized German Yorkville by widening existing fissures and opening new ones. Tensions between German Gentiles and Jews were especially tense. Starting in the spring of 1933, several New York Jewish organizations boycotted merchants who sold German goods or supported the Nazi cause. In December 1933, UGS initiated a counter-boycott, establishing the German-American Business League (DAWA) to oversee the effort. DAWA mimicked the National Industrial Recovery Act by providing each member business with a "blue eagle" to adorn its front window. In Yorkville, DAWA rejected one German Jewish shopkeeper's application by marking it with the word "Jude" in red crayon. Carl Froehlich, the Austrian-born president of UGS, told the local press that his group was "anxious to keep any element of racial prejudice from being mixed in the DAWA," but added that he had no option but to "doubt the good faith of any Jewish business man who wanted a DAWA eagle, in view of the boycott action supported by the great body of Jews in New York."⁶⁶ Despite reports of waning attendance at Yorkville-based FNG meetings in the summer of 1934, a rash of vandalism aimed at Jewish businesses during the 1934 Yom Kippur holiday forced the NYPD to conduct special patrols through the neighborhood.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Mayor O'Brien, concerned about potential violence, barred German Day just days before its scheduled start after a lengthy testimonial hearing at City Hall. Two months later, the city allowed the festival to go forward under the auspices of the Steuben Society. The twenty-thousand men and women who poured into Madison Square Garden heard Theodore Hoffmann, the Society's acting chairman, introduce a resolution condemning the mayor for his allegedly discriminatory stance. "Mayor Bars German Day Rally Here," *New York Daily News*, October 26, 1933, 2,8

⁶⁵ Bernstein, *Swastika Nation*, 25-28; "New York Group Plans German-Day Celebration," *Baltimore Sun*, November 2, 1933, 8; "Nazi Cheers Given by 20,000: Little Disorder in German Day in New York," *Boston Globe*, December 7, 1933, 36.

⁶⁶ "Bias Is Charged to German Group: Jewish Shopkeeper Says His Plea to Join DAWA Movement Was Refused," *New York Times*, May 11, 1934, 11

⁶⁷ Ronald H. Bayor, *Neighbors in Conflict: The Irish, Germans, Jews, and Italians of New York City, 1929-1941* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 67-70; "Bias Is Charged to German Group: Jewish Shopkeeper Says His Plea to Join DAWA Movement Was Refused," *New York Times*, May 11, 1934, 11; "Yorkville Nazi Spirit Collapsing, Meetings Are Poorly Attended," *Jewish Daily Bulletin*, July 20, 1934, 1-8; "Police Guard Jews from Nazis in Yorkville," *The American Israelite (OH)*, September 27, 1934, 5.

The 1936 formation of the Amerikadeutscher Volksbund (“the Bund”) further complicated matters, forever altering ethnic Yorkville’s reputation. Like earlier pro-Nazi movements, the Bund targeted Yorkville, renting space on East 85th street. Fritz Kuhn, the Bund’s leader and self-described “American Fuehrer,” had no prior connections to Yorkville. By fall 1936, however, Kuhn and his cronies had positioned the organization to achieve what Spanknöbel could not: control of German Day. Twenty-thousand people jammed Madison Square Garden to hear Avery Brundage, U.S. Olympic Committee chairman, and Karl Stroehlin, Stuttgart mayor and Reich plenipotentiary, praise Germany’s progress under Nazi rule as a police detail of six hundred kept order. The internal struggle to shape German Day’s imagery and messaging continued for the next two years. The Bund controlled the 1937 event, but self-described “moderates” presided over a 1938 version where no local brownshirts marched. Even at this event, however, a third of the audience saluted in the Nazi fashion and a swastika banner flew. Further, these modified optics did not stop speakers such as Theodore Hoffman, the Steuben Society’s chief, from expressing support for the Nazi regime, at least “within the boundaries of Germany.”⁶⁸

From German Day 1936 to Pearl Harbor, the Bund’s activities, real and imagined, served as a wellspring of sensational news for Gotham’s print press. Much of this coverage described Yorkville in reductionist terms, as “the German enclave,” while deemphasizing anti-Nazi sentiment among residents and ignoring the neighborhood’s non-German ethnics. Walter Winchell, who by the late thirties privileged the hunt for fascists on American soil in his syndicated columns, painted with the broadest brush. He saw Yorkville as a fifth column, ignoring the neighborhood’s diversity in identity and political persuasion. Winchell bolstered his perspective with colorful descriptions of “Nazi storm-troopers

⁶⁸ “Brundage Extols Hitler’s Regime: At German Day Observance Here He Says ‘We, Too, Must Stamp Out Communism,’” *New York Times*, October 5, 1936, 9; “Brundage Puts Okay on Hitler,” *New York Daily News*, October 5, 1936, 4; “Brundage Puts Okay on Hitler,” *New York Daily News*, October 5, 1936, 4; “German Day Rally Splits with Nazis: Patriotic Program at Garden Marks Break in Ranks – Kuhn Routed in New Jersey,” *New York Times*, October 3, 1938, 6 “German Day Rally Splits with Nazis: Patriotic Program at Garden Marks Break in Ranks – Kuhn Routed in New Jersey,” *New York Times*, October 3, 1938, 6. In early 1936, FNG disbanded in the face of congressional scrutiny. Shortly after, the Bund was born at a convention in Buffalo, New York. Bernstein, *Swastika Nation*, 41, 46-49

scuttling homeward from Yorkville frankfurter and Fuehrer festivals” and warned that “handbills slandering the President are making the rounds in Yorkville’s Nazi sector.”⁶⁹

Two Yorkville-based events during this period garnered above-the-fold headlines. In late October 1937, the Bund secured a permit from a reluctant Mayor Fiorella LaGuardia to parade through Yorkville. Memories of this parade water the myth that Nazis marched through Yorkville’s streets regularly and with impunity, implying that a critical mass of the neighborhood’s residents supported or at least tolerated the Bund. In fact, police outnumbered marchers in this parade.⁷⁰ Moreover, this was the only Bund street parade significant enough to reach the radar of Gotham’s mainstream newspapers. A few months later, in April 1938, a Bund rally at the Yorkville Casino honoring Hitler’s forty-ninth birthday turned violent, as Bundists clashed with members of the American Legion and other veterans who vocally opposed pro-Nazi speakers. *Life Magazine* ran a two-page spread of the fracas, including a photo of a smiling Otto Geisler, a Yorkville teenager arrested outside the venue while in full storm trooper gear. Winchell used the occasion to defend the veterans and cast Yorkville as a dangerous place, stating that “[t]he former doughboys took a shellacking in Yorkville that they didn’t have to take in the Argonne . . . yes, they were defeated – not because they were outnumbered, but because they fought “American style” – with their bare fists.”⁷¹ The Bund years left Yorkville with a permanent stain.⁷²

⁶⁹ Walter Winchell, “On Broadway,” *Tampa Times*, January 1, 1938, 4; Walter Winchell, “On Broadway,” *Waterloo Daily Courier* (IA), April 8, 1938, 4. Neal Gabler, *American Heritage* 45, no. 7 (Nov. 1994): 96.

⁷⁰ It bears emphasis that larger pro-Nazi events in the predominantly German American section of Ridgewood, Queens have largely faded from popular memory, perhaps due to Manhattan higher visibility and international reputation. “Nazi Rally Set for Tomorrow, 4,000 Expected: Preparations for Mass Meeting at Ridgewood Grove Completed,” *Brooklyn Citizen*, April 7, 1934, 2.

⁷¹ Walter Winchell, “On Broadway: The Private Papers of a Cub Reporter,” *Tampa Times*, April 29, 1938, 8.

⁷² “Only 307 in Nazi ‘Big Parade,’” *New York Daily News*, October 31, 1937, 10; “Nazis Parade at Yorkville,” *South Bend Tribune* (AP Story), October 31, 1937, 15; Arne Bernstein, *Swastika Nation: Fritz Kuhn and the Rise and Fall of the German-American Bund* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2013), 101-103. Additionally, an iconic photo of this parade appears with great frequency in online stories making this claim. Alan Taylor, “American Nazis in the 1930s—The German American Bund,” *The Atlantic*, June 5, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2017/06/american-nazis-in-the-1930s-the-german-american-bund/529185/>. Robert Rockaway, “Gangsters vs. Nazis: How the Jewish Mob Fought American Admirers of the Third Reich,” *Tablet*, July 2, 2018, [https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/265401/gangsters-vs-nazis](https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/265401/gangsters-vs-nazis;); “1,300 Police Guard 800 Nazi Paraders,” *New York Times*, October 31, 1937, 7; “Legion to Punish Boro Members Who Attended Riotous Nazi Rally,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 21, 1938, 1; “350 Vets, Nazis Riot in Yorkville; Seven in Hospital,” *New York Daily News*, April 21, 1938, 2; “Nazis Send 10 to Hospitals in N.Y. Bund Riot,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 21, 1938, 1; Al Binder, “1,000 Nazis Mob 100 Veterans; 7 Sent to Hospitals,” *New York Daily News*, April 21, 1938, 2; “U.S. Veterans Lose Battle with Germans in Manhattan,” *Life Magazine*, May 2, 1938, 19; Walter Winchell, “On Broadway: The Private Papers of a Cub Reporter,” *Tampa Times*, April 29, 1938, 8.

Yorkville was also the locus of significant anti-fascist activism, a fact rarely mentioned in the dominant narrative. The mainstream press's scant coverage of these activities commonly described them as the work of outsiders, implying that Yorkville itself could not abide or muster homegrown anti-Nazi sentiment. In May 1934, for example, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* reported that approximately "2,500 anti-Hitlerites traveling under the Communist banner, took part in [a] demonstration, and it was their anxiety to parade through Yorkville, center of pro-German and pro-Hitler sentiment in Manhattan."⁷³ One year later, the *New York Times* announced that anti-Nazi paraders had "invaded" Yorkville, as if the neighborhood were a Nazi fortress. Speakers at the post-march demonstration issued explicit warnings about "German and Irish Fascists in Yorkville."⁷⁴ Characterizing anti-Nazi activities in Yorkville as being led by outsiders only strengthened notions that the neighborhood was a foreign, insular, fanatical, and dangerous colony.⁷⁵

To redeem Yorkville's damaged reputation and counteract ongoing efforts to use their neighborhood as a setting for hate speech, community leaders and concerned citizens redoubled their efforts to show a different side of the community. During summer 1940, Joseph McWilliams, dubbed "Joe McNazi" by detractors, emerged as the latest threat to peace in Yorkville. He planned to normalize Bundist ideology at the ballot box by running for Congress. Like pro-Nazi agitators before him – Fürholzer, Spanknöbel, and Kuhn, -- McWilliams had no ties to Yorkville, just a faith that the

⁷³ "Foes of Hitler Stone Police; 41 Arrested: Riot Follows Parade in Yorkville without a Permit – 4 Cops Injured," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 11, 1934, 5.

⁷⁴ "Yorkville Invaded by Foes of Nazism" German Quarter Takes Parade of 500 Calmly, Having Only One Orange and a Bag of Water," *New York Times*, May 10, 1935, 12.

⁷⁵ Ibid; "Jewish Units Quit German Societies: Two German-American Clubs also Secede in Dissension over Nazi Issue," *New York Times*, September 22, 1933, 10; "Row over Hitlerism Splits German Society Wide Open," *New York Daily News*, September 23, 1933, 21; "Police Rout 3,000 in Anti-Nazi Riot: Patrolmen Are Stoned in Trying to Disperse Marchers in Parade in Yorkville," *New York Times*, May 11, 1934, 11; "Reds, Anti-Nazis Ready to March upon Yorkville," *New York Daily News*, May 11, 1934, 37; "Yorkville Invaded by Foes of Nazism" German Quarter Takes Parade of 500 Calmly, Having Only One Orange and a Bag of Water," *New York Times*, May 10, 1935, 12. The full extent of anti-Nazi activism is not clear. For instance, the press never reported on a 1939 speech by Gerhart Seger, former member of the Reichstag, who addressed 800 German Americans in Yorkville to clarify the threat posed by Hitler and the Nazi regime. As an outspoken critic of the Third Reich, a decorated fighter pilot during WW I, and a dedicated pacifist thereafter, Seger was a well-known and influential man. Yet, the *New York Times* did not communicate this meeting until Seger's death in 1967. "Gerhart Seger, 70, Fought Nazis; Ex-Reichstag Member Dies Here," *New York Times*, January 22, 1967, 76; "Refugee Details Escape from Nazis: Former Member of Reichstag Here for Lectures, Tells How He Deceived Camp Guards," *New York Times*, October 31, 1934, 6.

neighborhood was fertile ground for extremist politics. Inviting campaign contributions from Hitler, McWilliams pledged to use such funds “to save our country from Jewish-British domination, and to make it a Nationalist America.”⁷⁶ After James Blaine Walker soundly defeated him in the GOP primary, McWilliams ran under the banner of the “American Destiny Party,” ultimately failing to gather enough signatures to qualify for the ballot. At one point during the election cycle, a Harlem-based magistrate ordered McWilliams to undergo psychiatric evaluation at Bellevue Hospital for the chaos ensuing from one of his stump speeches.⁷⁷

On a mid-September evening in 1940, amidst this noise, a group calling itself “We Americans of Yorkville” paraded from different points in Yorkville to denounce hate speech. The processions converged at the Yorkville Casino for a massive rally. By choosing this venue, the group symbolically reclaimed community space stained by the Bund. Assemblyman Robert F. Wagner, Jr., Senator Wagner’s son, and Charles Ferry, president of the Yorkville Chamber of Commerce, were among the dignitaries who spoke at the rally. The terrain shifted radically for German Yorkville on December 7, 1941. U.S. entry into the war following Pearl Harbor demanded pledges of loyalty from German American institutions, which quickly followed. In early January, Victor Ridder, responding to Mayor LaGuardia’s call to organize German New Yorkers for the war effort, held community meetings at the Yorkville Casino in furtherance of the quest to sanitize this iconic neighborhood space.⁷⁸

For members of New York’s Hungarian American community, especially those in Yorkville, Europe’s escalating tensions during the 1930s muddled homeland politics. During this period, increasing

⁷⁶ “Trojan Horse Prances as Christian Mobilizer Chief Appears Before Dies,” *Dunkirk Evening Observer* (NY), May 2, 1940, 9.

⁷⁷ (No Title), *New York Times*, January 11, 1942, 27; Thomas M. Johnson, “Christian Mobilizer, Slated for Dies’ Appearance, Called Lively Trojan Horse,” *Elmira Star-Gazette* (NEA Service Staff Writer), June 26, 1940, 10; “McWilliams Gets 30 Days, Plans Appeal: Congress Candidate, Disorderly, Can Pay Alternative \$50 Fine,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 7, 1940, 3; “Kicked by M’Williams When Down, He Says,” *New York Daily News*, August 9, 1940, 14; “M’Williams in Bellevue for Destiny Party,” *New York Daily News*, September 19, 1940, 46; “Bellevue Covered Wagon,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 22, 1940, 43; “National Affairs – New York: Mr. McNazi,” *Time* 36, no. 13 (Sept. 23, 1940): 19.

⁷⁸ “Rally in Yorkville: 3 Parades Precede Meeting at Which Americanism Is Stressed,” *New York Times*, September 14, 1940, 6.

numbers of Yorkville-based Hungarians were completing the requisite steps to naturalization. The Yorkville Hungarian Democratic Club, through its lead instructor, Louis Gartner, made news for the scores of co-ethnics they shepherded through the citizenship process. Citizenship alone, however, did nothing to alter the extent to which Hungarians remained focused on matters abroad. Pan-Hungarian American organizations with a national reach rhetorically separated what was best for the Hungarian state from Nazi malfeasance. In March 1938, in response to Anschluss, Nazi Germany's annexation of Austria, Hungarian American leaders met in Niagara Falls to consider the ramifications of German aggression. These ethnic elites promulgated a statement supporting democratic reforms in Hungary and rejecting their homeland's possible Nazification. Later that year, the Hungarian-American Federation formally endorsed a proposal by U.S. Senator William King's (D-Utah) to sever diplomatic relations with Germany unless that country immediately reversed its antisemitic course.⁷⁹

Incidents in Yorkville reinforced the limited influence of such pronouncements. Many Hungarian Americans pondered what their homeland might gain from working with Germany. Some even cooperated with pro-Nazi elements on the local level. In October 1937, for example, two New York-based anti-Nazi organizations charged John Szabo, a Hungarian-born American citizen, with desecrating the American flag. Szabo, who ran a shop on East 86th Street, agreed to display a placard advertising the upcoming Bund-led German Day. The Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi league and the German-American League for Culture criticized the placard's comingling of the American flag and the Prussian Eagle as contemptible and illegal. Magistrate Judge Leonard McGee of the Yorkville Court dismissed the charges, commenting that "[y]ou have not the right party when you have the storekeeper . . . [y]ou should have

⁷⁹ "Get Citizenship Diplomas: Refugees Among 50 Hungarians Who Complete Course, *New York Times*, January 29, 1940, 2.

the person responsible for the printing and distribution.”⁸⁰ Whether or not Szabo had acted of his own free will or through coercion, this dispute offers a microcosm of Hungarian New Yorkers’ dilemma.⁸¹

As the German war machine ripped through Europe in 1940, many in Yorkville’s Hungarian enclave warmed to the idea of a German-Hungarian alliance of convenience as a path to meet the goals of the “Free Hungary” movement. At the nonnegotiable core of this ideology lay the hope of restoring, as much as possible, Hungary’s pre-WW I boundaries through revision of the Treaty of Trianon. Paul Nadányi, a Hungarian-born journalist, authored an English-language pamphlet for non-Hungarian audiences that contextualized and qualified these complex homeland politics. He feared rightfully that any support for Nazi Germany might lead to labeling Hungarian Americans as disloyal. Writing after the U.S. had entered the WW II, Nadányi recollected a September 1940 special service of the Orthodox Hungarian Greek Church on East 82nd Street where a series of speakers informed parishioners that the Hungarian army, pursuant to the Second Vienna Award signed by Hitler and Mussolini, had advanced into the northern section of Transylvania. Hungary was taking concrete steps to reclaim its lost territory, albeit in league with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Of this gathering, Nadányi observed:

This announcement caused great rejoicing. Several hundred people heartily applauded every word spoken about this award. These people are not Nazis. They never were contaminated with the Fascist germs, they never had any use for Nazi agitators who tried to stir up racial hatred . . . These people are ardent believers in American democracy . . . These people always believed that the treaty after the first World War, the so-called Trianon Treaty was unjust to Hungary. They believed this treaty violated the Wilsonian principles, the democratic right of people to self-determination.⁸²

Nadányi was not the first Hungarian who struggled to translate diasporic politics for an American audience, nor would he be the last. Internal debates concerning homeland causes and efforts to render

⁸⁰ “Freed in Use of Flag of U.S. on Nazi Sign,” *New York Times*, October 2, 1937, 11.

⁸¹ “Hungarian Americans Opposed to Nazidom,” *The Spokesman Review (Spokane, WA)* [AP Story], March 14, 1938, 3; “Senator King Urges U.S. to Rebuke Reich,” *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, November 15, 1938, 1; “Freed in Use of Flag of U.S. on Nazi Sign,” *New York Times*, October 2, 1937, 11.

⁸² Paul Nadany, *The Free Hungary Movement* (New York: Amerikai Magyar Nepszava, 1942), 4-5.

these matters legible to outsiders would continue to animate Hungarian Yorkville's political culture for decades to come.⁸³

In 1938, near the end of ethnic Yorkville's summer season, eccentric travel writer William Seabrook, in his book, *These Foreigners*, set the tone for ethnic Yorkville's future public reputation.⁸⁴ Seabrook referred to Yorkville as the city's "famous German colony" and "the largest and most colorful "German" tourist showplace in the western hemisphere," focusing on East 86th Street's commercial corridor.⁸⁵ Lampooning the Bavarian atmosphere of this area as a contrivance, he contrasted it with the "substantial, serious, and respectable life" of local German-American clubs and societies hidden from the tourists. Importantly, Seabrook devoted most of his observations to the recent history of Nazism in Yorkville. He largely dismissed concerns that the Bund had enough support to pose a serious threat. Rather, he predicted, the "Melting Pot will boil them down,"⁸⁶ To a notable degree, Seabrook foreshadowed the ethnic Yorkville imaginary's future ingredients: a heavy dose of the East 86th Street bars and restaurants, a heaping portion of the Nazi past, a dusting of the social life of German Yorkville's rank and file, barely a taste of the neighborhood's Hungarians or other ethnic elements, and an abiding hunger for the melting pot. As ethnic Yorkville moved from the summer heat to the long shadows of its autumn season, the received story never strayed too far from this formula.⁸⁷

⁸³ Ibid., 4-5, 9-16.

⁸⁴ Lewis Mumford, a public intellectual specializing in urban history and architecture, represented a different take on Yorkville of the late thirties and early forties. Mumford saw Yorkville as a tired and uninspired place in need of a new direction. While the city was in the process of tearing down the Second Avenue elevated train tracks, Mumford observed the "dreary mess of buildings that loitered beside the old "L" – much of it dating back to the seventies," which, he claimed, "has long been ready for demolition." Mumford never mentioned the people who lived and worked in those buildings. Lewis Mumford, "Growing Pains – The New Museum," in *Sidewalk Critic: Lewis Mumford's Writings on New York*, edited by Robert Wojtowicz (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), 231.

⁸⁵ William Seabrook, *These Foreigners* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1938), 221.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 231

⁸⁷ Ibid., 221-232.

CHAPTER 3

RECALLING ETHNIC YORKVILLE'S AUTUMN COLORS: WW II THROUGH THE 1960S

AT THE END OF SEPTEMBER

The garden flowers still blossom in the vale,
Before our house the poplars still are green;
But soon the mighty winter will prevail;
Snow is already in the mountains seen.
The summer sun's benign and warming ray
Still moves my youthful heart, now in its spring;
But lo! my hair shows signs of turning gray,
The wintry days thereto their color bring.

*Sándor Petőfi*¹

In 1947, Martin Lewis, an Australian-born artist who endeavored to reveal the extraordinary within Gotham's quotidian rhythms, produced a print entitled *Yorkville Night* (See Figure 5 below). This work depicts Yorkville as a place set apart and difficult to know. A fruit stand emits the only light as if to suggest that much of the surrounding area lies in utter darkness. The steel stanchion in the foreground symbolizes the Third Avenue El's role as a material boundary separating working-class Yorkville from the neighboring "Silk Stocking" district. It also hints at the intermittent but rumbling noise above, drawing an implicit contrast between the rapidly moving trains on the tracks and the pedestrian pace below them. The distant staircase offers a pathway to ascend from or descend into this seemingly subterranean world. The fruit stand's light washes out the details of all those nearby. No faces are perceptible in this mysterious slice of Manhattan.²

¹ Sándor Petőfi was born in the village of Kiskőrös on the Hungarian plain, approximately 135 kilometers south of Budapest, on New Year's Day in 1823. His father's name, István Petrovics, suggests Serbian lineage. However, his biographer, Enikő Molnár Basa, emphasized that the poet's ancestors "had lived in Hungary for generations and even possessed a patent of nobility . . . granted during the Turkish wars." Enikő Molnár Basa, *Sándor Petőfi* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), 15. Petőfi gave voice to and ultimately his life for the Hungarian Revolution of 1848-49. He was killed in battle at the age of twenty-six. Ever since, Petőfi has served as political inspiration for Hungarians of all stripes. Miklós Vámos, "Hungarian Blues; or, Excavated Poets' Society," *New England Review* 13, no. 3/4 (Spring - Summer, 1991): 197-202. In 1922, supporters of a Hungarian republic used the centenary anniversary of the poet's birth to push their cause in the Hungarian parliament. "Republic Cry in Hungary: Shouts in Assembly Cause a Protest by Monarchists," *New York Times*, December 24, 1922, 7. Petőfi Circles were gatherings of intellectuals, progressives, and reformers that are said to have sowed the seeds of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. András B. Hegedüs, "The Petőfi Circle: The Forum of Reform in 1956," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 13, no. 2 (1997): 108-33.

² At the time he created this print, Lewis was near the end of his long and winding career. After traveling through his native Australia, neighboring New Zealand, and California's Bay Area, Lewis settled in Gotham in 1901. Lewis called New York home for the next sixty years. Thomas P. Bruhn, "Introduction," in *The Graphic Works of Martin Lewis: October 14-November 19, 1978*



Figure 5. "Yorkville Night," Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2002709719/>.

By casting Yorkville's working-class men and women amidst shadows and darkness, Lewis reified tropes of the ethnic Yorkville imaginary. Popular recollections of ethnic Yorkville during and after the Second World War describe populations that, chastened by the Bund episode, slowly but steadily abandoned the district's ethnic enclaves or retreated into its obscure, darkened corners. The dominant narrative holds that East 86th Street's kitschy German bars and restaurants, deemed tolerable forms of cultural expression once they were drained of political extremism, produced the district's radiance in

(Storrs, CT: The William Benton Museum of Art-University of Connecticut, 1978), 7-8. Thomas Bruhn described Lewis's artistic technique and vision as "primarily tonal" in that it "is interested in and exploits the subtle gradations of light between black and white." Bruhn, *The Graphic Works of Martin Lewis*, 8; Susan Dunne, "Artist Played in Shadows," *Hartford Courant*, October 9, 2011, G-1; Maxwell McCrohon, "Martin Lewis's Late Rise to Fame," *Art Monthly, Australia* (1997): 22; Joan Stahl, *American Artists in Photographic Portraits* (New York: Dover Publications, 1995), 53.

the postwar period. Most recollections of ethnic Yorkville during its autumnal season depict the neighborhood, at least the areas beyond East 86th Street “safe zone” of ethnic identity, as static or even stale. An inability to keep up with the times, paradoxically seen as quaint and as an impediment to progress, distinguished Yorkville from other parts of Manhattan. Those who insisted on clinging to their ethnic identities, as faceless as the people in *Yorkville Night*, served as living evidence of the neighborhood’s outmoded ethos.

While tropes of ethnic Yorkville’s backwardness form one narrative thread during the neighborhood’s autumnal season, the era from the 1940s through the 1960s, the historical record reveals a much more complex story. The geopolitics of globalized war once again rendered Yorkville’s German and Hungarian populations suspicious in the eyes of outsiders, as the Great Hyphen Debate redux relitigated the merits of ethnic identity and questioned the loyalties of American citizens and legal residents who had maintained some connection to their ancestral homelands. In addition to the fighting in Europe, the Bund episode had a chilling effect on the neighborhood’s German Americans throughout the forties. With public attention fixed on Nazi Germany’s atrocities, residents of the Hungarian enclave operated under the radar as they wrestled with their own version of the homeland question, namely the relationship between revising the Treaty of Trianon and a pact with the fascists. As Gotham’s print press treated ethnic Yorkville like a defeated enemy in the postwar years by focusing on the exodus and retreat of the district’s German element, wartime refugees from Europe’s displaced persons camps breathed new life into the Hungarian enclave, a development largely ignored outside the neighborhood.

New threats to the continuing viability of ethnic, working-class Yorkville emerged a decade after the war, as developers, bureaucrats, and elected officials championed the value of modernizing Yorkville. Gentrification, a looming threat to ethnic Yorkville since the 1920s, had finally reached the Upper East Side’s mostly working-class neighborhood. This process would squeeze longtime ethnic residents and small business owners for the remainder of the twentieth century. The loss of ethnic

Yorkville's iconic spaces and structures, such as the Yorkville Casino and the Ruppert Brewery, symbolized this transformation. New York's mainstream media inflicted more damage by treating ethnic, working-class Yorkville as a convenient exemplar of racial intolerance during the city's racial tensions of the sixties. These trends set the stage for Yorkville's German enclave to pass from history to heritage, as memories of its heyday seemed to occupy more public attention than the life of its remaining ethnic residents. At the same time, Hungarian Yorkville extended its life through the contributions of another set of refugees, the 56ers, who fled a failed revolution to end Communist rule in Hungary.

WORLD WAR II COMES TO ETHNIC YORKVILLE

Historian Philip Gleason differentiates macro-level conceptions of ethnic identity that manifested during the Second World War from those that fueled Great War-era nativism. By the late thirties, he claims, a generation of reduced immigration, the decoupling of racial and cultural differences linked to the work of Franz Boas and like-minded anthropologists, and second-generation Americans drifting away from hyphenism created greater tolerance for diversity. U.S. entry into the war led to the state using ethnic difference, now repackaged as cultural pluralism, to make the case that American unity emerged from an organic "value consensus," not the kind of nationalism fomented within totalitarian systems. According to this logic, all Americans, regardless of race, ethnicity, creed, socio-economic status, or gender, understood the benefits accruing from the country's democratic principles and commitment to individual rights. In other words, many paths could lead to a shared sense of Americanness, situating ethnic difference within the overall project of social cohesion. Although

deemphasized by Gleason, the growing acceptance of European immigrants and their descendants as “white” played an essential role in this process of becoming “fully American.”³

Gleason’s big picture framing requires two crucial caveats. First, he understates the extent to which ethnicity continued to serve as a divisive subject. While greater tolerance existed for cultural difference around the edges, the global war’s intensification during 1940 and 1941 spurred another contentious national debate regarding the efficacy of ethnic identity. Louis Adamic, a Slovenian-born writer and public intellectual, tried to get ahead of fears about hyphenates with a nuanced message distinguishing this period from World War I. In a *New York Times* piece entitled “No ‘Hyphens’ this Time,” Adamic conceded that “[t]he hyphen is still with us,” but differentiated ethnic identity from disloyalty.⁴ Adamic advised ethnics to consider ceasing their use of the hyphen lest they be misunderstood, but, at the same time, asked other Americans to realize that “only a small fraction of what has been loosely called hyphenism at various times and various points of view is intentionally anti-American.”⁵ The vast majority of those who celebrate their ethnic heritage, he concluded, were making vital contributions to America’s war effort.⁶

Despite appeals to moderation, many hardline xenophobes attacked hyphenism in ways reminiscent of the Great War-era, characterizing persistent ethnic identity as a public nuisance with no legitimate purpose and incongruous with a time of national emergency. In New Brunswick, New Jersey, a city with a substantial Hungarian American minority, Noel Cobb, a local newspaper editor, pulled no punches, proclaiming that:

I dislike hyphenated Americans. By that I mean the use of the hyphen between the names of Polish American, Hungarian American and others of foreign nationality used with the word American . . . [T]he hyphen should be eliminated. They are now

³ Philp Gleason, *Speaking of Diversity: Language and Ethnicity in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 153-87.

⁴ Louis Adamic, “No ‘Hyphens’ This Time: Instead of ‘Hyphenates’ We Have ‘Foreign Groups’ That Are Contributing Much to Our War Efforts” *New York Times*, November 1, 1942, SM18.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid; Gleason, *Speaking of Diversity*, 153-87.

Americans and the mere fact they came to this country a few years, decades, or a couple of centuries after the forefathers of many of us is no reason for them to use a hyphen.⁷

In Gotham, the *Daily News* editorial staff reminded its readers that “[i]n the last war, some of our much respected German-Americans were praying that Germany would win, and exercising all their influence to cut off the supply of munitions to the Allies.”⁸ They then warned that “[w]hen hyphenation and pro-alien sympathies get beyond the passive point . . . no one whose first loyalty is to this country can countenance them.”⁹ The “passive point” Cobb referred to remained conveniently undefined.¹⁰

Secondly, the particular ways in which local ethnic communities interacted with the new hyphen debate matter. In the summer of 1940, as the German Luftwaffe prepared to assault Britain by air, images of Yorkville as the Bund’s former stomping ground and the place where Nazi spies conspired in dark bierstubes tarnished the neighborhood’s reputation. The fact that only a small percentage of Yorkville’s population had any direct connection to these transgressions was of little consequence. Accordingly, influential ethnics voices did not envisage the safe harbor Gleason described, but instead braced for the Great Hyphen Debate redux. The Ridder brothers, publishers of the German-language *Staats Zeitung und Herold* and principals of a budding media empire, addressed the potential intersection of the war and ethnic identity at multiple gatherings within Greater New York. Victor Ridder, speaking at the ninetieth anniversary of the Yorkville-based New York Turn Verein, predicted that animus against German Americans would resurface. While he encouraged the Turners to endure any such attacks “with fortitude,” his twin brother, Joseph, told a printing trade union composed of Germans, Hungarian, Italians, and Jews, to demonstrate “backbone and courage” in the face of

⁷ Noel C. Cobb, “No Hyphen Needed,” *The Daily Home News* (New Brunswick, NJ), March 18, 1941, 4

⁸ “The Big Bomb Plot,” *New York Daily News*, January 16, 1940, 21.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Louis Adamic, “No ‘Hyphens’ This Time: Instead of ‘Hyphenates’ We Have ‘Foreign Groups’ That Are Contributing Much to Our War Efforts” *New York Times*, November 1, 1942, SM18; Noel C. Cobb, “No Hyphen Needed,” *The Daily Home News* (New Brunswick, NJ), March 18, 1941, 4; “Newsman to Offer New Housing Plan: Mayor, Authority to Hear Noel C. Cobb of New Jersey,” *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), February 25, 1939, 3; “The Big Bomb Plot,” *New York Daily News*, January 16, 1940, 21.

anticipated backlash against ethnic sociocultural expression and identity. Joseph Ridder boldly asserted that “when others have demonstrated their Americanism under conditions similar to those that have faced us, we will talk to them on an equal plane.” His bravado incorrectly assumed a degree of socio-political capital on the part of ethnic communities that simply did not exist in the early forties.¹¹

Assemblyman Robert F. Wagner, Jr., the U.S. Senator’s son and a native of ethnic Yorkville, delivered a different message during a keynote address at the World’s Fair’s Hungarian Days. On a sun-drenched day on July 8, 1940, local Hungarian Americans poured into the fairgrounds at Flushing Meadows, Queens, to enjoy a rare moment of ethnic solidarity.¹² Acknowledging their interest in the fighting taking place in Europe, Wagner reminded his Hungarian American audience that their “first loyalties” were to America and implored each of them to let nothing “swerve you from the love and devotion [to] your adopted country.”¹³ Describing those who would cast doubt on their loyalty, Wagner pointed out that “[i]t is simple to suspect every foreigner of being a fifth columnist,” but dismissed such “indiscriminate suspicion” as misplaced and counterproductive.¹⁴ Soon thereafter, Rustem Vámbéry, a Hungarian criminology professor at the New School for Social Research, fell into line by organizing co-ethnics in Yorkville to support President Roosevelt’s emerging anti-Axis foreign policy.¹⁵

Similarly, cautious members of German New York’s leadership encouraged co-ethnics to proactively assert their loyalty to the United States as visibly and unequivocally as possible. Founders of

¹¹ Gleason, *Speaking of Diversity*, 153-87; “Ridder Urges Fortitude: Tells German-Americans 1917 Situation Must Be Faced Again,” *New York Times*, June 6, 1940, 13; “German Printers Warned by Ridder: Publisher Says Courage Will Defeat Return of Hostile Attitude of World War,” *New York Times*, July 8, 1940, 15; “Joseph E. Ridder Is dead at 80; Chairman of Newspaper Chain,” *New York Times*, April 21, 1966, 39. German-American units of A.F. of L. and C.I.O. quickly pledged their loyalty to the American war effort after the U.S. entered the war. “German-Americans Form Victory Group: Trade Unionists in Drive to Aid U.S. Win the War,” *New York Times*, March 25, 1942, 16.

¹² According to the *New York Times*, more than 900,000 people entered the Fair during the first week of July 1940, marking only the second time attendance had reached this level since the Fair opened in 1939. Milton Bracker, “640,000 Throng Fair on 4-Day Week-End: 7-Day period is Second to Top 900,000 Mark This Season – Bright Day Lures Crowd,” *New York Times*, July 8, 1940, 12.

¹³ Milton Bracker, “640,000 Throng Fair on 4-Day Week-End: 7-Day period is Second to Top 900,000 Mark This Season – Bright Day Lures Crowd,” *New York Times*, July 8, 1940, 12.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.; “Hungarian Fete Tomorrow,” *New York Times*, July 28, 1939, 8.

the Manhattan-based German American Congress for Democracy urged all co-ethnics to coalesce around President Franklin Roosevelt's commitment to human rights and the defeat of Nazi barbarism. In October 1941, Magistrate Charles Oberwager appealed to Gotham's ethnics to support Mayor Fiorella LaGuardia's re-election bid. In an unmistakable sign of the times, Rev. Dr. William Popke, pastor of Yorkville's Zion Lutheran Church and a one-time supporter of Heinz Spanknöbel's effort to seize control of the city's pan-German institutions in the name of Nazism, now assumed a leading role on the committee dedicated to re-electing the mayor who had once publicly clashed with such extremists.¹⁶

America's entry into World War II in December 1941 rendered public loyalty non-negotiable for Yorkville's ethnics. In the wake of Pearl Harbor, Gotham's newspapers did their part to ensure ethnic loyalty by surveilling Yorkville, as reporters gazed upon the neighborhood as if it were a barometer of foreignness.¹⁷ A *New York Times* story entitled "Yorkville Hushed as U.S. Enters War" read in part:

War between the United States and the Axis . . . brought a sudden hush along Eighty-sixth Street, Yorkville's main thoroughfare. Little knots of troubled housewives stood in the windy cold, tensely dismissing the development long expected, but shocking nevertheless. Men stared at the newspaper headlines at corner stands and broke into excited conversation. Generally, it is assumed Yorkville will remain loyal to the United States. Here and there on the street, men and women were outspoken on this point. In other places, the men were silent and looked sullen.¹⁸

Even after the city's crippled pan-German organizations announced their complete fealty to the American war effort in early 1942, New York's leading newspapers continued to fixate on German Yorkville at each of the conflict's perceived inflection points.¹⁹

¹⁶ 'German-Americans to Aid LaGuardia: Ex-Magistrate Oberwager Heads Committee for Re-election,' *New York Times*, October 20, 1941, 20.

¹⁷ Print coverage during the eighteen months prior to Pearl Harbor tended to depict German Yorkville as inherently suspect. For instance, Sloan Taylor, a reporter for the *Daily News*, claimed that Yorkville residents, as well as "Nazi officialdom," hid their true feelings about President Roosevelt's decision to close all German consulates in June 1941 behind "[s]ilence and enigmatic smiles." Sloan Taylor, "Nazis in City React with Silence, Smiles," *New York Daily News*, June 17, 1941, 18.

¹⁸ "Yorkville Hushed as U.S. Enters War: German-American District, However, Is Quick to Show Loyalty to America," *New York Times*, December 12, 1941, 22.

¹⁹ Ibid.

From early 1942 through the end of the Second World War, Yorkville served as an inviting setting within which to reassure New Yorkers and the nation that everyone was rowing in the same direction. Pledge drives and rallies provided opportunities for ethnic Yorkville's business and social leaders to show their commitment to defeating the Axis powers. During one such traveling war bond pledge drive in June 1942, a Yorkville woman described as a "robust German-American matron" allegedly offered to complete a pledge form with her own blood if necessary.²⁰ The American motion picture industry, as part of a billion dollar pledge drive, sponsored a rally along Yorkville's East 86th Street in September 1942. Orchestras from five area restaurants, including the Gloria Plasast, Lorelei, and Platzl, joined Hungarian opera singer, Margit Bokor, to imbue the event with a sonic flare. Three months later, the *New York Times* reported on a Yorkville-based coalition comprising Germans, Hungarians, Czechs, and Italians that commemorated the one-year anniversary of Pearl Harbor by vowing to "weld an ever firmer unity among ourselves for the victory of the united nations."²¹ Yorkville was listed along with other ethnic enclaves such as Chinatown and Little Italy to underscore the thoroughness of American unity in the immediate aftermath of D-Day. One month later, another *Times* article commending Yorkville's distinguished participation in the city's scrap metal collection drive noted multiple effigies of Hitler hanging from the neighborhood's lampposts.²²

A November 1942 rally sponsored by the Yorkville Victory Committee (YVC) illustrates the neighborhood's value as a space of visible patriotism. Turning German Yorkville's tainted reputation on its head, Mayor LaGuardia told a crowd of more than three thousand lining East 86th Street that the loyal

²⁰ "Minute Men Get Welcome in Forty Tongues in City," *New York Times*, June 16, 1942, 1.

²¹ "Pearl Harbor Day Finds Nation Sure of Japan's Defeat: Time for Surprise Is Past and America Is Taking the Offensive, Officials Note," *New York Times*, December 7, 1942, 1.

²² "German Societies Pledge U.S. War Aid: 1,300 Groups in City Join a Program of Defense Donations and Service," *New York Times*, January 11, 1942, 27; Sloan Taylor, "Nazis in City React with Silence, Smiles," *New York Daily News*, June 17, 1941, 18; "Minute Men Get Welcome in Forty Tongues in City," *New York Times*, June 16, 1942, 1; "Yorkville to Hold Bond Rally Today: Stags, Radio Stars to Appear at Anti-Nazi Demonstration by German-Americans," *New York Times*, September 27, 1942, 44; "Effigies of Hitler Hung in Yorkville: Likeness Adorns Many Posts as Community Sets Pace in the Collection," *New York Times*, October 16, 1942, 16.

spirit of the area's residents was unrivaled. A banner emblazoned with the phrase "Yorkville Speaks Out – Americans All" flew high above Sauerkraut Boulevard. Mayor LaGuardia declared that the presence of "a few lousy Bundists . . . doesn't represent Yorkville."²³ Earlier that year, LaGuardia had become the first New York City mayor to take up residence in Gracie Mansion, making him a recent addition to Yorkville's foreign-born migrants, a status he used adroitly to connect with the audience. Other speakers included Mrs. Isabel Parschall, head of United Yorkville for Victory Committee, William Wener, president of the Yorkville Chamber, and two prominent members of Yorkville's German American community: Mrs. Edward Rickenbacker, mother of the celebrated WW I flying ace, and Theobald Dengler, one of the founders of the New York branch of the Yorkville-based Catholic Kolping Society. City officials and event sponsors hoped the sight of these German American icons pledging their undivided loyalty to America would hold sway among their co-ethnics in Yorkville and beyond.²⁴

Efforts to refashion Yorkville as an expedient exemplar of patriotism did not wash clean the public reputations of the neighborhood's ethnic enclaves, especially the district's German American contingent. Media coverage of newly discovered disloyalty as well as legal proceedings stemming from older incidents kept alive memories of the Bund period and further stamped political extremism onto the ethnic Yorkville imaginary. During the first week of January 1942 news hit that a federal judge had sentenced thirty-three members of the so-called Duquesne spy ring to more than three hundred years in prison collectively for conspiring to engage in espionage for Nazi Germany. Few of those convicted had long-term connections to Yorkville; however, the conspirators utilized the neighborhood's bars and restaurants, as well as other Gotham spaces, to conduct their covert operations.²⁵ The Associated Press

²³ "Yorkville in War Lauded by Mayor: He Says No Section of City Is More Patriotic Despite 'a Few Lousy Bundists,'" *New York Times*, November 23, 1942, 15.

²⁴ Ibid.; "La Guardias Begin Moving into the Gracie Mansion," *New York Times*, May 27, 1942, 19. Leslie Hahner's concept of the "visual logic of Americanization" during the Great War era provides a useful analytical tool in evaluating how and why Yorkville served as a site of "visual patriotism" during World War II. Leslie A. Hahner, *To Become an American: Immigrants and Americanization Campaigns of the Early Twentieth Century* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2017), xxii.

²⁵ In *Double Agent*, a popular history focusing on William Sebold, a German immigrant who served as the FBI's chief informant in this matter, Peter Duffy dubbed Yorkville "de rigueur for Nazi spies." He also casually asserted that many of Yorkville's

and the city's mainstream papers chronicled other FBI searches in Yorkville, which yielded dozens of so-called "enemy aliens," a smattering of arms and ammunition, and sundry Nazi-themed paraphernalia.²⁶ The papers also closely followed legal proceedings of ex-Bund members. In January 1943, Ernst Schwenk, a waiter at a Yorkville restaurant who stood accused of spearheading the Bund's local propaganda campaign, declared that a "German can't be anything but a German."²⁷ With family still in the homeland, Schwenk added that "[b]lood is more important than citizenship," referring to his concern for his siblings in the homeland.²⁸ Two months later, the FBI arrested a former factory worker and Yorkville resident known as "Little Goebbels," who allegedly boasted about his close ties to the Reich in several of Yorkville's watering holes. There was even a story about an unregistered German national and Yorkville resident, Arthur Meissner, who had worn the blue of the New York police department for six years under an assumed name. A city employee claimed to have witnessed Meissner saluting Hitler in a Yorkville bierstube.²⁹ In addition to these sensational storylines, Hitler's suicide, Germany's surrender, and General Eisenhower's victory tour of the city all provided opportunities for news reporters to critique Yorkville residents' purported dearth of enthusiasm and troubling silence.³⁰

German bars pitched themselves as "Nazi-friendly" and named the Café Hindenburg and the Lorilei as two spots the conspirators favored. Peter Duffy, *Double Agent: The First Hero of World War II and How the FBI Outwitted and Destroyed a Nazi Spy Ring* (New York: Scribner, 2014), 179.

²⁶ In March 1944, pursuant to the wartime alien property laws, the government allowed the public to purchase the items once owned by the German Railroads Information Office. The State Department ordered the closure of their Yorkville-based office. The public had the opportunity to purchase furniture, tools, and cleaning supplies, but not the pictures of Hitler and the copy of *Mein Kampf* the company allegedly left behind. "Ends Public Display of Seized Nazi Goods: U.S. Will Open Bids Tuesday on Effects by Propagandists," *New York Times*, March 25, 1944, 8.

²⁷ "Former Bundist Puts Germany Before U.S.: Holds Blood Worth More Than American Citizenship," *New York Times*, January 20, 1943, 40.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ The *Times* even tracked a so-called "gray market" in German D-marks, said to have been thriving in Yorkville stores during the years immediately after the war. Many locals sent this currency to relatives in occupied Germany. There was nothing illegal about this practice, yet the coverage tended to raise the specter of impropriety. Will Lissner, "Yorkville Gray Market in Marks Is Thriving among Small Shops," *New York Times*, March 26, 1949, 1; Associated Press, "D-Mark Gray Mart Buds in Yorkville," *Baltimore Sun*, March 26, 1949, 2.

³⁰ Ibid.; Associated Press, "Yield Nazi Uniform," *Daily Oklahoman*, March 5, 1942, 11; "33 Aliens Seized in Yorkville Raids: 3 Italians and 30 Germans Are taken in Surprise Visits by Federal Agents," *New York Times*, March 5, 1942, 25; "64 German Aliens Seized Here by FBI: War Veterans All Are Members of Kyffhaeuser Bund, Active in Spreading Propaganda," *New York Times*, April 12, 1942, 31; "F.B.I. Seizes 24 Saboteur Aide Suspects: radio Sending Sets, Rifles and Other Arms Confiscated in Raids," *New York Times*, July 2, 1942, 1; FBI Round-up Nets More Aliens Here: 6 Employees of a Yorkville Restaurant Called Members of German organizations," *New York Times*, July 17, 1942, 7; "Swears Kunze Led Fight on Draft Act: Ex-Secretary of Bund Testifies Against Former Leader at Conspiracy Trial of 25," *New York Times*, September 24, 1942, 11; "6 More Nazi Aliens Seized in Week-

Given that the mainstream press often reduced ethnic Yorkville to its German element, the ethnic Yorkville imaginary elides the actions of Hungarians in the district after Pearl Harbor. Recovering this history reveals the difficulties Hungarian Americans faced in this period. As hard as it was to strike a balance between publicly championing the Allied cause and safely expressing concerns about the fate of family and friends in the homeland, Hungary's Nazification during the latter stages of World War II threatened to subject Hungarian New Yorkers to public censure. Ethnic leaders favoring visible patriotism held war bond rallies at the Yorkville Casino and organized events designed to raise funds to benefit the Red Cross mission in aid of Hungarians displaced by the war. Despite these acts, certain elements of Yorkville's Hungarian community endured increased scrutiny from local officials. In 1943, for instance, police arrested leaders of the Hungarian Young Men's Circle, a singing society that met at space owned by the Hungarian Literary Society on East 79th Street. Law enforcement accused this group of operating an illegal gambling hall. Dr. Nicholas Winter, a Yorkville-based Hungarian American dentist, admitted that members sometimes played pinochle or rummy for five cents a hand. It appears city officials had used knowledge of low-stakes gaming, a common practice at clubs throughout the city, as a pretext to harass Hungarian Americans.³¹

End: 3 Attended Meeting at Which German Flier Was Present," *New York Times*, February 21, 1943, 8; "7 Enemy Aliens Held on 64 Search Raids: 3 Women among German Who Are Taken to Ellis Island," *New York Times*, February 28, 1943, 46; "'Little Goebbels' Is seized by F.B.I.: War Plant Employee Boasted in Yorkville about His Nazi Activities," March 28, 1943, 27; "31 Germans Here Arrested by FBI: One, a Former Salesman of Marks, Is Said to Have Been as Associate of Veireck," *New York Times*, September 5, 1943, 16; "On Probation for 3 Years: German Who Was Policeman Under False Name Is Sentenced," *New York Times*, July 8, 1943, 11; "Policeman Trapped by His 'Heil Hitler': Alien Who Got Job by Fraud Hailed Nazi in Beerstube," *New York Times*, March 18, 1943, 14; "Pearl Harbor Day Finds Nation Sure of Japan's Defeat: Time for Surprise Is Past and America Is Taking the Offensive, Officials Note," *New York Times*, December 7, 1942, 1; "City Greets News Quietly, Solemnly: No Noisy Outbursts, No Large Crowds, but Calm Confidence Marks Reaction to Invasion," *New York Times*, June 7, 1944, 10; "City Takes Report of Death in Stride: Many New Yorkers Skeptical, Others Are Unemotional – Service Men Pleased," *New York Times*, May 2, 1945, 9; Neal Patterson, "Cheers Give Way to Thanksgiving," *New York Daily News*, C3, C8; Meyer Berger, "City's Celebration Chilled by Mayor as New York and London Handled the News of the Unconditional Surrender of Germany," *New York Times*, May 8, 1945, 7; Frank S. Adams, "4,000,000 See Hero: Roar of Sound Greets Triumphal Procession in Jammed Streets," *New York Times*, June 20, 1945.

³¹ "Events Today: War Rally, Hungarian-Americans: *New York Times*, March 15, 1942, 45; "Cavendish Club Gets Gambling Summons: Hungarian Singing Society also Is Haled to Court," *New York Times*, January 29, 1943, 21.

In addition to confronting multiple challenges on the home front, unfolding events in Europe increasingly placed Hungarian New Yorkers in a moral quandary. The dream of revising the Treaty of Trianon, which had drastically altered Hungary's borders, never died within the Hungarian diaspora. Hungarian New Yorkers, therefore, thirsted for the latest news about the conflict, always evaluating how it might redress this longstanding grievance. Placing emphasis on revising Trianon put many local Hungarians in the camp of tolerating Hungary's alliance with Germany, as a necessary evil.³² There is evidence, however, that others focused more on democratic reform. In February 1943, fifteen hundred local Hungarian Americans gathered at the Yorkville Casino to hear members of the American-Hungarian Committee report about an "underground" anti-fascist movement supposedly poised to seize control of the government, sever all links to Nazi Germany, bring pro-Nazi officials to justice, and terminate antisemitic policies. In addition, Hungarian New Yorkers attended lectures by homeland politicians who railed against the Axis alliance while visiting New York.³³

During the final thirty months of the European war, as factions within Hungary's government battled over which path to follow, the city's newspapers carried stories delineating a series of Hungarian setbacks. In January 1943, Red Army troops defeated the Hungarian Second Army near the Don River, allowing the Soviets to push westward through Ukraine. In March 1944, the Reich army executed Operation Margarethe, its full-scale invasion of Hungary. The Germans quickly captured Budapest. Hitler had long criticized Hungarian Regent Horthy for failing to implement a program to exterminate Hungarian Jews. With Hungary occupied by German troops, however, Adolf Eichmann, one of the chief

³² Nadanyi, *The "Free Hungary" Movement*, 4-5. Likewise, throughout the early 1940s, many high-ranking Hungarian officials continued to back a loose affiliation with Germany in order to redress Trianon and because they loathed the Russians and Hungary's short-lived experiment with Communism after the Great War. They played a dangerous game of seeking German cover to retake lost portions of the Kingdom, such as the former Upper Hungary in western Slovakia and Romanian-controlled Transylvania, while hoping to keep the Reich at bay. Ultimately, their efforts failed on all accounts. Peter Kenez, *Hungary from the Nazis to the Soviets: The Establishment of the Communist Regime in Hungary, 1944-1948* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1-9; Marianne Szegedy-Maszák, *I Kiss Your Hands Many Times: Heart, Souls, and Wars in Hungary* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2013), 62-65.

³³ "Red Cross Concert: Rapes Conducts the Program at Hunter for Hungarian Unit," *New York Times*, April 12, 1943, 24; "Events Today: War Rally, Hungarian-Americans," *New York Times*, March 15, 1942, 45; "'Underground' Is Active: Document read Here Tells of the Movement in Hungary," *New York Times*, February 15, 1943, 3

architects of the Final Solution, and the newly installed fascist Prime Minister, Döme Sztójay, oversaw an accelerated program that transported Hungarian Jews en masse to death camps such as Auschwitz.³⁴ In mid-October 1944, Ferenc Szálasi, head of the Nazi-like Arrow Cross, gained power. Szálasi and his henchmen ordered the creation of the Budapest ghetto in November 1944 and initiated a series of death marches. The reign of terror continued until the Red Army moved into Budapest in January 1945. All told, in just a few months, an estimated 400,000 Hungarian Jews perished.³⁵

As information about this genocide came to light, some Hungarian New Yorkers redoubled their efforts to use Gotham as a visible site to project their devotion to human rights and the fight against fascism to broader audiences. Longtime community leaders like attorney Morris Cukor, who had lived through almost the entire sweep of Hungarian Yorkville's historical trajectory, hoped old symbols of Hungarians' love of liberty might insulate the ethnic community from the homeland's malfeasance. In March 1944, Cukor led a portion of the city's Hungarian diaspora on a pilgrimage to the Lajos Kossuth monument on Riverside Drive and 113th Street. He along with the Hungarian American Committee, one of many impromptu pan-Hungarian wartime organizations, used the fiftieth anniversary of Kossuth's death as a backdrop to an audacious display of patriotism during which they donated twenty hospital service planes to the U.S. military. Three months later, in June 1944, a broad coalition of Hungarian

³⁴ Throughout the war, the Reich stoked preexisting antisemitism in Hungary, particularly prevalent among the nation's working classes. In the interwar period, the Hungarian legislature had passed a law limiting the number of Jews who could attend university. During the war, these laws obliterated the rights of Hungarian Jews to engage in any meaningful way in the nation's economy and restricted their political rights. John Connolly, *From Peoples into Nations: A History of Eastern Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020), 491-97; Ferenc Laczó, *Hungarian Jews in the Age of Genocide: An Intellectual History, 1929-1948* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 1-24.

³⁵ "Battle of the Don: Allies Strive to Keep Russia Supplied," *New York Times*, July 12, 1942, E1; C.L. Sulzberger, "Germans Regroup Divisions For Supreme Gamble in Russia: 218 Axis Divisions Poised in Russia Stage Being Set on the Russian Front," *New York Times*, May 31, 1943: 1; George Axelsson, "Nazis Stage Coup: Hungarian Regent and Others Believed Held After Hitler Parley," *New York Times*, March 21 1944: 1; "Hitler Invades an Ally," *New York Times*, March 22, 1944, 18; Randolph L. Braham and Scott Miller, "Preface," in *The Nazis' Last Victims: The Holocaust in Hungary*, ed. Randolph L. Braham (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 17-22; László Karsai, "The Last Phase of the Hungarian Holocaust: The Szálasi regime and the Jews," in *The Nazis' Last Victims: The Holocaust in Hungary*, ed. Randolph L. Braham (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 103-18; Attila Pók, "German Hungarians, and the Destruction of Hungarian Jewry," in *The Nazis' Last Victims: The Holocaust in Hungary*, edited by Randolph L. Braham (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 45-53; Robert Rozett, "International Intervention: The Role of Diplomats in Attempts to Rescue Jews in Hungary," in *The Nazis' Last Victims: The Holocaust in Hungary*, ed. Randolph L. Braham (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 137-52.

American organizations, churches, and synagogues met at a Manhattan-based conference sponsored by the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe. Specifically responding to Prime Minister Sztójay's grotesque boast that the anti-Jewish program had prepared the way for the return of the Hungarian diaspora, the conferees issued the following rebuke: "we came to the United States of our own free will, in search of a better land in which to make our homes and raise our children."³⁶ One month later, an interfaith coalition of Hungarian Americans orchestrated a multifaceted demonstration denouncing the genocide in Hungary. More than two thousand people gathered at a ceremony sponsored, in part, by the Yorkville-based New Light Temple. Meanwhile, the First Hungarian Reformed Church of New York, Hungarian Yorkville's oldest place of worship, conducted a special service in which congregants received yellow star armbands to symbolize solidarity with their Jewish co-ethnics. These multifarious efforts obscured internal fissures within the ethnic community, at least with respect to external audiences, and belied the fact that many local Hungarians continued to prioritize the homeland's quest to recover its lost territories whatever the cost.³⁷

ETHNIC YORKVILLE IN THE WAKE OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR: A TALE OF TWO ENCLAVES

New York's mainstream newspapers and popular columnists, focusing almost exclusively on the German enclave, treated ethnic Yorkville as terminally ill in the wake of the Second World War. Despite the hyperbole in these reports, the German community did find itself hampered by out-migration as well as the chilling effect of its local Bund past coupled with Nazi Germany's war crimes. German Yorkville nevertheless survived in large part by leaning on its reputation as the city's headquarters for German heritage, and through a modified form of pan-Germanism: the German-American Steuben Parade. Conversely, the Hungarian enclave began to flourish, a development not addressed in popular

³⁶ "Hungary Policy Assailed: Group Meeting Here Denounces the Extermination of Jews," *New York Times*, June 18, 1944, 24.

³⁷ Ibid.; "Massacre of Jews in Hungary Scored: Special Services of Protest Held by 2,000 in Bronx and in Manhattan Church," *New York Times*, July 10, 1944, 9.

recollections about the neighborhood. The Cold War delivered opportunities for local Hungarians to resurrect their reputation as the freedom loving people of Kossuth, in part by rebranding themselves victims of Soviet oppression. After the unsuccessful Hungarian rising of 1956, the Cold War also brought an influx of refugees ready to breathe new life into Hungarian New York and its Yorkville core.

The *Daily News* reported that May 8, 1945, V-E day, brought “[l]ittle joy in Yorkville.”³⁸ Kurt Palser, identified as a proprietor of an East 86th Street restaurant, mentioned his brothers who had served in the German army and his mother living in Russian-occupied Silesia. “I haven’t heard from any of them in three years.”³⁹ Meanwhile, a group of fifty men and women crowded around a newsstand on the southwest corner of 86th Street and Lexington Avenue to hear President Truman announce Germany’s surrender. According to the reporter the people were eerily void of affect. Rather, they simply “listened . . . [and] drifted off.”⁴⁰ This story presaged postwar coverage of Yorkville, characterizing it as a gloomy place defined only by its German American residents, tainted by its flirtation with Nazism, and destined for a demographic overhaul.⁴¹ New York columnist Mel Heimer, writing in 1947, compared Yorkville “to an abandoned Dodge City or Tombstone.”⁴² Heimer pondered “if perhaps the Axis defeat in the war wasn’t more sharply proven in Yorkville more than anywhere else in the world.”⁴³ A 1948 AP

³⁸ Neal Patterson, “Cheers Give Way to Thanksgiving,” *New York Daily News*, May 9, 1945, 3, 38. Public intellectuals like Emil Lengyel contributed to these efforts. Lengyel, who immigrated from Budapest to New York during the interwar period, wrote twenty historical monographs, served as an authority on the rise of Hitler and German Nazism, taught at New York University, and remained active into the 1980s. In 1948, Lengyel published *Americans from Hungary*, bringing academic rigor to the subject of Hungarian immigration and Hungarian American identity. Nicholas Roosevelt, “Hungarian Americans: Americans from Hungary by Emil Lengyel, 319 pp., Philadelphia Pa., J.B. Lippincott Company, \$4,” *New York Times*, July 11, 1948, BR13; “Emil Lengyel, a Retired Professor and Authority on Rise of Nazism,” *New York Times*, February 14, 1985, B12; Emil Lengyel, “Village View of World,” *New York Times*, August 19, 1981, A23.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ In this atmosphere, even the name “Yorkville” itself could be disadvantageous insofar as it invoked negative memories of the Bund episode in German Yorkville. Thus, the local chamber, in 1947, elected to change its name from the Yorkville Chamber to the Mid-East Chamber of Commerce. While subsequent references to the group occasionally used the old name, the group seemed to be distancing itself from its ethnic Yorkville roots. “Civic Unit Changes Name: Yorkville Group to be Known as Mid-east Chamber of Commerce,” *New York Times*, March 29, 1947, 21.

⁴² Mel Heimer, “My New York” Column, *The Journal News* (Nyack, NY), July 21, 1947, 3.

⁴³ Ibid.

article with national circulation proclaimed that Yorkville's German Americans had "lost their hold on this neighborhood"⁴⁴ due to the Bund controversy, precipitating an exodus to Queens and other parts of Greater New York. The message was clear: German Yorkville was receiving its "just desserts" for wartime disloyalty.⁴⁵ The storyline of a humbled Yorkville suggested a neighborhood on the brink of liberation from otherness – an urban space ready to fully join Manhattan-style modernity. In this sense, this period resembled the years following the Great War when a similar anti-ethnic discourse gained currency.⁴⁶

To be sure, the fifties did usher in a period of material change in Yorkville. Foreign-born heads of households trended down sharply. Single-family residential options were disappearing, as larger apartment complexes crept into the area. While Ruppert's Brewery still operated in Hellgate, the vacant lots now dotting the surrounding streets symbolized the area's decline. In the early 1950s, the city decided to terminate the Third Avenue El, one of Yorkville's defining material symbols. New subway lines and extensions, city planners argued, had rendered the elevated trains redundant. The Second Avenue El had ended service north of 59th Street just before the war, in June 1940. In August 1955, Yorkville's residents joined other New Yorkers living along the route of the Third Avenue El to bid farewell publicly to the last of the elevated trains before demolition crews arrived. The El's disappearance and renewed promises of a Second Avenue subway line seemed to signal that Yorkville

⁴⁴ Jean Meegan, Associated Press, "The Germans Surrender Yorkville," *Marshall News Messenger* (TX), June 3, 1948, B7.

⁴⁵ Around this same time, a defamation suit featuring Victor Ridder, former editor of the *Staats-Zeitung* and longtime member of German New York's elite, as the defendant kept the Bund story in the news cycle. Dr. Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster, a German-born academic who lived in New York City, sued Victor Ridder for libel. The cross-examination of Ridder by Louis Nizer, Dr. Foerster's attorney, raised questions about whether the Ridder brothers had acted as "Fifth Columnists" for Germany's Nazi government during the war. Nizer included the story as part of his memoir published in 1961. While the case and its aftermath did not fatally wound the Ridder family and their business interests, it did create a specter of impropriety. It is possible to draw parallels between the Ridder case and the ways the Bund period continues to haunt the memory of German Yorkville by creating a generalized sense of disloyalty. Louis Nizer, *My Life in Court*, 289-346; Grant J. Merritt, *Iron and Water: My Life Protecting Minnesota's Environment* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 152.

⁴⁶ Neal Patterson, "Cheers Give Way to Thanksgiving," *New York Daily News*, May 9, 1945, 3, 38; Mel Heimer, "My New York" Column, *The Journal News* (Nyack, NY), July 21, 1947, 3; Jean Meegan, Associated Press, "The Germans Surrender Yorkville," *Marshall News Messenger* (Marshall, Texas), June 3, 1948, B7.

was open for business and high-end resettlement, leaving many of the neighborhood's ethnic, working-class residents anxious about their fate.⁴⁷

In 1954, journalist Gerard H. Wilk, writing for *Commentary*, a leading journal of Jewish American affairs, captured the cross-vectors of German Yorkville in flux. Empty German bookstores and record shops, fewer street-level conversations in German, and one-time German commercial spaces bearing signs reading Magyar Uzlet, or "Hungarian business," suggested the erosion of Yorkville's German enclave and the rising tide of its Hungarian counterpart. One longtime resident lamented that "[n]obody knows anything about German American history anymore, nobody is interested."⁴⁸ Wilk marshaled this evidence to advance an argument that would ossify into received wisdom in the decades to come: German immigrants had "Americanized themselves" with notable efficiency; they had "climb[ed] up the social ladder in the same motion," quickly passing through ethnic enclaves like Yorkville on their way to "disappear[ing] into the American environment."⁴⁹ At the same time, however, Wilk described Yorkville as "the ever-glowing hearth whither the true German American, as the Yorkvillers believe, must always return, knowing that only here 'is something of the Heimat [homeland] preserved.'"⁵⁰ This district, he observed, provided a suitable climate for the hundreds of German American Turn Vereins and ethnic societies continuing to serve co-ethnics throughout Greater New York. Wilk also point out how hate groups continued to find oxygen in the neighborhood, describing episodic manifestations of neo-Nazis using the area's "Bund legacy" to amplify their message.⁵¹ Struggling to reconcile these various portraits

⁴⁷ Gordon D. MacDonald, *A Community Study of Yorkville: Upper East Side Manhattan*, Ph.D. dissertation, 1952; "Second Avenue Subway: Final Environmental Impact Statement and Final Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) Evaluation," *MTA New York City Transit*, Vol. 1 (April 2004), 14; Andrew J. Sparberg, *From a Nickel to a Token: Journey from the Board of Transportation to MTA* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 1-5, 101, 111-16; James McGlinchy and Sydney Mirkin, "Third Ave. Holds Wake for El: Parade, Band, Speeches, Sweat," *New York Daily News*, August 2, 1955, 3, 10C.

⁴⁸ Gerard H. Wilk, "Yorkville, Twenty Years After: The Brownshirts Are Gone – and Much Else," *Commentary*, January 1, 1954.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Wilk even portrayed these two camps as being locked in battle – "Today the demagogues are on the one side, and the Vereins-Deutschen (who the former described as "organized yodelers, clog dancers, and bowlers") on the other." Ibid.

of mid-fifties Yorkville, Wilk posed the ultimate question: “What, then is Yorkville in 1954?” His answer offered a linguistic snapshot of a time and place facing oblivion. Yorkville is, he offered:

[a]n island of uncertain memories and fading daydreams, which the tide of history will one day wash over, a cultural relic of the only major ethnic group in the United States without political influence . . . To the sightseer, one of a dwindling number of colorful “foreign quarters” . . . [T]he Yorkville of today, in its token exoticism and ethnic nostalgia, seems as much an American as an alien, much less a German, phenomenon.⁵²

Wilk’s extended profile roughed out what would become ethnic Yorkville’s orthodox ballad. Its verses sang of Germans, its chorus recalled Nazis, its tone evoked decline, and Hungarians would count themselves fortunate to receive a passing mention in the bridge.⁵³

Fallout from the Second World War as well as the emergence of America’s ideological and political struggle with the Soviet Union in the postwar period powered the resurgence of Yorkville’s Hungarian enclave, an epic tale deserving its own song. Passage of the 1948 Displaced Persons Act opened the door to the U.S. for a limited number of refugees from United Nations camps set up in Austria, Germany, and Italy.⁵⁴ Federal prohibitions on accepting immigrants who “had taken up arms against the United States of America” during World War II complicated the process for screening Hungarian displaced persons, or DPs. In addition, amendments to the law expressly barred admitting members of Communist party or those formerly associated with pro-Nazi groups such as the Arrow Cross Party-Hungarist Movement. Given Hungary’s belligerent status, the complex nature of Hungary’s wartime politics, and the presence of ex-Hungarian soldiers among the DPs, potential immigrants merited scrutiny throughout the migration process. Despite these hurdles, hundreds of DPs fleeing Hungary’s chaotic postwar environment ultimately settled in New York, infusing the enclave with

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Approximately one and a half million Hungarians fled the country before the U.S.S.R. gained control near the end of the war. Most of the refugees ended up in the U.N.’s camps. Louise W. Holborn, *The International Refugee Organization: A Specialized Agency of the United Nations: Its History and Work 1946-1952* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 182.

renewed vigor and dogmatic faith in America's early Cold War rhetoric and aims. This group helped found enduring Hungarian heritage institutions, thereby recalibrating the Hungarian Yorkville's socio-cultural self-image. Former DP Viktor Fischer, for example, played an instrumental role in shaping the city's Hungarian Scouting program, an experience through which boys and girls enhanced their Hungarian language skills and learned decidedly pro-Christian and Magyar centric lessons about Hungary's history and culture. Róbert Harkay, a fellow DP, served as the well-respected and indefatigable director of the Hungarian House for many years. During his tenure, this one-time clubhouse for elite Hungarian political exiles increasingly opened its doors to co-ethnics across the socio-economic spectrum and sponsored cultural programming intended to translate Hungarian culture to non-ethnic audiences.⁵⁵

The influx of DPs coincided with and reinvigorated efforts by the city's Hungarian Americans to project positive images of their ethnic identity. In August 1952, Hungarian New Yorkers celebrated St. Stephen's Day, a centuries-old national holiday marking the canonization of Hungary's first Christian king in the eleventh century, with a parade, a festival at Carnegie Hall, and a vesper service at St. Patrick's Cathedral. Both major party candidates competing in the 1952 presidential election, General Dwight Eisenhower and Illinois Governor Adlai Stevenson, joined President Truman in sending messages supporting the event's theme: a free and autonomous Hungary. During the 1950s, commemorations of the 1848 Revolution, celebrated as a national holiday in Hungary each March 15th, served as the primary cultural vehicle to unite Hungarian New York while connecting the community to the ideals of liberty and democracy. At the 1954 celebration of Hungarian Independence Day, held at the Yorkville Casino,

⁵⁵ Puskás, *Ties That Bind, Ties That Divide*, 259-69; Kathryn M. Bockley, "A Historical Overview of Refugee Legislation: The Reception of Foreign Policy in the Land of Promise," 21 *North Carolina Journal Of International Law And Commercial Regulation*, no. 1 (Fall 1995): 253-92; Luke Kelly, "Humanitarian Sentiment and Forced Repatriation: The Administration of Hungarians in a Post-war Displaced Persons Camp," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 30, no. 3 (2016): 387-406; Julia Edwards, "Europe's Million D.P.'s," *Baltimore Sun*, June 13, 1948, A1; Holborn, *The International Refugee Organization*: 182-83. Cong. Rec. 80th Cong., 2nd sess. Ch. 647, 1948: 1009-1014. More in-depth sketches of these leaders of Hungarian New York are provided in Chapter 7, "Housing Heritage."

speakers leveraged the Eisenhower administration's rhetoric backing a liberating Eastern Europe to call for American and international support should their homeland compatriots take up arms against Soviet oppression. These public celebrations evince the degree to which Hungarian American opinion leaders sought to affix ethnic identity to easily digestible Cold War symbolism of good and evil.⁵⁶

THREATS TO ETHNIC, WORKING-CLASS YORKVILLE: THE MID-FIFTIES AS A FULCRUM

Starting in earnest midway through the 1950s, the entirety of working-class Yorkville faced existential threats posed by developers and their political allies who saw the neighborhood as antiquated and underutilized. Similar to the 1920s, covetous profiteers sometimes cited the neighborhood's ethnic legacy as evidence of its pre-modern status. For these developers, affordable rents equaled unrealized gains. German merchants had helped stave off a class-based make-over three decades earlier by working with and within the Yorkville Chamber of Commerce and marketing East 86th Street's commercial corridor as an experience open not only to locals but to the ethnic Yorkville diaspora as well as non-ethnics. Developers operating in the years following World War II, however, had limited interest in the merits of Sauerkraut Boulevard. They had tapped into a pervasive mood of postwar progress powering a citywide construction boom. There was money to be made and Yorkville's ethnic enclaves seemed to be in the way.

⁵⁶ "Kossuth Day Is Marked: Hungarian American Group Presents Planes to U.S. Army," *New York Times*, March 20, 1944, 19; "4,000 Attend Field Mass: Services Recall the Crowning of Hungary's First King," *New York Times*, September 4, 1951, 25; "Hungarians Mark St. Stephen's Day: 7th Avenue Parade and Rally in Carnegie Hall Stress Aim of Ousting Red Regime," *New York Times*, August 25, 1952, 15; Judith Fai-Podlipnik, "A Decade of Bedlam: Hungarian-American Émigrés Versus the Muscovites, 1945-1955," *East European Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (September 2003): 303-23. In September 1951, four thousand Hungarian Americans from as far away as Ohio gathered in Staten Island for a Catholic mass commemorating the 950th anniversary of the crowning of Saint Stephen as the first king of the Hungarian nation-state. "4,000 Attend Field Mass: Services Recall the Crowning of Hungary's First King," *New York Times*, September 4, 1951, 25; Toby Rider and Kevin Witherspoon, "Making Contact with the Captive Peoples: The Eisenhower Administration, Cultural Infiltration, and Sports Tours to Eastern Europe," *Journal of Sport History* 45, no. 3 (Fall 2018): 300-301.

The urban redevelopment craze, championed by Robert Moses and his disciples, swept uptown like a prairie fire, reaching Yorkville in earnest in 1956.⁵⁷ In that year alone, new construction in Yorkville tripled.⁵⁸ During the post-WW I era, builders had left Yorkville's interior relatively intact, instead erecting their grand apartment structures on Park Avenue to the west and along the East River. Things would be different after WW II. Upper middle-class families sought new options north of midtown Manhattan. West Siders departing areas increasingly populated by Puerto Rican migrants constituted a highly motivated segment of the real estate market. Many of ethnic Yorkville's inhabitants had been paying ten dollars a month per room for their units. By comparison, the new apartments and cooperatives fetched upwards of \$100 per apartment. Peter Kihss of the *New York Times*, reporting at the start of this wave in 1955, explained that "the new apartments are breaking open the staid patterns of Yorkville . . . replacing the four and five story tenements and brownstones that for fifty years and more had sheltered Middle European workers and their sturdy scions."⁵⁹ Stanley Isaacs, whose City Council district included most of Yorkville, worried about longtime residents being "squeezed out" of their homes, and stressed the urgency of exploring ways to maintain Yorkville's traditional working-class character.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Stephen M. Kolman, in his 2002 dissertation entitled "We'll Take Manhattan: The Appropriation of Immigrant Space and the Transformation of Urban Geography in New York City: 1925-1975," examines, in part, this period of Yorkville's development. Kolman argues that city planners, led by Moses, purposefully adopted a laissez-faire approach to Yorkville, whereby they eschewed direct governmental planning in favor of private development. Moses did not view Yorkville as a slum but saw the white ethnic working-class population as incongruous with the area's high land values. Kolman asserts, persuasively, that Moses et al. looked at Yorkville in much the same way as real estate developers did – as a neighborhood best served by going upscale like the affluent territory bordering it to the west. Although it took time, that transformation is now more or less complete. Stephen M. Kolman, "We'll Take Manhattan: The Appropriation of Immigrant Space and the Transformation of Urban Geography in New York City: 1925-1975," PhD diss. (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2002), v, 1-8, 174-82.

⁵⁸ Yorkville had avoided this sweeping pattern of redevelopment in Manhattan for more than a decade after the war. Between 1947 and 1955, builders erected just sixteen apartment buildings in the neighborhood. However, in 1956 alone, nine such structures came online, nine others were in progress, and the municipal government was in the process of reviewing seventeen other plans. "Thomas W. Ennis, "Boom in Building Stirrs Yorkville: Solid Rows of Brownstones and tenements Replaced by New Apartments," *New York Times*, December 23, 1956, 125.

⁵⁹ Peter Kihss, "Our Changing City: Upper and Middle East Side: U. N. Buildings and Big Apartments Remake Face of Four-Square-Mile District," *New York Times*, July 1, 1955, 23.

⁶⁰ Thomas W. Ennis, "Boom in Building Stirrs Yorkville: Solid Rows of Brownstones and Tenements Replaced by New Apartments," *New York Times*, December 23, 1956, 125; Kihss, *New York Times*; Joel Schwartz, *The New York Approach: Robert Moses, Urban Liberals, and Redevelopment of the Inner City* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1993), xv, 274.

Longtime working-class and middle-class residents of Yorkville, including the district's white ethnics, desperately searched for options to remain in place. The state legislature offered a glimmer of hope for this population with passage of the Mitchell-Lama law in 1955, which attempted to increase affordable rental and cooperative housing by providing tax incentives and abatements for developers. In 1957, the Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association developed a plan to bring Mitchell-Lama projects to Yorkville, appealing directly to Mayor Robert Wagner, Jr. on the belief that he might take a special interest in his old neighborhood. Wagner was loath to interfere too aggressively with market forces, but he did favor the potential development of affordable housing on the sites of closed public schools. Two projects emerged directly from these efforts. The York Hill Apartments located at the junction of First Avenue and East 82nd Street welcomed residents in 1961. In 1967, the Rosalie Manning Apartments opened at 230 East 88th Street, providing over 100 units on a first-come, first-serve basis. These apartments provided some relief to ethnic Yorkville, whose constituents faced the squeeze about which Stanley Isaacs had warned. In the end, this modest remedy proved insufficient to stem the tide of gentrification.⁶¹

Thus, omnipresent construction crews worked feverishly throughout the sixties to replace brownstones and tenements with market-rate apartments rising eighteen to twenty stories, buildings offering office suites, and even an urban "shopping arcade" at the corner of East 86th Street and Third Avenue. In some cases, residential space disappeared via the wrecking ball, while at other times landlords summarily evicted tenants unable to pay jacked-up rents. Tenant agency took many forms. Some coalesced into tenants' rights groups. Others lobbied for more affordable cooperatives or for schemes that might prioritize longtime residents over "outsiders" in new construction. A few defiantly

⁶¹ "Find Affordable Housing: Mitchell-Lama," New York City Department of Housing, Preservation & Development, <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/hpd/about/about-hpd.page>, accessed March 8, 2020; Charles G. Bennett, "Yorkville Seeks City Housing Aid: Wagner Studies Proposals to Help Old Neighborhood – 2 Sites Suggested," *New York Times*, October 20, 1957, 48; Franklin Whitehouse, "Families with Modest Means Can Rent in Expensive East 80's," *New York Times*, July 23, 1967, 210.

refused to vacate their homes, forcing standoffs and court battles. But most just stepped awkwardly out of Yorkville and into the unknown.⁶²

Proprietors who did not own or otherwise control the fate of their commercial space faced similar problems. Gustav Kerekes, the German-born owner of a shop selling books and stationery, watched helplessly as his largely ethnic clientele fled the area. Referring to East 86th Street, Kerekes told a *Times* reporter that “[t]his street isn’t the same anymore – the old German people are moving out and everybody rich is moving in.”⁶³ This apparently affluent “swinging set,” to use the label favored by the local media, showed scant interest in foreign-language books and magazines, German and Hungarian pastries and cookies, or yodeling waiters. One young mother approvingly reported that “the cabarets are no longer stodgy and German, but young and swinging.”⁶⁴ For those subscribing to this point of view, ethnic was passé.

Despite developers seeking to demolish the old and journalists celebrating the new, ethnic Yorkville persisted. The German enclave’s residential presence was rapidly disappearing, but a critical mass of its East 86th Street commercial core continued to offer German fare, Bavarian atmospherics, and imported goods. In addition, two citywide developments helped keep the notion of German Yorkville in the minds of New Yorkers: the political ascent of Robert F. Wagner, Jr. and the creation of a new form of pan-Germanism, the German-American Steuben Parade.

⁶² Thomas W. Ennis, “Boom in Building Stirs Yorkville: Solid Rows of Brownstones and Tenements Replaced by New Apartments,” *New York Times*, December 23, 1956, 125; Edward C. Burks, “250 of Yorkville Protest Eviction: Picket Mayor’s Residence Over Razing of Building for Luxury Apartments,” *New York Times*, June 5, 1960, 57; “Yorkville Tenants Demand Protection,” *New York Times*, January 18, 1956, 33; Paul Hofmann, “A Defiant Tenant Gets Fire Guard: Yorkville Woman Refuses to Move for Renovation,” *New York Times*, June 18, 1961, 67; “‘Swinging’ Set Invades Old World of Yorkville,” *New York Times*, June 9, 1968, R1; “Manhattan’s Yorkville Section Gets Taste of Suburbia: Not Crabgrass or Car Pools, but a Shopping Center,” *New York Times*, September 3, 1967, 190.

⁶³ “E. 86th Street’s German Flavor Gives Way to the ‘60s,” *New York Times*, October 2, 1968, 41.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

On May 4, 1953, Robert Ferdinand Wagner, Sr., the former newsboy turned New Deal warrior, died at his son's home at 520 East 86th Street, in the heart of German Yorkville. Six months later, Robert F. Wagner, Jr., was elected New York City's 102nd mayor.⁶⁵ Wagner, Jr. had grown up in Yorkville, the only son of the German-born U.S. Senator and an Irish American mother, the former Susan Edwards. Born in 1910, he had lived through the neighborhood's turbulent Great War years, as well as its rebuilding process of the twenties. From the time his mother died when he was only nine years old, Wagner, Jr. followed in his father's footsteps. He devoted his entire professional career to public service, including his years spent in the Air Force during World War II. In 1938, Wagner, Jr. was elected to represent Yorkville in the State Senate fresh out of Yale Law School, after which he served in numerous municipal posts, including the Tax Commission, the Housing and Buildings Commission, and Chairman of the Planning Commission. In 1949, Wagner, Jr. was elected Manhattan Borough President, where, among other things, he worked with the local Chamber of Commerce to lead a donation drive called "Yorkville Open Your Hearts," which yielded four tons of clothes for the people of West Berlin. Wagner, Jr. did not forget from whence he came, whether that pertained to his German roots or his German American neighborhood. "I don't kid myself that the reason I had the opportunity to represent the district my father represented was the fact that he was there first, and that I had lived there all my life," he acknowledged.⁶⁶ For an entire decade, German Yorkville would have one of its own residing at Gracie Mansion in Carl Schurz Park, just a little farther down East 86th Street. Whether the Wagner

⁶⁵ "Robert F. Wagner Dies at Age of 75: Senator Who Retired in 1949 Served in Post 23 Years – Champion of New Deal," *New York Times*, May 5, 1953, 1; Fred J. Sass, "America Honors War Dead; 35,000 in Main Parade Here: The Nation's Tribute to Its War Dead," *New York Times*, May 31, 1951, 1. Robert F. Wagner, Jr. defeated the incumbent mayor, Vincent R. Impellitteri, in the Democratic primary by a 2:1 margin. The *New York Times* hailed the result "as proof that the Democratic party machine in New York City has lost the last remnants of power." Leo Egan, "Control of Votes Upset by Primary, Power of District Leaders in Democratic Machine Now Viewed as fading in the City," *New York Times*, September 17, 1953.

⁶⁶ Edith Evans Asbury, "Career of Wagner Chosen in Boyhood: Democrats' Mayoral Nominee Prepared for Public Life in School and College," *New York Times*, October 17, 1953, 17.

administration yielded tangible benefits to Yorkville remains debatable, but its symbolic significance to a then-wounded community is not.⁶⁷

As Wagner, Jr. took his seat atop city government, German Yorkville also started to host the German-American Steuben Parade, an invented tradition that helped the community rehabilitate its image damaged from the Bund years. The first official parade bearing the name of Baron von Steuben, the Revolutionary War hero who conveniently fused together German and American heritage, occurred in 1958. An estimated 150,000 onlookers refused to let threatening skies prevent them from witnessing marchers wearing lederhosen and dirndls, elaborate floats, and oom-pah bands march northward up Fifth Avenue. President Eisenhower and Theodor Heuss, the West German leader, donated flags from their respective countries, and the governors of New York and New Jersey joined Mayor Wagner as official parade dignitaries. Starting with this first Manhattan-based parade, event organizers stressed the importance of the parade route turning east on 86th Street, Sauerkraut Boulevard, to terminate at the site of a Yorkville street festival. The *New York Times* and *Daily News* described the inaugural Steuben parade in reverent terms, stressing the message of German American contributions to America without ever referencing the war years or the Bund. This event quickly gained favor as a central element of German New York's heritage practices and earned a special place on the city's annual events calendar.⁶⁸

Yorkville's Hungarian enclave did more than persist, it enjoyed a revival powered by postwar migration and the cultural politics of the Cold War. The failed Hungarian Revolution in the fall of 1956 brought even more refugees to the neighborhood and bolstered Hungarian Americans' collective

⁶⁷ Ibid.; "Wagner Jr. Enters the Senate Race, Setting Up Conflict with Harriman," *New York Times*, August 20, 1952, 1; Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 2-5; Edith Evans Asbury, "Career of Wagner Chosen in Boyhood: Democrats' Mayoral Nominee Prepared for Public Life in School and College," *New York Times*, October 17, 1953, 17; "4 Tons of Clothing for Refugees," *New York Times*, March 22, 1953, 12; "Wagner Fashioned Career in Politics: Began in State Assembly in 1937 – Was a Lieutenant Colonel in Air Force," *New York Times*, November 4, 1953, 16.

⁶⁸ Chapter 5: Marching Heritage explores the history of German American parading in New York, the Steuben parade's immediate origins and symbolism, its early development, and the event's evolution.

reputation as Cold Warriors. In October 1956, Hungary's Communist authorities aided by Soviet troops used deadly force to quell what had started as peaceful anti-communist demonstrations by university students and their supporters. As violence spread throughout the country, revolutionaries pleaded for Western assistance, especially from the U.S. None came. Instead, the Soviet army moved in to summarily crush the rebellion and restore the satellite government. More than 200,000 people escaped into neighboring countries. The revolutionaries earned the respect and sympathy of the American public, many of whom had closely followed these events on television. *Time* magazine named the "Hungarian Freedom Fighter" the man-of-the year in its January 1957 issue.⁶⁹

The failed Hungarian Revolution unleashed a sizeable migration as well as greater American sympathy for those forced to find a new home.⁷⁰ The Eisenhower administration took steps to admit political refugees, ultimately leading to 38,000 Hungarians immigrating to the U.S. Many migrants settled in Greater New York after matriculating through at Camp Kilmer, a New Jersey-based Army facility. Those who found their way to Yorkville to join extended family and friends or to start anew among co-ethnics, infused the enclave with political energy, organization-building skills, and a zest for liberty. They had experienced the Cold War as a nightmarish reality, not a thought exercise. Thus, the 56ers, as they were known, amplified the anti-communist rhetoric already emanating from Yorkville.⁷¹ They fortified the Hungarian National Council, the self-described Hungarian government in exile located in Yorkville on East 72nd Street, hosted exiled Hungarian officials and dignitaries, demonstrated in front of the United Nations and the Soviet embassy, and regularly commemorated the 1956 uprising. The

⁶⁹ Pastor, "The American Reception and Settlement of Hungarian Refugees in 1956-1957," 197-205; Donald Kerwin, "The US Refugee Resettlement Program — A Return to First Principles: How Refugees Help to Define, Strengthen, and Revitalize the United States," *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 6, no. 3 (Sep 2018): 207.

⁷⁰ By way of comparison, 26,377 DPs entered the U.S. whereas approximately 38,000 immigrated after the Hungarian Revolution. Peter Pastor, "The American Reception and Settlement of Hungarian Refugees in 1956-1957," *Hungarian Cultural Studies* 9 (2016): 201.

⁷¹ Hungarian Yorkville's anti-Communist activities fit within the New York's broader Cold War environment. According to Lisa Davenport, in New York of the mid-fifties, "to voice appropriate political protest, activists had to forego criticism of race and anti-Communism." Therefore, "[i]deas of social advancement, ideological supremacy, and exceptionalism of American democratic traditions became the only suitable themes for public debate." Lisa E. Davenport, *Jazz Diplomacy: Promoting America in the Cold War Era* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 13.

56ers kept homeland politics at the forefront of Hungarian New York life for decades, ensuring that anti-communist ideology animated everything from worship services to cultural events.⁷²

In March 1957, leadership of the Hungarian National Council organized a somber affair to honor victims of the Hungarian Rising six months earlier. Like many events before it, this commemoration centered around a pilgrimage to the Kossuth memorial. Increased volume and intensity marked subsequent versions of this homage to Hungarian conceptions of liberty. Five years later, fifteen hundred people attended a more raucous event at the Yorkville Casino where the impressive slate of speakers included Lajos Balogh, former Olympian and president of the American Hungarian Federation, Congressman and soon-to-be New York mayor, John V. Lindsay, and Sister Margit Slachta, a noted champion of women's rights and chief organizer of an effort to shelter nearly one thousand Hungarian Jews during the 1944 genocide.⁷³

Hungarian emigres, both DPs and 56ers, also reinvigorated Hungarian Yorkville's social institutions, especially its faith communities, in the 1950s. They fortified the congregations of existing places of worship such as St. Stephen of Hungary, the Roman Catholic church on East 82nd Street, as well as the venerable First Hungarian Reformed Church on East 69th Street. They also led the movement to open another reformed church in the Hungarian enclave's epicenter at 229 East 82nd Street between Second and Third Avenues. The Hungarian Reformed Church of New York City opened its doors in 1958. Rev. Gabor Csordas, the church's founding pastor, had immigrated to the U.S. from Szekesfeharvar, a

⁷² Pastor, 197-205; Kerwin, "The US Refugee Resettlement Program, 207; "'War of Subversion' against Reds Urged," *New York Times*, March 13, 1950, 3; "Gov. Lodge Warns of New Soviet Evil: He Joins Hungarian-Americans to Protest at Deportations in Eastern Europe," *New York Times*, July 8, 1951, 13; "Mindszenty Case Is Held Still Open: Dulles Tells Mass Meeting It Stays Before Conscience of Hungary and World," *New York Times*, December 28, 1953, 9; Kathleen McLaughlin, "Hungarian Exile's Plea to U.N. Warns of a Reprisal on People," *New York Times*, October 29, 1956, 8; "Budapest Ex-Chief Here: Former Mayor Plans to Ask U.N. for Help to City," *New York Times*, January 21, 1957, 10; "St. Patrick's Mass Remembers Victims of '56 Hungarian Revolt," *New York Times*, November 5, 1962, 28; "Dr. Tibor A. Weber, 82, Officer Of Hungarian Anti-Communists," *New York Times*, March 8, 1977, 32.

⁷³ "Revolution of 1848 in Hungary Marked," *New York Times*, March 15, 1954, 12.; John MacCormac, "Hungary Is Quiet on National Day: Kadar Regime's Preparation for Anniversary of 1848 Revolt Is Not Needed," *New York Times*, March 16, 1957, 6; "Hungarians Hold Fete: 1,500 Gather Here to Mark the Revolt of 1848," *New York Times*, March 12, 1962, 19; "Slachta, Margit (1884-1974)," *Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms: Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe, 19th and 20th Centuries*, edited by Francisca Haan, et al. (Central European University Press, 2005), 521-24.

city approximately sixty miles southwest of Budapest, in 1947 when he was in his mid-twenties. Under Csordas's leadership, the church blended reformed theology with an unyielding anti-communist attitude. Cold War politics also provided instrumental in political exiles establishing cultural institutions. In 1955, these Hungarian elites founded the American Hungarian Library and Historical Society, the institutional progenitor for the Magyar Ház, which has claimed the mantle of headquarters of Hungarian cultural heritage in Manhattan for more than half a century.⁷⁴

ETHNIC YORKVILLE'S LOST SYMBOLS AND DAMAGED REPUTATION: THE TUMULT OF THE 1960S

As Yorkville's working-class and largely ethnic residents and proprietors continued to contend with rapacious developers, vanishing brownstones, and empty stores, New York City passed the 1965 Landmarks Preservation Law. This legislation capped three decades of preservation activism in the city, a movement that finally found political daylight after a series of publicly unpopular demolition projects such as the Brokaw Mansion, located at East 79th Street and Fifth Avenue, and Penn Station. The Landmarks Commission, created to administer the preservation law, adopted a cautious approach in its early years designed to avoid constitutional challenges from the real estate industry or other commercial interests. Even accounting for its prudence, however, the Commission showed a bias toward preserving properties in affluent areas such as the "Silk Stocking" or "Gold Coast" district of the Upper East Side rather than in traditionally working-class, ethnic neighborhoods such as nearby Yorkville.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ "Gabor Csordas, 71, of Hungarian Church," *New York Times*, January 10, 1992, B6; Steven Kurutz, "Church That Once Offered Refuge Sits at the Eye of a Storm," *New York Times*, September 19, 2004, CY6. *Chapter 8, Believing Heritage*, presents a more detailed examination of the Hungarian Reformed Church, as part of wider discussion of the intersection of ethnic religion and ethnic heritage. "The History of the Hungarian House, Magyar Haz," <http://www.hungarianhouse.org/en/category/about-us/the-hungarian-house-of-new-york/>, accessed March 1, 2020; Tom Szigeti, "Hungarian Heritage Festival Held in New York City!" *Hungary Today*, September 8, 2017, <https://hungarytoday.hu/hungarian-heritage-festival-held-new-york-city-96291/>, accessed March 3, 2020; Fanni Kaszás, "'On Tuesdays, the whole XX. century comes alive at the tables': Interview with Ildikó Nagy, Director of the Hungarian House of New York," December 30, 2018, <https://hungarytoday.hu/on-tuesdays-the-whole-xx-century-comes-alive-at-the-tables-interview-with-ildiko-nagy-director-of-the-hungarian-house-of-new-york/>, accessed March 3, 2020. The Magyar Ház is featured in *Chapter 6: Housing Heritage*.

⁷⁵ Even the name "Yorkville" seemed to be in jeopardy during this time of accelerated change. The Yorkville Chamber of Commerce contacted Mayor Wagner and the New York Planning Commission to expressed members' dismay at a map omitting Yorkville from the city's more than eighty neighborhoods. The Planning Commission tried to ease concerns by stating that "[w]e

Thus, ethnic Yorkville's built heritage had few defenders during Gotham's construction frenzy, even among the preservationist crowd. Few outsiders seemed concerned that ethnic Yorkville might fade away without a trace.⁷⁶

Consequently, German Yorkville's primary symbols started to fall to the wayside during this period, a process marked by occasional eulogies in the local press. In 1965, the Yorkville Casino's new ownership group, the Yorkville Management Corporation, converted the building to accommodate a modern movie theatre, a night club, and offices. In the process, they eliminated the longtime German language theatre as well as the space that had welcomed political rallies and campaign speeches, organized labor meetings, and hundreds of gatherings of ethnic clubs and organizations, including those tied to German and Hungarian identities.⁷⁷ One year later, the Ruppert Brewery, founded in 1867 and once the nation's most productive brewing operation, shut down. Rheingold, a competitor, purchased the intellectual property rights relating to the company's primary brand, Knickerbocker, but sold the company's thirty-three buildings in the Hellgate section of Yorkville to a powerful developer, raising even more questions about the fate of the neighborhood's ethnic landscape.⁷⁸

Along with the loss of its most notable sites, ethnic Yorkville faced new attacks on its reputation in the sixties. Gotham's mainstream press increasingly reinforced a vision of Yorkville as old-fashioned and static, and its remaining working-class, ethnic residents as close-minded and even bigoted. *New York Times* reporter Thomas Buckley's 1963 article "Changing Neighborhood: Yorkville's Flavor Giving

can't imagine an official map of the city without Yorkville designated as Yorkville. When our official neighborhood map is issued, we're sure that Yorkville will be on it." "City Assured Yorkville" It's Still a Neighborhood," *New York Times*, July 26, 1962, 16.

⁷⁶ Rebecca Birmingham, "Smash or Save: The New York City Landmarks Preservation Act and New Challenges to Historic Preservation," *Journal of Law and Policy* 19, no. 1 (2010): 271-79; "The Disappearing Landmarks," *New York Times*, September 18, 1964, 34; Anthony C. Wood, *Preserving New York: Winning the Right to Protect a City's Landmarks* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 1-20.

⁷⁷ Despite the Yorkville Casino's complex and diverse history, the local press offered elegies foregrounding the pro-Nazi rallies which occurred within its walls. "Yorkville Landmark Will Be Razed," *New York Times*, March 2, 1965, 57; Thomas W. Ennis, "Yorkville Closing an Old Landmark: Casino Where Gaiety Thrived to Be Office Building," *New York Times*, August 2, 1965

⁷⁸ "Yorkville Landmark Will Be Razed," *New York Times*, March 2, 1965, 57; Thomas W. Ennis, "Yorkville Closing an Old Landmark: Casino Where Gaiety Thrived to Be Office Building," *New York Times*, August 2, 1965, 25; "Offices Invade Yorkville Section: Casino's Conversion to Give Beer Halls New Neighbor," *New York Times*, April 2, 1967, 407; Thomas Buckley, "Ruppert Brewery Is Close Here: End of the Landmark on East Side Won't Stop Flow of Beer," *New York Times*, January 1, 1966, 27.

Way to East Side Conformity” provides an apt example. In a story ostensibly about gentrification, Buckley presented a quasi-history lesson about Yorkville. He stated that “[u]ntil World War II the population of Yorkville was overwhelmingly German, Irish, Hungarian, Austrian, and Czechoslovak in origin, in about that order.”⁷⁹ New construction, he predicted, would alter the neighborhood’s demographics and strangle the ethnic commercial sector that caused former residents to return regularly to satisfy their ethnic fix. Buckley counter-balanced his sense of concern about the loss of cultural distinctiveness with an equal measure of criticism of Yorkville’s ethnics, who he characterized as insular, distrusting, and racially intolerant. Buckley even rekindled visions of Yorkville’s Nazi moment, musing about when “Fritz Kuhn was running the German-American Bund from an office on 85th Street and leading goose-step parades to more cheers than boos.”⁸⁰ While acknowledging the displacement likely to flow from this transition, Buckley implied that the demographic turnover would ultimately lead to a more open and inclusive neighborhood. Buckley’s piece captured the ambivalence that would plague ethnic Yorkville’s legacy throughout much of the twentieth century. He painted the neighborhood as a place defined by a proud but stained ethnic past and populated by an antiquated lot naively trying to stop the rising tide of modernity.⁸¹

New York’s 1960s racial politics helped cement ethnic Yorkville’s public reputation as a bastion of intolerance. By rebuking working-class whites residing within what was left of ethnic enclaves, the mainstream press implicitly exonerated affluent sectors of the city from any culpability for existing racial tensions. Thus, news coverage of the National Renaissance Party (NRP), a white nationalist organization,

⁷⁹ Thomas Buckley, “Changing Neighborhood: Yorkville’s Flavor Giving Way to East Side Conformity” 66 *New Buildings Go Up in 10 Years*, *New York Times*, October 17, 1963, 29.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid. Jeanine Larmoth, writing for *Harper’s Bazaar*, hit this point squarely in a 1965 article about Third Avenue. Larmoth wrote that “Third Avenue makes its way through Yorkville, intersects “steak row,” sobers up with business machine corporations, gets touched by Irish, Armenians, Czechs, Hungarians and Poles. It had an “El” once. To canopy it, to hide from the sky its less seemly aspects. Now, it is wide and bare of shadows or illusions. It could be nowhere in the world but New York. For nowhere is internationalism so homely a proposition, where import means, not luxury, not sophistication, but a sustaining link with a lost home.” Jeanine Larmoth, “Three Days on Third Avenue,” *Harper’s Bazaar* 98, no. 3042 (May 1965): 168.

focused on the group's occasional activities in Yorkville. The NRP, based on the Upper West Side, used Yorkville as one setting for its campaign of hate and bigotry. James Madole, the party head, delivered stump speeches laced with racist and antisemitic rhetoric, at one point claiming that Jews had conspired to dominate the Yorkville-Mid-Manhattan Chamber of Commerce. NRP members, some wearing Bund-like uniforms, tried to distribute literature carrying similar messages. Journalists deemphasized locals' attempts to drive out the hate-mongers, preferring instead to pick the scab of the Bund days. Syndicated columnist Max Freedman, for instance, compared Yorkville to Birmingham, Alabama. "In both places," he wrote, "there are prejudices ready to leap out from the dark regions of the human spirit."⁸²

As Freedom Summer unfolded in Mississippi in 1966, civil rights protests erupted in the heart of Yorkville following a deadly shooting by a white, off-duty police officer, Lt. Thomas Gilligan, of James Powell, an unarmed, fifteen-year-old black student. Gilligan, fired two shots and alleging that Powell had rushed him with a knife, claimed self-defense. Powell, a resident of the Bronx, had enrolled in a summer reading course at Robert F. Wagner Junior High School on East 76th Street. The day of the shooting, approximately three hundred young people demonstrated in Yorkville in what the local mainstream press described as a "riot." As local African American civil rights leaders called for a full and immediate investigation, the U.S. Nationalist Party, the latest mutation of white nationalism to use Yorkville as a convenient backdrop, tried to leverage the tragedy to advance its hate agenda. The group called on Mayor Wagner to immediately halt the city's busing program, disband the city's Human Rights Commission, and arrest civil rights leaders such as Bayard Rustin and James Farmer for inciting a riot. Despite the group having no connection to Yorkville and failing to garner local support for its views, Gotham's media used the U.S. Nationalist Party to reinforce a racial binary between black Harlem and

⁸² Joseph Cassidy and Lester Abelman, "4,000 Rout Hatemen in a Yorkville Gutter," *New York Daily News*, May 26, 1963, 2C; Arthur Noble, "He Goosesteps Himself Into a Pail of Jail," *New York Daily News*, May 27, 1963, 3; Associated Press, "Storm Trooper Put in Jail," *New Brunswick Daily Home News*, May 27, 1963, 17; "Trooper of Yorkville Wins, Loses in Court," *New York Daily News*, June 5, 1963, 30; Joseph Cassidy and Lester Abelman, "Nazi Punks at Diner; Nab 8, Two Arsenals," *New York Daily News*, July 15, 1963, 3; Max Freedman, "Hate Merchants Pose Grave Danger," *Salt Lake Tribune*, May 29, 1963, 14.

white Yorkville. A headline published by the *Daily News* in the middle of this controversy played on this trope: “A Boy Mourned in Harlem; Hate Peddled in Yorkville.”⁸³

Notwithstanding the *Daily News*’s penchant for sensational headlines, there was no denying the racial chasm that had separated East Harlem and Yorkville for decades. Yorkville, despite its reputation as an ethnically diverse district had fewer residents of color than any other Manhattan neighborhood, save perhaps the Upper East Side’s Gold Coast. Those committed to keeping it that way bristled at any potential change in Yorkville’s racial demographics. In 1947, the city had made affordable housing in north Yorkville available to a few black families.⁸⁴ Mrs. Hermina Baumgartner, the owner of multiple tenements on East 95th Street, complained that introducing African Americans would drive down property values and drive away tenants. A group of school-aged white boys threatened to greet the black children with violence. “Why can’t they go to Harlem?” one of them yelled.⁸⁵ Despite these issues, the East Harlem Project and the Commission on Human Rights of New York worked with the city’s public school system to integrate Yorkville’s schools.⁸⁶ The integration projects of the late fifties and early sixties enjoyed modest success, bringing in a few hundred students from East Harlem. Parents of the bused students registered general approval of the program, citing improvements in academic success and attendance. Persistent lobbying by a vocal set of white parents, however, eventually convinced the

⁸³ John Mallon and Leeds Moberly, “A Boy Mourned in Harlem; Hate Peddled in Yorkville,” *New York Daily News*, July 19, 1964, C5; Theodore Jones, “Negro Boy Killed; 300 Harass Police: Teen-Agers Hurl Cans and Bottles After Shooting by Off-Duty Officer,” *New York Times*, July 17, 1964, 1 ; Leonard Buder, “East Side School Upset by Tragedy: Attendance Off 25% Since Shooting of Negro Boy,” *New York Times*, July 25, 1964, 8.

⁸⁴ These families were originally slated to live in housing in Brownsville, an area of Brooklyn. When that project encountered a serious construction problem, the City Housing Authority responded by finding them space in Yorkville. Yorkville’s predominantly white population may have been the reason the neighborhood was treated as only an emergency solution rather than the original plan. “First Family Moved into Building Refurbished for Project Victims: Housing Authority Cites Anti-Bias Policy as Negroes Enter Yorkville Structure – Brownsville Houses Inspected,” *New York Times*, March 7, 1947, 27.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ The East Harlem Project and New York’s Human Rights Commission’s joint report on school integration issued in 1962 referred to Yorkville as “solid white.” “Releasing Human Potential: A Study of east Harlem-Yorkville School Bus Transfer,” *East Harlem Project and the City Commission on Human Rights of New York*, August 1962.

city to create an East Harlem school district, thereby eventually reversing many of the gains achieved through integration.⁸⁷

Similar divisions surfaced three years later in connection with the El Barrio riot of 1967. El Barrio, or Spanish Harlem, referred to the large community of first- and second-generation Puerto Rican Americans residing in an area of East Harlem extending from East 116th to East 97th Streets north to south and from First to Fifth Avenues east to west. The city's Puerto Rican population surged from approximately 60,000 in 1940 to over 610,000 in 1960 and 860,000 in 1970. In July 1967, an off-duty police officer shot and killed Reinaldo Rodriguez, who allegedly stabbed another man over a craps game near the corner of Third Avenue and East 111th Street, about fifteen blocks north of Yorkville. The incident inspired legitimate protests but also ignited violent reactions. Two residents of the neighborhood died over the course of five days of disorder. Many residents of El Barrio criticized the NYPD for escalating the incident through its "riot squadron," while some business owners who lived outside of the neighborhood lambasted Mayor Lindsay for failing to prevent looting.⁸⁸

The *New York Times* used the incident as an opportunity to highlight the clear divisions between Spanish Harlem and Yorkville. Reporter Deidre Carmody called East 96th Street, recognized as Yorkville's northern boundary, "as divisive a line as the wall that separates the two Berlins."⁸⁹ More than twenty years after World War II, she described Yorkville as "a polyglot area of German, Irish, Hungarian, Austrian, and Czechoslovakian residents" who felt raw contempt for their northern neighbors.⁹⁰ A Yorkville-based police officer, speaking on an assurance of anonymity, derided Spanish Harlem's Puerto

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Virginia E. Sanchez Korrol, *From Colonia to Community: The History of Puerto Ricans in New York City* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1983), 3-62, 221-14; Vincent J. Cannato, *The Ungovernable City: John Lindsay and His Struggle to Save New York* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 132-35; Jose E. Cruz, "Puerto Rican Politics in New York City during the 1960s: Structural Ideation, Contingencies, and Power," in *The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion: Identity Politics in Twenty-First Century America*, edited by David F. Ericson (New York: Routledge, 2011), 67-90.

⁸⁹ Deidre Carmody, "East 96th: Wall Between Worlds," *New York Times*, July 27, 1967, 20.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

Rican residents as “inherently lazy” and on the dole.⁹¹ “They stay in bed until the middle of the afternoon,” he insisted, “then they wake up, play their radios, drink beer on the streets and throw the cans into the gutters.”⁹² Marvin Sicherman, executive director of the Stanley Isaacs Community Center in north Yorkville, claimed that many of the aging white ethnics for whom the facility served as a lifeline held similar opinions.⁹³ These views gestured at the moral and intellectual inconsistencies of white ethnic identity in New York City during the 1960s. Many of Yorkville’s Euro-Americans, Germans and Hungarians included, were quick to distinguish themselves culturally and socio-economically from one another, and, especially, from what they perceived as dominant elements of Old New York. On the other hand, they were at least equally committed to their status as white Americans and proud to have held the geographic color line for so long. To many of the neighborhood’s white ethnics, civil strife in East Harlem did not represent evidence of racial inequality and the need for social justice. Rather, they construed these events as another threat to their way of life.⁹⁴

Kathryn Jolowicz, an amateur historian and storyteller who came of age within Yorkville’s German enclave during its autumnal season, often tells her audiences they should consider ethnic Yorkville’s tale complete as of 1960. For Jolowicz and others who experienced the steady decline of German American spaces, structures, and institutions as well as the out-migration of family and friends, the narrative of working-class, ethnic Yorkville’s post-1960 narrative may be too difficult to bear. Moreover, those focused myopically on the German American community fail to recall the resurgence of Yorkville’s Hungarian enclave that carried on through the sixties. Regardless of what drives historical interpretations of ethnic Yorkville that fixate on German Yorkville and avoid discussions or displacement

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

and gentrification, such treatments miss opportunities to explore ethnic Yorkville's transition from a place that harbored living enclaves to one more associated with collective memories of a bygone era. Ironically, this transformational process, through which the contemporary ethnic Yorkville imaginary assumed discernible form, inspired the very ethnic heritage practices of which Jolowicz is a vital part. To remediate this omission, ethnic Yorkville's journey from history to heritage constitutes the dominant thematic backdrop of the neighborhood's final historical chapter, its winter season, and lays the groundwork for critical examinations of ongoing German and Hungarian ethnic heritage practices taken up in Book II.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Kathryn Jolowicz, known as the Yorkville Historian, is featured prominently within *Chapter 5: Telling Heritage*.

CHAPTER 4
RECALLING ETHNIC YORKVILLE IN WINTERTIME: THE 1970S TO THE PRESENT

WINTER NIGHT

In this winter night a freight train—
itself a small winter night—streaks out onto the plain.
Its smoke ready to extinguish,
in an arm span infinitely,
the stars that revolve and languish.

On the frozen tops of boxcars
scurrying like a mouse, light flies,
the light of this winter night.

*Attila József*¹

In the early 1970s, Bruce A. Gimbel, chairman of Gimbel Brothers, Inc., foresaw the company's newest department store on the corner of Lexington Avenue and East 86th Street, as the cornerstone of a neighborhood renaissance. Gimbels East, as it was known, wiped out a popular movie theater and working-class housing. To Gimbel, Yorkville, with its frenetic construction of new luxury apartments and growing inventory of available high-rent commercial space, stood on the verge of realizing its full potential. Where others bemoaned forced residential relocations and the closures of ethnic shops and restaurants, Gimbel envisioned a tectonic event at the fault line separating working-class Yorkville and the Upper East Side, which he called "the richest suburb in the world."² According to this vision, the latter would bury the former in the name of progress and profit. Gimbel's gamble failed; his geological forecast never came to pass. Fourteen years after its bombastic opening, Gimbels was just another

¹ The life of Attila József, one of Hungary's greatest twentieth century poets, was like a shooting star, brief but a spectacular site to behold. Born in an industrial suburb of Budapest in 1905, he grew up in a series of foster homes after his father abandoned the family to immigrate to the United States and his mother died of cancer a decade later. Critics note Freudian influence in his poetry, especially its focus on the importance of childhood. Michael Slipp called József "the outstanding proletarian poet of the twentieth century." Michael Slipp, "Four Poems by Attila József," *The Hopkins Review* 7, no. 3 (Summer 2014): 347. József's death at the age of thirty-two remains controversial, although many believe he committed suicide. In 2011, rumors spread that the Viktor Orbán-led government planned to remove the statue of a seated József located near the Hungarian Parliament building, presumably because of the poet's temporary affiliation with the pre-World War II communist party. However, József's likeness continues to sit facing the Danube. Ibid, 346-47; "Hungarians and Poetry: Attila József and His Endangered Statue," *Hungarian Spectrum*, <https://hungarianspectrum.org/2011/11/21/hungarians-and-poetry-attila-jozsef-and-his-endangered-statue/>, accessed March 11, 2020.

² "Yorkville Site Is Prepared for New East Side Gimbels," *New York Daily News*, October 2, 1968, 4; Albert Scardino, "Gimbels at 86th: A Born Loser," *New York Times*, June 7, 1986, 33.

struggling retailer desperately seeking to unload its uptown property, at a loss if necessary. The *New York Times* lampooned the entire affair, calling the Gimbels store on East 86th Street a “born loser.”³ Gimbels East did not transform Yorkville into a shopping mecca but its owner’s efforts to do so fueled nostalgic recollections of the time of lager and sauerbraten.⁴

The meteoric rise and fall of Gimbels East offers an entry point into ethnic Yorkville’s winter season, an epoch marked by the accelerated erosion of its German and Hungarian residential enclaves, further conflation and ossification of the ethnic Yorkville imaginary, and the advent of an uneven memory culture struggling to preserve intangible and material elements of the district’s ethnic past. By the time Gimbels pulled up stakes in 1986, only a few thousand German Americans and Hungarian Americans continued to call Yorkville home and just a handful of ethnic stores and institutions remained. Echoing the sentiments of many of Yorkville’s white ethnics, Heinz Schlenker, manager of the then-popular Karl Ehmer Wurst Haus, drew correlations between the disappearance of ethnic Yorkville and the appearance of the giant department store. For Schlenker, Gimbels stood as a monument to emptiness, to the destruction of community, and the loss of place-based identity. Just a few years later, unsurprisingly, the Karl Ehmer franchise pulled up stakes, no longer able to justify maintaining its Yorkville branch.⁵

Two distinct periods comprise ethnic Yorkville’s winter season: the Gimbels years during the seventies and eighties followed by the neighborhood’s final turn toward gentrification from the 1990s to the present, during which the imagined history of the neighborhood’s ethnic past hardened. This season’s defining features included the phenomenon whereby many of the district’s white ethnics adopted politically conservative interpretations of what ailed the city and the nation, often leaning into

³ Albert Scardino, “Gimbels at 86th: A Born Loser,” *New York Times*, June 7, 1986, 33.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

a self-image as America's forgotten and unappreciated constituency. Big box retail, exemplified by Gimbels East, and large-scale infrastructure projects, such as the planned Second Avenue Subway, represented the latest series of threats to German and Hungarian residents and the extant spaces and structures on which they relied. The failure of housing schemes to live up to promises to help aging working-class ethnics stay in their home district only exacerbated frustrations. Within this atmosphere, Yorkville morphed into a place of ethnic heritage, where a shrinking cadre of Hungarian and even fewer German residents remained rooted while their co-ethnics, including a sizeable diaspora, returned to the neighborhood to visit friends and family, worship, purchase groceries and imported goods, or attend meetings of the few enduring ethnic clubs and associations. Yorkville's role as a place of reunion and ritual made the sustainability of ethnic shops and restaurants a high priority for these German and Hungarian diasporas. Every closure of an ethnically owned business, therefore, received inordinate attention as a tragedy bringing ethnic Yorkville ever closer to death.

Starting in the 1990s, with ethnic Yorkville's materiality disappearing at an accelerated rate, Gotham's mainstream press coopted what had been an internal lament. With the residential and commercial takeover of the neighborhood a fait accompli, it now appeared safe to lionize ethnic Yorkville's past. The press, therefore, called on calcified social memories of Yorkville's ethnic communities on special occasions such as the visit of Pope Benedict XVI, the German-born pontif, in 2008. The ethnic Yorkville imaginary also helped fill up the melting pot thesis, America's heavily guarded national immigration myth, with German Americans playing the role of the good migrants who dutifully assimilated into generalized American whiteness. The Bund episode now tended to appear as a decontextualized oddity, adding flavor to the broth. Finally, ethnic Yorkville's post-mortem reputation fed into New York's self-aggrandizing image as the quintessential city of immigrants, as long as one did not dwell on or look too deeply into the discrimination, harassment, and surveillance ethnic communities endured during the nation's two world wars.

DISPLACING ETHNIC YORKVILLE DURING THE GIMBELS YEARS: THE 1970S AND 1980S

Ethnic Yorkville entered its winter season amidst a maelstrom. In the early 1970s, New York's bond rating collapsed leaving the city on the brink of municipal bankruptcy. In October 1975, President Gerald Ford announced his refusal to use federal resources to bail out the city, prompting the *Daily News* to proclaim: "Ford to City: Drop Dead."⁶ A two-day electricity blackout in July 1977 affected almost all parts of Greater New York including Yorkville. Opinion leaders ranging from Hollywood to the national press corps assailed Gotham as a cesspool of drugs, homelessness, prostitution, police corruption, and violent crime. As stated by historian Roberta Brandes Gratz, "[i]n the 1970s, New York was probably the most unloved city in the country."⁷ This environment sparked debates about America's problematic cities that reflected the larger, national political shift toward conservative ideologies and policies. Consistent with the prevailing mood, Yorkville's white ethnic residents contributed to an angry coalition that condemned Mayor John V. Lindsay as an irresponsible liberal during the early seventies. They often assessed Lindsay through zero-sum thinking, judging his focus on minority rights and populations as betraying a lack of concern for or commitment to white ethnics. Accordingly, Yorkville's remaining German and Hungarian communities strongly supported Ed Koch over Mario Cuomo in the contentious 1977 mayoral race, finding common cause with Koch's pledge to root out corruption in anti-poverty programs as well as his adherence to neoliberal solutions to New York's fiscal crisis.⁸

⁶ "Ford to City: Drop Dead: Vows He'll Veto Any Bailout," *New York Daily News*, October 30, 1975, 1; Kim Phillips-Fein, *Fear City: New York's Fiscal Crisis and the Rise of Austerity Politics* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2017), 177-89.

⁷ Roberta Brandes Gratz, *The Battle for Gotham: New York in the Shadow of Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs* (New York: Nation Books, 2010), 23.

⁸ Kim Phillips-Fein, *Fear City*, 34-44, 177-89; Frank McLaughlin, "Protest Yorkville Apt. Squeeze," *New York Daily News*, May 14, 1969, 22; Sam Roberts, "Backlash Is a-Buildin' on the Upper East Side," *New York Daily News*, February 12, 1973, 5, 34; "Primary Runoffs – Results at a Glance," *New York Daily News*, September 21, 1977, 17; Peter W. Colby, "Ed Koch and the New York City Political Tradition," in *New York State Today: Politics, Government, Public Policy*, 2nd Edition, edited by Peter W. Colby and John K. White (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 51-59; Jonathan Soffer, *Ed Koch and the Rebuilding of New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 146-52; Lee Denbatt, "Koch, in Inaugural, Asks That 'Pioneers' Come East' to City: Key Officials also Sworn In," *New York Times*, January 2, 1978, 1, 13; "Text of Address Delivered by Koch at His Inauguration as Mayor of New York City," *New York Times*, January 2, 1978, 13.

Although these convulsions touched all New Yorkers, two specific events in the early seventies directly threatened ethnic, working-class Yorkville. Despite construction delays and cost-overruns, Gimbels East planned to open its doors in early 1972. Around the same time, the city broke ground on a Second Avenue subway line to run from the Financial District to the Bronx with multiple stations in Yorkville. The Yorkville Chamber of Commerce had lobbied city officials for this line as far back as the late twenties, believing it would promote local business and provide residents with a transportation option other than the congested subway station at Lexington Avenue and East 86th Street. The idea resurfaced periodically in subsequent decades, usually generating public dialogue about how it might affect Yorkville's ethnic character. Now, combined with Gimbels East, the Second Avenue subway appeared to pose a serious threat to longtime residents by making the neighborhood a more viable option for professionals with downtown jobs.⁹

Considering these circumstances through the lens of Yorkville's white ethnics, Carter Horsley of the *New York Times* described the neighborhood as standing "at a crossroads,"¹⁰ with each path forward obscured by doubt and fear. "Once one of the city's most cohesive ethnic communities, with Germans and Eastern European people predominating," he wrote, "Yorkville has felt the expansionary pressure from the wealthier Upper East Side on the south [and west] and the poorer East Harlem on the north."¹¹ For proponents of development, on the other hand, change could not come soon enough. "Right now, the area is at a kind of standstill and unless conditions change no one is going to invest" warned David Ornstein of Yorkville Management, one of the entities seeking to benefit from the reimagined neighborhood.¹² "But sooner or later the old stuff must deteriorate," he bluntly added.¹³ Ornstein

⁹ "Second Av. Chosen for Next Subway; Cost \$800,000,000: Program to Be Announced Soon Calls for Four-Track Line from Houston St. to the Harlem," *New York Times*, August 30, 1929, 1; "Seeks Subway Relief: Yorkville Body Urges Building of Second Avenue Line," *New York Times*, December 29, 1929, RE2

¹⁰ Carter B. Horsley, "Yorkville at Crossroads in Development," *New York Times*, January 30, 1972, R1.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

remained confident that “[i]n the long run, sense will prevail, and development will continue.”¹⁴ Other members of the unofficial redevelopment alliance couched their positions in more politic formulations. Martin Swartzman, a principal of Glenwood Management, a firm controlling multiple Yorkville properties, assured locals that the neighborhood’s distinctive qualities and colorful flavor would endure. Henry Sturman, who owned several properties on or near the corner of Third Avenue and East 86th Street promised that Yorkville’s growth would honor its “continental flair” by making it even “more cosmopolitan.”¹⁵

Real estate developers were not the only group who saw Yorkville as a business proposition. Throughout the seventies, prostitution gained a foothold in and around the former Sauerkraut Boulevard, signaling the deterioration of the district. Writing two months prior to the 1977 municipal election, columnist Beth Fallon, known for speaking truth to power, reported that “[f]ive blocks from [the mayor’s] mansion, hookers flaunt themselves in the doorways of Yorkville.”¹⁶ She commented that “watching E. 86th St., with its marzipan stores and airy Bavarian castles in café windows, slowly infiltrated by prostitutes, by addicts, by fear” left one with a “blinding sadness.”¹⁷ Local merchants such as Mihaly Vestergom, the owner of Café Geiger, one of the few remnants of East 86th Street’s Germanic heyday, blamed the neighborhood’s slide on Gimbels East, which, he insisted, precipitated the incursion of street vendors, fast food venues, and higher volumes of garbage. Vestergom’s daughter, Penny, a lifelong resident of Yorkville, expressed outrage over the situation. “We’ve lived on this block for 20 years [and] it’s a good neighborhood [with] good schools,” she explained.¹⁸ But now, prostitutes “openly solicit, while their pimps double-park in their big cars.”¹⁹ Community Board 8, charged with communicating the needs and concerns of residents and businesses to the Borough President,

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Beth Fallon, “Battle Lines Are Drawn in Beame,” *New York Daily News*, September 1, 1977, 14.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

complained bitterly to city officials and law enforcement. Its president even accompanied police officers on nighttime observations of the area. Locals saw the prostitution problem as a byproduct of the central issue: the erosion of a rooted, family-based sense of place. What they perceived as officials' inadequate response only reinforced concerns that the city had deprioritized the area's working-class residents. Conversely, the redevelopment crowd used prostitution and the general uptick in crime as evidence that only a holistic make-over could save the neighborhood. Expanding the Upper East Side's affluence, this logic held, would cure ailing Yorkville. Even Yorkville's name became a debatable topic during the 1980s. Real estate developers tended to favor the term the "Upper East Side" over "Yorkville," believing that such a rebranding exercise might boost property values, and erase memories of the district's grittier days. Throughout the seventies and well into the eighties, these competing viewpoints clashed in a chaotic war that played out in multiple venues ranging from city streets to City Hall.²⁰

Yorkville's white ethnics faced the trials and tribulations of the 1970s while Americans engaged in an uneven, contentious, and politicized debate about the salience of Euro-American identity.²¹ This discourse played out in New York in an amplified fashion due to the city's multicultural past and present. As ethnic Yorkville faded further from immediate sight, it often became fodder for the debate. One member of the ethnic Yorkville diaspora, for example, summoned Americanization rhetoric from the Great War-era to critique increased Hispanic migration. In an editorial entitled "Melting Pot," the writer, simply identified as "M. Suva," weaponized his or her family's immigrant legacy, stating:

²⁰ Thomas Lueck, "Beth Fallon, 64, Columnist Who Needled the Powerful, Dies," *New York Times*, January 30, 2006, A21; Beth Fallon, "Battle Lines Are Drawn in Beame," *New York Daily News*, September 1, 1977, 14.

²¹ Commentators produced voluminous writings about the subject of white ethnicity during the 1970s. The second edition of *Beyond the Melting Pot*, co-written by sociologists Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, was published in 1970. In considering the durability of white ethnic identity almost a half century after the end of mass immigration from Europe, Glazer and Moynihan wrote that "[t]he initial notion of an American melting pot did not, it seems, grasp what would happen in America." Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City, Second Edition* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1970), 13. At the same time, Glazer and Moynihan described a kind of diffusion of some white ethnics into a category they labeled W.A.S.P.s (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants). Specifically, they lumped Germans and Hungarians, at least those belonging to Protestant denominations and who had improved their socio-economic status, into this socio-ethnic category. *Ibid.*, 181-216. Glazer and Moynihan opined, "[t]he Germans, who formed along with the Irish the dominant ethnic groups of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the city," have not maintained, as a group, a prominence in the city proportionate to their numbers." *Ibid.*, xxxii.

I am really disappointed with this double standard. My family immigrated from Czechoslovakia, located in Yorkville, and had to learn English in order to survive. The same thing happened with the Italians, Germans, and Hungarians in our neighborhoods. So, what's with this Spanish stuff. Aren't we all Americans? There is one language for all the people of this great country.²²

On a less overtly political note, writers from the *New York Times* used the nation's Bicentennial to consider how urban neighborhoods such as Yorkville, and its once prominent white ethnics, fit into the ethnicity debate. Journalist Richard F. Shephard described New York as "the ultimate mammoth cliché of American immigration" with migrants "becoming old-stock [and] new waves displacing old waves."²³ Shephard emphasized, however, that this process leaves behind "archeological strata."²⁴ In the case of Yorkville, he argued, this residue assumed the shape of surviving ethnic restaurants and shops, which whispered clues about the past to those willing to listen. Richard Peck, another *Times* writer, also provided the obligatory delineation of the German and Hungarian restaurants and shops but placed them within a deep and thoughtful historical account. He complicated the myth of Yorkville as a "boozy, all-German cuckoo-clock land on the last Alpine meadow before Harlem, [a place] somehow remote from the temporary chic of the essential Upper East Side."²⁵ Peck worried that this vision elided a fascinating multi-cultural history featuring Weckquaesgeek Indians, Dutch settlers, the East River landed gentry, and the ethnic communities of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For Peck, this history demonstrated not only that "Yorkville thrives on change,"²⁶ but that each group which once called it home helped to construct its sense of place. Thus, Peck's interpretation of ethnic succession in Yorkville stands as a rare testament to the merits of connecting ethnic identity with a sense of place at a time when scholars increasingly theorized ethnicity as a matter of individual perception and choice.²⁷

²² M. Suva, "Melting Pot," *New York Daily News*, September 19, 1974, 61.

²³ Richard F. Shephard, "A Guide to the City's Melting Pot," *New York Times*, July 9, 1976, 60.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Richard Peck, "Bubble On, O Melting Pot!" *New York Times*, January 12, 1975, 252.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.; Shephard, "A Guide to the City's Melting Pot."

As opinion leaders tried to understand the place of ethnic identity in New York's changing cityscape, battles raged on between locals and developers. Within this chaotic atmosphere, even French pastry could symbolize Yorkville's problematic turn toward the "chic and costly."²⁸ The *New York Times* characterized the arrival of the croissant at Glazer's Bake Shop in 1983 as an implicit threat to the family-owned business's German traditions. One year later, the New York Turn Verein, one of the social pillars of German Yorkville, sold its building at the corner of Lexington Avenue and East 85th Street. Merging with a Westchester County club, the amalgamated American Turners constructed a new clubhouse in the Bronx, installing a few interior elements from their old Yorkville haunt.²⁹

In 1985, Bill Reel, a columnist for *Newsday* and the *Daily News* who championed working-class causes, used the plight of Yorkville's residents and small shopkeepers to exclaim that "[p]rosperity is killing the city."³⁰ Real estate magnate Peter Kalikow was in the process of evicting more than 1,200 residents from rent-regulated housing on East 78th and East 79th Streets with a playbook as familiar as the fallout: increase rents, evict, rebuild or renovate, and then increase rents some more. The projected victims in this case included a neighborhood butcher shop owned by Ed Kloos, Sr., a second-generation German American. His son, Ed Kloos, Jr., a minister with the United Church of Christ in Long Island and part of the ethnic Yorkville diaspora, evoked the fears and frustrations of many when he said:

My grandfather came to this country from Europe. He built this business. Sometimes it seems like foreigners built America and Americans are destroying it. Does raw capitalism replace the ethics this country was built on? Have we lost our humanity to economic considerations? It's better to be the screwdriver than the screw – Is that our philosophy?³¹

²⁸ Sara Rimer, "Yorkville Turns Chic and Costly," *New York Times*, November 6, 1983, R1.

²⁹ Ibid.; Shawn G. Kennedy, "Ethnic Makes Way for Modern," *New York Times*, September 16, 1984, A1.

³⁰ Bill Reel, "Yorkville or Yuppieville?" *New York Daily News*, May 2, 1985, 50; Bill Mason, "Former Newsday Columnist Bill Reel Dies at 71," *Newsday*, May 4, 2010, <https://www.newsday.com/long-island/obituaries/former-newsday-columnist-bill-reel-dies-at-71-1.1895894>.

³¹ Ibid.

Yorkville's gentrification during the 1980s seemed to suggest an affirmative answer to each of these rhetorical questions.³²

Yorkville's residents did band together during the Gimbels years in response to many of these challenges. They tried to stop or slow the pace of evictions, influence the manner of new construction, and advocated for green space as well as the preservation of local businesses and affordable housing. These collective efforts yielded sporadic victories but also exposed fault lines within the resistance related to socio-economic class and ethnic identity. For instance, a group of upper middle-class residents rallied to save Asphalt Green, a community space created by locals on a former industrial site near East 90th Street and York Avenue, from the fate of hosting yet another apartment building. This complex, however, had been slated to include the kind of affordable housing sought by older white ethnic evictees. Prioritizing a park over peoples' homes did not bode well for ethnic Yorkville.³³

Plans to erect residential towers at the north Yorkville site where Ruppert Brewery once dominated yielded more widespread opprobrium, manifesting in editorials, petitions to city officials, protests, and lawsuits. At a minimum, longtime locals wanted this project to create more affordable units. Over the course of a decade, from the mid-70s to the mid-80s, Glenwood Management, the developer of the Ruppert Towers project, deftly negotiated all such obstacles. Once completed, the 37-story towers fetched rents ranging from \$1,300 to \$2,700. While Glenwood agreed to designate a few apartments for seniors and those with limited financial means, this paltry concession failed to reverse the serial displacement of Yorkville's working class. In fact, the towers, in their grandiosity, served as an unmistakable monument to the close of an era.³⁴

³² Ibid.

³³ "Legion Honors Yorkville Activist," *New York Daily News*, June 14, 1984, M3; "Youth Center Now Landmark," *New York Daily News*, September 26, 1980, 48; "Community to Refloat E. River Fire-Boat House," *New York Daily News*, January 22, 1980, 7; "Former Asphalt Plant Now Recreational Green," *New York Daily News*, September 30, 1979; Hugh Wyatt, "26,000 Petition to Save Park," *New York Daily News*, March 12, 1974, 61.

³⁴ Eleanor Swertlow, "Deluxe Ruppert Towers Put Poor in Shadows," *New York Daily News*, September 22, 1974, 281; Jean Crafton, "An Old Brewery Site Sprouts Fresh Roots," *New York Daily News*, September 6, 1971, 146; Alan S. Oser, "About Real Estate: Ruppert Towers Holds Special East Side Place," *New York Times*, January 10, 1975, 61; Alan S. Oser, "Ruppert Renewal

By the mid-eighties, binarism – in the form of old versus new Yorkville – dominated public discourse about the neighborhood’s changing face. The local real estate sector’s elevator pitch maintained that, “the old Yorkville, a working-class neighborhood of mostly Germans, Hungarians and other Central European immigrants, gradually lost most of its ethnic character after the Third Avenue El was demolished in the 1950’s.”³⁵ The new Yorkville epoch commenced in the mid-seventies, according to this perspective, when the tony Upper East Side absorbed its struggling neighbor to its east. Recent transplants bolstered this interpretation by characterizing their new Yorkville as safer, cleaner, and more orderly. This perspective concealed thirty years of private and public sector decision making that made it nearly impossible for working-class residents to remain in their homes. As a sanitized story, it also suggested that ethnic Yorkville died by natural causes, which, in turn, cleared the way for economic progress and modernization. These narrative threads live on in the contemporary ethnic Yorkville imaginary, which avoids the messiness of the Gimbels years, especially the class-based displacement of long-time residents.³⁶

Claims that Yorkville had collectively embraced its shiny and modern future curiously coexisted with refrains to salvage what remained of the neighborhood’s ethnic commercial presence. In 1974, the Board of Estimate, responding to a vigorous local lobbying effort, amended zoning regulations on and near East 86th Street, ostensibly to preserve the area’s “old world charm.”³⁷ Proponents of the zoning restrictions cited the need to assist “the owners of the quaint boutiques [that] helped give the area its Middle European quality,” which faced higher property taxes and increased rents.³⁸ The new rules barred large-scale department stores and office buildings on the main stretch of German Broadway extending from First to Park Avenues. This decision reversed course on plans to convert the area into a

Plan Revised Drastically: Ruppert Renewal, With Plan Revised, Faces Hearings Next Month,” *New York Times*, August 15, 1971: R1

³⁵ Kirk Johnson, “2 Rental Luxury Towers Rise in the New Yorkville,” *New York Times*, June 28, 1985, A15.

³⁶ Ibid.; Kirk Johnson, “If You’re Thinking of Living in: Upper Yorkville,” *New York Times*, December 1, 1985, R9.

³⁷ John Toscano, “Approve Zoning for Yorkville to Keep Old Look,” *New York Daily News*, May 30, 1974, ML7.

³⁸ Ibid.

high-density regional shopping district, thereby giving ethnic Yorkville's surviving German and Hungarian shops and restaurants a reprieve. City Council President Paul O'Dwyer, the only dissenting vote on the rezoning scheme, believed the changes inadequate to remediate the most pressing problem, the need for affordable housing options for Yorkville's working-class and elderly residents.³⁹

While members of the Board of Estimate sympathized with O'Dwyer's concern, they subscribed to a local version of *realpolitik*.⁴⁰ Seeing few viable options for stemming the tide of working-class out-migration, the Board believed that preserving the ethnic commercial spaces might help prevent total forfeiture of Yorkville's distinctiveness. The results were mixed. Chain restaurants and take-out joints wedged next to ethnic butcher shops and cafés produced what Thomas Janes of the *New York Times* called "the East 86th Street jumble."⁴¹ Nonetheless, the endurance of ethnic Yorkville's shops played a vital role in Greater New York's white ethnics envisioning the neighborhood as an essential pilgrimage site. Sojourners poured into Yorkville during the holidays to purchase Easter treats at Elk Candy, renowned for its marzipan, and Christmas gifts at Bremen House, featuring an eclectic medley of foreign-language LPs, assorted European breads, and porcelain figurines. Paprikás Weiss pulled in Hungarian Americans seeking imported varieties of paprika as well as other Hungarian delicacies such as salami and goose liver. Its owner, Ed Weiss, the "Paprika Prince," operated a shop established by his grandfather, Isadore Weiss, a Hungarian Jewish migrant, in 1910. In its heyday, the store's customers included famed Hungarian playwright Ferenc Molnár and actress Zsa Zsa Gabor.⁴²

While the number of German and Hungarian restaurants in Yorkville declined during the Gimbels years, a proud set of survivors endured. Mainstays such as the Bavarian Inn, the Ideal

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ For example, Manhattan Borough President, Percy E. Sutton, who voted for rezoning, noted his skepticism about the likelihood of affordable housing solutions. Yet, explained his affirmative vote for rezoning by stating that "I am concerned with stabilizing the neighborhood." Edward Ranzal, "Estimate Board Votes Rezoning to Preserve Yorkville's Flavor," *New York Times*, May 30, 1974, 1.

⁴¹ Thomas W. Janes, "Winning While Losing Along East 86th Street," *New York Times*, April 16, 1978, 275.

⁴² Ibid., "Easter on 86th Street," *New York Magazine* 7, no. 14 (April 8, 1974), 75; George Lang, "the Many Tastes of Christmas," *New York Times*, December 18, 1977, 243; Bob Cooper, "Paprika Is in His Blood," *New York Daily News*, April 6, 1980, L26.

Restaurant, and Kleine Konditorie, a fusion of pastry shop and full-fledged restaurant which opened in 1923, offered German fare. The *Times* hailed the Lorilei as both “a holdout for old-style comfort and family-style cheer” as well as a refuge from the disco craze.⁴³ It offered not only German-Austrian food, but a ballroom where patrons could dance to the sounds of Erwin Holl and the Royal Bavarians, with their mix of German “Oom-pah” and Americana music. Hungarian restaurants such as Csarda, dubbed “cuisine de femme” due to its all-female chefs and ownership, and the Red Tulip, with its embroidered tablecloths, elaborately carved woodwork, and raucous bands, garnered positive reviews from food critics. Despite the success of these venues, Café Geiger’s fall from grace during the Gimbels years envisaged changing tastes and changing fortunes. For decades, Café Geiger had enjoyed an exalted place within Yorkville’s German food hierarchy. It combined a konditorie, or pastry café, with a full-service restaurant. In 1976, *Times* food critic Mimi Sheraton bestowed on Café Geiger a “very good” rating, commenting that “[c]onsidering the costs and logistics of running a restaurant in New York today, the job turned out by the management here borders on the amazing, with . . . moderate prices and a number of dishes consistently close of excellence.”⁴⁴ Just seven years later, she bludgeoned the German-style establishment, giving it a rating of “poor” due to erratic service, tasteless pastries, dried out veal, and uninspired goulash. Even the stained menus reflected the downfall.⁴⁵

THE ETHNIC YORKVILLE IMAGINARY CALCIFIES: THE 1990S TO THE PRESENT

In the spring of 2007, excavators started a decade long assault on Second Avenue. Nearly eighty years after the Yorkville Chamber lobbied city officials for a line closer to home, the long anticipated Second Avenue subway project had broken ground. The cacophony of machines, the pylons and

⁴³ “Going Out Guide,” *New York Times*, May 26, 1977, 69.

⁴⁴ Mimi Sheraton, “From Gemultichkeit to a Fairy Tale Trip,” *New York Times*, September 10, 1976, 59.

⁴⁵ Ibid., “Going Out Guide,” *New York Times*, May 26, 1977, 69; “Dining Out Guide: Mitteleuropa Restaurants,” *New York Times*, March 15, 1981, TG14; Mimi Sheraton, “Bright American and Faded German,” March 4, 1983, *New York Times*, C20.

barricades disrupting shops and restaurants, the scarred urban landscape – it was all part of Yorkville’s latest transformation. The *Wall Street Journal* quipped that “Yorkville has come a long way since emerging from the shadows of the elevated trains that once ran above its avenues,” suggesting demolition of the Third Avenue El opened the community to the purifying rays of sunshine.⁴⁶ This same article ticked off a litany of upscale housing projects that had revamped the neighborhood during the first few years of the twenty-first century. Located at the junction of East 83rd Street and York Avenue, Cielo, Italian for “sky,” boasted floor-to-ceiling windows, a concierge, and its own uniformed doorman. Studios started at \$640,000. The Brompton, a 22-story luxury condominium unit on East 85th Street named for an exclusive section of London, listed four-bedroom apartments carrying an eye-popping price tag of \$4 million. Some units in the Azure, located at East 91st Street and First Avenue, featured East River views. During the Azure’s construction, two workers died in a crane accident. A few months later, the *Wall Street Journal* matter-of-factly reported that “[a]ll signs of damage are gone, and buyers are now moving into the 128-unit building.”⁴⁷ There was no time to count the costs of progress. Yorkville, once home to vibrant German American and Hungarian American enclaves, now appeared to be something else entirely. As the development community savored its conquest and ethnic Yorkville’s built environment dwindled to a scattered set of structures, a crucial question hung in the air: how would ethnic Yorkville be remembered?⁴⁸

Indeed, ethnic Yorkville’s final journey from lived experience to subject of social memory occurred during one of New York City’s most pivotal periods, running from the 1990s through the first two decades of the twenty-first century. During the nineties, more than 1.2 million foreign-born migrants moved into New York while a slightly greater number of long-term residents left the city. Put

⁴⁶ “Yorkville: Growing Above and Below Ground,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 1, 2010.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

another way, as New York's native-born population declined by two percent during the 1990s, foreign-born residents increased by thirty-eight percent. By the turn of the century, the foreign-born comprised forty-five percent of the city's population. New York's mayoral races during this span proved as spirited as ever. In 1989, New Yorkers elected David Dinkins, the city's first African American mayor. In 1993 and 1997, they abruptly switched course electing Rudolph Giuliani, who advanced a "tough on crime" agenda.⁴⁹ On September 11, 2001, during the final months of Giuliani's second term, terrorists flew two passenger jets into the World Trade Center towers, killing nearly three thousand people, as part of a coordinated attack that shocked the nation.⁵⁰

9/11 left an indelible mark on New York. During the city's long and painful recovery, commentators, such as *The Daily Beast's* John Avlon, anointed Gotham as "the nation's symbol of resilience [and] indomitable heart of America."⁵¹ Steven Salaita, adopting a more critical stance, argued that the tragedy imposed on the nation and the city an "imperative patriotism," a strain of rigid nationalism reflecting, at times, xenophobic intolerance.⁵² Under this paradigm, commentators were just as likely to use early-twentieth century New York to symbolize foreignness as resilience. Thomas Ross, analyzing post-9/11 constructions of nationalism, said:

⁴⁹ In his inaugural, Giuliani specifically referenced his grandfather's immigrant experience, connecting his personal narrative to the white ethnics who helped elect him: "My grandfather, Rodolfo, came to New York almost 100 years ago. He came here with \$20 in his pockets. Like so many of you and your ancestors, he knew fear -- fear of a strange land, fear of learning to speak a new language, fear of the unknown. But he didn't let that stop him. He dreamed that life could be better for him and his children in New York City and he lived that dream." "The New Mayor; Transcript of Inaugural Speech: Giuliani Urges Change and Unity," *New York Times*, January 3, 1994, A18.

⁵⁰ Rae Rosen, Susan Wieler, and Joseph Pereira, "New York City Immigrants: The 1990s Wave," *Current Issues in Economics and Finance: Second District Highlights, Federal Reserve Bank* 11, no. 6 (June 2005), <https://www.issuelab.org/resources/12000/12000.pdf>, accessed February 29, 2020; "The Role of Immigrants in the New York City Economy," New York State Comptroller, Report 17-2010 (January 2010), <https://www.osc.state.ny.us/osdc/rpt17-2010.pdf>, accessed February 29, 2020; "Immigration and New York City: The Contributions of Foreign Born Americans to New York's Renaissance, 1975–2013," Americas Society/Council of the Americas (April 2014): 2–5; Alison Mitchell, "The 1993 Elections: The Transition; Dinkins and Giuliani Join in a Call for Healing and Unity," *New York Times*, November 4, 1993, A1; Alan Feuer and Benjamin Weiser, "Working for Trump, Giuliani Attacks His Law-Enforcement Roots," *New York Times*, May 4, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/04/nyregion/giuliani-trump-fbi-law-enforcement.html>, accessed February 28, 2020; N.R. Kleinfield, "A Creeping Horror: Buildings Burn and Fall as Onlookers Search for Elusive Safety," *New York Times*, September 12, 2001, 1.

⁵¹ John Avlon, "The Resilient City: New York After 9/11," *The Daily Beast*, September 11, 2014, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-resilient-city-new-york-after-911>, accessed February 29, 2020.

⁵² Steven Salaita, "Ethnic Identity and Imperative Patriotism: Arab Americans Before and After 9/11," *College Literature* 32, no. 2 (Spring, 2005): 146–68.

The nationalism of our time, unlike that of Theodore Roosevelt's, cannot be explicitly racially carved. Yet, in its demand for unconditional loyalty to country and in its use of the flag and references to our "fathers' commitment," this nationalism summons the old stories of what "America" meant. We are all draped in the flag and expected to be simply Americans. This is a form of "patriotism" that brooks no dissent, no whining, no place for the claims of the marginalized, a "melting pot" conception that leaves no doubt that the America that emerges is quintessentially White and Christian and engaged in a contemporary crusade.⁵³

Following this logic, stories about Euro-American immigration and acculturation needed to comport with the melting pot mythology. Put another way, historical narratives of cultural pluralism proved useful only so far as they juxtaposed the "good" European immigration of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries against the "problematic" post-1965 immigration from Mexico, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East. Accordingly, 9/11 and its aftermath influenced the extent to which nationalist visions, values, and metaphors gained currency within the ethnic Yorkville imaginary.⁵⁴

People identifying according to their Hungarian and German ancestry have continued to call Yorkville home during the past thirty years, albeit in modest numbers, despite gentrification. New York's mainstream press has profiled these groups sporadically, often in response to international or transnational events. For example, communism's collapse in the Eastern Bloc momentarily placed Hungarian Yorkville in the spotlight in the early nineties. Maggie Jackson of the *New York Times*, writing in 1991, observed that "[w]ith the fall of the Communist government in Hungary, there's new movement in Yorkville, the corner of Manhattan's Upper East Side where Hungarians have flocked for more than a century."⁵⁵ According to Jackson, the Hungarian section of Yorkville was "the most vibrant ethnic community in the half-square-mile area," with five Hungarian churches, a selection of Hungarian restaurants, and the Hungarian House on East 82nd Street pulling together locals and their extended

⁵³ Thomas Ross, "Whiteness: Some Critical Perspectives: Whiteness After 9/11," 18 *Washington University Journal of Law & Policy* (2005): 240.

⁵⁴ Salaita, "Ethnic Identity and Imperative Patriotism," 146-168; Ross, "Whiteness: Some Critical Perspectives," 240.

⁵⁵ Maggie Jackson, "Changes in Hungary Echo through N.Y. Neighborhood," *New York Times*, December 22, 1991, A32.

families as well as ethnic pilgrims.⁵⁶ Hungary's seismic shift reverberated through Hungarian Yorkville. Many of those born in Hungary weighed the costs and benefits of returning to their homeland. The presence of family in both the host country and the homeland often made these decisions wrenching. Exiles explored legal avenues for recovering real property lost as a result of their exodus. The First Hungarian Reformed Church even arranged to transport the ashes of deceased parishioners who left explicit directions to repatriate their remains upon Hungary's liberation. Simultaneously, Yorkville began to experience an influx of Hungarian visitors – including artists, entertainers, and politicians – as well as young migrants seeking opportunities in New York's recovering economy. This latter group evoked memories of those Hungarian immigrants who had journeyed to New York during the early twentieth century in search of short-term profits.⁵⁷

In 2005, changes at the top of the Roman Catholic Church's hierarchy brought German Yorkville back to the fore, if just for a moment. On April 25th, the Vatican broadcast globally the elaborate installation of Pope Benedict XVI as the successor to the ultra-popular John Paul II. Born Joseph Aloisius Ratzinger in the Bavarian town of Marktl, Pope Benedict was only the second German to lead the Church. Like German Yorkville itself, questions about Nazi connections dogged him before and after his installation. He had joined the ranks of the Hitler Youth at fourteen in accordance with then existing German legislation and served in the German military during World War II as a teen-aged conscript. These concerns did nothing to dampen the enthusiasm of Yorkville's German Catholic community. Julia Winter, a leader of St. Joseph's laity and a veteran of Yorkville's German American community, exclaimed that "I'm proud – he's Bavarian, and I come from northern Bavaria," after watching the televised ceremony at 4:00 a.m.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.; Clifford J. Levy, "East Europeans in U.S. Reclaiming Lost Estates," *New York Times*, August 13, 1991, A11; "Hungaria Dancers to perform at MSC Nov. 7," *Paramus Shopper News*, November 4, 1987, 14.

⁵⁸ Bill Egbert and Nicole Bode, "New Yorkers Wake Up at 4 a.m. to Celebrate," *New York Daily News*, April 25, 2005, 4; Susan Donaldson James, "Pope Benedict Dogged By Hitler Youth Past, Despite Jewish Support Pope Urged Beatification of Pope Pius

Three years later, Pope Benedict XVI visited the United States. In between meetings with politicians and dignitaries, he made time for a special trip to Yorkville. German Yorkville's leading voices expressed the significance of the moment for the roughly seven thousand German Americans who continued to reside in the neighborhood. Ralph Schaller, whose butcher shop Schaller & Weber had weathered the commercial storms of the preceding thirty years to stand as one of the only German American shops in Yorkville, called the Pope's pending visit "good for the neighborhood . . . especially the older German immigrants."⁵⁹ Kathy Jolowicz, *the* Yorkville historian, characteristically used the occasion to wax nostalgic, reminding reporters about the neighborhood's "golden days" when theaters played German-language films, bars poured German lager, and restaurants served sauerbraten. Pope Benedict XVI "obviously picked this neighborhood for a reason," Jolowicz reasoned.⁶⁰ "We are thrilled that somebody remembers us."⁶¹ They were remembered, but for how long?⁶²

Writing in the wake of this monumental event, David Dunlap of the *New York Times* wrote an article comingling Yorkville's German Catholic past with a jeremiad about the disappearance of ethnic Yorkville. "The Yorkville that the German-born Pope Benedict XVI visited on Friday," Dunlap commented, "bears almost no resemblance to the German enclave around Saint Joseph's Roman Catholic Church on East 87th Street from the late 1800s through the mid-20th century."⁶³ One now needed but a single hand to count the remaining German shops, mass said in the German tongue occurred but once a month at St. Joseph's, and the church's then-lead priest, Monsignor John Sullivan, needed Ms. Winter's coaching to improve his German pronunciation.⁶⁴

XII, Who Was Silent during Holocaust," *ABC News*, February 11, 2013, <https://abcnews.go.com/International/pope-benedict-dogged-nazi-past-achievements-jewish-relations/story?id=18469350>, accessed March 3, 2020.

⁵⁹ Peter Cox and Dan Mangan, "Visit to be Teu-tonic for Famed District," *New York Post*, April 15, 2008, 19.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ David W. Dunlap, "In New York, a Worldwide Message of Humanity: German Life in the City Is Recalled in Pope's Visit: In the Heart of Yorkville, Life Has Changed for German Catholics," *New York Times*, April 19, 2008, B1.

⁶⁴ Peter Cox and Dan Mangan, "Visit to be Teu-tonic for Famed District"; David W. Dunlap, "In New York, a Worldwide Message of Humanity: German Life in the City Is Recalled In Pope's Visit: In the Heart of Yorkville, Life Has Changed for German Catholics," *New York Times*, April 19, 2008, B1.

While ethnic Yorkville gained momentary visibility on these special occasions, it was the German and Hungarian restaurants and shops that continued to play an outsized role in representing the neighborhood's ethnic legacy throughout the accelerated gentrification process of the 1990s and beyond. Unfortunately, these repositories of ethnic identity made their deepest impression when exiting the stage. German favorites such as the Ideal Restaurant, the Bremen House, Kleine Konditorie, and Café Geiger, closed their doors in the nineties. Occasionally, the passing of these neighborhood businesses provided a moment to reflect on the past. In the summer of 1999, Joann Hierl placed a simple sign on the front door of Kramer's Pastries notifying customers of the business's imminent closing. Soon thereafter, a loyal patron arrived to purchase a cache of marzipan valued at three hundred dollars. Ms. Hierl explained that Yorkville's last German pastry shop, started by her father in 1950, would have closed long ago had she not owned the four-story walk-up it anchored. The costs of renovating the store's gas-powered ovens to assuage city inspectors proved too much to bear. In a sign of the times, a local chain bakery, Hot & Crusty, sought to employ Ms. Hierl, a master pastry chef who turned out such labor intensive delights as baumkuchen, a buttery layer cake resembling tree rings, and stollen, a classic German fruit cake. She summarily rejected the offer.⁶⁵

Hungarian shops and restaurants in Yorkville faced similar economic pressures during the 1990s and the early twenty-first century. In 1988, Carla De Silva, a *Newsday* food writer, presented a snapshot of Hungarian Yorkville's restaurant scene on the brink of a rapid decline. De Silva admitted to knowing little about the area despite being born and raised in New York. Upon visiting the micro-neighborhood, she discovered a triad of enduring Hungarian restaurants – the Red Tulip, Csarda, and Mocca –

⁶⁵ "Ach du Lieber! It's a Schnitzel Kind of Christmas," *New York Daily News*, December 13, 1991, 72; "Manhattan Dining Guide," *New York Daily News*, August 18, 1989, MJ5; Arthur Schwartz, "Restau-raters Speak Up: Here's What Readers Say Are Their Favorite Spots – From the Inexpensive to the Chi-Chi," *New York Daily News*, May 6, 1990, 11; Howard Kissel, ""Lost In America: East Side, Midwest Side, Mall Around the Town – N.Y.'s European Charm Is Vanishing," *New York Daily News*, April 26, 1998, 18; Dave Saltonstall, "Past Fading in Yorkville," *New York Daily News*, July 17, 1994, 11C; Corey Kilgannon, "Old- Style German Bakery Closes, and So Does an Era," *New York Times*, August 8, 1999, CY7; Karl Peterson, "Yorkville," in *Savoring Gotham: A Food Lover's Companion to New York City*, ed. Andrew F. Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 655-57.

Hungarian butcher shops on Second Avenue, dozens of Magyar-language newspapers and magazines at the Puski-Corvin Bookstore, and devoted congregants worshipping at St. Stephen's of Hungary. Hungarian foodstuffs even appeared in a Korean-owned grocery store at the corner of Second Avenue and East 82nd Street. Commenting about Hungarian Yorkville's diminishing commercial footprint, George Lang, a renowned Hungarian-born restaurateur, consultant, author, and Holocaust survivor, observed that "Hungarians are like paprika . . . [e]ven when there's just a little bit in a dish, the taste is everywhere."⁶⁶

By the early twenty-first century, much of the ethnic cityscape De Silva described had disappeared. During the 2004 Christmas season, the proprietors of Mocca, a Hungarian restaurant located on Second Avenue near East 82nd Street, announced its departure via a handwritten note taped to its locked entrance. Its owners could no longer keep pace with rising rents. The historical trajectory of this eatery encapsulates Hungarian Yorkville's erosion over the last quarter of the twentieth century. It also emphasizes the central role food culture plays in reflecting and shaping place-based ethnic identity. Cuisine from the homeland brings comfort and familiarity to diasporic communities, creates an internal sense of unity while accommodating regional variety, and serves as a vehicle for rendering one's culture legible to outsiders and inviting them to partake in a cross-cultural experience. Consequently, the loss of one of an enclave's anchor restaurants, such as Mocca, creates an immense socio-cultural chasm and tears down a bridge between the ethnic group and external communities.⁶⁷

In the early 1980s, Mocca had replaced another Hungarian bakery and restaurant, reflecting the owners' then-existing optimism about Hungarian cuisine's viability despite Yorkville's gentrifying

⁶⁶ Carla De Silva, "The Flavor of the Neighborhood: Little Hungary," *New York Newsday*, September 7, 1988; Molly O'Neill, "George Lang Tells His Story, Bottom to Top: A Restaurant Impresario Separates Real from Apocryphal," *New York Times*, April 22, 1998, F3.

⁶⁷ Matthew von Unwerth, "The Rise and Decline of a Hapsburg Empire," *New York Times*, December 26, 2004, CY10; Kwang Ok Kim, "Introduction," in *Re-Orienting Cuisine: East Asian Foodways in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Kwang Ok Kim (New York: Berghahn, 2015), 1-9. Guojun Zeng, Yongqiu Zhao, and Shuzhi Sun, "Sustainable Development Mechanism of Food Culture's Translocal Production Based on Authenticity," *Sustainability* 6, no. 10 (2014): 7030-7047; Richard W. Hallett, "'A Taste of This Lively Language': Attitudes Towards Languages Other than English in Lonely Planet Phrasebooks" *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* 12, no. 3 (2017): 214-30; Carole M. Counihan, *A Tortilla Is Like Life: Food and Culture in the San Luis Valley of Colorado* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2009), 7-9.

climate. Pre-merger Mocca, with its tin ceiling and Danubian antiques, consistently earned “very good” ratings from food critics. The same Mimi Sheraton who downgraded Café Geiger in the early eighties touted Mocca as a rare combination of quality and affordability. She described the eatery as a “casual café at midday, when a complete three-course lunch is \$4.95, [that] takes on more intimate overtones at night with candles at the table.”⁶⁸ Sheraton concluded that “[a]t these prices, one can forgive the paper napkins, the glass tops covering the tablecloths and the slightly cramped seating.”⁶⁹ In the 2004 *New York Times* eulogy of Mocca, entitled “The Rise and Decline of a Hapsburg Empire,” Matthew von Unwerth wrote:

Mocca, which spent more than 40 years on the same block, as a vestige of old Yorkville, the neighborhood of mostly German and Eastern European immigrants who settled the area more than a century ago. Even 20 years ago, the neighborhood was a thriving country unto itself, with its own restaurants, churches, and schools, all filled with the sounds of the Old World.⁷⁰

Von Unwerth inaccurately placed Mocca’s opening in the early 1960s, possibly confusing it with the earlier establishment. Accordingly, he described Mocca as a “vestige of old Yorkville,” missing an opportunity to explore how and why entrepreneurs opened a Hungarian restaurant at a time when others saw the death of so-called “old Yorkville” as inevitable.⁷¹

Despite these deficiencies, Hungarian Americans in Greater New York appreciated this homage to one of their most cherished places. Paul Kutschera and Jan and Carole Gaydos, in a joint editorial wrote

Rather than simply being a haven for a dying breed of locals, Mocca and Yorkville were also destinations for the wider metropolitan area Hungarian-American community. They were places where we could take older family members for a visit to the old country, through dishes they (and we) grew up with, and also introduce our children to the delights of this incredibly rich culture.⁷²

⁶⁸ Mimi Sheraton, “Restaurants: Hearty Hungarian and Old Steakhouse,” *New York Times*, April 29, 1983, C20.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Unwerth, “The Rise and Decline of a Hapsburg Empire,” CY10.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Paul J. Kutschera, Jan Gaydos, and Carole Gaydos, “Yorkville Has Lost More Than a Restaurant,” *New York Times*, January 16, 2005, R13.

Their message was powerful. Mocca was more than a neighborhood restaurant. It, like Yorkville itself, was part of a multi-generational diasporic network. It was a homecoming venue and a place of cultural transmission. It was irreplaceable as a material object but unforgettable as a cultural heirloom.⁷³

After closing its Second Avenue location in 2004, Mocca merged with Frankie's, an American-style diner a couple blocks south on Second Avenue. At this venue, chicken paprikás and stuffed cabbage cohabitated with burgers and fries, a strategy to deploy familiar American fare to introduce non-Hungarian customers to the possibilities of ethnic cuisine. Eventually, the amalgamated enterprise closed, permanently vanquishing Mocca to the nostalgic realm.⁷⁴

As Yorkville's ethnic restaurants struggled to survive or closed their doors, the mainstream media stopped questioning the forces of gentrification that had driven out almost all the neighborhood's working-class residents. Rather, they myopically focused on Yorkville's commercial aesthetic and increasingly defined that area as being limited to East 86th Street and its immediate environs. The restrictive zoning scheme of the 1970s had failed to ensure the sustainability of ethnic Yorkville's shops and restaurants on the former German Broadway. As their numbers decreased, the street assumed an indistinct and unstable countenance. In the fall of 2000, the *New York Times* painted an unflattering picture of East 86th Street, dismissing it as "a noisy tangle of traffic, pedestrians, shoppers and street vendors" most recently infiltrated by a "mishmash of banks, clothing stores, pizza parlors [and] piles of garbage."⁷⁵ Developers of upscale residential space such as William Lie Zeckendorf argued

⁷³ Ibid. Joseph Berger, "My Manhattan: On the Upper East Side, Memories Fueled by Strudel," *New York Times*, April 7, 2006, E29; Irene Sax, "If You're Hungry for Some Hungary," *New York Daily News*, May 27, 2005, 74; Mimi Sheraton, "Restaurants: Hearty Hungarian and Old Steakhouse," *New York Times*, April 29, 1983, C20; "Dining Out Guide: Hearty Fare," *New York Times*, January 9, 1987, C24; John R. Levine, "Chrome Dome: The British Have the Pub, the French the Café: Americans Have the Diner and Its Benefits Are Social as well as Gastronomic," Editorial, *Boston Globe*, July 18, 1993, 53-54; Arthur Schwartz, "Stokin' Up the Stove: Chefs Are Rib-sticklers for Hearty Winter Dishes," *New York Daily News*, January 5, 1992, 21; Unwerth, CY10.

John R. Levine, "Chrome Dome: The British Have the Pub, the French the Café: Americans Have the Diner and Its Benefits Are Social as well as Gastronomic," Editorial, *Boston Globe*, July 18, 1993, 53-54; Arthur Schwartz, "Stokin' Up the Stove: Chefs Are Rib-sticklers for Hearty Winter Dishes," *New York Daily News*, January 5, 1992, 21; Unwerth, CY10.

⁷⁴ Irene Sax, "If You're Hungry for Some Hungary," *New York Daily News*, May 27, 2005, 74.

⁷⁵ "Trying to Tame the Mishmash That Is East 86th Street," *New York Times*, October 29, 2000, CY10.

that ending the protective zoning measure represented a prerequisite to unlocking East 86th Street's potential. The city listened and acted accordingly.⁷⁶

Meanwhile, a merchant-led coalition, the Yorkville East 86th Street Business Improvement District (Yorkville BID), banded together to upgrade a section bounded by East 85th Street to the south, East 87th Street to the north, Lexington Avenue to the west, and Second Avenue to the east. Yorkville BID developed a beautification and sanitation plan, worked to earn community support, and shepherded its vision through Community Board 8 and the City Planning Department. Yorkville BID expressed no concern about working-class or even middle-class residents who remained in the neighborhood. Nor did it dwell on the roles developers and cutthroat landlords had played in creating the chaos the group now sought to abate. They hoped to go with the grain of development, not against it. Nevertheless, influential developers concerned with regulatory hurdles and high-income residents balking about tax increases executed an end run to City Hall to halt the modest movement in its tracks. By May 2001, seeing no path forward, Yorkville BID withdrew its plan. As a result, the East 86th Street area was wide open to unfettered development. In this environment, big box stores such as Barnes and Noble, H & M, Sephora, and Shake Shack looked like saviors. Eventually the giant retailers and new waves of affluent condominium dwellers who followed them demanded many of the changes Yorkville BID had pursued, such as enhanced security and waste disposal. The time had come for East 86th Street to be beautiful and exclusive.⁷⁷

Most contemporary profiles of Yorkville generally, and East 86th Street specifically, describe the neighborhood's recent period of soaring rents and proliferating high rises as a success story, with affluence serving as the preeminent measuring stick. For the *Daily News*, the dramatic rise in median

⁷⁶ Ibid., Shawn G. Kennedy, "A New Cachet for Old East 86th Street: Condos, Upscale Shops Reviving Neighborhood," *New York Times*, April 15, 1990, R1.

⁷⁷ "Trying to Tame the Mishmash That Is East 86th Street," *New York Times*, October 29, 2000, CY10; Bruce Lambert, "And Now, for 86th: Maybe Not a B.I.D., After All," *New York Times*, May 7, 1995, CY8.

household income – from \$58,000 in 1999 to \$80,000 in 2013 – signaled that Yorkville was “getting hipper.”⁷⁸ Realtor Joanna Siegel, in 2014, boasted that Yorkville offered “a bank on every corner [and] a supermarket on every block.”⁷⁹ As the Second Avenue subway project moved closer to completion, the upscale housing market exploded. Available apartments yielded scores of inquiries to real estate agents and bidding wars became commonplace. Beth Fisher, a senior managing director of Corcoran Sunshine Marketing Group, a company projecting itself as an “industry leader in the planning, design, marketing, and sale of new luxury residential development,”⁸⁰ commented that a genuine “sense of discovery and adventure is something that has come back to the east side” effectively treating the latter stages of Yorkville’s working-class history as a kind of dark ages.⁸¹ Jessica Dailey of the *New York Post*, writing in the summer of 2019, commented that “[f]or a long time, East 86th Street was considered . . . as desirable a place to live as 42nd Street.”⁸² Now, however, “[t]he beautification measures — alongside a host of new condo and rental developments — have and will bring more people, and a more upscale vibe, to the area.”⁸³ According to attorney Robert Hacker, a Yorkville resident for twenty years, chain retailers replacing mom and pop shops is “a normal evolution in neighborhoods like this.”⁸⁴ His fourteen-year-old daughter, he emphasized, adores the new Ulta at the southwest corner of East 86th Street and Third Avenue.⁸⁵ These vignettes conveying Yorkville’s hip revival and celebrating passive consumer consumption as an evolved form of free market citizenship sometimes tapped into the area’s ethnic past to add color but tended to steer clear of reopening the wounds of residential and commercial displacement. This general pattern fortified a basic tenet of the ethnic Yorkville imaginary:

⁷⁸ “Away from Park and Fifth Aves., it’s Getting Hipper,” *New York Daily News*, April 25, 2014, 2.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ “About Us,” Corcoran Sunshine Marketing Group, <https://www.corcoransunshine.com/about.php#>, accessed March 1, 2020.

⁸¹ Kathleen Lucadamo, “Open House Saturday: Yorkville Is Chugging Along – The Upper East Side’s More Affordable Neighborhood Sees Its Star Rise as It Eagerly Awaits the Second Avenue Subway,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 30, 2016, A16.

⁸² Jessica Dailey, “The Upper East Side’s Once-humble Main Drag Gets Upscale,” *New York Post*, June 5, 2019, <https://nypost.com/2019/06/05/the-upper-east-sides-once-humble-main-drag-gets-upscale/>, March 1, 2020.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.; Andrew Friedman, “Upper East Side: Opposition By Big Owners Dooms a BID,” *New York Times*, May 6, 2001, CY4; Bruce Lambert, “And Now, for 86th: Maybe Not a B.I.D., After All,” *New York Times*, May 7, 1995, CY8.

ethnic Yorkville died of natural causes and evoking its ghosts need not interfere with celebratory descriptions of the neighborhood's contemporary progress nor optimistic visions of its future.⁸⁶

Until recently, New York's preservation community, which depends on financial support from affluent donors, avoided actions that might challenge this rule of thumb. In the early years of the Landmarks Act, only three Yorkville properties achieved designation: Gracie Mansion in 1966; the New York Public Library, Yorkville Branch in 1967; and structures affiliated with the Holy Trinity Church also in 1967. As preservationists worked to save these properties, they barely seemed to notice or care that Yorkville's frenetic present was burying its ethnic past. Accordingly, in 1980, these defenders of the built environment set their sights on convincing the city's Landmarks Commission to designate a broad swathe of the Upper East Side, extending from East 59th Street northward to East 79th Street and westward from Lexington to Fifth Avenue, as an historic district. Jane Trichter, co-chair of the Committee for the Upper East Side Historic District, after celebrating the Gold Coast's many architectural points of interest in a *New York Times* op-ed, made an emotional appeal therein to defend the designation proposal, stating:

A historic district, however, is more than a concentration of quality architecture. It is an area where a distinct sense of place exists. This district has a special character that is both of historic and esthetic interest. This is an identifiable living and historic community, an exhibit in defense of urban living, and a physical context for the history of the city.⁸⁷

These words could just as easily have described the Yorkville section of the Upper East Side, but for the working-class neighborhood's lack of political clout. Trichter and her allies won the day; the Upper East

⁸⁶ Steven Miles, "The Neoliberal City and the Pro-active Complicity of the Citizen Consumer," *Journal of Consumer Culture* 12, no. 2 (2012): 216-30; Dallas Rogers and Michael Darcy, "Global City Aspirations, Graduated Citizenship and Public Housing: Analysing the Consumer Citizenships of Neoliberalism," *Urban, Planning and Transport Research: An Open Access Journal* 2, no. 1 (2014), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21650020.2014.906906>. Bruce Lambert of the *New York Times* provides a standard way to discuss the modern history of East 86th Street: "For better or for worse, 86th Street has gone through major transformations as Yorkville's hub. In its heyday of middle European immigration, flourished with Continental flair. But as that era faded, the street became populated by drug pushers, peddlers, prostitutes, and panhandlers." Bruce Lambert, "And Now, for 86th: Maybe Not a B.I.D., After All," *New York Times*, May 7, 1995, CY8.

⁸⁷ Jane B. Trichter, "Designation? Certainly, How Much? The Debate: For an Upper East Side Historic District Now for Landmark Designation of Individual Buildings Only," *New York Times*, May 4, 1980, R1.

Side Historic District was born in 1981. Friends of the Upper East Side (FRIENDS) emerged the following year, in part, to advocate for the newly protected zone. There are now a total of seven historic districts in the Upper East Side. None of these includes any portion of Yorkville.⁸⁸ While urban preservation may not be a zero-sum game in the strictest sense, it can resemble one at times. By protecting such a large section of the Upper East Side over the objections of the city's real estate industry, the future possibilities of designating parts or individual elements of Yorkville seemed slim. Something had to be sacrificed at the altar of development.⁸⁹

Within the past ten years, Gotham's preservation community, led by FRIENDS, has increased its commitment to protecting Yorkville's history and heritage, including an emphasis on its ethnic legacy. With the gentrification process more or less complete, remembering Yorkville's ethnic past could now avoid the thorniness of acknowledging ongoing displacement. Additionally, boasting about the neighborhood's ethnic history gave it an interesting backstory, which promised to increase interest and even rents in the increasingly affluent district. In 2012, the Yorkville Bank Building, located on Third Avenue near East 85th Street, earned landmark status. The four-story Italian Renaissance Revival-style structure was erected in 1905 to house the bank, originally incorporated in 1892.⁹⁰ August Zinnser, a second generation German American, served as the bank's president from 1909 to 1926, a period during which the institution helped develop Yorkville's commercial sector including the East 86th Street zone. For eighty-five years the bank served not only the German American community but the entirety of Yorkville. Oswald Ottendorfer, publisher of the *Staats-Zeitung*, New York's preeminent German-

⁸⁸ These historic districts are Carnegie Hill, Hardenbergh/Rhineland, Henderson Place, Metropolitan Museum, Park Avenue, Treadwell Farm, and the Upper East Side (this being the designation achieved in 1981). "Learn about the Upper East Side's Seven Historic Districts," Friends of the Upper East Side, <https://www.friends-ues.org/historic-districts-and-landmarks/>, accessed March 1, 2020.

⁸⁹ Trichter, "Designation?" R1; "East Side Landmark Group Set," *New York Times*, September 16, 1982, C5; "Goodbye, Rolls: Hello to 'Quality' On Third Avenue," *New York Times*, December 5, 1982, R1.

⁹⁰ Today, the building houses Gap and Equinox Fitness. "Postings: Renaissance Revival; A New Gap for an Old Bank," *New York Times*, March 17, 1991, 10-1; "Building Location, Yorkville Bank Building, 1511 York Avenue, Block 1531 Lot 1," FRIENDS of the Upper East Side, <https://www.friends-ues.org/advocacy/yorkville-go-game/yorkville-survey-images/yorkville-bank-building-page/>, accessed March 6, 2020.

language newspaper, and Jacob Ruppert, Jr., the son of Yorkville's best-known brewer prince, were among the bank's noteworthy stockholders, connecting the building to the scions of German Yorkville. In addition to protecting the building itself, designation of the Yorkville Bank inspired new research into the neighborhood's ethnic past. The Yorkville Bank's designation report, drafted by Olivia Close a researcher for the Landmarks Preservation Commission, included a one-page historical sketch of German Yorkville up to World War II. Unfortunately, it also parroted some of the common tropes privileged by the ethnic Yorkville imaginary, including the Great War decline of German Yorkville as well as an implication that the Bund period was the enclave's final act. The report makes only a passing reference to Yorkville's Hungarian, Czech, and Slovak communities. Such historical resuscitations have contributed to the imaginary's privileging of Yorkville's German past above all others.⁹¹

Efforts to preserve ethnic Yorkville's history intensified after the success of the Yorkville Bank designation. In 2015, Tara Kelly, then-executive director of FRIENDS, expressed her organization's intent "to find what is left of the distinct architectural features in the neighborhood and use it to tell the stories and heritage of the immigrants in Yorkville."⁹² Toward this end, FRIENDS initiated a comprehensive survey of Yorkville from its antiquated southern boundary of East 59th Street to its long-standing northern marker of East 96th Street in order to prioritize preservation goals for the area. As mentioned above, in 2018, FRIENDS published *Shaped by Immigrants: A History of Yorkville*, the first historical account of ethnic Yorkville. In 2019, FRIENDS played an instrumental role in backing an application to designate as a landmark the First Hungarian Reformed Church, located at 346 East 69th Street. In June, the Landmarks Commission unanimously approved this designation request. Sarah Carroll, the Commission's chair, saluted the church as an exemplar of cultural history and architectural

⁹¹ Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Yorkville Bank*, Designation List 456 LP-2510, City of New York, June 12, 2012, Prepared by Olivia Klose, accessed June 12, 2020, <http://s-media.nyc.gov/agencies/lpc/lp/2510.pdf>.

⁹² "In Search of Yorkville's Hidden Gems," February 17, 2015, *Straus Media*, <http://www.nypress.com/news/in-search-of-yorkvilles-hidden-gems-IXNP1020121121311219981>, accessed March 10, 2020.

significance. As with the Yorkville Bank and German Yorkville, the First Hungarian Reformed Church's designation report prompted historical research into the Hungarian enclave and the Hungarian presence in New York more generally. The report's historical sections constitute a modest attempt to complicate the story of ethnic Yorkville, stating in part, "[a]lthough Yorkville was primarily known as a German-American (Little Germany) community during the first half of the 20th century, there were also large numbers of residents who came from Austria-Hungary forming communities of their own . . . includ[ing] Hungarians or Magyars (Little Hungary) and Slavs (Little Bohemia)."⁹³

Notwithstanding this preservation pivot, ethnic food still reigns supreme in conjuring memories of ethnic Yorkville. Thus, almost any inquiry into Yorkville's ethnic past will lead toward an area of Second Avenue immediately south of East 86th Street, where one finds Schaller & Weber, the traditional German-style butcher shop, and its neighbor, the Heidelberg, the home of schnitzel and clanking beer steins.⁹⁴ Jeremy Schaller, grandson of one of Schaller & Weber's founders, owns the two four-story structures that house the store and a related business. He has refused every offer by developers to purchase the spaces, even those willing to accommodate his business in a renovated building. In the summer of 2019, he revealed that one developer had offered him \$24 million, triple the market rate. Schaller explained that "[t]his store is iconic and its aesthetic would be compromised if we knocked down the buildings."⁹⁵ Schaller's decision not to sell is more than a straightforward business decision; it is intertwined in his understanding of ethnic Yorkville's history and heritage.⁹⁶

⁹³ New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation Report, First Hungarian Reformed Church, June 11, 2019, Designation List 512, LP- 2601, <https://a860-gpp.nyc.gov/bitstream/gpp/22205/1/2601.pdf>, accessed March 1, 2020.

⁹⁴ Glaser's Bake Shop, which used to be recognized as one ethnic Yorkville's holdouts, closed in the summer of 2018 after 116 years of operation. Stefanie Tuder, "116-Year-Old UES Bakery Glaser's Will Close This Summer: The owners of Glaser's Bake Shop Want to Retire," *Eater New York*, March 2, 2018, <https://ny.eater.com/2018/3/2/17072872/glasers-bake-shop-closing-nyc>, accessed March 11, 2020; Micheline Maynard, "Beloved New York Bakery Glaser's, Famous for Its Black And White Cookie, Planning To Close," *Forbes*, May 6, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michelinemaynard/2018/05/06/the-beloved-nyc-bakery-with-the-famous-black-and-white-cookie-is-planning-to-close/#48e5c8cf305d>, March 11, 2020; Stephanie Ott and Helen Corbett, "German Gem: Bavarian Bakery in New York Closes After 116 Years," *DPA International*, June 30, 2018.

⁹⁵ Joseph Berger, "Towers Crowd Yorkville: 'We Could be Living Anywhere Now,'" *New York Times*, July 30, 2019, A24.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*; Eric Asimov, "\$25 and Under; German Fortification, at an Outpost in Yorkville," *New York Times*, December 25, 2002, F7; Cynthia Kilian, "Yodel Yum! Here's the Cream of the Bavarian Crop This Oktoberfest," *New York Post*, October 6, 2007, 23.

Gary Barnett sees the world differently. The man *New York Magazine* dubbed “the Anti-Trump” for his relatively low-key lifestyle, has an affinity for towers. Extell, the company he runs, built One57, a residential skyscraper jutting more than one thousand feet above midtown Manhattan, and is in the process of constructing Central Park Tower, which is slated to be the tallest residential building in the world at 1,550 feet. Barnett sees no logic in a city of eight million people pining for a lost past when demand for housing is high.⁹⁷ He also rails against “wealthy Upper East Siders who want to keep everybody else out.”⁹⁸ Ben Kallos, Yorkville’s representative on the City Council, is troubled by Barnett’s vision. Kallos, who has familial ties to Hungarian Yorkville, has warned that “[e]veryone in the city who cares about the cultural identity of their neighborhood should be watching Yorkville.”⁹⁹ Among the many questions ethnic Yorkville’s latest chapter engenders, three assume prominence. How long might Jeremy Schaller or his descendants decline lucrative offers to purchase their buildings? To what extent would the disappearance of Schaller & Weber and the Heidelberg affect how ethnic Yorkville is remembered? Finally, what “cultural identity” is Councilman Kallos and his allies trying to save by resisting the kind of mega-development favored by Barnett and his ilk? These are difficult questions subject to variable answers. They touch on connections between the built environment and social memory, the material and the imagined, and place and identity. Perhaps, the foregoing historical interpretation of ethnic Yorkville is one modest effort to keep the story alive no matter what happens to the neighborhood’s materiality in the future.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ According to its website, Extell, Barnett’s development company, “has redefined the New York City skyline with an impressive portfolio of residential, office, hospitality, and mixed-use properties. These iconic properties have raised the benchmark and continue to set the standards of real estate development.” “Shaping the Skyline,” *Extell Development Company*, <https://extell.com/>, accessed March 10, 2020.

⁹⁸ Berger, “Towers Crowd Yorkville,” A24.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.; Gabriel Sherman, “The Anti-Trump,” *New York*, September 22, 2010, <https://nymag.com/news/features/establishments/68503/>, accessed March 11, 2020; “The One to Look Up To,” *One57*, <https://one57.com/>, accessed March 11, 2020; “Design Vision,” Central Park Tower, <https://centralparktower.com/tower#design-vision>, accessed March 11, 2020.

BOOK I: IN CONCLUSION

The foregoing historical account set forth in Book I presents an archivally-driven narrative of ethnic Yorkville's past. It also identifies the creation and reproduction of the received wisdom and dominant narratives less rooted in historical evidence, that is, the ethnic Yorkville imaginary. The major points of deviation between these two ways of knowing and communicating Yorkville's ethnic past warrant reiterating before the story continues in Book II, which takes up questions of how Yorkville's ethnic past gave birth to and informed contemporary German and Hungarian heritage practices.

The imagined past situates ethnic Yorkville's origins within the General Slocum tragedy of the early twentieth century, thereby bringing a high degree of drama to the story and artificially stacking Yorkville's ethnic history atop that of the lower Manhattan enclaves of *Kleindeutschland* and Little Hungary. The record shows, however, that German migrants gravitated to Yorkville's open spaces decades before the turn of the century, seeing it as an ideal spot in which to gather for festivals and social gatherings. Further, German-speakers started to relocate to the area in the period after the Civil War, thereby creating an ethnic enclave capable of beaconing new migrants during the 1880s and 1890s. Similarly, the Hungarian settlement in Yorkville predated the General Slocum incident. Recovering and articulating a more complex history of ethnic Yorkville's spring season underscores the prominent role these ethnic groups played in the neighborhood's social, cultural, economic, and even political development.

The standard account of how the twentieth century's two global wars affected Yorkville's German and Hungarian enclaves, the primary subjects of its summer season, elevates local versions of political extremism to the exclusion of other subjects. To be sure, the Bund's presence drew negative attention to Yorkville in the thirties and subsequently chilled ethnic political expression. Fascism in German Yorkville, accordingly, deserves attention as a major part of ethnic Yorkville's past. Bund myopia, however, presents several problems. It overshadows the preceding Great War era, a period

which constitutes a foundational predicate for understanding the relationship between ethnic identity and times of national emergency. It also elides the experiences of the district's Hungarian Americans, who not only navigated nativist animus and questions of loyalty during the first half of the twentieth century but engaged in contentious internal debates concerning the intersections of Hungarian identity and homeland concerns.

Book I's account of ethnic Yorkville's autumn season pushes against simplistic tropes of a place and people stuck in the past from the forties through the sixties. Flattened social memories miss how the second Great Hyphen Debate affected local Germans and Hungarians and disregard the agency of ethnics who worked to preserve their enclaves, protect their reputations, and create new cultural outlets, such as the Steuben Parade, despite the stain of the Bund's Yorkville activities. Moreover, the accepted narrative fails to account for the juxtaposition of the two enclaves. While German Yorkville waned, Hungarian Yorkville waxed as waves of Cold War-era refugees resettled in the neighborhood and bolstered its existing cultural institutions and built new ones. From the mid-fifties through the sixties, developers descended on Yorkville, often painting its residents as impediments to progress. New York's major newspapers backed up this line of argument by, in part, portraying these populations as stubbornly foreign and racially intolerant. This focus on Yorkville's antiquated character tended to obscure the loss of core aspects of the neighborhood's materiality, such as the Yorkville Casino and the Ruppert Brewery.

Common narratives of ethnic Yorkville's past would prefer not to dwell on the protracted decline of the German and Hungarian enclaves from the 1970s to the present. Freezing the story in the fall and avoiding the winter chapter's messiness reinforces the timeless tableaux of the ethnic Yorkville imaginary, such as de-contextualized images of East 86th Street's German signing waiters and Bavarian aesthetics. In contrast, Book I's periodized interpretation of this stage of ethnic Yorkville's history carefully tracks the process of gentrification, the loss out of iconic ethnic businesses and anchor

institutions, and the hardening of the ethnic Yorkville imaginary. Put simply, failure to acknowledge the German Americans and Hungarian Americans who lived in, fought for, and maintained ties with Yorkville well after its active enclaves perished omits a vital part of the story and underestimates the power of a place where hyphenated identity persists.

BOOK II: ETHNIC YORKVILLE'S CONTEMPORARY HERITAGE PRACTICES

INTRODUCTION TO BOOK II

Ethnic Yorkville's consensus history holds that the district's German and Hungarian communities are relics of the past, that they have no meaningful presence in its present or future story. This interpretation renders ongoing ethnic engagement in Yorkville invisible. Book II challenges this claim by examining the histories and contemporary manifestations of a series of ongoing ethnic heritage practices. This heritage reflects the endurance of place-based ethnic identities insofar as it emerged from, connects to, and reflects on Yorkville's once-prominent German and Hungarian enclaves. For the past three decades, however, these heritage practices have occurred within a dramatically altered setting – Yorkville without its active ethnic enclaves. Thus, Book II also seeks to explore discontinuities and ruptures between Yorkville's ethnic past and its contemporary ethnic heritage institutions and activities.

The intersectionality of heritage and identity is central to Book II's analyses. Rodney Harrison defines heritage as "a set of attitudes to, and relationships with the past."¹ To Antionette Jackson, heritage refers to "anything a community, a nation, a stakeholder, or a family wants to save, make active, and continue in the present."² Although the term heritage often evokes tangible or material objects, such as artifacts, monuments, or historical sites, it can also assume intangible forms, through language, rituals, craft techniques, or songs. Heritage, whether tangible or intangible, takes shape through ongoing processes by which people negotiate its boundaries, construct its meanings, and perform its associated narratives. Hence, heritage is more verb than noun. As with any social process, asymmetries of power, authority, and access influence the results.³

¹ Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches*, 14.

² Antoinette T. Jackson, *Speaking for the Enslaved: Heritage Interpretation at Antebellum Plantation Sites* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2012), 23.

³ *Ibid.*, 13-24; Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 1-6; Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches*, 1-37; Lynn Meskell, *The Nature of Heritage: The New South Africa* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 1-8.

Marta Amico and Elsa Peralta argue that heritage “has everything to do with identity.”⁴ Heritage is, therefore, bound up with our quest to locate ourselves in relationship with and relative to others. Put another way, heritage is inextricably linked to belonging. This connection between identity-making and heritage claiming is crucial for addressing the salient question: why do people who do not reside in Yorkville travel to the neighborhood for the express purpose of engaging in ethnic heritage activities? Put simply: why Yorkville still? Yorkville’s residual ethnic heritage practices suggest that under certain conditions place attachment and ethnic identity are mutually constitutive. Each case study offers a distinct assessment of the bond between place and ethnicity as well as the forces that corrode it.⁵

The intersection of heritage and hegemonic discursive practices, such as nationalizing myths and tropes, constitutes the last of the broad theoretical concepts that influence Book II’s analyses. Laurajane Smith’s formulation of the authorized heritage discourse provides a means to understand this relationship. According to Smith the authorized heritage discourse privileges “aesthetically pleasing material objects, sites, places and/or landscapes that current generations ‘must’ care for, protect and revere . . . to forge a sense of common identity based on the past.”⁶ While this universalizing discourse fixates on the material symbols to promote a common heritage, the term applies with equal force to America’s historical myths that seek to sanitize, declaw, beautify, and streamline the nation’s past to create a corpus of heritage claims citizens can easily learn, support, and spread. With Smith’s concept as a guide, this study seeks to identify and assess how hegemonic narratives, especially the nation’s most cherished immigration myth – the melting pot thesis – and the related ethnic Yorkville imaginary, constrain or otherwise influence the heritage practices discussed.⁷

⁴ Marta Amico and Elsa Peralta, “Introduction,” in *Heritage and Identity: Engagement and Demission in the Contemporary World*, eds. Marta Amico and Elsa Peralta (New York: Routledge, 2009), 1.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1-11.

⁶ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 29.

⁷ Historian John Bodnar and heritage scholar Rodney Harrison provide guidance on this matter. Both scholars deploy a dichotomous formulation to analyze heritage practices, differentiating between official or formally sanctioned cultural heritage and vernacular forms existing outside of and sometimes challenging officialdom. While the reality of cultural heritage production does not adhere neatly to theoretical binaries, Bodnar and Harrison inspire inquiry into how Yorkville’s Germans

These conceptual considerations guide Book II's analyses of four ethnic heritage categories present in contemporary Yorkville: traditions of place-making and storytelling related to Yorkville's German community; German New Yorkers' locally produced and transnationally inspired parade culture; Hungarian New Yorkers' quest for a cultural headquarters; and the ethnic religious heritage of Yorkville's Hungarian Christian faith communities. Specific examples featured in these chapters range from highly visible and public facing events like the German-American Steuben Parade, which marches up Fifth Avenue every September, to the barely visible and private world of St. Stephen of Hungary's displaced parishioners who worship at St. Joseph's Church, the neighborhood's German national parish, each Sunday. On a different note, the story of Kathryn Jolowicz, *the* Yorkville historian, demonstrates how one person can greatly influence the course of local ethnic history and heritage, while the Magyar Ház shows how multiple ethnic cultural institutions can coalesce in an effort to construct an ethnic headquarters aspiring to symbolize Gotham's Hungarians writ large. Examining the distinct historical trajectory of each heritage category adds depth and breadth to the overall histories of Yorkville's German and Hungarian communities. In their totality, these ethnic heritage practices and their accompanying histories reveal political and identity-based fault lines and feuds often arising out of homeland concerns. They also evince attempts to draw exclusionary boundaries around ethnic identity. Lastly, they reflect external pressures for ethnic heritage to embrace the trappings and symbols of American patriotism to render hyphenated identities more palatable to outsiders and to pay proper allegiance to the melting pot thesis. Despite these problems, it is through these heritage practices that ethnic Yorkville persists.

and Hungarians tried to navigate through heritage-making ecosystems marked by inequality and suspicion of hyphenated identity. Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 13-20; Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches*, 1-7.

CHAPTER 5
TELLING HERITAGE: THE ROLE OF STORYTELLERS, MEMORY KEEPERS,
AND LOCAL HISTORICAL PRACTICES IN INTERPRETING AND CONVEYING ETHNIC YORKVILLE'S PAST

"Homeland is something one becomes aware of only through its loss."

GÜNTER GRASS

During this project's initial stages, one person after another advised me to "talk to Kathy," by whom they meant Kathryn A. Jolowicz, commonly referred to as *the* Yorkville Historian. Following this advice, I explored her digital imprint to gain a better understanding of her connection with the neighborhood's ethnic past. Jolowicz's online ubiquity inspired awe. In August 2017, I met her at Heidelberg, a German restaurant just a few steps away from the corner of Second Avenue and East 86th Street. The venue, like the memory keeper with whom I dined, seemed like the last of its kind. While I enjoyed my first taste of schnitzel, thinly sliced batter-fried veal, Jolowicz poured forth German Yorkville's past in a dizzying mixture of vignettes, scenes, names, and autobiographical themes faster than I could take notes. She appeared to inhabit the stories she shared, as if speaking to me from a distant time. My fears that this neighborhood sage would dismiss a would-be academic with no ties to Yorkville melted away as she spoke. Jolowicz, I sensed, saw hope in my curiosity. From that moment on, she gave this project access and time, believing it in the best interest of her avocational focus: the preservation of German Yorkville's story.

In a metropolis replete with brick-and-mortar museums, historical venues, acclaimed walking tours, and high-powered preservation institutions, Jolowicz has worked almost single-handedly for three decades, seeking neither remuneration nor reward, to nurture German Yorkville's legacy. She has served as its narrator, public advocate, and living archive. Thus, this chapter centers Jolowicz's work as a memory keeper, storyteller, and local historian, examining her genesis, development, and record of heritage production. Moreover, it situates her within ethnic Yorkville's bardic tradition: locals contributing to and attempting to shape ethnic Yorkville's historical narrative and legacy through

memoirs, oral histories, exhibits, lectures, tours, and more recently, websites. Studying these practices adds nuance and complexity to our understandings of ethnic Yorkville's imagined past.⁸

PART I: THE ROOTS OF ETHNIC YORKVILLE'S BARDIC TRADITION

Ethnic Yorkville's contemporary voices stand on the shoulders of a group of memory shapers who emerged during the Gimbels years. As Yorkville braced for its winter season, a period beset by intensified development, residential and small business dislocation, an increase in crime, and waves of municipal crises, many of the neighborhood's natives gazed backward, choosing to immerse themselves in a seemingly more pleasing past. The recollections of a few of ethnic Yorkville's native daughters and sons circulated publicly, adding insiders' perspectives to the emerging ethnic Yorkville imaginary. The three voices highlighted here are: Victoria Yurasits Pellegrino, a writer and social critic; Marie Jastrow, an octogenarian who realized her dream of becoming a published author; and Robert Burghardt, a muralist with a passion for local history.

The Writer

Victoria Yurasits Pellegrino, a professional writer then in the early stages of her career, penned a rough draft of the insider's story of ethnic Yorkville for *New York News Magazine* in 1975. In less than a decade after her locally circulated article, she wrote or co-authored three books, carving out a niche as a leading voice on societal issues at the fore in the seventies such as mental health, divorce, and gender equality. Born and raised in Yorkville, descended from German and Hungarian immigrants, Yurasits

⁸ As used herein, these three terms are distinct but related. The term "memory keeper" appears in scholarship describing a diverse set of cultural practices but here stands for a role in which a person actively and purposefully seeks to collect and amass the social memories and pasts of a certain collectivity such as a place-based ethnic community, and where the person is known to others for serving in this capacity. Kathryn Jolowicz is a contemporary example of a memory keeper, in her case on behalf of German Yorkville. See Faedah M. Totah, "The Memory Keeper: Gender, Nation, and Remembering in Syria," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 9, no. 1 (Winter 2013): 1-29; Susan Tucker and Svanhildur Bogadottir, "Gender, Memory, and History In One Culture and Across Others," *Journal of Archival Organization* 6, no. 4 (2008): 288-310. A storyteller is more akin to the bards of old, who communicated traditional stories and narratives through oral tradition. The term local historian or neighborhood historian suggests a level of assumed or claimed authority to interpret a community's or group's past.

Pellegrino possessed clear bona fides to serve as a neighborhood chronicler. The title of her piece, “Yorkville Lives,” spoke to its immediate objective: to counter predictions of the ethnic neighborhood’s imminent demise. Rather, she saw it at a “turning point . . . balanced between decay and revitalization.”⁹ Yurasits Pellegrino provided a virtual tour of what remained of ethnic Yorkville’s commercial footprint, detailing the celebrated dishes of every restaurant and the distinctive wares of each shop connected to Yorkville’s Central and Eastern European residents. Her point: one could still see, hear, smell, feel, and taste ethnic Yorkville. Yes, the El no longer rumbled overhead, the dance halls of her youth had vanished, and several German and Hungarian family-owned businesses had closed. Yet, Yurasits Pellegrino was far more concerned with what had replaced them: Hamburger King occupied the Brauhaus’s former space; no Hungarian films played at the drug store where the Tobis Theatre once stood; and customers ate spaghetti where lager once flowed from the Jager House’s taps. She, like so many others, bewailed that “violent movies and fast-food emporiums, singles bars, high-priced call girls and higher-priced psychiatrists” had followed Gimbels East to the area.¹⁰ All New Yorkers who cared about the sanctity of neighborhoods had a stake in Yorkville’s future, warned Yurasits Pellegrino, and it was not too late to craft a different path forward. Her 1975 vision of ethnic Yorkville’s redemption did not come to pass. The ethnic neighborhood continued to fade away during the last quarter of the twentieth century.¹¹

Yurasits Pellegrino’s piece was more than an unheeded jeremiad. It represented the first public attempt by an ethnic Yorkville native to shape the neighborhood’s narrative. In a technique emulated by later memory keepers and storytellers, Yurasits Pellegrino depicted the neighborhood’s granularity

⁹ Victoria Yurasits Pellegrino, “Yorkville Lives,” *New York News Magazine (Daily News)*, January 12, 1975, 282.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.; Victoria Yurasits Pellegrino’s three books were *The Book of Hope, Living and Loving after Divorce*, and *The Other Side of Thirty*. She also edited *Pageant*, and wrote articles for publications such as *Ms*, *The Village Voice*, *Today’s Health*, and *womenSports*. During the seventies, she partnered with New York physician Helen De Rosis to run workshops for area women dealing with the symptoms of depression. Laura D. Hirschbein, *American Melancholy: Constructions of Depression in the Twentieth Century* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 111.

through her own family's story. She wrote about her Hungarian-born paternal grandfather, who, during the Great Depression, worked on a construction crew that built midtown Manhattan's Hotel Elysée and its iconic Monkey Bar. She introduced her maternal grandfather, born in Germany, who opened a tailor shop on East 85th Street while his wife cooked for affluent families in the Gold Coast neighborhood. Yurasits Pellegrino's mother's recollection that "[e]verybody worked six days a week, but we rested on Sunday," exemplified the salt-of-the earth nature of Yorkville's ethnic families.¹² She described beer halls, songfests, and the Second Avenue's open-air market, which sold goods ranging from honey to harmonicas. Her recitation of history presented a copacetic image of multicultural co-existence, or, to use her own words, a "melting pot."¹³ In this sense, Yurasits Pellegrino reified the uncritical interpretations of European immigration then gaining strength as a tool of political comparison during the same decade that witnessed a period of heavy migration to New York from Latin America and the Caribbean. On the other hand, she showed how the granular detail of an ethnic community as refracted through one family's experiences might resonate with broader audiences. "I see and hear my past . . . my roots . . . and that's a good warm feeling," she observed.¹⁴ In short, Victoria Yurasits Pellegrino demonstrated to others the power of place and its connection to ethnic identity.¹⁵

The Octogenarian

Before the close of the decade, Marie Jastrow, a woman born in what was then Danzig in 1898, shared her memories of ethnic Yorkville with a national audience. Jastrow had a long love affair with writing, especially short stories recounting her Yorkville youth. For decades, however, her readership reached no further than her own home, as publishers summarily rejected her submissions. Nonetheless, in an ode to uncommon perseverance, Jastrow published her first work at the age of eighty-one, a 1979

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

memoir called *A Time to Remember*.¹⁶ In 1986, she authored a sequel called *Looking Back*. Jastrow was not on a quest to save ethnic Yorkville. Instead, she sought to use the neighborhood as the setting to convey bits and pieces of “an ordinary life” within “the glorious and remarkable story of the millions who migrated to a new land and settled there.”¹⁷

In both books, Julius and Johanna Grunfeld, Jastrow’s parents, occupy center stage. Julius Grunfeld, her father, was an Austrian Jew who relocated to a German-speaking community in Serbia, where he later met his future bride, Johanna Deutsch. Grunfeld was a restless soul and a chronically flawed entrepreneur. Eventually, the shame of his failed business pursuits drove Grunfeld, then in his mid-thirties, to immigrate to America in 1905. For two years, he struggled to gain his financial footing, while his wife, daughter, parents, and in-laws all predicted his return. Much to the family’s surprise and chagrin, Grunfeld resolved to stay in America, forcing Johanna and Marie, then ten-years-old, to join him. Jastrow and her mother crossed the Atlantic in 1907, becoming part of the largest influx of foreign-born migrants to ever enter the United States in a single year.¹⁸

The bulk of Jastrow’s memoirs relates to the family’s experiences within their small slice of America, the few blocks surrounding their tenement apartment on East 81st Street in Yorkville. Jastrow unapologetically adopted a nostalgic tone and tenor in both memoirs. “[I]f I see this era with romantic eyes, it is because it *was* a romantic era,” she wrote in her debut book.¹⁹ “Who can deny the romance of a world flocking by the millions to the lure of the phenomenon called America?”²⁰ Caroline Seeböhm, reviewing *A Time to Remember* for the *New York Times*, heaped praise on Jastrow’s memoir. “This kind

¹⁶ According to Andrew Kincaid, “[m]emoir is typically understood to exist in counterpoint to the more upstanding and canonical tradition of autobiography. But memory, unlike official narratives, is multiple, ephemeral, and fragmented. As its literary equivalent, the memoir, claims, each of us has a story to tell and the potential to introduce complexity, the individual voice, into the supposedly shared common narrative of history.” Andrew Kincaid, “Memory and the City: Urban Renewal and Literary Memoirs in Contemporary Dublin,” *College Literature* 32, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 16-42.

¹⁷ Marie Jastrow, *A Time to Remember: Growing Up in New York Before the Great War* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1979); Marie Jastrow, *Looking Back: The American Dream through Immigrant Eyes* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1986).

¹⁸ Jastrow, *A Time to Remember*, 13-66; Jastrow, *Looking Back*, 23-41

¹⁹ Jastrow, *A Time to Remember*, 168.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

of document grows more and more precious with the years,” she opined, adding that Jastrow’s “vivid descriptions evoke more than just a lost age – they evoke a certain feeling for America that cannot quite be duplicated.”²¹ By tethering her family’s migration story to the patriotic rhythms of the American Dream, an increasingly common theme in the years following the nation’s bicentennial, Jastrow had struck a pleasing tone. She produced the perfect score for an era when genealogy had begun to capture the imaginations of increasing numbers of Americans.²²

Jastrow’s work evinced the potential as well as the limitations of personal memoir, particularly when discussing the sacrosanct subject of Euro-American immigration. As heritage documents, her books emotively described the precarity of migrant life and the sorrow of family separation. She carefully mapped the local urban landscape, drawing vivid portraits of neighborhood businesses such as Rosenberg’s dry goods and Goodman’s drug store. Jastrow’s recollection of Paprikás Weiss deftly resurrected the Hungarian grocery’s earliest days allowing the reader to almost smell the merchandise. Perhaps most importantly, she privileged vignettes of her mother pushing against patriarchal norms, such as when she secured a new apartment and found a job without seeking her husband’s permission. Each of these elements furthered understandings of the immigrant experience.²³

Jastrow’s memoirs, however, speak loudest in their silences. She avoids any discussion about her family’s positionality as German-speaking Jews in an area of Yorkville where most residents were Gentiles of German and Hungarian identity. In fact, she gives no sense of German Yorkville’s multiple forms of heterogeneity. Rather, like Yurasits Pellegrino, Jastrow emphasizes the term “melting pot,” not only to connote inter-ethnic harmony but to suggest a rapid and unproblematic process of assimilation. Additionally, her first memoir sidestepped the Great War period. The sequel addressed the subject more

²¹ Caroline Seebohm, “Nonfiction in Brief: Solitaire Westchester,” *New York Times*, July 29, 1979, BR4.

²² Jastrow, *A Time to Remember*, 13-66, 168; Jastrow, *Looking Back*, 23-41; Caroline Seebohm, “Nonfiction in Brief: Solitaire Westchester,” *New York Times*, July 29, 1979, BR4.

²³ Jastrow, *A Time to Remember*, 11-163; Jastrow, *Looking Back*, 23-195.

squarely, providing a glimpse of intra-ethnic disagreements concerning global politics, but failed to discuss how German Yorkville faced enhanced scrutiny, surveillance, and claims of disloyalty. Most problematically, Jastrow's memoirs endorse the image of the U.S. as an unrivaled land of economic opportunity, free from ingrained social class hierarchies evident in European polities. Of course, a memoir is an awkward place for messiness and nuance. Perhaps that helps explain this genre's success as a form of heritage communication.²⁴

The Artist

Artist Robert Burghardt, like Yurasits Pellegrino and Jastrow, found inspiration in his Yorkville youth. In 1983, he set out to stimulate the memories of former New Yorkers, especially those members of the Yorkville diaspora who, like himself, had gone suburban. Thus, his seventy-five-foot mural, "Growing Up in New York City, 1926-38," which traveled around Greater New York, depicted a child's perspective on Gotham during the interwar years. Burghardt was born in 1926 in a tenement near the corner of East 94th Street and First Avenue, in Yorkville's Hellgate area. His parents had emigrated from Hungary with their two oldest children in the early twenties. The Burghardts quickly came to know tough times. Before the future artist had turned two, his father, Anton, who labored as a dishwasher in an area restaurant, died of pneumonia. Consequently, Mary Burghardt remade herself as the superintendent for a building on East 91st Street, an uncommon vocation for a woman during the Great Depression.²⁵ Undoubtedly, the intensity of these early experiences contributed to Burghardt's

²⁴ Jastrow, *A Time to Remember*, 11-163; Jastrow, *Looking Back*, 23-195. To be sure, Jastrow had ample reason for believing in America as a place where talent trumped status. Her son, Robert Jastrow, who helped publish the memoirs and wrote the Introduction to *Looking Back*, became a renowned astrophysicist. Robert Jastrow led NASA's Goddard Space Institute for twenty years, founded the George C. Marshall Institute in Washington, D.C., and authored several books about space. Upon his death in 2008, the *New York Times* called him the man "who made space understandable." Not bad for a kid from Yorkville. John Schwartz, "Robert Jastrow, Who Made Space Understandable, Dies at 82," *New York Times*, February 12, 2008, D7.

²⁵ Nancy Cacioppo, "'Growing Up in New York City, 1926-38': Burghardt's Mural Conjures Up Memories," *White Plains Journal*. Despite these limitations, non-fiction writers have used Jastrow's memoirs as source material to make factual claims about Yorkville during the early twentieth century or to analyze immigration more generally. See, Bernard F. Dick, *The Merchant Prince of Poverty Row: Harry Cohn of Columbia Pictures* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1993); Sydney Stahl Weinberg, *The World of Our Mothers: The Lives of Jewish Immigrant Women* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 4. *News*, December 25, 1983, 58; "'Vanishing Rockland' on Exhibit," "'New York! New York!' – Theme of Exhibits at New City Library," *White Plains Journal News*, August 12, 1983, 40; Mariruth Campbell, *White Plains Journal News*, September 17, 1969,

subsequent commitment to local history and community art. After moving north in 1954, he served as an historian for the town of Stony Point and for Rockland County, while working full-time as chair of Rockland County Community College's math department.²⁶

With "Growing Up in New York City," Burghardt painted a memoir on canvas, focusing on a single family's recollections of Yorkville's bygone era. Ruppert Brewery, the El, and tenement buildings dot the urban landscape as neighborhood children play "Johnny on the Pony," a popular street game of the era, and swim in the East River. Like Yurasits Pellegrino and Jastrow, Burghardt preferred to recall a past without conflict.²⁷ The mural contained no hint of the civil strife present during his boyhood days, such as the Bund-related mayhem.²⁸ As his mural traveled throughout the metropolitan region, Burghardt moved with it, waxing nostalgic about Yorkville's history to visitors and the press. Yet unlike Yorkville's other early storytellers, Burghardt underscored his neighborhood's links to the wider city. Despite his family's limited financial means, they found ways to recreate at far-off venues such as Coney Island, Canarsie Beach in Brooklyn, and even the Palisades Amusement Park across the Hudson in Bergen County, New Jersey. In announcing one of his lectures, the *White Plains Journal News* invited

69; Susan Deeks, "Rockland Recollections: The Art of Robert Burghardt," *Nanuet NY Patch*, June 27, 2017, <https://patch.com/new-york/nanuet/rockland-recollections-art-robert-burghardt>, accessed March 27, 2020.

²⁶ Nancy Cacioppo, "'Growing Up in New York City, 1926-38': Burghardt's Mural Conjures Up Memories," *White Plains Journal News*, December 25, 1983, 58; "'Vanishing Rockland' on Exhibit," "'New York! New York!' – Theme of Exhibits at New City Library," *White Plains Journal News*, August 12, 1983, 40; Mariruth Campbell, *White Plains Journal News*, September 17, 1969, 69; "In Haverstraw, the Subject Is Rockland," *White Plains Journal News*, July 6, 1979, 25; Susan Deeks, "Rockland Recollections: The Art of Robert Burghardt," *Nanuet NY Patch*, June 27, 2017, <https://patch.com/new-york/nanuet/rockland-recollections-art-robert-burghardt>, accessed March 27, 2020.

²⁷ A *Daily News* article from 1976 featuring one of Yorkville's longtime foreign-born residents offered a similar perspective. Frank Aloise, who was born in Italy, started working for G. Strasswimmer, a German American pharmacy on Second Avenue in Yorkville, in 1920, at the age of sixteen. G. Strasswimmer opened in 1876 to serve German migrants and others who ventured into Yorkville to work at one the neighborhood's major breweries. Aloise commented that Yorkville "was a much nicer place" in 1920, a time with few cars and fewer robberies. The people "were more solid on those days," Aloise said. They "paid their bills in cash and on time and if we accidentally left the front door open all night, nobody even bothered anything." To Aloise, the steel curtain roll-up doors that still protect Manhattan's businesses when closed symbolized the increase in crime and the loss of trust. John Lewis, "Druggist Likes 'Old Days,'" *New York Daily News*, March 11, 1976, 7.

²⁸ Perhaps an image of Mayor LaGuardia reading the comics on the radio due to a newspaper strike was meant to stand for the municipal government's leadership and oversight during this fraught period. "'New York! New York!' – Theme of Exhibits at New City Library," *White Plains Journal News*, August 12, 1983, 40.

“[t]hose wishing to travel down memory lane with Burghardt, and those younger people who want to know how it once was” to look, listen, and imagine.²⁹

PART II: SIE IST EINE NATURGEWALT: KATHRYN JOLOWICZ’S GERMAN YORKVILLE³⁰

“Nothing after the 1960s matters,” Kathryn Jolowicz stated matter-of-factly as she and I meandered down East 86th Street with the ghosts of singing waiters and clanging beer steins swirling about. In this succinct utterance, Jolowicz not only articulated an ironclad tenet of her interpretation of Yorkville’s history – that the ethnic neighborhood meriting memory died fifty years ago – but raised queries about why her quest to preserve its past seems to matter so much. From whence do our neighborhood memory keepers and storytellers come? What drives them? What stories do they tell and who listens? Jolowicz provides an entry point into studying how and why neighborhood memory keepers and storytellers dedicate time and effort to preserving ethnic pasts.

The Education of a Neighborhood Memory Keeper and Storyteller

Kathryn A. Jolowicz was born on October 11, 1939, to Paul Jolowicz and the former Ruth von Eltzsch, a middle-class couple then residing in the Woodside neighborhood of Queens. Jolowicz entered a world ablaze. Just six weeks before her birth the German military had defiantly commenced an assault on Poland, triggering the Second World War. President Roosevelt pressed Congress for legislation ending an existing munitions embargo on a "cash and carry" basis in response to Germany’s belligerence, signaling America’s tack away from its isolationist course. Although busy making a new life in the U.S., events in Europe undoubtedly stirred Paul Jolowicz’s emotions. Kathryn’s father was born in 1905 in the city of Posen, then part of Imperial Germany’s Prussian province. However, the reconstituted Poland claimed sovereignty over the city via the territorial settlements contained in the

²⁹ Ibid; Cassi Feldman, “The Rules of the Games, More or Less,” *New York Times*, July 1, 2007, 26.

³⁰ Translated from German as “She is a force of nature.”

Treaty of Versailles. By the time of Kathryn's birth, however, Posen was once again under German control due to Nazi aggression.³¹

The Jolowicz clan possessed a passion for collecting, disseminating, and preserving scholarly ideas, dispositions that would later well up within in *the* Yorkville historian. Starting modestly in the 1860s with Joseph Jolowicz procuring a license to sell books and artwork in Posen, the family built a successful publishing company specializing in scientific books, articles, and dissertations. At its height, *Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft* ("AV"), founded by Leo Jolowicz, the brother of Kathryn's paternal grandfather, trailed only Springer within Germany's crowded science publishing sector. The Jolowicz family relocated AV to Leipzig, a city renowned for its book fairs and antiquarian marketplace, in the aftermath of the Great War. In the early 1930s, as AV continued to expand its reach, Paul Jolowicz traveled to the United States ostensibly to establish an American branch of the publishing company, a period during which he married Ruth Eltzsch at a ceremony in New York.³²

The National Socialists' takeover of the German government abruptly halted the Jolowicz family's rising fortunes. In 1937, Nazi officials seized control of AV's Leipzig operations. Leo Jolowicz's son Walter and son-in-law Karl Jacoby found themselves in a concentration camp for a short time. After gaining their release in 1938, the two embarked on a harrowing journey taking them through Asia, Australia, Scandinavia, and Cuba, before arriving in New York. Around this same time, Albert Jolowicz, Leo's brother and Kathryn Jolowicz's paternal grandfather, wrangled with Nazi bureaucrats over the fate his Berlin-based bookstore and antiquarian shop. With stunning efficiency, some members of the family

³¹ Mark D. Van Eils, "Poznań, Poland," *Military History* 35, no. 5 (Jan 2019): 76-77; Edmund Spevack, "Borderland Nationalism, Westward Migration, and Anti-Polish Aggression: The Case of Grenzmark Posen-Westpreussen, 1919-1939," *East European Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (Oct. 1996): 301-30; Kristin Kopp, *Germany's Wild East: Constructing Poland as Colonial Space* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 1-28.

³² Edwin F. Beschler, "Walter J. Johnson and Kurt Jacoby: Academic Press," in *Immigrant Publishers: The Impact of Expatriate Publishers in Britain and America in the 20th Century*, eds. Richard Abel and Gordon Graham (New York: Routledge, 2017); *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft der Bibliophilen: Sechster Jahrgang, 1904* (Weimar, Germany: Sekretariat der Gesellschaft der Bibliophilen, 1904), 32; Pieter Bolman, "The Significance of April 4th, a Reflection," in *Academic Publishing in Europe: The Role of Information in Science and Society*, eds. Armoud de Kemp, Einar H. Fredriksson, and Björn Ortelbach (Washington, D.C.: Los Press, 2006), 117-120.

reassembled the pieces of their shattered enterprise in New York. Academic Publishing, the successor company, earned a stellar reputation as a leading publishing house, counting Albert Einstein among its authors. Walter Jolowicz served as the new company's CEO and Karl Jacoby its chief editor. Paul Jolowicz remained closest to the family's commercial roots, handling myriad roles while specializing in the acquisition and sale of antiquarian books.³³

The Jolowicz family saga, which took them from the Posen borderland to entrepreneurial exploits in Leipzig to Nazi persecution to success in New York, presents a dramatic tale of perseverance. Yet, the family eschewed public discussions of their journey. Whether their Jewish ancestry contributed to this reticence is unclear. To be sure, soon after migrating, Walter Jolowicz changed his name to Johnson and joined a Manhattan-based Lutheran church. Paul Jolowicz, in contrast, kept his name and passed it onto his daughter, despite relocating to Yorkville, a site of conflict between German Jews and non-Jews. In a general sense, the Jolowicz family's story reinforces the complexity, fluidity, and conflictual nature of German American identity.³⁴

Unlike most of her Yorkville contemporaries, Jolowicz did not attend a local public or parochial school during the fifties. Thus, she did not experience firsthand the period's tensions over racial desegregation nor the ethnic heterogeneity and hybridity that had come to characterize the neighborhood's religious schools such as the one overseen by St. Joseph's Church, Yorkville's German national parish. Rather, in her adolescent years, Jolowicz attended private schools in Tarrytown and Long Island. Starting in 1954, she returned to Manhattan full-time to attend Julia Richman High School,

³³ Paul Wassarman, *A Place in History: The Biography of John C. Kendrew* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 151; Jan-Pieter Barbian, *The Politics of Literature in Nazi Germany: Books in the Media Dictatorship*, trans. by Kate Stuge (New York: Bloomsburg, 2010), 232; Edwin F. Beschler, "Walter J. Johnson and Kurt Jacoby: Academic Press," in *Immigrant Publishers: The Impact of Expatriate Publishers in Britain and America in the 20th Century*, edited by Richard Abel and Gordon Graham (New York: Routledge, 2017), 69-88.

³⁴ Ibid. Ms. Jolowicz grew up in Yorkville during a period when the signifier "German American" tended to exclude those identifying as German Jews, and she, like her mother, embraced a Germanness steeped in Protestantism. Moreover, the background she shares with the public, presented to journalists and in lectures, does not feature the Jolowicz family's Jewish roots. Steven Lechner, Observations, Kathryn Jolowicz lecture on March 9, 2019 (hereinafter "Steven Lechner Observations, March 9, 2020).

situated on the corner of East 67th Street and Second Avenue. The then-all-girls school prepared its students for success at the collegiate level. In addition to reinforcing a passion for learning, the school exposed Jolowicz to variegated, and sometimes competing, visions of womanhood. The school simultaneously emphasized home economics courses while welcoming the local chapter of the Lucy Stone League, an organization formed in New York soon after ratification of the nineteenth amendment. By the 1950s, “Lucy Stoners,” worked to identify and remediate gender discrimination in its various forms. In the mid-fifties, the Julia Richman chapter rededicated the school’s library in honor of Anna Maulin Zenger for her contributions to press freedom. Dominant social memories of this constitutionally protected American value had long recognized the pioneering efforts of John Peter Zenger, a German-born printer who New York’s royal governor unsuccessfully tried to silence with a libel suit. The young activists sought to use the power of naming rituals to recover and elevate the story of Zenger’s wife, Anna, who kept the presses going during her husband’s incarceration and trial. In a period associated with women’s roles as mothers and homemakers, Jolowicz and her classmates benefitted from attending an educational institution that provided its female students with ample space to think critically, dream big, and challenge gender-based stereotypes.³⁵

After graduating from high school in 1957, Jolowicz enrolled in New York University’s interior design program, earning a BFA in 1961. Her early adult life coincided with two significant trends, both of

³⁵ Susan Henry, ““We Must Not Forget That We Are Dealing with a Woman”: Jane Grant’s Return to a Magazine and a Cause,” *Journalism History* 33, no. 3, (Fall 2007): 151-162; Lucy Stone League to Honor Woman Pioneer of Free Press,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, March 30, 1954, 11; Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, c2008), 1-18; Kathleen A. Laughlin et al., “Is It Time to Jump Ship? Historians Rethink the Waves Metaphor,” *Feminist Formations* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 76-80. During its foundational period, the Lucy Stone League focused on the right of women to maintain their birth names upon marriage. Olivia B. Waxman, ““Lucy Stone, If You Please’: The Unsung Suffragist Who Fought for Women to Keep Their Maiden Names,” *Time*, March 7, 2019, accessed May 5, 2020, <https://time.com/5537834/lucy-stone-maiden-names-womens-history/>; Susan Henry, “Gambling on a Magazine and a Marriage: Jane Grant, Harold Ross, and *The New Yorker*,” *Journalism History* 30, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 54-65. The 1953 German Day activities in New Jersey’s Schuetzen Park epitomized the approach of celebrating John Peter Zenger. Event planners organized a writing contest carrying the prompt: “What John Peter Zenger Means to Me,” open to all students enrolled in a German class at a school within two-hundred miles of New York City. “German Essay Winners to Be Feted May 31,” *New York Daily News*, May 10, 1953, H10. Julia Richman students also engaged with more “traditional” commemorations of American history, such as the 1954 observance of Bill of Rights Day, run by the New York branch of the National Society of Colonial Dames and co-sponsored by the Sons of the American Revolution and the Bills of Rights Commemorative Society. “Colonial Dames Hail Bill of Rights,” *New York Daily News*, December 15, 1954, 17C.

which shaped her later development into a memory keeper, storyteller, and local historian. On the macro-level, the number of women entering the workforce increased precipitously throughout the sixties, which shaped feminists' demands for equal pay, access to managerial positions, and accountability for gender-based harassment. Jolowicz did not identify as a feminist in an activist sense, but she nevertheless scaled gender barriers in her professional pursuits.³⁶

At the same time, Yorkville, the neighborhood in which Jolowicz had spent her early days and where she continued to reside, was transforming before her eyes. Manhattan's insatiable real estate developers had set their sights on the working-class portion of the Upper East Side, leading to the evisceration of ethnic landmarks like the Yorkville Casino and the exodus of many German American families. Ethnic memory was replacing ethnic living. Jolowicz witnessed firsthand how East 86th Street's surviving restaurants, bars, and shops assumed an inordinate degree of the burden to represent German Yorkville to curious tourists and to provide a space for the neighborhood's diaspora to periodically reassemble. Bearing witness to these changes had a profound impact on Jolowicz. As a subsequent interpreter of this history, she would privilege Sauerkraut Boulevard as an ecosystem capable of generating broad claims about the meanings and values of ethnic identity and community.³⁷

Unlike many Yorkville residents, Jolowicz did not simply observe these transformations. Nor did she join ethnic Yorkville's exodus to other parts of Greater New York. Instead, Jolowicz faced uncertainty with resolve and action, deciding to stay in the place to which she had become so attached.³⁸ Starting

³⁶ Interview of Kathryn A. Jolowicz by author, March 9, 2019.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ The voluminous literature on place attachment informs this study. Especially relevant are psychological and sociological studies of longtime residents experiencing a gentrifying neighborhood. Jolowicz's entire life as a neighborhood activist, memory keeper, storyteller, and local historian has occurred during a period of gentrification. It stands to reason that these experiences profoundly shaped her self-identity, which in turn colored the way she interprets and communicates the past. Her decision to embrace these various roles also provides a case study of how and why some residents not only choose to remain in a rapidly changing neighborhood but actively seek to influence how its past is honored and remembered in the present. See June Dwyer, "Reimagining the Ethnic Enclave: Gentrification, Rooted Cosmopolitanism, and Ernesto Quiñonez's Chicago Fire," *MELUS* 34, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 130; Tine Buffel and Chris Phillipson, "Ageing in a Gentrifying Neighborhood: Experiences of Community Change in Later Life," *Sociology* 53, no. 6 (2019): 987-1004; Cathrine Degnen, "Socialising Place Attachment: Place, Social Memory and Embodied Affordances," *Ageing and Society* 36, no. 8 (Sep 2016):1645-67; Jean Sandrine, "Neighbourhood

with her formation of the East 83rd/84th Street Block Association (Block Association) in 1973, Jolowicz leaped with both feet into the world of neighborhood stewardship. Upon its formation, the Jolowicz-led Block Association intervened in a local controversy with citywide implications, joining with other Yorkville residents to fight against a methadone clinic at East 84th Street and Third Avenue. The clinic, they asserted, constituted a public nuisance by failing to provide adequate security and enabling loitering. The coalition persuaded a judge to order the clinic to beef up security and markedly reduce the size of its client population. Groups in other New York neighborhoods followed the Yorkville coalition's "not in my backyard" blueprint. By 1974, the clinic decided to pull up stakes and vacate Yorkville altogether, signifying a complete victory for Jolowicz. For nearly a half century, Jolowicz, often working through the Block Association, has guarded against real and perceived threats to Yorkville, such as the prostitution problem during the last three decades of the twentieth century.³⁹ Along the way, she forged strong ties with local law enforcement, advocating for community policing long before the phrase gained cache. Jolowicz's neighborhood advocacy is not a parallel track from her role as a memory keeper, storyteller, and local historian: it is all part of a unified drive to preserve and protect her home in all its manifestations.⁴⁰

Attachment Revisited: Middle-class Families in the Montreal Metropolitan Region," *Urban Studies* 53, no. 12 (2016): 2567-83; Graham D. Rowles, "Place and Identity in Old Age," *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 3, no. 4 (1983): 299-313;

³⁹ Block associations were gaining wider acceptance and use in the late sixties and early seventies, reflecting earlier efforts by Robert F. Wagner, Jr. and other public officials to encourage localized input as a means to render the metropolis more livable and the municipal government more responsive. Glenn Fowler, "The Block Association, Boon to City Activists: The Block Association, Boon to City Activists," *New York Times*, October 19, 1969, R1; Joseph Lelyveld, "Welfare Center's Woes Affect Neighbors," *New York Times*, December 13, 1971, 54. According to *Brick Underground*, self-styled as a "daily survival guide for buying, selling, renting and living in New York City," defines block associations as "groups of residents who decide to collaborate to strengthen a block or area; they often form around a particular issue or set of issues--for example, an unscrupulous landlord or a green space that needs improved maintenance." "How Block Associations Work to Make NYC a City of Neighbors," *Brick Underground*, accessed April 16, 2020, <https://www.brickunderground.com/live/nyc-block-associations>. With Jolowicz at the helm, the Block Association has also played an instrumental role in the city's festive culture. "Gratitude: Third Avenue Festival Thanks to All Listed Here: Participating Community Organizations," *New York Daily News*, September 14, 1984, M7; "It's Worth Toasting," *New York Daily News*, December 4, 1977, M10.

⁴⁰ "State Acts to Shut Methadone Clinic," *New York Times*, March 16, 1973, 54; "Metropolitan Briefs: Judge Rules Against Northside Houses Tappan Zee Work Finished Iraqi Indicted on Bomb Charges from the Police Blotter: Methadone Clinic Reopening After Fire," *New York Times*, May 23, 1973: 51; "Penalty for Q's Voted," *New York Daily News*, May 27, 1973, 58; Bryant Mason, "Hail Methadone Clinic Ruling," *New York Daily News*, July 16, 1973, 1B; "Ask State Ban on Dope Clinic," *New York Daily News*, July 21, 1973, 15ML; Lawrence Van Gelder, "A Disputed Methadone Clinic Moves From East 84th Street: Lease Expires," *New York Times*, August 22, 1974, 40; Corey Kilgannon, "A Sex Sting Called 'Operation Losing Proposition,'" *New York Times*, January 17, 1999, CY6; "Minutes," City of New York, Manhattan Community Board 8, Transportation Committee, April 4,

In 1988, after more than a decade as a neighborhood steward, Jolowicz transferred her membership from Holy Trinity Church on the Upper West Side to Zion-St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church on East 84th Street ("ZSM"). ZSM's Yorkville location allowed her aging mother to forego burdensome cross-town trips every Sunday mornings. The church's modestly sized congregation belied its rich history. German Americans had formed Zion Lutheran in 1892, during German Yorkville's ascension. The church maintained a strong congregation throughout the early twentieth century, benefitting from the enclave's growth in the period prior the Great War. In the 1930s, its pastor, William Popcke, publicly supported Germany's Nazi regime and local Bund-related activities, a period the modern church would prefer to forget. After World War II, Zion Lutheran absorbed what remained of the congregation of St. Mark's, one of *Kleindeutschland's* foundational German-speaking churches, and the place of worship for nearly all the victims of the General Slocum disaster in 1904. Thereafter, the amalgamated ZSM could claim its part in the histories of New York's two most prominent German-speaking enclaves.⁴¹

Jolowicz enjoyed a fruitful relationship with ZSM for several years. The church, and especially the Ladies' Aid Society, afforded her elderly mother opportunities to establish new social bonds with German-speaking contemporaries. For the designer with two Fine Arts degrees, the church represented a fading fresco in need of restoration. Thus, she updated existing traditions such as the Weihnachtbasar (Christmas bazaar), organized novel fundraising events such as an annual Bierfest on Steuben parade day, and crafted a multifaceted publicity and marketing campaign. Manfred Bahmann, ZSM's German-born pastor, celebrated her efforts. In 1990, Jolowicz launched a German language school at the church,

2018, 3-4. Jolowicz has served as the Vice President of the 19th Precinct Community Council for years. This group acts as a vehicle to connect the local police department with area residents. *Our Town*, April 5, 2012, 16; *Our Town*, March 7-13, 2019, 18; Justin Brown, "Inspector Returns, Privately," *New York Times*, September 15, 1996, CY7.

⁴¹ Robin Harris, "German Day Rally K.O.'d by O'Brien," *New York Daily News*, October 26, 1933, 2, 8; "Untermeyer Presses Nazi Issue," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 26, 1933, M2; "Dr. Popcke Lauded at Jubilee Service: Zion Lutheran Church Marks His Fifty Years in Ministry," *New York Times*, May 5, 1939: 3; "Fight on Dr/ Popcke Taken to Synod Head: Plantikow, Ousted as Member of Zion Church, Sees Dr. Burgess on Row with Pastor," *New York Times*, September 2, 1934, 12; "Our History," *Zion St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church*, accessed May 15, 2020, <http://www.zionstmarks.org/ourhistory.htm>.

a program meant to build bridges between the English- and German-language groups, raise awareness about the church and its historical significance, and supplement the coffers. In a short time, Jolowicz had become an indispensable member of ZSM. As the church's centennial approached, she seemed poised to play a leading role in its commemorative moment.⁴²

Re-designing Ethnic Yorkville's Narrative

Not only did Jolowicz play a pivotal role in ZSM's 1992 centennial commemoration, but this experience set her more firmly on a course to become a memory keeper, storyteller, and local historian. Her grand vision – to prepare an edited volume chronicling the church's history and to construct a complementary exhibit – spoke to her quest for a usable past capable of outliving the passing commemoration.⁴³ Receiving the go-ahead from church leadership, she fully embraced the historical research aspect of the project, assembling and organizing the church's archival materials, scattered as they were in various nooks, crannies, closets, and cabinets. She periodized the church's history and organized the documents thematically. She poured through the journals of church committees, including those kept by the St. Mark's Ladies Aid Society, the group that had chartered the *General Slocum* in 1904. In other words, with no formal training, Jolowicz used historical methodology to convey the church's story. The Jolowicz-led project produced a book entitled *Zion-St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Yorkville's Last Full Service German Church: 1892-1992, 1847-1992: A History* as well as an exhibit on the histories of Zion Lutheran and St. Mark's, before and after their merger. In addition to bringing

⁴² According to Jolowicz, during one of the first visits to Zion-St. Mark's, her mother, Ruth, met a woman who once lived in the same Berlin neighborhood. They had lived in relative proximity within the U.S. without ever having crossed paths. Interview of Kathryn Jolowicz, March 9, 2019.

⁴³ It was also an example of the unlocking the power of what David Kyvig, Myron Marty, and Larry Cebula call "nearby history." Kyvig et al. wrote that "every person's world has a history that is useful, exciting, and possible to explore." David E. Kyvig, Myron A. Marty, and Larry Cebula, *Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You*, 4th Edition (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 2. They offered the term "nearby history" to stand for "the entire range of possibilities in a person's immediate environment." Ibid. Jolowicz's first substantial engagement with nearby history illuminated and opened new pathways, permitting her to travel deeper into various pasts in her Manhattan neighborhood.

substance to the 1992 commemoration, this work laid the foundation for ZSM to earn listings on the State Register of Historic Places in 1994 and the National Register of Historic Places in 1995.⁴⁴

The commemoration project, especially the exhibition work, transformed Jolowicz. Curiosity had begotten discovery. Discovery, in turn, had deepened her appreciation for her German ancestry. Having tasted the fruit of historical narrative she considered how telling German Yorkville's story might breathe life into the moribund enclave. Moreover, 1997 would mark the 150th anniversary of St. Mark's founding in *Kleindeutschland*, a special occasion demanding more stories. Thus, she began talking with longtime neighborhood residents, devouring secondary sources, reading through memoirs, and mining the city's archival resources. Through these efforts, the exhibit grew in scale and depth. By 1997, its thirty substantive panels presented a *longue durée* interpretation of Yorkville's history, starting in the seventeenth century, as well as additional evidence about the General Slocum disaster. Jolowicz, drawing from her seemingly bottomless well of creativity, considered other modes to share the past with others. She started to write a book, a species of "thick description" memoir, intertwining her personal memories with Yorkville's history. She even envisaged a neighborhood museum dedicated to recalling German New York, and especially the Yorkville and *Kleindeutschland* enclaves.⁴⁵

Just as Jolowicz stood poised to conquer the past, the present shifted beneath her feet. The church that had nurtured her historical inquiry suddenly posed an existential threat to her creation. Starting in 1996, a foul air engulfed ZSM. Members of the church council bickered over budgetary matters and other details of church governance. Perhaps weary of incessant in-fighting, Pastor Bahmann, who had championed Jolowicz's many projects, accepted a new post to oversee the campus ministry at NYU. After a notably brief search, Wolf Kaufmann became the church's new spiritual leader

⁴⁴ Jolowicz also complemented the exhibit with a grand opening presentation attended by church members, local politicians, dignitaries, and others. Kathryn A. Jolowicz Interview, March 9, 2019.

⁴⁵ Interview of Kathryn A. Jolowicz, March 9, 2019; Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3-30; J. K. Gibson-Graham, "Rethinking the Economy with Thick Description and Weak Theory," *Current Anthropology* 55, no. S9 (Aug. 2014): S147-S153.

in 1997. Under Kaufmann, church membership declined precipitously while its atmospheric toxicity increased in equal measure. Ironically, at the very time the church struggled to regain its equilibrium, Rep. Carolyn Maloney, whose Congressional district included Yorkville, took to the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives to pay tribute to “The Historic Exhibit of Old Yorkville.” Notably, Jolowicz was the only individual singled out in Rep. Maloney’s remarks. Praise at the highest levels of government could not protect Jolowicz or her work product. Soon, all of it – the German language school, the publicity plan, and the exhibit – fell victim to ZSM’s internal maelstrom.⁴⁶

Given the structure of the Lutheran Synod, especially the relative independence of individual churches, Jolowicz focused on salvaging what she could of her various projects. For example, she successfully established a German language school decoupled from the church. The school, now known as the German Language Learning Club (GLLC), thrived in the immediate post-church period, expanding its offerings for young learners and adding adult students. Over time, GLLC broadened its mission to include cultural engagement designed to foster a deep appreciation for German Yorkville’s past. In pursuit of its cultural mission, GLLC has sponsored or participated in walking tours, lectures, movie nights, concerts, and dinners. Every September members of the GLLC marches up Fifth Avenue at the head of the Metropolitan Division of the German-American Steuben parade.⁴⁷

Unfortunately, the exhibition suffered a far different fate. In 1998 and 1999, Rev. Kaufmann privately and publicly accused Jolowicz of sowing division within the congregation. Then, in an action soaked in spite, he ordered the exhibit locked under the church’s stage, an edict that marked the opening salvo in an exhibit war. The local *Fox* affiliate and the *New York Times* deemed the feud newsworthy. Jolowicz, by virtue of her training and experience, commanded the media stage.

⁴⁶ Representative Carolyn Maloney, Extension of Remarks on June 16, 1998, 105th Cong. 2nd sess., June 16, 1998, “In Honor of the Historical Exhibit of Old Yorkville, Hon. Carolyn Maloney of New York in the House of Representatives”: E1135; Kathryn A. Jolowicz papers.

⁴⁷ “Exploring the German Language & Lifestyle,” German Language Learning Club, Accessed April 15, 2020, <https://www.germanlearn.com/>; Interview with Kathryn Jolowicz, March 9, 2019.

Kaufmann, in contrast, receded into silence. In August 2001, the *Times* ran a story headlined, “Past May Be the Victim in Battle Over Exhibition,” featuring a photo of a smiling Jolowicz.⁴⁸ *Times* reporter Erika Kinetz wrote that “[t]he exhibition, which Jolowicz hoped would be the seed of a museum, is boxed up beneath the stage of [ZSM’s] parish hall because of a dispute over who owns the work.”⁴⁹ Capturing the frustrating catch-22, she explained that “[t]he church cannot display it because Ms. Jolowicz has the copyright [but] Ms. Jolowicz, a former member of the church cannot display it because the church has custody.”⁵⁰ Pastor Bahmann, then shepherding a new flock in Pennsylvania, observed that dooming the exhibit to molder was an “absolute shame.”⁵¹ Teri Slater of the Historic Districts Council’s board called the church’s behavior “a terrible disservice to the German-American community and to the Yorkville community.”⁵² Nothing could break this stalemate – not public shaming, not the former pastor, not a Lutheran church dispute resolution process, and certainly not lawyers. To this day, the original exhibit remains hidden from public view and inaccessible to its creator. Jolowicz resolved not to allow this dispute to be the final word on the exhibit. In 2001, she matter-of-factly told the press, “I built it from scratch [and] I can build it again.”⁵³

The rebuilding process took years not months. The challenges were myriad. Her aging mother, Ruth (von Eltzsch) Jolowicz, required care and companionship until she passed away at the age of ninety-eight in June 2005. Further, Jolowicz had to finance the reclamation project out-of-pocket. Irrespective of these issues, escaping the confines of church bureaucracy gave her a palpable sense of liberty. She now exercised exclusive control over how to shape the narrative and promote the project. While the new exhibit incorporated the initial foundational themes – the separate and combined

⁴⁸ Erika Kinetz, “Neighborhood Report: Yorkville; Past May Be the Victim in Battle Over an Exhibition,” *New York Times*, August 5, 2001, CY5; Kathryn A. Jolowicz papers.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

histories of Zion Lutheran and St. Mark's as well as tragic story of the General Slocum disaster – it now foregrounded German Yorkville. Moreover, Jolowicz decided to frame the complementary oral presentation in highly personal terms. She would blur the lines between historical research and memoir, a technique consistent with ethnic Yorkville's early story tellers of the seventies and eighties. Through these choices, she constructed a nostalgic experience capable of virtually transporting willing travelers back to Sauerkraut Boulevard. By 2008, Jolowicz felt ready to give her time machine a go. Andrea Zimmerman, a self-identified "native of Southern Yorkville," lauded one of Jolowicz's maiden voyages. She described being "immensely impressed with Ms. Jolowicz's in depth knowledge of both the general history of Yorkville and of course German immigration and settlement history in particular."⁵⁴ Based on this initial success, several organizations in the Yorkville area invited Jolowicz to guide them through a similar journey. Eventually, her show transcended Manhattan, reconnecting Yorkville to Gotham's once-strong German American network. To date, Jolowicz and her exhibit have shared memories of German Yorkville's past at more than two dozen venues. At eighty years old, she shows no signs of slowing.⁵⁵

Becoming *the* Yorkville Historian

Today, it is nearly impossible to recall German Yorkville publicly without paying homage to Jolowicz as the repository of the bygone enclave's memories, a living portal to a lost urban neighborhood. She is, in short, *the* Yorkville Historian. While not an official title, it is one she wears proudly and wields deftly. It functions at once as a calling, a persona, and a duty. For the past quarter century, no single individual has exercised more influence over the ethnic Yorkville imaginary. Examining Jolowicz through the lens of this role provides insight into how memory keepers, story tellers, and local

⁵⁴ "The History of Yorkville & Kleindeutschland," Historic Districts Council, October 24, 2008, accessed April 21, 2020, <https://hdc.org/the-history-of-yorkville-kleindeutschland/>.

⁵⁵ Ibid.; Interview of Kathryn A. Jolowicz, March 9, 2019.

historians coexist with, are shaped by, and seek to influence place-based social memories within a rapidly changing urban landscape.⁵⁶

In the mid- to late-nineties, New York's mainstream media identified Jolowicz as a loquacious and reliable voice for ethnic Yorkville. Prior to this time, the ubiquitous articles chronicling the loss of the neighborhood's ethnic population and built environment occasionally quoted those most directly affected by gentrification such as restaurateurs and shop owners. Less frequently, reporters would season their jeremiads with laments from preservationists and local politicians. No single person claimed the authority to speak on behalf of the disappearing neighborhood. That changed in 1994, when the *Daily News* ran an article reflecting on the so-called East Harlem riot of 1964. This retrospective employed a simplistic binary contrasting Harlem's African American community with Yorkville, its predominantly white neighbor to the south, the setting of the fatal shooting of teenager James Powell. Jolowicz, characterized as an "old-time resident," offered a set of images, drawn from her own memories, intended to signify Yorkville's lost German enclave. By recalling how she and friends would dance at the Lorilei and wile away the time on brownstone stoops, Jolowicz evoked a carefree era "totally ruined" by rapacious development.⁵⁷ "[I]t was a sort of Champs Élysées without the outdoor cafes," she quipped.⁵⁸ Jolowicz's reliance on personal memory and commonly accepted geo-cultural references to evoke Yorkville's past prefigured the techniques she would come to refine through subsequent public comments as well as the exhibit and lecture series. Local media ate it up.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ The work of Ray Cashman, and especially his book *Packy Jim*, has influenced the immediate analytical study of Kathryn Jolowicz in innumerable ways. Cashman's book focuses on a single memory keeper-storyteller residing in County Donegal in Northern Ireland's borderlands. Cashman's work examines Packy Jim's role in "the instantiation and cultivation of particular traditions," while also considering "how traditional communicative resources, texts, and genre, play a role in construction and development of a person's sense of self." Ray Cashman, *Packy Jim: Folklore and Worldview on the Irish Border* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2017), 4. This work is cited at specific points in the next two subsections where Cashman's insights profoundly shaped the conclusions offered.

⁵⁷ Dave Saltonstall, "Past Fading in Yorkville," *New York Daily News*, July 17, 1994, 21.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.; David W. Dunlap, "Behind the Façade, a Building Divided: In Old Yorkville's Montgomery, Residents Watch Their Home Being Taken Apart," *New York Times*, December 8, 1992, B1.

In the years following her initial moment on the public stage, New York's newspapers came to view Jolowicz as German Yorkville's lamenter-in-chief, capable of eulogizing once-prominent ethnic shops such as Elk Candy and Kramer's Pastries. Through this role, Jolowicz refined the art of feeding journalists bite-sized recollections about the neighborhood's German past. Her discursive repertoire came to comprise a relatively tight collection of oral tableaux and personal memories suffused with generational critiques. As Gotham's media had done for several decades, Jolowicz's focus never strayed far from East 86th Street, which she saw as representative of Yorkville writ large. Sauerkraut Boulevard, she habitually declared, was "my Disneyland." This line's apparent simplicity belied its genius. It cleverly invited listeners to recall German Yorkville as a symphony of the senses, to envision it through a child's eyes. Viewed through this lens, 86th Street's sights, sounds, and smells – locals in dirndls and lederhosen, singing waiters, *kuchen* and *kaffee* (cake and coffee), sauerbraten, and gingerbread houses – possessed magical qualities. This fantasyland motif could easily be contrasted with the street's contemporary jumble of impersonal box stores and chain restaurants. "It is so sad," became Jolowicz's standard way of punctuating her trip down memory lane. By the time she finished, her listeners were bound to concur.⁶⁰

As Jolowicz's reputation as a local public historian grew, so did her role. In 2006, she publicly sparred with the forces of corporate America. Marriott International solicited Jolowicz for ideas on how to incorporate Yorkville's history and heritage into events surrounding the opening of its new hotel at the corner of East 92nd Street and First Avenue. In response, Jolowicz asked whether the chain planned to incorporate "Yorkville" into the hotel's name. Upon receiving a negative reply, Jolowicz leaped into action. She formed a pressure group intertwined with German New York's past, such as K. Jacob Ruppert, descendant of the brewer prince, and Henry Z. Steinway, scion of the piano dynasty, as well as

⁶⁰ Interview of Kathryn A. Jolowicz, March 9, 2019. As stated by Ray Cashman, "[w]hen taken as a whole, an individual's repertoire of personal narratives – rarely told chronologically, or all in one sitting – comprise a life story." These "[l]ife stories invent rather than reflect the coherence we seek in our own self-image and in our presentation of self to others." Cashman, *Packy Jim*, 6.

preservation groups, such as FRIENDS. She initiated a letter writing campaign making full use of her neighborhood and ethnic networks. Concerned that “[t]he German-American history of Yorkville ha[d] been reduced to a footnote,” Ruppert expressed how he “would love some kid to see the name Yorkville on the hotel and ask: ‘Yorkville? What’s Yorkville’ and have his question answered.”⁶¹ While the hotel ultimately refused to budge, the episode did nothing to dampen her resolve. Jolowicz would fight on, defending Yorkville’s honor in the face of both real and perceived threats.⁶²

By 2008, as she prepared to publicly share her reconstructed exhibit, these newspapers interviews helped propel Jolowicz to celebrity status within German Yorkville’s heritage network. With increased notoriety came added responsibilities. Seemingly any matter touching directly or indirectly on the neighborhood’s ethnic past required her input. Numerous authors, especially those working on non-fiction topics with a Yorkville angle, sought her advice or used her quotes. Multiple writers have benefitted from a Jolowicz tour of Yorkville, including Jonathan Eig, best-selling biographer of Lou Gehrig, one of the neighborhood’s iconic figures. When Pope Benedict XVI visited Yorkville’s St. Joseph’s Church in 2008, Jolowicz served as a neighborhood spokesperson despite her Lutheran background and unfamiliarity with Yorkville’s parochial schools.⁶³ In 2014, when portions of the Ruppert Brewery resurfaced during a massive construction project in the Hellgate area, Jolowicz once again sprang into action. With the assistance of FRIENDS, she made sure a local archaeologist had an opportunity to measure, record, and photograph the remnants. Most recently, Jolowicz has lent her name and status to a coalition seeking to protect the façade of the St. Joseph’s Orphan Asylum, the only remaining piece of a structure dating back to the late 1850s, presently under threat from a proposed sports complex. These

⁶¹ John Freeman Gill, “On Sauerkraut Boulevard, Hard Feelings for a New Hotel,” *New York Times*, February 5, 2006, CY6.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Jolowicz shared parts of her repertoire with the *New York Post* upon the Pope’s visit, calling to mind images of bierstubes, butcher shops, and German-language theaters. Peter Cox, “Visit to Be Teu-tonic for Famed District,” *New York Post*, April 15, 2008, accessed April 14, 2020, <https://nypost.com/2008/04/15/visit-to-be-teu-tonic-for-famed-district/>.

experiences demonstrate the varied and sometimes contentious nature of a neighborhood-based public historian working within a dynamic urban landscape.⁶⁴

In 2009, Jolowicz, launched a website under the name of the Yorkville/Kleindeutschland Historical Society (“YKHS”).⁶⁵ Going digital constituted an important step in Jolowicz’s evolution as a memory keeper, storyteller, and local historian. It provided a means to transcend geographical boundaries, expand her audience, and bring together various elements of her historical work. The website did not create *the* Yorkville Historian, but it reflected her influence and articulated her *standpunkt*, or viewpoint, with clarity and force. By adopting a “historical society” label, Jolowicz audaciously claimed an authority on par with a non-profit, governmental entity, despite having no formal sanction. By including *Kleindeutschland* in the YKHS name, she claimed dominion over Manhattan’s broader German American memoryscape. And by referring to herself as “*the* Yorkville Historian” on the site’s main page, Jolowicz signaled that she had come to inhabit fully the public persona heretofore ascribed to her by others.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Jonathan Eig, *Luckiest Man: The Life and Death of Lou Gehrig* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 368; E.J. Fleming, *Paul Bern: The Life and Famous Death of the MGM Director and Husband of Harlow* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2008), x; Mitch Broder, *Discovering Vintage New York: A Guide to the City’s Timeless Shops, Bars, Delis & More*, First edition, (Guilford, CT: Global Pequot, 2013), 81-83; Edward T. O’Donnell, *Ship Ablaze The Tragedy of the Steamboat General Slocum* (New York: Broadway Books, 2003), 324; Peter Cox, “Visit to Be Teu-tonic for Famed District,” *New York Post*, April 15, 2008, accessed April 14, 2020, <https://nypost.com/2008/04/15/visit-to-be-teu-tonic-for-famed-district/>; Matthew Sweeney, “Yorkville Prepares for Pope’s Visit,” *New York Daily News*, April 6, 2008, accessed April 22, 2020, <https://www.newsday.com/long-island/yorkville-prepares-for-pope-s-visit-1.879742>; David W. Dunlap, “Red-Brick Remnant of Manhattan’s Brewing Past Is Unearthed, Only to Vanish,” *New York Times*, March 26, 2014, A28; NY1 and Jacob Ruppert, “Remnants of Old Ruppert Brewery Found at Yorkville Construction Site,” *YouTube video*, 1:52. May 9, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HrYJdAx88yA>; “A Ghostly Remnant: Saint Joseph’s Church and Saint Joseph’s Orphan Asylum: Part II,” St. Joseph’s Church Yorkville, January 27, 2019, accessed April 23, 2020, <https://www.stjosephsyorkville.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/January-27-2019-Bulletin.pdf>.

⁶⁵ According to the website, the YKHS’s officers are: Jolowicz, President, K. Jacob Ruppert, Vice President, and Hermes Knauer, Secretary and Treasurer. “Contact Us,” The Yorkville/Kleindeutschland Historical Society, accessed April 20, 2020, <http://www.yorkville-kleindeutschlandhistoricalsociety.com/contactus.html>. Ruppert, an attorney and judge in Louisiana, is an heir to the Ruppert brewing legacy. See “Jacob Ruppert,” Jacob Ruppert, accessed April 24, 2020, <http://www.jacobruppert.com/index1.html>. Hermes Knauer, who grew up in Yorkville, is a specialist in the conservation of armor and weapons for the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Georgett Roberts, “Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Master Armorer Prepares for Arms and Armor Exhibit,” *New York Post*, January 21, 2013, accessed April 25, 2020, <https://nypost.com/2013/01/21/metropolitan-museum-of-arts-master-armorer-prepares-for-arms-and-armor-exhibit/>.

⁶⁶ “The Lost ERA of New York City,” The Yorkville/Kleindeutschland Historical Society, accessed April 20, 2020, <http://www.yorkville-kleindeutschlandhistoricalsociety.com/>.

Jolowicz used the website to “declare that the existence of Yorkville, once lauded as Germantown, a phenomenon on the Upper East Side of Manhattan in New York City, has not been forgotten and will not be forgotten.”⁶⁷ Toward that end, she described the YKHS’s purpose as:

To preserve Yorkville’s memory, with 86th Street from Lexington Avenue to First Avenue, as its center. The primary goal is to establish a place where we, as patriotic German/Americans can come together and share our memories, both written and pictorial. The ultimate goal is to create a Yorkville/Kleindeutschland Museum in Yorkville in which the stories about the struggles of German/Americans related to the Yorkville phenomenon are told.⁶⁸

Scores of people, including many members of the ethnic Yorkville diaspora or their descendants, have contacted Jolowicz through the site since its creation. Some seek genealogical advice, others information about lost aspects of ethnic Yorkville’s built environment, and a few simply want to reminisce. In 2017, Columbia University elected to preserve the YKHS website through its Avery Library Historic Preservation and Urban Planning digital collection, ensuring its future availability to researchers and explicitly situating *the Yorkville Historian* within Yorkville’s historical record.⁶⁹

Witnessing *the Yorkville Historian*

On Saturday, March 9, 2019, German Yorkville came back to life in the auditorium of St. Jean Baptiste Roman Catholic Church, a parish church within the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York at the corner of Lexington Avenue and East 76th Street. Kathy Jolowicz, *the Yorkville historian*, presided over a ritual comingling of history, heritage, and memory in the form of an exhibition and lecture. FRIENDS, as the event sponsor, described the exhibit as “a nostalgic exploration of Yorkville’s history with a particular focus on [Jolowicz’s] personal memories that evoke the village feel of the area’s

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ “About the Yorkville/Kleindeutschland Historical Society,” accessed April 20, 2020, <http://www.yorkville-kleindeutschlandhistoricalsociety.com/aboutus.html>.

⁶⁹ Ibid.; “The Yorkville/Kleindeutschland Historical Society,” Columbia University, Avery Library Historic Preservation and Urban Planning, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://clio.columbia.edu/catalog/12850514?counter=1>. Although the YKHS holds the promise of facilitating multivocal representations of cultural heritage through crowdsourcing, the fruits of any such projects do not appear on the website. See Lala Hajibayova, “Leveraging Collective Intelligence: From Univocal to Multivocal Representations of Cultural Heritage,” *Journal of Documentation* 74, no. 6 (2018): 1190-1203.

German heyday with reminiscences of famous restaurants, ethnic shops, dance halls, schools, churches, and a common language.”⁷⁰

An hour prior the event, Jolowicz, assisted by an eager group of female volunteers transformed this empty space into a time machine. *The Yorkville* historians’ assistants comprised longtime friends and associates as well as students from the GLLC. By donning dirndls, a traditional dress associated with folk culture in parts of southern Germany and Austria, Jolowicz and her volunteers conveyed an easily digestible, if campy, sense of ethnic identity. Moreover, the attire served as a prop for Jolowicz’s claim that women in dirndls constituted a common site in German Yorkville in the forties and fifties. These visual clues helped meet the expectations of ticketed passengers, who expected transit to pre-1960s German Yorkville. Within minutes, over twenty panels organized around sixteen topics spanned the room’s perimeter. A German-centric history of Yorkville unfolded through more than a dozen panels, at least half of which focused on East 86th Street’s once thriving socio-commercial world. Other topics included *Kleindeutschland*, the General Slocum disaster, German American churches, WW II-era internment of German Americans, and the Steuben Parade. The remaining panels, a highlight reel of Jolowicz’s neighborhood stewardship, introduced Yorkville’s first responders, the 19th Precinct Community Council, and the Block Association. Portions of Jolowicz’s unfinished memoir added detail at appropriate locations. More than a dozen “No Photography” signs left no doubt about Jolowicz’s views on intellectual property rights, a lesson she learned the hard way at ZSM twenty years earlier. Although the exhibit design contemplated attendees progressing through the material in an orderly fashion, most allowed images of German Yorkville in its heyday to lure them in at various points. An older visitor wondered aloud what photographs she might recognize while another admitted to feeling overwhelmed by the exhibit’s sheer volume. By the time event organizers politely encouraged everyone to take their

⁷⁰ FRIENDS of the Upper East Side, “Memories of Yorkville’s “Kleindeutschland”: an Exhibit and Lecture, <https://www.friends-ues.org/join-friends-for-winter-2019-events/>, accessed March 23, 2020.

seats in preparation for the lecture, a sense of wanderlust gripped the room as upwards of eighty time travelers virtually roamed through German Yorkville.⁷¹

More so than the physical exhibit, the lecture captured the essence of *the* Yorkville Historian. Throughout the process of rebuilding her work product after the ZSM imbroglio, Jolowicz had confronted obstacles. Time, money, and competing responsibilities limited what was possible. In contrast, the lecture faced no such limitations. Through it, Jolowicz could command the narrative. If the March 2019 event is representative, her lecture offered a highly personalized account of Yorkville's past that she appeared to channel directly out of her memories in real time. The trip on which she took her fellow travelers revealed as much about the tour guide as the destination.⁷²

Stylistically, Jolowicz proceeded along a loose chronology but freely jettisoned that framework from time to time by flashing verbal images. At times, the result was jarring. Attacks on German culture during the Great War, epitomized by renaming sauerkraut "liberty cabbage," for example, suddenly appeared during an exposition on Yorkville's commercial growth in the 1930s. At another point, she suddenly shifted from her parent's arrival in New York in 1932 to the nickelodeon theaters popular in the early twentieth century. She credited her parents as belonging to a "pioneering" generation while attributing German Yorkville's start to the General Slocum disaster thirty years before. It was unclear whether these temporal zigzags and conflation disoriented the audience. Her use of mental mapping of Yorkville's past, on the other hand, clearly struck home. Those with even a modicum of knowledge about Manhattan's grid system could follow along as Jolowicz pointed out the German American businesses and social spaces that once dotted German Yorkville's landscape. Heads nodded knowingly as she evoked names such as the Bremen House, Lorilei, and the Yorkville Casino. Through this simple

⁷¹ Steven Lechner Observations, March 9, 2019. Most of the panels combined text and images. As a stylistic matter, the amount of text did not adhere to any sort of best practices relative to museum exhibits. The text portions of some panels exceeded three hundred words, thereby leaving visitors with a difficult choice: linger at one or two locations or circulate through the exhibit relying solely on images and photographs.

⁷² Ibid.

technique, honed by working with the city's media, Jolowicz subtly connected audience members, especially those with a living memory of these spaces and places, with a tangible past.⁷³

Jolowicz's reliance on images over narrative makes identifying her messages challenging. Nonetheless, three broad themes emerged from her March 2019 lecture: German Yorkville's beauty and authenticity; German predominance within multicultural Yorkville; and the presence of tragedy, injustice, and perseverance within the broader German American story. In a variation of her oft-repeated phrase, she opined that "86th Street, for me, was really like a Disneyland – such a magical place."⁷⁴ Flashes of music boxes, sauerbraten, and bakeries decorated her verbal reconstruction of the street at Christmas time. Jolowicz even used her first trip to the Heimat, the German homeland, in the early sixties to ratify 86th Street's authenticity. "I went to Germany and I stood there," she said, "and I thought, 'This is just like 86th Street.'" The audience's laughter seemed to confirm her conclusion.⁷⁵

Jolowicz's clearest message asserted the centrality of German Yorkville within the larger neighborhood. In fact, she eluded to a local melting pot theory stemming from an ahistorical reading of European history, whereby Yorkville's various ethnic groups naturally gravitated toward the Germans' benign cultural and linguistic hegemony, as they had done overseas as subjects of what she called the "Prussian empire." Thus, she conveyed a vision of a Yorkville where all groups were bound together through the German language, a "lingua deutsche" of sorts. While situating the German enclave at the core of a polyglot neighborhood, she accorded scant rhetorical space to discussing the neighborhood's other Central and Eastern European communities such as the Hungarians, Czechs, and Slovaks. Nor did she, at any point, discuss particularities of identity once prevalent within the wider German-speaking

⁷³ Kathryn A. Jolowicz, Lecture, March 9, 2019.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

community, such as those who described themselves as Plattdeutsche (Low Germans), Bavarians, Hessians, Prussians, and Saxons to name a few.⁷⁶

A subtheme of victimhood and grievances constituted the lecture's most striking element. Jolowicz seemed committed to using part of her time to remediate alleged erasures of tragedies and injustices endured by German Americans.⁷⁷ Toward this end, she offered a granular account of the General Slocum disaster through which attendees could almost feel the heat of the advancing flames. Jolowicz also shared her concern that Americans of German descent paid an unfair price for Germany's sins during the Second World War. Thus, she highlighted FBI raids on and internment of German Americans during World War II, commenting that "[w]e know that the Japanese were interned, and we know that the Italians were interned, but the Germans were also interned."⁷⁸ Although Jolowicz did not illuminate these stories with local examples or evidence, her general tone implied that Yorkville residents experienced this kind of persecution. It bears emphasis that she largely avoided topics capable of disrupting this theme of maltreatment. Thus, she gave the Bund story short shrift and avoided moments of conflict such as the dueling boycotts in the thirties and subsequent appearances of neo-Nazi groups.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ In this sense, Jolowicz demonstrates, in an overt way, that all history is political, even that which some might see as apolitical local history. As Fiona Cosson states, "[l]ocal history society archives are in fact brimming with their own particular politics, depending on their collectors and curators." Fiona Cosson, *The Small Politics of Everyday Life: Local History Society Archives and the Production of Public Histories*, *Archives and Records* 38, no. 1 (2017): 48.

⁷⁸ Kathryn A. Jolowicz, Lecture, March 9, 2019. Jolowicz referenced the German American Internee Coalition ("GAIC"), a group dedicated to raising awareness of U.S. internment of German Americans during World War II. In 2009, the GAIC partnered with the National Park Service and others to host a conference on the U.S. Government's Alien Enemy Control Program at Ellis Island. In addition to its public relations and educational campaign, the group organizes reunions throughout the country. Jolowicz was a special guest at one such event in Pennsylvania. German American Internee Coalition, "Ellis Island: Where It All Began," accessed April 25, 2020, <https://gaic.info/ellis-island-where-it-all-began/>; see also Ingrid Gessner, "Commemorating Crystal City: The Transnational Dimension of German American Internment Experiences," *American Studies Journal*, no. 59 (2015), accessed April 25, 2020, <http://www.asjournal.org/59-2015/commemorating-crystal-city/>; Robert A. Selig, "The Internment of German and German-Americans during World War II: A Dark Chapter in Our Nation's History," *German Life* 9, no. 2 (Aug/Sep 2002): 41.

⁷⁹ She supplements these stories with a list of German Americans who anglicized their surnames ranging in time and vocation from John Rockefeller to Ethyl Merman to John Denver, implying that anti-German sentiment drove their decisions. Steven Lechner, *Observations*, March 9, 2019.

These interpretative priorities and silences raise questions about the role of a memory keeper, storyteller, and historian operating on the local level. Since the early seventies, Jolowicz has answered the call to serve her neighbors. Two decades of stewardship prepared her to fill a vacuum as a local historian in the early nineties at a time when few showed a willingness to preserve Yorkville's past. Given this background, it is unsurprising that Jolowicz wraps her historical perspective in boosterish garb. Moreover, Jolowicz's privileging of the neighborhood's German past logically grew out of her work with ZSM as well as her own ethnic identity. Over time, however, she gained a reputation as *the* Yorkville Historian, a role implying broad knowledge of and authority over the entirety of Yorkville's past. Under these circumstances, Jolowicz's choices about what and who to prioritize carry real costs. Her German-centric interpretation deemphasizes Yorkville's other ethnic groups, as well as those unaffiliated with any ethnic collective. Accordingly, Jolowicz's interpretation amplifies the myopia of the ethnic Yorkville imaginary. Furthermore, her decision to foreground maltreatment of German Americans while avoiding the fraught and sometimes dark elements of the neighborhood's past substitutes one erasure for another.⁸⁰ Perhaps most importantly, by choosing to route the past through her personal memories, she has created a historical record unlikely to endure. The fate of her exhibit, for example, remains unclear, as multiple New York-based entities have declined Jolowicz's offers to bequeath her work to them, usually citing storage concerns. Jolowicz's memoir remains unfinished and she never realized her dream of a Yorkville museum on or near East 86th Street.⁸¹

Such critiques, however, should not dismiss Jolowicz's skill for satisfying the nostalgic yearnings of those familiar with ethnic Yorkville's story and sparking curiosity in those less familiar with the neighborhood's history. Nearly all the disproportionately older audience who attended the March 2019 lecture appeared to enjoy the experience. *The Yorkville Historian's* verbal tableaux allowed them a rare

⁸⁰ Yet, those who came expecting an informational lecture privately questioned Jolowicz's accuracy and sentimentality while others pursued such details during the Q & A period. Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

chance to engage in a shared place-based memory session.⁸² Even newcomers with little pre-knowledge about Yorkville's history cited benefits from the exhibit and lecture. For one couple who recently relocated to the district, listening to *the Yorkville Historian* brought them closer to a story from which they would otherwise feel separated.⁸³ They indicated their commitment to seeking out additional opportunities to learn about Yorkville's ethnic heritage. Put simply, Jolowicz's style facilitated a shared sense of place, and as such, constitutes a form of "productive nostalgia." Nostalgia refers to a kind of longing for the spatially and temporally familiar. Those capable of satisfying this desire, however much the exercise might deviate from the historical record, often inspire others to scratch the nostalgic itch through their own actions. This kind of inspiration can bear fruit when it leads participants to pursue their own curiosity into family history or even devote time and resources to investigating or even preserving local histories or material culture.⁸⁴

As recently as November 2019, Jolowicz carted her panels, lecture, and perspective to St. Michael's Cemetery Chapel in Queens, the latest stop on her tour. Tony Barsamian, publisher of the *Queens Gazette*, the event's emcee, lauded the Yorkville Historian, saying that "Kathy Jolowicz is amazing and the entire standing room only audience applauded her spectacular historical insights."⁸⁵

⁸² Jolowicz's style of mixing autobiography with purported history would be familiar to her listeners. Ray Cashman reminds us that "we are not all poets, but many of us – particularly those living in contemporary individualistic Western societies – are inveterate tellers of personal experience narratives – anecdotes of the self with lasting reportability." Cashman, *Packy Jim*, 6. Perhaps, attendees saw in Jolowicz's style, a practice in which they themselves engaged. Speaking about how communities construct place-based memories, Sarah De Nardi contends that "[t]hey do not simply transmit these knowledges to each other as much as construct them, enact them and share them together." Sarah De Nardi, *Visualising Place, Memory and the Imagined* (London: Routledge, 2019), 18.

⁸³ Katja Hrobat Virloget has written about the phenomenon of rapid urban change leading to disruption from shared stories, traditions, and place-based self-identities in communities with Slovenia's Adriatic coastline. She contends that many so-called "rootless" newcomers simply do not have an awareness of the urban spaces' background stories and even when made aware of these narratives, do not see them as relevant to their present and future lives. A targeted anthropological and sociological study might be able to glean more about how Yorkville's current population understands, interacts with, and values the neighborhood's ethnic pasts. Katja Hrobat Virloget, "Urban Heritage Between Silences Memories and 'Rootless' Inhabitants: The Case of the Adriatic Coast in Slovenia" in *The Routledge Handbook of Memory and Place*, edited by Sarah De Nardi et al. (New York: Routledge, 2020), 22-30.

⁸⁴ Rebecca Wheeler, "Local History as Productive Nostalgia? Change, Continuity and Sense of Place in Rural England," *Social & Cultural Geography* 18, no. 4(2017): 466-86. Alison Blunt, "Collective memory and productive nostalgia: Anglo-Indian homemaking at McCluskieganj," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 21 (2003): 717-738

⁸⁵ Jason D. Antos, "The Legacy of Kleindeutschland & Apple Strudel at St. Michael's," *Queens Gazette*, November 13, 2019, accessed April 24, 2020, <https://www.qgazette.com/articles/the-legacy-of-kleindeutschland-apple-strudel-at-st-michaels/>.

Notwithstanding concerns about narrative coherence, interpretative depth, and inter-ethnic inclusiveness, *the* Yorkville historian continues to find an audience for her visions of the past.⁸⁶

PART III: TELLING ETHNIC YORKVILLE'S STORY BY OTHER MEANS

Not Much To See There: Traces of Ethnic Yorkville's Material Remnants in Guidebooks

Kathryn Jolowicz, despite her outsized role, does not exercise monopoly power on ethnic Yorkville's story. Gotham's print press has influenced and shaped the ethnic Yorkville imaginary from the time German migrants first started to utilize the district's wide-open spaces for public celebrations. As Manhattanites anticipated completion of the Second Avenue subway in the early twenty-first century, the city's dailies habitually described Yorkville as a rediscovered territory. Historical sketches of the neighborhood's ethnic history embedded in these stories tended to convey two misleading ideas. There is "not much to see there" they would assert, referring to the purportedly sparse inventory of surviving structures linked to ethnic Yorkville's history. Typically, the narrative would then hold up two German-themed businesses as the only evidence of ethnic Yorkville's past. In a 2015 *New York Times* piece directed at a real estate audience, Alison Gregor referred to Yorkville as "one of Manhattan's more inconspicuous neighborhoods."⁸⁷ After mentioning its ethnic enclaves, Gregor asserted that "[t]here are few remnants of this history today, though the German Influence is still seen on Second Avenue in the Heidelberg restaurant, along with Schaller & Weber, a maker and purveyor of German-style meats and charcuterie."⁸⁸ The incessant focus on Heidelberg and Schaller & Weber obscures other aspects of ethnic Yorkville's remnant architecture and dulls the possibility of deploying the full complement of the built environment to enrich and enliven the neighborhood's biography.⁸⁹ Moreover, this myopia extends

⁸⁶ Ibid; Steven Lechner, Observations, March 9, 2019.

⁸⁷ Alison Gregor, "River Views, and Soon a Subway," *New York Times*, February 8, 2015, RE8; see also Joseph Berger, "Subway Work On 2nd Avenue Orphans Stores," *New York Times*, October 5, 2010, A1.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ While there are serious costs to myopic interpretations that focus only on Heidelberg-Schaller & Weber, is not illogical. In *Global Cities, Local Streets*, Sharon Zukin et al. emphasize the importance of what they call "shopping streets" to urban

ethnic Yorkville's decades-long vigil. The deathwatch discourse seems to suggest that social memory of ethnic Yorkville is inextricably intertwined with these Second Avenue businesses. When they die, this logic holds, so too will the neighborhood's ethnic past.⁹⁰

Perceptions that ethnic Yorkville lacks a historically significant built environment might stem from comparisons with other parts of Manhattan. Rodney Harrison, a leading voice in the field of heritage studies, for example, held up Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood on the Lower West Side as an exemplar of New York's superabundance of material heritage. On the Upper East Side, huge swathes of its affluent areas have achieved protected status under the city's preservation code. On the Lower East Side, public and private institutions have worked diligently to preserve properties connected to its immigrant and ethnic past. Yet, in Yorkville, the "not much to see there" refrain holds sway. Why? Simply put, a neighborhood's material remnants cannot utter a word about the past on their own. The built environment speaks only through the social practices associated with and intended to interpret its otherwise mute materiality. In the case of Yorkville, these social practices have made modest strides in pointing people toward the material remnants of neighborhood's ethnic past but have done little to alter its dominant narrative.⁹¹

In New York, these social practices include the work of tour guide publishers whose guidebooks have played a significant role in rendering Gotham's history legible by translating the built environment. Through their narrative summaries and editorial choices, guidebooks mediate between the built

neighborhood identity. "[T]here are spaces where we experience everyday diversity," they argue, "where globalization is embedded in local communities, [and] where immigrants . . . work alongside the native-born." Local shops on local streets make life livable, sociable, and rich. Insofar as Heidelberg and Schaller & Weber represent these values and these experiences, it is no wonder they receive so much attention. Sharon Zukin, Philip Kasinitz, and Xiangming Chen, *Global Cities, Local Streets: Everyday Diversity from New York to Shanghai* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 1-2.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Harrison, 1; New York Landmark Preservation Commission, *Upper East Side Historic District Designation Report*, vol. 1, NYLPC Research Department, (New York 1981), <http://s-media.nyc.gov/agencies/lpc/lp/1051.pdf>; New York Landmark Preservation Commission, *Welcome to LESPI: Lower East Side Preservation Project*, accessed April 27, 2020, lespi-nyc.org; New York Landmark Preservation Commission, *East Village/Lower East Side Historic District Designation Report*, (New York, 2012); Na Li, *Kensington Market: Collective Memory, Public History, and Toronto's Urban Landscape* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 1-11.

environment and publics interested in exploring the city's many urban neighborhoods. The WPA's Federal Writers' Project's *The New York City Guide (WPA Guide)* marked the first notable instance of a guidebook using the built environment to flesh out Yorkville's ethnic communities. Published in 1939, the *WPA Guide* aimed to elucidate "the communities and points of interest in all five boroughs of New York City" for the benefit of "the permanent resident and the visitor."⁹² This resource narrated a "tour" of Yorkville' that elevated people over structures. The section on Hungarian Yorkville, for example, not only described East 79th Street's restaurant scene but attempted to share elements of everyday life such as *Amerikai Magyar Nepszava*, New York's primary Hungarian-language newspaper, various ethnic delicacies carried by local shops, and the community's festive and commemorative culture.⁹³ Throughout the forties and fifties, the *WPA Guide's* people-centered approach equipped city dwellers as well as out-of-towners to experience ethnic Yorkville as a living organism, not simply a collection of inaudible structures. As Yorkville's ethnic population and landscape started to wane, so too did its presence in city guidebooks.⁹⁴

The *AIA Guide to New York City* (the "AIA Guide"), first introduced in 1968 and updated decennially, evinced a wholly different approach insofar as it emphasized materiality. Examining its five editions offers a means by which to assess how descriptions of ethnic Yorkville's built environment have changed over time. The inaugural *AIA Guide* appeared in the early stages of ethnic Yorkville's existential crisis, as the real estate industry eyed the neighborhood as an underdeveloped borderland. This first edition also came out while the city was still adjusting to its new preservation act. The 1968 *AIA Guide's* lone nod to ethnic Yorkville's history acknowledged that the neighborhood "continue[d] to harbor [a]

⁹² *New York City Guide: A Comprehensive Guide to the Five Boroughs of the Metropolis – Manhattan, Brooklyn, the Bronx, Queens, and Richmond – Prepared by the Federal Writers Project of the Works Progress Administration in New York City* (New York: Random House, 1939), *Preface*.

⁹³ Likewise, the section on German Yorkville discussed key structures including the Yorkville Casino on East 86th Street, the German Workers Club on Third Avenue, and the German Central Bookstore on East 84th Street while also referencing the enclave's socio-cultural elements. Of course, given that the Guide was published during the end of the Bund period, this recent story received a great deal of attention. *New York City Guide*, 251-52.

⁹⁴ *New York City Guide*, 243-52.

decreasing number of the old immigrant German, Hungarian, and Czech middle class.”⁹⁵ The Ruppert Brewery, which had ceased operations two years earlier, constituted the only material element of ethnic Yorkville to earn a listing. Thus, the *AIA Guide* constructively eviscerated the Liederkrantz headquarters, the New York Turn Verein, the Hungarian House, St. Joseph’s Church, Yorkville’s other ethnic places of worship, and the entirety of the ethnic shops and restaurants.⁹⁶ The 1978 *AIA Guide*, published during the troubled Gimbels years, granted Yorkville its own section, an improvement by any measure, and added an entry for the New York Turn Verein. On the other hand, it suggested that Yorkville contained few structures of interest or significance because “the bulk of the area’s building is housing for the lower middle class.”⁹⁷ Judging by the *AIA Guide*’s first two editions, it appeared that a declining ethnic, working-class neighborhood could be ignored with ease and impunity.⁹⁸

The 1988 *AIA Guide* marked a shift in how guidebooks delineated Yorkville’s ethnic materiality. Commercial entities connected to Yorkville’s German and Hungarian communities gained mention, such as Kleine Konditorei, Karl Ehmer Wurst Haus, Bremen House, Glaser’s Bake Shop, and Püski-Corvin Magyar Könyvesház (i.e., Hungarian Bookstore). So, too, did places of worship such as St. Joseph’s Church, St. Stephen of Hungary, and ZSM. Ethnic Yorkville, through these listings, reappeared in the architectural record even if the *AIA Guide* failed to convey the full breadth of its footprint. In addition, the revised narrative introducing Yorkville foregrounded the neighborhood’s ethnic history, referring to 86th Street as “the city’s German-American Hauptstrasse (Main Street)” and noting the “considerable evidence in church names, settlement houses, and older restaurants” of the neighborhood’s Hungarian community.⁹⁹ The third edition’s enlarged treatment of ethnic Yorkville came after two decades of

⁹⁵ *AIA Guide to New York City*, eds. Norval White and Elliot Willensky (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1968), 156.

⁹⁶ This result belied Mayor Lindsay’s boast, contained in the *AIA Guide*, that this comprehensive resource would render the city’s “old-country neighborhoods, its isolated parks, and its often scrambled street patterns” more visible even to the “casual visitor.” *Ibid.*, ix.

⁹⁷ *AIA Guide to New York City*, Rev. Ed. eds. Norval White and Elliot Willensky (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1978), 242.

⁹⁸ *AIA Guide*, 154-86; *AIA Guide*, Rev. eds. Norval White and Elliot Willensky, 242-50.

⁹⁹ *AIA Guide to New York City*, 3rd Ed., eds. Norval White and Elliot Willensky (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1988), 405.

development and displacement. While the fallout from this process had not catalyzed action within New York's preservation community, it had reached the consciousness of those responsible for compiling the *AIA Guide*. It is also possible that the ethnic communities themselves, through their entrepreneurs and thought leaders, may have influenced this result.¹⁰⁰

These changes held, for the most part, in the *AIA Guide's* subsequent editions published in 2000 and 2010. Although many of the ethnic shops referenced in 1988 disappeared during the last decade of the twentieth century, the ethnic churches continued to warrant prominent listings. Moreover, the Hungarian House gained inclusion in the 2000 and 2010 editions, although it was misleadingly identified as the American Federation for Hungarian Education & Literature, one of its member entities.¹⁰¹ The narrative introduction continued to pay homage to the neighborhood's ethnic past. However, since 1988, this enhanced attention to the neighborhood's ethnic past has amplified the Bund story. The *AIA Guide's* latest editions state, in exaggerated form, that "[i]n the 1930s Fritz Kuhn led parades of the German-American Bund until Pearl Harbor finally put an end to such antics."¹⁰² Through its first half century, the *AIA Guide* increased awareness of ethnic Yorkville's built environment well beyond the Heidelberg-Schaller & Weber myopia; yet, overall, it has not proven an effective tool for correcting, supplementing, disrupting, or otherwise challenging the ethnic Yorkville imaginary.¹⁰³

Is There Anything to See Here?: Seeking Ethnic Yorkville through Guided Walking Tours

New York not only inspires an array of guidebooks but supports scores of walking tours. To scholar Jonathan Wynn, walking tour guides are akin to "urban alchemists," who, through a mixture of

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 405-15.

¹⁰¹ Despite these improvements, the *AIA Guide's* listings sometimes uproot a property from its ethnic origins, such as its omission of any information that clarifies the historical significance of the Yorkville Bank building within the listing for the GAP and Equinox Health Club. *AIA Guide to New York City*, 4th Ed. (New York: Crown Publishers, 2000), 450-61.

¹⁰² *AIA Guide*, 4th Ed., 450.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 450-61. The *Blue Guide*, another popular guidebook of the period, also emphasized the Bund history. Carol von Pressentin Wright, *Blue Guide: New York* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1983), 383.

mythology, revelation, and showmanship, “reenchant” urban spaces for locals and visitors alike.¹⁰⁴ According to Wynn, walking tours, especially those offered by small outfits or solo practitioners, can illuminate the obscure, reanimate the forgotten, or even disinter the dead. This sanguinity belies the inherent limitations of this public history medium, which often prioritizes entertainment over education in order to deliver an experience likely to satisfy a broad cross section of participants. Further, limitations of time and space circumscribe the depth and breadth of historical coverage and site interpretation achievable through a walking tour. Finally, contrary to Wynn’s claim that walking tours invite serendipity and chance, standardizing course and content are a guide’s stock in trade, insofar as repetition nurtures expertise. Thus, as a medium for communing with the past, guided walking tours have limited potential to introduce complex and nuanced historical narratives. All too often, they simply re-inscribe received wisdom such as the ethnic Yorkville imaginary.¹⁰⁵

Adding to these limitations, New York’s walking tour circuit has largely ignored Yorkville as a venue. This inattention likely stems from common misconceptions that the neighborhood’s historical landscape has disappeared, a conclusion buttressed by the guidebook industry. As a result, few of New York’s tour operators offer a pre-designed walking tour focused on Yorkville, and only one advertises explorations of the neighborhood’s ethnic history or heritage. In comparison, tours highlighting ethnicity and immigration abound on the Lower East Side, Little Italy, and other city neighborhoods.¹⁰⁶

In 2017, Joyce Gold, the principal of Joyce Gold Historic Tours of New York designed the only regularly schedule guided tour of Yorkville’s ethnic past.¹⁰⁷ Despite having lived in Manhattan for five decades and leading tours of nearly forty city neighborhoods, Gold had never considered Yorkville as a

¹⁰⁴ Jonathan R. Wynn, “City Tour Guides: Urban Alchemists at Work,” *City & Community* 9, no. 2 (June 2010): 150.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ “Plan a Tour,” Tenement Museum, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://www.tenement.org/plan-a-visit/>; “Public Tours and Events,” Lower East Side Jewish Conservancy, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://www.nycjewishtours.org/contact> “New York City Little Italy Tours,” Viator, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://www.viator.com/New-York-City-attractions/New-York-City-Little-Italy/d687-a1296>.

¹⁰⁷ The *WPA Guide to NYC*; the *AIA Guide to New York City*, the *Blue Guide*, and forty years of newspaper clipping on Yorkville were among the sources on which Joyce Gold relied to craft the narrative for the ethnic Yorkville tour.

site capable of generating sufficient interest. Then came the game changer: the Second Avenue subway's long anticipated opening. Gold foresaw "other downtowners" warming to the idea of engaging with Yorkville's ethnic history. The resulting tour, "Yorkville – The Middle-European City," covers East 72nd Street to Sauerkraut Boulevard. Gold uses multiple sites relating to the German, Hungarian, and Czech districts, such as St. Stephen of Hungary and ZSM, to "discuss why immigrants left their homeland, why they moved to Yorkville, what institutions and businesses they began, why they left the neighborhood, and what is happening there today."¹⁰⁸ To Gold's surprise, the bulk of time travelers came from within Yorkville as opposed to other parts of the city or beyond. A stream of recent transplants demonstrated a desire to learn more about their adopted district. Ultimately, however, inconsistent attendance caused Gold to relegate the ethnic Yorkville tour to "private-booking only" status. Despite her effort to amplify ethnic Yorkville's voice through the walking tour medium, the neighborhood's material remnants still spoke in whispers to those outside the neighborhood.¹⁰⁹

The not-for-profit sector has also tried to use guided walking tours to summon Yorkville's ethnic past. In 2016, the Historic Districts Council (HDC), a crucial actor within New York's preservation ecosystem, named Yorkville one of its "Six to Celebrate." For almost a decade this annual campaign has raised awareness of the historically significant architecture and preservation needs of selected city neighborhoods. During Yorkville's year in the preservation limelight, HDC in partnership with Friends of the Upper East Side enlisted noted architectural historian Francis Morrone to interpret the neighborhood's ethnic legacy through a series of walking tours. Morrone's first tour centered around lower Yorkville and spotlighted the Czech community. His second used mid-Yorkville's architecture to discuss the Hungarian enclave. And his final tour led participants from Hellgate down to the East 80s to

¹⁰⁸ Joyce Gold email message to author, May 1, 2020.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., "Uptown Walking Tours (above 59th Street to Washington Heights): YORKVILLE — THE MIDDLE-EUROPEAN CITY," Joyce Gold History Tours of New York, accessed April 29, 2020, <http://www.joycegoldhistorytours.com/NYC-tours.html#uptown>. According to Gold, some participants cited ancestral connections to the neighborhood's ethnic enclaves while others sought information about general topics such as "the start of the library system, public school design, Great Depression-era progressive movements, and philanthropic" contributions." Ibid.

consider aspects of German Yorkville. According to HDC's announcement, in addition to "a bit of focus" on these ethnic communities, the tours were designed to "look at the broader demographic history (especially the century-long history of gentrification), and how that history manifested in architecture, and at the histories of housing, religion, institutions, breweries, and much else."¹¹⁰

Analyzing Morrone's editorial choices sheds light on the broader issue of how walking tours can tell ethnic Yorkville's story. Morrone's tour of German Yorkville, which surprisingly showed no allegiance to the ethnic Yorkville imaginary, added granularity and, to a lesser extent, interpretive nuance to this history. He devoted as much time to discussing German Jews as to their Catholic and Protestant co-ethnics, crediting the former with building institutions benefitting the entire community. His lengthy treatment of the Young Men's Hebrew Association revealed broader Jewish philanthropic networks and set forth how this institution operated as a quasi-settlement house for the neighborhood's foreign-born and their children. Morrone also discussed religious particularity within German Yorkville's Christian community, challenging claims that German-speakers were predominantly Protestant. Lastly, his discussion of Immanuel Lutheran Church's bells, donated by Empress Augusta Victoria, wife of Kaiser Wilhelm II, reflected the transnational networks of German Yorkville, a phenomenon often reflected in and through ethnic churches.¹¹¹

In other ways, however, Morrone's interpretation remained fraught and limited. It refracted local history through a series of "great man" biographies. The Rhinelander family and Jacob Astor

¹¹⁰ "Yorkville's Immigration History: Three Tours," Historic Districts Council, April 4, 2017, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://hdc.org/events/yorkvilles-immigration-history-three-tours/>. Francis Morrone is an acclaimed public architectural historian, consultant, adjunct professor, and author of several books chronicling the city's historically significant material remnants. His numerous awards and accolades include the HDC's Landmarks Lion designation. "Landmarks Lion 2016 Francis Morrone," Historic Districts Council, accessed May 1, 2020, <http://hdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Francis-Morrone-bio-Lion-2016.pdf>.

¹¹¹ Historic Districts Council, "Yorkville Walking Tour with Francis Morrone- Full Video," Filmed [June 3, 2017]. YouTube video, 56:48. Posted [June 29, 2017]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6S0MRqwCn6M&t=26s>. Such analysis risks subjecting Morrone's walking tour to an undue degree of scrutiny. His expertise regarding New York's architectural history, historical architectural styles, and eye for detail are all unimpeachable. The group he guided through Yorkville in June 2017 seemed to be uncommonly attuned to and interested in these matters. Moreover, Morrone's quirky and affable style seems well suited to delivering an enjoyable experience.

exemplified the wealthy land barons who, in Morrone's narrative, played the part of community builders both literally and through their various philanthropic endeavors. Morrone lauded the entrepreneurial success, ethnic leadership, and raw power of the brewer princes, especially the Rupperts and the Ehrets, as well as Henry Steinway and his progeny. While each of these businesses employed many of Yorkville's residents, they eclipsed all other commercial pursuits and employment options in this telling. Further, ordinary German Americans populated Morrone's story merely as nameless laborers who passively benefitted from the largess of industrialists. Morrone complemented his "great man" approach by emphasizing "rags to riches" stories of well-known immigrants. The childhoods of James Cagney and the Marx Brothers, for example, provided fodder for Morrone to stress the importance of settlement houses and similar community resources in providing opportunities for the children of immigrants to embrace and pursue the American dream. "You can't do much better than James Cagney and the Marx Brothers when you're talking about immigrants in New York City who . . . succeeded against tremendous odds," he observed.¹¹² According to this line of reasoning, fame and fortune mark success. Finally, his history of German Yorkville ceased at the Great War, leaving the impression that the trials and tribulations faced by the community during that period sounded the enclave's death knell. This approach managed to eliminate the Bund story, East 86th Street's boom years, and everything thereafter.¹¹³

Morrone, perhaps New York's preeminent public architectural historian, did not craft a walking tour capable of reanimating German Yorkville. But for a few celebrities and business leaders, this exploration of the built environment remained largely silent about the experiences of Yorkville's

¹¹² Ibid. James Cagney, the son of an Irish father, spent part of his boyhood living in an apartment on East 96th Street between Third and Lexington Avenues, the extreme northwest corner of the neighborhood. The five Marx brothers, the children of German Jewish parents who emigrated from Alsace, lived on East 93rd Street. Ibid.

¹¹³ Historic Districts Council, "Yorkville Walking Tour with Francis Morrone- Full Video," Filmed [June 3, 2017]. YouTube video, 56:48. Posted [June 29, 2017]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6S0MRqwCn6M&t=26s>. Martin Klepper refers to the "rags to riches" or "Horatio Alger" emplotment device as a core American narrative, part of our national mythology. It is worth noting that unlike the self-made man version of this storyline, Morrone backed a community-based explanation, where Cagney and the Marx Brothers cultivated their talent within the confines of their neighborhood. Martin Klepper, "'From Rags to Riches' and the Self-made Man," in *Approaches to American Cultural Studies*, eds. Antje Dallmann, Eva Boesenberg, Eva, and Martin Klepper (New York: Routledge, 2016), 123-31.

German-speaking rank-and-file and their descendants. He avoided many of the traps and pitfalls of the ethnic Yorkville narrative but failed to add nuance and multivocality to the neighborhood's ethnic history. HDC, the entity that commissioned Morrone's work, came to this project with the laudable goal of raising awareness about Yorkville, especially its ethnic history and heritage. Good intentions, however, did not, in this case, lead to better history nor did it highlight contemporary ethnic heritage practices in neighborhood.¹¹⁴ This critique is not intended to be an indictment of Morrone or HDC, but rather an illustration of guided walking tours' tendency to stay within the lanes of the thematically familiar, such as "great man" and "rags to riches" stories.¹¹⁵

CONCLUSION

New York's newspapers do not have a monopoly on ethnic Yorkville's story. Members of ethnic Yorkville's diaspora and its homegrown memory keepers developed a bardic tradition that sought to reanimate the neighborhood through the highly personalized stories of insiders. Kathryn Jolowicz stands as the most significant of these homegrown storytellers. Her personal evolution into a revered historian and neighborhood spokesperson demonstrates the influence a single life can have on our relationship with the past. At the same time, outsiders such as travel guide publishers and walking tour guides relied on Yorkville's material remnants, or at least the perception of what remained, to reflect on the neighborhood's ethnic history. While these heritage practices have kept memories of ethnic Yorkville alive, albeit on life support, they have not fully restored multivocal interpretations of its rich and

¹¹⁴ Although beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is worth considering the strengths and weaknesses of relying upon preservation organizations to shape and communicate a neighborhood's history and heritage. Clifton Hood argues that elites held a firm grip on interpretations of New York City's history until the middle of the twentieth century. Whether the rise of Gotham's preservation community adequately challenged this hegemony is a question warranting further research. Clifton Hood, "Journey to 'Old New York': Elite New Yorkers and Their Invention of an Idealized City History in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *Journal of Urban History* 28, no. 6 (Sep. 2002): 699-719.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.; William Holton, "Walking Tours for Teaching Urban History in Boston and other Cities," *OAH Magazine of History* 5, no. 2 (Fall 1990): 14-19; Julia Aoki and Ayaka Yoshimizu, "Walking Histories, Un/making Places: Walking Tours as Ethnography of Place," *Space and Culture* 18, no. 3 (2015): 273-84; Martin Klepper, "'From Rags to Riches' and the Self-made Man," 123-31.

complex history. At times, the insiders challenged certain aspects of received wisdom but, in the end, they did not carve out bold, new interpretive pathways. The outsiders, to a great extent, operated within the confines of ethnic Yorkville imaginary, thereby reifying its hegemonic hold on historical understandings. Moreover, both groups largely ignore how ethnic Yorkville's past continues to resonate through contemporary heritage practices such as the German-American Steuben Parade, the Hungarian House, and Yorkville's ethnic faith communities.

CHAPTER 6

MARCHING HERITAGE: HISTORY AND HERITAGE IN NEW YORK'S STEUBEN PARADE

“What a beautiful, what a happy country this is! Without kings,
without prelates, without bloodsucking farmers of the revenue, and without lazy nobility!”
BARON FRIEDRICH WILHELM VON STEUBEN¹

In September 2018, I marched in the 61st German-American Steuben parade as a guest and putative representative of the German Language Learning Club of New York City. Possessing limited ability to speak German, donning no lederhosen, and claiming no German ancestry, I made an odd fit with this group. Yet, as a historian of urban space and ethnic identity and heritage, I arrived fully armed with questions. To what extent did the Steuben parade reveal or reflect German New Yorkers' long tradition of parading? How might the parade shed light on visions of German identity as well as collective memories of ethnic Yorkville?

The parade, to be sure, projected glimpses of certain pasts. Marchers from Germany wore costumes meant to represent styles dating back centuries. Baron von Steuben, the Prussian-born Revolutionary War hero and namesake of the celebration, lives on in floats and parade literature. Planners consciously promote the event's six-decade history, branding everything from the Fifth Avenue route, to Miss German America and her court, to the symbolism of the cornflower as “traditional.” Nonetheless, other pasts remained opaque. Despite Yorkville lying to the march's immediate right, representations of the neighborhood's historical influence remained difficult to discern. Further, nothing overtly communicated how the Steuben parade relied on more than a century of German processions in Gotham. Recovering this past, including the Steuben parade's pre-history, holds the promise of bringing history and heritage into a dialectic capable of enriching understandings of the past and present.

¹ Letter from Baron Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben to Baron De Frank at Hechigen, July 4, 1779 in Friedrich Kapp, *The Life of William Frederick von Steuben: Major General in the Revolutionary Army*, Second Edition (New York: Mason Brothers, 1859), App. IV, 653.

Public parading has received increased attention by historians, anthropologists, and sociologists over the past three decades. The term “parade,” as used herein, refers to planned, performed, choreographed and highly visible marches or processions occurring within the larger frame of American civic life. Insofar as parades fuse narrative, materiality, embodiment, and movement, they represent highly visible and potentially powerful ways, as Susan Davis argues, “to present public images of social relations.”² In accordance with Davis, Geneviève Fabre and Simon Newman emphasize the political nature of public parades, even those marketed and consumed as apolitical manifestations of civic culture.³ Ethnic parades, such as the German American processions covered here, stem from and shape definitions of ethnic identity for both internal and external audiences. Ethnic parades can be generative of larger festive manifestations, and range from special, one-time processions to annual, commemorative, and ritualistic events. Regularly occurring ethnic parades often assume and sometimes purposefully project a sense of timelessness; but festive culture, even when commemorative in nature, is constantly in flux and always subject to reinterpretation and redesign due to changes to the planning regime or emerging social or political needs, concerns, pressures, opportunities, and desires. Anna Servaes, using Franco American culture as her example, describes parades and festivals as liminal subjectivities “float[ing] between history and contemporary life.”⁴ In short, the Steuben parade, as an annual ethnic procession, represents a heritage practice capable of enhancing understandings of German Yorkville, especially its part as the hub of a citywide ethnic network.⁵

² Susan G. Davis, “Strike Parades and the Politics of Representing Class in Antebellum Philadelphia,” *The Drama Review: TDR* 29, no. 3 (Aut. 1985): 106.

³ Newman describes parades and festivals of the early American Republic, for example, as specific forms of “popular political culture” capable of elucidating vernacular perspectives and ideologies otherwise difficult to find in the archival record. Simon P. Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 3.

⁴ Anna Servaes, *Franco-American Identity, Community, and La Guianée* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi Press, 2015), 75.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 67-75, 154-59; Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street*, 3-7; Davis, “Strike Parades,” 106-16; Amy Malek, “Public Performances of Identity Negotiation in the Iranian Diaspora: The New York Persian Parade,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 31, no. 2 (2011): 388-410; Chad E. Seales, “Parades and Processions: Protestant and Catholic Ritual Performances in a Nuevo New South Town,” *Numen* 55, no. 1 (2008): 44-67; Lorena Garcia and Mérida Rúa, “Processing Latindad: Mapping Latino Urban Landscapes through Chicago Ethnic Festivals,” *Latin Studies* 5 (2007): 317-39; Linda J. Lumsden,

PART I: TRACING THE LONG TRADITION OF GERMAN AMERICAN PARADING IN NEW YORK

Marching to Belong

The nineteenth century's middle decades marked the protean period of German parading in New York. Increased immigration, which grew six-fold from 1845 to 1855, partly drove German New Yorkers' participation in the city's parade culture.⁶ Nourished by a larger population, Gotham's Germans explored ways to gain legitimacy within the city's political and social realms. Parades, and the institutions that sponsored them, offered one point of access.⁷

New York's mid-nineteenth century parading culture was untamed. By the 1850s, the yearly parade commemorating George Washington's birthday had waned. Gotham's press marginalized Independence Day parades as settings for petty crime and derided the ubiquitous militia marches as failing to effectively promote the capacity of the men charged with protecting the city. In the years after the Civil War, even the St. Patrick's Day parade, the city's oldest recurring procession, fell into disrepute. At a time when the Irish had yet to become "white," the *New York Times* assailed this event as the city's "annual nuisance" and argued that ethnic parades carried the risk of replicating "Old World" blood feuds on New York's streets. Hence, the *Times* called for limits to the scope and frequency of public parading. Nonetheless, German New Yorkers intrepidly entered this turbulent mid-century parade scene. Over the next three decades, parading became an integral element of their civic engagement. Marching to belong and connect, parading served as a visible strategy for adjusting to life as New Yorkers and Americans.⁸

"Beauty and the Beasts: Significance of Press Coverage of the 1913 National Suffrage Parade," *J & MC Quarterly* 77, no. 1 (Aut. 2000): 593-611; Ramón A. Gutiérrez, "Preface," in *Feasts and Celebrations in North American Ethnic Communities*, eds. Ramón A. Gutiérrez and Genevieve Fabre (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), ix-xiv; Genevieve Fabre, "Feasts and Celebrations: Introduction," in *Feasts and Celebrations in North American Ethnic Communities*, eds. Ramón A. Gutiérrez and Genevieve Fabre (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 1-9.

⁶ Changing economic conditions such as the potato blight of the early 1840s as well as the political and social fallout stemming from the failed central European revolutions running from 1848 to 1850 fueled the exodus. Nadel, *Little Germany*: 17-19.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 29-34.

⁸ "Grand Military Fete," *New York Daily Herald*, October 18, 1839, 2; "Fourth of July Celebration in New York," *New York Daily Herald*, July 6, 1845, 1; Nadel, *Little Germany*, 19-32; "St. Patrick's Day," *New York Times*, March 16, 1868; "Street Parades," *New York Times*, December 14, 1871, 4. Interestingly, German Americans of this era envisioned Independence Day as an opportunity to venture out of the city in search of greener pastures or to attend theatrical and musical events. For example, on July 4, 1860, members of the Liederkrantz and the Arion Society, New York City's two most prominent German singing societies,

German parading of this period fell into four categories: fitting into the city's civic institutions; overtly political parading; participating in special, one-time celebrations; and parading within German institutions. Many German New Yorkers joined the city's militia during the 1840s, with units springing out of German enclaves in Manhattan, Ridgewood, Queens, and Williamsburg, Brooklyn. German members brought discipline to the city's disorderly militia parades. Militia membership acted as a gateway into serving the Union cause in the Civil War. In 1863, the *New York Times* foregrounded German American military sacrifice, highlighting the Steuben Regiment, Seventh New-York Volunteers. During the nineteenth century's last three decades, German Civil War veterans featured prominently in civic parades, embedding their ethnic narrative into the broader American story.⁹

German New Yorkers also joined fraternal organizations such as the Improved Order of the Red Men (IORM). The IORM attempted to convey a sense of American patriotism largely by appropriating Native American cultural symbolism and terminology. During the 1860s, German New Yorkers gained traction within the IORM by organizing the group's parades and arranging for Manhattan to serve as the host city for its 1862 national convention. Despite its moniker, the IORM restricted its membership to white men. By joining the IORM and similarly gendered and racialized institutions, German New York's men sought to leverage existing notions of whiteness to elevate their socio-political status within the broader public sphere controlled largely by the city's Anglo-American Protestant elites.¹⁰

traveled all the way to West Point for private picnics and games. Areas of Yorkville and Harlem also provided space for German American gatherings. "The Fourth in the City: Patriotism, Parades, and Pyrotechnics," *New York Times*, July 6, 1860, 4-5. In 1839, for example, the *New York Herald* described militia men in one such urban procession as follows: "some look[ed] fierce, some foolish, some dirty, some careless, some were smoking, some munching, some chatting, some laughing, and all caring for anything in the world but their martial appearance." A group of Irish American marchers assaulted two dozen police officers in 1867, unleashing an urban riot and drawing reproach from Gotham's business community. In the summer of 1870, an Irish parade again degenerated into a fracas, as New York area Orangemen came under attack during their commemoration of the Battle of the Boyne. "An Attack on the Police," *New York Times*, March 19, 1867, 4; "The Recent Riots," *New York Daily Herald*, March 22, 1867, 10; "The St. Patrick's Day Riot," *New York Daily Herald*, April 7, 1867, 3; "From New York," *Buffalo Commercial*, May 13, 1867, 2; "The Riot on St. Patrick's Day – Some of the Alleged Rioters before Judge Russell," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 1, 1867, 10;

⁹ "East New York Parade," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 11, 1853, 2. "Local Intelligence: The German in New-York," *New York Times*, August 23, 1863, 3.

¹⁰ "The I.O.R.M.: Festival at Conrad's Park," *New York Times*, September 10, 1862, 2; Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 1-12, 39-90; Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race, Vol One: Racial Oppression and Social Control* (New York: Verso, 1994),

Other German New Yorkers saw parades as tactics to serve overtly political ends. Some marched as partisans, such as the German units of the Wide Awakes who paraded in support of Abraham Lincoln in 1860. Others used processions to pursue social and economic justice. In 1855, Germans formed the core of a mass demonstration in Manhattan intended to raise awareness of rampant joblessness and promote full employment legislation. Eight thousand unemployed New Yorkers marched to City Hall without music or placards, trusting their disciplined silence to convey the gravity of their concerns.¹¹

Lastly, Germans leveraged Gotham's explosive growth during the 1850s and 1860s to host national conferences of ethnic institutions, typically featuring lavish parades. The 1857 national Turner festival used multiple New York venues including Yorkville's then-open spaces. In 1865, German singing societies came to town for the Sngerfest. Following a large parade led by German American Civil War commander Joseph Hillebrand, Friedrich Kapp, a Rhineland-born member of the state bar and trustee of the German Bank of Manhattan, addressed a crowd of twenty thousand assembled on the Upper East Side. Kapp tapped into the emotive imagery of what scholar Orm verland calls the myth of blood sacrifice. "More than all others," he proclaimed, "the fighting men of German birth . . . discerned the true state of political affairs, burst the shackles of party and poured out their blood on every battlefield

1-22; David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, Rev. ed., (New York: Version, 1991), 3-17; Eric Arnesen, "Whiteness and Historians' Imagination," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no 60 (Fall 2001): 13-21; Eric Foner, "Response to Eric Arnesen," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 60 (Fall 2001): 57-60; Andrea L. Smith and Anna Eisenstein, "Thoroughly Mixed Yet Thoroughly Ethnic: Indexing Class with Ethnonyms," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 23, no. 2 (2013): E1-E22, ISSN 1055-1360, EISSN 1548-1395, DOI: 10.1111/jola.12012; Cybelle Fox and Thomas Gulielmo, "Defining America's Racial Boundaries: Blacks, Mexicans, and European Immigrants, 1890-1945," *American Journal of Sociology* 118, no. 2 (Sept., 2012): 327-79; *The Construction of Whiteness: An Interdisciplinary Analysis of Race Formation and the Meaning of a White Identity*, ed. Stephen Middleton, David R. Roediger, and Donald M. Shaffer (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2016).

¹¹ "Brooklyn Wide Awakes," *Brooklyn Evening Star*, November 2, 1860, 3; "Fashion and Famine: Eight Thousand Unemployed Workmen in Fifth Avenue," *New York Daily Herald*, January 16, 1855, 10; Laurens, *The Crisis of the Enemies of America Unmasked*, 197. Despite this intent, the *New York Daily Herald* observed that "a rougher or more uncouth set never paraded in this city." "Fashion and Famine: Eight Thousand Unemployed Workmen in Fifth Avenue," *New York Daily Herald*, January 16, 1855, 10 National proponents of restricted immigration characterized the parade as evidence of the threat posed by the foreign-born element in America's major cities. For example, J. Wayne Laurens, in *The Crisis of the Enemies of America*, described how the demonstrators "march[ed] through the city in force, so as to menace the American inhabitants, and give them a clear intimation of what they were to expect" should their demands not be met. J. Wayne Laurens, *The Crisis of the Enemies of America Unmasked* (Philadelphia: G.D. Miller, 1855), 197 This negative press suggested that those challenging established power through public parading could be branded as a heedless mob and a threat to civic stability.

of the vast theatre of war, absolving the debt of patriotism without stint or cavil.”¹² In Kapp’s view, German New Yorkers had a duty to act politically, grow economically, and serve their community during this postwar crossroads. Kapp argued that by honoring their Germanness while fulfilling these duties his co-ethnics would reap the reward of social respect and legitimacy from their native-born counterparts. Kapp’s defense of a “dual identity” foreshadowed the next phase of German parading in Gotham, where Germanness found visible expression in large-scale civic parading.¹³

Marching for Visibility, Self-Definition, and Unity

Unification of the German Empire in 1871 ushered in an era stretching to the early twentieth century during which German New Yorkers refined their use of parading to meet Kapp’s charge. In the pre-Steuben parade era, no single date rings more vital than April 10, 1871, when German New Yorkers marched *en masse* in the Great German Peace Parades. Tens of thousands of German Americans took to the streets of Manhattan and Brooklyn one month after victorious German troops marched down Paris’s Champs-Élysées during the Franco-Prussian war’s latter stages. Hoping to speak to internal as well as external audiences, organizers from various parts of Gotham’s German American network of enclaves attempted to frame German unification in the most favorable light possible. Thus, they fashioned the twin parades as celebrations of peace, even though the German state had emerged directly from war and in apparent disregard for the ongoing havoc of the Paris Commune. Whereas the local German-language press assailed all things French during the war, German New Yorkers used the parade to pivot by avoiding this potentially contentious topic. As a result, New York’s mainstream press echoed

¹² “The German Saengerfest: Proceedings of the Last Day,” *New York Times*, July 20, 1865, 8. According to the weekly newspaper *The Nation*, Kapp was a giant within Gotham’s German American community and a man who made an indelible mark on New York more broadly. The unnamed author of an 1884 obituary commented that within New York “[w]hatever scheme was afoot among the Germans, he was consulted. . . [regardless] whether it was among the down-town bankers, or the up-town journeymen – whatever was planned required his signature to make it effective.” Kapp went on to become a member of the New York’s Board of Emigration.

¹³ “Seventh Annual Social Turnfest,” *New York Daily Herald*, August 30, 1857, 5; “The Turner’s Festival,” *New-York Tribune*, September 1, 1857, 7; “The German Saengerfest: Proceedings of the Last Day,” *New York Times*, July 20, 1865, 8; Robert Ernst, *Immigrant Life in New York City: 1825 – 1863* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 270, note 101.

uncritically the peace motif. The *New York Times* reported that “portraits of the Kaiser Wilhelm, Bismarck and von Moltke were the nearest allusions which were given to the strife in France, and there was neither motto nor emblem which in itself celebrated” Germany’s military success over France.¹⁴

Parade planners in Manhattan and Brooklyn also understood how the city’s print press obsessed over scale in their coverage of Gotham’s parades. The turnout at the peace parades shattered records, signaling German New York’s strength in clear and powerful terms. One report estimated that more than 100,000 people strode down Manhattan’s streets with several times that amount bearing witness to the nearly four-hour parade. According to the *New York Times*, this “almost endless cortège” surpassed the city’s largest-ever events, including the fête marking Lee’s surrender at Appomattox and Lincoln’s funeral procession. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* commented that “[i]t would be impossible to name the number of people participating in the [Brooklyn] parade,” but described the marchers’ flags, placards, and banners as “almost numerous enough to shade the streets through which they passed.”¹⁵

Such coverage fostered the popular belief that German New Yorkers brought uncommon discipline to civic parading. New York’s newspapers lauded Germans’ planning acumen, stressing how parade officials had organized scores of social institutions and clubs into neat divisions, in the military tradition. The Manhattan parade showcased twelve divisions, ranging from Turn Vereins to brewers to singing societies, all led by grand marshal Franz Sigel, a well-respected Civil War commander. Moreover, German New Yorkers benefitted from comparisons to their Irish counterparts. They had pulled off one

¹⁴ The parades took place just days after the Grant Administration formally recognized Wilhelm I as the legitimate head of the German federated state. “The Peace Jubilee: Meeting of German Citizens,” *Brooklyn Union*, April 8, 1871, 2; “Peace Rejoicings: Imposing Celebration by the German, Yesterday,” *New York Times*, April 11, 1871, 1; “The Germans’ Joy: Imposing and Unprecedented Pagaent in Honor of Peace and Faderland,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 11, 1871, 4; “The Great German Peace Jubilee – the New German Power in Both Hemispheres,” *New York Daily Herald*, April 11, 1871, 6; “Peace: A Great Demonstration by Children of the Fatherland,” *New York Daily Herald*, April 11, 1871, 3; John G. Gazley, *American Opinion of German Unification, 1848-1871* (New York: Longman, Green & Co., 1926), 490-91.

¹⁵ “Peace Rejoicings: Imposing Celebration by the German, Yesterday,” *New York Times*, April 11, 1871, 1; “The Germans’ Joy: Imposing and Unprecedented Pagaent in Honor of Peace and Faderland,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 1871, 4. Simon Newman, a scholar of public processions in America’s early Republic period, notes that newspapers are an especially rich source of data for past parades. Moreover, news coverage extended the geographic and temporal reach of these events, of which organizers were usually aware. Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street*, 3.

of the grandest street parades in the city's history without the mayhem unleashed at the 1867 St. Patrick's Day parade or the 1870 parade of the Orangemen. Everywhere American and German flags comingled symbolizing amity between the countries, as well as speaking to Kapp's concept of loyalty to one's adopted home and love of one's birthplace. Music was omnipresent, generating a festive mood. Then there were the wild claims of the German capacity for consuming massive quantities of beer while avoiding discord. One news story insisted that at one Bowery-based beer garden, put into service prior to the parade, "nearly 150 kegs of lager had been consumed at eight o'clock [in the] morning."¹⁶ According to this juxtaposition, German self-discipline rendered their drinking culture a palatable if distinctive element of the city's broader festive norms.¹⁷

The peace parades raised German New York's status within the city's broader social and political networks. New York's city government embraced the celebrations without qualification at a time when others contested the merits of large-scale public processions. Further, the municipal governments of Manhattan or Brooklyn did not micro-manage the parades, suggesting their faith in German New Yorkers. City offices and many businesses closed early out of respect for the fête, an honor not typically afforded to St. Patrick's Day. New York Governor John Hoffman, Mayor A. Oakey Hall, and city council members graced the reviewing stand. In post-parade remarks emphasizing German New York's rising tide, Hoffman quipped that he felt compelled to "come to this, the fourth German city in the world, to join with you in your celebration."¹⁸ The parades caused the *New York Herald*, a paper aligned with the Democratic party, to reflect on German New York's potential political influence, arguing that "Germans

¹⁶ "Peace Rejoicings: Imposing Celebration by the German, Yesterday," *New York Times*, April 11, 1871, 1.

¹⁷ Ibid. *The New York Times* even praised German paraders who insisted on the removal of an Irish flag spotted along the line of march. "Today was a German-American holiday," the *Times* explained, "and the Germans were determined that no flag should wave with their own . . . save the Stars and Stripes." "Peace Rejoicings: Imposing Celebration by the German, Yesterday," *New York Times*, April 11, 1871, 1. The *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, the city's leading German-language daily newspaper, decorated its headquarters with evergreens, Prussian flags, and a prodigious painting of the "Goddess of Germany."

¹⁸ "The Great German Peace Jubilee – the New German Power in Both Hemispheres," *New York Daily Herald*, April 11, 1871, 6

hold a balance of power in this city, over this State, and thereby the balance of power upon which the Democratic party rely in their calculations of the next Presidential election.”¹⁹

The peace parades and the German unification they elevated encouraged Prussians, Hessians and Hanoverians to develop a pan-Germanic framework within which they could continue to celebrate their distinct regional identities. In 1875, an influx of migrants from northern regions such as Prussia, Hanover, and the Mecklenburgs embraced this decentered approach by establishing the Plattdeutsche Volksfest, an event fusing together a multifaceted festival with parading.²⁰ Soon, Hessians, Bavarians, Swabians and others were holding their own Volksfests. The modern Steuben parade owes much to Volksfest parading, which underscored the social value of historical costuming representing Germany’s various regions, a crucial part of today’s Steuben parade.²¹ The Plattdeutsche Volksfest’s honor guard, created to escort delegates of other area German American social institutions, replicated uniforms worn by Frederick the Great’s soldiers. Additionally, music, most notably brass bands, accompanied parades

¹⁹ Ibid; “The Germans’ Joy: Imposing and Unprecedented Pagaent in Honor of Peace and Faderland,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 11, 1871, 4; “Peace Rejoicings: Imposing Celebration by the German, Yesterday,” *New York Times*, April 11, 1871, 1.

²⁰ These culture shapers comprised not only established German New Yorkers but also those who settled in the New York City area during what Stanley Nadel called the “second great wave” of German immigration. A predominance of German-speaking migrants who came to the United States from 1865 to 1879 hailed from northern regions such as Prussia, Hanover, and the Mecklenburgs. During the prior period of immigration, far more southern German-speakers entered America. Nadel, *Little Germany*, 19. This is not to suggest the end of smaller German American societies organized around occupation, cultural production, neighborhood, or associations with specific German geographies. On the contrary, as immigration from Germany to the New York area increased and as the German American population spread to more parts of the New York area, the number of small- to medium-sized institutions expanded. However, the PVV and its Volksfest represented early examples of pan-Germanic gatherings where these institutions could collaborate and cross-pollinate. “Schwasbischer Saengerbund at Ridgewood Park,” *Brooklyn Standard Union*, August 25, 1890, 4; “The Bavarian Festival: 10,000 Happy People at Ridgewood Park,” *Brooklyn Standard Union*, August 22, 1892, 2; “A Big Festival: The Annual Bavarian Volksfest at Ridgewood Park,” *Brooklyn Standard Union*, August 21, 1893, 5;

²¹ These marches ranged from processions aimed at festival attendees, such as the fifteen thousand who paraded to open up the 1884 Brooklyn Volksfest, to those aimed at external audiences, such as the throng of over one hundred German American organizations who publicly processed to the ferry terminal in route from lower Manhattan to the New Jersey festival grounds in 1907. “An Exodus to Hoboken,” *New York Daily Herald*, September 13, 1875, 5; “German Harvest Home,” *New-York Tribune*, September 2, 1879, 8; “In Line: The Parade of the Plattdeutsche Volksfest Verein,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 8, 1884, 4; “The Volksfest: The Tenth Anniversary of the Big German Organization,” *Brooklyn Standard Union*, August 7, 1893, 5; “Eight Bras Bands: Some of the Features of the Great German Picnic,” *New York Times*, August 20, 1889, 2; “Beer to Sobriety: people Who Know How to Have Fun and Be Orderly,” *New York Times*, August 25, 1886, 8; “Sixth Plattdeutsche Festival: First Day of the Merry-Making – Beer, Sausages and Sauerkraut,” *New York Times*, September 7, 1880; “To the Wedding Nuptial Day at the Great Plattdeutsche Volksfest,” *New York Evening World*, August 20, 1889, 2; “A Big Festival: The Annual Bavarian Volksfest at Ridgewood Park,” *Brooklyn Standard Union*, August 21, 1893, 5; “A Great Day for Thieves: Outrageous Doings at the Plattdeutsche Volksfest,” *New York Times*, August 17, 1891, 1; “The Plattdeutsche Volksfest Open: 35,000 Herrs, Fraus, and Kinder Parade to Schuetzen Park, in Union Hill, N.J.,” *New York Times*, August 19, 1907, 14.

and set the tone at these mass gatherings. By 1889, the Plattdeutsche Volksfest boasted upwards of eighty bands comprising in excess of eight hundred musicians, numbers dwarfing even the largest iterations of the modern Steuben parade.²²

Like today's Steuben parade, the Volksfests nourished cooperation among disparate Germanic institutions, such as singing societies, shooting clubs, and turn vereins. In addition, each regional designation – lowland Germans, Bavarians, Hanoverians, and so forth – felt obliged to attend one another's festivals. In return, the receiving organization formally honored visitors by trumpeting their arrival or through preferential placement in the line of march. These visiting and receiving practices are akin to what Eric Hobsbawm called "invented traditions," which he defined as "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition."²³ If repeated often enough, these rituals strongly suggest an unbroken chain through time.²⁴

Marching for the State

During the early years of the twentieth century German New Yorkers seemed poised to continue to use parading to raise their social and political profile. In 1902, for instance, they marked the visit of Prince Henry, Wilhelm II's brother, with a sizeable and thunderous parade endorsed by city officials. Richard Müller, president of the U.S. German Veterans Association, led the torchlight march of nearly nine thousand members of local German institutions including multiple bands. The Hohenzollern royal reviewed the parade from a red velvet throne situated on the balcony of the Arion Society's Fifth Avenue headquarters. Louis Weyland, head of a singing society known as the Arions, proclaimed that

²² "Our History," The Plattduetsche Volksfest Vereen of New York & New Jersey, accessed May 7, 2019, <https://www.volksfest.org/>; "Sixth Plattdeutsche Festival: First Day of the Merry-Making-Beer, Sausages, and Sauerkraut," *New York Times*, September 7, 1880, 8; The Hartung's Park Festival," *New York Times*, September 8, 1880, 2.

²³ Hobsbawm, 1.

²⁴ "A Big Festival: The Annual Bavarian Volksfest at Ridgewood Park," *Brooklyn Standard Union*, August 21, 1893, 5; "To the Wedding! Nuptial Day at the Great Plattdeutsche Volksfest," *New York Evening World*, August 20, 1889, 2; "The Plattdeutsche Volksfest Opens: 35,000 Herrs, Fraus, and Kinder Parade to Schuetzen Park, in Union Hill, N.J.," *New York Times*, August 19, 1907, 14.

German New Yorkers “felt bound to prove . . . that, while they are loyal citizens of their adopted country, they are abound with innumerable ties of love and gratitude to the old Fatherland where they first learned the sweet sounds of their mother tongue.”²⁵

Later that year, German New Yorkers called on decades of parade and festival experience to push against Prohibitionists and those backing restrictive immigration laws. Deutsche Tag (German Day), commemorating the establishment of North America’s first German-speaking settlement in Pennsylvania, offered a non-combative yet powerful method to assert the community’s influence by fitting German Americans into the broader American narrative. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* saw this event as “the initial step toward organizing a permanent central association to all German societies of Brooklyn and Manhattan, in order to form similar organizations in other cities,” seemingly endorsing such a move.²⁶ Indeed, in the wake of these 1902 events, German New Yorkers organized a National German-American Alliance chapter (NGA) and created the United German Societies of the City of New York (UGS) to promote pan-Germanism. In 1905, UGS organized a torchlight procession in uptown Manhattan commemorating the centennial of the death of German poet Friedrich Schiller. The Schiller parade, coming less than one year after the General Slocum disaster, highlighted *Kultur*, German high culture, while reinforcing the community’s resilience. From 1905 to the First World War, German New Yorkers continued to use parades and festivals to wage political battles against the Anti-Saloon League

²⁵ “A Close View of Prince Henry: Taken While New York Gave Him the Freedom of the City,” *Brooklyn Citizen*, February 26, 1902, 7; “Paraded for the Prince: German Societies to the Number of 320 Turned Out,” *New York Times*, February 27, 1902, 3; “Greeting of Men of German Blood: Prince Henry in the Arion Society’s Home,” *New York Times*, February 27, 1902, 3; Jörg Nadler, “From Culture to Kultur: Changing American Perceptions of Imperial Germany, 1870-1914 in *Transatlantic Images and Perceptions: Germany and America Since 1776*, eds. David A. Barclay and Elisabeth Glaser-Schmidt (Washington, D.C.: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 145-46. Mayor Seth Low, after presenting the Prince with the “Freedom of the City of New York” medal, reminded those assembled that the city owed a debt to the German men and women who helped build it. “A Close View of Prince Henry: Taken While New York Gave Him the Freedom of the City,” *Brooklyn Citizen*, February 26, 1902, 7. Heike Bungert, a scholar of German American festive culture in Milwaukee, notes that ethnic parades are capable of “mark[ing] the requisition of public space not only visible but also audibly.” Heike Bungert, “Demonstrating the Values of ‘Gemultichkeit’ and ‘Cultur’: The Festivals of German Americans in Milwaukee, 1870-1910,” in *Celebrating Ethnicity and nation: American Festive Culture from the Revolution to the Early Twentieth Century*, eds. Geneviève Fabre, Jürgen Heideking, and Kai Dreisbach (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001), 177.

²⁶ “German Day Celebration to Be Held in Manhattan,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 2, 1902, 10.

and in support of open immigration, as well as to cultivate community through German Day and other pan-German events.²⁷

As European hostilities metastasized into the Great War in August 1914, many German New Yorkers boldly supported Imperial Germany. UGS led a demonstration accusing Gotham's major newspapers of defaming the Fatherland after Germany declared war on Russia. Two days later, thousands of men and women marched from lower Manhattan to Harlem, braving extreme heat, to show solidarity on their way to the Bavarian Volksfest. Around this same time, Adolph Mohr, a recent immigrant and sergeant in the German Reservists, led a procession to the German Consulate carrying a list of seven hundred men pledging their service to the Heimat. Mohr's wife organized a companion march of German-born women seeking to enlist as nurses. These New Yorkers perceived no inconsistency between their desire to join the German war effort and their status as U.S. residents. Moreover, they saw public parading as an effective means to underscore their passion and purpose.²⁸

As the European war expanded, most German New Yorkers explored ways to support the Heimat while showing loyalty to America. The wartime "Americanization" movement, fueled in equal parts by images of the European war and the anti-immigration movement's machinations, complicated this balancing act. In the summer of 1915, city officials, in close coordination with the federal government, rebranded July Fourth "Americanization Day." According to Frederic Howe, New York's ex-

²⁷ Ibid.; "Germans to Parade: Big Torchlight Procession Will Be Principal Feature of Schiller Celebration," *Brooklyn Citizen*, April 23, 1905, 4; "In Memory of Schiller: The Mayor's Address," *New-York Tribune*, May 8, 1905, 3; "Torchlight Parade to Honor Schiller," *New York Times*, May 9, 1905, 9; "Parade in Schiller's House," *New York Sun*, May 9, 1905, 12. It is worth noting that cracks appeared in U.S.-German relations during this period, Germany and Britain engaged in a naval blockade of Venezuela ostensibly intended to collect unpaid debts. New York's leading English-language newspapers decried this move as a violation of the Monroe Doctrine. The *New York Herald* gave Britain a pass while assigning full blame to the German Empire, which it dubbed the "wicked partner." *New York Herald*, December 15, 19, and 21, 1902. This international incident reverberated locally, as the *Herald* insinuated that German New Yorkers who failed to condemn their homeland's allegedly provocative acts exposed their divided loyalties. For German New Yorkers, amicable relations between the U.S. and Germany undergirded their quest for greater visibility and respectability since the peace parades of 1871. Now, geopolitical currents seemed to be changing course, a trend that would continue until the mid-twentieth century. Ibid.; Nadler, "From Culture to Kultur: Changing American Perceptions of Imperial Germany, 1870-1914": 131-54; John M. Thompson, "Theodore Roosevelt and the Politics of the Roosevelt Corollary," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 26 (2015): 571-90.

²⁸ "Germans Parade Here: Reservists March to Consul's Office and Then to Hoboken," *New York Times*, August 5, 1914, 6; "Germans Parade Here: 400 March Up Broadway – Crowds Block Traffic," *New-York Tribune*, August 5, 1914, 14; Clifton J. Child, *The German-Americans in Politics, 1941-1917* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1939), 23-25.

immigration commissioner, the event aimed to “put an end to divided allegiance which so many aliens feel today.”²⁹ Although German New Yorkers seemed to pay little mind to the 1915 Americanization Day parade, this event acted as the opening salvo in a public struggle over the relationship between parades, patriotism, and belonging to American society that intensified with each passing day of the Great War.³⁰

In aftermath of the 1915 Americanization Day, UGS and like-minded institutions deployed parades and festivals to justify, preserve, and defend the hyphen and the homeland. Speakers at the 1915 German Day celebration squarely addressed the identity question in terms Friedrich Kapp would have endorsed. Rev. Dr. Hugo Meyer encouraged attendees to demonstrate their ancestral pride by always singing “Deutschland über Alles.” William Liebermann described anti-hyphens within the German community as derelict, comparing them to “the young man who marries a young woman, surrounds her with luxuries and lets his old mother starve.”³¹ In early 1916, some German New Yorkers debated whether to amplify their calls for American neutrality by entering the upcoming St. Patrick’s Day parade. In March, Germans and New Yorkers with ties to other Central Powers nations staged a massive bazaar in Madison Square Garden to raise funds for those displaced or adversely affected by the conflict. Surviving soldiers who fought in the Franco-Prussian War, adorned with Iron Crosses, joined German boy scouts and reserve nurses in a procession witnessed by thousands of attendees as well as diplomats from the Central Powers alliance. Dr. Emanuel Baruch, head of the bazaar’s planning committee, summoned the blood sacrifice argument once more, claiming that Germans, along with the Irish, had fought for America in higher proportions than any other nationality.³²

²⁹ “Americanization Day to Impress Aliens Planned,” *New York Sun*, June 13, 1915, 5.

³⁰ Ibid.; “America Day Newest Idea to Celebrate,” *Elmira Sta-Gazette*, June 9, 1915, 15; “Americanization Day to Impress Aliens Planned,” *New York Sun*, June 13, 1915, 5; “Planning to Make the Fourth Citizenship Day,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 4, 1915, 6; “Big Day To-day for New York Patriots,” *New York Sun*, July 5, 1915, 7; Hahner, *To Become an American*, 124-155.

³¹ “Proud of Hyphen Lieberman Asserts,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 18, 1915, 8.

³² Ibid.; “Irish Ask Germans to Parade”; ‘Is That So?’ Ask Hibernians,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 11, 1916, 18; “Garden Swamps at German Bazaar: Big Auditorium Holds Record Throng of Sympathizers with Teutonic Cause,” *Brooklyn Standard Union*, March 12, 1916; “50,000 Germans Capture Bazaar: Zeppelin, U-Boat, Wee Appam and Bernstorff Are Cheered at Garden,” *New-York Tribune*, March 12, 1916, 13; “Crowd of 45,000 at German Bazaar,” *New York Sun*, March 17, 1916.

By May 1916, Gotham's political leaders had grown frustrated with ethnic politicking. Mayor John Mitchel publicly attacked local German Americans for derailing his plans to commemorate the sinking of the *Lusitania*. German New Yorkers adjusted to this changing climate by more purposefully foregrounding patriotic symbolism. In June 1916, more than 120,000 people attended "American Liberty Day" held at the Sheepshead Bay Speedway. Organizers invited locals with ties to Germany and Austria-Hungary to an event meant to put the loyalty question to rest. The associated parade offered a carefully choreographed spectacle that included a "marching flag" comprising more than one thousand women. Floats depicted German contributions to the Revolutionary and the Civil Wars. Scenes of Germans in the Revolutionary War included Baron von Steuben, Molly Pitcher, and Peter Muhlenberg, whereas scenes of the Civil War depicted General Franz Sigel and a memorial to the 180,000 German American in the Union cause. Classic American symbols such as George Washington and the Liberty Bell complemented these images. One, simply called "Peace," accompanied by one hundred female dancers carrying lilies, earned the loudest applause. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* noted that "[t]he hyphen was conspicuously absent and not a semblance of a Teutonic emblem of any kind could be noted."³³ American Liberty Day had managed to paint German New York in a positive light within the mainstream press, but simultaneously reinforced the notion that loyalty required abandoning hyphenated identity.³⁴

Woodrow Wilson's reelection in November 1916 followed by America's entry into the war in April 1917 dramatically reset the playing field. Within this wartime atmosphere, federal, state, and municipal authorities claimed full control over the city's public parades and gatherings. Military parades with ultra-patriotic themes proliferated. German New York, as a collective, was absent from these civic celebrations. In early 1918, Friends of German Democracy (FGD) marched onto the public stage to replace images of NGAA and UGS with a pan-German institution fully prepared to make peace with the

³³ "'America First' Is Teuton's Pledge," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 5, 1916, 8.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Wilson administration and local authorities. Franz Sigel, Jr., son of the esteemed Civil War general, emerged as the group's spokesman. Whereas General Sigel once led processions intended to strengthen German-American identity in the Friedrich Kapp model, his offspring aspired to accelerate assimilation. Hence, the FGD's goals consisted of replacing the hyphen with the phrase "Americans of German extraction" and ending use of the German tongue in New York.³⁵

FGD prioritized Loyalty Week, a beefed-up version of Americanization Day. The week's plan culminated with a July Fourth parade meant to demonstrate that each of Gotham's ethnic communities had fallen in line with the nation's war aims. FGD's leaders were eager to deliver German New Yorkers to Loyalty Week's patriotic altar, hoping other foreign elements would follow the German example. FGD's found most of its success, limited as it was, in Yorkville. The Yorkville-based New York Turn Verein committed to the parade in early 1918 and the neighborhood kicked-off Loyalty Week in mid-June with a Flag Day celebration and parade. Yorkville's state senator, Robert F. Wagner, led the parade as its grand marshal. The event featured contingents of Czechs, Slovaks, Russians, Serbians, and Greeks but avoided naming Yorkville's largest ethnic group, the Germans, or its burgeoning Hungarian population.³⁶

Despite FGD's claims of inclusion, the mayor's office remained ambivalent about working with people connected to the Central Powers. U.S. Marshal Thomas McCarthy, a Loyalty Week spokesman, explained that "[w]e do not want any man in the parade who does not mean it, who does not wish for

³⁵ "Weismann Attacks Wilson by Innuendo," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 16, 1916, 10; "To Americanize Aliens," *New York Times*, April 13, 1917, 14; "President's Daughter Will Preside at Americanization Forum Day Meeting," *New York Evening World*, June 28, 1917, 8; "Hylan's Last Drive at Ten Meetings; No Reply to Mayor," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 3, 1917, 9; "Accuses Hylan of Being Pro-German: Mitchel Says Opponent Aids Propaganda," *Boston Globe*, October 31, 1917, 2; "Mitchel Declares Hylan Conspired to Create a Disloyal Press Here and Pollute Sources of Information," *New York Times*, November 1, 1917, 1; "To Help Germans Toward Democracy," *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, February 3, 1918, 4; "Send a Message of Democracy to Germany," *New York Herald*, February 16, 1918, 9; "An Excellent Season for German Newspaper Reticence," *New York Herald*, April 27, 1918, 8

³⁶ "German Democrats to Parade," *New York Herald*, June 6, 1918, 16. "To Help Germans Toward Democracy," *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, February 3, 1918, 4; "Send a Message of Democracy to Germany," *New York Herald*, February 16, 1918, 9; "An Excellent Season for German Newspaper Reticence," *New York Herald*, April 27, 1918, 8; "German Democrats to Parade," *New York Herald*, June 6, 1918, 16; "To Take Part in Nation's Day: Americans of German Birth to Parade," *Brooklyn Citizen*, June 6, 1918, 6. Wagner participated in the 1915 Americanization Day, agreeing to read the Declaration of Independence to his constituents in Yorkville. "Big Day To-day for New York Patriots," *New York Sun*, July 5, 1915, 7.

America to win, who does not want to see the Kaiser beaten.”³⁷ In response, the FGD, purporting to represent German New York writ large, offered even more concessions. The group attacked those using the term “German-American” as enemies of the state. To counter hyphenism, FGD helped hatch and promote a plan to place a symbolic melting pot along the parade route, into which marchers would hurl awards they had received from Central Powers sovereigns. Proceeds generated by the sale of these items would fund war bonds. Sigel even targeted German New Yorkers who had received medals from the German government during Prince Henry’s 1902 visit. German New York’s proud parading history had been turned on its head with FGD serving as an accomplice in the reversal.³⁸

Parade officials leveraged the symbolic capitulation of New York’s German community, largely via FGD’s words and deeds, to keep other groups in check. As the procession drew near, Hungarian marchers found themselves in the eye of a storm. E. Paul Yaselli, a U.S. attorney and a member of the “Four Minute Men,” a group of volunteers charged with spreading American wartime propaganda in public venues, accused Hungarian New Yorkers of planning to feature nationalist floats and costumes. At first, the mayoral committee dismissed the claims, assuring the public that the Hungarians would be on the same footing as other groups tied to the Central Powers nations. Spokesman Henry MacDonald explained that “they will not appear as Hungarians at all, but as loyal Americans of Hungarian descent.”³⁹ Geza Berko, head of the Hungarian division, shared his group’s parade plan publicly to allay further concerns. The group had designed floats and obtained period costumes to portray the Magyar defense of the Christian West against Turkish threats in the fifteenth century, as well as the liberal democratic tradition embodied by Lajos Kossuth. Berko’s explanation backfired. Czechs and Yugoslavs

³⁷ “McCarthy Gives Slogan for Loyalty Parade Marchers,” *New-York Tribune*, June 18, 1918, 6.

³⁸ “Flag Celebrations Open Loyalty Week,” *New York Times*, June 14, 1918, 22; “McCarthy Gives Slogan for Loyalty Parade Marchers,” *New-York Tribune*, June 18, 1918, 6; “Blot Out the Hyphen Franz Sigel Urges,” *New-York Tribune*, June 17, 1918, 6; “The Melting Pot for Decorations,” *Buffalo Morning Express and Illustrated Buffalo Express* (AP Article), June 26, 1918, 2; “To Spurn Kaiser’s Medals,” *New York Evening World*, June 26, 1918, 4.

³⁹ “Hungarians Cause a Fourth of July Protest: Italian Section of Four-Minute Men Objects to Their Display in parade,” *New York Times*, July 26, 1918, 7.

joined the anti-Magyar chorus, and the Italians threatened to boycott the parade. As the controversy grew, many encouraged the Hungarians to behave like the Germans. Multiple attempts to resolve the dispute came down to an all-day negotiation handled by leaders of the city's Liberty Loan Committee.⁴⁰

Yaselli and his supporters employed rumor and an historical counternarrative to win the day. They claimed that Berko and his co-negotiator, Alexander Konta, did not enjoy broad support among Hungarian New York's rank-and-file. The anti-Hungarian coalition recast Kossuth, formerly a hero to New Yorkers, as unfit for commemoration for allegedly advocating cultural genocide against non-Magyar groups. Outmanned, Berko and Konta agreed to forego the floats and costumes. The *Times* applauded the Hungarians for "march[ing] as ordinary American citizens in civilian dress," with signage limited to identifying their literary, charitable, and political societies.⁴¹ Hungarian New Yorkers' initial foray into public parading in Gotham had collided head-on with a wartime state apparatus bent on maintaining control over the city's symbolic spaces.⁴²

Marching to Infamy

German parading disappeared from Gotham's civic stage in the immediate postwar climate. The German military would goose-step through Berlin before German Americans could gain sanction to march again in Greater New York. Municipal authorities simply had no incentive to loosen their grip on public Germanness. Mayor Hylan was likely aware of the 1920 firestorm in Pittsburgh, where veterans expressed outrage at that city's mayor for reinstating German Day festivities. Accordingly, Hylan's administration held the line against German parading while selectively giving license to other ethnic

⁴⁰ Ibid.; "Explain Hungarian Plans for July 4," *New York Times*, June 27, 1918, 9; "Independence Day Parade," *New York Times*, June 29, 1918, 10

⁴¹ "Day-Long Pagaent Pictures America United for War," *New York Times*, July 5, 1918, 1.

⁴² "Hungarian Cause a July 4th Protest," *New York Times*, June 26, 1918, 7; "Explain Hungarian Plans for July 4," *New York Times*, June 27, 1918, 9; "Independence Day Parade," *New York Times*, June 29, 1918, 10; "Upholds Italians in Loyalty Day Row," *New York Times*, June 29, 1918, 5; "Italians and Hungarians Split on Loyalty Parade," *New-York Tribune*, July 1, 1918, 14; "'U.S. First' Settles Italian-Hungarian Row over Parade," *New-York Tribune*, July 2, 1918, 6. "calls Hungarian Floats in parade an Insult to Italy," *New-York Tribune*, June 26, 1918, 9. The *New York Tribune* reported that the mediators suggested the Hungarians modify their floats to "picture their New World activities in mines and factories and shipyards." The Hungarians passed on that idea given that these activities had little to do with their experience in Gotham. "'U.S. First' Settles Italian-Hungarian Row Over Parade," *New-York Tribune*, July 2, 1918, 6.

groups. Ukrainians and Lithuanians marched for political independence and the Irish continued their St. Patrick's Day procession.⁴³ Moreover, no German New Yorkers participated in the 1921 Memorial Day procession honoring living Civil War veterans, nor did any German American institutions officially join the Anti-Dry march of that year. Rather, 25,000 Yorkvillians participated as unaffiliated residents.⁴⁴

Notwithstanding these restrictions, the moratorium on public Germanness in Greater New York did not last. By the mid-1920s, the Steuben Society, a pan-Germanic entity which rose from the wartime ashes, explored acceptable ways to reengage with the city's ceremonial life. On Memorial Day 1925, this group honored German-born Jacob Leisler, the one-time Lieutenant Governor of colonial New York, at City Hall Park on Memorial Day, while the Society's Brooklyn and Queens units secured a place in Ridgewood's parade. In November 1927, the Steuben Society called on the memory of its namesake by celebrating the 150th anniversary of Baron von Steuben reaching the American colonies with a gathering at Madison Square Garden featuring German bands and soprano Maud von Steuben, a descendant of the Revolutionary War hero. The presence of ex-Mayor Jimmy Walker, then the American ambassador to Germany, and the U.S. Secretary of War added legitimacy to the occasion. The following day, Governor Al Smith signed a proclamation declaring December 1st "Steuben Day" throughout the Empire State. Flying the colors of patriotism through von Steuben's legacy seemed to offer the safest passage through the turbulence of the postwar years.⁴⁵

⁴³ German parading remained unpalatable in the early 1920s, but Irish marchers acted in overtly political ways. In 1921, they portrayed the St. Patrick's Day parade as a protest against Britain's conduct in Ireland. Despite the parade's politics, Mayor Hylan served as an official reviewer. However, the Irish carefully distanced themselves from Sinn Fein's wartime links to Imperial Germany. "Col. Anderson to Lead Irish Protest Parade," *Brooklyn Standard Union*, February 26, 1921, 2; "Hylan to Review Parade: Plans Completed for St. Patrick's Day Marchers," *New York Evening World*, March 16, 1921, 3. "Not a Sinn Fein Parade," *New-York Tribune*, March 23, 1920, 12.

⁴⁴ "Foreign News: Berlin," *New York Daily News*, September 10, 1924, 3; "Veterans Refuse to March in Parade," *New York Evening World*, November 11, 1920, 19; "Pittsburgh Veterans Refuse to March Before Mayor Babcock," *Altoona Tribune*, November 12, 1920, 1; "Sale of \$7,000 in Bonds Saves Verein Concert," *New-York Tribune*, April 28, 1919, 1; "Police Protection Asked for German-Americans," *New-York Tribune*, May 3, 1919, 6; "Brooklyn Russians Parade Tomorrow," *New York Daily News*, October 3, 1919, 7; "Hylan to Review Parade: Plans Completed for St. Patrick's Day Marchers," *New York Evening World*, March 16, 1921, 3; "Undaunted by Advancing Years the Grand Army Parades: May Party in Yorkville," *New York Daily News*, May 31, 1921, 10; "Volstead Victims to March as Body in Anti-Dry Parade," *New York Evening World*, June 2, 1921, 11.

⁴⁵ "City Will Pay Tribute Today to Heroes of Nation's Wars," *New York Daily News*, May 30, 1925, 46; "Brooklyn Prepares Stirring Memorial Day Tribute to Her Soldier Heroes," *Brooklyn Standard Union*, May 29, 1925, 3; "German Festival Held on Turnpike," *New York Daily News*, June 17, 1927, B7; "Plattsdsutsche Volksfest-Verein Festival Closes," *Brooklyn Standard Union*, June 20,

No period within the long history of German parading in New York had more influence on the Steuben parade's founding than the 1930s, a decade in which the Volksfest network endured, the Steuben Society continued to lean on the historical reputation of the good Baron, and Nazis set up headquarters in Yorkville. In the summer of 1931, Mayor Jimmy Walker put his stamp of approval on public celebrations of German identity by attending the opening parade of the Plattdeutsche Volksfest. One year later, the *Brooklyn Times Union* heaped praise on this event for bringing New Yorkers together "by [the] thousands for games and food and songs of their native land," and for furnishing "malt liquor as close to that of [Germany] as the laws of this land permit."⁴⁶ New York's newspapers saw the Volksfests as standing apart from the extremism creeping into other corners of German New York. Describing the 1940 Bavarian festival, during the Second World War, the *Brooklyn Citizen* stated that "[n]ot a swastika was in sight as the merrymakers carved themselves great hunks of meat . . . and washed them down with 120 barrels of beer."⁴⁷

On another front, the Steuben Society redoubled its quest to aggrandize the legacy of its patron saint, Baron von Steuben. Well after Germany descended into the depths of Nazism, the New York-based Steubenites lobbied Albany for legislation or executive action recognizing von Steuben with an annual commemoration. Governor Herbert Lehman, in 1936, issued a proclamation designating September 17th as "Von Steuben Day," citing not only the Prussian commander's Revolutionary War

1927, 3; "Song Festival Success: Schwaben-Volksfest Draws 10,000 to Cypress Hills Park," *Brooklyn Times Union*, September 6, 1927, 8; "Are Diamonds Unlucky? Picture at Garden Theatre Will Tell," *Paterson Evening News*, August 18, 1928, 7; "Fun Across the River," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 2, 1929, 64; "Over the Air to Brooklyn," *Brooklyn Standard Union*, November 30, 1927, 13; "Honoring Baron Steuben," *Binghamton Press and Sun-Bulletin*, December 1, 1927, 6. At the same time, the Volksfest tradition marched on primarily in Brooklyn, Long Island, and at the former-Schuetzen Park in New Jersey. "Harvest Festival," *Brooklyn Chat*, September 10, 1921, 33; "Bavarian Volksfest Held at Cypress Hills," *Brooklyn Standard Union*, August 16, 1926, 3; "Steuben Society Enjoys Day at Volksfest Park," *Brooklyn Daily Times*, June 30, 1924, 4; Schwabs to Hold Putting at Nassau," *Brooklyn Times Union*, April 14, 1928, 5; "Schwaben Volksfest Proved Best Ever," *Brooklyn Chat*, September 15, 1928, 5.

⁴⁶ "The German Festival," *Brooklyn Times Union*, June 25, 1932, 4.

⁴⁷ Ibid.; "3,000 Boro Bavarians Hold Annual Volksfest," *Brooklyn Citizen*, August 26, 1940, 2; "City Officials Will Attend Volksfest at Franklin Square," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 21, 1931, 4; "The German Festival," *Brooklyn Times Union*, June 25, 1932, 4. It bears mention that the PVV, through its then-president John Wedermann, flirted with local fascists in 1932, generally supporting UGS's right to run a Nazi-themed German Day. "Protest German Meeting Ban," *Canandaigua Daily Messenger*, October 26, 1933, 1 (AP captioned photo). Also, there is some evidence that the Volksfests were drawing fewer German Americans than in previous decades. "Bayerische Verein in 43D Volksfest," *Brooklyn Times Union*, June 13, 1932, 7.

record but his role as a regent of the state university. Von Steuben's name proved inviolable, as future governors approvingly followed Lehman's example. A generation later, German Americans seeking to reignite the community's parading heritage would again rely on the Baron and what he had come to symbolize. These modest strides likely generated hope that German New Yorkers would soon grace Gotham's civic stage in a unified and public manner, but the rise of Nazism in Germany shattered visions of a full restoration. It balkanized German New York, polluted German Day, and tainted Yorkville's reputation.⁴⁸

Nazi ascendancy in Germany in March 1933 fractured the city's German American institutional unity. Public remonstrations aimed at the Nazi regime first came from groups outside of German New York. In May 1933, an estimated one hundred thousand people marched in Manhattan to protest Nazi Germany's mass book burning in Berlin. At the procession's terminus, Mayor John O'Brien denounced Nazism as a threat to global peace and Fiorello LaGuardia, then an ex-Congressman, mocked Hitler as a "brown-shirted fool."⁴⁹ Four months later, German New Yorkers joined the chorus. The resurrected FGD organized an automobile parade through Yorkville, East Harlem, and Brooklyn, capped off by a memorial service at Yorkville's Austrian Hall dedicated to the "Hitlerite victims."⁵⁰ For the rest of the thirties, anti-Nazi and pro-Nazi elements locked horns with municipal authorities uneasy about both local and global developments. The Spanknöbel affair in 1933 and the Bund-controlled events in 1936 and 1937 transformed German Day celebrations into contested space throughout the thirties.⁵¹

⁴⁸ "City Officials Will Attend Volksfest at Franklin Square," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 21, 1931, 4; "The German Festival," *Brooklyn Times Union*, June 25, 1932, 4. Contemporaneous with its lobbying efforts, the Steuben Society, in 1936, cryptically warned that a pro-Nazi group had tried to establish a charter under the name of the "General Von Steuben Bund." "Steuben Society Holds Yearly Ball with 1,000 Present," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 26, 1936, 10; "August 11 Will be Designated Von Steuben Memorial Day," *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, April 1, 1935, 13; "To Honor Von Steuben," *Ithaca Journal*, August 10, 1935, 1; "Thursday Constitution, Steuben Day Besides Jewish New Year," *Ithaca Journal*, September 16, 1936, 1; "Two Days in One," *New York Daily News*, September 17, 1936, 37.

⁴⁹ "100,000 March in Anti-Nazi Parade Here," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 11, 1933, 17.

⁵⁰ The *New York Times* described the new FGD as a "militant anti-Nazi group [comprising] many German war veterans." Thus, New York's anti-Nazis earned the "militant" label before the pro-fascist elements. "Anti-Nazi Parade Held in Yorkville: Friends of German Democracy Including Reich Veterans, Denounce Hitler Regime," *New York Times*, September 10, 1933, 12.

⁵¹ "100,000 March in Anti-Nazi Parade Here," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 11, 1933, 17; "Anti-Nazi Parade Held in Yorkville: Friends of German Democracy Including Reich Veterans, Denounce Hitler Regime," *New York Times*, September 10, 1933, 12;

No event looms larger in social memory, however, than the notorious Bund march on October 30, 1937. To this day, this parade fuels spurious claims that Yorkville's streets once teemed with goose-stepping brownshirts.⁵² On the contrary, the procession in the fall of 1937 October was the only official Bund parade in Yorkville. Furthermore, despite the Bund's boast that upwards of 12,000 members from throughout the Northeast would march, participants numbered between four to eight hundred.⁵³ Nevertheless, after World War II, the persistent imagery of regular and spectacular Nazi parades through Yorkville's streets developed into a kind of closed circuit of memory, distorting facts and tainting the German enclave's legacy. Later conflation of German Yorkville and Nazism owed much to a 1939 Federal Writers' Project guidebook that devoted more space to the neighborhood's Bund period than any other feature. It stated that "[t]he Nazis occasionally parade through Yorkville in their uniforms."⁵⁴ In subsequent decades, the trope of marching Nazis assumed a special place within outsiders' tales about German Yorkville. In 1954, journalist Gerard Wilk noted that "[f]ifteen and twenty

"German Day Rally Splits with Nazis: Patriotic Program at Garden Marks Break in Ranks – Kuhn Routed in New Jersey," *New York Times*, October 3, 1938, 6; "Mayor Bars German Day Rally Here," *New York Daily News*, October 26, 1933, 2,8; "New York Group Plans German-Day Celebration," *Baltimore Sun*, November 2, 1933, 8; "Nazi Cheers Given by 20,000: Little Disorder in German Day in New York," *Boston Globe*, December 7, 1933, 36; "Brundage Puts Okay on Hitler," *New York Daily News*, October 5, 1936, 4; "German Day Rally Splits with Nazis: Patriotic Program at Garden Marks Break in Ranks – Kuhn Routed in New Jersey," *New York Times*, October 3, 1938, 6; "German Day Is Celebrated: 4,000 Sing, Eat, Drink, and Talk at Annual Outing," *Baltimore Sun*, September 13, 1948, 7; "Dr. Johnson Aids Penna. Week," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 19, 1949, 15; "Deutscher Tanzverein to Participate in National Folk Festival," *Paterson Morning Call*, August 11, 1950, 11; "German Day Program Adds Bavarian Dances, Folk Songs," *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, August 11, 1950, 38; "German Day Due to Draw 10,000 to Park," *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, August 13, 1950, 6B; "1,500 Observe German Day," *San Francisco Examiner*, October 5, 1953, 19; Smith, *The Deutschtum of Nazi Germany and the United States*, 69-73; Diamond, *The Nazi Movement in the United States*, 267-77.

⁵² "Only 307 in Nazi 'Big Parade,'" *New York Daily News*, October 31, 1937, 10; "Nazi Parade at Yorkville," *South Bend Tribune* (AP Story), October 31, 1937, 15; Bernstein, *Swastika Nation*, 101-103. Additionally, an iconic photo of this parade appears with great frequency in online stories making this claim. Alan Taylor, "American Nazis in the 1930s—The German American Bund," *The Atlantic*, June 5, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2017/06/american-nazis-in-the-1930s-the-german-american-bund/529185/>. Robert Rockaway, "Gangsters vs. Nazis: How the Jewish Mob Fought American Admirers of the Third Reich," *Tablet*, July 2, 2018, <https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/265401/gangsters-vs-nazis>.

⁵³ Of the parade itself, the *Times* said, "When the march got under way, a crowd of 5,000 had gathered at East End Avenue. The command to march was the signal for the mixed outburst of boos and heils. At Second Avenue the heils reached a loud crescendo. Here, the paraders cheered a Nazi flag flying from a window in a tenement house at No. 343 . . . When the marchers reached Eighty-sixth Street and Lexington Avenue, the boos were predominant. From east Eighty-fifth Street and Lexington to East End Avenue, the crowds," "1,300 Police Guard 800 Nazi Paraders," *New York Times*, October 31, 1937, 7. While this attempt to map the local geography of Bund support suggested that the most vocal proponents were stationed at Second Avenue and 86th Street, the heart of German Yorkville, this report does not warrant any firm conclusions. The *Daily News*, adding to the ambiguity, reported that "[t]he spectators were about evenly divided in sentiment." "Only 307 in Nazi 'Big Parade,'" *New York Daily News*, October 31, 1937, 10.

⁵⁴ *New York City Guide* (Federal Writers' Project) (New York: Random House, 1939), 251.

years ago, when Nazis chanting the “Horst-Wessel Lied” marched in Yorkville, East 86th Street was not the hospitable and neutral place it is today.”⁵⁵ This narrative made the prospect of renewing the tradition of German American parading in 1950s New York problematic, to say the least.⁵⁶

Two generations later, the specter of goose-stepping Bundists continued to haunt German New Yorkers. In a 1998 *Daily News* retrospective entitled “Ratzis,” Jay Maeder recalled how in 1937 “[Fritz] Kuhn began to stage regular Nazi parades through Yorkville.”⁵⁷ In 1999, the *Daily News* reprinted this article in a book celebrating Greater New York’s centennial and immortalized the story as a digital posting in 2017.⁵⁸

PART II: THE BIRTH OF THE STEUBEN PARADE

Creatio ex nihilo, or creation out of nothing, best describes the Steuben parade’s autobiography. According to the event’s contemporary organizers, the Steuben parade can be traced back to a 1957 procession in Ridgewood, a predominantly German-American neighborhood in Queens. Supposedly, that event’s success produced an “enthusiasm . . . so overwhelming that on September 20, 1958, just one year later, the Parade was moved from Myrtle Avenue to its current location on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan.”⁵⁹ This streamlined narrative makes no mention of German New York’s storied parading heritage. Instead, it resets the clock in the safety of 1957, more than a decade after the end of World War II, and in a setting other than Yorkville. This story effectively erases the grand processions of the

⁵⁵ Gerard H. Wilk, “Yorkville, Twenty Years After: The Brownshirts Are Gone – and Much Else,” *Commentary* (Jan-June 1954).

⁵⁶ *New York City Guide* (Federal Writers’ Project) (New York: Random House, 1939), 251; Wilk, “Yorkville, Twenty Years After: The Brownshirts Are Gone,” 41-48; Jay Maeder, “Ratzis: Fritz Kuhn and the Bund, 1939,” *New York Daily News*, May 31, 1998, 43; Jay Maeder, *Big Town, Big Time: A New York Epic: 1898-1998* (New York: New York Daily News, 1999), 85; Jay Maeder, “How Fritz Kuhn and American Nazis brought anti-Semitic fervor to New York City before WWII,” *NY Daily News Online*, <https://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/american-nazis-brought-anti-semitic-fervor-nyc-pre-wwii-article-1.801338>, accessed May 2, 2019.

⁵⁷ Jay Maeder, *Big Town, Big Time: A New York Epic: 1898-1998* (New York: New York Daily News, 1999), 85

⁵⁸ Ibid.; Jay Maeder, “How Fritz Kuhn and American Nazis Brought Anti-Semitic Fervor to New York City before WWII,” *New York Daily News*, <https://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/american-nazis-brought-anti-semitic-fervor-nyc-pre-wwii-article-1.801338>.

⁵⁹ 61st Annual German-American Steuben Parade of NYC Saturday, September 15, 2018 Press Kit, 3.

late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and avoids the complex reality of parading during the Great War era. Further, it conveniently circumvents memories of the Bund, which contributed to the disappearance of German American parading during the 1940s and early 1950s.⁶⁰

Of course, neither the Ridgewood procession, which proceeded down Myrtle Avenue in 1956 not 1957, nor the first Steuben parade on Fifth Avenue in September 1958, appeared spontaneously. Both derived from a concerted effort to resurrect German Gotham's festival culture in the early 1950s, a process championed by a small but able group of community visionaries. Led by Willie Schoeps, the affable president of a venerable German American singing society, these ethnic leaders started to conceive, and then construct a grand pan-Germanic parade capable of fostering co-ethnic comradeship and unity. Such an event might not place German New Yorkers on equal footing with Fifth Avenue's parading ethnics – the Irish, Italians, and Poles – but offered a way to reshape German New York's war-torn narrative, which often fixed on Nazism's moment in Yorkville. Whether the parade achieved all the founders' goals remains debatable. Against the odds, however, Schoeps and company designed a heritage event with staying power. But for a cancellation forced by the Covid-19 pandemic, September 2020 would have marked the sixty-third time German New Yorkers and their supporters marched up Fifth Avenue, in what has blossomed into the nation's largest annual German American heritage parade.⁶¹

Pan-German Parading Returns to New York

In the early 1950s, German New York's leading figures considered how to project a sense of pan-Germanness through public parades and festivals. Many viewed the Volksfest network, which had carried the full burden of publicly displaying German American heritage, as incoherent for wider audiences. Accordingly, in May 1953, Schützenpark in North Bergen, New Jersey, a location that had

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ "Welcome from the General Chairman!", German-American Steuben Parade New York, accessed March 14, 2020, <http://germanparadenyc.org/about-us/>.

hosted scores of Volksfest events over the decades, welcomed German Americans from several states to what organizers dubbed “German-American Day.” Thematically, the event centered on John Peter Zenger, an early-eighteenth century New York-based printer whose arrest and trial by colonial authorities connected him to American notions of press freedom, an apt Cold War subject. Subsequent versions of German-American Day, sometimes shortened to “German Day” in the English language press, continued the practice of celebrating the accomplishments of key historical figures. The 1954 festival honored Conrad Weiser, a prominent member of the Pennsylvania Dutch colony and diplomat during the French and Indian War; the 1955 event focused on nineteenth century German American statesman and politician, and former Yorkville resident, Carl Schurz; and event planners dedicated the 1956 festival to Christopher Ludwick, who purportedly encouraged Hessian mercenaries to join the patriots’ side during the Revolutionary War. The New Jersey-based German-American Day laid the foundation for the Steuben parade in several respects. Most fundamentally, it showed that pan-Germanic festive culture could resume without rousing controversy. Also, it reinforced the efficacy of historically situating German Americanism with American patriotism, especially the nation’s Revolutionary period. Lastly, a few key members of Ridgewood’s German enclave who chaired these events learned valuable lessons that they later applied to the quest of reincarnating German New York’s parading tradition.⁶²

German American parading returned to New York City in April 1956, in the form of a procession that subsequently laid claim to having launched the Steuben parade tradition. At first glance, the golden

⁶² “German Essay Winners to Be Feted May 31,” *New York Daily News*, May 10, 1953, H10; “New Parkway Section to Open each Week,” *Asbury Park Press* (NJ), July 19, 1954, 3; “Brooklyn, L.I. Will Take Part in Weiser Day,” *New York Daily News*, July 18, 1954, p. 41B; “German Fete for Ludwick,” *Daily News*, May 29, 1955, p. H2; “‘German Day’ Set in Jersey,” *New York Daily News*, May 13, 1956, p. 5H. Importantly, German-American Day did not adversely affect the interest in or significance of the Volksfest activities. These regional festivals continued throughout the decade, continuing to draw sizeable crowds and visits from political figures and foreign dignitaries. “Wagner at German Festival,” *New York Times*, August 15, 1955, 48; “Germans Hold Festival: Putting in Jersey Will Benefit Home for Aged There,” *New York Times*, August 13, 1956, 5; “Fritz Reuter Home Rededicated Today,” *New York Daily News*, August 19, 1956, H4; “Mayor’s Car Loses Wheel at Festival,” *New York Times*, August 10, 1959, 29.

anniversary of the Brooklyn Boys' and Girls' Chorus, originally formed as an ethnic boys' choir known as the Knabenchor, seemed an unlikely candidate to reinstate German parading in Gotham. A fifty-year history, frankly, paled in comparison with the lifespans of many of German New York's institutions. In fact, the city's two most prestigious singing vereins, the Liederkrantz and the Arion Society, were founded in 1847 and 1854 respectively. Nonetheless, the New Jersey-based festivals of the early- to mid-fifties had produced a palpable momentum igniting the imaginations of many German New Yorkers, including the city's German American-in-Chief, Mayor Robert Wagner. No arm twisting was needed to convince Yorkville's political prince to proclaim April 29, 1956, the day of the Brooklyn Boys' and Girls' Chorus celebration, as German-American Day throughout the city. This act, in turn, opened the door for this otherwise local and unremarkable occasion to blossom into a transcendent two-day celebration capped off by a grand procession. The parade mobilized close to one hundred German American organizations representing almost every borough. Ten bands produced the musical accompaniment while an equal number of floats linked contemporary German American culture to patriotic themes from American history, in a technique similar to parades of the early-twentieth century.⁶³

In 1957, the National Sngerfest gathered in New York, kicking off a summer replete with German American festivals and cultural gatherings. To an even greater extent than the Ridgewood parade a year earlier, the Sngerfest fostered a spirit of cooperation among the metropolitan area's German American institutions. Its national appeal also drew the interest of major political figures, as New York Governor W. Averell Harriman, New Jersey Governor Robert Meyner, U.S. Senator from New

⁶³ "'Knabenchor' Chorus to Sing at Academy," *Brooklyn Record*, April 27, 1956, 5; "Proclaim Sunday 'German Day,'" *Brooklyn Daily*, April 25, 1956, 6. The parade occurred along Myrtle Avenue, a main thoroughfare in the Queens neighborhood of Ridgewood, which bordered the Bushwick neighborhood that was home to the Brooklyn Boys' and Girls' Chorus. Common perceptions in 1956 held that Ridgewood had managed to retain much of its German cultural flavor during a period of substantial demographic change throughout the city, including in New York's German center of Yorkville. A 1955 *Daily News* article declared Ridgewood "Germany, U.S.A." Area resident Otto Petersen, an officer with the PVV, claimed that "[m]ost of the churches in Ridgewood conduct one service in English and one in German." David Gordon, "Ridgewood Is Germany, U.S.A.," *New York Daily News*, February 13, 1955, B1, B28; Richard Bocklett, "Steuben Parade a Ridgewood Original," *Queens Ledger*, September 17, 2009, http://www.queensledger.com/view/full_story/3627437/article-Steuben-Parade-a-Ridgewood-original?instance=weather_QL, accessed on November 12, 2018.

Jersey Malcolm Forbes, and Mayor Wagner each attended the closing ceremonies at Schützenpark. Germane to the Steuben parade, the Sangerfest reclaimed cultural space within Manhattan, albeit temporarily, with concerts in Madison Square Garden as well as the Yorkville Casino. Just a few months after this catalytic event, two of its principle organizers, Willie Schoeps and Judge William Ringel, would make the case for German New York to come together to plan a highly visible pan-institutional ethnic parade, preferably right in the heart of Manhattan.⁶⁴

In September 1957, during the close of the 95th Cannstatter Volksfest, Schoeps, Ringel, and Theodore Dengler, head of the Yorkville-based Catholic Kolping Society, implored leaders of German New York’s male-dominated social network to consider the merits of an annual parade. Accordingly, German American organizations chose delegates who convened multiple times during the final months of 1957. Despite the purported success of the Ridgewood parade and the Sangerfest, many institutional leaders, especially those representing the Volksfest network, entered these meetings as skeptics. These men were hesitant to commit to a major public procession that might fail and worried that success of a combined event could harm their longstanding and independent festivals. According to the *Staats-Zeitung*, Gotham’s storied German-language newspaper, only the deft leadership of Willie Schoeps saved this ambitious project from the debilitating effects of an internecine squabble.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ “Heute Sangerfest-Konzert; Sonntag Siegerverkundigung,” *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung und Herold*, May 25, 1957, 13; “Heute Verteilung der Sangerpreise: Sangerfestes im Schutzenpark,” *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung und Herold*, May 26, 1957, 13.

⁶⁵ “Bunte Streiflichter vom 95. Cannstatter Volksfest,” *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung und Herold*, September 12, 1957, 13; “Delegiertentagung Stand Ganz im Zeichen des Volksfesterfolges,” *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung und Herold*, September 13, 1957, 13; “Morden Wird uber die Parade Entschieden,” *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung und Herold*, September 16, 1957, 13; “Die Deutsche Parade Ist Noch in Schwebe,” *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung und Herold*, September 22, 1957, 13. As German New York’s leaders continued to debate the merits of a large-scale procession, Hungarian New Yorkers pursued their own parading goals. In October 1957, Hungarian Americans, for the first time, marched in the Pulaski Day parade. Polish New Yorkers started this event in the 1930s to celebrate their ethnic identity and to honor Casimir Pulaski, a Polish soldier who joined the patriots’ cause in the American Revolution. By the 1950s, it had grown into one of Fifth Avenue’s grander events, sometimes topping 100,000 marchers. One year removed from the Hungarian Revolution, a group of 56ers joined the Polish parade to show solidarity against Soviet oppression in Eastern Europe. Hungarian New Yorkers, who do not have their own Gotham parade, have irregularly partnered with the Poles in like fashion in recent versions of the Pulaski parade. “120,000 Due to march in Pulaski Fete Today,” *New York Times*, October 6, 1957, 53; “Hungarians In Polish Parade,” *New York Daily News*, October 6, 1957, M14; Edith Evans Asbury, “Pulaski Honored as 100,000 March: Polish Groups Parade Up Fifth Avenue Despite Rain and Chilly Winds,” *New York Times*, October 7, 1957, 29; “Paraders Brave Rain for Pulaski,” *New York Daily News*, October 7, 1957, 19; “Hungarian Americans Marched at the Pulaski Day Parade,” *Hungarian Free Press*, October 20, 2014, <https://hungarianfreepress.com/2014/10/20/hungarian-americans-marched-at-the-pulaski-day-parade/>, accessed April 1,

By 1957, Schoeps had emerged as one of the most universally beloved men within Gotham's German American circles. Rarely was a German cultural event held in Greater New York without the presence of the Arion Society's affable president.⁶⁶ Schoeps combined implacable sanguinity, indefatigable work ethic, and unfailing good humor. He once quipped about the frequency with which he had to spell "Arion," to clarify the group's appropriation of the immortal horse from Greek mythology and to guard against associations with the term "Aryan."⁶⁷ Schoeps was born in Silesia, just a few weeks after German forces penetrated Belgium in 1914, and emigrated in 1934, a little more than one year after the National Socialists gained control of the German State. Possessing a modicum of formal education, he worked as an auto mechanic before seizing an opportunity to join the sales force for the Newark-based G. Krueger Brewing Company. As he made his rounds, Schoeps developed a rapport with scores of German American bar and restaurant owners, including the ethnic businesses on or near East 86th Street. These social and professional ties made him an integral link between German New York's commercial and cultural spaces. They also provided an avenue to partner with the Yorkville-Mid-Manhattan Chamber of Commerce, whose president, John Tully, handled press relations for the parade during its early days.⁶⁸

2020; Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in New York, "New York's 78th Annual Pulaski Day Parade," https://nowyjork.msz.gov.pl/en/news/new_york_s_78th_annual_pulaski_day_parade?searchTag=Pulaski+Parade&search=true&searchInTags=true, accessed April 1, 2020.

⁶⁶ *The New Yorker Staats-Zeitung und Herold* regularly articulated the position that the singing societies transcended socio-economic and political divisions within the German American community. It may come as no surprise that Willie Schoeps developed a reputation as a peacemaker and relationship builder. Joseph Horowitz, *Wagner Nights: An American History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 35.

⁶⁷ Interestingly, however, the Arion Society, a group that traveled abroad with some frequency, had a close encounter with Adolf Hitler during a 1937 trip to Breslau, Germany. The occasion was the 75th anniversary festival of the German Sängerbund. As members of the Arion Society marched in a parade relating to this international event, Hitler reached out to shake their hands. He then gave the Arion members a Nazi salute which, apparently, they returned in kind. "100 Arions Return, Proud of Handshake by Hitler; Found Nazis Happy and Busy," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 12, 1937, A3. Willie Schoeps was not part of this delegation. In fact, he did not join the Arion Society until 1941. "Song Is Ending for Chorus," *New York Daily News*, September 11, 1983, B1.

⁶⁸ Interview of Ronald Schoeps, March 8, 2019; "German-U.S. Parades Man of Notes," *New York Daily News*, September 16, 1962, XQ4; William Neugebauer, "A Way to Go Home Again," *New York Daily News*, June 4, 1984, 11; "Report Arion Clubhouse Sold Brings Denial," *Kings County Chronicle (NY)*, December 31, 1957, 4.

Schoeps brought to bear all his contacts and experiences in managing the delicate internal parade debate. Throughout this process, he was persistent but not pushy, allowing the delegates to slowly warm to the idea of a large-scale Manhattan-based parade capable of rehabilitating German New York's local reputation, especially that of Yorkville. As geopolitics often influences local ethnic identity and reputation, positive developments within the Federal Republic of Germany, or West Germany, – the end of Allied occupation and admission into NATO in 1955, and membership in the European Economic Community in 1957 – helped create an atmosphere of possibilities. Schoeps adroitly assuaged fears expressed by leaders of the Volksfest network, situating the parade as a complement to, not a replacement of the existing festival structure into which he himself had poured so much of his time and talent. By late October, discussions had progressed enough for Mayor Wagner to pay a visit to a delegate meeting at the Jägerhaus in Yorkville, reflecting the city's support.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, Judge William E. Ringel cut a direct route through the city's bureaucratic thickets. Ringel, born in Vienna, came to America as an infant in 1901. Soon thereafter, his parents established themselves within Yorkville's growing German American community. Ringel exemplified the grit possessed by so many of Yorkville's first-generation German-speakers. He earned his baccalaureate from City College in 1923 after which he taught in the New York school system to pay his way through the evening Law School program at New York University. In 1933, as a spokesperson for the Steuben Society's New York Division, he publicly criticized Heinz Spanknöbel's attempted take-over of German Day. Originally appointed by Mayor LaGuardia, by 1957, Ringel had served as a judge on several of the city's municipal courts for nearly a generation. Over the years, he forged a special bond with another favorite son of Yorkville, Robert F. Wagner, Jr. Ringel and Wagner were inseparable at German American

⁶⁹ "Delegiertentagung Stand Ganz im Zeichen des Volksfesterfolges," *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung und Herald*, September 13, 1957, 13; "D.A. Komitee Heute im Jägerhaus; Wagner Dort," *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung und Herald*, October 30, 1957, 13; Julia Lange, "How to Cope with it? The Steuben Society of America's Politics of Memory and the Holocaust," in *Reverberations of Nazi Violence in Germany and Beyond: Disturbing Pasts*, eds. Stephanie Bird, Mary Fulbrook, Julia Wagner and Christiane Weinand (New York: Bloomsburg Academic, 2016): 251-64.

cultural events throughout Greater New York after the latter took up residence at Gracie Mansion. This relationship proved indispensable in obtaining the official blessing to parade in Manhattan, a prospect, in the end, too attractive for the Volksfest leaders to pass up.⁷⁰

German Americans Parade on Fifth Avenue

The first Manhattan-based parade reflected the branding, scope, and route priorities set by Schoeps and his fellow visionaries. Choosing to name the parade in honor of Baron Wilhelm Friedrich von Steuben, organizers fused the birth of the parade with the birth of the nation. Baron von Steuben also had local ties, as he had helped found the German Society while a resident of Greater New York. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, his memory had fueled civic engagement. In 1858, German New Yorkers put on a festival to raise money for a von Steuben memorial. In 1881, they paraded in honor of his visiting descendants. And, in 1910, German New York sent a delegation to Washington D.C. to attend the unveiling of the Steuben Monument in Lafayette Square. In the aftermath of the Great War, the Steuben Society had used his name as a prophylactic against persistent anti-German sentiment. More proximate to the parade's birth, a contingent from German New York traveled to the Steuben Memorial State Historic Site in Remsen, New York, the Baron's final resting place, on Steuben Day in September 1957. From the first parade to the present day, each news account of the event describes, at least summarily, the importance of Baron von Steuben to American history, thereby re-inscribing the centrality of German immigrants to the nation's grand narrative.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Robert D. McFadden, "William Ringel Is Dead at 97; A Zesty Figure on the Bench," *New York Times*, July 1, 1999, C13; "Ban on Nazi Rally Upheld by O'Brien," *New York Times*, October 26, 1933, 1. Judge Ringel served as the Steuben parade's grand marshal for well over a decade, making him one of the true constants of the event. "Steuben Day Parade," *New York Daily News*, September 18, 1969, 46.

⁷¹ "Great German Festival in Aid of the Fund for Erecting a Monument to Baron Steuben," *New York Times*, July 27, 1858, 4; Friedrich Kapp, *The Life of Frederick William von Steuben: Major General in the Revolutionary Army*, Second ed. (New York: Mason Brothers, 1859), 585-606; "Baron Steuben's Descendants: The Arrangements for Their Reception in This Country," *New York Times*, October 10, 1881, 5; "Souvenir Program: Unveiling of the Steuben Monument: Washington D.C., December 7, 1910," *United German Societies of the District of Columbia* (Washington D.C., The Carnahan Press, 1910), "Farm U.S. Gave to von Steuben to be Park: New York Votes Fund to Establish Memorial," *Marshall County News* (KS), January 16, 1931, 7; "Steuben Memorial Dedicated Up-State," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 12, 1931, 1; "Steuben Day," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 12, 1931, 6; "Senora Ferrara Joins Cuban Envoy in Geneva: Ambassador Prittwitz of Germany Expected Here Tomorrow from Remsen, N.Y., Where Memorial Grove Was Dedicated," *Washington D.C. Evening Star*, September 13, 1931, 35;

The inaugural parade seemed to allay concerns that German New York might not produce a parade worthy of processing along Fifth Avenue, the city's most vaunted parade route. Nine thousand marchers as well as multiple bands and floats ambled twenty-six blocks up the famous thoroughfare while an estimated 150,000 bore witness despite threats of inclement weather. Unlike the Ridgewood affair of 1956, participating organizations represented all five boroughs as well as parts of New Jersey and Connecticut. President Eisenhower and Theodor Heuss, the West German leader, donated flags from their respective countries, symbolizing the event's subtheme of international diplomacy. New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller and New Jersey chief executive Robert Meyner joined Mayor Wagner as official parade dignitaries, seizing an opportunity to gain goodwill with constituents at this public spectacle.⁷²

Importantly, the founders designed the route to turn east on 86th Street, with Yorkville residents lining Sauerkraut Boulevard several rows deep. Parade participants coalesced with locals to form a raucous atmosphere on Yorkville's streets and in its bars and restaurants, a post-parade tradition that would continue for the rest of the twentieth century. The first Steuben parade's success evinced the redemptive promise of public parading. Even if it did not match the magnitude of the St. Patrick's or Columbus Day parades, the event passed muster with the city's press. The *New York Times* and *Daily News* described the inaugural Steuben parade in reverent terms, stressing the message of German contributions to America without ever referencing the World Wars or the Bund.⁷³

"Attend Dedication of Steuben Memorial Park," *Allentown Morning Call*, September 19, 1931, 1; "Steuben Memorial State Historic Site," New York State Parks, accessed April 2, 2020, <https://parks.ny.gov/historic-sites/steubenmemorial/details.aspx>; "Two Days in One," *New York Daily News*, September 17, 1935; "Pilgerfahrt der Steuben Society zum Grab des Freiheitskämpfers," *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung und Herold*, September 6,, 1957, 13; Robert A. Selig, "Baron Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben: First Inspector General of the United States Army (1730-1794)," *German Life* 4, no. 2 (Sept. 30, 1997): 44.

⁷² "Parade Set Today by German Groups," *New York Times*, September 20, 1958, 21; Philip Benjamin, "9,000 March Here to Honor Steuben: Spirit Is Gay Despite Gray Skies at 5th Ave. Parade of German-Americans," *New York Times*, September 21, 1958, 85; Dick Lee, "Ave and DeS Are Close as Two Politicians," *New York Daily News*, September 21, 1958, 5.

⁷³ Arthur Mulligan, "Fine Marching Weather on Tap for the St. Patrick's Day Parade," *New York Daily News*, March 17, 1958, 5; "Columbus Day Programs Will Draw Crowds," *New York Daily News*, October 12, 1958, B34; "100,000 May March for Columbus," *New York Daily News*, October 12, 1961, 14.

PART III: THE STEUBEN PARADE'S EVENTFUL LIFE

Schoeps, Ringel, and their associates had done it. The first march honoring Baron von Steuben in 1958 succeeded on several fronts. It re-legitimized German American parading in Manhattan, gave German New Yorkers central representation along Fifth Avenue, and injected a new narrative into German Yorkville. From the start, parade organizers have attempted to balance the founding priorities with visions of expanding the event's appeal, all while managing challenges and mitigating threats that may arise. This section examines this six-decade long process by highlighting four discernible themes: the strategies and tactics parade organizers have pursued to secure a distinct place within New York's crowded parading culture; the political nature of a purportedly apolitical event; variants of ethnic identity on display at the parade; and the relationship between Yorkville, German New York's preeminent ethnic place, and the parade, its preeminent ethnic event.⁷⁴

Securing the Steuben Parade's Place Within New York's Crowded Parading Culture

The first step in building on this initial success was to expand the procession, for scale mattered to public perception. Gotham's dailies stuck close to formulaic coverage of parades, usually featuring the numbers of marchers and observers in the headline or lead paragraph. During the late fifties, the St. Patrick's Day and Italian-themed Columbus Day parades constituted the two largest ethnic Fifth Avenue processions. In October 1958, approximately 75,000 people marched in the Columbus Day Parade, while 130,000 people braved winter-like weather in the March 1959 edition of the great Irish procession. Despite the unfairness of comparisons with these longstanding events, the pressure to grow the Steuben Parade was palpable. In 1959, Willie Schoeps and his team made good on his promise of a bigger and better event than the year before, as twenty thousand trod the path up Fifth Avenue. The parade's scope continued to trend upward during the early sixties, with twenty-five thousand

⁷⁴ The German-American Committee of Greater New York and the Federation of Americans of German Descent recognized Willie Schoeps as the "German-American of the Year" in 1959 for his contributions toward launching the Steuben parade. William Neugebauer, "The Song Is Ending for a Chorus," *New York Daily News*, September 11, 1983, B1, B3.

participating in 1962 and forty-five thousand in 1963. Parade organizers relied on an expansive network that included the Volksfest vereins and reached into Rockland, Nassau, and Westchester counties, New Jersey, Connecticut and beyond. These affiliated groups included former city residents who relished the chance to see Yorkville resplendent and ready to receive the diaspora at the post-parade festival.⁷⁵

As the parade grew, its leaders turned their attention to achieving parading equity. Since at least 1951, participants in the St. Patrick's Day parade had proceeded along Fifth Avenue guided by a green stripe painted by city work crews. As the 1962 Steuben parade approached, organizers sent a formal request to Traffic Commission Henry Barnes asking his workers to paint a blue line down the center of East 86th Street, from Fifth to First Avenue. Blue, they insisted, denoted German allegiance to the cornflower, a symbol of national pride. The *Daily News* parroted this claim, stating that "the blue cornflower is the native flower of Germany, and blue, standing for hope and courage, is to Germans what green is to the Irish."⁷⁶ By seeking a blue line extending only along the parade's last leg, the

⁷⁵ "Sun, Politicos Smile for the Sons of Italy," *New York Daily News*, October 13, 1958, C3; Arthur Mulligan, "Bit o' Snow on the Parade Only Made the Green Look Prettier," *New York Daily News*, March 18, 1959, C5; "Sees 200,000 at March for Von Steuben," *New York Daily News*, August 30, 1959, 1; "Steuben Parade Set: Americans of German Descent Honor Birthday Tomorrow," *New York Times*, September 18, 1959, 26; "Steuben Parade Set: 20,000 to March on 5th Ave. at 2 P.M. Saturday," *New York Times*, September 15, 1960; "German-American Groups to Plan Steuben parade," *Passaic Herald-News*, August 9, 1958, 16; "Steuben parade Attracts 200,000: Fifth Avenue March Honors Drillmaster of Revolution," *New York Times*, October 1, 1961, 68; David Binder, "Brandt, Rockefeller and Wagner Lead Steuben March," *New York Times*, September 30, 1962, 1; Peter Flint, "45,000 March in 6th Annual Steuben Parade," *New York Times*, September 22, 1963, 58; William Neugebauer, "Achtung! It'll Be Joy Uber Alles," *New York Daily News*, August 7, 1983, "Steuben Day Units Get Set," *Rockland County Journal-News*, September 22, 1967, 3; William Neugebauer, "Beer Fest – for Fun and Merriment," *New York Daily News*, June 2, 1985, NL-B5; "German American Fest Will Start with a Big Oom-Pah-Pah," *New York Daily News*, June 16, 1988, NS-26. Anna Servaes, writing about Franco American parades, emphasizes the importance of ethnic festive culture as fostering "the cyclical return of a diaspora." Servaes, *Franco-American Identity*, 67. The parade committee also literally gained access to City Hall. Throughout the sixties, seventies, and eighties, performers scheduled to participate at the Steuben parade gathered outside of City Hall to put on a free concert, usually the day before or morning of the parade. The concert offered another way to spread the word. "On and Off Broadway," *New York Daily News*, September 13, 1967, 54; "Flower of the Day," *New York Daily News*, September 18, 1970, C6; "Mayor Previews Participants in City's 23d Steuben Parade," *New York Times*, September 27, 1980, 27; "It's Oktoberfest Times in September Around Town," *New York Times*, September 24, 1982, C24. When Schoeps pressed the idea of a large Manhattan-based parade in 1957, leaders of the Volksfest vereins expressed concern about potential harm to their longstanding, regionally specific events. While the PVV and other Volksfest celebrations continue, the Steuben parade does tend to consume all the oxygen in the room vis-à-vis German New York's public facing heritage. Currently, it might be more appropriate to speak about a Steuben parade rather than a Volksfest network. See, e.g., William Neugebauer, "Beer Fest – for Fun and Merriment," *New York Daily News*, June 2, 1985, NL-B5; "German American Fest Will Start with a Big Oom-Pah-Pah," *New York Daily News*, June 16, 1988, NS-26.

⁷⁶ Arthur Mulligan, "Germans Set to Walk Blue Line Up Fifth," *Daily News*, September 29, 1962, C5; See also Ernest Werth's letter to the editor, in which he waxes historical about the Germany's ties to the cornflower, including an anecdote about the cornflower being dubbed the "Kaiserblume" based on Emperor Wilhelm I affinity for the plant. Ernest Werth, *New York Times*, Letter to the Editor, October 16, 1962, 38.

Steuben parade committee positioned this request as humble compared to the Hibernians. This stretch of East 86th Street, moreover, was German Yorkville's "Main Street" and German New York's symbolic core.⁷⁷

Commissioner Barnes summarily rejected the blue line request, sparking a firestorm that quickly engulfed the mayor's office and eventually consumed in toto the very notion of painting lines for ethnic parades.⁷⁸ The parade organizers appealed their case directly to the top, believing that Mayor Wagner, as a co-ethnic and Yorkville native, would have their back. The *Daily News* reacted by lampooning Wagner as "Herr Burgermeister." Initially, the Mayor resisted the plea, but Steuben Parade officials publicly threatened to take their case to the U.S. State Department. "International amity" was at stake, they asserted, pointing out that West Berlin's Mayor, Willy Brandt, would appear in the parade as an honored guest. Less than a week before the event, the planning committee met with city officials to hammer out a compromise permitting blue adhesive tape to be affixed to the 86th Street portion of the route. The *Daily News* reported that "[t]he good burghers of Yorkville will have a blue line along 86th St. for their Steuben Day parade Saturday after all."⁷⁹ John Tully, head of the Chamber of Commerce, wedded Irish wisdom and German symbolism by saying, "I can see no reason why we couldn't have a painted line . . . but half a loaf of pumpernickel is better than none."⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Arthur Mulligan, "Yorkville Moans the Blues to Bob," *New York Daily News*, September 20, 1962, 5; Arthur Mulligan, "Yorkvillagers to Sing Blues to State Dept.," *New York Daily News*, September 21, 1962, 38; Arthur Mulligan, "Germans Set to Walk Blue Line Up Fifth," *New York Daily News*, September 29, 1962, C5.

⁷⁸ Few traffic commissioners warrant an autobiography, but Henry Barnes was no ordinary bureaucrat. Robert Moses once said of Barnes, "[t]here are no limits to this man's cleverness and gall." Martin Arnold, "Traffic Commissioner Barnes, 61, Dies After Being Stricken on Job," *New York Times*, September 17, 1968, 1. Barnes recounted the Battle of the Blue Stripe in his memoir. Despite inaccuracies about the timing, he recounted the affair with a mixture of good humor and unending frustration. Summing up his thoughts on the collision of public heritage and traffic control, he stated that "[t]he whole business of parades is a headache [because] they raise hell with traffic and hell with business." Henry A. Barnes, *The Man with the Red and Green Eyes: The Autobiography of Henry A. Barnes, Traffic Commissioner, New York City* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1965), 222.

⁷⁹ Arthur Mulligan, "Blue Line for Steuben Parade: Wearer of the Green Comes to the Rescue," *New York Daily News*, September 25, 1962, 4

⁸⁰ Ibid.; Arthur Mulligan, "Yorkville Moans the Blues Line to Bob," *New York Daily News*, September 20, 1962, C5; "Steuben Day Planners get Their Blue Line," *Elmira Star-Gazette*, September 29, 1962, 4; "Line Becomes International Incident," *Indianapolis Star* (AP), September 26, 1963, 14; Arthur Mulligan, "Yorkvillagers to Sing Blues to State Dept.," *New York Daily News*, September 21, 1962, 38; Arthur Mulligan, "Germans Set to Walk Blue Line Up Fifth," *New York Daily News*, September 29, 1962, C5.

The following year, the Steuben Parade pressed for and achieved further concessions from city officials. This time, Commissioner Barnes's crew painted a blue stripe down 86th Street and parade planners gained license to affix blue tape on the entirety of the Fifth Avenue portion of the route. The German Americans' successful lobbying efforts drew the attention of other ethnic groups, most notably Italian Americans. The Italian Historical Society, which oversaw the annual Columbus Day Parade, demanded a "royal purple line" along Fifth Avenue. Commissioner Barnes balked at the idea, citing the Mayor's promise that his workers would not be asked to paint any more lines. In a classic case of one-upmanship, John LaCorte, Columbus Day Parade spokesman, fired back that the Lord Admiral deserved "a double line, not one." Steuben parade officials entered the fray in a surprising way by inviting the Italian heritage parade to turn right on East 86th Street for a festive reception by German Yorkville, even offering to paint the purple line themselves.⁸¹

The Italians earned their stripe, but their temporary victory threatened the entirety of New York's ethnic parade landscape. His patience frayed and sensing more groups demanding more stripes, Mayor Wagner announced a moratorium on parade lines. The Italians shrugged and the Irish acquiesced, but the Germans grumbled. They claimed Wagner had failed to consult with them, thereby publicly declaring a full right to participate in the city's parade policymaking. The controversy reappeared episodically during the seventies and eighties. The St. Patrick's Day committee convinced Mayor Abraham Beame to embrace his Irish ancestry by permitting the return of the green line in 1975, causing the Germans to seek recompense. Incessant lobbying eventually paid off when Mayor Koch granted the Steubenites' request for a painted blue line on East 86th Street in the early 1980s. Of course,

⁸¹ "45,000 Take the Blue Line for Steuben," *New York Daily News*, September 22, 1963, 4; Arthur Mulligan, "Italians Get Irish Up as Barnes Bans Purple Line," *New York Daily News*, September 24, 1963, C3; Edward O'Neill and Arthur Mulligan, "Stripe for Columbus Ends Fifth Avenue Lines," *New York Daily News*, October 11, 1963, 5; Arthur Mulligan, "St. Pat Will Toe the Line: He'll See a Green Stripe on His Fifth," *New York Daily News*, March 11, 1975, C3. Don Singleton, "Steuben Marchers Feel Blue," *New York Daily News*, August 4, 1982, 17.

the German Americans then publicly questioned why the Irish had gained permission to run their painted stripe the complete length of the Fifth Avenue route.⁸²

This battle of the blue stripe involved more than a thirst for equity within a competitive ethnic heritage ecosystem. It reflected the parade organizers' challenge of constructing tradition and increasing visibility during the parade's formative period. Understandably, the general public saw the Steuben Parade as an upstart. Yet, as German New York sought to "invent tradition," to invoke the Hobsbawmian concept, it had at its disposal a century of parading experience. Parade organizers called upon this rich heritage to design a well-ordered, aesthetically pleasing, and sonically exhilarating procession. The line of march owed much to the carefully orchestrated Volksfest processions, which utilized divisions reflecting German heterogeneity and regional distinctiveness. Upwards of forty bands saturated the Fifth Avenue corridor in much the same manner as the large-scale pan-Germanic parades of yore, such as the 1902 marching ode to Prince Henry. The first float depicting Baron von Steuben and George Washington at Valley Forge harkened back to the UGS parades of the Great War era.⁸³

The founders also deployed new symbols, such as the Cornflower Queen, or *Kornblumen Konigin*, to convey the parade's primary messaging. At first blush, the Cornflower Queen, a ritual that persists to the present, seems susceptible to critiques that it objectifies women. The role's responsibilities, however, extend far beyond the event itself. Domestically, the Queen and her court promote German American culture throughout the Tri-State area, especially during the busy summer heritage season. Until recently, they bore responsibility for building cultural bridges and increasing the parade's international profile, duties that demanded uncommon linguistic and diplomatic skill sets. So armed, they traveled to cities and towns in Germany and Austria attending festivals and social

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1-4. In 1986, Senator Alphonse D'Amato admitted to not knowing anything about Baron von Steuben, but complimented the parade held in his honor as "the only parade that starts on time." G. Brian Kulers, "Remembering Steuben on His Day," *Newsday*, September 21, 1986, 19.

gatherings and engaging with a diverse set of politicians and civic leaders. These efforts paid off by increasing the number of overseas bands and clubs participating in the parade, helping to create a transnational event.⁸⁴

Additionally, the Cornflower Queen, combined with the broader women's liberation movement, helped loosen the parade's patriarchal traditions. In 1963, Katie Schrimpp the Recording Secretary, served as the lone woman on the twenty-three-member parade committee. Connie Rom, the 1978 Cornflower Queen, led a female vanguard that reshaped the parade's governing body. Propelled by her experience as an international ambassador for German heritage, Rom assumed a central role in the male dominated space of parade planning. Today, she is a highly visible and influential member of the executive committee and serves as the event's co-commentator. Women, most of whom came of age after transformations wrought by the women's liberation movement, now make up a majority on the executive committee as well as within the operating committees' leadership positions. In a parallel development, starting in 1985, the parade increasingly honored the contributions of German American women. In that year, Uji Derickson, a TWA flight attendant credited with defusing a hijacking, wore the blue sash as the parade's honorary grand marshal. Derickson's appearance caused one female spectator to comment that "[s]he has guts and she shows that women can do a lot."⁸⁵ Parade organizers have bestowed special honors on more than a dozen women since this time, including Emily Haber, German ambassador to the U.S., who served as the 2019 honorary grand marshal.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Jeannette Stenger, "Miss Deutsch-Amerikas Reisetagebuch," *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung und Herald*, March 16, 1957, 11; "Miss Deutsch-Amerika Wird für 1958 Gewalt," *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung und Herald*, May 26, 1957, 2; "Heute der Letzte Tag für die Miss Deutsch-Amerika-Wahl," *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung und Herald*, October 15, 1957, 2. To be sure, the founders' creation of the position coincided with well-publicized beauty contests emanating from New York, such as the Miss Rheingold competition. David Hinckley, "Your Favorite Selection: On the Campaign Trail with Miss Rheingold," *New York Daily News*, November 22, 2005, 24; "Vote Now – Elect Miss Rheingold 1956!" *Kingston Daily Freeman*, September 19, 1955, 8; "She'll Do Alright as Miss Rheingold," *Paterson Morning Call*, December 29, 1959, 26.

⁸⁵ "TWA Stewardess Leads New York parade: Hijacking Heroine" *People More Tolerant on Security Checks*, *Orlando Sentinel*, September 22, 1985, 5.

⁸⁶ "Cornelia Schlierf Rom: Miss German-America 1978," German-American Steuben Parade New York, German-American Committee of Greater New York, accessed April 10, 2020, <http://germanparadenyc.org/cornelia-schlierf-rom-miss-german-america-1978/>; "Leadership," German-American Steuben Parade New York, German-American Committee of Greater New York, accessed April 10, 2020, <http://germanparadenyc.org/about-us/leadership/>; "Operating Committees," German-American

Though they may have been surprised at the rise of women within the parade hierarchy, the founders would have been pleased to see the event firmly entrenched within Gotham's ethnic heritage parading environment in the twenty-first century. To be sure, the Steuben parade has never approached the lofty participation numbers of the St. Patrick's Day and Columbus Day Parades, the contemporary versions of which are larger by at least a factor of three. At times, the Steuben parade even struggled to command the stage on its own day, as when the Korean parade celebrating North and South Korea's admission into the United Nations upstaged it in 1991. Nonetheless, those who shepherded the Steuben parade through its formative period secured its place on the civic calendar. Today, city officials regularly laud the parade as the best organized and most disciplined of the Manhattan's annual processions. If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, spin-offs inspired by New York's Steuben parade speak volumes. In addition to mini-Steuben parades in the Greater New York area, Chicagoans started marching annually in honor of von Steuben in 1965 and Philadelphians in 1971.⁸⁷

Steuben Parade New York, German-American Committee of Greater New York, accessed April 10, 2020, <http://germanparadenyc.org/about-us/operating-committees/>; "TWA Stewardess Leads New York parade: Hijacking Heroine" People More Tolerant on Security Checks," *Orlando Sentinel*, September 22, 1985, 5; "New York Report: Steuben parade," *Morristown Daily Record*, September 22, 1985, 13; Sara M. Evans, "Women's Liberation: Seeing the Revolution Clearly," *Feminist Studies* 41, no. 1 (2015): 140-47.

⁸⁷ Seth Harrison, "Locals Participate in NYC St. Patrick's Day Parade," *White Plains Journal News*, March 17, 2019, 16A; Thomas Tracy, "Have a Blarney Good Time at St. Pat's Parade," *New York Daily News*, March 16, 2019, 3; Ellen Moynihan and Larry McShane, "Generations March on Day of Irish Pride," *New York Daily News*, March 17, 2019, 6-7; "&4th Annual Columbus Day Parade," *New York Daily News*, October 5, 2018, 2; "Fifth Ave. Is Columbus Ave., At Least for a Day," *New York Daily News*, October 9, 2018, 14; Columbus Citizens Foundation, "The Annual Columbus Day Parade on Fifth Avenue, New York City," https://www.columbuscitizensfd.org/columbus-celebration/columbus_parade.html, accessed April 6, 2020; "Showers Interrupt Parade to Mark Steuben Day," *New York Times*, September 19, 1971, 79; "Steuben Parade Lures Thousands," *New York Times*, September 23, 1973, 54; German-American Fest, "About Us: Steuben Parade," <https://germanday.com/about-us/>, accessed April 9, 2020; "Von Steuben Day Held," *Chicago Tribune*, September 17, 1989, 3; "Steuben Parade Set for Saturday," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 24, 1971, 1; "Steuben Parade Is Today," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 22, 1984, B2. Contingents the Chicago and Philadelphia parades have marched in the parade's Continental Division in years past. German-American Steuben Parade Official Line-up, September 20, 2014, accessed April 13, 2020, <http://slidegur.com/doc/4479449/54th-annual---german-american-steuben-parade>. The event scheduled for September 2001 was the only time the Steuben parade has not marched up Fifth Avenue in the fall since 1958. Members of the parade committee honored the victims and marked the moment by joining Cardinal Edward Egan for an interdenominational memorial prayer service on the weekend that would have included the parade. Chairman William Hetzler spoke on behalf of the group: "We felt it was important to help our city and nation heal for all who are deeply affected by this catastrophe. All of the people who participated in our yearly parade are deeply missed." Rosalie Longo, "Respect for Terr Victims Put Before Two Parades," *Passaic Herald-News*, September 28, 2001, D7.

Playing Politics at the “Apolitical” Steuben Parade

Officially, the Steuben parade constitutes an apolitical space. Yet, the parade has been bound up in politics of all stripes since its inception. The event’s architects have always coveted explicit or even implicit support from elected officials or their plenipotentiaries. President Eisenhower provided an American flag for the inaugural event, Governor Nelson Rockefeller and Mayor Wagner were loyal attendees, then-former-Vice President Richard Nixon appeared at the post-parade dinner in 1963, and Susan Ford wooed votes for her father in 1976. For office seekers, the late September event proved to be an irresistible opportunity to earn free media just weeks before election day.⁸⁸

Schoeps, from the start, pitched the parade’s *Gemütlichkeit*, meaning cheer and good will, as an elixir strong enough to overcome the political rivalries and animus so common in Gotham’s political crucible. He had to muster all his diplomatic acumen to maintain this façade of armistice. In 1964, incumbent Kenneth Keating and challenger Robert Kennedy were locked in a bitter race to represent the Empire State in the U.S. Senate. Less than six weeks before New Yorkers headed to the polls, the two men shook hands and exchanged good-natured jibes as photographers snapped images that went viral in the old-school sense. Directly behind them, almost willing their amity, stood a smiling Schoeps. In 1982, Susan Chira of the *New York Times* was so struck by the sight of gubernatorial candidates Mario Cuomo and Lewis Lehrman engaging in convivial banter at the parade’s silver anniversary, she described

⁸⁸ “Mayor’s Big Sprint Catches Parade,” *New York Daily News*, September 20, 1959, 2C; “When Senate Opponents Meet,” *Paducah Sun-Democrat*, September 27, 1964, 1; “Fifth Ave. Parades Set Today and Tomorrow,” *New York Daily News*, September 30, 1961, C8; “When Opponents Meet,” *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, September 27, 1964, 1. Six weeks after Richard Nixon resigned from the presidency and two weeks removed from President Ford’s controversial pardon, the Steuben parade committee welcomed Nixon’s son-in-law, Edward F. Cox, to walk up Fifth avenue as an honored guest. “Parade and Festivities Mark the Day,” *New York Times*, September 24, 1974, 66. Mark Nevin, “Nixon Loyalists, Barry Goldwater, and Republican Support for President Nixon during Watergate,” *Journal of Policy History* 29, no. 3, (2017): 403, 422; Ken Gormley and David Shribman, “The Nixon Pardon at 40: Ford Looks Better Than Ever,” *Wall Street Journal*, September 6, 2014, A.15. Political support also took the form of congressional testimony extolling the parade’s virtues and trumpeting the importance of German American contributions to the American way of life. See Representative Joseph Addabbo speaking on *Steuben Day*, 113th Cong., Congressional Record 26623-26624 (September 25, 1967). Politicians usually opted for a “soft power” approach, meaning that they would show up, act interested, and cheer. Overt politicking seemed out of place, such as when Senator James Buckley used his appearance at the 1976 Steuben parade to blast his challenger, Daniel Patrick Moynihan. “Sen. Buckley Is Confident,” *Wellsville Daily Reporter* (NY), September 21, 1976, 4.

the event as “a time when New York politicians forget campaign clashes [amidst] German-Americans celebrat[ing] their heritage.”⁸⁹ Thus, despite isolated incidents of visible friction, such as the 1969 parade when Mayor Lindsay and his challengers grudgingly acknowledged one another in the reviewing stand, comity tended to hold. Call it political performativity.⁹⁰

Parade politicking never ceased. In 1999, then-real estate magnate Donald J. Trump, despite claiming Swedish ancestry for decades, embraced his German heritage as the Steuben parade’s honorary grand Marshal. Trump’s about-face coincided with him mulling a possible presidential run. The following year, Mayor Rudy Giuliani walked briskly up Fifth Avenue just one day after major cancer treatment to send a message of his personal and political virility. Gotham’s mainstream media declared the act a miracle, and Giuliani soaked it in, giving a triumphant post-parade press conference on Sauerkraut Boulevard flanked by New York Yankees owner, George Steinbrenner, the honorary grand marshal, and Congressman Rick Lazio, then in the final weeks of a U.S. Senate race against First Lady Hillary Clinton. The more the politicians used the Steuben parade to amplify their message, the more the parade gained notoriety.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Susan Chira, “Political Foes Join Hands at Steuben Day Parade,” *New York Times*, September 26, 1982, 40.

⁹⁰ “When Senate Opponents Meet,” *Racine Journal-Times Sunday Bulletin*, September 27, 1964, 1; “Opponents Meet,” *Lake Charles American-Press*, September 28, 1964, 5; Paul L. Montgomery, “Politicians Abound as 13,000 March in 12th Steuben Parade,” *New York Times*, September 21, 1969, 1; Susan Chira, “Political Foes Join Hands at Steuben Day Parade,” *New York Times*, September 26, 1982, 40.

⁹¹ “Parade Set Today by German Groups, New York Times,” September 20, 1958, 21; Philip Benjamin, “9,000 March Here to Honor Steuben: Spirit Is Gay Despite Gray Skies at 5th Ave. Parade of German-Americans,” *New York Times*, September 21, 1958, 85; “Sees 200,000 at March at Von Steuben,” *New York Daily News*, August 30, 1959, 1; “5th Ave. Parades Set Today and Tomorrow,” *New York Daily News*, September 30, 1961, C8; “Steuben Day Parade Brings Out Politicos,” *New York Daily News*, September 20, 1970, 28; “Parade and Festivities Mark the Day,” *New York Times*, September 24, 1974, 66; Pranay Gupte, “Miss Ford Likes Steuben Parade, Sees President Doing Well Here,” *New York Times*, September 19, 1976, 36; “NBC Faces Roker Storm Clouds,” *New York Post*, March 4, 1999, 9; “German-American Steuben Parade,” *White Plains Journal News*, September 17, 1999, 4; Erika Martinez, “A Deutsch Treat for Parade-Goers,” *New York Post*, September 19, 1999, 20; Richard Cohen, “The Donald for President? It Looks Like America Really Is a Country Where Anything Can Happen,” *New York Post*, September 24, 1999, 31; Andrea Bernstein, *American Oligarchs: The Kushners, the Trumps, and the Marriage of Money and Power* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2020), 13-14, 54-61; Oscar Rickett, “Trump Keeps Saying His Father Was Born in Germany – He Wasn’t,” *The Guardian*, July 17, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jul/17/trump-keeps-saying-his-father-was-born-in-germany-he-wasnt>, accessed March 20, 2020; Michael O. Allen and Don Singleton, “Giuliani Marches On, A Day Out of Hospital,” *New York Daily News*, September 17, 2000, 4; “Mayor Called ‘Amazing’ in 24-Block March,” *Poughkeepsie Journal*, September 17, 2000, 4A; “Mayor Marches in Parade After Cancer Treatment,” *The Desert Sun*, September 17, 2000, 2. Reportedly, Clinton endured a barrage of jeers, taunts, and critical signs when she appeared at the 2000 St. Patrick’s parade. It is unclear whether this experience kept her away from the Steuben parade six months later, or whether the parade committee

Indeed, less than a decade after the parade's revitalization, parade officials' reaction to an apparent snub by President Johnson in 1964 puts to rest any notion that the parade eschews politics. Schoeps characterized Johnson's decision not to accept an invitation to serve as honorary grand marshal as an offense against an ethnic group that had given so much to "building our great country."⁹² He opined that "[t]he twenty million German Americans are sick and tired of being treated like second-class citizens," apparently casting official respect for ethnic identity as an inviolable right of American citizenship.⁹³ Local media offered no critique of this remark, which came just two months after Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act seeking to mitigate the second-class citizenship of African Americans. Schoeps even upped the ante by expressing his intent to invite Senator Barry Goldwater, a staunch opponent of the Civil Rights Act and Johnson's opponent in the pending election, to wear the blue sash of the Steuben parade's honored guests. His comments seemed to prefigure the rise of white ethnic angst in the late sixties and early seventies, a movement that simultaneously borrowed from and criticized the black liberation movement and other aspects of identity politics.⁹⁴

The Steuben parade's political nature extends to its fundamental interventions. The parade's organizers wanted to challenge claims that Germans had disappeared into undifferentiated Americanness, that the melting pot's assimilative powers had eradicated German Americans' pretensions to distinctive cultural identities. German New Yorkers even sought to rehabilitate claims of German ethnic exceptionalism, a viewpoint compromised by the World Wars, and made more delicate in an environment that favored multiculturalism so long as it served the notion of American

failed to invite her. Frank Lombardi and Joel Siegel, "Hil on March" Snow Way Dueling Pols Would Miss St. Pat's," *New York Daily News*, March 18, 2000, 3.

⁹² "Yorkville to March Despite LBJ Snub," *New York Daily News*, August 30, 1964, 1.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Arthur Mulligan, "Yorkville to March In Spite of LBJ Snub," *New York Daily News*, August 30, 1964, 1; Joni Hersch and Jennifer Bennett Shinall, "Fifty Years Later: The Legacy of the Civil Rights Act of 1964," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 34, no. 2 (2015): 431. In 1968, despite Schoeps's public frustration four years earlier, or, perhaps because of it, LBJ sent George McGhee, former Ambassador to West Germany, to deliver a message of support for German Americans. McGhee read Johnson's statement – "to all Americans of German descent who have done so much to build the American heritage" – from a platform on East 86th Street. "Gemultichkeit and Martial Music," *New York Times*, September 22, 1968, 24.

exceptionalism. The event's choreographers felt the need to restore German New York's reputation tainted by the Bund's connections to Yorkville and Germany's war crimes during the Second World War. To marry these objectives the parade has never strayed from wrapping nationalistic claims and symbols around ethnic images. Within its symbolic and rhetorical space, the parade privileges the importance of law enforcement and military might. The early parades adhered to the longstanding German American practice of placing military veterans at the front of the procession. Starting in earnest in 1963, city police officers and fire fighters joined their military brethren, as the founders strove to visibly connect the event with the city's public servants. Today, the Grand Council of Steuben Societies in Civil Service, comprising German Americans from the NYPD, FDNY and other municipal agencies, commands an exulted place in the lead division. While this placement demonstrates allegiance to the founders' vision of infusing the event with the trappings of patriotism, it also suggests contemporary planners' desire to reinforce politically conservative messages about American identity and values.⁹⁵

Flags and floats supplement the parade's pursuit of the patriotic imperative. The founders established a practice of placing the Stars and Stripes at the front and rear of each division, and mandated that where an American flag appeared with the banner of any other nation, the former be given preferential placement on the righthand side. Mini-American and German flags abound at today's parade, with organizers distributing them by the tens of thousands to participants and observers. The symbolism of co-mingled flags is ubiquitous in parade literature and on trinkets. Additionally, floats

⁹⁵ "Detailed Program of the Steuben Parade," *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, September 15, 1963, 6D; "Ninth Annual Steuben Parade," (Advertisement by The Blue Swan), *Hackensack Record*, September 15, 1966, 24; Ramaswami Mahalingam, "Introduction," in *Cultural Psychology of Immigrants*, edited by Ramaswami Mahalingam (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006), 3. Characterizing these goals as a balancing act is akin to the Bodnarian conception of ethnic celebrations in *Remaking America*. However, it is difficult to fit the Steuben parade neatly into Bodnar's categories of official and vernacular commemorative practices. The parade's organizers intended to push against dominant narratives, which had formed in large part due to state power and influence but operated within the bounds of what was acceptable and palatable. Thus, the parade sits between official and vernacular expression. Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 13-20. For another perspective, see Orm Øverland, who writes: "In the United States, [ethnic] celebration serve to bolster both nationalism and ethnicity. The ethnicity that is celebrated has European roots but has taken on American characteristics. The nationalism that is confirmed and celebrated is unabashedly American. There is nothing foreign about such celebration." Orm Øverland, *Immigrant Minds, American Identities*, 2.

visually affirm the “Americanness” of this ethnic celebration, oftentimes through martial-themed tableaux. In addition to the obligatory von Steuben at Valley Forge scene, floats placing German Americans squarely in the center of the American story have depicted Mary Ludwig Hays, the purported inspiration for the Molly Pitcher myth; Franz Sigel the Civil War general who served as the grand marshal of New York’s 1871 Peace parade; German-born politician and statesman Carl Schurz accompanying Abraham Lincoln; and Wernher von Braun’s contributions to America overtaking the Soviet Union in the space race.⁹⁶

At ground level on parade day, rhetoric bearing the mark of the patriotic imperative is legion. German bands play tunes from the American patriotic cannon and German tourists enthusiastically waive American flags as they shout encouragement to marchers. Based on informal interviews conducted in 2018 and 2019, organizations in the Metropolitan Division situate German American contributions within the frame of American exceptionalism with remarkable consistency, as if summoning universally accepted talking points. Josephine Frederick of Queens, a parade spectator, drove the point home in 1982 as she addressed a reporter’s questions. Frederick admitted her affinity for German culture despite her claims of Scotch-Irish and Welsh ancestry. Yet, when asked why she attended the Steuben parade, Frederick declared that it “makes me feel real American.” In other words, practicing German heritage finds meaning and acceptability when refracted through the prism of American dominance and hegemony. In this way, the event offers a broader appeal beyond the history of the ethnic community it celebrates.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Ibid.; Despite the prevalence of martial scenes, floats rarely veer into contemporary issues. However, in 1965, Marianna Rossi Decker, an influential member of the New Jersey contingent, designed a float paying patriotic homage to America’s war in Vietnam. “Von Steuben Day Proclaimed,” *Paterson News* (NJ) September 10, 1966, 13; “Wayne Author, Artist to Speak at Annual Butler PTA Book Fair,” *The Herald-News* (NJ), November 1, 1966, 23. In later years, Rossi Decker was a staunch supporter of President Nixon. “Nixon Sends Personal Note to Mrs. Decker,” *Paterson News* (NJ) July 19, 1974, 35.

⁹⁷ Susan Chira, “Political Foes Join Hands at Steuben Day Parade,” *New York Times*, September 26, 1982, 40. The Reagan administration used the occasion of the so-called German-American Tricentennial in 1983, commemorating the 300th anniversary of the first German-speaking settlement in colonial America (Germantown, PA) by a group of Mennonite families, to promote a similar kind of “feeling real American” through recollections of European immigration. U.S. President, Proclamation 5014, “Ronald W. Reagan -- Tricentennial Anniversary Year of German Settlement in America,” 96 Stat. 2603, (January 20, 1983): 1541-42, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-97/pdf/STATUTE-97-Pg1541.pdf>. Four years

Problematically, the patriotic imperative pumps oxygen into Euro-Americans' propensity for juxtaposing their ancestors' migration with post-1965 migration patterns. When asked how the Steuben parade might speak to contemporary immigration issues, one parade committee member commented that "most of the people in this group . . . would not be particularly concerned about that current immigration situation because they [or their ancestors] came through the legal system."⁹⁸ Parade participants habitually describe German migrants as the quintessential Americans because they attained middle-class status, transcended their ethnic enclaves, and culturally assimilated with exceptional efficiency and thoroughness. The messages, whether implicitly or explicitly delivered, were clear: Germans represented an indispensable ethnic group and therefore fit neatly within the "good immigration" paradigm; whereas, recent migrants, especially Latinos, constituted "bad" immigrants, because of the reported unwillingness to learn English and tendency to cling to ethnic enclaves. According to this logic, Germans' ability to earn inclusion as full-fledged Americans underscores the need to exclude those who fail to follow the same path.⁹⁹

Ethnic Identity and Belonging at the Steuben Parade

Paradoxically, the Steuben parade presents German American identity as expansive and inclusive as well as narrow and exclusive. In the former category stands the many ways the Steuben parade's organizers created a heritage spectacle that, to a notable degree, championed a transnational ethos. The parade's founders understood their ethnic identity in transnational terms. They read the *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, which not only delivered news in the German tongue, but covered German

later, in his proclamation of German Day, Reagan lauded German Americans by saying that "[f]ew people have blended so completely into the multicultural tapestry of American society and yet made such singular economic, political, social, scientific, and cultural contributions to the growth and success of these United States." U.S. President, Proclamation 5719, "Ronald W. Reagan, German-American Day, 1987," 101 STAT. 2211 (October 2, 1987): 2210-11, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-101/pdf/STATUTE-101-Pg2211.pdf>,; Ron Alexander, "German-Americans Mark Tricentennial, *New York Times*, August 15, 1983, B7; James Harney and Paul Meskil, "Wir Lieben a Parade," *New York Daily News*, September 25, 1983, C5.

⁹⁸ Interview, Steuben Parade Official, September 15, 2018.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

geopolitics in the postwar and Cold War contexts. Moreover, they had relationships with businesses in Ridgewood and Yorkville, such as Bremen House, tied to trade networks with the Heimat. They kept in contact with family abroad and some even traveled to West Germany. It follows, therefore, that these leaders designed an event capable of reflecting a *Denkweise*, or mindset, that transcended local, regional, and national confines.¹⁰⁰

Officials from the Federal Republic of Germany soon reciprocated this transnational approach. Doing so provided a risk-free platform for cultural diplomacy and facetime with American politicians and opinion leaders, all just blocks away from the UN. Parade organizers relished visits from German officials as another means to grab headlines and draw crowds. Thus, an enduring symbiosis emerged. At the second Steuben parade, Wilhelm Grewe, the West German ambassador to the U.S. and renowned expert in international law, became the first of many foreign dignitaries to grace the reviewing stand. In 1962, Willy Brandt agreed to don the blue sash of the Steuben parade's Honorary Grand Marshal, in what constituted the most consequential visit by a German official in the event's six-decade long history.¹⁰¹ East Germany had started the hasty building of what would morph into the Berlin Wall just one year earlier. As Brandt visited New York, the East Germans were perfecting their edifice. With his city encircled, the West Berlin mayor personified the frontline of the Cold War and the urgent need for West Germany and the U.S. to maintain solid relations. The bands played multiple Berlin-themed pieces

¹⁰⁰ According to Marta Anico and Elsa Peralta, "heritage has everything to do with identity," but "identify is not just identification: it is also the meaning ascribed to similarity and difference." Marta Anico and Elsa Peralta, "Introduction," 1. See also Yudhishtir Raj Isar, Dacia Viejo-Rose, and Helmut Anheier, "Introduction," in *Heritage, Memory & Identity*, edited by Helmut Anheier and Yudhishtir Raj Isar (London: Sage Publications, 2011), 5-12.

¹⁰¹ A partial list of German politicians the parade committee has received as honored guests includes: Fritz Vomfelde, the Mayor of Düsseldorf (1961); Gerhard Schröder, then West Germany's Foreign Minister and later Chancellor of the reunified Federal Republic of Germany (1963); Max Adenauer, Lord Mayor of Cologne and son of West Germany's first Chancellor (1965); Karl Carstens, President of West Germany (1969); Lothar Späth, Minister President of Baden-Württemberg (1979); Karl Ludwig Wagner, Minister President of Rheinland-Pfalz (1990); Wolfgang Ischinger, German Ambassador (2005); and Klaus Wowereit, former Mayor of Berlin (2015). "Grand Marshals," German-American Committee of Greater New York, German-American Steuben Parade New York, accessed April 6, 2020, <http://germanparadenyc.org/about-the-parade/grand-marshals/>. Brandt's agreement to receive the honor and attend the parade had to gratify the organizers. During his first visits to Gotham in the fifties, Brandt declined to tour Yorkville, wishing instead to see the Lower East Side. "I can see Germans at home," he reportedly said. "Take me to the Lower East Side because it is a long time since I have met many Jews," Leonard Lyons, "Pay to Order of a Beggar," *Indianapolis News*, April 27, 1965, 15.

for the honored guest, including “It Was in Schöneberg,” a tribute to West Berlin’s post-partition city hall. Standing at a podium on East 86th Street between Second and Third Avenues, Brandt told those assembled that “[j]ust as hundreds of thousands of Germans have come to America in quest of freedom, so thousands of Americans are in Germany today to defend freedom.”¹⁰² His twin messages – gratitude to the American military and an homage to America’s self-image as the land of immigration – struck a melodious chord for the Steuben parade crowd.¹⁰³

The parade also connects people at the grassroots level, creating, over time, an imagined heritage community that transcends national borders.¹⁰⁴ In 1977, Peter Lorenz, president of West Berlin’s House of Representatives, traveled to the Steuben parade bearing gifts. His fellow Berliners had raised \$600,000 to assist New Yorkers adversely affected by historically frigid temperatures the previous winter. A more common site are the bands and clubs that travel from Germany and Austria to New York. These groups not only add sound and color to the parade, they participate in a fruitful cultural exchange. The visitors spend time with parade organizers and supporters at the pre-parade gala as well as the after-party in Central Park. Typically, the groups schedule ample time to visit cultural and historical sites in a trip, that for many, is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Some have even become fixtures. For example, the Karneval and Fastnacht groups from Cologne, the German city in the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia, punctuate the parade. With their festooned costumes and festive attitudes, they command attention, infusing the event with unrivaled color and spectacle. Participants are not the only

¹⁰² David Binder, “Brandt, Rockefeller and Wagner Lead Steuben March: Steuben Parade Is led By Brandt,” *New York Times*, September 30, 1962, 1.

¹⁰³ Ibid; “Grand Marshals,” German-American Committee of Greater New York, German-American Steuben Parade New York, accessed April 6, 2020, <http://germanparadenyc.org/about-the-parade/grand-marshals/>. In 2009, Steuben parade officials demonstrated the two-way flow of international parade diplomacy. Lars Halter, parade chairman, and Herb Seeff, vice-chairman, met with German Chancellor Angela Merkel at an awards dinner in Berlin. Chancellor Merkel was reportedly delighted to hear about the parade’s progress, generating hope among the event’s leadership that she might soon wear the blue sash. To date, Chancellor Merkel has declined invitations to do so. “Steuben Parade Meets German Chancellor Merkel,” German-American Steuben Parade of New York, German-American Committee of Greater New York, June 2009, accessed April 15, 2019, www.ajns.com/old-websites/www.germanparadenyc.org/news18.html.

¹⁰⁴ The term ‘imagined heritage community’ is an adaptation of Benedict Anderson’s meta-concept of “imagined communities.” Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983).

ones to make the overseas journey, however, as tour companies now offer packages to German nationals centered around the parade.¹⁰⁵

Willie Schoeps's 1984 journey to the Heimat exemplifies the parade's ability to facilitate highly personalized forms of transnationalism. Although not his first return to Germany, this trip was special in many ways for the seventy-year-old parade founder. Manfred Ludwig, a German newspaper editor and publisher, arranged for Schoeps to meet with public officials and dignitaries in Bonn, Cologne, Düsseldorf, and Munich, in the mold of a high-ranking ambassador. The one-time auto mechanic and beer salesman even commanded an audience with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl. The trip culminated in a special reception in Warendorf, a city in the Rhein-Westphalia region, where Schoeps received a medal recognizing his use of ethnic heritage to foster international relations. The ceremony in Warendorf held special significance in that it represented a homecoming, or at least as close to one as a divided Germany could muster. As Schoeps explained at the time, "Warendorf practically adopted that part of Germany where I came from, just like a godmother."¹⁰⁶ He added, "I'd never visit Silesia now; there's no going back."¹⁰⁷ The concept of "home" is complicated. "To me 'home' means being with the

¹⁰⁵ "12,000 March in Steuben Parade," *New York Times*, September 18, 1977, 44; Merican Steubenprade, "Steubenparade in New York – Die Parade der Deutsch-Amerikanischen Freundschaft," accessed August 14, 2018, <http://www.steubenparade.de/>; Presently, the parade might receive more news coverage in Germany than in the U.S. Patrick Bahners, "The German Weekend of New York," *Frankfurter Allgemeine (Blog)*, September 13, 2013, accessed April 12, 2020, <https://blogs.faz.net/central/2013/09/23/deutsche-wochenende-von-new-york-241/>; Britta Schmitz, "German-American Steuben parade 2015," *Europa Newswire*, September 10, 2015, accessed March 21, 2020, europanewswire.com/german-american-steuben-parade-2015/; Christina Horsten, "German Traditions on Show in New York for Steuben parade," *DPA International*, September 21, 2019. In 2018, *Our Town*, a weekly covering life on the Upper East Side, completely ignored the parade. *Our Town*, Week of September 13-19, 2018. The 2017 visit of Spielmannszug Bernburg, a band based in Magdeburg, Germany, the hometown of Baron von Steuben, provides firsthand insight into these visits. The 60th Steuben parade marked the Bernburgers' lone appearance at the event to date, fulfilling a longtime dream. In addition to marching up Fifth Avenue, the Bernburgers played for the Mayor DiBlasio at Foley Square, toured the Statue of Liberty and "One World Observatory," and, in their own words, "plunged into the hustle and bustle of the world-famous Times Square." "Bernburger Spielmannszug Realizes Its American Dream," Spielmannszug Bernburger 1902 e.V., September 19, 2017, <https://www.spielmannszug-bernburg.de/rueckblick2017.php>. In 2014, Kristina Kren played homage to these groups by traveling to Cologne to attend Karneval. Once there, she and her mother stayed with Frau Hinz just outside the city. As Kren put it, "[t]his very welcoming woman has many connections to the German American Steuben Parade in New York [having] hosted over thirty past Queens of the Steuben Parade." "As Karneval Was Just Recently Celebrated in Germany our Former Miss German America, Kristina Kren, Looks Back on Her Trip to Cologne Last March," German-American Steuben Parade of New York, German-American Committee of Greater New York, accessed April 11, 2020, <http://www.ajns.com/old%20websites/www.germanparadenyc.org/index.html>.

¹⁰⁶ William Neugebauer, "A Way to Go Home Again," *New York Daily News*, June 4, 1984, XQ6.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

people of Silesia,” even if outside the Heimat, Schoeps observed.¹⁰⁸ No one was better prepared to find a home within a diasporic community than the Steuben parade’s founder.¹⁰⁹

While the Steuben parade committee embraced its role as an informal state department, it did nothing to improve relations between Jewish and non-Jewish German Americans closer to home. The trials of the 1930s – the Spanknöbel-led purge of German Jews from local vereins, the dueling boycotts, and the Bund mayhem – had erected symbolic walls around German American identity to the exclusion of Jews. Ridgewood and Yorkville, the two neighborhoods intertwined in the Steuben parade’s history, carried reputations as sites closely associated with harboring antisemitism in the prewar period. In the case of Yorkville, the reputational damage felt permanent and conflict seemed unending. In 1950, a group of Jewish students publicly decried Yorkville-based German American organizations for sponsoring the German national soccer team’s visit to New York. The protesters’ literature framed Yorkville as “the center of Nazi intrigue in this country.”¹¹⁰ During the early sixties, as the Steuben parade ascended in popularity, neo-Nazis attempted to gain attention by spewing bigoted messages from Yorkville’s streets. In 1978, the Steuben parade itself became a rhetorical battleground for collectives on both sides of this issue. One group distributed flyers bearing so-called “anti-German slogans” while the other dropped antisemitic leaflets. Leaders of the city’s German American and Jewish organizations, the Steuben parade committee among them, convened to discuss the incident. At the summit’s conclusion, they issued a joint statement condemning the divisive messages and pledging to work toward greater cooperation and coordination. This moment of possibility, however, failed to materially alter images of German identity at the Steuben parade. Participants maintained the ritual of

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.; Interview with Ronald Schoeps; Andrew Demshuk, *The Lost German East: Forced Migration and the Politics of Memory, 1945-1970* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 194-95; Roel Jennissen, *Ethnic Migration in Central and Eastern Europe: Its Historical Background and Contemporary Flows*, *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 11, no. 2 (2011): 256-57. Schoeps had developed a habit of collecting awards for his work. Just a year prior, the Federal Republic of Germany bestowed upon him its highest civilian honor, the Commander’s Cross of the Order of Merit. Neugebauer, “A Way to Go Home Again.”

¹¹⁰ “N.Y. Germans and Jews Unite,” *The New York Jewish Week*, October 8, 1978, 16.

gathering for a pre-parade mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral, tacitly endorsing a Christianized image of German identity. Further, not one group identifying as German American Jews marched up Fifth Avenue in late September during the twentieth century.¹¹¹

Whether willful or negligent, this failure narrowed the definition of German American and impoverished some of the ethnic heritage experience of the Steuben parade. In 2003, William Hetzler, parade chairman, seemed ready to wade into these troubled waters. He explained to *Newsday* that the Steuben parade intended "to showcase the contributions and accomplishments of Germans and their ancestors, including German-Jewish."¹¹² By publicly invoking German Jews, Hetzler, the one-time owner of a local chain of bakeries and delis in Queens, implicitly, if vaguely, recalled Germany's dark history. Unlike prior parade spokesmen, who avoided the issue of German Jewry altogether, Hetzler stated unequivocally that "[m]y mission is to heal those wounds."¹¹³

Yet, not until 2010 did a German Jewish group, led by Rick Landman, officially enter the Steuben parade. In that same year, Dr. Ruth Westheimer, noted sex therapist and Holocaust survivor, served as the parade's Honorary Grand Marshal. Landman's German Jewish paternal grandparents had immigrated to the United States after surviving the Shoah, a personal history that profoundly shaped his views on ethnic identity and heritage. Writing in 2013, after marching in his fourth Steuben parade, Landman expressed "mixed emotions" about the effort to reconcile German Jews and this heritage

¹¹¹ "Roosevelt Drawn into Nazi Fight Here by Celler," *New York Daily News*, July 31, 1935, 2; "F.D.R. Supports Jews, Anti-Nazi Crowd Assured," *New York Daily News*, July 31, 1935, 11; 'Yorkville Flags to Fly Against Neo-Nazi Rally,' *New York Daily News*, May 25, 1963, 18; "No Sale in Yorkville," *New York Daily News*, May 26, 1963, 72; Edward O'Neill, "City Hall," *New York Daily News*, June 3, 1963, 4; "Hate for Sale," letter to the editor, *New York Daily News*, May 30, 1963, 29; "N.Y. Germans and Jews Unite," *The New York Jewish Week*, October 8, 1978, 16. Elie Wiesel, Holocaust survivor and author, also used Yorkville as a powerful setting from which to deliver a political message. In 1974, he delivered a speech at Carl Schurz Park warning against the treatment of Jews in the Soviet Union at a rally entitled "One Torah, One People." Glenn Fowler, "3 Events Show City's Ethnic Diversity," *New York Times*, October 7, 1974, 37. In *Ambiguous Relations: The American Jewish Community and Germany Since 1945*, Shlomo Shafir alleged that in 1977, George Pape, then a co-chairman of the Steuben parade, criticized plans to add the Holocaust as a mandatory topic in New York City's history curriculum. Shafir even called Pape a Holocaust skeptic if not denier. Shlomo Shafir, *Ambiguous Relations: The American Jewish Community and Germany Since 1945* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999), 314.

¹¹² Marc Ferris, "German Heritage on Display at Steuben Parade," *Newsday*, September 18, 2003, A41.

¹¹³ Ibid.

parade. “When I had the idea,” he said, “I wondered if this mere act could be considered insensitive to some Jews.”¹¹⁴ Ultimately, Landman concluded that parading provided a path to reclaim the legacy of German Jewish contributions to Germany and America, and to reframe German American identity comprehensively. Over the next decade, Landman struggled to convince others to join this cause. Most cited Sabbath restrictions or simply seemed bemused at the invitation. Even those who agreed tended to cancel prior to the parade. As a result, the German Jewish contingent usually topped out at four marchers. In the last two parades, no group participated in the parade under the banner of German Jewry. Three-quarters of a century after World War II and more than eighty years removed from the Bund’s Yorkville days, the rupture between German Jewish and non-Jewish identities remains unresolved, raising questions about the capacity of ethnic heritage celebrations to heal deep and traumatic historical wounds.¹¹⁵

Un-placing the Steuben Parade

The Steuben parade, as a heritage practice, has had a profound effect on the link between ethnic identity and place. For more than forty years, the parade route turned east into Yorkville along 86th Street. Crowds amassed on both sides of the German Broadway to witness the parade’s conclusion. Although this final leg was brief, it provided yearly therapy to an ailing German Yorkville. New York’s mainstream press often conflated the parade and the German neighborhood, ensuring the latter an annual moment to bask in the spotlight of positive press coverage. Originally, everyone descended on Yorkville’s German- and Austrian-themed bars and restaurants and their immediate environs for a post-

¹¹⁴ Rick Landman, “Is It Too Soon for a Jewish Contingent in the Steuben Parade,” *Infotruer.com*, September 21, 2013, <http://www.infotrue.com/vonsteuben.html>, accessed February 18, 2020.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. According to the Steuben parade’s website, “The Committee recognized Dr. Westheimer’s contributions to America but also her enduring love for her homeland Germany, from which she had to flee during the Nazi era.” “Grand Marshals,” German-American Committee of Greater New York, German-American Steuben Parade New York, accessed April 6, 2020, <http://germanparadenyc.org/about-the-parade/grand-marshals/>. Three years earlier, in 2007, Dr. Henry Kissinger, became the first German Jewish American to accept an invitation to be the parade’s grand marshal. In 1969, some reports claimed Dr. Kissinger would appear at the parade as President Nixon’s representative, but it is unclear whether he attended the event. Program of the 60th German-American Steuben Parade: Celebrating 60 Years: New York City – 2017, “History of the Parade: reigning Queens, Grand Marshals and Guests of Honor”; “Steuben Parade Saturday in N.Y.,” *Passaic Herald-News*, September 17, 1969, 6.

parade festival that blurred the lines between indoor and outdoor space. For years, Yorkville's real and imagined connections to the Steuben parade buoyed its tenuous reign as the symbolic capital of German New York.¹¹⁶

In the early sixties, however, the parade committee opted to gather at the Biltmore Hotel in midtown Manhattan, leaving the plebeians to drink, eat, and sing in Yorkville. On one hand, this act expanded German New York's leaders' opportunities to commune with the parade's honored guests. On the other hand, it created a small, class-based crack between the parade's elites and Yorkville. Although the Yorkville post-parade festival continued for the remainder of the twentieth century, some officials vividly recall the neighborhood's slide during the Gimbels' years. Yorkville's disappearing ethnic venues and sullied reputation, caused in part by increased crime, widened the tear. The fissure became a permanent chasm in 2001, due to the city's requirement that all Fifth Avenue parades disband at the corner of East 86th Street. No longer would the parade's sights and sounds saturate Yorkville.¹¹⁷

Two decades after the route change, parade officials, almost without exception, continue to proclaim Yorkville's importance to the event. One commented that the parade "still brings [people] to the place that really was the German area even if it isn't German anymore."¹¹⁸ Another stressed the need to ensure the parade continues to terminate at 86th Street "to at least end in the German part."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Arthur Mulligan, "Yorkville to March in Spite of LBJ Snub," *New York Daily News*, August 30, 1964, 1

¹¹⁷ "45,000 March in Steuben Parade Today," *New York Daily News*, September 21, 1963, 18; "Etc.," *White Plains Journal News*, August 29, 2002, 17. The city's decision seemed motivated by traffic concerns. Nonetheless, it is not uncommon to hear people claim that the East 86th Street leg was the victim of problems at the Puerto Rican parade. Such claims usually depict the Puerto Rican parade, which began in 1958 – the same year the Steubenites first marched – as being unruly and dangerous. The logic follows that these problems ruined things for the other ethnic groups that march on Fifth Avenue. To be sure, in 2000, several women alleged that they were assaulted by young men in Central Park near the Puerto Rican Day parade. Consequently, they subsequently sued the city for insufficient security. However, there seems to be no basis for holding the parade or its officials responsible for this malfeasance and no evidence of a connection between the alleged assaults and city's move to end the East 86th Street section of the Steuben parade. The persistent mythology surrounding the Puerto Rican parade's impact on German New Yorkers raises concerns about race-based constructions of ethnic identity and "race scapegoating" within New York's multicultural environment. "Puerto Rican Day Parade: Fewer Marchers, More Police," *White Plains Journal News*, June 9, 2001, 3; "Parade Attacks Result in \$960M Lawsuit Against NYC: Police Charged with Failing to Protect Women from Assaults," *White Plains Journal News*, June 9, 2001, 3; Alice McQuillan and Corky Siemaszko, "Rampage in the Park: Most Wanted: Cops Eye Video to ID Attackers," *New York Daily News*, June 15, 2000, 3; "Put the Blame Where It Belongs," June 16, 2000, *New York Daily News*, 58.

¹¹⁸ Interview, Steuben Parade Official, September 15, 2018.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

Still another conjectured that parading close to Yorkville might inspire preservation of the handful of German American spaces left there. Notwithstanding these thoughts, today's parade contains few elements capable of reminding participants or spectators about Yorkville's one-time centrality to the Steuben parade story. Moreover, instead of turning right into Yorkville after the parade, the crowd turns in the opposite direction to enter Central Park for a carefully packaged, commercialized, and stereotypical Oktoberfest sponsored by German brewers such as Hofbräu München and Spaten. While fun, the event follows the standard Oktoberfest script: beer lines, beer tents, and stein holding contests, known as *Masskrugstemmen*. One feels like it could happen anywhere, except, of course, Yorkville.¹²⁰

The Steuben parade appears to stand on solid ground in 2020, despite its one-year hiatus caused by the pandemic. Most of its rituals, some with long pedigrees and others created in the parade's founding period, continue, offering a sense of stability. While not one of the city's mega-events, it still draws an impressive crowd. Transnationalism has become the Steuben parade's calling card and its most newsworthy feature. Nevertheless, something has been lost over time. The parade no longer reveals much about local history. Marta Anico and Elsa Peralta have noted the potential for heritage practices to provide "material and symbolic support" for the kinds of narratives that shape identity. Of course, place is a significant element of individual and group identity. Thus, the parade's erasure of Yorkville, the one-time heart of Gotham's German community, from the story it tells is an important development raising questions about the co-existence of history, heritage, and place. For a time, Yorkville acted as a hinge between these two different ways of recalling the past. German

¹²⁰ "60th Annual German-American Steuben Parade of NYC, Press Kit," German-American Committee of Greater New York, September 16, 2017, accessed on August 17, 2019, <http://germanparadenyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/60th-Annual-German-American-Steuben-Parade-Press-Kit.pdf>; Joshua Barone, *New York Times*, September 18, 2015, C29. In a promotional pamphlet prepared for potential overseas participants, the parade committee conveys only a brief message about the history of German New York: "Once a year, German-Americans celebrate their history and friendship between the two countries in New York. On the third Saturday in September, they meet for the German-American Steuben Parade on the world-famous Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. Along the beautiful Central Park, a spectacular and colorful parade moves just under two kilometers up the city to 86th Street, which used to be the center of German culture in New York" (translated from German), "Informationen für Vereine: Herzlich Willkommen zur German-American Steuben Parade of New York City," German-American Steuben Parade.

Yorkville's material disintegration corroded that hinge. The result is an "un-placed" ethnic heritage event, meaning a public facing celebration no longer significantly grounded in a place, and firmly embracing the "placeless-ness" of late capitalism. Whether this result is lamentable, liberating, or a little bit of both is in the eye of the marcher.¹²¹

¹²¹ The parade committee put together a "virtual parade" that combined interviews, messages, a footage from prior events to continue the Steuben parade's tradition. The committee made this compilation available on September 19, 2020 through its website. 63RD German-American Steuben Parade, September 19, 2020, https://totalwebcasting.com/view/?func=VOFF&id=twclient&date=2020-09-19&seq=1&fbclid=IwAR37a40Gk8yD4OhVDBxvEuHO4Hk51TqQBTatVfZllko6dwxcOeb_0tvNqOw. It is worth noting that the two commercial concerns most often cited as that which remains of German Yorkville – Schaller & Weber and the Heidelberg – have participated in the parade from time to time, either by sponsoring floats or operating a food tent at the Oktoberfest. See German-American Steuben parade Official Line-up, September 20, 2014, accessed April 13, 2020, <http://slidegur.com/doc/4479449/54th-annual---german-american-steuben-parade>.

CHAPTER 7
HOUSING HERITAGE: THE MAGYAR HÁZ AND HUNGARIAN NEW YORK'S QUEST FOR AN ETHNIC HEADQUARTERS

"The dead have nothing except the memory they've left."

FERENC MOLNÁR

As I walked briskly down East 82nd Street to meet a leader of the Hungarian American community, my first sight of the place stopped me cold. There stood a federal style building with its brick edifice draped in thick coats of red paint. The Hungarian coat of arms and a sign proclaiming "MAGYAR HÁZ" adorned the exterior. Large American and Hungarian flags reached out toward the street. I was intrigued. I entered the unlocked entrance after knocking yielded no response. Soon I came upon a group of older men and women engaged in an afternoon card game. My insufficient Hungarian made the scene more awkward than necessary and feelings of self-consciousness and embarrassment quickly surfaced. My first moments in the Magyar Ház had me questioning whether I could accurately interpret, let alone convey, Hungarian Yorkville's story.

Viktor Fischer, the person I had come to meet, saved me from my moment of panic and doubt. This respected member of Gotham's Hungarian community inquired about my background and showed interest in my status as a lapsed Hungarian. He is the kind of person who asks questions to understand not to judge. Fischer described his family's harrowing journey from post-WW II Hungary to Germany and then to the United States. He painted a vivid portrait of Hungarian Yorkville circa 1948 through the eyes of a teenager. Most importantly, Fischer stressed the urgency of chronicling the ethnic enclave's past. At any point in this meeting, he could have politely observed that my linguistic shortcomings and outsider status made me a poor fit for the challenge at hand. Instead, by pledging his support and offering his help he gave me the gift of trust. After we parted ways, I turned back to gaze upon the Magyar Ház, pondering the humbling yet inspiring nature of my first visit. Every person associated with Hungarian Yorkville and the Magyar Ház with whom I met showed similar kindness. They never insisted that I

convey a certain narrative. Nor did they suggest that delving into Hungarian Yorkville's past would be easy. They simply had faith in me to tell the story well.

The Magyar Ház, or Hungarian House, belies a single, simple definition. To those familiar with Hungarian Yorkville as a viable enclave, it signifies a bygone era. To those drawn to Gotham's role as America's preeminent port of entry for the foreign-born, it is one of many material manifestations of the city's multicultural self-image. Older Hungarian New Yorkers might see the Magyar Ház as a lifeline, refuge, or repository of personal memories. Younger generations of co-ethnics tend to view it as a center of cultural programming and inter-generational cultural transmission. Third- or fourth-generation Hungarian Americans might come to reawaken their dormant ethnic heritage. Finally, for many, the place remains simply inscrutable and mysterious, a curious exception to the melting pot mythos.

The Magyar Ház, with all its complexity and variability, sits within the broader story of housing heritage, that is, connecting ethnic heritage to a specific physical locus. During the entirety of Hungarian New York's 140-year history, groups within the community writ large have attempted to create ethnic headquarters. The act of pursuing a Hungarian headquarters in New York has raised questions and fomented conflict relating to ethnic identity, namely: *what is Hungarianness?* and *Who is a Hungarian American?* Ethnic identity is an exercise in drawing boundaries, as including some excludes others. Drawing identity boundaries of any kind is an inherently dynamic and unsettled process. Moreover, the question of who draws and controls these boundaries and what internal and external factors influence that process demarcate disparities in power and status, and in the case of Hungarian identity, issues pertaining to religion, history, and geopolitics.

A summary of Hungarian identity in New York underscores the dynamic and contested nature of ethnic identity claim making. Hungarian Jews once comprised the majority of those asserting Hungarian identity in Gotham. They populated and organized its voluntary associations, directed its political

efforts, stewarded its cultural projects, and represented Hungarian culture to external audiences. Hungarian New York then splintered over religious identity, homeland politics, and ideological predilections during the interwar period. New waves of migration spurred by the Second World War and the Cold War exacerbated this cleavage. These political émigrés breathed new life into Hungarian New York, including Yorkville. Whereas Hungary's wartime alliance with Nazi Germany's threatened to place all Hungarian New Yorkers in an unfavorable light, the Cold War, and especially the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, rehabilitated the community's reputation. Hungarian refugees fleeing communist oppression, most of them Christian, rekindled visions of Hungarians as the people of Lajos Kossuth, the nineteenth century revolutionary.

Subsequently, a small group of exiled politicians and aristocrats seized the opportunity to create the Magyar Ház in Yorkville in the mid-1960s. This act reflected the degree to which Hungarian identity in New York had assumed a decidedly Christian and Cold Warrior hue. Over the course of the last half century, the Magyar Ház increasingly assumed a status as Hungarian New York's putative flagship. This process has rendered opaque the history and legacy of prewar Hungarian New Yorkers, and, to a significant degree, has marginalized social memories and contemporary awareness of Gotham's Hungarian Jews. Exploring the Magyar Ház, therefore, encourages a critical examination of an ethnic group grappling with the fundamental questions of self-identity and boundaries. Religious affiliation, for example, has played an outsized role, as Christians of Hungarian descent have often marginalized Jewish Hungarians' claims to ethnic inclusion. It also reveals how paradigms such as the Cold War, and specific episodes with it like the Hungarian Revolution, influenced these local, translocal, national, and transnational processes.

This chapter reviews Hungarian New Yorkers' efforts to house ethnic heritage in three phases. Part I focuses on Hungarian New York's pre-World War II associational life. It presents three micronarratives of earlier attempts to construct institutions capable of serving as socio-cultural and to

some extent political centers of New York's Hungarian community. In Part II the story turns to how the Second World War and the Cold War, as well as their concomitant migratory waves, affected Hungarian identity in New York; and, in turn, how that process paved the way for the rise of Magyar Ház as a representative institution. Lastly, Part III focuses on the Magyar Ház itself, from its founding in the 1960s to the early twenty-first century, profiling a handful of its pivotal actors. It concludes by assessing the institution's contemporary role as a site of Hungarian cultural heritage.

PART I: HUNGARIAN NEW YORKERS' QUEST TO HOUSE HERITAGE, 1880s to 1950s

While Hungarian New York was still in its infancy in the 1880s, ethnic leaders pursued the goal of creating a community center capable of housing the social, cultural, and, at times, political needs of émigrés and their families. No such Hungarian house took firm root. Subsequently, two Yorkville-based voluntary associations, A New-Yorki Első Magyar Önképző Egylet and the Hungarian Workers' Home, founded in the late-nineteenth century and post-WW I periods respectively, showed some potential for filling this void. Hungarian New York remained a community divided, however, due to religious factionalism, Hungary's fraught interwar politics, and America's growing paranoia about perceived connections between Hungarians and political radicalism.

An Unrealized Dream of a Downtown Hungarian House

Hungarian Americans first articulated the need to construct a Hungarian house in the colony developing into Little Hungary in lower Manhattan during the late 1880s. Ethnic leaders outside of New York produced much of the initial rhetorical steam for this project. In 1887, Cleveland-based Mihály Pálincás reasoned that "[i]f it is possible to collect millions from the poor folks in Hungary to 'play war games,' then we, Hungarian-Americans can surely give some money to support the nation with the Hungarian House in New York City."¹ Just a year earlier, Pálincás had co-founded the Verhovay Aid

¹ Géza Kende, *Magyarok Amerikában: Az Amerikai Magyarság Története* (Cleveland: A Szabadság Kiadása, 1927), 94.

Association (VAA), a Pennsylvania-based fraternal organization designed to extend unemployment and life insurance benefits to Hungarian migrants. His interest in a Gotham Hungarian house may have derived from the VAA's vision of planting branch offices in major North American cities. Other prominent Hungarians soon joined the cause. Gusztáv Erdélyi, the well-regarded editor of the *Amerikai Nemzetőr*, a New York-based newspaper, excoriated wealthy Hungarians for neglecting the need for an ethnic space to assist those in need. Despite these appeals to pride and shame, the campaign yielded less than \$25.00 by the following spring. Nearly four decades later, Géza Kende of the *Amerikai Magyar Népszava* would quip that "[w]ith this pace of donations, Hungarians would have to wait about two thousand years to build the Hungarian House."²

In 1892, the Hungarian house concept resurfaced in the now burgeoning Little Hungary. Four voluntary associations – the New-Yorki Első Magyar Önképző Egylet, the Magyar Társalgó és Betegsegélyző Egylet (the Hungarian Social and Sick Benefit Society), the Magyar Társadalmi és Műkedvelő Egylet (Hungarian Social and Amateur Theatrical Society), and the Dalárda és Vörösmarty Mihály Egylet (the Mihaly Vorosmarty Singing Society) – formed the March 15th Association to oversee the project. For nearly two decades, this pan-Hungarian entity deemphasized direct donations, opting instead to earmark ticket sales for Hungarian holidays and commemorations for the capital fund. During this period, other voluntary associations joined the collective effort, although internal struggles erupted

² Kende, *Magyarok Amerikában*, 94; E.C. Ray, *John Bancroft Devins: A True Greatheart* (New York: Association Press, 1912), 70-77; Annals of Cleveland Newspaper Series: Cleveland Foreign Language Newspaper Digest, Hungarian-Polish, Works Projects Administration in Ohio, District Four – Cleveland, Vol. IV, 1937, January 1940, summaries from *Szabadság*, 101-102; Verhovay Aid Society Plans Celebration: Famous Hungarian Organization, 30 Years Old, to Observe Anniversary," *Pittsburgh Daily Post*, March 13, 1916, 4; "Magyar Union Plan Indorsed: Verhovay Aid Societies Supreme Officers Approve Projected National Federation," *Pittsburgh Daily Post*, April 29, 1916, 5; "Hungarians Here Condemn Kaiser: 27,000 Approve Justice of America's Stand Against Enemies," *New York Herald*, April 17, 1918, 6. The Verhovay Aid Association was founded in 1886 "by thirteen Hungarian coal miners." According to the William Penn Association, the VAA's initial goal "was to extend a helping hand to each other and to the many Hungarian immigrants who worked and suffered in the mines and industrial centers of America at a period in its history when insurance of any sort was still in the far away future." "Our History," *William Penn Association*, accessed by June 1, 2020, <http://www.wpalife.org/about/our-history/>.

over including those espousing socialist ideology. In 1910, the group, having collected just \$1,600, admitted defeat.³

Christian Hungarians subsequently organized their own attempt at raising money for a Hungarian headquarters, a development that reflected growing sectarianism. After purchasing an existing building in lower Manhattan, the group quickly defaulted on its mortgage, necessitating the sale of the property. At the time New York Hungarians abandoned the dream of a Hungarian house in the early twentieth century, such spaces existed in nearby Newark and Trenton, as well as in Akron, Ohio; South Bend, Indiana; Johnstown, Pennsylvania; St. Louis; and Chicago. Writing in 1927, Kende commented that “these houses not only provide a home for Hungarian celebrations, but also seem to be great investments for the local Hungarian communities.” Unable to hide his frustration, Kende stated that “[f]orty years ago, the Hungarians started to build the Hungarian House of New York using bricks made of ‘empty words and promises.’” He punctuated his remarks by predicting that “there will never be a Hungarian house in New York.”⁴ Kende appeared prescient for another forty years.⁵

Hungarian Identity and the First Hungarian Literary Society

In 1889 fourteen Hungarian Jews incorporated A New-Yorki Első Magyar Önképző Egylet, the First Hungarian Literary Society, (Önképző Egylet or the Literary Society). Forged from a shared cultural heritage as much as from a common religious identity, its *raison d’être* was “to conduct debates, recitations, and readings, and generally to improve literary talent and to cultivate social relations among its members and [to] conduct a library.”⁶ Self-learning literary associations had gained currency within post-revolutionary Hungary during the last third of the nineteenth century as a form of resistance to

³ “Celebration of Hungarian Societies,” *New York Sun*, March 21, 1892, 2. Interestingly, the 1892 commemoration was held at the Central Turn Verein on Sixty-seventh Street. “Celebration of Hungarian Societies,” *New York Sun*, March 21, 1892, 2. It is also worth noting that just as many organizations did not join the 1892 effort as did. *Annals of Cleveland Newspaper Series: Cleveland Foreign Language Newspaper Digest*, Hungarian, 1891-1892, Works Projects Administration in Ohio, District Four – Cleveland, January 1942, summaries from *Szabadság*, 22-29.

⁴ Kende, *Magyarok Amerikában*, 92-96.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ “To Benefit Hungarians,” *New York Times*, August 8, 1889, 1.

Vienna's program of Germanizing the Magyars. Eventually, the Hungarian government mandated their inclusion within the Kingdom's educational system, a nationalization project intended to instill a deep appreciation for and connection to Hungarian writers. Establishing the Önképző Egylet in New York asserted the merits of Hungarian high culture while also distancing Hungarians from Austrians in their new environment. At the time of the Önképző Egylet's legal formation, the bulk of Gotham's Hungarian population, whether Jews or Gentiles, resided in lower Manhattan's Little Hungary. The Önképző Egylet's multiple venue changes during its first two decades suggest the difficulty of finding suitable space, although the frequent moves did not seem to dampen the founders' enthusiasm for associational life.⁷

The Önképző Egylet's early leaders immediately set out to make a mark within and beyond Hungarian New York. Having emigrated from Hungary at a time when Hungarian Jews were part of a common Magyar polity, these men rightfully saw themselves as full-fledged Hungarians operating an association aspiring to universal ethnic appeal. The institution's programming reflected this vision. In its inaugural year, the Önképző Egylet established an annual "peasant ball" on New Year's Eve, summoning the folkloric power of the Hungarian Plains to unify co-ethnics symbolically, regardless of religious identity. In 1894, the Önképző Egylet gained wider visibility by claiming center stage within Hungarian New York's festive cultural milieu. The group played a prominent role in multiple events honoring Lajos Kossuth upon his death in March of that year. Six months later, the Önképző Egylet hosted an elaborate fête complete with Hungarian American singers and a formal flag dedication ceremony to salute amicable relations between the Kingdom of Hungary and the U.S. By welcoming Laura Ruttkay,

⁷ "Hungarian Education," British Houses of Parliament, *Board of Education: Special Reports on Educational Subjects, Vol 8, "Education in Scandinavia, Switzerland, Holland, Hungary & c.* (London: Wyman & Sons, 1902), 518-22, accessed May 14, 2020, <https://books.google.com/books?id=xG0OQAIAIAJ&pg=PA519&lpg=PA519&dq=hungarian+word+onkepzo&source=bl&ots=RHb20cB41x&sig=ACfU3U1SaOngqIK9gknhjFuMtAQ-iBkeQw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj5qyiorPpAhXFVN8KHVbtBW0Q6AEwDXoECAoQAAQ#v=onepage&q=hungarian%20word%20onkepzo&f=false>.

Kossuth's niece and a Brooklyn resident, as its special guest, the Önképző Egylet further immersed itself in the legitimating memory of the beloved revolutionary.⁸

The Önképző Egylet achieved notable success during its early decades owing in great part to the indefatigable Morris Cukor, its longtime honorary president. Cukor immigrated to America as a teenager in 1884, initially settling with his family in Little Hungary. His father, József Cukor, was one of the founders of the Önképző Egylet. After attending the Royal Hungarian College, his son, Morris, earned a Juris Doctorate from New York University's (NYU) Law School in 1890 as a twenty-two-year-old. For the next sixty-seven years, he led an extraordinary life that featured active involvement with Tammany Hall, a lucrative law practice, and multiple municipal posts such as the presidency of the city's Civil Service Commission. Cukor never saw his individual success as a reason to eschew his Hungarian identity. He viewed the Önképző Egylet as a platform for two causes he held dear: pan-Hungarianness and charitable works. Thus, the organization, often acting through the Ladies' Auxiliary formed in 1901, emphasized philanthropy among its core activities. His nephew, George Cukor, who earned acclaim as a Hollywood film director, conjectured his uncle may have attained a seat on the Supreme Court had he not clung so stubbornly to his ethnic ties. Morris Cukor could not abide such a self-serving stratagem, even in the land of individuality.⁹

⁸ "Events To-day," *New York Herald*, December 31, 1922, 20; "Kossuth's Niece to Attend: Mrs. Ruttkay Will be Patroness of a Flag Dedication," *New York Evening World*, September 21, 1894, 6.

⁹ "Morris Cukor, 88, Ex-City Aide, Dies: Retired Lawyer Had Been Head of Civil Service Unit Here--Aided Hungarians Active in Masonic Work Led War Bond Drive," *New York Times*, December 8, 1957, 88; Patrick McGilligan, *George Cukor: A Double Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 3-8; *General Alumni Catalogue of New York University, 1833-1906: Law, Graduate, Pedagogy, Veterinary, Commerce, and Collegiate Division Alumni* (New York: General Alumni Society, 1906), 43, accessed May 5, 2020, https://books.google.com/books?id=DKmEAAAIAAJ&pg=PA43&lpg=PA43&dq=morris+cukor+nyu+law+school&source=bl&ots=wG9uUvKiPf&sig=ACfU3U0wy9cEz7hut_H08-XOJXJaJjPERA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjw78X9uKTpAhUNPa0KHT5DA4wQ6AEwAnoECAQQAQ#v=onepage&q=morris%20cukor%20nyu%20law%20school&f=false; Anikó Prepuke, "Jews in Metropolitan Transformations of New York City," *Fulbright Grant 2010-11*, accessed May 8, 2020, <http://www.fulbright.web2.vhost.hu/book6/prepukaniko.pdf>. The elder Cukor set off for America despite the family having attained minor gentry status with an estate in Napkov, Hungary. With the possible aid of his "Old World" status, the elder Cukor quickly established himself within the city's Hungarian community. McGilligan, *George Cukor*, 3-8. According to his biographer, "[e]arly in life, [George] Cukor made a vow to himself not to be a 'hyphenated American' like his grandfather and uncle." McGilligan, *George Cukor*, 8.

Around 1910, the Önképző Egylet relocated to East 79th Street in Yorkville in response to the accelerated uptown migration of Jewish and non-Jewish Hungarians from their lower Manhattan enclave. By 1925, it purchased its “permanent” location at 323 East 79th Street. The group, then led by Dr. Arthur Kozma, a local confidante of President Theodore Roosevelt, commissioned the translation and publication of Sándor Petőfi’s poetry. This project supplemented the Önképző Egylet’s ongoing efforts to amass a library of printed Hungarian language sources. The institution deftly navigated the turbulent waters of the Great War, a time when Cukor, Kozma, and other members worked cooperatively with Hungarian New York’s non-Jewish elites such as Géza Berkó and Alexander Konta.¹⁰

Although the Önképző Egylet continued its cultural, social, political, and philanthropic projects throughout the twentieth century from its East 79th Street headquarters, it never became Hungarian New York’s home base. According to a commemorative journal written in 1939, the Literary Society’s golden anniversary, the founders’ hoped “to nurture and maintain the Hungarian language, culture, Hungarian social life, and to create a permanent shelter” for the local Hungarian community.¹¹ Housing the entirety of Hungarian New York remained a goal beyond the group’s grasp for several reasons. Staunchly anti-communist factions balked at the Önképző Egylet accepting members such as Ferenc Göndör, publisher of *Az Ember*, a leftist Hungarian-language newspaper, during the interwar years. Göndör’s background included a brief and chaotic stint as Press Commissar for Béla Kun, leader of the Bolshevik coup d’état in 1919.¹² Adding to this problem, fissures between New York’s Jewish and non-

¹⁰ Prepuk, “Jews in Metropolitan Transformations of New York City”; “Hungarian party,” *New York Daily News*, May 18, 1925, 22; “Home Again,” *New York Daily News*, January 25, 1948, 5; “Hungarian Honored,” *New York Daily News*, June 21, 1953, 11BL; “Theatrical Night,” *New York Daily News*, April 15, 1956, 9; “Magyars Have a Roosevelt Portrait,” *New York Sun*, March 18, 1906, 3; “Parsons Home; Backs Whitman: Finds There’s Still Many Reasons for Supporting the District Attorney,” *New-York Tribune*, August 12, 1914, 5; “Hungarians Here Protest: Arrange for Mass Meeting to Assert Loyalty for America,” *New York Times*, January 24, 1916, 4; “No. 81 East 7th Street,” *Daytonian in Manhattan*, September 30, 2015, accessed May 5, 2020, <http://daytoninmanhattan.blogspot.com/2015/09/no-81-east-7th-street.html>.

¹¹ The First Hungarian Literary Society, <http://www.clubonkepzo.com/>.

¹² Ferenc Göndör entered the U.S. in 1926, and immediately started to publish the weekly *Az Ember*, translated as *The Man*. He published the paper from 320 East 79th Street, next door to the Önképző Egylet. “Hungarian Weekly to Celebrate,” *New York Times*, July 1, 1943, 5. Göndör was keenly aware of his controversial reputation. Within weeks of entering New York’s Hungarian community, he published an editorial in the *New York Times* attempting to dispel rumors that he supported the concept of neighboring countries ousting the Horthy regime. At the same time, he made his views about that administration

Jewish Hungarian populations, which manifested earlier in the twentieth century, widened during the thirties and forties. Even within Hungarian Jewry's social milieu, the Önképző Egylet shared representational authority with the Rakoczi Aid Society, the Kossuth Hungarian Literary Sick and Benevolent Society, and organizations aligned with New York's Hungarian synagogues, such as the Yorkville Hungarian Social and Benevolent Association of New York, suggesting that many Hungarians preferred smaller, more intimate institutions where individuals could play larger roles. Lastly, the Önképző Egylet's governance was firmly in the hands of Hungarian New York's professional class, despite claims of socio-economic heterogeneity within its membership. Thus, although specific programs may have targeted the needs of the working-class, it appears unlikely that laboring co-ethnics would have had cause to consider the Önképző Egylet a genuine home. While the Önképző Egylet lives to this day, commentators typically differentiate it as a Jewish-Hungarian association.¹³

The Political Culture and Cultural Politics of the Hungarian Workers' Home

In 1924, journalist Karl Bercovici described the Hungarian Workers' Home (Workers' Home) on East 81st Street as "the pride and the strength of the organized industrialists of the Magyars living in the city."¹⁴ Organized during WW I, the Workers' Home enjoyed a relatively short but consequential run as the hub of ethnic labor activism in Hungarian Yorkville. In addition, the Workers' Home housed a drama troupe, sponsored weekly concerts, and even operated a ground floor restaurant. It was through the

crystal clear, stating that "[t]he Hungarian people deserve better leaders, other than the present corrupt gang of counterfeiters which is holding the reins at Budapest." Ferenc Göndör, "Hungary and Little Entente," *New York Times*, March 8, 1926, 18.

¹³ Brooklyn Daily Eagle Almanac (American Almanac Collection, Library of Congress), *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (1906): 315. In this case, the term "profession class" is not shorthand for aristocracy or inherited wealth or privilege. It included those who attained status through matriculation into professions such as law and medicine. For example, Zoltán Neumark, resident of Hungarian Yorkville (239 East 79th Street), served two terms as president of the First Hungarian Literary Society and subsequently as an honorary president. Neumark emigrated from Hungary in 1928, initially settling with his family in Akron, Ohio. After earning an undergraduate degree from Akron University, Neumark served in the U.S. military during World War II. He graduated from NYU Law School in 1948, after which he practiced law until 1997. His *New York Times* obituary, presumably written by his wife of fifty-five years, Janine Neumark, noted that he "joined the First Hungarian Literary Society which very quickly became his second home." "Paid Notice: Deaths, Neumark, Zoltán," *New York Times*, March 23, 2008, A27; Transcript of Proceedings, Supreme Court, Bronx County, Trial Term – Part II, Records & Briefs, New York State, Appellate Division, 31 A.D. 2nd, Volume 29 (New York: Library of the New York Law Institute), 44; Alex Witchel, "Three Stories Tall, And a Hundred Deep," *New York Times*, June 28, 2001, F1.

¹⁴ Karl Bercovici, *Around the World in New York* (New York: The Century Company, 1924), 356.

Workers' Home, Bervovici claimed, that Gotham's theatrical community came to appreciate the works of the Hungarian playwrights Ferenc Molnár and Lajos Bíró.¹⁵

During its developmental stage, a commitment to labor causes did not prevent the Workers' Home from opening its clubhouse to those with divergent political perspectives. Occasionally, this approach literally converted the place into a political battleground. Such was the case when a 1925 dinner ostensibly honoring Count Mihály Károlyi's fiftieth birthday erupted over the highly flammable issue of Hungary's postwar political order. Hungarian Americans from as far away as New Brunswick, New Jersey and Bridgeport, Connecticut joined with their Gotham brethren not only to hear Károlyi speak, but to show a unified front against Admiral Horthy's rule in Hungary. Event organizers read pro-Károlyi telegrams from Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, Governor Al Smith, and Mayor Hylan. In the end, however, anti-Horthy unity and general conviviality gave way to a blood feud over what kind of government should replace Hungary's Regency. This controversy pitted pro-Károlyi republicans against those sympathetic to Bolshevism. As Károlyi addressed the assemblage, Louis Basky, editor of the Communist newspaper *Új Előre*, literally leaped upon a table to denounce the former Hungarian parliamentarian, as several young labor activists joined in the vitriolic chorus. Only the impromptu diplomacy of Károlyi and Ákos Koszta, the Jersey City leader of the republican faction, who assured that all points of view would be heard in due course, prevented the tempest from gaining strength. Fueled by the liberating power of free speech, the attendees punctuated the evening by dancing the csárdás, finding solace in ethnic tradition. As the Károlyi birthday dinner demonstrated, the Workers' Home was a unique space where the Hungarian community's cultural, social, and political elements cohabitated in complex and sometimes volatile combinations.¹⁶

¹⁵ Ibid., "Hungarians Buy Clubhouse," *New York Sun*, June 20, 1917, 11.

¹⁶ "Dances and Riots Jazz Up Birthday of Count Karolyi: Keeping Order Proves Strenuous Task at Noisy, Colorful Magyar Celebration," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 5, 1925, 4. Károlyi apparently learned his lesson. At his final speaking engagement before leaving the Greater New York area in March 1925, he darted for the door immediately after delivering his remarks. Among the things he missed was a public reading of a critical letter penned by a group of Hungarian American priests who

Starting in earnest in the late twenties, the Workers' Home actively embraced a socialist, if not communist, agenda. Politically left leaning labor organizations like the Yorkville branches of the Hungarian Workers Federation and the Hungarian Brotherhood of the International Workers Order (IWO) as well as the Young Workers League of New York and other overtly communist entities made frequent use of the Workers' Home's meeting spaces and printing press. From the mid-thirties to the period immediately following the Second World War, the IWO's membership exploded, especially in New York, due to the group's ethnic recruitment scheme. As a result, the city's IWO branches often doubled as ethnic clubhouses featuring traditional song, dance, and in the case of Hungarian Americans, even peasant costumes.¹⁷

Yet by the early 1950s, the Workers' Home and similarly situated spaces came under intense scrutiny from state and municipal communist-hunters inspired by Senator Joseph McCarthy and his ilk. New York State used the civil justice system to silence IWO organizations and seize and liquidate properties allegedly harboring them. Simultaneously, the NYPD infiltrated Gotham's Popular Front. Testifying before the U.S. Senate, undercover officer Stephanie Horvath declared that of all the city's communist affiliated groups none posed more of a danger to the nation than the Yorkville Club of the Communist Party operating at the East 81st Street headquarters of the Workers' Home. Over ninety percent of the members she outed resided in between East 72nd and East 86th Streets. These revelations brought a swift end to the community's gathering space and Hungarian Yorkville consequently lost a key

blasted Károlyi's views on homeland politics as insincere and hypocritical. "Count Karolyi Lauded as Hungary's Washington; \$3,800 Fund Evaporates," *New Brunswick Daily Home News*, March 23, 1925, 1.

¹⁷ New York City was the place of the IWO's founding in 1930. Although the IWO initially tried to focus more on class than ethnic identity, its organizers soon realized the power of latter in the city's multicultural society. The socio-cultural activities at lodges like the Workers' Home served as an effective means for attracting potential members and for winning the support of entire families. Roger Keeran, "National Groups and the Popular Front: The Case of the International Workers Order," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 14, no. 3 (Spring, 1995): 23-51

socio-cultural and political site. Those who endeavored to construct a new home for local Hungarian Americans in the years following this tumult would pursue a starkly different political agenda.¹⁸

PART II: HUNGARIAN NEW YORK AT WAR, BOTH HOT AND COLD

World War II and the Cold War radically realigned Hungarian New York. Hungary's strategic alliance with Germany, intended to right the alleged wrongs of the Treaty of Trianon, threatened irreparable harm to the collective reputation of the city's Hungarian Americans. The Hungarian Holocaust further inflamed the situation while also exacerbating tensions between Jewish and non-Jewish Hungarian New Yorkers. Due to the concerted efforts of wartime exiles to rehabilitate the reputation of Hungary and Hungarians as well as America's postwar ideological and geopolitical contest with the Soviet Union, Hungarian New Yorkers refashioned their image as champions of liberty and foes of communism. The Hungarian Revolution, and the refugee crisis it created, completed this reputational transformation, as Hungarian New Yorkers became trusted Cold Warriors of the highest order. These events set the stage for the Magyar Ház's founding in 1966.

¹⁸ "Think Economically!" *Youth* (Feb. 1922): 16, accessed May 9, 2020, https://books.google.com/books?id=Frc0AQAAMAAJ&pg=PA1&lpg=PA1&dq=think+economically+youth+february+1922&source=bl&ots=U0R1IVYCrM&sig=ACfU3U06xBENDiBoB3c9bFy9x2PpQDRJ3g&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjrsb_z9KvpAhUFQ6wKHa3WCPQQ6AEwAHoECAyQAQ#v=onepage&q=think%20economically%20youth%20february%201922&f=false; "Industrial Relations: Proposed Constitution of Amalgamated Metal Workers of America," *Bloomsberg's Labor Digest* 5, no. 16 (Feb. 5, 1921), accessed May 9, 2020, <https://books.google.com/books?id=rT02AQAAMAAJ&pg=PA548&lpg=PA548&dq=350+east+81st+street++amalgamated+metal+workers&source=bl&ots=Msy6MkHkd8&sig=ACfU3U2agx1aA19JGV5X6kK3pRUo94Qq4w&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjQgt3X9avpAhVEc98KHa-eDwgQ6AEwAXoECAoQAQ#v=onepage&q=350%20east%2081st%20street%20%20amalgamated%20metal%20workers&f=false>; *Scope of Soviet Activity in the United States: Hearings before the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and other Internal Security Laws of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate*, 84th Congress. 26 (1956) (Affidavit of Louis Rethy Reed concerning Association with Alexander Goldberger, alias Joseph Peters); *Scope of Soviet Activity in the United States: Hearings before the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and other Internal Security Laws of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate*, 84th Congress. 26 (1956) (statement of John Lautner); *State of New York v. International Workers Order, Inc.*, Appellate Div. – First Dept. (1951), Brief for the Respondent-Appellant International Workers Order, Inc.; *Communist Underground Printing Facilities and Illegal Propaganda, United States Senate, Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws of the Committee on the Judiciary*, Executive Session, 83rd Congress, 1st Session (1953) (statement of Stephanie Horvath, New York Police Department).

Hungarian New York and the Second World War

Hungarian New Yorkers paid close attention to homeland politics from the moment Lajos Kossuth first stepped foot on Manhattan Island in the mid-nineteenth century. Homeland politics, broadly construed, encompasses a range of actions, attitudes, and discourses, wherever undertaken, deriving from or otherwise significantly related to political issues or circumstances perceived as emanating from a nation of origin or putative ancestral home. For several decades, New Yorkers self-identifying as Hungarians, whether Christians, Jews, or religiously unaffiliated, and irrespective of their region of origin within historical Hungary, tended to hold similar views about political questions affecting the homeland. Collectively, they commemorated Kossuth and the 48ers, raised relief funds during the Great War, and bewailed the injustice of the Treaty of Trianon. But, during the immediate postwar period, events in Hungary – intrigue by neighboring countries, questions about the Habsburg dynasty's fate, failed attempts to establish democratic rule, and the ill-fated communist dictatorship of Béla Kun – started to fray this political cohesion. The Horthy-led interwar period continued the unraveling toward disunity. Hungarian Jews in New York assailed Horthy and his supporters as antisemitic. At the same time, ethnics who identified as communists and socialists pined for a revolutionary upheaval, characterizing 1919 as an opportunity lost. Pro-democratic groups bickered about who to blame for failed efforts to enact a postwar republic, as demonstrated by the contentious dinner honoring Mihály Károlyi at the Workers' Home in 1925. To a remarkable degree, the fraught politics of a place over four thousand miles away was tearing apart Hungarian New York.¹⁹

¹⁹ "Scores Karolyi Exclusion: Anti-Horthy League Here Writes State Department on Visa," *New York Times*, August 17, 1928, 38; "Finds Statue Crumbling: Anti-Horthy Committee Says Kossuth Memorial Is of Poor Material," *New York Times*, September 23, 1928, 26; "Dances and Riots Jazz Up Birthday of Count Karolyi: Keeping Order Proves Strenuous Task at Noisy, Colorful Magyar Celebration," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 5, 1925, 4; "Count Karolyi Lauded as Hungary's Washington; \$3,800 Fund Evaporates," *New Brunswick Daily Home News*, March 23, 1925, 1. For discussions of "homeland politics" and the related meta concept of "transnational politics," see Sharon Madriaga Quinsaat, "Migrant Mobilization for Homeland Politics: A Social Movement Approach," *Sociology Compass* 7, no. 11 (2013): 952–64; Milena Belloni, "Refugees and Citizens: Understanding Eritrean Refugees' Ambivalence Towards Homeland Politics," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 60, no. 1 (2019): 55–73. There were isolated examples of ethnic collaboration within the wealthy class during this period, such as the work of the American-Hungarian Medical Association (the "AHMA"). In 1938, the AHMA organized a philanthropic dinner at the Plaza Hotel on Fifth Avenue to raise funds to assist "needy Hungarian families in the metropolitan area." At the time, Dr. Camille

The Second World War completed the rupture. The possibility of Hungary casting its lot with Nazi belligerents had circulated widely throughout the city by the summer of 1940, putting Hungarian New Yorkers in a bind. As journalist Paul Nadányi noted in his visit to the Greek Orthodox Hungarian Church on East 82nd Street in the fall of 1940, a sizeable segment of the community appeared open to a Faustian bargain, seeing a German partnership as an immediate way to regain Transylvania, Upper Hungary, and the other portions of the old kingdom. Hungarian Americans hailing from these areas usually prioritized territorial revisionism. Furthermore, many Hungarians could not abide cooperating with the Soviets, a presumptive prerequisite for backing the Allies. To others, especially Hungarian Jews, no geospatial prize could warrant supporting the Nazis. This faction worried that Hitler's war crimes, especially his radically antisemitic actions, would harm irreversibly Hungary's international reputation. The New York Council of American Citizens of Hungarian Origin, which organized demonstrations of loyalty to U.S. foreign policy, was born from these concerns. More than four thousand people attended this group's Hungarian Independence Day gathering at the Yorkville Casino in March 1941. Morris Cukor, now Hungarian New York's elder statesman, shared the stage with Margit Bokor, a Hungarian-born mezzo-soprano with the Metropolitan Opera Company, Robert F. Wagner, Jr., then Yorkville's representative in the New York State Assembly, and a Magyar dance troupe in full costume.²⁰

Kereszturi was president of the AHMA. Dr. Kereszturi, was part of the pediatric staff for the city's Bureau of Laboratories. Camille Kereszturi, Harold A. Rosenberg, and William H. Park, "Tuberculin Allergy Produced by Parenteral BCG Vaccination," *American Review of Tuberculosis* 36, no. 1 (1937): 90.

²⁰ Nadányi, *The "Free Hungary" Movement*, 4-5; "Liberation Marked by Hungarians Here: Position of Country Today Laid Solely to Force," *New York Times*, March 17, 1941, 4; "Opera Is Succored by Margit Bokor; Takes Place of Rise Stevens on Short Notice in Octavian Role in 'Rosenkavalier,'" *New York Times*, January 15, 1941, 19. In mid-June 1940, the *Daily News* reported that "[t]he city's Hungarian population was jolted yesterday with the discovery that [János] Makkai, whom many regard as their country's No. 1 Hitler's stooge and anti-Semite, slipped into New York very quietly last Monday on the U.S. liner Manhattan." Guy Richards, "Makkai Here, Denies Aiding Hungarian Nazis," *New York Daily News*, June 15, 1940, B10. Purportedly, the Hungarian Consul General, was the first to meet Makkai. Ferenc Göndör, the *Az Ember* editor and member of the First Hungarian Literary Society, was among those who warned that Makkai's sudden and unannounced appearance and his audience with Hungarian diplomats in the U.S. suggested Hungary's imminent turn toward Nazism. As a member of the Hungarian Parliament, Makkai was instrumental in proposing and advocating a series of so-called Jewish laws, that excluded Hungarian Jews from certain economic sectors, especially positions within state licensed media. Thomas Orszag-Land, "Love among the Ashes," *The Jerusalem Report* (Jan. 31, 2011): 40; István Pogány, *Righting Wrongs in Eastern Europe* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), 26-32; Moshe Y. Herczl, *Christianity and the Holocaust of Hungarian Jewry*, translated by Joel Lerner (New York: New York University, 1993), 100-19. Gábor Gyáni referred to the tendency of social memories of the Treaty of Trianon, as a moment of Hungarian collective trauma, to drown out memories of the Hungarian Holocaust as the

Tibor Eckhardt, a well-known Hungarian politician, entered Hungarian New York's divisive climate in August 1941, just two months after the Germans invaded Russia and two days prior to the Roosevelt-Churchill Atlantic Charter summit. This leader of the exile elites would prove indispensable to the creation of multiple pan-Hungarian institutions in New York during the fifties and sixties, including the Magyar Ház itself. According to historian Steven Béla Várdy, Eckhardt's wartime mission aimed to establish a clandestine relationship with American officials to preserve Hungary's territorial gains no matter the Axis powers' fate, and, if necessary, to form a government in exile to accomplish these ends. Eckhardt presented himself as a political refugee committed to fighting Nazism. Given his copious editorials and earned media in the *New York Times*, the former leader of the Hungarian Smallholders' Party commanded attention. Despite his ubiquity and public critiques of fascism, he failed to make headway with the Roosevelt administration. Many high-ranking U.S. officials distrusted Eckhardt, pointing to his ties to an allegedly antisemitic organization during the 1920s.²¹

Eckhardt's appearance exacerbated existing internecine conflicts within Hungarian New York. In September 1941, he launched the "Movement for an Independent Hungary," a clever campaign meant to draw on Kossuth-aged images of Hungarians as a democratically committed people severable from

"Trianon syndrome." Gábor Gyáni, "Hungarian Memory of the Holocaust in Hungary," in *The Holocaust in Hungary*, eds. Randolph L. Braham and András Kovács (New York: Central European University Press, 2016), 215-30.

²¹ Steven Béla Várdy, "Hungarian Americans during World War II: Their Role in Defending Hungary's Interaction," in *Ideology Politics and Diplomacy in East Central Europe*, ed. M.B.B. Biskupski (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003), 120-46; Katalin Kádár Lynn, *Tibor Eckhardt: His American Years, 1941-1972* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 2007), 55-88; Katalin Kádár Lynn, "Remembering Tibor Eckhardt: A Conversation with Dr. von Habsburg," *East European Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (Jan. 2008): 467-81; Mark Stout and Katalin Kádár Lynn, "'Every Hungarian of Any Value to Intelligence': Tibor Eckhardt, John Grombach, and the Pond," *Intelligence and National Security* 31, no. 5 (2016): 699-714; Tibor Eckhardt, *Tibor Eckhardt in His Own Words: An Autobiography*, ed. Katalin Kádár Lynn (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 2005), 215-36. Prior to 1941, Eckhardt had made two trips to the U.S. during the 1930s, and periodically appeared in America's mainstream press. These stories portrayed him as a mercurial politician, at various times advocating rapprochement with the Habsburgs, warning against Nazi interference with Hungary's sovereignty, and then, in 1938, recommending an accord with the Germans to avoid an open confrontation. "Eckhardt Advocates Return of Habsburgs: External Dangers Threatening Danube Powers Held reason for Change of Views," *New York Times*, October 12, 1937, 6; "Agrarian Denounces Fascism in Hungary: Eckhardt, Party Leader, Calls on Reich to Leave Hungarians Alone to Manage Affairs," *New York Times*, April 13, 1937, 7; "Asks Hungary-Reich Pact: Eckhardt Advises Budapest to Come to Terms With Nazis," *New York Times*, March 28, 1938, 7. Moreover, Eckhardt was depicted as a firebrand who engaged in multiple duels, including one involving the Hungarian Premier, Julius Goemboes that made the front page of the *New York Times*. "Hungarian Premier and Foe Miss in Duel," *New York Times*, April 8, 1936, 1; "Eckhardt's Challenges Result in Bloodless Duel," *New York Times*, June 8, 1935, 6.

the state's malfeasance. The movement's proclamation, signed by Eckhardt as "President of the Executive Committee," expressly called on Hungarian nationals residing abroad as well as "[c]itizens who are of Hungarian descent" to create organizations espousing the objectives and values of the "Independent Hungary" movement.²² The New York-based newspaper *Amerikai Magyar Népszava* ("AMN") played a key role within the ethnic institutional coalition rallying to this cause.²³

In contrast, left-leaning voices, such as Rustem Vámbéry, a professor at the New School, and composer Béla Bartok, publicly attacked Eckhardt as a Horthy stooge and an apologist for Nazification. Meanwhile, New York's pro-Károly wing wrestled with their iconic leader, then residing in London, moving toward communist solutions to Hungary's ills. In similar fashion, Ferenc Göndör of the *Önképző Egylet* railed against Eckhardt, Horthy, and all things "old regime," preferring that Hungary tack hard left. Interest groups affiliated with the Little Entente states of Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia, many of which had a strong presence in New York, added to the anti-Eckhardt cacophony. While jousting with this imposing lineup of foes, Eckhardt continued to communicate with colleagues in Hungary. In fact, he did so after press reports in October 1941 that the Hungarian government had stripped him and four other officials living abroad of their citizenship. Eckhardt's dispatches ended abruptly in March 1944, when he ceded the movement's leadership to the Washington-based American Hungarian Federation, concluding that his reputational instability threatened the greater good.²⁴

²² Kádár Lynn, *Tibor Eckhardt: His American Years*, 208.

²³ Ibid.; Mark Stout and Katalin Kádár Lynn, "'Every Hungarian of any value to intelligence': Tibor Eckhardt, John Grombach, and the Pond," *Intelligence and National Security* 31, no. 5 (2016): 699-714. Additionally, the American Hungarian Federation, an organization formed in the first decade of the twentieth century, reasserted itself as a strong voice for Hungarian American political causes. In 1940, the AHF relocated from Pittsburgh to Washington, D.C., to be closer the core of American politics. Várdy, "Hungarian Americans during World War II," 132-43.

²⁴ Joseph S. Roucek, "The 'Free Movements' of Horthy's Eckhardt and Austria's Otto," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (Aut. 1943): 466-77. In October 1941, the *New York Times* covered a rally attended by approximately one thousand "loyal American citizens of Hungarian descent" supposedly representing forty organizations from the Greater New York area in the Bronx. Attendees pledged to support the United States foreign policy vis-à-vis the war and dismissed Tibor Eckhardt as "an undercover agent of Horthy." "Back Roosevelt Policy: 1,000 Hungarian-Americans Here Pledge Aid – Score Horthy," *New York Times*, October 6, 1941, 7. Steven Béla Várdy places Béla Lugosi, the well-known Hollywood actor who played Dracula, within a politically left, anti-Horthy triumvirate that included Rustem Vámbéry and Oszkár Jászi, a New York-based sociology professor. According to Várdy, none of these men were communists in the strict sense, although that conclusion was contested at the time. Ibid., 134. During the war, Ferenc Göndör managed to cast aside concerns that he was a socialist or communist subversive, largely on his criticism of the Hungarian government's partnership with Nazi Germany. In 1943, his newspaper's

Despite efforts by Morris Cukor, the Önképző Egylet's honorary president, to organize events during this period through which local co-ethnics could pledge their loyalty to, and display their patriotism for America, Hungarian New York's incessant infighting and the war's horrifying and devastating costs reverberated throughout Gotham's Hungarian network. The Second World War resulted in the deaths of at least 400,000 Jews in what would be labeled the Hungarian Holocaust, Hungary's loss of even more territory to Czechoslovakia, and Soviet occupation. A more dire state of affairs for Hungarian New York and the homeland seemed unimaginable.²⁵

Hungarian New York's Transition from Postwar to Cold War

Whereas World War II appeared to usher in Hungarian New York's nadir, the Cold War carved a new, albeit winding, course that would lead to the Magyar Ház. Soviet postwar occupation and the development of a communist ruling class led to explicit political repression in Hungary. Those facing reprisals, whether based on their wartime status or simply their reluctance to endorse the communist project, vacated Hungary by the tens of thousands. Many found their way into United Nations displaced persons camps in Austria, Germany, and Italy, and some, pursuant to the 1948 Displaced Persons Act,

silver anniversary edition (counting its birth in Budapest in 1918) even received an express endorsement from New York Governor Thomas E. Dewey. "Hungarian Weekly to Celebrate," *New York Times*, July 1, 1943, 5. After the war, Göndör turned much of his attention to the immigration of Germans and Hungarians he believed to be war criminals. He levied such an attack against Ernst von Dohnányi, the world-class pianist and composer, who fled Hungary as the Russians solidified their control of the country in the months after the war. Ilona von Dohnányi, *Ernst von Dohnányi: A Song of Life*, edited by James Grymes (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 177-80.

²⁵ "Liberation Marked by Hungarians Here: Position of Country Today Laid Solely to Force," *New York Times*, March 17, 1941, 4; "Kossuth Day Is Marked: Hungarian American Group Presents 20 Planes to U.S. Army," *New York Times*, March 20, 1944, 19; Joseph S. Roucek, "The Bulgarian, Rumanian, and Hungarian Peace Treaties," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 257 (May, 1948): 97-105; Mordecai Paldiel, *Churches and the Holocaust: Unholy Teaching, Good Samaritans, and Reconciliation* (Jersey City, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, 2006), 274; Randolph L. Braham, "Hungary," in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. David S. Wyman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 200-24; Wolfgang Muller, "Soviet Policy, Political Parties, and the Preparation for Communist Takeovers in Hungary, Germany, and Austria, 1944-1946," *East European Politics and Societies* 24, no. 1 (Winter 2010): 90-115; Mark Pittaway, "The Politics of Legitimacy and Hungary's Postwar Transition," *Contemporary European History* 13, no. 4 (Nov., 2004): 453-57. Hungarians in Yorkville and throughout the city struggled to reconcile the disjointed messages relating to territorial re-annexation, the alliance with the Axis powers, and the competing rhetoric of Eckhardt and his opponents. Joseph Roucek, writing in 1943, emphasized how Hungarian-language newspapers added to Hungarian Americans' confusion about their homeland's geopolitical options and decisions. According to Roucek, in one issue of the *Egyétértes* (*In Agreement*) a paper published in Bridgeport, Connecticut, there appeared a story imploring the Hungarian diaspora to support the U.S. war effort wholeheartedly as well as a column opining that America's entry into the war changed nothing about the goal of regaining the pre-Trianon lands. Joseph S. Roucek, "The 'Free Movements' of Horthy's Eckhardt and Austria' Otto," 468.

settled in Greater New York. Given the traumatic nature of their refugee experience, these émigrés felt powerfully attached to their new American home. Soon, their dogged desire to see Hungary liberated from the yoke of communism would synchronize with America's Cold War geopolitical outlook.²⁶

Both the newcomers and Hungarian New York's more established elements watched in horror as the Soviet Union methodically gained dominion over Hungary through manipulated elections and episodic purges. The Soviets also presided over the re-partition of Greater Hungary. Thereafter, Hungarian New York became a diasporic base of public criticism over the alleged mistreatment of Hungarian minorities in places such as Transylvania. In 1948, when Americans could still travel to Hungary, members of the Hungarian diaspora undertook personal fact-finding missions. Many of these sojourners syphoned unofficial intelligence to American newspapers, commenting on obstacles to press freedom and threats to faith communities. Hungarian New Yorkers also organized relief efforts, much as they had done after the Great War, to provide food, clothing, and other materials for family and friends. Popular culture offered another means to manage angst concerning the homeland, as ethnics flocked to movies depicting prewar Hungary, like the 1948 release of *A Szelerem nem Szégyen*, translated as *Love Is*

²⁶ Approximately one and a half million Hungarians fled the country before the U.S.S.R. gained control near the end of the war. Most of the refugees ended up in the U.N.'s camps. Louise W. Holborn, *The International Refugee Organization: A Specialized Agency of the United Nations: Its History and Work 1946-1952* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 182. Puskás, *Ties That Bind, Ties That Divide*, 259-69; Kathryn M. Bockley, "A Historical Overview of Refugee Legislation: The Reception of Foreign Policy in the Land of Promise," *North Carolina Journal Of International Law And Commercial Regulation* 21, no. 1 (Fall 1995): 253-92; Luke Kelly, "Humanitarian Sentiment and Forced Repatriation," 387-406; Julia Edwards, "Europe's Million D.P.'s," *Baltimore Sun*, June 13, 1948, A1; Holborn, *The International Refugee Organization*: 182-83. It bears mention that the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, originally in charge of the postwar refugee crisis, presumed that "displaced persons" should be repatriated whenever possible. In fact, most Hungarian refugees did return by the end of 1945. However, as underscored by Luke Kelly, "a so-called 'hard core' of DPs unwilling to return to newly communist countries," including thousands of Hungarians, "remained into 1946, prompting the formation of the International Refugee Organization." Luke Kelly, "Humanitarian Sentiment and Forced Repatriation: The Administration of Hungarians in a Post-war Displaced Persons Camp," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 30, no. 3 (2016): 389. The postwar emigres came in two "waves." One group left Hungary in 1945, near or just after the war's formal conclusion. This group stayed in DP camps until the Displaced Persons Acts of 1948 and 1950 afforded them the opportunity to enter the U.S. There was, however, a second group referred to as "the 1947 refugees" who departed between 1947 and 1949. This exodus included an elite class "who had participated in Hungary's various post-war coalition governments but were gradually pushed out of power by their partners, the communists." Katalin Kádár Lynn, *Tibor Eckhardt: His American Years*, 135.

Not a Shame, which played at Yorkville's New Europe Theatre, formerly known as the Tobis, near the corner of East 79th Street and First Avenue.²⁷

New York also acted as the epicenter for higher order ethnic organizing, whereby exiled politicians and religious leaders constructed institutions to pursue grandiose public relations, humanitarian, and political projects. The Hungarian National Council, or Magyar Nemzeti Bizottmány (HNC), formed in 1947, strove for leadership within this ecosystem, often holding itself up as the Hungarian government in exile. Early on, the HNC raised awareness about religious oppression in postwar Hungary and spearheaded humanitarian efforts for displaced persons. The eight exile elites who formed its inner circle, however, struggled to project a unified front. Historian Martin Nekola delineated the HNC's three factions as Tibor Eckhardt's historical Hungary wing that longed to rehabilitate the constitutional monarchy; former Premier Ferenc Nagy's republicanism organized around an ethnic nation-state based on a narrowly defined Magyarism, and ex-president of parliament Monsignor Béla Varga's focus on communism's human and cultural costs.²⁸

Despite this factionalism, the HNC managed to make headway in shaping public opinion on the Hungarian question, especially within New York. A 1951 *New York Times*' editorial unequivocally endorsed the HNC's account of mass evictions, deportations, and other human rights violations, stating:

The letter we publish today . . . is one more reminder that the time has come for our Government to do something about these Communist

²⁷ "Hungarian Curtain," *Canandaigua Daily Messenger*, August 20, 1948, 6; Hungarian Doctor Visiting Here Tells of Budapest Rebuilding," *Ithaca Journal*, August 13, 1948, 5; Wanda Hale, "A Melodrama of Hungary at New Europe," *New York Daily News*, October 28, 1950, 28; "Of Local Origin," *New York Times*, March 5, 1948, 17.

²⁸ Kádár Lynn, 156-73. In addition to its New York office ten blocks from the United Nations, the HNC maintained an office in Washington, D.C. At its high-water mark in the early fifties, the HNC claimed over 50,000 members. Ibid. In addition to Eckhardt, the HNC executive committee included ex-Premier Ferenc Nagy, Msgr. Béla Varga, former speaker of the Hungarian Assembly, József Hórváth and Károly Peyser, leading figures within the Christian Democrats, Béla Fábián, a Hungarian Jew who co-founded the anti-Horthy Hungarian Liberty Party and escaped from a Nazi concentration camp during the Hungarian Holocaust, Zoltán Pfeiffer, postwar Under Secretary of Hungary's Ministry of Justice, and Baron George Bessenyei, a former Hungarian diplomat. "Bela Fabian, 77, Exile Leader of Anti-Red Protests Here, Dies: Hungarian Refugee Directed Demonstrations and Rallies – Lawyer and Author," *New York Times*, December 28, 1966, 37; "Dr. Bela Fabian, Hungarian Jewish Leader, Dead; Fought Anti-semitism," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* 33, no. 248 (Dec. 29, 1966): 4; "Hungarian Ex-M.P. in Custody of U.S.," *New York Times*, October 10, 1948, 30; Christopher Felix, *The Short Course in the Secret War*, 4th Edition (New York: Madison Books, 2001 [1963]), 192-94; Bernard Klein, "Hungarian Politics and the Jewish Question in the 1930s," in *Hostages of Modernization: Studies on Modern Antisemitism 1870-1933/39, Austria, Hungary, Poland, Russia* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1993), 924-38.

outrages. To gnash one's teeth, to shout protests and imprecations, to express horror and pity, or to throw up one's hands in despair will not help these victims . . . We must do what we can to make certain that they will not suffer in vain.²⁹

The HNC's fragile coalition fell apart in the mid-fifties, although some members of the inner circle continued to invoke the organization's name to add authority to a particular cause. For a brief time, Hungarian New York lacked an institution claiming the right to speak universally for the Hungarian diaspora regarding homeland politics.³⁰

The HNC's terminal illness did not, however, prevent other elements of Hungarian New York from treating America's Cold War posture as an opening to orchestrate public displays of anti-communism during the first half of the fifties.³¹ March 15, the Hungarian holiday honoring the mid-nineteenth century Kossuth-led revolution, functioned as an apt symbol connecting Hungarian history and culture to the geopolitical moment and the Yorkville Casino served as the preferred locus of this annual commemoration organized by the Eastern District of the American Hungarian Federation.

Typically, more than one thousand people attended the two-day event. Keynote speakers often included

²⁹ "The Mark of Cain," *New York Times*, July 10, 1951, 25. The *New York Times* was echoing and amplifying a letter to the editor authored by Béla Fábán in his capacity as a member of the executive committee of the Hungarian National Council. Fabian implored the American government and the public to pay closer attention to the human rights violations perpetrated by the Hungarian government. He questioned whether "everyone in the United States is aware of the true meaning of communism . . . that communism is a merciless enemy with whom no compromise is possible." Béla Fábán, "Terror in Hungary Charged: Deportations to Slave-Labor Areas Compared to Nazi Methods," *New York Times*, July 10, 1951, 25.

³⁰ "Moscow Declares Report on Hungary Ry U.N. Is Illegal," *New York Times*, June 23, 1957, 1; Will Lissner, "Monarchy Issue Plagues Emigres: Emigres from Soviet-Controlled Countries Here," *New York Times*, October 5, 1950, 21; Martin Nekola, "'For the Freedom of Captive European Nations': East European Exiles in the Cold War," *Historical Research* 87, no. 238 (Nov. 2014): 723-741; Ferenc Nagy, *The Struggle Behind the Iron Curtain*, trans. Stephen K. Swift (New York: Macmillan Company, 1948), 52-69. In the wake of the Hungarian Revolution, Béla Fábán, describing himself as an executive member of the HNC, wrote to U.S. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge regarding a United Nations report about the events of October 1956. At the time, the HNC office was noted as 125 East 72nd Street, in the lower part of Yorkville. "Asks Quick Action," *New York Daily News*, June 25, 1957, 48; "Moscow Declares Report on Hungary Ry U.N. Is Illegal," *New York Times*, June 23, 1957, 1.

³¹ By 1950, the new American Cold War paradigm was firmly in place. One year after its establishment in 1949, American troops led a NATO coalition into battle in the Korean peninsula. That same year, the State Department issued a classified report, NSC-68, urging the U.S. to build-up a massive cache of conventional and nuclear weapons. A Senate committee led by Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee hunted for communists, disregarding the rights of free speech and assembly. Hungarian New Yorkers' anti-Soviet cause found a receptive audience within this politically charged environment. For local Hungarians, the Cold War's rising temperature was washing clean the stains of World War II. Charles M. Dobbs, *The Unwanted Symbol: American Foreign Policy, the Cold War, and Korea, 1945-1950* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1981); Ken Young, "Revisiting NSC 68," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 15, no. 1, (Winter 2013): 3-33; John J. Gladchuk, *Hollywood and Anticommunism: HUAC and the Evolution of the Red Menace, 1935-1950* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

former high-ranking officials from Hungary's prewar or wartime government. In 1954, for instance, Miklós Kállay, Hungary's Premier from 1942 to 1944, who resettled in New York after the war, used the event to predict that his homeland would "be the first country to throw off the Soviet yoke." Event organizers also read a letter from President Eisenhower indicating his "confiden[ce] that the democratic ideals which American citizens of Hungarian descent are expressing are similarly embodied in the aspirations of Hungarians within their native lands."³² The President's attention underscored the strategic utility of the Hungarian American community in relation to Cold War U.S. foreign policy.³³

Foregrounded by the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, the latter half of the decade further resurrected Hungarian Americans' collective reputation as the freedom fighting descendants of Kossuth. Images of Hungarian resolve and Soviet brutality, communicated through photojournalism outlets such as *Life* magazine as well as the emerging medium of television, projected dramatic renderings of a fight between good and evil. Adding to the Revolution's salience for American audiences were domestic debates regarding the Eisenhower administration's inaction and the viciousness of the Russian retaliation. In November 1956, the first cohort of Hungarian refugees arrived for processing at New Jersey's Camp Kilmer "[t]o the half-sad, half-gay strains of Brahms' Hungarian Dance No. 5" played by a military band.³⁴ The *New York Times* described how the newcomers paid rapt and respectful attention to Army officers,

³² "Revolution of 1848 in Hungary Marked," *New York Times*, March 15, 1954, 12.

³³ Ibid.; Eisenhower, then in the throes of a presidential campaign, had sent a similar message to Hungarian New Yorkers as they commemorated St. Stephen's Day in 1952. "Hungarians Mark St. Stephen's Day: 7th Avenue Parade and Rally in Carnegie Hall Stress Aim of Ousting Red Regime," *New York Times*, August 25, 1952, 15. Kállay, while living in exile, set about distancing himself from the Hungarian Holocaust that occurred after his removal as Premier as well as rehabilitating Hungary's international reputation by authoring an insider's view of his country's actions during the interwar and World War II periods. In a memoir written during the two years after the war, subsequently published by Columbia University, Kállay stated that "I shall have achieved my purpose, probably the last service which I can render my poor nation, if I have helped restore the true colors to the picture which foreigners have of it." Nicholas Kállay, *Hungarian Premier: A Personal Account of a Nation's Struggle in the Second World War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), xxxiii-xxxiv; Randolph L. Braham, "Rescue Operations in Hungary: Myths and Realities," *East European Quarterly* (Summer 2004): 181; Peter Pastor, "A New Historical Myth from Hungary: The Legend of Colonel Ferenc Koszorus as the Wartime Savior of the Jews of Budapest, Review Article of Jeszenszky, Géza," *Hungarian Cultural Studies* 12 (2019): 132-149.

³⁴ Harrison Salisbury, "60 Hungarians Welcomed at Kilmer to a New Life: The First Group of Refugees from Communist Oppression in Hungary Arrives in New Jersey on Way to New Homes," *New York Times*, November 22, 1956, 1. Peter Pastor estimates that only small fraction of the 56ers "took up arms" in the revolution, as the vast majority seized the opportunity to escape the totalitarian regime. Peter Pastor, "The American Reception and Settlement of Hungarian Refugees in 1956-57," *Hungarian Cultural Studies* 9 (2016): 199.

applauded passionately during prepared remarks, and dutifully saluted the U.S. flag. Coverage of the migrants' ordeals and the prevailing Cold War socio-political milieu produced an outpouring of support by the American public. In December 1956, just two months after the revolt, pollster George Gallup found that over twenty-four million Americans were prepared to house Hungarian émigrés, at least on a short-term basis. Eventually, 38,000 Hungarians entered the U.S. looking to recreate home.³⁵

The 56ers who made their way to Gotham bolstered the ethnic community's growing vitality, visibility, and influence. They also carried with them remarkable stories of courage and perseverance that collectively imbued them with exalted status within the Hungarian diaspora. Budapest-born Péter Halász, the son of Hungarian Jews, wrote and staged off-Broadway plays and lent his dulcet tones to Radio Free Europe for thirty years. Hungarian Yorkville is the primary setting for his 1967 novel, *Masodik (Second) Avenue*. Béla Király had served in the Hungarian Army during the Second World War, eventually attaining the rank of major general. He escaped from a Siberian exile, sat on death row for five years on trumped up espionage charges, and was elected commander of the anti-Communist national guard in the 1956 rising. In America, Király earned his doctorate in history from Columbia University at the age of fifty and thereafter joined Brooklyn College's faculty. After returning to Hungary in 1990 he served as an independent member of the Hungarian Parliament.³⁶

³⁵ Ibid.; Eszter Balázs and Phil Casoar, "An Emblematic Picture of the Hungarian 1956 Revolution: Photojournalism during the Hungarian Revolution," *Europe-Asia Studies* 58, no. 8 (Dec. 2006): 1241-60; George Gallup, "24.5 Million U.S. Families Willing to Assist Refugees," *Lacrosse Tribune*, December 5, 1956, 28; Kathleen McLaughlin, "Hungarian Exile's Plea to U.N. Warns of a Reprisal on People," *New York Times*, October 29, 1956, 8; "Budapest Ex-Chief Here: Former Mayor Plans to Ask U.N. for Help to City," *New York Times*, January 21, 1957, 10; James P. Niessen, "Hungarian Refugees of 1956: From the Border to Austria, Camp Kilmer, and Elsewhere," *Hungarian Cultural Studies* 9 (2016): 122-136; Rosemary Blackman, "Long Night's Journey into Day: The Hungarians at Camp Kilmer," *Vogue* 129, no. 9 (May 1, 1957): 158, 159, 205, 206, 214; Peter Pastor, "The American Reception and Settlement of Hungarian Refugees," 197-205; Puskás, *Ties That Bind*, 274-75.

³⁶ In the months after the revolution, the Hungarian government complained bitterly that Béla Király and his fellow exiles were spewing forth slanderous accounts of the event. In February 1957, Hungary formalized their accusations, sending a lengthy memorandum to the United Nations Secretary General. In addition to Király, the document named Anna Kéthly, the social democratic politician dubbed Hungary's "Joan of Arc," as well as József Kóvágó, ex-Mayor of Budapest. Kóvágó, like Király, joined the Gotham's Hungarian expat community. Kathleen Teltsch, "Hungary Protests to U.N.," *New York Times*, February 7, 1957, 3.

The stories of 56ers such as Éva Apor Bálintitt and Tibor Arany, while less visible, capture the spirit of this group in equal measure. The communist regime of Mátyás Rakosi persecuted Bálintitt and her family as purported members of the bourgeoisie. After finding herself in the crosshairs of some of the thickest fighting in central Budapest, Bálintitt escaped Hungary in November 1956 clutching only a history textbook she hoped to share with her future progeny. For more than a half century, Bálintitt devoted her time and resources to the Magyar Ház and other ethnic institutions. Arany fought as part of the *Pesti Srácok* (Budapest Boys), the youth brigade that engaged the heavily armed Soviet forces. Stints as a building superintendent in Manhattan and as the driver of an ice cream truck paid the bills, but Arany's true passion was Hungarian-language radio, a vocation he pursued for several decades. In 2001, he, like many others, resettled in a free and democratic Hungary.³⁷

The Exile Community's Cultural Turn

Starting in the early fifties, leaders of Hungarian New York's exile elites prioritized cultural preservation projects. This cultural turn presaged the creation of the Magyar Ház in 1966. In the first such project in 1951, Béla Varga, as head of the HNC, announced a plan to counteract alleged Soviet machinations to eradicate Hungarian culture. Specifically, the HNC enlisted Dr. István Barankovics, a celebrated scholar, dissident newspaper editor, political leader of a grassroots Progressive Catholic movement, and recent exile, to design and manage a multifaceted program of cultural enrichment for the Hungarian diaspora. Speaking through a translator, Barankovics told a gaggle of reporters that:

The Hungarians are an Eastern people, but our culture has always been oriented toward the West. Now the occupiers from the Soviet empire seek to force upon our people a culture oriented toward Russia

³⁷ "56 Stories: Personal Recollections of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution a Hungarian American Perspective," eds. Andrea Lauer Rice and Edith K. Lauer, Lauer Learning and Hungarian American Coalition, accessed May 2, 2020, http://www.hacusa.org/userfiles/file/56_Stories_konyv_DIGITAL_WEB.pdf; Anonymous, "Remembering Bela Kiraly, a Hungarian Officer and Gentleman," *The Economist* (Online); July 6, 2009, accessed May 18, 2020, <https://search-proquest-com.prox.lib.ncsu.edu/docview/872546611?pq-origsite=summon>; David Rennie, "The Hungarian Who Could Have Started World War III," *The Spectator*, October 21, 2006; "Hungarians to Form Freedom Unit Here," *New York Times*, March 9, 1957, 8; "Budapest Revolt Hero Gets Columbia Degree," *New York Times*, June 3, 1959, 28; Tom Hundley, "Hungary's Scars Linger," *Chicago Tribune*, October 22, 2006, accessed May 16, 2020, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2006-10-22-0610220410-story.html>.

. . . Under these conditions, *our culture can only survive among the émigrés of the free world*.³⁸

For the HNC and Barankovics, the need for cultural preservation and the hope of a liberated Hungary remained inseparable. They trusted that communism would fold, extrapolated that Hungarians would install a representative form of government, and imagined a diaspora population longing and fully ready to return. The HNC-sponsored projects differed materially from programming developed by the Önképző Egylet and the Workers' Home, which had sought to maintain Hungarian cultural traditions for migrants who had decided to reside permanently in the U.S. Accordingly, New York's Hungarian community of the early fifties resembled that of the early twentieth century: a place of varying homeland imaginaries, with some firmly rooted, others bracing for the challenge of making a new life, and still others fixed on the prospect of returning to their place of origin.³⁹

Whereas the Barankovics-led effort aimed to keep Hungarian culture at the forefront of the lives of ordinary migrants, Hungarian New York's elite pursued a parallel course targeted at the ethnic professional and upper classes. One product of this approach, the American Hungarian Library and Historical Society (Library Society), established in 1955, would become one of the Magyar Ház's founding institutions. Tibor Eckhardt, now a seasoned, albeit controversial, member of the city's Hungarian leadership, was one of the institution's chief protagonists. In 1959, during the post-Revolution era of good feelings toward Hungarian New Yorkers, the Library Society made a splash by sponsoring a debut concert by the Philharmonia Hungarica at Carnegie Hall. This Vienna-based orchestra comprised over seventy 56ers.⁴⁰

³⁸ "Hungarians Work to Save Culture: Barankovics, Refugee, Heads Drive Here to Counteract Destruction Effort," *New York Times*, October 3, 1951, 19 (emphasis added). Barankovics is sometimes credited with having led the last political party to offer any effective opposition to communist hegemony in postwar Hungary. Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.; "Enter the Church," *Tribune* (UK), Issue 556, September 5, 1947, 5.

⁴⁰ "Hitt-de Hertelendy," *New York Times*, January 18, 1927, 18; "Miss Hitt to Wed Mar. 31: Her Marriage to Andor de Hertelendy to Take Place in Washington," *New York Times*, March 18, 1927, 28; "Elizabeth Hitt a Diplomat's Bride: Wed to Andor de Hertelendy. Secretary of Legation of Hungary, at Her Parents' Home," *New York Times*, April 1, 1927, 16; "Katalin Kádár Lynn, 'At War while at Peace: United States Cold War Policy and the National Committee for a Free Europe, Inc.," in *The Inauguration of Organized Political Warfare: Cold War Organizations Sponsored by the National Committee for a Free Europe/Free Europe Committee*, ed. Katalin Kádár Lynn (Saint Helena, CA: Helena History Press, 2013), 7–70; László Varga and

This concert showed, among other things, how exile organizing within New York's Cold War climate produced strange bedfellows. Eckhardt's event committee included Andor Hertelendy, a Hungarian aristocrat and ex-diplomat who had married into Washington, D.C. high society as well as Count István Révay, then head of the Hungarian section of the National Committee for a Free Europe. At the same time, it included Ferenc Kóréh, a staunchly anticommunist broadcaster for Radio Free Europe who had become an American citizen in 1956. According to the U.S. Justice Department, leading up to and during the Hungarian Holocaust, Kóréh had written and republished virulently antisemitic tracts. Nevertheless, the Eckhardt group partnered with a local committee headed by several prominent Jewish New Yorkers such as Julian Fleischmann, president of a city-based federal bank branch, U.S. Senator Jacob Javits, and Hungarian ex-industrialist Ferenc Chorin, the descendant of a Hungarian Jewish family.⁴¹

Nike Varga, April 7, 1954, House of Representatives, 82nd Congress, 2nd Session, Report 1503 to accompany H.R. 2403, letter from Count Stephen Révay to Albert P. Morano, May 29, 1953; Julian R. Fleischmann, Headed 9th Federal Savings and Loan," *New York Times*, March 5, 1967, 86; "Bergen Attorney in Federal Post," *Bergen Evening Record*, December 30, 1959, 1; "Philharmonia Hungarica Due," *New York Times*, September 22, 1959, 46; "Hungarian Library To Gain by Concert," *New York Times*, October 2, 1959, 26. There were cultural projects outside of those associated with or purporting to represent the HNC. The American Hungarian Art Association (Art Association) illustrates how this phenomenon played out in New York. Formed by dissident Hungarian artists in the metropolitan area, the Art Association soon develop into the World Federation of Hungarian Artists, a diasporic institution with transnational aspirations. "Group Displays Art in Edison," *Bridgewater Courier-News*, November 9, 1964, 9; Margaret Taylor Dry, "The Makks: Husband-Wife Art Team Return," *Austin American-Statesman*, April 28, 1974, 6; After his immigration to the U.S. in 1962, Americo Makk became the public face of the Art Association and its global off-shoot. Makk's many awards included the Albert Einstein Peace Prize and the Outstanding Achievement Award for Western Paintings. He was commissioned to paint portraits of two U.S. presidents, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, as well as Cardinal Mindszenty and Hungarian-born actress Éva Gabor. "Husband-and-Wife Collection Awarded Permanent Home," *Art Business News*, 32 no. 3 (Mar. 2005): 34; Americo Makk, "Legacy Fine Art Gallery, accessed May 20, 2020, <http://lfagallery.net/americomakk/>.

⁴¹ Judy Feigin, "Ferenc Koreh - A Lifetime of Propaganda," U.S. Department of Justice: The Office of Special Investigations: Striving for Accountability in the Aftermath of the Holocaust," December 2008, 229-238; Eric Lichtblau, *The Nazis Next Door: How America Became a Safe Haven for Hitler's Men* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013), 134-35; Kinga Frojimovics, Géza Komoróczy, Viktória Pusztai, and Andrea Strbik, *Jewish Budapest: Monument, Rites, History* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999), 381; Paul Ghali, "Goering Takes Jew's Industry to Free Him," *Binghamton Press*, July 1, 1944, 15; Paul Ghali, "Goering Sells Freedom to Millionaire," *Des Moines Register*, July 2, 1944, 3; Marianne Szegedy-Maszák, *I Kiss Your Hands Many Times; Hearts, Souls, and Wars in Hungary* (New York: Spiegel & Gray, 2013); Prominent Hungarian Jewish Industrialists in Portugal, Folder 4, FDR Library, Marist College. Szabolcs Szita, *Trading in Lives: Operations in Jewish Relief and Rescue Committee in Budapest, 1944-1945* (New York: Central European University Press, 2005), 130-31. Almost thirty years later, during President Clinton's first term, the U.S. Justice Department prosecuted a denaturalization case against Kóréh based on toxically antisemitic articles he wrote or republished leading up to and during the Hungarian Holocaust. Judy Feigin, "Ferenc Koreh - A Lifetime of Propaganda," U.S. Department of Justice: The Office of Special Investigations: Striving for Accountability in the Aftermath of the Holocaust," December 2008, 229-238; Eric Lichtblau, *The Nazis Next Door: How America Became a Safe Haven for Hitler's Men* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013), 134-35.

The Carnegie Hall concert ushered in a period where Hungarian New York's upper strata, dominated by Catholic wartime exiles, constructed a social scene built around philanthropic benefits and balls. As a result, Gotham's print press shifted from chronicling the flight of the 56ers to exoticized coverage of the Barony of Hungarian New York. The former Klára von Csorba, whom media referred to as "Mrs. Paul Porzelt," connoting her marriage to the former governor of the New York stock exchange, assumed primary responsibility for coordinating the Hungarian Catholic high society circuit. The daughter of a Hungarian aristocrat, Csorba had charted her own course as an actress and singer while still in her teens. Upon immigrating to the U.S. in 1950, she earned instant bona fides by touting her family's intimate relationship with Cardinal Mindszenty, whose arrest had by then become an American cause célèbre. In accordance with Gotham high society's heavily gendered distribution of labor, she teamed up with a rotating list of countesses and baronesses, including the spouses of many of the Magyar Ház's eventual founders, to plan and publicize annual fêtes like the Hungarian Catholic League of America Charity Ball and the Hungarian Piarist Ball, as well as special events such as a concerto performed by the renowned pianist, Géza Anda, and a reception honoring Archduke Otto von Habsburg. Countess László Széchenyi, born Gladys Vanderbilt, brought gravitas and celebrity status to these occasions, sometimes acting as an honorary chair.⁴² Judging by the loyal patronage of American diplomat John Chambers Hughes, America's one-time "permanent representative" to the North American Treaty Organization (NATO), these events not only whetted the social appetites of New York's upper-class Hungarians but won favor with influential members of America's Cold War intelligentsia.⁴³

⁴² Gladys Vanderbilt, the New York-born daughter of Cornelius Vanderbilt, married Count László Jenő Maria Henrik Simon Széchenyi, who, among other things, served as the Hungarian minister to the U.S., in 1908. Count Széchenyi was the great-nephew of István Széchenyi, a contemporary of Lajos Kossuth. He died in 1938. "Nobles Come for Wedding: Titled Kinsfolk of Count Széchenyi Arrive," *Los Angeles Times*, January 15, 1908, 11; "The House of Szechenyi in Magyar Annals: Long and Hungarian Family into which Miss Gladys Vanderbilt Will be Married To-morrow," *New York Times*, January 26, 1908, SM4; "Count Szechenyi, Ex-Envoy Is Dead: Husband of the Former Gladys Vanderbilt Was Hungarian Minister to U.S.," *New York Times*, July 6, 1938, 23.

⁴³ Inez Robb, "Hungary's Hildegard 'Fond' of America; Wears Medal, Gift of Cardinal Mindszenty," *Scranton Times-Tribune*, May 17, 1950, 37; "Paul Porzelt," *New York Times*, August 24, 1984, D15; "Hungarian Unit Plans Sixth Ball Here on Jan. 23: The Catholic League of America to Hold Fete for Victims of Reds," *New York Times*, January 9, 1960, 13; "Hungarian Unit Plans a Benefit Here on Jan. 21: League of America to Hold Charity Ball in Pierre Ballroom," *New York Times*, January 6, 1961, 24;

PART III: MAGYAR HÁZ: HUNGARIAN NEW YORK'S PUTATIVE HEADQUARTERS

Today, the Magyar Ház announces on its website that it aspires to be “a community establishment, a stronghold where the Hungarian-American diaspora can experience and maintain its Hungarian identity and cultivate Hungarian culture and language, but also to create a bridge between Hungarian, Hungarian-American, and American societies.”⁴⁴ The house’s materiality, its role in ethnic formation, cultivation, and preservation, as well as its connection to broader Hungarian transnational networks, all find voice within this contemporary mission statement. The Magyar Ház’s self-definition, especially its adherence to a strictly Magyar-Christian conception of Hungarian identity, however, conflates, distorts and, in some cases, elides Hungarian New York’s complex local, translocal, and transnational history, as well as its heterogeneity. Part III foregrounds these issues while examining the Magyar Ház in three historical phases: its founding era from its roots in the mid-fifties to the early seventies; its maturation and decline from the early seventies to the early twenty-first century; and its renaissance from 2009 to the present.⁴⁵

The Magyar Ház’s Founding Era

Hungarian New York’s exile elites opened the Magyar Ház in 1966 as an extension and culmination of their politically inspired cultural turn. Specifically, it emerged from the nearly catastrophic failure of the fledgling Library Society. Hungarian New Yorkers had dreamed of a library since the Önképző Egylet’s birth. In 1955, the exile elites formed the Library Society to “rescue” a sizeable collection of English-language works by or about Hungarian Americans, known as “Hungarica,”

“Concert by Geza Anda to Assist Hungarians,” *New York Times*, November 1, 1961, 44; “Reception Planned for Archduke Otto,” *New York Times*, April 9, 1961, 90.

⁴⁴ “Welcome,” New York-I Magyar Ház/Hungarian House of New York, accessed May 1, 2020, <http://www.hungarianhouse.org/en/>.

⁴⁵ Paul A. Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary: Religion, Nationalism, and Antisemitism, 1890-1944* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 1-9, 225-37.

from a veritable house arrest at the Library of Congress (LOC).⁴⁶ Károly “Charles” Feleky, an immigrant from Budapest, amassed the collection at his own expense from 1895 to his death in 1930. For years, Feleky had kept the Hungarian National Museum apprised of his avocation, even sending it clippings and articles. Accordingly, upon his death, the Hungarian government acquired the collection and, from 1937-1942, operated the Hungarian Reference Library of New York, even displaying the books at the 1939 World’s Fair.⁴⁷

The U.S. government deposited the collection, seized during World War II, with the LOC. The Library Society, having closely monitored these events, reached out to the LOC to offer the collection a good home. Initially, the Library Society planned to house the works at an East 85th Street brownstone but exile leaders repurposed that space for refugee relief for those displaced by the Hungarian Revolution. Scrambling for an alternative, the Library Society purchased a run-down structure on East 84th Street. After receiving the collection, it struggled, and ultimately failed, to meet the LOC’s strictures for storage conditions, public access, and professional management. As a result, the LOC recalled the materials in the early sixties. Undaunted by this misstep, the Library Society, now a fully incorporated non-profit entity with an active donor base, considered other ways to fulfill its prime directive: “to promote interest in and knowledge of Hungary, to gather and preserve books and material with

⁴⁶ The AHL’s founding members included János Pelényi, Alexander St. Iványi, Baron Francis Neumann de Végvár, Tibor Eckhardt, and Ottó Hámos. “About Us,” American Hungarian Library and Historical Society/Amerikai Magyar Könyvtár és Történelmi Társulat <https://www.hungarianlibrary.org/>.

⁴⁷ Kenneth E. Nyirády, *The History of the Feleky Collection and Its Acquisition by the Library of Congress* (Washington, D.C.: European Division, 1995), 1-14; James P. Niessen, “Documenting the Hungarian Heritage of the U.S.: Efforts at Home and Abroad,” *Slavic & East European Information Resources* 14, no. 4 (2013): 234-41; Elemér Bakó, “Hungarica,” *Quarterly Journal of Current Acquisitions* 13, no. 3 (May 1956): 200-20. Initially Feleky found work as a musician and later managed a theater in midtown Manhattan. His day job funded his real passion, collecting books. The term bibliophile seems inadequate to capture Feleky’s commitment to this avocation. Visitors to his apartment on West 114th Street in the 1920s reported that his collection, estimated at more than eight thousand books and over one hundred thousand magazine articles and clippings, filled an entire room floor to ceiling. In addition to housing Feleky’s opus, the Hungarian Reference Library of New York served as a venue for lectures, exhibits, and cultural events. Zsolt Nagy emphasizes that the Hungarian Reference Library was the realization of the Hungarian government’s long-held goal of establishing a government-sponsored cultural beachhead in New York City. This, in turn, was part of a broader plan of cultural diplomacy with the United States. Zsolt Nagy, *Great Expectations and Interwar Realities: Hungarian Cultural Diplomacy, 1918-1941* (New York: Central European Press, 2017), 119-25.

historical value and make them available to the public.” At a minimum, meeting this goal would require a better facility.⁴⁸

In 1958, while the Library Society was acquiring the Feleky collection, a group of exiles founded the Széchenyi István Society (Széchenyi Society), with an eye toward supporting post-Revolution refugees. The Széchenyi Society aimed to balance migrants’ basic needs, such as jobs, food, clothes, and housing, with a program of social camaraderie and cultural enrichment. Count István Széchenyi served as an apt namesake for an institution led by Hungarian aristocrats. According to Hungary’s predominant historical mythos, Széchenyi, often referred to as “the greatest Hungarian,” symbolizes the enlightened nobility. Ferenc Chorin, the first among equals within the Széchenyi Society’s founding circle, supported the institution with his money and ideas. Through regular lectures and networking opportunities, he developed a schema for connecting recent migrants, especially middle- and working-class 56ers, with business and employment opportunities.⁴⁹

From 1963 to 1964, these two exile institutions teamed up with the Hungarian Catholic League to form the American Foundation for Hungarian Literature and Education (the Foundation) in 1964.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ “American Hungarian Library and Historical Society,” American Hungarian Library and Historical Society, accessed May 2, 2020, <https://www.hungarianlibrary.org/>; Nyirády, *The History of the Feleky Collection*, 1-30; Tibor Frank, “Interwar New York-City of Europeans: Forging a New Identity,” *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* 16, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 145-170; “Charles Feleky Dead: Manager of Martin Beck Theatre Was Prominent as Musician,” *New York Times*, October 5, 1930, 28; Niessen, “Documenting the Hungarian Heritage of the U.S.,” 234-41; Bakó, “Hungarica,” 200-20; “Hungarian Library Open: That Nation’s Minister Calls It ‘Important Cultural Bond,’” *New York Times*, April 21, 1938, 15.

⁴⁹ “The Széchenyi István Society,” New York-i Magyar Ház/Hungarian House, <http://www.hungarianhouse.org/en/category/about-us/owner-organizations/szechenyi-society/>; The Széchenyi Istvan Society Inc./ Széchenyi Istvan Társaság (SZIT) - NEW YORK, <http://szit.info/>. In the 1820s, Count Széchenyi donated the equivalent of a year’s salary to establish the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Interestingly, in his own time, Széchenyi acted as a counterweight to Lajos Kossuth, who he characterized as rash and radical. Although commonly characterized as a political reformer, he believed in managed change over time in the mold of a classical conservative such as Britain’s Edmund Burke. The modern-day adoration of both Széchenyi and Kossuth suggests a kind of historical cognitive dissonance made possible, perhaps, on the plasticity of collective memory. John Connelly, *From Peoples into Nation: A History of Eastern Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020), 111-14; András Gerő, *Modern Hungarian Society in the Making: The Unfinished Experience* (translated by James Patterson and Enikő Koncz) (New York: Central European University Press, 1995), 60-70; Alexander Maxwell and Alexander Campbell, “István Széchenyi, the Casino Movement, and Hungarian Nationalism, 1827–1848,” *Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* 42, no. 3 (2014): 508-25; George Bárány, *Stephen Széchenyi and the Awakening of Hungarian Nationalism, 1791-1841* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968). István Hargittai and Magdolna Hargittai, *Budapest Scientific: A Guidebook* (New York: University Press, 2015).

⁵⁰ Over the years, the Catholic League handed over its ownership rights to local Hungarian Franciscans, who in turn passed it on to the Hungarian Scout Association in Exeter, which has been the third co-owner ever since. The AFHLE was formally registered as a not-for-profit under the New York State law on April 16, 1964.

The Foundation envisioned establishing a Hungarian headquarters in Manhattan. More than twenty years after Tibor Eckhardt's arrival in America, the exile elites, who once hoped to return to a liberated homeland, seemed ready to put down more permanent roots. In September 1966, the Foundation purchased a property on East 82nd Street, in the heart of Hungarian Yorkville.⁵¹ Under an agreement forged by the co-owners, the Foundation would maintain the physical property while each owner's right of transfer was limited to ethnic institutions with similar cultural objectives subject to approval of the other owners. This clause ensured the property would remain in the hands of the Hungarian community. The agreement further barred the co-owners from financially benefitting from any future sale of the property, earmarking profits for other organizations engaged in Hungarian scientific and cultural activities. The seller, the Central Turn Verein (CTV), had acquired it in 1893 with the generous help of Jacob Ruppert, its primary patron.⁵² The transfer of one of ethnic Yorkville's iconic structures from

⁵¹ The purchase of the East 82nd Street structure occurred within the broader context of a wave of ethnic institution building within Hungarian North America during the fifties and sixties. Hungarian Americans in New Brunswick, New Jersey, provide a nearby example. Leaders in the New Brunswick enclave formed the American Hungarian Studies Foundation (AHSF) in 1956. In 1963, the AHSF, through Dr. August Molnar, its president, announced its intent to expand the study and preservation of Hungarian culture in the U.S. It took the AHSF more than twenty-five years to raise the funds necessary to open the Hungarian Heritage Center in 1989. "Hungarian Refugees Chosen for a Unique Program at Rutgers: Will Live and Study on Campus During 8-Week Orientation program Sponsored by Scientists," *New Brunswick Daily Home News*, January 17, 1957, 1; "Rutgers Study Foundation Works to Keep Alive Hungarian Cultural Heritage in U.S.," *The Courier News (Plainfield, NJ)*, April 27, 1963, 3; "Hungarian Studies Group Plans Third Benefit Ball," *New Brunswick Daily Home News*, January 28, 1966, 10; "Hungarian-born Nobel Winner to receive Foundation's Award," *New Brunswick Home News*, May 6, 1973, C16.

⁵² Ruppert hoped the property would resurrect the moribund institution. Just a few years prior, its membership roll exceeded two thousand, making it the second largest turner society in the city, behind only the New York Turn Verein at East 85th Street and Lexington Avenue. The organization's good fortunes changed suddenly in the early 1890s following the death of its popular president, Charles Nehrbus, a municipal court judge and devoted Tammany man. The depleted CTV could not keep pace with the substantial mortgage, thereby precipitating the move to East 82nd Street. The CTV recovered almost as quickly as it had declined. By 1895, the group ran a dizzying array of programs from this single location, including kindergarten classes, gymnastics training, fencing competitions, and chess and drama clubs. In early twentieth century, the CTV claimed a membership of 2,500. In the 1920s, the CTV trained and sponsored boxers who competed in Yorkville's robust fighting scene. The CTV held onto the property through the successive storms of the Bund years, World War II, and the covetous developers of the late fifties. "Tammany's Formal Approval," *New York Times*, October 20, 1883: 1; "Tammany's Ticket Named," *New York Times*, October 16, 1889: 1; "Judge Nehrbus Dead: Carried Off by Consumption Aggravated by the Grip," *New York Times*, March 16, 1890, 13; "A New Turn Verein: The Central, An Offshoot of the New-York Selecting Headquarters," *New York Times*, February 1, 1886, 8; "A Gorgeous Clubhouse: The New Home of the Central Turn Verein," *New York Times*, October 12, 1889, 9; "Another Club in Trouble: Brewer Ruppert to Run the Central Turn Verein," *New York Times*, January 15, 1893: 8.

German to Hungarian hands, seemed to symbolize the two community's divergent fortunes in the mid-sixties.⁵³

Conversely, the Magyar Ház opened while Hungarian Yorkville's fortunes were rising. Although most Hungarian families with ties to the neighborhood's prewar period had relocated by the 1960s, a few stalwarts remained. By the sixties, the wartime and Revolutionary refugees who replenished their ranks had found their footing. Further, Greater New York, and Yorkville in particular, continued to act as a magnet drawing Hungarian émigrés throughout the decade. These various waves breathed new life into St. Stephen of Hungary Roman Catholic Church and inspired the 1960 construction of the Hungarian Reformed Church of New York on East 82nd Street. H.P. Koenig's 1964 travel column presents a snapshot of Hungarian Yorkville from an outsider's perspective:

From Yorkville down along 2nd avenue the neighborhood becomes predominantly Hungarian, with different shops featuring other specialties, another language being spoken. Here, spices stand in jars, ground paprika is sold by the half or full pound, restaurants serve up a fare belonging to the Budapest of old.⁵⁴

As the Magyar Ház entered this distinct balance of old and new, its potential to serve the ethnic community broadly rather than provide an exclusive space for Hungarian aristocrats and political leaders remained an open question.⁵⁵

During its founding era, the Magyar Ház not only housed the activities of its owner-institutions but did function as the exile elites' clubhouse in the mold of the city's Harvard Club. Through the sixties and into the seventies, the Barony of Hungarian New York continued to organize fundraising balls and

⁵³ The governing agreement called for the Foundation to maintain the physical property while each owner's right of transfer was limited to ethnic institutions with similar objectives subject to approval of the other owners. The founders intended for this clause to ensure that the property would remain "in the hands of the Hungarian community." Furthermore, in the event the AFHLE were to be dissolved and the Hungarian House sold, none of the co-owners shall benefit from the proceeds, and the entire amount is to be offered to organizations engaged in Hungarian scientific and cultural activities. Interview of Ildikó Nagy by author June 12, 2018.

⁵⁴ H.P. Koenig, "The Traveler's New York: How to Journey Around the World Without Leaving Manhattan," *Chicago Tribune*, April 26, 1964, § 6-12.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

galas to assist Hungarian refugees in the U.S. as well as those residing in Western Europe and other points within the diaspora. The Magyar Ház recognizes Edward “Ede” Neumann de Végvár and Péter Schell, two aristocrats in the center of these activities, as founders. Tibor Eckhardt, the consummate homeland politician, Ferenc Chorin, the industrialist of Jewish ancestry, and Károly Pulvári, a successful academic and scientist, round out the short-list of those granted this title. Starting with Chorin’s death two years before the Magyar Ház opened its doors, all the founders but Dr. Pulvári, who resided in Washington D.C., had died by 1974. As the exile elites faded from the scene, a new generation, one less directly tied to entrenched social hierarchies, charted a new path into the future. They envisioned an ethnic headquarters capable of contributing to the social and cultural needs of a wider swathe of New York’s Hungarian community.⁵⁶

The Magyar Ház’s Second Act: Early 1970s to the Early Twenty-First Century

The Magyar Ház’s second act is best understood through the labors of four key émigrés, each of whom provide entry into distinct aspects of the institution. Viktor Fischer, arguably the Magyar Ház’s most universally revered figure, led the Hungarian Scouting Association in Exeter’s local troops for decades. Róbert Harkay, commonly referred to as the Magyar Ház’s “greatest director,” served in the leadership of every owner-institution at one time or another, managed the house’s day-to-day

⁵⁶ “Dr. Tibor Eckhardt, 84, Dead; A Former Hungarian Diplomat,” *New York Times*, September 5, 1972, 40; “About 1,000 Persons Attend Service for Francis Chorin,” *New York Times*, November 10, 1964, 47; “Peter Schell, Ex-Minister of Interior of Hungary, 75,” *New York Times*, March 6, 1974, 44. Some of these events featured the presentation of debutantes, usually ten to twenty young women of Hungarian descent. “Ball on Saturday Will Raise Funds for Hungarians: Catholic League Aides to gather at Pierre for Annual Fete,” *New York Times*, January 22, 1967, 75. Debutantes Waltz at Hungarian Ball,” *New York Times*, January 28, 1968, 69; Lisa Hammel, “Hungarians Have a Ball With Czardas and Go-Go,” *New York Times*, February 15, 1969, 22; “Benefit on Jan. 31 to Aid Hungarians,” *New York Times*, January 22, 1970, 33. The list of those who could and should be considered founders of the Magyar Ház is longer. For example, a *New York Times* obituary applied the label “co-founder” to László Pathy, a highly respected and successful international businessman. “Ladislav Pathy, 87, Dead: Former Business Executive,” *New York Times*, July 26, 1984, B8. His son, Laurence Pathy, confirmed this fact in a letter to me, while declining to provide any further details about his father’s association with the Magyar Ház. Letter from Laurence G. Pathy to author, November 4, 2019. From 1953 to 1972, Dr. Pulvári was a professor at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., and from 1972 until his death in 1999, he was a professor emeritus of that same institution. Dr. Pulvári was a prolific scholar who published numerous articles in the field of ferroelectrics and held seventy-five patents in the U.S. and in other jurisdictions. Interestingly, in 1978, he received the “American Medal” from the Daughters of the American Revolution. Letter from John J. Convey, Provost, Catholic University of America, to Members of the University Community, May 11, 1999, in private archives of the Catholic University of America, provided by John A. Judge, Dean of Engineering, The Catholic University of America.

operations, and helped construct its vision for three decades. Barbara Bollók, a Yorkville resident with boundless energy and a hunger for organizing ethnic events and programs, soared above Hungarian New York's factional tendencies. László Hámos followed in his father's footsteps by becoming the head of the Library Society, built and oversaw a transnational human rights organization, and worked behind the scenes to ensure the long-term prospects of the Magyar Ház.

Viktor Fischer: A Tisztelt (The Respected)

Since relocating to America in 1951 as a teenager, Viktor Fischer earned respect within Hungarian New York and beyond. He speaks impeccable Hungarian despite having lived and worked in the Greater New York area for many decades. Fischer is well-versed on his homeland's historical, literary, and musical legacy. He and his Hungarian-born wife, Jutka, taught their three sons the Magyar language and are attempting to do the same with their six grandchildren. "I feel comfortable with both of my identities," Fischer reports, as if channeling Hungarian New York's early twentieth century hyphenates.⁵⁷ By virtue of his revered status, linguistic acumen, and cultural literacy, Fischer has been a key factor in the Magyar Ház endurance as a site of Hungarian identity and cultural heritage.⁵⁸

Fischer credits his lifelong commitment to nurturing and passing on his Hungarian identity to the Hungarian Scouting Association in Exteris, or *Külföldi Magyar Cserkészszövetség* (HSA-Exteris). His father, a Budapest-based engineer who had to take work on the line of a tool and die plant post-migration, escorted Fischer to his first HSA-Exteris meeting at the home of Zoltán Vasvári, a former officer in the Hungarian Army known in Hungarian New York's circles as Zolibá. The New York unit of the HSA-Exteris got off to a modest start, with Zolibá forming a troop of less than ten boys in 1951, more than a decade prior to the Magyar Ház's opening. Fischer, following in Zolibá's footsteps, led the New York troop for several years as a young adult before assuming ever greater responsibility within the

⁵⁷ Interview of Viktor Fischer interview by author, August 8, 2017.

⁵⁸ Ibid; Viktor Fischer, interview by Réka Pigniczky in Fillmore, New York in August 2015. Interview part of the Memory Project: A Visual History Archive of Hungarian Emigration, translated by Olga Cupp, <https://memoryproject.online/viktor-fischer/>.

broader HSA-Exteris movement. He nevertheless was instrumental in keeping a close eye on the local troops' progress and continuity, assisting, whenever necessary. Among his many responsibilities, Fischer serves as the voluntary editor of the HSA Exteris magazine, *Vezetők Lapja*, or *Leader's Magazine*, a commitment he has maintained for the past fifteen years.⁵⁹

Hungarian Scouting, an offshoot of a larger movement attributed to British army officer Sir Robert Baden-Powell, traces its roots to the early twentieth century. Hungary hosted the Fourth World Scout Jamboree in 1933, relishing the chance to enhance the nation's international reputation. Despite Nazi pressure to disband Hungarian Scouting, the movement survived World War II. In 1948, however, Hungary's government outlawed the practice to pave the way for the Pioneers, a communist facsimile. Meanwhile, in 1945 and 1946, former leaders in DP camps turned to Scouting as a means of cultural preservation, self-determination, and socio-political resistance to their homeland's communist mutation. This historically freighted version of Hungarian Scouting traveled with DPs to new ethnic settlements in the West, including Greater New York.⁶⁰

Hungarian Scouting blossomed in Gotham despite the presence of community skepticism. Fischer, for instance, recalls how one prominent Hungarian cleric refused to assist with Zolibá's recruitment efforts due to a preference for rapid assimilation. Nonetheless, by the mid-fifties, Yorkville served as the base camp for Hungarian Scouting in the state, with meetings often held at the Szent Imre Young American-Hungarian Club on East 81st Street. Starting in 1960, girls gained the ability to engage

⁵⁹ Viktor Fischer, "History of Hungarian Scouting in New York," New York-i Magyar Ház/Hungarian House, http://www.hungarianhouse.org/en/history-of-hungarian-scouting-in-nyc-post/?set_cat_id=41. Hungarian Scouting also prepared Fischer to excel in his chosen vocation: a math teacher in the New York public school system. As early as his sophomore year in high school, he was organizing athletic events in the New York area through his Scouting network. The district wide "Track and Field Day" that emerged from this modest beginning is in its seventh decade, owing to Fischer's leadership. Interview of Viktor Fischer interview by author, August 8, 2017.

⁶⁰ "Hungarian Scouting in Exteris," American Hungarian Museum/Amerikai Magyar Múzeum, accessed September 1, 2020, <https://magyarmuseum.org/hungarian-scouting-in-exteris/hungarian-scouting-in-exteris/>; *Troop 214: 214-es Csapat*, directed by George Csicsery, ed. Gabriella Koncz (DVD, Zala Films, 2008); George Fogarasi, "Confessions of a Hungarian Boy Scout," *Queen's Quarterly* 113, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 392-401. The 1933 jamboree was held at the Royal Forest of Gödöllő just outside of Budapest. Erika Papp Faber, "August 2-15, 1933: 4th World Jamboree in Gödöllő," *Magyar News Online*, no. 146, September 2020, <http://www.magyarnews.org/news.php?viewStory=2556>.

in Scouting with the creation of the Gotham's first all-female troop, named in honor of Dorottya Kanizsay, a storied educator of aristocratic young women in the early sixteenth century. Shortly after their establishment, the New York troops plugged into a developing North American Scouting network. Starting in 1967, the Magyar Ház served as the principal meeting place for the local troops, a tradition still intact. In 1993, HSA-Exteris joined the tri-partite accord as an owner-institution of the Magyar Ház, replacing the Hungarian Catholic League of America. Fischer was a natural fit to represent the HSA-Exteris on the Magyar Ház's management committee, a position he has held for nearly a quarter century.⁶¹

At least in its current iteration, the Magyar Ház's continued existence depends on inter-generational cultural transmission. Presumably, young people who matriculate through Hungarian Scouting will be well positioned to lead the institution in the future. Accordingly, Fischer sees the HSA-Exteris as the single most vital program within its walls. An age-appropriate knowledge of the Hungarian language acts as a prerequisite for participating in Scouting, as scout leaders conduct all troop meetings and business in the mother tongue. Thus, parents considering Scouting must teach their children Hungarian in the home, as Fischer did for his sons, or enroll them in the weekend Hungarian language school, which currently meets in the Magyar Ház as well as the First Hungarian Baptist Church on East 80th Street. This full immersion approach tends to produce fierce loyalty to the practice of retaining linguistic and cultural literacy. Conversely, its high demands narrow the field of potential participants.⁶²

Given that HSA-Exteris is quite literally a space where Hungarian identity is shaped, Hungarian Scouting's historical entanglement with Christianity bears scrutiny. Hungarian youth of Jewish parentage participated in Hungarian Scouting throughout the movement's formative period. Growing antisemitism during the Second World War disrupted this pattern, however, as some troops barred non-Christian

⁶¹ "History of Hungarian Scouting in New York."

⁶² Viktor Fischer interview by author, August 8, 2017.

children. Scholar Katherine Magyarody argues that such exclusionary practices violated Hungarian Scouting's purportedly humanist ideology as set forth in the principle: "A Scout regards every other Scout as his brother."⁶³ It is unclear whether any of those affiliated with compliant troops found their way into the DP camps. Today, HSA-Exteris offers its programs to children regardless of ethnic or religious background. Nonetheless, some families might view its Christian connections as promoting a bounded definition of Hungarian identity. On a slightly different note, Gabor Bodnár, widely hailed as the "father" of the HSA-Exteris, and the founders of this worldwide organization, through literature and reenactments, infused Magyar founding myths dating back to the ninth century as well as purported links to Hunnic progenitors centuries earlier into contemporary ethnicity consumed by scouts. This "deep history" sought to develop diasporic unity through an unbroken and almost timeless depiction of what it means to be Hungarian.⁶⁴

The troops operating from the Magyar Ház show no signs of deviating from Hungarian Scouting's humanist foundations. Fischer stresses Hungarian Scouting's growing diversity, as more and more children from exogamous marriages participate. Ildikó Nagy, the Magyar Ház's Hungarian-born director, offers a notable example of this phenomenon. Nagy, who grew up in Hungary long after Scouting disappeared and who later married an American born musician, had never seen the institution in practice before coming to the Magyar Ház. Initially, she bristled at the uncompromising discipline and quasi-militaristic atmosphere at the meetings. Over time, however, she came to value Scouting's emphases on personal networking and cultural preservation. As a result, her daughter, Anna, donned the scout uniform. Undoubtedly, Viktor Fischer felt pleased.⁶⁵

⁶³ Katherine Magyarody, "Hungarian Scouting in Exile: Frame Narratives and the Creation of a Diasporic Community," *Hungarian Studies Review* 42, no. 1 (Spring-Fall, 2015): 141.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 135-62; Fogarosi, "Confessions of a Hungarian Boy Scout," 392-400.

⁶⁵ Ildikó Nagy interview by author, June 12, 2018.

Róbert Harkay: A Szikla (The Rock)

Róbert Harkay acted as the Magyar Ház's rock. At one point or another, Harkay held an officer position with every one of the three owner-institutions. He served as the Foundation's first corporate secretary, later becoming its president. Harkay was a founding member of the Széchenyi Society, joining in 1954. As a board member, first appointed in 1966, and then president during the 1980s, he helped the Széchenyi Society reimagine its mission as one of conveying Hungarian culture after exhausting its initial work assisting with the resettlement of 56ers who found their way to New York. Despite rising through the ranks to become the Foundation's chief visionary and planner, he was never reticent to get his hands dirty, often quite literally, as the Magyar Ház's day-to-day manager. Most importantly, he shepherded this collective enterprise of localized Hungarian heritage through the Gimbels' year of the seventies and eighties, the season during which ethnic Yorkville's erosion accelerated. Put simply, Harkay was the right leader at the right time. Those who were there universally recognize him as the Magyar Ház's finest director.

Harkay was born in Budapest on July 8, 1923, two years after the Treaty of Trianon, the only child of László Hazelmayer-Havas and Mária Magdolna Szabó. His father hailed from Esztergom, Hungary's medieval capital and the seat of the Roman Catholic Church in the country. A career military man twice wounded in the Great War, Hazelmayer-Havas served in the Csendőrség, the Hungarian Gendarmerie, attaining the rank of ezredes, or colonel. Harkay's mother grew up in Sopron, a city in Hungary's northwestern corner, closer to Vienna than Budapest. Embodying her nation's musical traditions, she became an accomplished pianist and music teacher. The Second World War radically changed Harkay's life course. It disrupted him from completing of a doctoral program in law and political science at the Pázmány Péter Catholic University and separated him from his parents. In what the family considered a "miracle," he was reunited with his parents at the Pocking DP camp in Bavaria after the war. Harkay served as an interpreter, escort, and resettlement officer for the agencies that operated the

camp. He arrived in the U.S. in 1950 through a National Catholic Welfare Conference scholarship and soon began attending St. John's University. In 1953, Harkay met his future wife, Josephine, at a Manhattan-based lecture. After a two-year courtship, the couple married in 1955, the same year Harkay took the oath of citizenship.⁶⁶

Under Harkay's leadership, the Magyar Ház transcended its origins as a clubhouse for Hungarian elites. The three owner-institutions allowed him wide latitude to chart this new path, a testament to Harkay's diplomacy and trustworthiness. He balanced the goals of providing programming aimed directly at the Hungarian American community with the need to translate Hungarian culture, traditions, and values to external audiences. Guided by Harkay, the Library Society and the Széchenyi Society collaborated to organize and sponsor a broader array of concerts, plays, and lectures. As Yorkville's Hungarian community declined, the Magyar Ház increasingly served as a diasporic hub, marking its increased accessibility to Hungarian Americans regardless of class or status. Additionally, starting in 1990, Harkay played a crucial role in holding adult language learning classes at the Magyar Ház in response to an intensifying interest in genealogy and ethnic heritage.⁶⁷

Harkay was also an unabashed Cold Warrior. He blended the measured approach of Tibor Eckhardt, who made occasional public addresses while working political back channels, with the edginess of Béla Fabián, a one-time member of the HNC once infamously jailed for protesting in front of

⁶⁶ Email from Josephine Harkay to Steven Lechner, October 7, 2019. Growing up, Harkay traveled with his family to Sopron to visit his maternal grandmother, Karolin Zeich, who died the same year Hungarians took up arms against communist rule in 1956. Email from Josephine Harkay to Steven Lechner, October 7, 2019. Pocking housed the largest number of DPs of any camp within the American zone, with displaced Jews comprising a majority of the population. The Pocking DP Camp was proximate to the former site of the Flossenbürg concentration camp, outside of Weiden, Germany. Thirty thousand people perished at this camp and its nearly satellites. Col. John R. Dabrowski, "U.S. Army Liberates Flossenburg Concentration Camp," *US Army Heritage and Education Center*, April 11, 2008, accessed May 21, 2020, https://www.army.mil/article/8441/u_s_army_liberates_flossenburg_concentration_camp; Thomas Balbierer, "The Boy Who Survived," accessed May 21, 2020, <https://projekte.sueddeutsche.de/artikel/bayern/flossenbuerg-concentration-camp-the-boy-who-survived-e875900/>. Harkay trained as an electrician through the camp's vocational opportunities. Margarete Myers Feinstein, "Jewish Women Survivors in the Displaced Persons Camps of Occupied Germany: Transmitters of the Past, Caretakers of the Present, and Builders of the Future," *Shofar* 24, no.4 (Summer 2006): 83. While working part-time and boarding with a Brooklyn-based family. He also earned credits from Georgetown University and Columbia, and, in 1974, completed an "intensive marketing program," sponsored by his employer, AT & T, at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business. Email from Josephine Harkay.

⁶⁷ Email from Josephine Harkay.

the Soviet Union's office at the UN. Harkay prioritized Hungarian participation in Captive Nations Week, a tradition initiated by the Eisenhower administration in 1959 designed to show solidarity among Americans who hail from nations under authoritarian rule. Harkay lived to see Hungary's communist government collapse in 1989. Afterward, the Magyar Ház hosted multiple members of Hungary's post-communist political class, including József Antall, the first elected Prime Minister, and Árpád Göncz, its popular President. Under Harkay's measured leadership, the Magyar Ház also acted as Hungarian New York's locus to discuss the possibilities of repatriation and pressing compensatory claims for lost property. In 1992, Harkay received the Ellis Island Medal of Honor, established in 1986 as part of the Statue of Liberty's centennial commemoration to recognize foreign-born Americans "who have shown an outstanding commitment to serving our nation either professionally, culturally, or civically," at a ceremony held in Ellis Island's great hall. Harkay's sudden death in November of that year shocked New York's Hungarian community. Given his body of work, it is not surprising that his shadow would loom large as the Magyar Ház struggled to find its equilibrium in the post-Cold War-era.⁶⁸

Barbara Bollók: A Híd (The Bridge)

In the world of contemporary Hungarian American heritage, Barbara Bollók bridges potential divides of time, space, and ideology. She sees Hungarian identity as a gift to share generously, not as a tool to draw lines. She refused to see religion as a suitable way to parse ethnic identity. For several

⁶⁸ Maggie Jackson, "Migration: Young Immigrants Are Building Nest Eggs in Manhattan's Yorkville Area While Retirees Are Returning to Their Homeland," *Los Angeles Times (AP)*, December 22, 1991, A32; Clifford J. Levy, "East Europeans in U.S. Reclaiming Lost Estates," *New York Times*, August 13, 1991, A11; George Gomori, "Árpád Göncz Obituary: Writer, Translator and Playwright Who Was the First President of Independent Hungary," *The Guardian*, October 7, 2015, accessed May 28, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/07/arpad-gonczi>; "Bela Fabian, 77, Exile Leader of Anti-Red Protests Here, Dies," *New York Times*, December 28, 1966, 37. Béla Fabián and Tibor Eckhardt were bitter foes during Hungary's interwar period. As one of the highest-ranking Hungarian Jews in the government in the 1920s, Fabián accused the antisemitic group known as the Association of Awakening Hungarians of, among other things, covering up religiously motivated murders. Likely due more to the exigencies of the Cold War moment than any change of heart, the two men often found common ground within New York's exile political community. Randolph L. Braham, "Right Radicalism in the Immediate Post-war Period," in *Hostages of Modernization: Studies on Modern Antisemitism, 1870-1933/39, Austria-Hungary-Poland-Russia*, ed. Herbert Strauss (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1993), 917-18. For his part in this rapprochement, Fabian was attacked from the left as "a traitor of Jewry" by the Hungarian newspaper *Egyleti Elet*. Fabian received \$100,000 in a libel suit against the paper. "Hungarian Leader Wins \$100,000 Suit," *New York Times*, September 13, 1955, 62.

decades, she has lent her skills for organizing as well as her desire to see others happy and content to the Magyar Ház, the Hungarian Reformed Church, and many other institutions inside and outside of Hungarian Yorkville. She has been a member of the Önképző Egylet since 1974 despite her Christian Hungarian affiliation.⁶⁹

Bollók and the Magyar Ház grew up alongside one another. She arrived in New York as a gangly teenager from the small town of Kömörő in northeastern Hungary in 1964, the year that the exile elites formed the Foundation. Unlike the Barony of Hungarian New York, however, Bollók claimed no aristocratic pedigree or special political status. Rather, she crossed the Atlantic on her first ever plane ride determined “to be somebody.”⁷⁰ Bollók gained proficiency in English from a standing start in just three months, and four years later graduated Far Rockaway High School on time and in good stead. Thereafter, she took a job at a Hungarian travel agency in Yorkville, an ideal fit for her bilingual skills and magnetic personality. While still in her mid-twenties, Bollók purchased another travel agency on East 80th Street. For more than forty-five years, she has shepherded travelers to and from Europe, even arranging for Steuben paraders to visit Gotham. Bollók plans to publish her story as a memoir entitled *Fifty Years in America*, and is in the final stages of constructing a permanent historical exhibit at her motel in the Catskills displaying an eclectic mix of Hungarian American artifacts and photos as well as Kennedy family and Pearl Harbor memorabilia.⁷¹

Bollók has welcomed any place, practice, or organization carrying the potential to unite her co-ethnics through a shared sense of Hungarian identity and heritage. She possesses a multi-level historical sensibility: in addition to embracing Hungarian culture and traditions writ large, Bollók understands and values how Hungarian identity manifests in distinct ways on transnational, national, regional, and local

⁶⁹ Barbara Bollók interview by author, September 18, 2019; Barbara Bollók in telephonic discussion with the author, May 25, 2020.

⁷⁰ Kömörő, at the time Bollók was growing up, is near the confluence of Hungary, the eastern portion of Czechoslovakia, the western boundary of Ukraine, then part of the U.S.S.R., and northwestern Romania. Traditionally, this region had a mix of Hungarian Christians and Jews, ethnic Germans, and Slavic peoples. Barbara Bollók Interview.

⁷¹ Ibid.

scales. This perspective partially explains her habitual joining. Bollók is affiliated with the North American Delegation of the Hungarian Association of the Knights of Malta; serves on the American Hungarian Federation's board; played an integral role in New York's fiftieth and sixtieth commemorations of the Hungarian Revolution; heads the Hungarian Theater that has arranged for overseas actors to visit the U.S.; provides translation services to the Hungarian Embassy; advises those authoring books about New York's ethnic foodways; led the Ladies Aid Society at the Hungarian Reformed Church on East 82nd Street; and participates in regional events such as the annual Hungarian Festival in New Brunswick, New Jersey. "I was everywhere" she rightly observes. Bollók's use of the past tense belies her continuing efforts.⁷²

At the heart of all this activity is a burning desire to bring joy through connection. In 1968, Bollók's graduation provided the impetus for her mother to travel to the U.S. for the first time. The ensuing reunion brought together family members separated for nearly sixty years. "I had a feeling that I had to be born to bring the family together," Bollók said. For decades, she has brought this same drive to unite to Hungarian Yorkville and the Magyar Ház. Bollók was awestruck by the uptown Hungarian enclave's coherence and vibrancy from the moment she witnessed it in the mid-sixties. Before then, Yorkville had existed merely as the mythologized setting for her grandfather's early twentieth century migration to America. Now, Bollók experienced firsthand men and women speaking Hungarian on Second Avenue, gypsy music emanating from the Red Tulip, and shoppers pouring into Paprikás Weiss or one of Yorkville's Hungarian butcher shops. She came to see Hungarian Yorkville as the indispensable nexus, a community bound together by ethnic belonging. As the enclave started to vanish before her eyes, Bollók reached for a camera as the best available means to honor what was disappearing. An avocation morphed into an obsession producing thousands of images of Hungarian Yorkville's people and places. "The only way I can hang on to them is [to] take a picture," she explains. Like Kathryn

⁷² Ibid.

Jolowicz, her German American counterpart, Bollók resolved to stay put while others fled. Now, she is as much part of Hungarian Yorkville's heritage landscape as the remaining churches and the Magyar Ház itself.⁷³

Although she has been a longtime member of the Library Society, Bollók's contributions to the Magyar Ház have never relied on a specific office or position. She leads by doing. Bollók has organized children's talent shows, concerts, plays, and even a hundredth birthday celebration for Otto Hámos, the last of the Magyar Ház's founders. An ardent believer in diasporic linguistic preservation, Bollók has a long record of devoting her time and energy to the Hungarian School. In 2014, she curated an exhibition entitled "Remembering a Vibrant Hungarian Neighborhood: Fifty Years of Pictures, Posters, and Film." Just as the Magyar Ház's leaders were turning much of their attention to nurturing regional, national, and transnational networks, Bollók, who some in the Hungarian American community refer to as "Mrs. New York," prioritized the institution's connections to a lived, localized, and threatened visible past within Yorkville's material landscape. Whether the Magyar Ház will continue to feature Hungarian Yorkville's history and legacy in its public-facing programs remains an open question.⁷⁴

László Hámos: Az Olaj A Gépben (The Oil in the Machinery)

László Hámos maintained vivid memories of Hungarian Yorkville his entire life. He never forgot the enclave's female elders who gathered regularly in his father's cavernous office near the corner of East 84th Street and Third Avenue for a social hour carried on in a hybrid dialect. "I would sit in the corner and listen to them chirping away," he recalled, "it was such an atmosphere."⁷⁵ Those women nicknamed him "*Messzire csúszott*," translated as "*He slid far away*." In truth, Hámos never strayed from his Hungarian identity and community, which he defined in diasporic as well as local terms. For more

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.; Fischer Interview; Interview of Barbara Bollók by Joan Roth, June 10, 2016, New York Public Library, <http://oralhistory.nypl.org/interviews/barbara-bollok-w3gydk>.

⁷⁵ Interview of László Hámos by author, June 12, 2018.

than fifty years, he devoted his professional life and an inordinate amount of his spare time, to Hungarian American causes. He was a local ethnic leader on par with Alexander Konta and Morris Cukor but also a giant within the political wing of the global Hungarian diaspora. Those who would dare to lead in these ways invite fire from critics, and Hámos was no exception. Yet, the thongs of family, friends, colleagues, and admirers who celebrated his life at a memorial service at the Magyar Ház on May 11, 2019 could barely fathom the void left by his departure.⁷⁶

Hámos was only six months old in 1951 when his family boarded a reconstructed battleship to travel to America in the early fifties. During World War II, his father, Ottó Hámos, saw combat on the Russian front, was recruited to work as a bureaucrat in Admiral Horthy's Budapest office, and escaped from a Gestapo jail cell during Germany's occupation of Hungary. Although the Hámos family settled in New Jersey after immigrating to the U.S., they established strong ties to Hungarian Yorkville. Ottó Hámos was an early member of the Library Society, experiencing firsthand the fumbling of the Feleky collection. As an officer of that organization, Ottó Hámos helped found the Magyar Ház in the mid-sixties.⁷⁷

László Hámos did more than just observe his father's community service; he fully absorbed its spirit. This background helps explain his decision to forego a lucrative career as an attorney to fight against the maltreatment of Hungarian minorities in Transylvania, Slovakia, and other severed parts of historical Hungary. Through the Hungarian Human Rights Foundation, or Magyar Emberi Jogok Alapítvány (HHRF), which he co-founded, Hámos combined intelligence gathering, meticulous research, and persuasive lobbying to influence American foreign policy. According to cofounder, Jenő Brogyányi, the HHRF constituted a sea change in the Hungarian émigré mindset insofar as it sought to replace

⁷⁶ Ibid.; "HHRF President László Hámos Memorial Service, May 11, 2019 @ Hungarian House of New York," *YouTube Video*, 1:40:14, October 23, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v6PUJhZvJUK>.

⁷⁷ Finding refuge in an Austrian DP camp where their first son, Árpád, was born, they subsequently migrated to France. László Hámos was born during his family's sojourn in that country. Hámos Interview.

localized gnashing of teeth over Hungary's woes performed in relatively isolated clubs and societies with an organized network possessing a clear sense of purpose. Brogyányi credits Hámos with giving "the Hungarians of the West the means to look to the future and take action."⁷⁸

Despite the demands of developing a politically unified diasporic network capable of acting as an effective pressure group, Hámos remained ever mindful of the local Hungarian community, and especially, the Magyar Ház, its putative flagship. Indeed, he was an indispensable player in the house's transition from a clubhouse for the wealthy and privileged to a welcoming space for a broader range of Hungarian Americans. A founder once told him that the house was meant to serve the needs of only "certain Hungarians." This comment stuck with Hámos his entire life. Strongly disagreeing with what he dubbed an "exclusivist" stance, Hámos pushed the Library Society to embrace fully its mission "to be a center of Hungarian cultural programs, specifically art and literature, in New York City."⁷⁹ In addition to more egalitarian cultural programming, Hámos supported efforts to make the house more accessible to other Hungarian American voluntary associations. Starting in the mid-seventies, ethnic entities outside the three owner-institutions took advantage of the Magyar Ház's new spirit of openness. Hámos also attended to the Library Society's other mandate: to house a Hungarian library. Albeit in fits and starts, the Library Society recovered from the Feleky fiasco, eventually amassing well over six thousand

⁷⁸ Jenő Brogyányi Remarks, "HHRF President Laszlo Hamos Memorial Service, May 11, 2019 @ Hungarian House of New York," *YouTube Video*, 1:40:14, October 23, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v6PUJhZvJUK>. The precursor to the HHRF, the Committee for Human Rights in Romania, was born in 1976. Hámos was part of a small group committed to "holding the Romanians' feet the fire," as he put it, over its oppression of ethnic Hungarians. On May 7, 1976, Hámos and his compatriots took out a full-page ad in the *New York Times* criticizing the Ceausescu-led Romanian government and the U.S. for considering grating that country "most favored nation" status. The following day, they organized a large demonstration in Yorkville. Ceausescu, who was in New York at the time, ordered his handlers to assassinate Hámos and another organizer of the demonstration. It remains unclear what steps if any Ceausescu's henchmen took to make good on this order. Ion Mihai Pacepa, *Red Horizons: The True Story of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescus' Crimes, Lifestyle, and Corruption* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1987): 324-39.

⁷⁹ Hámos Interview.

sources. Scholars and ordinary folk with an interest in Hungarian American history have visited its well-appointed basement library space.⁸⁰

Hámos's leadership of the Library Society, while crucial, does not adequately describe his overall contributions to the Magyar Ház. Calling himself the "oil in the machinery," Hámos often preferred to work behind-the-scenes toward his view of what best served the house. In 2006, for example, he directed his formidable lobbying skills to Governor George Pataki, a fellow Hungarian American for whom he had delivered many ethnic votes. Hámos found himself sharing a box with the Governor during a Carnegie Hall concert commemorating the Hungarian Revolution. Hámos told Pataki that the place that made the evening's unified ethnic front possible, the Magyar Ház, had fallen into dire straits. Its brittle bones were giving way. Due principally to Hámos's powers of persuasion, the Magyar Ház secured \$450,000 through the Empire State Development Corporation to repair and upgrade the house. Thirteen years later, Pataki joined his co-ethnics at the Hungarian House to eulogize Hámos. Pataki closed his remarks by challenging those in attendance not just to remember their old friend but to follow his example by acting in the face of injustice.⁸¹

Emese Latkóczy embodies this call to action and shares Hámos's deep appreciation for Hungarian Yorkville and the Magyar Ház. Born in Canada, Latkóczy moved with her family to Yorkville in 1973 at the age of twelve. Her parents immediately immersed her into the community's ethnic youth culture. Latkóczy attended St. Stephen of Hungary School for seventh and eighth graders, with its elderly Hungarian-speaking nuns, honed her language skills in the Hungarian School, and joined Hungarian Scouting. Though she has called other places home since the early seventies, Latkóczy proudly asserts that she has maintained a continuous residence in Yorkville since that time. She became active in the

⁸⁰ It also holds archived documents relating to the Hungarian American community as well as a major art collection. The Museum of American Hungarian Foundation in New Brunswick manages much of the archival material today. "About Us," *American Hungarian Foundation*, <https://www.ahfoundation.org/>.

⁸¹ Hámos Interview.

diasporic human rights movement while still in high school, eventually becoming an HHRF director and head of the ReConnect Hungary, a program designed for young adults of Hungarian descent to engage in cross-cultural missions in their ancestral homeland. Moreover, she embodies Hámos's commitment to the Library Society, having served on its board for nearly two decades. Latkóczy's direct contributions, institutional memory, and time working with László Hámos will serve well the Magyar Ház as it faces a future without those who bore witness to its birth and early development.⁸²

The Magyar Ház's Reneszánsz: 2009-Present

In 2009, Kevin Walsh, creator of the website *Forgotten New York*, proclaimed he had "discovered the remnants of a Hungarian-American enclave" on the Upper East Side.⁸³ Raised in Brooklyn's Bay Ridge neighborhood, Walsh turned his lifelong fascination with Gotham's lesser-known areas into an entrepreneurial endeavor. Despite his general cognizance of ethnic Yorkville, Walsh was surprised to find vestiges of what he called "Little Hungary" on East 82nd Street and its vicinity. His piece referenced Cardinal Mindszenty's 1974 visit to what he called the American Hungarian Library and Historical Society.⁸⁴ This singular reference to the Magyar Ház suggests that Walsh never spoke with anyone connected with the institution, emblematic of the gulf between the gatekeepers of Gotham's past like Walsh, who often present mere glimpses of ethnic diversity and heritage, and those engaged in localized and sustained ethnic heritage practices.⁸⁵

⁸² Emese Latkóczy Interview by author, August 8, 2017.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ "The federal-style townhouse at 213 East 82nd with the metal porch boasts a plaque indicating in Hungarian and English that Joseph Cardinal Mindszenty visited here May 7, 1974," pointing out that the Prelate "was an implacable opponent of both Nazi and Communist domination of Eastern Europe; he was tortured and held prisoner by the Communist Party in Hungary between 1949 and 1956." Lastly, he conveyed that "[s]ince 1966, the building has been home to the American-Hungarian Library and Historical Society." making no mention of the Magyar Ház's fascinating origins or its multiple contemporary uses. Kevin Walsh, "Little Hungary," *Forgotten New York*, June 25, 2009, accessed December 17, 2019, <https://forgotten-ny.com/2009/06/little-hungary/>

⁸⁵ Ibid.; Hana R. Alberts, "'Rediscover Forgotten New York: One Man Has Been Searching for Remnants and Oddities of the City from an Earlier Era: Here, He Shares His Offbeat Finds for All to See: Old's Cool,'" *New York Post*, April 6, 2019, 23; Robert F. Worth, "At a Legendary Cemetery, a Rare Look Behind the Gates," *New York Times*, March 22, 2004, B5.

Walsh's "drive-by" coincided with the onset of the Magyar Ház's renaissance. The house had declined steadily since Róbert Harkay's untimely death in 1992. The physical structure was crumbling, and the threat of bankruptcy loomed. In 2009, Michael Szarvasy, then a Széchenyi Society board member, agreed to step in temporarily to nurse the Magyar Ház back to health. Szarvasy, a successful art dealer with a political science degree from Columbia University, started attending Magyar Ház events soon after immigrating to America in the mid-sixties. As director, he stabilized the house's finances and precipitously increased its public-facing programming in just three and half years. Along the way, Szarvasy faced criticism, and even personal attacks, unfortunate byproducts of the complex nature of the house's triumvirate ownership structure. Nevertheless, the Szarvasy years, combined with funding secured during the Pataki administration, poured a new foundation upon which the contemporary Magyar Ház could build.⁸⁶

Soon after Szarvasy's departure, however, the Magyar Ház slid backward. Ill-advised hires exposed the institution's fragility. Under one derelict director championed by the Széchenyi Society, the house descended into financial trouble in just six months. Then along came Ildikó Nagy. Born in Hungary in the latter days of communist rule and educated as a sociologist, the multi-talented Nagy has a rich background in the arts. In the early twenty-first century, Nagy worked for Mediawave, a Hungarian enterprise specializing in connecting innovative musicians and filmmakers to audiences in Hungary and beyond. She met her husband, Chris Potter, the American-born and internationally acclaimed jazz saxophonist, at a Mediawave event. After the couple relocated to Brooklyn, Nagy assumed leadership of the Magyar Ház's folk dancing program. László Hámos, Viktor Fischer, and others had a feeling that this cosmopolitan transplant might be just the right person to lead the house into its next phase.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Interview of Michael Szarvasy by author, June 4, 2020.

⁸⁷ "Colloquium Budapest: The Budapest Manifesto from the Budapest Conference, Europe Jazz Network, October 2004, accessed June 6, 2020, https://www.europejazz.net/sites/default/files/20041001_Colloquium_Budapest.pdf.

The Magyar Ház's 2015 gala honoring its own golden anniversary acted as proof of concept. Although Nagy had no fundraising experience, she had helped organize European jazz festivals during her time with Mediawave. This background mixed with the local knowledge of Barbara Bollók, Viktor Fischer, and other house veterans, produced the perfect blend. Event literature described the Hungarian House as a "bastion of Hungarian identity" and the "only physical structure in New York City dedicated to the presentation and preservation of Hungarian art and culture."⁸⁸ More than fifty donors, some with firsthand memories of the founding era, made significant contributions. Dignitaries representing the Hungarian government, including President János Áder, Consul General Ferenc Kumin, and Deputy Consul General Imre Szakács, joined former New York Governor George Pataki as "honorary patrons." The Kálmán Magyar, Jr. Band, led by the son of a Hungarian folk dancing legend, and the Hungarian Consulate General's "Master Chef" satisfied the senses. The golden anniversary celebration symbolically marked the Magyar Ház's next phase. In addition to learning the nuts and bolts of running an exile elite-style formal event, Nagy earned the trust of the house's official and unofficial leadership. Successfully navigating this experience freed her to pursue new approaches capable of broadening the house's appeal. The results speak for themselves. The Magyar Ház has flourished over the past five years and, in 2018, Nagy received the Gold Cross of the Hungarian Order of Merit at a ceremony in New York for advancing Hungarian culture and for nurturing the Hungarian American community.⁸⁹

As Nagy helped chart the Magyar Ház's new course, she also continued its longstanding programs and traditions. Hungarian Scouting and the Hungarian School continue to meet at the house. Kata Pándi oversees the troops that use the Hungarian House as their home base: Girl Scout Troop # 46 named for Kata Bánffy and Boy Scout #7 named for Gusztáv Erős. While Hungarian continues to serve as

⁸⁸ "Fwd: Saturday, January 31st, 2015 at 7 PM - Fundraising Gala Evening to Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Hungarian House of New York," https://groups.google.com/g/hungarianevents/c/l_2fN0Dn-YY?pli=1; "Fundraising Gala Evening for the 50 Years Anniversary of the Hungarian House," New York-i Magyar Haz/Hungarian House of New York, accessed June 1, 2020, <http://www.hungarianhouse.org/en/fundraising-gala-evening-for-the-50-years-anniversary-of-the-hungarian-house/>.

⁸⁹ "The Bridgwoman: Hungarian Gold Cross for Ildikó Nagy," Mediawave, March 15, 2018, accessed June 3, 2020, <http://mwave.iq.hu/index.php?modul=aktualisok&kod=3298&nyelv=eng>.

Scouting's lingua franca, the New York troops now proclaim that, "[e]very Hungarian-speaking child, no matter the skill level, is welcome to join!"⁹⁰ The Arany János Hungarian School, which met at St. Stephen of Hungary Roman Catholic Church for decades, now calls the Magyar Ház home. The Saturday morning class times not only accommodate parents' busy schedules but harken back to the days when Hungarian Yorkville's diaspora would return to the neighborhood on the weekends to learn, shop, and worship. Finally, the Magyar Ház also continues to serve as a refuge for Hungarian New York's elders. For Nagy, the trained sociologist, it is these more informal settings that underscore the complexity of migrant communities. At the weekly bridge game, for example, a Transylvanian-born baroness from the noble Apor family passes the time with a Holocaust survivor and the Önképző Egylet's former cook. The founders might not recognize the place.⁹¹

The Magyar Ház's special programming, ranging from historical exhibits to all manner of visual art and music, has played an integral role in raising the institution's profile and exposing wider audiences to Hungarian culture, both traditional and contemporary.⁹² To honor the sixtieth anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution in October 2016, the house organized an exhibition of artifacts depicting the experiences of 56ers, as both freedom fighters and refugees. The House has also served as the locus

⁹⁰ "Hungarian Scout Troops in New York," *New York-i Magyar Haz/Hungarian House of New York*, accessed June 1, 2020, <http://www.hungarianhouse.org/en/category/about-us/owner-organizations/hungarian-scouts-asociation-in-exeteris/hungarian-scout-troops/>.

⁹¹ Ibid.; Interview of Ildikó Nagy by author June 12, 2018; Paul Shore, *Jesuits and the Politics of Religious Pluralism in Eighteenth-Century Transylvania* (New York: Routledge, 2016). "Arany János Hungarian School, New York," *New York-i Magyar Haz/Hungarian House of New York*, accessed June 1, 2020, http://www.hungarianhouse.org/en/arany-janos-hungarian-school-new-york/?set_cat_id=210. According to the Arany Janos Hungarian School's PTA's mission statement, the group "welcomes members from all religious and political backgrounds." The school's "primary goal is to teach Hungarian to younger generations as well as to preserve our cultural heritage as Hungarian Americans." "Our Mission, Our Goals," *Arany János Hungarian School, New York*, <http://hungarianschoolnyc.com/>.

⁹² A Trip Advisor review offers an opportunity to see these kinds of events through the perspective of a first-time visitor to the Magyar Ház. The reviewer, "Barry M.," attended a 2019 exhibit entitled "The Fragile Brutalism of Marcel Breuer," featuring the work product of Marcel Breuer, a Hungarian American architect and devotee of the Bauhaus movement. Barry M. described the Hungarian House as "a rather unique looking 19th Century building," and noted the "variety of Hungarian related activities, such as Hungarian folk dance and language lessons, and similar activities for youngsters including Scouting," occurring in the space. He concluded that "[f]or a casual visitor, the collection of Hungarian folk art and crafts, and musical instruments is worth a look," and advised others to consider getting on the Hungarian House's mailing list. Barry M., *Trip Advisor*, New York's Center for things Hungarian https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g60763-d19240885-Reviews-Hungarian_House-New_York_City-New_York.html#REVIEWS.

of Polish-Hungarian Friendship Day, featuring folk costumes, music, and dance. It has screened the movie *Son of Saul*, which received the Oscar for best foreign-language film. The post-screening discussion, featuring Géza Röhrig, the lead actor, and Zita Vadász, director of the Hungarian Cultural Center, broached the painful subject of the Hungarian Holocaust to promote greater understanding and healing. In January 2019, the Magyar Ház used Hungarian Culture Day to unveil its newly renovated main hall, marking the occasion with an exhibition featuring the work of the twentieth century Hungarian photographer André Kertész.⁹³

Given Nagy's passion for and knowledge of jazz, music has assumed center stage in the Magyar Ház. Pianist Endre Hegedűs, a prolific international performer and graduate of Budapest's Franz Liszt Academy of Music, brought his talents to Yorkville. So, too, did Hungarian pianists, Zsolt Farkas and Andrea Várnagy, who introduced children to Dvorak, Grieg, and Liszt in an interactive concert. Most significantly, Nikolett Pankovits, a Hungarian-born jazz vocalist who relocated to New York in 2010, found a home-away-from-home at the Hungarian House. "Getting to know Ildikó Nagy . . . changed my life," she observed.⁹⁴ Nagy helped Pankovits consider ways to meld Hungarian folk rhythms into an already eclectic fusion. Speaking about her devotion to the Magyar Ház and her friend Nagy, Pankovits said that "[w]hether she asks me to sing, fix the website, or collect tickets at a program, I'll do it." Thanks in large part to Nagy, East 82nd Street has never seemed cooler.⁹⁵

⁹³ "Hungarian House of New York Features Milestones, 1956 Immigrant Stories," Hungarian Initiatives Foundation, December 9, 2016, <https://www.hungaryfoundation.org/milestones-hungarian-house-ny/>; "Polish-Hungarian Friendship Day in New York," New York-i Magyar Ház/Hungarian House of New York, accessed June 1, 2020, <http://www.hungarianhouse.org/en/iii-polish-hungarian-friendship-day-in-new-york/>; "Screening of Oscar-winning *Son of Saul*," New York-i Magyar Ház/Hungarian House of New York, accessed June 1, 2020, <http://www.hungarianhouse.org/en/screening-of-oscar-winning-son-of-saul/>; "4th Hungarian Heritage Festival – Celebration of Hungarian Language Day in New York," New York-i Magyar Ház/Hungarian House of New York, accessed June 1, 2020, <http://www.hungarianhouse.org/en/4th-hungarian-heritage-festival-celebration-of-hungarian-language-day-in-new-york/>.

⁹⁴ Fanni Kaszás, "'You Either Adapt to the Rhythm of New York and Spin with It or It Will Spit You Out' – Interview with Jazz Vocalist Nikolett Pankovits," *Hungary Today*, May 11, 2019, <https://hungarytoday.hu/niki-pankovits-jazz-interview/>.

⁹⁵ Ibid.; "Day of Hungarian Culture – Concert of Nikolett Pankovits," *New York-i Magyar Ház/Hungarian House of New York*, <http://www.hungarianhouse.org/en/day-of-hungarian-culture-concert-of-nikolett-pankovits/>.

The Hungarian Heritage Festival, first held in June 2015, is the most public element of the Magyar Ház's recent emphasis on broadening its appeal and increasing its visibility. The initial event was a joint venture with the Balassi Institute and the Hungarian Cultural Center, interrelated diasporic projects created and funded by the Hungarian government.⁹⁶ It featured Hungarian arts and crafts, including the traditional of lace-making, as well as folk dancing, and an assortment of musical acts ranging from the folk revival stylings of Budapest's Ágnes Herczku to Béla Ágoston playing the duda, a Hungarian goatskin bagpipe. The Magyar Ház has hosted three festivals since this initial effort. In addition to continuing to coordinate with the Hungarian government, the Magyar Ház garnered support from key members of the Hungarian American cultural heritage network such as the American Hungarian Federation (AHF) and the Hungarian Initiatives Foundation (HIF).⁹⁷

As the Magyar Ház cannot house all the exhibits, performances, and food, the festival spills forth onto East 82nd Street, turning Hungarian Yorkville's definitive street into a sensory goulash. For one visitor to the second festival in 2017, the event ushered in a flood of memories. "In 1957, I lived in this neighborhood," she proclaimed. "[E]veryone was Hungarian or German." A younger Hungarian migrant attending the same festival expressed his strong desire to expose his young daughter to his "way of life and traditions and what [he] left at home." Gergely Hajdú-Németh, of the AHF, declared the festival "good for everybody," explaining that "even if you're not Hungarian you can appreciate the culture."

⁹⁶ The Balassi Institute describes itself as "a network of cultural matchmakers, Hungarian centers of culture in 23 countries" Although an arm of the Hungarian government, it claims to enjoy "substantial autonomy to promote Hungarian and Central European culture," The Hungarian Cultural Center in New York, founded by the Hungarian Ministry of Culture in 2001, strives "to present the multicultural past and present of Hungarian arts and society to American audiences while . . . fostering Transatlantic cultural dialogues." "Balassi Institute," Balassi institute/Hungarian Cultural Center, New York, accessed June 2, 2020, <http://www.newyork.balassiintezet.hu/en/2012-01-16-03-53-44/>.

⁹⁷ "Hungarian Heritage Festival," *New York-i Magyar Ház/Hungarian House of New York*, http://www.hungarianhouse.org/en/hungarian-heritage-festival/?set_cat_id=281; "Hungarian heritage Festival," *New York-i Magyar Ház/Hungarian House of New York*, <http://www.hungarianhouse.org/en/ii-hungarian-heritage-festival/>. Emese Kerkay, "Hungarian Lace," April 9, 2015, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://magyarmuseum.org/hungarian-lace/hungarian-lace/>; "Artist Profiles: Ágnes Herczku," World Music Central, accessed June 6, 2020; <https://worldmusiccentral.org/2018/07/04/artist-profiles-agnes-herczku/>; Arle Lommel, "The Hungarian Duda and Contra-Chanter Bagpipes of the Carpathian Basin," *Galpin Society Journal* 61 (Apr., 2008): 305-21; Béla Szilárd Jávorszky, *The Story of Hungarian Folk: Village Music, World Music* (Kossuth Publishing: Budapest, 2015), 144-53.

Anna Lacey-Smith of the HIF stressed the inter-generational diversity on display. Whether or not these festivals turned a significant profit, they present Hungarian culture and traditions to a broad audience without succumbing to the commercialization that haunts certain aspects of the Steuben parade.⁹⁸

CONCLUSION

Charles Feleky once described a “dream that the Hungarian government built a Hungarian House in New York, placed my library in it, and named me librarian.”⁹⁹ The Magyar Ház, while not the complete fulfillment of the Feleky vision, is, in many ways, the realization of a dream. For eighty years, Hungarian New Yorkers pursued a Hungarian house capable of meeting the immediate needs of its ethnic constituents, preserving cultural heritage, and rendering legible Hungarian culture for wider audiences. The exile elites who established the Magyar Ház did not fully embrace this agenda, but the institution they planted subsequently bore such fruit. Through the hard work and willing spirit of people like Róbert Harkay, Viktor Fischer, Barbara Bollók, László Hámos, Emese Latkoczy, Michael Szarvasy, and most recently, Ildikó Nagy, the house weathered many storms. In 2020, the Magyar Ház appears well-positioned to continue its quest to represent Hungarian identity and culture in New York.

Whether the Magyar Ház will play a significant role in preserving the history of Hungarian New York, and more specifically, the Yorkville enclave, is a wholly different matter. The exile elites did not just create a clubhouse for their personal enjoyment; they constructed an ethnic anchor institution steeped in an exclusive definition of Hungarian identity. Their emphasis on Christian identity and Cold War politics tended to cover over Hungarian New York’s prewar history including its vibrant Hungarian Jewish leadership and its political heterogeneity. All too soon, no one with a living memory of the DP and 56er waves of migration, no less the prewar period, will make their way to the cultural center.

⁹⁸ “Hungarian Heritage Festival New York, 2017,” Hungarian Initiatives Foundation, *YouTube Video*, October 5, 2017, 3:24 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BH6YC9H9HqU>.

⁹⁹ Nyirády, “The History of Feleky Collection,” vii.

Accordingly, Hungarian New York's past, including the history of the Yorkville enclave, is an endangered species. Regardless of the circumstances of its founding or its practices thereafter, however, the Magyar Ház still offers the last, best hope to preserve this local history. Whether it can do so while pursuing the grand goal of presenting visions of Hungarianness to new generations and serving the needs of new migrants remains unclear.

CHAPTER 8

BELIEVING HERITAGE: THE HISTORICAL LIVES AND HERITAGE AFTERLIVES OF HUNGARIAN YORKVILLE'S FAITH COMMUNITIES

“Do not forget, do not forget, do not forget this small honest nation
that is enduring torture for the service of humanity.”

JOSZEF CARDINAL MINDSZENTY¹

I stood alone inside the worship space of the Independent Hungarian Reformed Church on East 82nd Street. The Sunday morning service would not begin for another hour. After welcoming me warmly, Reverend Árpád Drótos had returned to his nearby office to make his final preparations, leaving me to explore in solitude. The sanctuary presents as an ode to Calvinist simplicity. Reformed aesthetics are designed not to compromise “the unadorned message of grace.”² The bare side walls and linearity of the pews directed my eyes to the front of the space where two modestly-sized stain glass windows provide the only color in an otherwise drab and monochromatic interior. Behind the pulpit, affixed to the plain wooden wall, are the words “Tebenned – Bízunk Eleitől Fogva,” translated as “We trusted in you from the beginning.” Flags of Hungary and the United States flank the pulpit, symbolizing the hybridity of Hungarian American ethnic identity.

Over the next hour, eighteen women and a dozen men, all well-dressed, entered the sanctuary. Seniors predominated among this group. Rev. Drótos’s entrance at precisely 11:00 a.m. commenced an hour-long service where the music, sermon, and communion were all in Hungarian. Two-thirds of the congregants reassembled in the basement for a post-service luncheon. Laughter and good cheer filled the room as gendered cliques formed to spin yarns about the past and discuss local, national, and homeland news. The only English heard in this space came from a small group of boys and girls who played together after completing their weekly Hungarian language lesson. For me, the scene generated

¹ Adam Somorjai and Tibor Zinner, *Do Not Forget This Small Honest Nation: Cardinal Mindszenty to 4 US Presidents and State Secretaries, 1956-1971: A Documentary Overview* (Xlibris, 2013), 3 (quoting Cardinal Mindszenty’s letter to President Eisenhower, November 11, 1956).

² David Hart Nelson, “Historic Calvinism in the Orthodox Style Bethel Presbyterian Church, Wheaton, Illinois Sunday, 1 October 2006,” *Anglican and Episcopal History* 76, no. 2 (June 2007): 272.

mixed emotions. These people had traveled to Yorkville from disparate parts of Greater New York, in the process demonstrating an uncommon commitment to their church, their former neighborhood, and one another. Organized religion appeared a powerful catalyst for a kind of living ethnic heritage. Yet, the low number of worshipers, their median age, and the paucity of young people hinted at the precarity of this scene.

Five Hungarian Christian places of worship, three founded well before the Second World War, dot contemporary Yorkville's urban landscape. They have curiously outlived the Hungarian enclave by decades. The First Magyar Reformed Church on East 69th Street, the First Hungarian Baptist Church on East 80th Street, and East 82nd Street's Independent Hungarian Reformed Church, Holy Cross Byzantine Catholic Church, and St. Stephen of Hungary Roman Catholic Church are the only material remains of pre-Magyar Ház Yorkville. Their histories constitute raw material that might be mined to raise awareness about the neighborhood's former Hungarian enclave, provide granularity to its story, and, in the process, complicate the ethnic Yorkville imaginary and its myopic focus on the German community.

By virtue of their visibility and relative proximity, these churches invite exploration into how historically constituted Hungarian religious heterogeneity mapped onto a specific urban neighborhood. Professional observers of Gotham's built environment have shown limited interest in these extant churches over the past thirty years. The *AIA Guide* failed to mention any of them in its first two iterations, published in 1968 and 1978. Three appeared in its 1988, 2000, and 2010 editions: the First Hungarian Reformed Church; the Hungarian Baptist Church; and St. Stephen of Hungary Catholic Church. The brief entries said nothing, however, about the churches' origins, the enclave they served, or their continued roles as sites of ethnic religious practice. *Shaped by Immigrants: A History of Yorkville*, published by FRIENDS of the Upper East Side in 2019, represents the most detailed treatment of Hungarian Yorkville's churches to date. Although FRIENDS selected the same trio referenced in the last

three *AIA Guides*, it placed these institutions within the neighborhood's broader historical context and ethnic past, while providing truncated origin stories along with architectural details. In this way, *Shaped by Immigrants* invites a deeper historical investigation.³

The chapter's findings push against simplified models of ethnic churches as institutions that lead predictably linear lives. Sociologist Mark Mullins set forth a general theory of the ethnic church's life cycle. Such institutions, he argued, serve the foreign-born founders in their youth, struggle to appease the second generation in their middle years, and then see their ethnic cultural character fade away in old age. Historian Stephen J. Shaw implicitly endorsed this view by describing the national parish as a "way station" designed to guide Catholic immigrants on a journey toward assimilation. To be sure, the relative success of inter-generational cultural transmission affects the durability and longevity of the ethnic church. However, the fact that Yorkville's Hungarian churches persist several decades after the enclave's decline suggests the fallibility of this linearity thesis.

To engage critically with these enduring ethnic faith communities, this chapter focuses on Hungarian Yorkville's two most venerable places of worship: the First Magyar Reformed Church and St. Stephen of Hungary Roman Catholic Church. It discusses the roles of migratory waves, ecclesiastical hierarchies and structures, homeland politics, and pastoral leadership to complicate and supplement generational explanations for the rise and fall of ethnic churches. The chapter is divided into three parts. Part I sketches the stormy and contested origins of these two churches. Part II examines the churches' post-founding roles as centers of ethnic life with an emphasis on the intersectionality of Hungarian American identity, local and transnational religious hierarchies, and the influence of homeland politics.

³ *AIA Guide to New York City*, eds. Norval White and Elliot Willensky (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1968); *AIA Guide to New York City*, Rev. Ed., eds. Norval White and Elliot Willensky (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1978); *AIA Guide to New York City*, 3rd Ed., eds. Norval White and Elliot Willensky (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1988), 405-407; *AIA Guide to New York City*, 4th Ed., eds. Norval White and Elliot Willensky (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 2000), 450-52; *AIA Guide to New York City*, 5th Ed., eds. Norval White and Elliot Willensky (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 2010), 468-78; *Shaped by Immigrants: A History of Yorkville*, 41-53.

Part III examines ethnic religious heritage at the First Magyar Reformed Church and St. Stephen of Hungary, by juxtaposing the preservation of the former and the closure of the latter.

PART I: THE DRAMATIC AND TRAUMATIC BEGINNINGS OF HUNGARIAN YORKVILLE'S TWO OLDEST CONTINUOUS FAITH COMMUNITIES

Groups of Hungarian émigrés who arrived in New York during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries established multiple faith communities. Their harbored myriad reasons for doing so. Charles Hirschman, a leading historian of ethnic religiosity, asserts that organized religion provides individual migrants means to “find solace for the inevitable human experiences of death, suffering, and loss” in communion with others.⁴ Consistent with this logic, Hungarian New York’s faith communities replaced, at least to an extent, the social and kinship networks from which migrants were geographically separated. A sense of shared values, common historical identities, and familiar cultural traditions, foodways, and language accelerated the formation of deep and lasting relationships with co-ethnics within émigré houses of worship. Like many other immigrant groups, Hungarian New Yorkers founded places of worship to meet personal spiritual needs, to form new social bonds, and to anchor their ethnic communities.⁵

⁴ Charles Hirschman, “The Role of Religion in the Origins and Adaptation of Immigrant Groups in the United States,” *The International Migration Review* 38, no. 3 (Fall, 2004): 1207.

⁵ Ibid., 1206-1208. This chapter’s focus on Hungarian Yorkville’s Christian faith communities is not intended to elide the spiritual heritage of the neighborhood’s Hungarian Jews. Upwards of five thousand Hungarian Jews resided in Yorkville from the turn of the twentieth century through most of the interwar period. They established two Magyar faith communities during the first quarter of the twentieth century. The Ohavei Torah Congregation conducted worship services using secular space on East 82nd Street beginning in 1917. The most significant Hungarian Jewish synagogue was the First Hungarian Congregation Anshe Yehuda, the Brothers of Judah of Yorkville, originally established in Little Hungary around 1904. This group worshipped on East 85th Street. In 1927, due presumably to Hungarian Jewish out migration, Anshe Yehuda merged with four other congregations. Their place of worship on East 78th Street continues to serve area Jews as the Yorkville Synagogue, but does not explicitly links to Hungarian heritage. Contemporary Yorkville, therefore, does not contain material remains that rekindle social memories of the neighborhood’s Hungarian Jewish past. *Shaped by Immigrants*, 54-55; Prepuk, “Jews in Metropolitan Transformations of New York City,” 4-7; *The Jewish Communal Register of New York City 1917-1918*, 2nd Ed. (New York: Kelilah of New York City, 1918), 82-84; *American Jewish Year Book Vol. 21 (1919-1920)*, 475, accessed June 29, 2020, http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1919_1920_5_Directories.pdf; “Congregation B'nai Jehuda The Yorkville Synagogue,” The Yorkville Synagogue, accessed June 10, 2020; <http://yorkvilleshul.com/>; New York Historical Synagogues Map, “Ackman and Ziff Genealogy Institute, accessed June 2, 2020, <https://genealogy.cjh.org/synagogue/1202>.

Hungary's Religious Colony: Establishing the First Magyar Reformed Church of New York

The early history of Hungarian Calvinists in the United States countermands artificially tidy narratives of nameless and homogenous émigré communities assimilating to an identifiable American way of life. Rather, the experience of Hungarian Americans in the Reformed church evinces the explosive potential of the intersection of ethnic identity and organized religious affiliation. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, American Reformed denominations viewed Hungarian Americans as a domestic mission, and their message contained equal parts salvation and cultural assimilation. Conversely, when emigration threatened to render Magyars a minority within the Kingdom of Hungary, that nation's government poured manpower, money, and resources into transforming Reformed churches in America into engines of cultural transmission and patriotic leanings. The ensuing struggles between American and Hungarian ecclesiastical authorities splintered the Hungarian Reformed movement in the U.S., a process further complicated by the Great War. In the eye of this storm stood Rev. Dr. Zoltán Kuthy, the longtime pastoral leader of the First Hungarian Reformed Church of New York on East 69th Street. In June 2019, this church achieved official landmark status. While the associated designation report's historical summary touches on the deep roots of Hungarian Calvinism in the sixteenth century, it fails to describe Kuthy's experience during the local, regional, and transnational battle for ethnic hearts and minds in the early twentieth century. Recovering this history underscores the centrality of émigré churches in reinforcing and reshaping ethnic identity.

Hungarian Calvinism is deeply enmeshed with Magyar nationalism. In the mid-sixteenth century, a time when the Austrian crown and the Turkish empire claimed dominion over most of historical Hungary, upwards of ninety percent of the Magyar population identified with Reformed theology. Although the Jesuit-led Counter-Reformation violently reinstated the predominance of Roman Catholicism, it did not dull Magyar enthusiasm for Reformed Christianity. Hungarian churches founded

upon Calvinist principles conducted worship services in the Hungarian language, not Latin, making them accessible to rural populations. Whereas the Roman Catholic Church of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries included most of the Kingdom of Hungary's ethnic minorities under its tent, Magyars alone populated Reformed congregations. Moreover, Calvinism provided symbolic legitimacy to the 1848-1849 Hungarian Revolution. Lajos Kossuth, the rising's leader, declared the city of Debrecen, the center of Hungarian Calvinism, the capital of a free and independent Hungarian state. Hungarian migrants who came out of this faith tradition considered their religious and national identities as two sides of the same coin.⁶

As Hungarian migration to America increased during the 1880s, the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) took notice. The RCUS, founded by German émigrés fifty years before the American Revolution, viewed the Hungarian newcomers, especially those laboring in Pennsylvania coal country, as fertile ground for a domestic missionary project. In 1890, to bridge the linguistic divide, the RCUS arranged for Hungarian ministers to plant and lead ethnic congregations. These Hungarian-born ministers set up missions in urban hubs such as Chicago, Cleveland, and Trenton, as well as in smaller municipalities like Mt. Carmel, Pennsylvania and South Norwalk, Connecticut. By 1898, RCUS officials touted the success of their Hungarian American outreach, stating that no mission "is more prosperous than the Hungarians . . . [who] come nearer [to] helping themselves" than any other émigré group.⁷

The First Hungarian Reformed Church of New York, known as the New York-i Első Magyar Református Egyház in Hungarian, was born in 1895, when Bertalan Demeter conducted a Hungarian

⁶ Ibid.; John Butosi, "The Calvin Synod: Hungarians in the United Church of Christ," in *Hidden Histories in the United Church of Christ*, edited by Barbara Brown Zikmund (Cleveland: United Church Press, 1984), 132. According to Botond Gaál, "the Hungarian Counter-Reformation was so cruel and bloody that Protestant-Catholic relations in Hungary up until today are affected by the memory of it." Botond Gaál, "'Calvin's Truth' and 'Hungarian Religion': Remembering a Reformer," in *Sober, Strict, and Scriptural: Collective Memories of John Calvin, 1800-2000*, eds. Johan de Niet, Herman Paul and Bart Wallet (Boston: Brill, 2009), 99.

⁷ *Acts and Proceedings of the Synod of the Potomac of the Reformed Church in the United States at Its Annual Sessions in Woodstock, Virginia, 26th Annual Session* (Philadelphia: Reformed Church Publishing House, 1898), 48; "The Eureka Classis: Historical Background," The Reformed Church in the United States, accessed June 15, 2020, <http://www.rcus.org/eureka-classis/>.

Calvinist service at Hope Chapel on East 4th Street in downtown Manhattan. In 1898, as additional missions came on board, the RCUS reshuffled its Hungarian ministers. Rev. Dr. Zoltán Kuthy assumed leadership of the New York congregation. Kuthy had impressed the RCUS during a brief stint at Mt. Carmel. Consequently, the thirty-two-year-old, who hailed from a tiny village in Hungary's most rural county found himself working in one of the most densely populated neighborhoods on the globe. Demeter's groundwork coupled with a continuing stream of Hungarian migrants allowed Kuthy to think big. In 1902, his congregation purchased and renovated an East 7th Street tenement, the first Protestant church Hungarian New Yorkers called their own. Just a year later, he secured a position for his younger brother, Elémer Kuthy, as the minister of a Reformed congregation in Passaic, New Jersey.⁸

Just as Zoltán Kuthy's flock settled into its refurbished three-story building, the Hungarian government hatched a bold scheme that would alter his church's path and eventually subject the young minister to public scrutiny. Hungary launched a covert operation dubbed "American Action," intended to inspire large-scale repatriation of Magyars. Hungarian officials had come to fear that heavy emigration of non-Jewish Hungarians starting in the late 1890s threatened the nation's tenuous ethnic majority. They targeted Hungarian American Calvinist churches as means to lure the diaspora home, believing their congregations contained higher proportions of patriotic and culturally homogenous Magyars.⁹

Count Jozsef Dégenfeld, a high ranking lay official within the Reformed Church of Hungary (RCH), traveled to the U.S. in March and October of 1904 to persuade Hungarian preachers to formally align

⁸ "Seventy Years a Church: Work of the Fourth Avenue Presbyterian Congregation," *New-York Tribune*, November 9, 1896, 3; "In the Real Estate Field," *New York Times*, May 10, 1902, 14; "First Hungarian Reformed Church of New York City, New York, N.Y., USA," First Hungarian Reformed Church of New York City, accessed June 1, 2020, <http://honlap.parokia.hu/lap/fhrcnyc/cikk/mutat/first-hungarian-reformed-church-of-new-york-city/>. Zoltán Kuthy, in 1898, also assisted Hungarian Calvinists in Passaic, New Jersey, who had been loosely banded together since 1895, to formalize their body as a church within the Hungarian Classis of the RCUS. "Diamond Jubilee: Hungarian Reformed Church to Celebrate," *Passaic Herald-News*, September 19, 1970, 10.

⁹ Alexander Harsányi and Alexander Kallassay "The Hungarian Classis," in *The History of the Pittsburgh Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States Prepared in Commemoration of the Fiftieth Anniversary* (Greensburg, PA: Charles M. Henry Printing, 1920), 547-52; Mark Wyman, *Round-trip to America: The Immigrants Return to Europe, 1880-1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 11; Benkart, "The Hungarian Government, the American Magyar Churches, and the Immigrant Ties to the Homeland, 1903-1917," 312-21; Glanz, "Lives and Deaths of a Hungarian Bank in New York," 131-219.

their congregations with the homeland. The brothers Kuthy fully embraced Dégenfeld's agenda, becoming the RCH's most strident supporters in America. Before the close of the year, four other congregations pledged their fealty. The RCUS, by contrast, saw Dégenfeld as an interloper and accused the Hungarian church and government of bribing ministers with pension plans and survivor's benefits, all for political not religious ends. Moreover, the RCUS branded the Kuthy brothers and their ilk turncoats and ingrates too easily swayed by the "glitter of gold." RCUS officials called the "movement to establish an American Hungarian Church . . . irregular, unconstitutional, revolutionary and demoralizing."¹⁰ Over the course of the next few years, the RCH sent additional representatives to pry away more churches and develop Hungarian language and cultural schools within member institutions. By 1910, the RCH bloc included twenty-three congregations, a statistical majority of Hungarian Reformed churches in America.¹¹

For more than a decade, Zoltán Kuthy continued to lead the First Hungarian Reformed Church of New York. He and his brother dutifully opened Hungarian language day schools, intended to meet all the educational needs of the congregation's school-aged children. Few RCH affiliates pursued this comprehensive educational model, opting instead for weekend Hungarian schools. The Kuthy brothers' efforts to do so underscored their unmitigated commitment to the homeland church. In the end, their day schools floundered. Most Hungarian-born parents chose to enroll their sons and daughters in public schools, and thus could only commit their children to weekend language training. This failed experiment reflects the degree to which Hungarian émigrés tried to balance engagement with ethnic and non-ethnic institutions. It also suggests that during the first decade of the twentieth century increasing numbers of

¹⁰ "Hungarian Question: Discussed by Home Mission Board of Reformed Church," *Allentown Leader*, May 18, 1905, 1.

¹¹ Ibid.; "Hungarian Prince to Visit Passaic," *Passaic Herald-News*, March 10, 1904, 1; "Hungarian Count Visits Reformed Church Here: Represents Reformed Mission of Hungary Which Will Aid Local Church," *Passaic Daily News*, October 20, 1904, 2; "Hungarian Church Here to Continue: Present Trouble Due to Political Intervention from National Hungarian Church Abroad," *Central New Jersey Home News*, May 16, 1905, 2; "Rector Must Show Cause in Court," *Trenton Evening Times*, January 9, 1908, 1.

Calvinist Magyars were choosing to put down more permanent roots in America, anathema to the Hungarian government.¹²

As Zoltán Kuthy worked to grow his congregation, assist his brother's church, and meet the RCH's expectations, he caught the unwanted attention of Marcus Braun, a Hungarian-born immigration inspector. After migrating to New York in 1892, Braun immersed himself in municipal, state, and national politics, founding the city's Hungarian Republican Club and supporting Teddy Roosevelt's political fortunes with uncommon zeal. In 1897, he took the oath of citizenship. His personal path influenced his binary conception of early twentieth century European immigration. Émigrés who deviated from his own linear experiences from new immigrant to American citizenship were per se "undesirable." Braun strictly applied these standards to his co-ethnics, labeling the bulk of Hungarian migrants as the "criminal, insane, and pauper classes," cast outs or a plundering assemblage with no intention to settle down.¹³ He loathed those who came to America only "for a temporary stay, procuring labor at any price, expending . . . only what is absolutely necessary to maintain life, and sending the balance to their native country, whither they return after a time."¹⁴ Braun also complained incessantly about Hungary's propaganda campaigns waged through the foreign language press and ethnic churches.¹⁵

It came as no surprise, therefore, that Braun identified Zoltán Kuthy as the most dangerous Hungarian émigré in America. Braun saw the Reformed pastor not so much as a dupe of the Hungarian state but as a skillful propagandist in his own right who shoveled anti-American sentiment to gullible migrants. Braun also believed that Kuthy's retention of his Hungarian citizenship and receipt of books

¹² Zoltán Fejős, "Education in the Mother Tongue" *The Perpetuation of Ethnic Consciousness among Hungarian-Americans, 1890-1920*, *Hungarian Studies Review* 33, nos. 1-2 (2006): 17-26; "Hungarian Reformed," *Passaic Herald-News*, June 1, 1922, 44.

¹³ Letter from Marcus Braun to the Secretary of Commerce and Labor, Immigration Service, Hon. Frank P. Sargent, August 12, 1904 in *Certain Reports of Immigrant Inspector Marcus Braun*, 59th Congress, 1st Session, December 4, 1905-June 30, 1905, House Documents, Vol. 47, House of Representatives (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906), 26-37.

¹⁴ Letter from Marcus Braun to the Secretary of Commerce, 27.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 26-37; "Died," *New York Times*, March 19, 1921, 11; Application for Passport-Naturalized Citizen-162, June 28, 1912.

from the RCH as proof that he was an asset of the Hungarian state, reporting his suspicions to the U.S. Department of Labor and Commerce. Although there is no evidence that the federal government acted on this intelligence, Braun's character assault on Kuthy demonstrates the risk of ethnic religious leaders who privileged homeland identity and culture over assimilation.¹⁶

Once the Braun controversy subsided, Kuthy's star continued to rise and his church's immediate future appeared bright. He became the head of the Eastern District of the RCH-backed churches, a position that enhanced his leverage with Hungarian state officials. He also simultaneously engaged in a rapprochement with his RCUS co-ethnics, appearing jointly at the silver anniversary celebration of Cleveland's Hungarian Reformed church. Kuthy publicly supported Hungary in the Great War until U.S. involvement made this position untenable. The social capital Kuthy had amassed over his years working in and for New York's Hungarian community, placed him on par with ethnic leaders such as attorney Morris Cukor, financier Alexander Konta, and newspaper editor Géza Berkó. Consequently, in February 1916, Konta invited Kuthy to be part of a delegation that met with President Wilson to encourage American neutrality. Kuthy's activism did not adversely affect his leadership of the church. In 1916, the First Magyar Reformed Church of New York had almost one thousand contributing members and raised \$12,000. That same year, Kuthy and his congregation christened a newly constructed sanctuary on East 69th Street, bordering Yorkville's rapidly expanding Hungarian American enclave.¹⁷

¹⁶ Ibid., 26-37; Letter from Marcus Braun to Department of Commerce and Labor, Immigration Service, Hon. Frank P. Sargent, Commissioner-General, June 13, 1905 in Certain Reports of Immigrant Inspector Marcus Braun, 59th Congress, 1st Session, December 4, 1905-June 30, 1905, House Documents, Vol. 47, House of Representatives (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906), 43; Neil Shumsky, "Let No Man Stop to Plunder!" American Hostility to Return Migration, 1890-1924," *Journal of Ethnic History* 11, no. 2 (Winter, 1992): 60. Sociologist Robert E. Park, one of the founders of the Chicago School of immigration studies, accused Kuthy as being in the pocket of the Hungarian government during the war. Robert E. Park, *The Immigrant Press and Its Control* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1922), 420.

¹⁷ "Pittsburgh Pastor Leads in Jubilee: Rev. Kalassay Conducts Cleveland Hungarian Reformed Church Festivities," *Pittsburgh Daily Post*, July 5, 1916, 5; "Hungarians to See Wilson: Will Present Resolution of Fealty Recently Adopted Here," *New York Times*, February 22, 1916, 3; "Hungarians Here protest: Arrange for Mass Meeting to Assert Loyalty to America," *New York Times*, January 24, 1916, 4; *Eagle Almanac 1917, Volume 32* (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Daily Eagle Publishing, 1917), 360. Examples of Kuthy's activities include publicly supporting a relief effort for the families of Hungarian reservists who returned to fight for the homeland, attached his name to a full-page advertisement appearing in multiple newspapers calling for American manufacturers to cease the production of war material, speaking at events honoring and eventually eulogizing Emperor Franz Joseph. "Hungarians Plan a Fund: Will Give Aid to Families of Reservists Who Fight," *New York Times*, August 1, 1914, 6; "An Appeal to the American People," *Brooklyn Times Union*, April 5, 1915, 7; "An Appeal to the American People," *Pittsburgh Post-*

U.S. entry into World War I frayed the bonds between the RCH and its American congregations and taxed Kuthy. After the armistice, the pastor traveled to Hungary multiple times to confer with RCH officials. During one such visit in the summer of 1921, Kuthy collapsed and died on a Budapest street. Two months later, the RCH agreed to permit its old foe, the RCUS, to resume ecclesiastical control and oversight of RCH-affiliates in America. This capitulation, commonly known as the “Tiffin Agreement,” so named for the Ohio town in which it was signed, brought the First Magyar Reformed Church of New York back into relationship with American authorities. Decades later, further divisions precipitated by the Tiffin Agreement would open the door for subsequent waves of Hungarian émigrés to establish another Reformed church in Yorkville, one intentionally free of any connection to the RCUS or other American-based Protestant denominations. Perhaps Kuthy would have considered the Independent Magyar Reformed Church on East 82nd Street as ultimately closer to his vision than the church he helped build.¹⁸

Hungarian Yorkville’s National Parish: The Wrenching Birth of Saint Stephen of Hungary

On a crisp November afternoon in 1927, around five thousand Hungarian New Yorkers gathered along East 82nd Street to witness placement of the cornerstone of St. Stephen of Hungary Church. Monsignor Michael Lavelle, rector of St. Patrick’s Cathedral, offered prayers for the ethnic church and its congregation. Next to him stood Bonaventura Peéri, St. Stephen’s Hungarian-born Franciscan pastor. No one present found more satisfaction in this moment than Peéri. For five years, he had weathered schemes and personal attacks orchestrated by the church’s lay leaders and navigated the circuitous bureaucratic back channels of the Archdiocese, all with the single-minded goal of meeting the needs of the Hungarian Catholics under his spiritual care. Peéri would die less than seven years after this

Gazette, April 5, 1915, 7; “Honor Francis Joseph,” *Pittsburgh Daily Post*, December 21, 1916, 4; “Will Honor Austrian Emperor,” *New-York Tribune*, August 12, 1915, 1.

¹⁸ Ibid.; Butosi, “The Calvin Synod,” 131-32; Puskás, *Ties That Bind, Ties That Divide*, 206-207.

ceremony. In his absence, his Hungarian Franciscan order relinquished control of the parish. For nearly ninety years thereafter, St. Stephen's national parish status remained unsettled and disputed.¹⁹

At the turn of the century, a period of increasing Magyar immigration, a critical mass of Hungarian Catholics formed the St. Stephen Sick and Benevolent Society (Benevolent Society), an entity aimed at assisting co-religionist émigrés. The group associated itself with Stephen I, recognized as the first Christian monarch of the Kingdom of Hungary.²⁰ In 1902, the Most Rev. Michael Augustine Corrigan, head of New York's Archdiocese, granted the Benevolent Society permission to establish a Hungarian national parish. The congregation occupied space on East 14th Street about a block away from Little Hungary's core, in what had been an Episcopal and then a Presbyterian sanctuary.²¹

Despite operating as a congregation within the dominion of the Archdiocese, the most assertive officers of the Benevolent Society tried to retain a tight grip over St. Stephen's operations. Thus, the Benevolent Society warred with Rev. Ladislaus Perényi, the Hungarian-born priest approved by the local Catholic hierarchy. In 1905, just months after the congregation moved into the renovated space on East 14th Street, Leopold Várhelyi, the Benevolent Society's president, filed criminal libel charges against Perényi for allegedly accusing the group of hoarding funds intended for the church. Perényi remained at the helm of St. Stephen for two more years, despite the poisonous atmosphere, but eventually returned

¹⁹ "Hungarian Church to Lay Stone Today: New Building in East 82nd St. to Supplant St. Stephen's in East Fourteenth," *New York Times*, November 13, 1927, N2; "Church Cornerstone Laid: 5,000 Attend Ceremony at New Parish Building for Hungarians," *New York Times*, November 14, 1927, 23.

²⁰ Canonized in 1083, Church history claims that Stephen I used his final public address in 1038 to exhort his nation's leaders to defend, preserve, and spread Roman Catholic belief and practice above all other concerns. "St. Stephen of Hungary: Feast Day: August 16," *Catholic News Agency*, accessed June 13, 2020, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/saint/st-stephen-of-hungary-565>; "St. Stephen of Hungary: Patron of the Parish," Saint Stephen of Hungary Parish, Centennial Celebration Eucharist, September 15, 2002.

²¹ "Consecration," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, accessed June 20, 2020, <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04276a.htm>; "New York City," *New York Herald*, June 20, 1872, 2; "Sale at Houston and Eldridge Streets," *New York Times*, July 2, 1904, 12; Dr. Árpád Gerster, a noted Hungarian American surgeon, capitalized the venture with a donation of \$100.00. Dr. Gerster's contributions to the advancement of surgical methods were myriad. In 1888, he published the first textbook opining on surgical interventions for cancer and in 1911 became the first Mount Sinai surgeon to assume the presidency of the American Medical Association. Several records indicate that Dr. Gerster was a Hungarian of Jewish ancestry. Robert L. Harkay, *St. Stephen of Hungary Church, 1901-1978: A Chapter to the Ethnic History of New York City* (New York: Catholic Publishing Company, 1979), 35.

to Hungary. After Perényi's departure, the church went through three priests in fifteen years, in the process earning a problematic reputation in Gotham's Catholic circles as a congregation dominated by a lay faction seeking to wield unchecked power.²²

Father Bonventura Peéri, a Hungarian friar, stepped into this quagmire in 1922. His arrival reflected the Franciscan Order of Hungary's heightened interest in placing its friars directly into openings in ethnic parishes in the aftermath of the Great War. This strategy contrasts with that of the Reformed Church of Hungary's postwar withdrawal from its American churches, as formalized through the Tiffin Agreement. Hungary's Catholic officials may have sensed an opportunity to rebrand Hungarian national parishes as the optimal home for its diasporic Magyars. Peéri arrived as a relatively green thirty-four-year old cleric. Months before he sailed for the U.S., his home village, Csáktornya, had become part of the newly constituted Yugoslav nation-state under the terms of the Treaty of Trianon. Peéri, therefore, arrived in Gotham not as a sojourner, but as a man without a country. He was anxious to

²² "Accuse Priest of Libel: Split in Church of St. Stephen of Hungary Takes a Police Court Turn," *New York Sun*, August 20, 1905, 12; "Priest Called to Court on Libel Charge: Father Perenyi of the Hungarian Church Accused by a Faction," *New York Times*, August 21, 1905, 12; "Hungarians Swear Their Allegiance to U.S.A.," *The American Leader* Volume 9, no. 5 (March 9, 1916), 265; *The Catholic Church in the United States of America: Undertaken to Celebrate the Golden Jubilee of His Holiness, Pope Pius X, Vol. III, The Province of Baltimore and the Province of New York, Section 1* (New York: Catholic Editing Company, 1914), 466-67. To Perényi, any funds the Benevolent Society acquired in its capacity as an instrument of St. Stephen's belonged to the church. Verhelyi and Julius Völgyi, another officer of the Benevolent Society, not only pursued their position through the courts but threatened to seek relief from John Cardinal Farley, head of the Archdiocese, and if necessary, the Vatican. "Priest Called to Court on a Libel Charge: Father Perenyi of the Hungarian Church Accused by a Faction," *New York Times*, August 21, 1905, 12. Perényi spent about one year serving a parish in Perth Amboy, New Jersey before returning to Hungary in 1908. "To Erect Big Stone Church," *Perth Amboy Evening News*, January 18, 1908, 6; "Clergymen Defendant: In Suit for Damages, Following Automobile Collision on State Street Recently," *Perth Amboy Evening News*, September 18, 1908, 15; *The Catholic Church in the United States of America: Undertaken to Celebrate the Golden Jubilee of His Holiness, Pope Pius X, Vol. III* (New York: Catholic Editing Company, 1914), 375. Perényi may have also upset the Benevolent Society and perhaps some the church's rank-and-file for his outspoken condemnation of the Austrian crown. In the spring of 1906, he joined Morris Cukor as a keynote speaker at a Hungarian Independence Day event in which the theme was a free and autonomous Hungarian state. Perényi, addressing five thousand passionate Hungarian New Yorkers, declared that "Hungary is wet with the blood of patriots," and accused the House of Hapsburg of seeking to "enslave" the Magyar people. "Hungarians Again Ask for America's Support: 5,000 Here Shout "Down with the House of Hapsburg,"" *New York Times*, March 12, 1906, 18. The next two pastors, Rev. Louis von Kovacs de Járdánháza and Rev. John Froehlich, were more closely connected to Vienna. Kovács, in fact, who came from an aristocratic family, had received the Cross of the German Knights by the royal family. *The Catholic Church in the United States of America: Undertaken to Celebrate the Golden Jubilee of His Holiness, Pope Pius X, Vol. III* (New York: Catholic Editing Company, 1914), 375.

make St. Stephen's his home and its parishioners his people. As Peéri would soon learn, passion alone proved an imperfect tool with which to repair a fractious church culture.²³

The Benevolent Society's pugnacious nature, in full force in the early twenties, caught the enthusiastic priest flat-footed. Viewing themselves as founders of an entity representing an extension of the religious body, the Benevolent Society claimed a right of consultation on hiring and firing decisions. They, therefore, questioned Peéri's legitimacy. The new friar had no sooner delivered his first Mass, when Julius Völgyi, the Benevolent Society's treasurer, announced that "he will go as quick as he came."²⁴ Subsequently, the organization's officers pursued a two-front battle: make life difficult for Peéri while finding a hand-picked substitute. In May 1924, the Benevolent Society ran an advertisement in the Hungarian-language press as a frontal assault on Peéri's reputation. They accused the friar of "occup[ying] St. Stephen Church on 14th Street by unpermitted methods," conveniently omitting the fact that Cardinal Hayes had authorized the appointment.²⁵ At the same time, they identified a Yonkers-based pastor, Father Csizz, as an ideal candidate to replace Peéri. Thereafter, Csizz frequently appeared with the Benevolent Society's officers in popular venues in Little Hungary, Yorkville, and other parts of Hungarian New York. By the fall of 1924, frustrated by Peéri's tenacity, the Benevolent Society played their trump card: intercession by Cardinal Hayes.²⁶

Until that point, Peéri had managed to stand his ground while keeping the feud in-house, or, at least, within the Hungarian community. In Peéri's mind, however, the Benevolent Society's request to meet directly with Cardinal Hayes marked a serious escalation in St. Stephen's civil war. In response, he sent a missive to the Archdiocese attacking the Benevolent Society's officers on multiple grounds. He

²³ "New York, New York Passenger and Crew Lists, 1909, 1925-1957," *Family Search*, accessed July 3, 2020, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:24FJ-M2W>, (search for "Bonaventura Peéri, Hungary"); John Butosi, "Magyar Witnessing," in *Outreach and Diversity*, ed. Barbara Brown Zikmund (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2000).

²⁴ Letter from Bonaventura Peéri to Patrick Cardinal Hayes, October 3, 1924; St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

questioned their motives, dismissed their piety, mocked their socio-economic status, and raised concerns about their ideological proclivities. They are “malevolent men,” the young friar exclaimed, who “hate me and hinder my every effort.”²⁷ They “desire more to run the matters of the [c]hurch than those of their own Society.”²⁸ To Peéri, the officers were deficient Catholics who rarely donated money or time to St. Stephen or the city’s Catholic charities. In sum, Peéri castigated the Benevolent Society as “a hindrance [to] all progress and peace.”²⁹ Peéri’s rhetoric reflected many of the social biases and flashpoints of 1920s Hungary. For example, he emphasized the working-class vocations of the Benevolent Society’s officers: John Dringus, the president, earned a living as a carpenter, Frank Kaszab, the secretary, was a butcher, and Julius Völgyi, his primary nemesis, had labored as a blacksmith. Peéri also characterized their “unholy” demand for live entertainment to cap off the church’s recent mission drive as further proof of their common station. The Magyar friar implored Cardinal Hayes to deny such a base lot an audience.³⁰

Peéri saved most of his venom for Alexander Konta, the Benevolent Society’s honorary president. At one time, Konta was Hungarian New York’s most visible public figure. Among Hungarian émigrés, he enjoyed singular success in accessing Gotham’s exclusive and prestigious institutions such as the Manhattan Club and the Metropolitan Opera’s board of directors. On the other hand, he was no stranger to controversy. Despite his efforts to organize the Hungarian Loyalty League for the Committee for Public Information during the Great War, the U.S. Senate investigated Konta for his alleged attempt to broker the German government’s purchase of an American newspaper. At the time of the St. Stephen’s civil war, Konta was several years into a campaign to rebuild his civic reputation. This second act notwithstanding, Peéri saw Konta as a dangerous fraud. The friar not only accused Konta of

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.; Peéri also attacked the officers’ use of the Jewish-run Bolshevik press to broadcast their smear campaign. Ibid. To be clear, the officers’ publication of choice, *A Hét*, leaned Republican. “Immigration Notes: Emigration Less,” *California Immigration and Housing Bulletin* 1, no. 2 (Nov. 1920), 10.

spearheading the coup d'état involving Father Csizz but assailed him as a "converted Jew [and] not a practical Catholic" who at one time ran a morally bankrupt Budapest newspaper.³¹ By holding up Konta as its symbolic leader, Peéri claimed, the Benevolent Society had debased and degraded the church. Peéri's scattershot arguments were sufficient to prevent the meeting.³²

In addition to the battle between Peéri and the Benevolent Society, St. Stephen faced the challenge of navigating demographic shifts within Hungarian New York. By the early 1920s, Yorkville had overtaken Little Hungary as the city's Hungarian social, cultural, and economic hub. As active church membership declined, Peéri came to see relocating to Yorkville as a matter of survival. Failure to do so, he repeatedly warned, would cause his congregation to disappear into the heathen masses of Hungarian Yorkville. In a letter to the Diocesan Council written in the fall of 1924, he stated:

the [p]arish of St. Stephen includes only a fraction of the Hungarian Catholics of our city and I can safely state . . . that the major part of this, the exclusive kind, the intelligent and richer elements of Hungarian Catholics were drive away from the church by improper management and live in utter indolence toward the church today.³³

Despite postwar pressure on the foreign-born to Americanize, Peéri did not believe Hungarian Americans able or willing to blend into uptown Manhattan's existing territorial parishes. During his short time in New York, he had concluded that his Catholic co-ethnics expected Mass and sacramental rites in their native language. Thus, failing to relocate St. Stephen would force the pious into the arms of one of Yorkville's Hungarian Protestant churches.³⁴

³¹ Letter from Bonaventura Peéri to Patrick Cardinal Hayes, October 3, 1924; St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie.

³² Ibid.; "Advertising Men to Hear Dr. John Finley," *Women's Wear Daily (Daily Retailing)*, January 6, 1921, 1; Joseph J. Kozak to Head New Concern," *Women's Wear Daily (Footwear)*, July 8, 1927, 1.

³³ Letter from Bonaventura Peéri to Reverend Diocesan Council of the Archbishopric of New York, November 29, 1924, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie. The church performed only twelve christenings and responded to just six sick calls in all of 1923. Letter from Bonaventura Peéri to Thomas Carroll, Chancellor, New York Archdiocese, April 23, 1924, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie.

³⁴ Ibid.; Notes of Bonaventura Peéri presented to Msgr. Thomas G. Carroll, December 1, 1924, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie.

Conversely, as more Christians than Jews migrated uptown from lower Manhattan or entered the neighborhood directly from Hungary, Yorkville was gaining a reputation as a decidedly Gentile space. By the early twenties, this section contained the majority of Manhattan's estimated fifty thousand Hungarian Catholics. In fact, Peéri calculated that approximately eleven thousand Hungarian families lived on or near East 79th Street. Peéri derived hope from these demographics. The friar described this group to the city's Catholic hierarchy as the descendants of Hungary's millennium-long partnership with Rome who saw their faith as an inextricable component of their ethnic identity. He inferred, therefore, that they would readily embrace a well-managed and unified Hungarian parish in Yorkville. This belief formed the core of Peéri's mantra: build a new church and they will fill the pews.³⁵

Seemingly through sheer persistence, Peéri gained the Diocesan Council's tepid support for his relocation vision in late 1924. As a result, he intensified the church's capital campaign, which swelled to \$45,000 by the fall of 1925. Obtaining approval to purchase a specific property, however, proved difficult. Peéri had to avoid upsetting the rectors of Yorkville's territorial parishes while dealing with intrigue and indifference within the Archdiocese. Msgr. Gallus Bruder, the venerable head of St. Joseph's Church, Yorkville's German national parish, blocked the Hungarians from purchasing property on East 86th Street, German Yorkville's main artery.³⁶ On other occasions, St. Stephen lost out on available parcels on East 81st and 82nd Streets, as well as an ideal location on East 79th Street, due to the Diocesan

³⁵ Letter from Bonaventura Peéri to Thomas Carroll, Chancellor, New York Archdiocese, April 23, 1924, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie. Letter from Bonaventura Peéri to the Reverend Diocesan Council, June 28, 1924, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie. Writing to Thomas Carroll, the Archdiocesan Chancellor, in April 1924, Peéri asserted that "[t]here are at least 50,000 Hungarian Catholics in the Manhattan section of New York City, who returned to paganism and refuse to bring their children for Baptism to get a priest to their sick to administer the sacrament of Holy Unction." Letter from Peéri to Carroll.

³⁶ On another occasion, St. Stephen's relocation committee had identified a potential building site on East 79th Street between Second and Third Avenues. Just two blocks east, however, stood St. Monica's Roman Catholic Church, a sizeable territorial parish constructed in 1879. Anticipating a grievance from this venerable institution, Peéri deployed the language of ethnic identity to make his case. He did not challenge St. Monica's territorial predominance, but rather its fitness to "take care of the Hungarians in any able way." In other words, he wanted to make it clear that this was not a case of competing for parishioners. Letter from Bonaventura Peéri to the Reverend Diocesan Council, June 28, 1924, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie.

Council's deliberate review process. At one point, a frustrated Peéri conjectured that the cleric assigned to oversee the matter, Msgr. Lavelle, was "under the sinister influence of Mr. Alexander Konta."³⁷

In late 1925, after much handwringing, the Archdiocese granted Peéri authority to purchase several parcels on East 82nd Street, at an agreed to sum, "for the purpose of organizing a new Hungarian parish in that district."³⁸ Then, throughout 1926, the Catholic hierarchy focused on reining in Peéri's ambitious vision of a parish complex housing a church, monastery, school, and community center. By May 1927, Cardinal Hayes felt secure enough in the project to congratulate Peéri, writing in part: "it is surely time that the Hungarian people of New York should have a center worthy of their faith, their race, and their noble history."³⁹ At the same time, Hayes reminded the friar that the city's Hungarian Catholics would bear primary responsibility for paying off the debt.⁴⁰

On December 2, 1928, Cardinal Hayes formally dedicated the newly constructed St. Stephen of Hungary Church. As many as twelve thousand local Hungarian Americans gathered to mark the moment. In addition, a delegation led by the Very Rev. Osvald Oslay, the provincial of Peéri's order, traveled from Hungary to bear witness. Just two months later, Peéri asked the Archdiocese for \$25,000 to outfit the school, auditorium, and social center. He admitted to not "realiz[ing] what a task [he] had undertaken in trying to equip a rectory, church, school, kindergarten, and social center at the same time."⁴¹ Neither

³⁷ Letter from Thomas G. Carroll to John J. Dunn, October 1, 1925, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie.; Letter from Bonaventura Peéri to Thomas G. Carroll, October 14, 1925, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie; Letter from Bonaventura Peéri to Patrick Cardinal Hayes, January 16, 1926, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie; Letter from Bonaventura Peéri to Patrick Cardinal Hayes, December 18, 1924, Letter from Bonaventura Peéri to Patrick Cardinal Hayes, February 2, 1925, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie.

³⁸ Letter from Thomas G. Carroll to Bonaventura Peéri, November 9, 1925, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie.

³⁹ Letter from Patrick Cardinal Hayes to Bonaventura Peéri, May 18, 1927, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie.

⁴⁰ Ibid.; Letter from Thomas G. Carroll to Bonaventura Peéri, November 9, 1925, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie.

⁴¹ Bonaventura Peéri to Patrick Cardinal Hayes, February 2, 1929, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie.

Peéri, the congregation, nor the Archdiocese could have known that within a year a severe and sudden economic downturn would imperil the viability of Yorkville's Hungarian national parish.⁴²

The Great Depression reduced the church's income as much as twenty-five percent in 1930 and 1931. In response, Peéri encumbered the church with more debt in a vain attempt to stay afloat. Near the end of 1932, the Archdiocese let his request for a bailout die on the vine. Simultaneously, Peéri sought permission to approach a local Franciscan order, Holy Name Province, for the purpose of securing English-speaking friars. "The younger generation keep away from our church," he complained. "They all claim to be Americans and want to be served in English."⁴³ The twin threats of debt and generational disinterest took a toll on Peéri. In May 1933, the Archdiocese and the Hungarian Franciscans grew increasingly concerned that Peéri's deteriorating health rendered him unable to lead the parish. Thomas Carroll, the Archdiocesan Chancellor, informed Cardinal Hayes that the friar was "not absolutely persona grata" an apparent reference to his diminishing capacity.⁴⁴ Later that year, on the recommendation of Rev. Medard Medzevsky, the head of Greater New York's Hungarian Franciscans, Peéri acquiesced to an extended period of convalescence at a Hungarian monastery run by his brother. On February 28, 1934, less than a year later, Peéri died at the age of 47 in his homeland.⁴⁵

Peéri's death set off a chain of events that fundamentally changed St. Stephen's composition. His monastic order transferred control of the parish to the New York-based Holy Name Province. In their appeal to the Pope Pius XI, the Hungarian Franciscans cited generational assimilation as the primary motivation for their decision, stating:

[because] it is impossible to establish a Hungarian Province in the United States,

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Letter from Bonaventura Peéri to Thomas G. Carroll, December 6, 1932, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie.

⁴⁴ Memorandum drafted by Thomas G. Carroll for Patrick Cardinal Hayes, May 1, 1933, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie.

⁴⁵ Ibid; Letter from Bonaventura Peéri to Thomas G. Carroll, December 6, 1932, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie; "Father Peeri Found Dead, Former Pastor Here: Recent Head of Church of Saint Stephen Went to Hungary to Recover His Health," *New York Times*, March 17, 1934, 10.

since it is certain that the new Hungarian-American generation only uses the English language, and it is almost always necessary to preach in that language, it has asked the Province of the Holy Name of Jesus to accept in perpetuity the monastery, church, and parish.⁴⁶

Correspondence between Medzevsky and the Archdiocese indicates that the crippling debt also drove this decision. Despite their pessimistic outlook, however, the Hungarian Franciscans agreed to supply the church with Hungarian-speaking friars as long as necessary. Nevertheless, the non-Hungarian Holy Name order now controlled New York's Hungarian national parish. This peculiar arrangement colored the spiritual and associational lives of the church's ethnic parishioners for generations to come.⁴⁷

PART II: SERVING THE ENCLAVE: EPISODES FROM YORKVILLE'S HUNGARIAN CHURCHES

Once established, Yorkville's ethnic churches served as anchor institutions for their constituencies. Their materiality, and in some cases grandeur, signaled the vitality of the ethnic collective to internal and external audiences alike. Until the Magyar Ház transcended its elite origins after the passing of its founding generation in the 1970s, Hungarian Yorkville's churches shared the burden of satisfying locals' hunger for an ethnic headquarters. That is, much of the neighborhood's ethnic life occurred inside their walls. They preserved the native tongue and offered venues for cultural production and performance. Hungarian churches fostered community through lay committees, social clubs, banquets, and festivals. The family nature of the ethnic church experience brought multiple generations together in one space more than any other neighborhood institution. In a similar vein, it was within Hungarian Yorkville's church that different socio-economic classes had the greatest

⁴⁶ Translation of Beneplacitum Submitted by Father Faust, May 26, 1934, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie.

⁴⁷ Ibid.; Letter from Medard Medevsky to Patrick Cardinal Hayes, November 15, 1934, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie; Letter from Medard Medevsky to Thomas G. Carroll, May 28, 1933, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie; Letter from Mathias Faust to Patrick Cardinal Hayes, October 27, 1933, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie; Letter from Medard Medevsky to Central Hanover Bank & Trust Company, November 15, 1934, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie.

opportunity for meaningful interaction. Leadership of or within an ethnic church often revealed or conveyed social capital capable of transcending the specific economic status of its congregation. Importantly, Hungarian Yorkville's churches also reflected the fraught nature of homeland politics, evincing the transnational character of ethnic spiritual practices. Part II examines the mature periods of the First Magyar Reformed Church and St. Stephen of Hungary to consider how and why these religious institutions influenced the processes whereby Hungarian identity and heritage was claimed, shaped, and sometimes contested.⁴⁸

Yorkville's Reformed Faith Communities and the Politics of Hungarian American Identity

Zoltán Kuthy's untimely death in 1922 severed the direct link between the First Magyar Reformed Church and Hungary's government. Nonetheless, politics continued to penetrate the walls of Yorkville's Reformed church for decades thereafter, as demonstrated by the experiences of two well-educated, Hungarian-born pastors: Rev. Dr. Géza Takaró and Rev. Dr. Imre Kovács. While both faith leaders helped their flocks navigate homeland politics, they did so in vastly different ways. Takaró, Kuthy's immediate successor, led the First Magyar Reformed Church for more than thirty years. While preferring to focus on fortifying the local ethnic religious community, his commitment to an interfaith understanding of Hungarian ethnicity opened him up to political attacks as a purported communist sympathizer in the crucible of postwar Hungarian New York. In stark contrast, Kovács embraced a militant brand of anti-communism, organizing and leading demonstrations against the Soviet Union. Each of these pastors attempted to shepherd the Hungarian Reformed faith community according to his values and ideological bent. As their experiences bear out, leading the First Magyar Reformed Church

⁴⁸ Margaret Cowell and Heike Mayer, "Anchor Institutions and Disenfranchised Communities: Lessons for DHS and St. Elizabeths," in *Schools and Urban Revitalization: Rethinking Institutions and Community Development*, edited by Kelly L. Patterson and Robert M. Silverman (New York: Routledge, 2014), 86-106; Lawrence Brown et al, "The Rise of Anchor Institutions and the Threat to Community Health," *Santa Barbara* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 79-100; Charles W. Choi and Deborah Berhó, "Ethnic Identity Maintenance within the Latino-American Church: A Structuration Perspective," *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* 45, no. 2 (2016): 91-93; Tyler Barrett, "Language Policy in Japanese Ethnic Churches in Canada and the Legitimization of Church Member Identities," *Lang Policy* 16 (2017): 433-60; Anya Woods, *Medium or Message?: Language and Faith in Ethnic Churches* (Buffalo: Multilingual Matters, Ltd, 2004), 1-42.

during Hungarian Yorkville's active phase was never simply about attending to the church budget or delivering an effective sermon. Transnational politics constituted an unavoidable part of their portfolio.

Géza Takaró, unlike his predecessor, Zoltán Kuthy, or his Catholic counterpart, Bonaventura Peéri, had fully established his professional bona fides before migrating to America. He had pastored a Reformed congregation in Kőbánya, a suburb in southeast Pest, lectured and wrote articles under the auspices of Hungary's YMCA movement, and traveled internationally as a diplomat of Hungarian Calvinism. In September 1921, Takaró crossed the Atlantic for the first time on a multifaceted mission. The RCH had deputized him to effectuate transfers of its Hungarian Reformed churches to the RCUS, pursuant to the Tiffin Agreement. Consequently, Takaró met with federal government officials to obtain releases of Hungarian Reformed church properties seized during the Great War. During this same trip, Takaró attended the thirtieth anniversary of Pittsburgh's Hungarian Reformed church, the first Calvinist congregation established by Hungarian Americans. There, he met Alexander Kalassay, an elder statesman of the Hungarian Reformed movement in the U.S. who held sway over pastoral assignments. Over the course of the next year, Takaró continued his preaching and missionary work from his Budapest base, while Kuthy shuttled back and forth between New York and Hungary in a failed attempt to find an alternative to American control of the First Magyar Reformed Church of New York. When Kuthy's death left a pastoral vacancy at the church, RCUS officials such as Kalassay leaped at the chance to recruit one of Hungary's most respected clerics. On October 11, 1922, Takaró, his wife, Irene, and their six children landed at Ellis Island ready to accept the challenge of leading Yorkville's Hungarian Reformed church.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ "Hungary Reformed Church Christenings, 1624-1895," *Family Search*, accessed July 6, 2020, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:939K-RY9L-WM?personaUrl=%2Fark%3A%2F61903%2F1%3A1%3AV5WQ-Y6G>, (search for "Geza Takaro, Hungary"); "New York Passenger Arrival Lists (Ellis Island), 1892-1924," *Family Search*, accessed July 6, 2020, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:J6GJ-6J8>; "Religious and Charitable," *Pittsburgh Press*, September 28, 1921, 13; "New York's First Hungarian Reformed Church of New York City." *Magyar Online*, accessed June 20, 2020, <http://www.magyaronline.net/ismertetok.php?iid=58>; "Annual Meeting of Magyar Church: Elders and Trustees Elected at

Takaró's efforts to steady a congregation still reeling from Kuthy's sudden passing took many forms. He put the church's financial house in order, expanded its membership, and reaffirmed the institution's commitment to Hungarian-language training aimed at second-generation ethnics. In just a few months, he attained the office of regional vice president of the Board of Home Missions for the RCUS. Locally, Takaró forged strategic relationships with leaders like Alexander Konta and joined the effort to place a monument to Lajos Kossuth on Riverside Drive. Takaró also embraced opportunities to serve as an ethnic public intellectual, teaching classes on Hungarian language and literature at Columbia University and defending his homeland's free speech record in *New York Times* editorials. On December 21, 1930, near the close of Takaró's first decade at the helm, the church installed three bronze tablets depicting of the life of Kossuth as part of a rededication ceremony. Takaró used this powerful symbol of Hungarian New York's past to challenge his congregation to face its future bravely despite the onset of an economic downturn.⁵⁰

While guiding the church through the Great Depression, Takaró chose to avoid the more controversial elements of Hungarian homeland politics, such as debates about the Horthy regime. Instead, he gravitated toward pan-Hungarian events. In 1935, a delegation from the church, dressed in peasant costumes, marched along Fifth Avenue as part of an inter-ethnic peace parade. Three years

Business Session of Members of Congregation," *Scranton Republican*, January 7, 1922, 22. Stephen Balogh, the Executive Secretary of the American Hungarian Federation, in Congressional testimony, spoke to Takaro's stellar reputation among Hungarian clerics in training during the early twentieth century. Balogh described Takaro as "an outstanding preacher and a spiritual leader. He was our ideal and we idolized him." U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, *Communist Activities among Aliens and National Groups – on S. 1832: A Bill to Amend the Immigration Act of October 16, 1918 as Amended*, 81st Cong., 1st sess., 1949, 855.

⁵⁰ "Hungarian Ministers Open Meetings Here," *Lancaster News-Journal*, June 12, 1923, 18; "Hungarian Drive for Social Centre," *New York Times*, November 21, 1926, 14; "Pastors Will Visit College; Hungarian Reformed Church Leaders Attend Conference at Seminary Here," *Lancaster New Era*, June 12, 1923, 3; "55 New Courses Added at Columbia: Extension Department to Include 759 Subjects for Instruction in Next Year," *New York Times*, July 19, 1925, E2; Géza Takaro, "Democracy in Hungary: Country Stands Above Immediate Neighbors in Matter of Constitutional Liberty," *New York Times*, March 9, 1930, 59; "Mayor Lauds Finns for Housing Lead: La Guardia Letter Read at Folk Festival, Praises Apartment Building by Group," *New York Times*, June 21, 1937, 21; "Police Rout 'Reds' in Kossuth Meeting: Cries of 'Bolshevik' Start Fistic Clashes at Ceremony at Monument Sites," *New York Times*, November 6, 1927, 27; "Topics of Interest to the Churchgoer," *New York Times*, December 20, 1930, 15; "Church Honors Kossuth: Hungarians Hear Patriot Extolled as Tablets Are Unveiled," *New York Times*, December 22, 1930, 21.

later, Takaró delivered the keynote address at the Hungarian Independence Day gathering at the Yorkville Casino, extolling the virtues of ethnic unity among Hungarian New Yorkers.⁵¹

The Second World War, and more specifically the Hungarian Holocaust, put an end to the pastor's cautious approach to political matters. With four of his sons and sons-in law enlisted in the U.S. military, Takaró had been an early and active supporter of America's war effort, joining "ethnic loyalty" organizations such as the New York Council of Hungarian Americans for Victory (Victory Council). The Victory Council promoted war bonds, sponsored blood drives, and supported the USO. It also locked arms with the United Hungarian Jews of America to warn about Hungary's pro-Nazi, antisemitic Arrow Cross party. Takaró deployed a similar interfaith approach at the First Magyar Reformed Church. In June 1944, the church hosted an intercessional service dedicated to "the persecuted Jews of Hungary" attended by Catholics, Jews, and Protestants of Hungarian descent.⁵² In his sermon, delivered in the native tongue, Takaró spoke of a "human nation with one blood . . . where every people has a right to liberty."⁵³ He continued to support Hungarian Jews after the war. In 1949, he spoke at a meeting of the Federation of Hungarian Zionists held at the Yorkville Temple on East 86th Street, where he shared the stage with Ferenc Göndör, Béla Kun's one-time press attaché and member of the Önképző Egylet. Takaró did not let the prejudices prevalent within Hungarian Yorkville's Christian circles stop him from standing up for human rights or conceiving broadly of Hungarian identity.⁵⁴

A powerful set of Hungarian Americans used the backdrop of the early Cold War to take Takaró to task for his principled stand. Rev. George Borshy, head of the Hungarian Reformed Federation of

⁵¹ "20,000 Pacifists in March Today as War Protest," *Brooklyn Times Union*, May 18, 1935, 2; "Events Today," *New York Times*, March 13, 1938, 43. Sculptor János Horvay designed the tablets for the Lajos Kossuth monument, but donated them to the First Hungarian Reformed Church when they were not included in the original work. "Riverside: Louis Kossuth: History," *New York City Department of Parks & Recreation*, accessed June 2, 2020, <https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/riverside-park/monuments/879>.

⁵² "Hungarian Pastor Appeals for Persecuted," *American Israelite*, June 20, 1944, P2.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.; "Events Today," *New York Times*, December 11, 1949, 86; Richard L. Miller, *Under the Cloud: The Decades of Nuclear Testing* (The Woodlands, TX: Two-Sixty press, 1991), 108.

America, and Stephen Balogh, chief of the American Hungarian Federation, accused Takaró of engaging in subversive activities during the war before a U.S. Senate subcommittee. They cited his membership in Bolshevik-influenced organizations, articles he had written for leftist Hungarian-language newspapers, and his travel to Hungary after the communist takeover. Borshy claimed that Takaró had assailed Tibor Eckhardt and his exile elite cohorts a “reactionary and Fascist gang.”⁵⁵ Takaró defended himself before the subcommittee, emphasizing his wartime record of patriotic volunteerism. He denied knowingly assisting any communist organizations and side-stepped requests that he expose Hungarian American subversives in New York and elsewhere.⁵⁶

This attack on Takaró’s political persuasion tarnished his reputation within Hungarian Yorkville. As a testament to his thirty years of ministry, however, he managed to continue as the First Magyar Reformed Church’s pastor until 1953. At that point, the seventy-two-year-old cleric stepped down from pulpit, accepting the title of pastor emeritus. Takaró’s experience demonstrates conflicts among Hungarian American leaders who sought to shape the narrative of Hungary’s involvement in the Second World War. As the exile elites gained strength in postwar New York, Takaró and others who had championed interfaith causes and criticized Hungary’s wartime politicians fell out of favor. For a generation, Hungarian American leaders were expected to speak the absolutist language of the Cold War while demonstrating amnesia about the homeland’s conduct during World War II. The church seemed interested in finding a pastor who more aptly fit this moment.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Testimony of Rev. George E.K. Borshy, Executive Secretary of the Hungarian Reformed Federation of America, Communist Activities among Aliens and National Groups, September 28, 1949, U.S. Senate, Special Subcommittee to Investigate Immigration and Naturalization of the Committee on the Judiciary, Hearing before the Subcommittee on Immigration and Naturalization of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate, 81st Congress, 1st session, on S. 1832, A Bill to Amend the Immigration Act of October 16, 1918, as Amended.

⁵⁶ Ibid.; Testimony of Rev. Géza Takaro, Minister of the First Magyar Reformed Church, New York, N.Y., “Communist Activities among Aliens and National Groups, September 28, 1949, U.S. Senate, Special Subcommittee to Investigate Immigration and Naturalization of the Committee on the Judiciary, Hearing before the Subcommittee on Immigration and Naturalization of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate, 81st Congress, 1st session, on S. 1832, A Bill to Amend the Immigration Act of October 16, 1918, as Amended, 864-78.

⁵⁷ Woman’s Guild Annual Meeting on May 2nd,” *The Chatham Press (NJ)*, April 27, 1951, 1; “New York Evangelical Synod Open Conference Here,” *Troy Times Record*, April 29, 1952, 13; “Frederick Dougherty,” *Pomona Progress Bulletin*, April 25, 1956, 23; “Evelyn Bierce’s Marriage Announced,” *Poughkeepsie Journal*, November 29, 1953; 1A.

The First Magyar Reformed Church, accordingly, recruited Dr. Rev. Imre Kovács, a gifted orator and talented musician to replace Takaró. Kovács was born in Pancsova, then in southern Hungary, in 1910. His father was Magyar and his mother of German ancestry. Kovács absorbed the multicultural milieu of his home region, learning to speak Hungarian, Serbian, and German by the age of three. In 1921, the Treaty of Trianon converted his hometown to Yugoslav territory. Thereafter, Kovács connected to his Hungarian identity through religion and music. He started preaching at fifteen, entered seminary at seventeen, and then served as secretary to the ecclesiastical head of the Hungarian Reformed Church in Yugoslavia. In 1929, he received a full scholarship to complete his undergraduate studies at a Reformed seminary in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. After earning his degree in just two years, Kovács entered Yale's divinity school. He simultaneously pursued his passion for music, taking classes at Yale, the Westminster Choir School in Princeton, New Jersey, and the Julliard School in New York.⁵⁸

Kovács learned how to marshal these experiences into a personal and portable narrative capable of connecting to American patriotism. In 1937, the striking, six-feet, four-inch Hungarian with a voice "like a deep-toned organ" started delivering lectures for the American YMCA to civic groups, graduation assemblies, and churches. His themes ranged from global politics to neighborliness to personal happiness. No matter the topic, his own success story in the American democratic experiment formed the kernel of his address. Kovács was fond of saying that "some people are born in America – others, no matter where they were born, were born American" and referred to himself as "Hungarian by

⁵⁸ "Address by Kovacs: Authority on European Affairs to Speak at Rotary Forum on Monday," *York Dispatch*, February 1, 1947, 5; "Clergyman Pleads for Tolerance: Native of Hungary Tells Rotary How Young of Europe Are Taught to Hate," *Wilkes-Barre Times Leader*, September 7, 1943, 3; "Executives Hear Imre Kovacs in Talk Wednesday," *Gastonia Gazette*, December 13, 1949, 14, "Knife and Fork Club Will Hear Imre Kovacs Mon.," *Brownsville Bulletin*, September 29, 1954, 6; "Lecturer Gives Principal Address," *Duncannon Record*, August 22, 1946, 1; "United States, Genealogy Bank Historical Newspaper Obituaries, 1815-2011," Family Search, accessed June 21, 2020, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QPBG-VZ26> (search "Imre Kovacs, Pacsova"); "New York, New York Passenger and Crew Lists, 1909, 1925-1957," Family search, accessed June 21, 2020, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:24KJ-YZQ>.

birth, Yugoslavian by compulsion, and American by choice.”⁵⁹ In March 1938, just one month after accepting an invitation to lead the Hungarian Reformed church in Trenton, New Jersey, Kovács decided to add action to his pro-democratic rhetoric by joining the North American Hungarian Democratic Federation (NAHDF). Attendees at the NAHDF’s convention elected Kovács president of the fledgling organization, thereby beginning his long run as a strong voice for reform in Hungary. In fact, Kovács told his co-ethnic activists that Hungarian diasporic churches either had to throw their weight behind democracy in Hungary or perish. In November 1938, as Nazi Germany intensified its anti-Jewish campaign, Kovács, on behalf of NAHDF, endorsed Senator William King’s call for the Roosevelt administration to cut off all diplomatic and economic relations with that country. A year later, as Hungary drifted toward a German alliance, Kovács and the NAHDF mounted a “Stop Hitler” campaign meant to force Hungarian officials to take a public stance against fascism.⁶⁰

Kovács intensified his lecture tour during the Second World War, but his themes conspicuously circumvented the messiness of Hungary’s wartime geopolitics. Throughout the forties, he delivered variations of a Tocquevillian speech entitled “The Challenge of Being an American,” intended to provoke listeners to participate actively in the civic life of their local community. His decision to leave Trenton to pastor a more rural church in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania appeared consistent with this vision. In 1953, ready for a new challenge, Kovács agreed to become the First Magyar Reformed Church of New York’s fourth pastor, replacing Takaró. When he arrived in Gotham, he found a Hungarian community increasingly influenced by the exile elites. Hungarian American institutions not fully aligned with their

⁵⁹ “Foreign-Born Kovacs to Speak Monday on American Challenge,” *Woodstock Daily Sentinel (IL)*, January 22, 1948, 1; “Newark Graduates to Hear Lecturer,” *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, May 30, 1954, 5B.

⁶⁰ Ibid.; “Foreign-Born Kovacs to Speak Monday on American Challenge,” *Woodstock Daily Sentinel (IL)*, January 22, 1948, 1; “Hungarians in U.S. Urge Resistance,” *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, March 14, 1938, 6; “Demands Human Rights for Hungarians: Niagara Falls Congress Condemns Persecution of Minorities in Central Europe,” *New York Times*, March 13, 1938, 35; “U.S. Urged to Sever Nazi Relations,” *Altoona Tribune*, November 15, 1938, 1; “Hungarian Groups to Aid Democracy: United States and Canadian Bodies Form Federation in Niagara Meeting,” *New York Times*, March 14, 1938, 4; “Dr. Herman to Speak at Bethany Reformed,” *York Daily Record*, February 5, 1938, 5; “Knife and Fork Club Will Hear Imre Kovacs Mon.,” *Brownsville Bulletin*, September 29, 1954, 6; “Nazis Called Barbaric,” *Escanaba Daily Press*, November 15, 1938, 2; “Back ‘Stop Hitler’ Plan: Hungarians Here in Message to Envoy to Support British,” *New York Times*, April 8, 1939, 3.

concept of Hungarian ethnicity, such as Hungarian Jews and those on the political left, were subject to marginalization. The charismatic public speaker who defined himself as “American by choice” now shared space in an ethnic enclave dominated by former aristocrats and politicians who prioritized preserving an exclusively Magyar-Christian vision of Hungarian cultural identity.⁶¹

The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 seemed to change Kovács or at least rekindle the interest in homeland politics he had shown almost two decades earlier. Moreover, while not fully endorsing the exclusionary cultural politics advocated by some of Hungarian New York’s more hardline exile elites, his decision to participate in highly visible demonstrations against communist oppression in Hungary elevated him to the status of an ethnic Cold Warrior. On November 12, 1956, just eight days after the Soviets stamped out the Hungarian Revolution, Kovács picketed with five hundred co-ethnics outside of the U.S.S.R.’s UN headquarters. Mayor Wagner, seeking to avoid an international incident, ordered law enforcement to create a restricted protest zone. When the police refused to grant Kovács’s request to enlarge the area, the preacher shocked them by kicking down the wooden barriers one by one while shouting “[y]ou are treating us like animals.”⁶² News of the picketing pastor quickly spread. Kovács pushed the demonstrators to continue their efforts well into 1957 and directly involved his congregation in these efforts, at one point transforming the First Magyar Reformed Church into a symbol of resistance by using black streamers to signify mourning for the Hungarian Republic.⁶³

⁶¹ “AAUW to Hear Rev. Kovacs Here Tonight,” *Allentown Morning Call*, November 11, 1941, 13; “Four P-T Groups Have Founders Day program: Rev. Imre Kovacs of Phoenixville Speaker at Raub School,” *Allentown Morning Call*, February 10, 1942, 1; “Guest Night Speaker,” *Paterson Morning Call*, April 27, 1944, 9; “Dr. Imre Kovacs to be Speaker at Conference,” *Wilmington Morning News*, June 30, 1945, 8; “Imre Kovacs to Speak at Institute,” *Altoona Tribune*, October 7, 1946, 14; “Graduation at Freeland High,” *Hazleton Plain Speaker (PA)*, June 3, 1953, 4; “Ordination Next Sunday,” *Wilkes-Barre Times Leader*, June 10, 1953, 9; “Danville Church Gets Deed,” *Bridgewater Courier-News (NJ)*, October 6, 1953, 8; “Freedom Defined for Kiwanis Club,” *Chambersburg Public Opinion (PA)*, November 27, 1953, 7; “Knife and Fork Club Will Hear Imre Kovacs Mon.,” *Brownwood Bulletin*, September 29, 1954, 20.

⁶² “Pastor Upsets Barriers at Soviet U.N. Building,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 12, 1956, 11.

⁶³ Ibid.; “2 Refugee Planes to Come in Today: Church Group Asks \$325,000 for Aid to Hungarians – Red Tape is Denied,” *New York Times*, November 28, 1956, 3; “Murillo Canvas Given to Church” Present to Hungarians Here Honors Freedom Fighters and Courageous Pastor,” *New York Times*, January 28, 1957, 17; “Hungarian Groups Defy Soviet Here,” *New York Times*, July 17, 1958, 2; “Hungarians Here to Renew Pickets: Daily Demonstrations Due at Soviet Headquarters in Reply to Russian Threat,” *New York Times*, July 13, 1958, 14. Kovács was one the founding members of the Greater New York Committee of Hungarian Churches and Organizations. Through this group, Msgr. Gyula Marina, pastor of Yorkville’s Hungarian Greek-Catholic church, lent his support to the anti-Soviet movement. “Hungarian Groups Defy Soviet Here,” *New York Times*, July 17, 1958, 2;

Ex-premier Imre Nagy's execution in the summer of 1958 ignited a new round of protests. In June, demonstrators clashed with the NYPD. Kovács, trying to manage relations with city officials, organized blood donations earmarked for the police blood bank "to purposefully return the blood we inadvertently drew."⁶⁴ Such diplomacy did not prevent the situation from reaching a boiling point a month later. Kovács promised "something exciting" to light a fire under apathetic Americans. On July 19, the pastor, dressed in a black suit, stood on Park Avenue holding up a homemade Soviet flag. Police braced for what might happen next as Kovács announced, "I take this rag wet with the blood and tears of the innocent and tear it to shreds with the indignation of an aroused mankind."⁶⁵ As he ripped the makeshift Sickle & Hammer, picketers ran onto the street to trample and spit upon the pieces. Minutes later, Kovács repeated the performance with a second flag. The Soviet officials, incensed by the display, threatened to withdraw from the UN.⁶⁶

There is no evidence these dramatic scenes influenced American Cold War policy. The lack of results deflated Kovács and his allies. On the final day of the 1958 protests, he announced:

Today we lost faith. We are going home [to] cry. This broke our spirit. All week long we few have been marching up and down hoping the Americans would join us. Today we got our answer . . . When will . . . Americans wake up to what is happening. We thought that the headlines would arouse the people. But America is asleep.⁶⁷

Although Kovács protested against Khrushchev's U.S. tour in 1959 and the Soviet Union's nuclear testing program in 1961, he sought solace by resuming his lecture tour. After his intense engagement with homeland politics, Kovács deployed his biography to espouse a multicultural sensibility. "I was never

"Hungarians Here to Renew Pickets: Daily Demonstrations Due at Soviet Headquarters in Reply to Russian Threat," *New York Times*, July 13, 1958, 14.

⁶⁴ "Hungarians Who Battled Police June 22nd Give Their Blood for Department Bank," *Glens Falls Post-Star*, June 15, 1958, 1.

⁶⁵ "Hungarians Here Rip Soviet Flag: Refugees Spit on Banners Before Russian Building at End of Picketing," *New York Times*, July 20, 1958, 20.

⁶⁶ Ibid.; "Hungarians Who Battled Police June 22nd Give Their Blood for Department Bank," *Glens Falls Post-Star*, June 15, 1958, 1; "Hungarian Groups Defy Soviet Here," *New York Times*, July 12, 1958, 2.

⁶⁷ Robert Alden, "Leader of 18 Hungarian Pickets in City Says American Apathy 'Broke Our Spirit,'" *New York Times*, July 19, 1958, 3.

satisfied with the term ‘melting pot,’” he told an audience in 1963. “I prefer to think of [differences] as a flower garden full of many colors or as an orchestration of many instruments.”⁶⁸ Ultimately, Kovács moved back to a smaller Reformed church in Pennsylvania in the mid-sixties. In his absence, the First Magyar Reformed Church struggled, burning through a series of short-term pastors for the remainder of the decade. It also faced an intra-ethnic challenge, as the Independent Magyar Reformed Church planted its flag on East 82nd Street, in the heart of Hungarian Yorkville, in the late fifties. The DPs and 56ers who played prominent roles in founding the rival church eschewed the First Magyar Reformed Church as an exceedingly American institution despite Kovács Cold Warrior exploits, thus creating another split in New York’s Hungarian community.⁶⁹

Claiming, Contesting, Circumscribing, and Celebrating Ethnic Identity at a National Parish: Life and Worship at St. Stephen of Hungary

In November 1973, Jozsef Cardinal Mindszenty, the man commonly seen as the embodiment of Hungarian resistance to communist oppression during the Cold War’s first three decades, agonized over the state of Hungarian Yorkville’s national parish. Mindszenty had just returned to his Vienna-based exile following a North American tour with stops in New York, New Jersey, and Eastern Canada. In New Brunswick, New Jersey, he had blessed St. Ladislaus, the recently renovated church in the heart of the local Hungarian American enclave. More than five thousand people flocked to see and hear the Primate of Esztergom address them in their native tongue. Mindszenty implored the crowd to cling to their faith and delivered a blunt anti-abortion message. It was his call for Hungarian Americans to maintain their ethnic identity and preserve their ancestral language, however, that electrified the assemblage. The diaspora, Mindszenty argued, represented the last best hope to save the Hungarian spirit.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Virginia London, “Benevolence to Others Road to Growth, Happiness,” *Bangor Daily News*, 1963, 12.

⁶⁹ Ibid.; “Protest K in Procession,” *New York Daily News*, September 14, 1959, 2; “Walter Carlson, “Familiar U.N. Pickets Regroup to Condemn ‘Megaton Terror,’” *New York Times*, October 30, 1961, 19.

⁷⁰ George Dugan, “5,000 Hail Mindszenty At Jersey Church Rite: Banners of Welcome Anthem Is Sung,” *New York Times*, October 1, 1973; 39; Letter from Jozsef Cardinal Mindszenty to Terence Cardinal Cooke. November 10, 1973, Vienna.

As Mindszenty reveled in the energy in New Brunswick, he took notice of the problems in Gotham. Writing to Terence Cardinal Cooke, head of the New York Archdiocese, after the trip, he stated that “[t]he fact that there is no Hungarian parish in New York City is a great drawback to the indeed large Hungarian colony [there].” Nearly forty years after Peéri’s death had precipitated St. Stephen falling under the dominion of the American friars, Mindszenty cited the Archdiocese’s wanton neglect of the “desolate condition” of parish.⁷¹ Recommending a dialogue with Serenus Szabó, the top-ranking Hungarian Franciscan in America, he asked Cardinal Cooke, “not to leave the Hungarian Catholics without a genuine and independent Hungarian parish and center,” explaining that “[w]hat we cannot do inside our unfortunate homeland, I ask you to do for my people in New York with Christlike pastoral concern.”⁷² Mindszenty gave voice to the long-held concerns of the Hungarian American element within St. Stephen of Hungary, who were engaged in a struggle to practice their faith in accordance with their ethnic identity in a church attracting increasing numbers of non-Hungarians and run by American Franciscans.⁷³

The question of whether and to what extent St. Stephen of Hungary could or should remain a Hungarian parish in more than name permeated church life from the time the Hungarian Franciscans transferred control to the Holy Name Province in 1934. Under the agreement, approved by the Vatican, a Holy name friar would serve as the church’s Superior while the Hungarian Franciscans would supply Hungarian speaking clerics to serve in subordinate positions. Over time, St. Stephen, a church expressly created to meet Hungarian New York’s distinct spiritual needs, harbored a sizeable non-Hungarian contingent demanding English-language services. Although the two sub-communities managed to co-

⁷¹ Letter from Jozsef Cardinal Mindszenty to Terence Cardinal Cooke, November 10, 1973, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph’s Seminary, Dunwoodie.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

exist for more than eighty years, the matter of how a national parish might accommodate ethnic and non-ethnic members never ceased to act as a source of friction.⁷⁴

As early as June 1935, Hungarian Americans had grown weary of the American Franciscans. Consequently, the community deputized Dr. Hergott, a resident of Hungarian Yorkville, to petition the Archdiocese to return control of the church to the Hungarian parishioners. The response of J. Francis McIntyre, Chancellor for the Archdiocese, betrayed the Catholic hierarchy's frustration with the Hungarians. After reminding Dr. Hergott of the guaranteed presence of a Hungarian cleric, McIntyre excoriated the Hungarians as "a complete failure" and band of ingrates who had forgotten the sacrifices made to construct the church in the first place. Instead of griping, he reasoned, the Hungarians should be thankful that "the new management, with the help of the English-speaking people in the neighborhood, were making a determined and somewhat successful effort to carry the huge debt."⁷⁵ Hergott received no good news to report to the Hungarian parishioners.⁷⁶

Father Emeric Szlezák, a freshly ordained Franciscan, entered this fraught scene a decade later. His tenure, which stretched over four decades, helped St. Stephen of Hungary retain its national parish status and feel despite demographic changes in Yorkville and its Hungarian enclave over time. In turn, Szlezák demonstrates the influence a single faith leader can exercise within the context of an ethnic church. Szlezák was born in Budapest to a working-class family in 1917. Seeking to better their economic prospects, his family migrated to New York in late 1923, just before the era of open European immigration ended. Starting in 1928, the Szlezáks, who resided in Brooklyn, journeyed into Manhattan to attend Mass at the newly built St. Stephen of Hungary Church. In 1945, after completing a rigorous

⁷⁴ The Catholic Church requires Papal approval of any agreement alienating or otherwise materially affecting Church property. The term "beneplacitum apostolicum," meaning "at the pleasure of the Holy See," is used to capture this wide range of transactions and decisions. Patricia Durchholz, *Defining Mission: Comboni Missions in North America* (Lanham, NY: University Press of America, 1999), 67; Peter A. Baart, *Legal Formulary* (New York: Fr. Pustet & Company, 1898), 292.

⁷⁵ James F. McCarthy Memorandum to File, New York, March 15, 1985, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

course of theological training through which he earned the equivalent of a master's degree, Szlezák reported for duty at St. Stephen. Szlezák never forgot the anxiety he felt about having to preach in Hungarian given his limited vocabulary and subpar pronunciation skills. Years later, he wrote:

In New York, I had to preach in Hungarian, and believe me, it was not easy. I tried to memorize the sermons on the train, but when someone sat beside me, I felt quite uneasy. [Eventually] I just copied the Hungarian thoughts from sermon books and tried to give them as is, not realizing that the talks were from another era, and quite ancient in grammar.⁷⁷

For Szlezák, enhancing his Hungarian-language skills became a lifelong commitment. Father Iván Csete, a retired priest who provides pastoral services to St. Stephen's contemporary faith community, quipped that Szlezák spoke and wrote Hungarian quite fluently by the time he reached ninety. Over the course of forty years as St. Stephen's primary Hungarian friar, Szlezák's diplomatic skills earned the trust of his non-Hungarian superiors, which, in turn, allowed him to advocate strategically for the church's Hungarian population.⁷⁸

St. Stephen's Hungarian faith community tends to recall the Szlezák era, running from 1945 to 1986, as the church's "golden age," notwithstanding tense relations between the ethnic parishioners and the Holy Name order. Music and food infuse memories of this period, bolstering such nostalgia. For decades, the church boasted a mixed-gender Hungarian choir, *Hit Szava*, or the Voice of Faith. Founded by Sabbas Kilian, a Hungarian-born Franciscan and subsequently under the direction of Hungarian émigré Jules Vállay, the choir recorded weekly sessions for a local radio station and performed live at venues throughout Greater New York, including the 1964 World's Fair. Through the "Mother's Club," which prepared the church's ethnic luncheons, St. Stephen gained a culinary reputation the equal of the

⁷⁷ Kalman Szlezák, Emeric's father, joined a church-based sick and benevolent institution, the Our Lady of Hungary Society. Emeric Szlezák Memoir, "Chapter 6: Fr. Emeric Szlezak," in *Who Am I*, Digital, Personal Repository of Emery Szlezak (Szlezák Memoir).

⁷⁸ Szlezák Memoir; Telephone call: Ivan Csete, interviewee, and Steven Lechner, interviewer, July 1, 2020. When he died at the age of 101 on March 16, 2019, Szlezák was the longest-living friar in the history of the Holy Name Province. "Obituary: Emeric Szlezak," *Tampa Bay Times*, March 21, 2019; "Making 65 Years of Priestly Ministry," April 8, 2019, accessed July 5, 2020, <https://www.dosp.org/marking-65-years-of-priestly-ministry/>; "St. Petersburg Friar Turns 100," *Tampa Bay Times*, accessed July 7, 2020, https://www.tampabay.com/news/Hometown-Pinellas_165170984/.

neighborhood's Hungarian restaurants. Rose Yurasits, who has resided in Yorkville continuously since migrating from her native Hungary as a teenager in 1946, recalled fondly how the women in the Mother's Club "made wonderful Hungarian food, including tureens of soup, chicken and pork dishes" as well as homemade pastries.⁷⁹ Those who attended Yorkville's Hungarian churches during the last four decades of the twentieth century remember gendered food battles where the respective women's groups tried to outdo each other for the best Sunday buffet.⁸⁰

While St. Stephen of Hungary partnered with the neighborhood's Hungarian Protestant churches to create an unofficial food network, it did not emulate their tendency to engage with homeland politics in a direct sense. Archdiocesan oversight, the Holy Name non-Hungarian friars' tight grip on church affairs, and Father Szlezák's preference for harmonious co-existence between ethnic and non-ethnic factions, help explain this distinction. A notable exception to this general rule occurred in the fall of 1977 when President Jimmy Carter's announced his plan to return the crown of Stephen I to Hungary. Americans had taken possession of the ancient crown near the end of the Second World War. Starting with Truman, Hungarian Americans had convinced a series of administrations to retain the crown until Hungary ceased to be ruled by a communist regime. The Carter administration reversed this longstanding policy based on its Eastern Europe strategy to extend the olive branch to nations perceived as more open to liberal democratic principles, such as Hungary and Poland.⁸¹

This change in foreign policy enraged Hungarian New Yorkers attuned to homeland politics, who could not abide any overture to what they saw as an illegitimate government. Róbert Harkay, the

⁷⁹ Email from Carol Blakeley and Rose Yurasits to author, May 28, 2020.

⁸⁰ Ibid.; Vállay, "For Your Penance: Sing!"; Vállay, "My Life: A Brief Biography of Jules S. Vállay." Father Kilian Csaba, the Hungarian friar responsible for the choir, used confession time as a recruiting opportunity. Jules S. Vállay, "For Your Penance: Sing!" onlysaytheword.com, accessed June 1, 2020; <http://www.onlysaytheword.com/for-your-penance-sing.html>. Jules Vállay served as the choir director from nearly four decades, retiring in 1990. Ibid. In his eighties, he started a blog chronicling, among other things, his recollections about life as a Hungarian parishioner at St. Stephen of Hungary. Jules S. Vállay, "My Life: A Brief Biography of Jules S. Vállay," onlysaytheword.com, accessed June 1, 2020, <http://onlysaytheword.com/my-life-jules-s-vallay.html>.

⁸¹ Máté Gergely Balogh, "Killing the Canard: Saint Stephen's Crown, Nixon, Budapest, and the Hungarian Lobby," *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* 24, no. 1 (2018): 165-89; Katalin Kádár Lynn, "The Return of the Crown of St. Stephen and Its Subsequent Impact on the Carter Administration," *Eastern European Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (June, 2000): 190-211.

Magyar Ház's manager and one of St. Stephen's Hungarian lay leaders, organized a multifaceted protest designed to raise awareness of the controversy. In late 1977, as Secretary of State Cyrus Vance prepared to deliver the crown to Hungary's Kádár regime, Harkay and his supporters held a prayer vigil at St. Stephen. Afterwards they proceeded by motorcade to Philadelphia, where they staged a rally next to the Liberty Bell. Harkay, in front of a gaggle of reporters, explained the group's intent, saying:

We are trying to express our grave dissatisfaction with President Carter's decision to return the holy crown at this time. We feel the crown will not belong to the Hungarian people if it is returned now . . . We want Americans to rally with us on this cause and protest Carter's action.⁸²

Once back in New York, the Hungarians held a candlelight vigil outside of Gracie Mansion. Meanwhile, New Brunswick's Hungarian American community gathered at St. Ladislaus, reflecting a greater ability to use their religious space for political purposes. The pastor at St. Ladislaus, Father Füzér, even publicly objected to returning the crown and criticized Carter's inconsistent human rights record. In contrast, St. Stephen's Hungarian friars, including Father Szlezák, avoided taking any public stance on the matter. In the end, the protests did not change Carter's mind. At a ceremony inside Budapest's Parliament building, state officials carefully placed the crown into its special case, where it resides to this day. Thousands of Hungarians milled about outside, unable to attend the non-public event.⁸³

The abrupt end to the Szlezák era in the mid-eighties threatened to strike a mortal blow to St. Stephen's Hungarian identity. The Holy Name order's new Superior was committed to relitigating and

⁸² Terry Taylor, "Hungarian Crown's Return Is Opposed at Protest Rally," *Pottsville Republican*, December 27, 1977, 1.

⁸³ Ibid.; Robert D. McFadden, "Motorcade Protests U.S. Plan to Return Crown to Hungary," *New York Times*, December 27, 1977, 3; "Protesters Rally Against Return of Crown to Hungary," AP, December 27, 1977, 44; "Hungarians Want Crown Kept in U.S.," *Delaware County Daily Times*, December 27, 1977, 4; "U.S. Return of Crown to Hungary Protested," *New York Times*, November 30, 1977, 46; Jill Ross, "Protest over Crown Planned," *Central New Brunswick Home News*, December 27, 1977, 13; "Crown Return Draws Protest," *Carlisle Sentinel*, December 28, 1977, 19; "Protest Rally," *Jackson Sun (TN)*, December 27, 1977, 3; "Judge Won't Halt Return of Crown," *Los Angeles Times*, December 31, 1977, A5; "Crown Flown Back to Hungary Amid Widespread U.S. Protests," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, January 6, 1978, 10; "U.S. Returns Hungary's Crown," *Spokesman-Review*, January 7, 1978, 2; "Return of the Holy Crown of St. Stephen," U.S. Embassy in Hungary, accessed November 13, 2018, <https://hu.usembassy.gov/embassy/budapest/embassy-history/return-holy-crown-st-stephen/>; Máté Gergely Balogh, "Killing the Canard: Saint Stephen's Crown, Nixon, Budapest, and the Hungarian Lobby," *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* 24, no. 1 (2018): 165-89. Father Füzér's public position was even more notable given press reports that the Vatican leaned toward supporting Carter's decision. Paul Hofmann, "Pope Paul Said to Back Return of Hungarian Crown," *New York Times*, December 29, 1977, 3.

recalibrating the church's national parish status, and so cast the ethnic element as divisive and the institution's split personality as unsustainable. The Superior resolved "to bring unity to our diversity . . . [by] chang[ing] the ethnicity of the parish and mak[ing] it American."⁸⁴ Transferring Szlezák, seen by the church's ethnics and the American friars, as "a symbol of Hungarian ethnicity," constituted the centerpiece of this scheme. St. Stephen's Hungarians solicited the help of allies to preserve the national parish. In January 1985, Sándor Balogh, head of the National Federation of American Hungarians, met with representatives of the Hungarian laity to learn more about the dispute. After reviewing the group's file, which allegedly included correspondence to and from church officials, Balogh took the case to Cardinal John O'Connor, the Archdiocese's chief. Balogh's warned that "the situation at St. Stephen's was reaching a flashpoint, and unless some action is taken to defuse the conflict, I would hate to think what might happen."⁸⁵ Balogh accused the Holy Name Province of violating its contractual obligations by ignoring, and in some cases undermining, the spiritual needs of the parish's Hungarian constituency. Further, in a creative reading of the Second Vatican Council, commonly known as Vatican II, he insisted that the Catholic officials were dutybound to see to "the pastoral care of ethnics, respecting their language and traditions."⁸⁶ In other words, Balogh argued that St. Stephen's role as a national parish was inviolable.⁸⁷

St. Stephen's second civil war reached well beyond Hungarian New York, finding audiences in disparate parts of the Hungarian diaspora. In March 1985, for instance, Dr. Julian Ambrus, of the Catholic Physicians Guild and American Physicians of Hungarian Origin, offered the Archdiocese his

⁸⁴ Szlezák Memoir.

⁸⁵ Balogh made explicit reference to recent waves of violence aimed at abortion clinics to underscore his fears, stating that "[w]e all pray, for example, that the recent action of some-pro-lifers – taken with the best of motives, yet in our view not only illegal but morally wrong – against some abortion clinics, will not serve as an example for the rejected, frustrated, emotionally riled members of this unfortunate church." Balogh, Sándor to John Cardinal O'Connor, January 20, 1985, East Greenbush, New York; see also David Zucchino, "Violence Grows Against Abortion Clinics, Pro-Choice Groups," *Charlotte Observer*, September 4, 1984, 1; Virginia Martin, "Abortion Fight Compounded by Violent Attacks on Clinics," *Montgomery Advertiser*, December 23, 1984, C1.

⁸⁶ Letter from Sándor Balogh to John Cardinal O'Connor, January 20, 1985, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

opinion. Ambrus told Cardinal O'Connor that during his recent European lecture tour co-ethnics had peppered him with questions about Gotham's Hungarian national parish, stating:

[s]everal of [my colleagues] mentioned . . . the problem of the St. Stephen Church in New York City . . . There is apparently a trend today to eliminate the Hungarian character of this church and . . . its function to serve the Hungarian ethnic group. Apparently, the Hungarian Father who was serving this community has been reassigned and the Hungarian group trying to participate in the community affairs of the church ha[s] been excluded. This may be a minor issue, but it appears that it made major waves in certain European communities.⁸⁸

The Archdiocese's response, delivered by Rev. James McCarthy, Cardinal O'Connor's Secretary, opined that "[t]he history of the immigrant church in the Archdiocese and the history of St. Stephen's are very much bound together and the Archbishop is very much aware of the problem."⁸⁹ Catholic officials seemed to have concluded that national parishes caused more problems than they solved. Despite their grievances falling on deaf ears, the Hungarian parishioners remained committed to their national parish. They continued to attend the church, populate its organizations, celebrate Hungarian feast days, and run the church bazaar and other special events, even as Hungarian Yorkville declined after the Gimbels years. Their perseverance, tied to the link between the ethnic enclave, the church as an ethnic space, and their identity as hyphenates, continued for three more decades until the Catholic hierarchy decided to close St. Stephen permanently in 2015.⁹⁰

PART III: PRECARIOUS PERSISTENCE: HUNGARIAN YORKVILLE'S CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS HERITAGE

Yorkville's five Hungarian American churches continue their lives as ethnic faith communities.

The neighborhood's Hungarian Reformed churches and the Hungarian Baptist Church still hold regular

⁸⁸ Letter from Julian L. Ambrus to John Cardinal O'Connor, March 4, 1985, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie.

⁸⁹ Letter James F. McCarthy to Julian L. Ambrus, Archdiocese of New York, March 15, 1985, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie.

⁹⁰ Ibid.; Letter from Julian L. Ambrus to John Cardinal O'Connor, March 4, 1985, St. Stephen of Hungary, Collection No. 011.001, Box 32, Folder 1, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie.

worship services and organize ancillary activities for their congregants. These churches press on despite their weekly attendance numbering in the dozens rather than the hundreds. In contrast, the Holy Cross Byzantine Catholic Church typically draws less than a dozen worshippers weekly. While owning its modest sanctuary on East 82nd Street provides a measure of stability, it is unclear how long this small faith community will cohere. St. Stephen of Hungary, once the Roman Catholic rock of Hungarian New York and symbolic heart of the Yorkville enclave, has stood vacant since the Archdiocese of New York mandated its closure as part of a sweeping reorganization and consolidation plan in 2015. When the Catholic hierarchy padlocked the church and reassigned its congregation to St. Monica's on East 79th Street, the closest territorial parish, nearly fifty of its members resisted. This faction forged an agreement with the rector of St. Joseph's Church, whereby Yorkville's one-time German national parish would host a weekly Hungarian-language mass and post-service coffee hour. In all five cases, therefore, these ethnic faith communities gather in Yorkville, despite the inconvenience and costs of traveling to Upper Manhattan from other parts of Greater New York and beyond. Hungarian Yorkville's ethnic churches thus exist in a state of precarious persistence. Their ability to carry on as ethnic churches appears to be hinged to the lifespans of their current members, especially those with living memories of Hungarian Yorkville. The First Magyar Reformed Church and St. Stephen have experienced this twilight period in divergent ways. The former gained currency within a larger movement to preserve the materiality and narrative history of ethnic Yorkville. The latter's congregation gathers outside the public eye in a church not their own. Their ability to endure on a long-term basis as a distinct group appears as threatened as the memories their quest might generate.⁹¹

⁹¹ Ibid.; National Register of Historic Places, 322-344 Rowhouses, New York, New York, National Register #84002793; National Register of Historic Places, First Hungarian Reformed Church, New York, New York, # 75319493; Landmarks Preservation Commission, First Hungarian Reformed Church, Designation Report, LP-2601, City of New York, June 11, 2019. Prepared by Marianne Hurley: 8-13; Timothy Cardinal Dolan, Decree on the Merger of the Territorial Parish of Saint Monica. New York, NY, The Personal Parish of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, New York, NY, and the Personal Parish of Saint Stephen of Hungary, November 2, 2014, <https://archnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/Decree-on-the-Merger-of-the-Territorial-Parish-of-St-Monica-NY.pdf> (Dolan Decree).

Listed and Landmarked: The First Magyar Reformed Church and the Preservation Ethos

Notwithstanding the aesthetic concerns that sometimes spur preservation decisions, the underlying logic of granting special status to the urban built environment is based on its ability to open portals to the past. In 2000, the First Magyar Reformed Church of New York gained inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places, which the National Park Service describes as “the nation’s inventory of historic places and the national repository of documentation on the variety of historic property types.”⁹² A generation later, New York’s Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) afforded the church protection under the city’s urban preservation law. Accordingly, this church is one of ethnic Yorkville’s only properties to be listed and landmarked. The fact that the landmarking process relating to the First Magyar Reformed Church played out contemporaneously with the Archdiocese of New York closing St. Stephen of Hungary made the LPC’s decision even more meaningful for those connected to Yorkville’s Hungarian heritage. As a protected property, the First Magyar Reformed Church carries the promise of anchoring social memories about the enclave. The church’s mnemonic potentiality raises an essential question: what might this church say about Yorkville’s ethnic past? The preservation actions of the National Register of Historic Places in 2000 and the LPC in 2019 offer a partial response this crucial query.⁹³

In June 2019, the LPC voted unanimously to bestow landmark status on the First Magyar Reformed Church of New York. Preservationists and politicians praised the decision. Friends of the Upper East Side placed the action within the greater context of the neighborhood’s “unique legacy as a home for a wide variety of immigrant communities” as well as the pressing need to acknowledge “the

⁹² “National Register Bulletin: How to Apply to National Register Criteria for Evaluation,” National Park Service, accessed June 15, 2020.

⁹³ https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB-15_web508.pdf

institutions which served their many cultural, religious, and social needs.”⁹⁴ Carolyn Maloney, whose Congressional district includes Yorkville, called the church an “architectural gem” and a “wonderful reminder of the Hungarian community that once flourished in Yorkville.”⁹⁵ Ben Kallos, Yorkville’s representative on the City Council, supported the church from the beginning of the landmark process in 2013. His testimony at the LPC’s March 2019 hearing connected the First Magyar Reformed Church to the fundamental principle of freedom of worship. The church, he argued, “is a symbol of the Hungarian community and their efforts to establish a Reformed congregation in the city, free from the religious persecution they faced in their homeland.”⁹⁶ In addition, Kallos stressed how the church filled local Hungarian Americans with “a sense of pride in their culture,” while also providing them with “a sense of security” in an otherwise unfamiliar and sometimes hostile environment.⁹⁷

For Kallos, the designation also struck a personal chord, reinforcing the complex interrelationship among individual, family, and communal notions of ethnic identity and belonging. His grandparents, Holocaust survivors who identified as Hungarian Jews, had settled in Yorkville. Kallos, who considers the one-time working-class neighborhood a childhood home, bore witness to many of the enclave’s “cultural touchstones” disappearing with limited public outcry, as developers pushed to bring Yorkville into the Upper East Side’s affluent fold.⁹⁸ The designation of the First Magyar Reformed Church offered a reprieve from this protracted pattern of destruction and loss. “This is the neighborhood I grew up in,” Kallos explained, “[which] is why I cherish any buildings that connect us to our past and stand in living testimony to the rich cultural immigrant heritage of the area that might otherwise be denied.”⁹⁹

⁹⁴ “Two New Upper East Side Landmarks!” Friends of the Upper East Side, accessed June 21, 2020, <https://friends-ues.org/two-new-upper-east-side-landmarks/>.

⁹⁵ Veronica Rose, “Landmarks Designates First Hungarian Reformed Church,” *Cityland*, June 12, 2019, accessed June 19, 2020, <https://www.citylandnyc.org/landmarks-designates-first-hungarian-reformed-church/>.

⁹⁶ “Testimony to the Landmarks Preservation Commission Supporting the Designation as an Individual Landmark: First Hungarian Reformed Church, aka 346-348 East 69th Street,” New York City Council Member, Ben Kallos.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

The First Magyar Reformed Church had been the subject of preservation efforts prior to the recent LPC process. The parsonage fell within a request submitted by the New York State Department of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (NYPRHP) in 1984 to add row houses on East 69th Street to the National Register of Historic Places. The application described the structures as “a rare surviving enclave of low-rise nineteenth century construction in the heavily rebuilt eastern edge of upper Manhattan” as well as an ode to the Néo-Grec style brownstones built during Yorkville’s 1870s construction boom.¹⁰⁰ Despite objections from four property owners and no official comment from the church, the National Park Service approved the listing of the 322-344 East 69th Street Rowhouses.¹⁰¹

In 2000, the East 69th Street Block Association partnered with the New York Landmarks Conservancy and the NYPRHP to nominate the First Magyar Reformed Church proper for listing on the National Register. After careful consideration, the church expressly supported the nomination, writing:

The pastor and the Consistory ha[ve] debated over this issue and it met with their support. Our Church has been an important part of Hungarian ethnic culture in the greater New York area since its inception, and we have been an active part of the Upper East Side community. We were excited to hear the plan of the 69th Street Block Association to apply for this honorable status. We have gladly participated in the planning and researching [for] the application process, and we are looking forward to hearing a positive decision of the evaluation.¹⁰²

Anne Millard, then the president of Friends of the Upper East Side (FRIENDS), a non-profit dedicated to historic preservation, backed the nomination stressing that the church “is representative of the ethnic roots of the Upper East Side, and the many immigrant groups, like the Hungarians, who created and

¹⁰⁰ National Register of Historic Places, 322-344 Rowhouses, New York, New York, National Register #84002793.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. Four of the ten property owners expressly objected to the listing. One strongly backed the process. The First Magyar Reformed Church was among five property owners failing to clarify their position to the nomination in writing.

¹⁰² Letter from First Hungarian Reformed Church to Bernadette Castro, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, March 1, 2000, in National Register of Historic Places, First Hungarian Reformed Church, New York, New York, #75319493.

continue to give the [neighborhood] its special sense of place.”¹⁰³ The 2000 process modeled how internal and external stakeholders can work together to preserve ethnic history and heritage.¹⁰⁴

Critically analyzing the 2000 nomination paperwork and the LPC’s designation report issued in 2019 provides clues about how the First Magyar Reformed Church might link Hungarian Yorkville’s past and present. The 2000 nomination cited the church’s “association with the Hungarian community in New York City during the twentieth century” as partial grounds for listing the property on the National Register.¹⁰⁵ The nomination offered a periodized history of Hungarian New York, beginning with Lajos Kossuth’s visit in the mid-nineteenth century and extending through the 1990s. By its very existence, this account challenged the ethnic Yorkville imaginary’s German myopia. Moreover, the history, while deviating from or omitting the archival record in certain regards, evinces a good faith effort to convey a narrative with more than a superficial degree of nuance and complexity. For instance, the summary differentiated political émigrés settling in New York during the two decades after Kossuth’s visit in the mid-nineteenth century from those motivated chiefly by economic concerns arriving after the 1870s. It noted the range of social and commercial institutions such as churches, synagogues, restaurants, and newspapers that had served the Hungarian American communities in lower Manhattan and Yorkville. The historical sketch nodded to the complexities of Hungarian ethnic identity by referencing the presence of Slovaks, Croatians, and Romanians emigrating from the Kingdom of Hungary prior to World War I, and by acknowledging that Hungarian migrants came from a variety of religious traditions including Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, and the Eastern Orthodox church. Perhaps most surprisingly, the summary transcended the standard temporal boundaries of ethnic Yorkville’s predominant narrative by noting Hungarian immigration during the 1980s and after communism’s

¹⁰³ Letter from Anne Millard, Friends of the Upper East Side to Bernadette Castro, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, January 12, 2000, in National Register of Historic Places, First Hungarian Reformed Church, New York, New York, #75319493.

¹⁰⁴ National Register of Historic Places, First Hungarian Reformed Church, New York, New York, # 75319493.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

collapse in 1989, as well as the presence of cultural centers such as the Magyar Ház and its one-time neighbor on East 82nd Street, the Puski-Corvin bookstore.¹⁰⁶

While notable as a rare account of Hungarian Yorkville and the Greater New York network to which it belonged, the nomination continued to present a problematic history in a few ways. Several omissions conspired to present a sanitized account. The nomination said nothing about anti-Hungarian discourses of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries nor the Americanization campaigns to which Hungarian émigrés were subjected. It failed to mention homeland politics, which fueled intra-ethnic conflict in Gotham, including tension between Hungarian Jews and non-Jews, and which played such a vital role in determining the Christian flavor of Hungarian identity cultivated in and projected by the Yorkville enclave. Like many immigration histories, the summary glossed over conditions in the sending country that motivated emigration and remained silent about return migration, a defining element in the Hungarian American story. While its efforts to complicate Hungarian identity were laudable, a person lacking pre-knowledge of the Kingdom of Hungary's status as a multi-ethnic state within a state or the Treaty of Trianon in 1921 would struggle to grasp the contested nature of Hungarian American identity by reading this summary. Concerning Hungarian Yorkville itself, the nomination artificially bounded the enclave within an area running from the upper 70s to the lower 80s, failed to reference the importance of St. Stephen of Hungary and other places of worship, and inadequately discussed the degree to which Yorkville operated as a social and commercial hub within Greater New York's wider ethnic network. Most glaringly, it elided Hungarian emigration after the Second World War and the Hungarian Revolution, movements of people and ideas that profoundly reshaped Hungarian enclaves throughout Gotham, especially Yorkville, and directly affected the First

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

Hungarian Reformed Church as it became a bastion of anti-communism under the pastoral leadership of Rev. Dr. Imre Kovács.¹⁰⁷

The 2019 landmarking process offered an opportunity to build on the history presented in the 2000 nomination, and perhaps to correct some of its interpretative flaws. To be sure, compared to the earlier historical summary, the LPC's designation report more effectively described Hungarian New York within the context of a broader Hungarian network including settlements in New York State, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Ohio, and Illinois. Moreover, it characterized Yorkville as a multiethnic neighborhood, noting the predominance of Germans, but also the presence of Slavs, Irish, Jews, and Italians throughout much of the twentieth century. Further, it causally connected uptown migrations to construction of the Second and Third Avenue elevated trains, as opposed to simply asserting that the Hungarians followed the Germans to Yorkville. The report expanded Hungarian Yorkville's geospatial footprint, helping to explain how it was that a church located on East 69th Street could serve the ethnic enclave to its north.¹⁰⁸

On the other hand, the designation report repeated some of the 2000 nomination's fundamental problems. It, too, sanitized the record, avoiding thorny issues like the Great War at home and abroad, the divisiveness of homeland politics during the interwar years, and the fight over who could rightfully claim Magyar identity within Hungarian New York. While situating the First Magyar Reformed Church within the context of World War II and the Cold War, even referencing the demonstrations led by Kovács, the report inaccurately implied that all Hungarian New Yorkers stood against their homeland's alliance with Nazi Germany and publicly protested the persecution of Jews in Hungary during the war's final phase. Lastly, the report, like the nomination, failed to discuss the

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Landmarks Preservation Commission, First Hungarian Reformed Church, Designation Report, LP-2601, City of New York, June 11, 2019. Prepared by Marianne Hurley: 8-13.

postwar and post-revolutionary migrations that repopulated Hungarian Yorkville, created a rival Hungarian Reformed church, and eventually led to the development of the Magyar Ház.¹⁰⁹

One final issue regarding these preservation processes bears emphasis. In both 2000 and 2019, historical accounts of Hungarian New York, the Yorkville enclave, and the First Magyar Reformed Church, paled in comparison with the emphasis placed on Emery Roth, the architect who designed the church and parsonage. In fact, the 2000 nomination devoted twice as much space to Roth's biographical sketch than it did to its other historical components. Specifically, the nomination and the designation report highlighted Roth's record of designing notable apartment buildings on the more affluent Upper West Side a decade after he drew up the plans for the church. Emphasizing a prolific architect's body of work represents standard fare in the preservation world, with its preoccupation on buildings styles and design elements. Clearly, those backing the National Register listing and the landmark designation believed that foregrounding Roth would prove persuasive, a strategy that seems sound in hindsight. Nonetheless, the depiction of Roth in these documents constitutes a missed opportunity to tell a more nuanced and complicated story about Hungarian New York.¹¹⁰

Emery Roth's life offers a testament to the complexity and hybridity of Hungarian American identity. He grew up in a Hungarian Jewish family in the town of Gálszécs in Upper Hungary, now Sečovce, Slovakia, an area of notable ethnic and religious diversity during the nineteenth century. Roth's family owned and managed the town's inn, which featured a café, guest rooms, banquet hall, and a meeting space for a semi-private casino or club. Of this place, he once said that "Magyar, Slovak, Pole, German, Jew, rich and poor, all were guests at our house."¹¹¹ Roth himself spoke Hungarian and Slovakian and, to a lesser extent, German. According to his biographer, Steven Rutenbaum, Roth's family exemplified the ability of many Hungarian Jews to attain a socio-political standing just below that

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 10-12.

¹¹¹ Steven Rutenbaum, *Mansions in the Clouds: The Skyscraper Palazzi of Emery Roth* (New York: Balsam Press, 1986), 14.

of the nation's Magyar aristocracy. This was the Hungary that Roth left when he sailed for the United States in 1884. After stops in Chicago and Kansas City, Roth relocated to New York in the 1890s. He found work planning remodel projects for restaurants and cafés owned by Jewish and non-Jewish Hungarians in Little Hungary.¹¹²

The kinds of intersections of ethnic identity replete in Roth's experiences played out in specific ways within New York's Hungarian communities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet, the histories recounted in the preservation documents avoid much of this subject matter. In its only reference to Roth's status as a Hungarian Jew, the 2000 nomination opines that "[i]n view of the fact that he was Jewish and had never designed a church property, it is thought he was given the commission due to his close ties with the Hungarian community in the city."¹¹³ This statement lacks any explanatory power as it does not build from a foundational understanding of the religious heterogeneity of Little Hungary during the early twentieth century. Problematically, the 2019 designation report erases Roth's Jewish identity entirely. The fraught and often contested nature of post-migration ethnic identity persists as an understudied area of so-called immigration history presumably because it threatens to muddy the melting pot narrative. Roth's story invites a more nuanced interpretation of what it meant to be Hungarian American in early twentieth century New York, which, in turn, might spark interest in how and why that identity changed over time and why it assumes a certain form in institutions such as Magyar Ház today.¹¹⁴

Admittedly, it may be unfair to expect the preservation of a single building to yield fine-grained histories of a neighborhood's multicultural and transnational past. Moreover, preservationists often use historical content to persuade a board or committee to attach some degree of protection to a structure. These circumstances make celebratory and flattened renderings of the past more likely to predominate.

¹¹² Ibid., 13-52.

¹¹³ National Register of Historic Places, First Hungarian Reformed Church, New York, New York, # 75319493.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.; Landmarks Preservation Commission, 8-13.

Nonetheless, as New York's preservation entities continue to identify material elements of the city's former and current ethnic enclaves worthy of advocacy, they would be well advised to value the integrity of the stories they uncover as much if not more than the integrity of their walls and windows.

Purgat6rium: The Closure of Saint Stephen of Hungary Parish and the Liminal State of Hungarian Yorkville's Catholic Heritage

According to many of St. Stephen's Hungarian American parishioners, the New York Archdiocese sentenced their national parish to death on November 2, 2014. Eighty-seven years after Cardinal Hayes blessed the newly constructed Hungarian parish in Yorkville, Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the current head of the city's Catholic hierarchy, announced that Gotham's Hungarian national parish would merge with St. Elizabeth of Hungary, originally founded upon Slovakian identity, and St. Monica's, Yorkville's oldest territorial church located on East 79th Street. The latter, by far the largest of the three facilities, would house the amalgamated church. The Archdiocese provided for the memberships of St. Stephen's parishioners to transfer "provided they have domicile or quasi-domicile" in the territory drawn for the merged parish. The domicile clause, displaying the Church's pivot away from the national or personal parish system in vogue during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, constituted one of many features of this process that jeopardized St. Stephen's Hungarian faith community.¹¹⁵

St. Stephen of Hungary appeared to stand on firm ground just a few years prior to the merger, a fact adding to the parishioners' shock and frustration. Rev. Angelo Gambatese of the Holy Name Province, an affable Franciscan who had served as parish rector for a decade, publicly touted the congregation's vitality in 2010. He informed a *Daily News* reporter that "[t]he parish was founded as a

¹¹⁵ Dolan Decree. The Archdiocese clumsily labeled the post-merger church "Saint Monica, Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, and Saint Stephen of Hungary," although the decree grants the church community to change the name. The decree also called for St. Monica's priests to assume responsibility for all "ecclesiastical goods" possessed by St. Stephen's, including, presumably, relics. Ibid. Slovakian Catholics founded St. Elizabeth of Hungary Church in 1891. It was considered a national parish. For more than a generation, the Slovak faith community gathered at St. Brigid's Church on Thompsons Square park in the East Village. The congregation moved uptown. In 1917, after it purchased the former Emmanuel Lutheran Church on East 83rd Street. "Welcome Letter by Rev. Donald C. Baker," The Roman Catholic Parish of St. Monica-St. Elizabeth of Hungary-St. Stephen of Hungary, accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.stelmo79.org/welcome>; "Slavonians in New York: How They Live among Their Neighbors of Other Races," *New York Times*, November 3, 1895, 27; "Msgr. Andrew Dzijacky," *New York Daily News*, August 13, 1958, 50.

ministry to the Hungarian community in New York and continues to have a vigorous and growing Hungarian ethnic community.”¹¹⁶ At that time, the church dedicated one weekly service to a Mass delivered entirely in the Hungarian language. The presence of five English language Masses, however, revealed that service to a non-ethnic majority accounted for the growth in the parish. Despite comprising a statistical minority, the hyphenates played a vital role in planning and implementing the parish’s major fundraisers, such as the cultural festival initiated in the 1970s. In 2009, this annual event netted \$15,000. Through the Mothers’ Club and the St. Claire Altar Society, exclusively female organizations with long pedigrees, Hungarian Americans also continued their tradition of luncheons featuring stuffed cabbage, pastries, and homeland music following the Sunday morning Hungarian language Mass. While technically open to all, anyone not conversant in Hungarian might feel a bit out of place. Thus, St. Stephen’s split personality, a prominent element of the Szlezák period running from the 1940s into the 1980s, persisted. Gambatese, as the cleric charged with leading a national parish with a decidedly non-ethnic congregation, described his biggest challenge as fostering “a community open to the neighborhood and welcoming to the Hungarian community who live and work in the tristate area.”¹¹⁷

The co-existence of St. Stephen’s non-ethnic majority and its Hungarian American minority continued until late 2013, when the ground shifted for everyone. In the wake of the Great Recession and the Franciscans’ inability to replenish their ranks, Holy Name Province determined it could no longer afford to manage the parish. Whereas the Hungarian constituency railed against the American-trained friars’ takeover during the Great Depression as a threat to St. Stephen’s Hungarian identity, contemporary co-ethnics reacted to the Franciscans’ departure with equal despair. Holy Name Province,

¹¹⁶ Maxine Simpson, “Serving a ‘Vigorous and Growing’ Group: St. Stephen of Hungary,” *New York Daily News*, April 4, 2010, 33; Rebecca Doel, “Hungarian Church’s Fair Celebrates Many Cultures,” *HNP Today*, September 30, 2009, <http://hnp.org/hungarian-churchs-fair-celebrates-many-cultures/>.

¹¹⁷ Simpson, “Serving a ‘Vigorous and Growing’ Group.”

like most elements of the Roman Catholic Church during the early twenty-first century, faced a shortage of priests and increased budgetary pressures. Coinciding with these crises, Father Gambatese's health started to fail, a contingency that likely influenced the order's decision to relinquish control of St. Stephen to the New York Archdiocese. In January 2014, Holy Name Province's leadership, in an open letter to the entire faith community, said farewell to Hungarian New York's national parish, stating that:

We have been privileged to serve you for 80 years. As your parish began to diversify and attract a broader population, in more recent decades we have sought the assistance of various Hungarian priests, some of them friars, to enable us to continue the ministry to the Hungarian people as well as to respond to the changing needs of what has become a very diverse congregation.¹¹⁸

In addition to putting a positive spin on how they handled the parish's duality over the years, the Franciscans spoke in ominous terms about the church's future ability to serve the Hungarian population. In this letter, they admitted their inability to "provide the requested financial assistance to bring in a Hungarian friar to minister at St. Stephen's."¹¹⁹ By stating their belief that the parish could support only a single pastor, Holy Name Province's leaders cast doubt on the ability of St. Stephen meet its obligations to its Hungarian congregants in the future.¹²⁰

Holy Name Province's withdrawal occurred in the middle of the New York Archdiocese's self-described listening tour dubbed "Making All Things New," a process whereby Church officials sought to evaluate critically the then-existing portfolio of Catholic parishes to diagnose and remedy perceived inefficiencies. The desire to put its financial house in order in the twenty-first century drove the Archdiocese. Long-standing national parishes did not fare well in these kinds of ecclesiastical undertakings in other major cities, as the contemporary American Catholic Church tended see them as

¹¹⁸ Letter from (Very Rev.) John F. O'Connor, OFM, Provincial Minister, and (Rev.) Dominic Monti, OFM, Provincial Vicar, to the St. Stephen of Hungary congregation, January 16, 2014, held in personal archive of Robert Winer (Open Letter from Holy Name Province).

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.; Interview of Martin Milisits by author, September 5, 2020; Interviews of Robert Winer by author, July 20 and August 8, 2020.

anomalous exceptions to the nation's melting pot image. In the case of St. Stephen, Holy Name Province's hasty withdrawal and budgetary concerns rendered it especially vulnerable. As rumors swirled about the parish's status, the Franciscans, as their final act, assigned Father Bill Bried to serve as interim pastor until the Archdiocese could appoint its own priest. Initially, Bried's letters to the faithful conveyed noticeable optimism, as he expressed his commitment to working with the congregation "to make this a stronger and better parish."¹²¹ He also outlined a path toward survival if the parish learned to share personnel and pool resources with nearby churches. In addition to advocating for this "cluster" approach and overseeing St. Stephen's regular services and programs, Bried served as an intelligence source for the Archdiocese. Multiple lay leaders came to believe that Bried disparaged St. Stephen to the Catholic hierarchy, helping to seal the parish's fate. Just a few weeks after Bried completed his brief tenure, the Archdiocese announced that St. Stephen of Hungary would no longer operate as a stand-alone national parish.¹²²

Citing the antiquated roots of the contemporary parish structure, a lack of priests, declining attendance, and a "huge financial burden," the New York Archdiocese announced the results of "Making All Things New" in late fall 2014. The reorganization affected nearly one-third of the Catholic communities within the Archdiocese's jurisdiction. St. Stephen of Hungary became one of sixty-four churches forced to close its doors and merge with a territorial parish. The formal decree affecting St. Stephen and St. Elizabeth permitted their sanctuaries to remain "open for public worship," but

¹²¹ Letters from Fr. Bill Bried to St. Stephen of Hungary's congregation, undated, in the personal archives of Robert Winer.

¹²² Ibid.; Peter Feuerherd, "Opponents Challenge Parish Closing, Mergers in NY Archdiocese," *National Catholic Reporter*, September 23, 2015, <http://ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/opponents-challenge-parish-closings-mergers-ny-archdiocese>; Nándor Dreiszinger, *Church and Society in Hungary and in the Hungarian Diaspora* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2016), 339. Interview of Rosalind Panepento by author, September 2, 2020. The precarious nature of Catholic parishes established pursuant to the national or personal parish model stands in stark contrast to the stability of urban territorial churches. To a great degree, the Catholic Church has come to see the national churches as anachronistic and even as public relations problems. The possibility of outsiders perceiving the Church as an agent of difference and separateness might further harm its reputation, already tarnished by sexual scandals and a lack of transparency. Tricia C. Bruce, "Hispanic 'Personal Parishes' in the Contemporary U.S. Catholic Church," *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community* 46, no. 4 (Oct/Dec 2018): 324-339; Tricia C. Bruce, *Parish and Place: Making Room for Diversity in the American Catholic Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017). For a discussion of urban territorial churches, see Gerald Gamm, *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews Left Boston and the Catholics Stayed* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

simultaneously disabused the laity of any hope that Mass or other sacraments would be celebrated at either location “on a regular basis.” The decree also mandated the transfer of archival materials and “ecclesiastical goods” to St. Monica’s. Leaders of the Hungarian faith community claim that this allegedly haphazard process led to the disappearance of some of the church’s historical documents. While stating “[t]hat there will be many who are hurt and upset as they experience what will be a change to their spiritual lives,” Cardinal Dolan never acknowledged these kinds of disruptions or that for ethnic parishioners of national churches losing their parish meant a severance from their place-based history and heritage.¹²³

On July 26, 2015, St. Stephen of Hungary’s parishioners gathered for a final Mass before the merger’s effective date. It was standing room only. The farewell luncheon drew even more people. Members of Hungarian Yorkville’s diaspora reminisced as they enjoyed traditional Hungarian dishes and desserts. A mix of melancholy, nostalgia, and anger filled the space. Robert Winer, then vice-president of St. Stephen’s lay committee, told reporters present that “it’s not going to be the same” at another church.¹²⁴ Calling the church “our Hungarian place,” he reminded them that Hungarians built St. Stephen with their own funds. Winer also cited the loss of its name as another casualty of the Archdiocese’s ill-conceived reorganization scheme before punctuating his remarks with the simple but blunt statement: “for us, it’s not okay.”¹²⁵

¹²³ Dolan Decree; Joel Landau, Rikka Reyna, and Reuven Blau, “Catholic Archdiocese of New York to Merge 112 Parishes into 55 New Congregations,” *New York Daily News*, November 3, 2014, <https://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/archdiocese-new-york-merge-55-parishes-report-article-1.1996146>. Initially, the Archdiocese allowed only limited public access to the decrees. Parishioners had to schedule an appointment and abide by procedures barring them from taking photographs or contemporaneous notes. Dr. Nicholas Cafardi, one-time dean at Duquesne University Law School and subsequently that institution’s general counsel, commented that he had “never seen anything like this before,” and could not “imagine its purpose except to prevent the parishioners from exercising their legitimate appeal rights.” Sharon Otterman, “New York Archdiocese Parishioners See System of Secrets as They Fight Church Closings,” *New York Times*, February 12, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/13/nyregion/new-york-archdiocese-parishioners-see-system-of-secrets-as-they-fight-church-closings.html>; “(1993-2005) Dean Nicholas P. Cafardi, Duquesne University, [https://www.duq.edu/academics/schools/law/about/deans-of-the-school-of-law/previous-deans/\(1993-2005\)-dean-nicholas-p-cafardi](https://www.duq.edu/academics/schools/law/about/deans-of-the-school-of-law/previous-deans/(1993-2005)-dean-nicholas-p-cafardi).”

¹²⁴ Melanie Grayce West, “New York Churches Receive Tearful Farewells: Thousands of Catholics Attend Final Services at Parishes Set to Close,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 25, 2015.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

The Archdiocese selected Father Donald Baker to lead the amalgamated church. Baker, fifty-five-years old at the time of the merger, had built a solid reputation as the relatively hip pastor of the Church of St. Teresa on Manhattan's Lower East Side. He had a talent for interspersing current events and popular culture into his punchy homilies. On a typical Sunday, he preached to upwards of five hundred faithful reflecting downtown Gotham's rich cultural mosaic. "We are a congregation that worships in four languages," Baker told the *Daily News* in 2010.¹²⁶ "As a result, diversity is a hallmark of our parish."¹²⁷ Despite this record, Baker had no experience dealing with an older congregation attached to a national parish. Yet, he had faith that his welcoming approach could calm the troubled waters. "I [will] make my mark softly and slowly," Baker explained, in order to "turn all of the sadness, darkness and feeling of rejection [into] a new birth."¹²⁸ As the merger's effective date drew near, he reached out to St. Stephen's faith community through an open letter, acknowledging their anxiety and displeasure. He nevertheless asked for a chance to show how the combined parish might serve their needs. Cutting to the heart of the matter, Baker observed that "St. Stephen had not died," but rather "[a] central dimension of its existence, its community, [was] healthier than ever."¹²⁹ His communiqué said nothing to assuage the Hungarians' fears that the new church would ignore their cultural needs: language, ethnic societies, post-service meals, holidays, and veneration of specific saints. Instead, he argued simply that a unified church would better serve the community.¹³⁰

Active members of the Hungarian laity split over what to do. The late summer timing of the announcement also meant that many ethnic parishioners were in Hungary visiting friends and relatives,

¹²⁶ Maxine Simpson, "'Diversity is Hallmark of Our Parish': Church of St. Teresa-Nativity Church," *New York Daily News*, September 2010, 42.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Melanie Grayce West, "One Pastor Takes on Three Parishes as Churches Merge: Catholic Priest Assumes the Lead of Three New York Parishes in Archdiocese's Reorganization," *Wall Street Journal*, July 24, 2015; see also Simpson, "'Diversity is Hallmark of Our Parish.'"

¹²⁹ Donald C. Baker, *Letter from Fr. Baker, Pastor, Church of St. Monica on the Closing of St. Stephen of Hungary Church*, 2015.

¹³⁰ Ibid. Baker did indicate that the new church successfully lobbied to "continue to offer a Hungarian Mass at St. Stephen of Hungary Church through August 23 for the feast of St. Stephen." But this concession offered no long-term solution to Hungarians' desire for language-specific Mass and services. Ibid.

annual journeys that both represented and affirmed their transnational identities. Rather than follow a gradualist approach, Father Baker gave the Hungarians, whom he treated as a single bloc, one week to choose whether to join St. Monica's. Most Hungarians saw no reason to start over as a small faction within a large congregation. Even St. Monica's design, including its imposing stairs, formed a literal barrier for many older ethnics. More substantively, the Hungarians longed to worship and congregate in their native tongue and according to their religious-cultural traditions. Thus, the group, now organized as a displaced ethnic faith community, approached Father Boniface Ramsey, the rector of St. Joseph's Church on East 87th Street, with a creative solution to their dilemma. Márta Kelety, one of their lay leaders, asked Ramsey for access to his church for weekly Hungarian religious services. As a son of ethnic Yorkville, Ramsey listened. His German-born mother, a longtime Yorkville resident, used to attend Mass occasionally at St. Stephen. Moreover, as the pastor of the neighborhood's German national parish, Ramsey had familiarity with aging congregations, changing demographics, generational differences in ethnic identity, and the effects of gentrification. Accordingly, he and the Hungarians struck a deal that holds to this day. The New York-i Szent István Katolikus Közösség, translated as the New York St. Stephen Catholic Community would organize and manage their weekly Mass and post-worship coffee hour at St. Joseph's while turning over the collection plate money to the church.¹³¹

As many Hungarians relocated to St. Joseph's, the St. Stephen Parish Council asked Cardinal Dolan to reconsider his decision based, in large part, on the church's Hungarian history, heritage, and contemporary faith community. In addition to stressing that Hungarians had built this national parish, these lay leaders described the church's ongoing ethnic flavor and feel. "If you were to walk into our kitchen and auditorium on most Sunday afternoons, you might actually think you were in Hungary," they

¹³¹ Landau, Reyna, and Blau, "Catholic Archdiocese of New York to Merge 112 Parishes." Andy Newman, "New York Archdiocese Will Close 7 More Churches," *New York Times*, May 8, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/09/nyregion/new-york-archdiocese-will-close-7-more-churches.html>; Interview of Boniface Ramsey, June 15, 2020; New York-i Szent István Katolikus Közösség, "Vasárnapi Hírlap," *New York*, August 6, 2017; Letter from Márta Kelety to Rev. James Boniface Ramsey, June 29, 2015, in the personal archives of Robert Winer.

pointed out. “For non-Hungarians, it is a beautiful thing to see.”¹³² Given the relationship of ethnic identity and heritage, local history, space, and place, they argued, “the Hungarian community will cease to exist” without St. Stephen of Hungary. Cardinal Dolan summarily rejected the request, taking the opportunity to “remind” the petitioners “that parishes are not closed, but merged.”¹³³ Notwithstanding Dolan’s correction, the aggrieved parishioners continued to challenge against the closure.¹³⁴

The fight to save the parish moved to the Holy See. The Parish Council’s three lay leaders – Martin Milisits, Rosalind Panepento, and Mark Farina – appealed the Archdiocese’s decree and Cardinal Dolan’s denial of the request for reconsideration to the Vatican, which maintains appellate jurisdiction over parish closings and mergers. Ultimately, these lay leaders decided not to move forward with the Vatican appeal given what they saw as a low probability of success. Milisits, the only member of the trio of Hungarian ancestry, came to see moving to St. Monica’s as the prudent choice. Despite his willingness to push the matter a good distance and his careful consideration of the available options, his support of the merged church caused some members of the Hungarian laity to treat Milisits as a turncoat. Milisits considered himself a realist.¹³⁵

Even after forging an agreement with Father Ramsey at St. Joseph’s, Márta Kelety joined forces with Robert Winer, a fellow member of the Parish Council, to assume control of the Vatican appeal. This turn of events, where Hungarian American lay leaders pushed the challenge without the active participation of non-ethnics, offered a symbolic reminder of the parish’s balkanized history. Kelety and Winer sought a compromise whereby St. Stephen’s sanctuary would host Sunday Mass on a weekly basis in the Hungarian language, the Archdiocese would arrange for the services of a Hungarian speaking

¹³² Petition from the Parish Council of St. Stephen of Hungary to Timothy Cardinal Dolan, Archbishop of New York and Bishop John O’Hara, Auxiliary Bishop, November 8, 2014, in personal archives of Róbert Winer (Petition of Parish Council of St. Stephen of Hungary).

¹³³ Letter from Timothy Cardinal Dolan, Archbishop of New York to the Parish Council of St. Stephen of Hungary, December 6, 2014, in personal archives of Róbert Winer.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*; Petition of Parish Council of St. Stephen of Hungary.

¹³⁵ Interview of Martin Milisits by author; Interview of Rosalind Panepento.

priest, that the Hungarian parishioners enjoy “generous use” of St. Stephen’s meeting hall “for events that promote the spirituality and the patrimony of the Hungarian Catholic heritage,” and that the merged church carry out such national parish duties such as “car[ing] for and support[ing] the Hungarian spirituality, culture, traditions, and community life” so long an essential aspect of St. Stephen of Hungary. Kelety and Winer described the Hungarian parishioners as “gravely concerned that what Cardinal Dolan calls ‘merger’ has instead all the characteristics of ‘suppression.’” They emphasized that Hungarian Yorkville’s diaspora refused to “be scattered throughout the various territorial parishes where we have residence.”¹³⁶ Eventually, faced with the same impediments as the Parish Council, the Hungarian litigants could not muster the resources required to appeal the decision to the Vatican’s highest court, the Supremo Tribunale della Segnatura Apostolica. Accordingly, the formal challenge to the closure-merger of St. Stephen of Hungary terminated in 2017.¹³⁷

St. Stephen’s Hungarian faith community, including many members of Yorkville’s Hungarian diaspora who reside in other parts of Greater New York, continues to travel into Manhattan at significant expense and inconvenience to preserve their ethnic spiritual heritage practices at the neighborhood’s one-time German national parish. Father Iván Csete, a Transylvania-born octogenarian priest, shares the duties of conducting Mass in Hungarian with another Hungarian-speaking cleric based in New Jersey. Csete, a 56er and unapologetic supporter of Viktor Orbán, Hungary’s controversial Prime Minister, traces his priestly calling to the direct encouragement of Cardinal Mindszenty. He represents

¹³⁶ Initial Notice of Appeal submitted by Marta Kelety and Róbert Winer to the Vatican, undated, in the personal archives of Róbert Winer, 3, 10.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1-10; Letter from Marta Kelety and Róbert Winer to Timothy Cardinal Dolan, the Archbishop of New York, May 7, 2016, in the personal archives of Róbert Winer; Letter from Beniamino Cardinal Stella, Prefect, Congregatio Pro Clericis, to Marta Kelety and Róbert Winer, June 21, 2016, in the personal archives of Róbert Winer; Letters from Joel Mercier, Titular Archbishop of Rota, Secretary, Congregatio pro Clericis, to Marta Kelety and Róbert Winer, September 5, 2016, July 14, 2016, and February 18, 2017, in the personal archives of Róbert Winer; Letter from Giuseppe Sciacca, Titular Bishop of Fondi, Secretary, to Marta Kelety and Róbert Winer, February 23, 2017, in the personal archives of Róbert Winer; Rev. Monsignor Gregory Mustaciolo, Office of the Vicar General, to Róbert Winer, July 21, 2017, in the personal archives of Róbert Winer. St. Elizabeth of Hungary, the other national parish adversely affected by the Archdiocesan reorganization, did appeal their case to the Vatican’s Supreme Court. After more than three years, that body has not issued a final decision on that case. Milisits Interview; Panepento Interview; and Winer Interviews.

one of Catholic New York's harshest critics of the Archdiocesan reorganization schema, which he derisively calls "Making All Things Wrong." To Csete, the term "merger" is subterfuge insofar as the parish was "to be closed completely for public worship, except two days a year, the feast of St. Stephen and the foundation anniversary of the church."¹³⁸ Furthermore, Csete interprets the Archdiocese's termination of New York's Hungarian national parish while parishes serving Hispanics, Italians, and other ethnic groups continue as a highly selective, if not discriminatory action.¹³⁹

Presently, the New York-i Szent István Katolikus Közösség continues to gather at St. Joseph's even though the merged parish bears the name St. Stephen of Hungary. At the same time, Hungarian American Catholics have reoccupied their traditional sanctuary on special occasions, such as the Feast of St. Stephen, during the past few years. Notwithstanding this sporadic use, the Hungarians' connections to their Yorkville-based spiritual home are now endangered to the point of disappearing outright. Robert Winer, the spokesman for the Hungarians worshipping at St. Joseph's, claims that Father Baker cited ongoing construction at St. Stephen of Hungary as the reason he and his co-ethnics could not gather to celebrate the homeland's patron saint in August 2020. To be sure, the St. Stephen of Hungary School, which has gained distance from its Hungarian roots through a rebranding exercise targeting Yorkville's upscale families, has already converted parts of the parish building, such as the meeting hall, to administrative offices and classrooms. This status quo seems time limited. The median age of the group that worships at St. Joseph's is well above sixty, while efforts by Father Csete and Robert Winer to recruit younger families active in Hungarian Scouting and the Arany János Hungarian School programs at the Magyar Ház have not born fruit. In the end, it may fall to Bonaventura Peéri's requiem on East 82nd Street alone to preserve or trigger recollections of Yorkville's once-vibrant Hungarian community.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Iván Csete, "Personal Memoir" (unpublished manuscript, undated), typescript, in the personal archives of Iván Csete, 5, 10.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 1-19.

¹⁴⁰ Winer Interviews; Jocelyn Thomas, "St. Stephen of Hungary Parish Hosts Cardinal," *HNP News*, February 4, 2009, <https://hnp.org/st-stephen-of-hungary-parish-hosts-cardinal/>; Jenny Anderson, "To Survive, a Catholic School Retools for a Wealthier Market," *New York Times*, August 19, 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/20/nyregion/to-survive-some-catholic-schools-rebrand-to-lure-wealthier-families.html>; Jocelyn Thomas, "The New York Times Features St. Stephen of

CONCLUSION

For most of the twentieth century, Yorkville's Hungarian enclave relied heavily on its ethnic churches to serve as de facto socio-cultural centers. They expected their religious institutions to provide stability, foster community, preserve a sense of ethnic identity, and nurture feelings of rootedness. Living memories of Hungarian Yorkville's churches rarely dwell on liturgical matters, but instead focus on this kind of social utility and value. Barbara Bollók, the keeper of Hungarian Yorkville's flame, met an émigré soccer star while visiting a friend at St. Stephen of Hungary. The couple later exchanged vows at the Independent Magyar Reformed Church just down the street. A young László Hámos, the one-time head of the American Hungarian Library and Historical Society and co-creator of the Hungarian Human Rights Foundation, stood next to his father as that church's cornerstone was laid in the late fifties. Emese Latkovzy, Hámos's protégé, after relocating to Yorkville with her family in the 1970s, spent hours each weekend at the Hungarian language school that used to meet at St. Stephen.¹⁴¹

The celebratory nature of these personal memories, however, tends to elide the post-founding histories of Hungarian Yorkville's churches as political spaces. The Hungarian laity at St. Stephen, for example, struggled to maintain their national parish status after the Hungarian friars transferred management to an American order in 1934. Thereafter, the church developed along two parallel tracks, harboring both Hungarian and English-speaking factions. For eighty years, the Hungarian parishioners preserved their rituals, traditions, and clubs in the face of countervailing pressures and contrary to the melting pot narrative. Several blocks south, at the First Magyar Reformed Church, homeland politics

Hungary Parish School," *HNP News*, August 29, 2012, <https://hnp.org/new-york-times-features-st-stephen-hungary-parish-school/>; Maria Hayes, "New York City School Anticipates Expansion," *Holy Name Province*, July 17, 2013, <http://hnp.org/new-york-city-school-anticipates-expansion/>. The top administrator of St. Stephen of Hungary demonstrated no inclination to discuss the school's connections to Hungarian Yorkville or its Hungarian American heritage. This refusal to discuss the school's ethnic history and heritage continues despite parishioners from the church establishing a memorial scholarship fund in memory of Father Angelo Gambatese, the former rector of St. Stephen of Hungary. Jocelyn Thomas, "School Scholarship Established in Angelo Gambatese's Name," *HNP News*, March 23, 2016, <https://hnp.org/school-scholarship-established-angelo-gambateses-name/>.

¹⁴¹ Bollók Interview; Hámos Interview; Latkóczy Interview.

held sway well after the Tiffin Agreement caused the church to sever ties with the Hungarian government. Where Dr. Rev. Géza Takaró labored to lead his congregation toward accepting an inclusive, interfaith conception of pan-Hungarian identity during the Second World War, his successor, Dr. Rev. Imre Kovács, used the pulpit to fight the Cold War, leading anticommunist demonstrations after the failed Hungarian Revolution. Religion and politics did more than coexist in Yorkville's Hungarian enclave. They often cohabitated.

In their totality, Yorkville's Hungarian Christian churches have served as extant symbols of the neighborhood's once-active ethnic enclave. Their very presence within Yorkville's cityscape carries the promise of complicating the ethnic Yorkville imaginary. Gotham's preservation community, for instance, rallied to protect the architectural integrity of the First Magyar Reformed Church, and in the process drafted historical sketches that shed some light on the heritage of Hungarian New York and its Yorkville hub. Materiality alone, however, is an imperfect mnemonic device. Buildings cannot speak. Thus, those interested in and concerned for Yorkville's ethnic past might draw as much inspiration from the St. Stephen of Hungary's parishioners who, in 2004, published a centennial history of their parish that helps bring Hungarian Yorkville alive, as from the building they can no longer use. Tapping into the histories and heritage practices of Hungarian Yorkville's churches certainly enriches our understandings of ethnic Yorkville's past.¹⁴²

¹⁴² *St. Stephen of Hungary Parish New York City, 1902-2002* (New York: St. Stephen of Hungary, 2004).

BOOK II: IN CONCLUSION

Book II's case studies further our understanding of ethnic Yorkville in three fundamental ways. They address the complex relationship between the ethnic Yorkville imaginary, the dominant narrative of the neighborhood's ethnic past developed and nurtured by Gotham's mainstream press, and the contemporary ethnic heritage practices arising from the once-prominent German and Hungarian enclaves. These contemporary heritage practices, through their origins, development, and persistence, also push against claims that ethnic Yorkville long ago disappeared into the ether leaving behind only faint traces of commercialized Germanness near East 86th Street and Second Avenue. Lastly, they underscore and explicate the myriad problems manifest in cultural heritage practices dependent on specific definitions of ethnic hybridity.

Over the past decade, critical heritage studies scholars have analyzed the extent to which broad regimes of political and socio-cultural power shape the claims embedded in heritage forms and practices. These analyses tend to use local examples to assess the hegemonic force of UNESCO designations, nationalizing mythologies, civic boosterism, and historically based tourism campaigns. Consistent with the tenets of critical heritage studies, Book II's German American case studies demonstrate how certain ethnic heritage practices reify aspects of ethnic Yorkville's grand narrative, especially its allegiance to America's most cherished immigration myth: the melting pot metaphor. Homegrown storytellers ranging from Marie Jastrow to Kathy Jolowicz, despite their interest in chronicling and preserving a localized past, deemphasized German Yorkville's declension period, and rendered its other ethnic groups, most notably the Hungarians, invisible. External voices such as travel book authors and tour guides also fit ethnic Yorkville's narrative within an artificially linear assimilation

framework. Paradoxically, these storytelling practices ignore the persistence of place-based ethnic identity even while exemplifying this phenomenon.¹⁴³

Book II's approach of situating these cultural heritage practices within ethnic Yorkville's broader historical trajectory, in contrast, facilitates a deeper appreciation for the intersectionality of ethnic identity, place, and social memory. It reveals the extent to which grassroots practitioners used heritage activities or institutions to build and preserve community. Jolowicz, for example, redoubled her efforts to preserve collective memories of German Yorkville after the loss of her initial exhibit. Her website, presentations, and other memory keeping work invite others to travel back to the enclave's apex during the 1940s and 1950s. Willie Schoeps and his fellow Steuben parade founders not only created an enduring spectacle but reclaimed Yorkville as a hub of German American identity within Gotham. The contemporary parade perpetuates their goal of creating a distinctly transnational space. Róbert Harkay, Viktor Fischer, and László Hámos broadened the vision and appeal of the Magyar Ház, originally established as an elite clubhouse for Hungarian political exiles. Robert Winer and Márta Kelety defended St. Stephen's ethnic faith community by relocating the Hungarian language Mass and coffee hour to Yorkville's German national church, petitioned the Vatican to reverse the New York Archdiocese's edict closing the church, and pushed for special religious services to continue at their former religious home. All the actions delineated above occurred during or after the decline of Yorkville's ethnic enclaves. Thus, they collectively mount a counterargument to the previously unchallenged wisdom that the neighborhood's Euro-Americans processed in a straight line toward cultural assimilation.

¹⁴³ Andrea Durbach and Lucas Lixinski, "Introduction," in *Heritage, Culture and Rights: Challenging Legal Discourses*, eds. Andrea Durbach and Lucas Lixinski (Portland, OR: Hart Publishing, 2017), 1-7; Luciane Aguiar Borges, Feras Hammami, Josefin Wangel and "Reviewing Neighborhood Sustainability Assessment Tools through Critical Heritage Studies," *Sustainability* 12 (2020): 1605-19; Anna Rue, "'It Breathes Norwegian Life': Heritage Making at Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum," *Scandinavian Studies* 90, no. 3 (2018): 350-75; Regina F. Bendix, Aditya Eggert and Arnika Peselmann, "Introduction: Heritage Regimes and the State," in *Heritage Regimes and the State*, eds. Regina F. Bendix, Aditya Eggert and Arnika Peselmann (Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Göttingen, 2012), 11-20.

Lastly, Book II's contemporary heritage practices highlight the fraught nature of ethnic cultural heritage, with an emphasis on its tendencies toward decontextualization, standardization, and alienation. The Steuben parade, so intertwined with German Yorkville at its birth, now sends marchers and spectators to Central Park for a homogenized and commercialized Oktoberfest that de-places the event. Interestingly, this practice validates the Volksfest leaders' concerns, as expressed in the mid-1950s, that a pan-ethnic event might deteriorate German New York's heterogeneous network. Insofar as they endorse visions of pan-Germanism and pan-Hungarianism, Book II's ethnic cultural heritage practices also mark and patrol identity boundaries. Put simply, they exclude as they include. The Steuben parade and the Magyar Ház, for instance, privilege Christian conceptions of ethnic identity that marginalize German and Hungarian Jews. Moreover, purveyors of these cultural heritage manifestations invite external audiences to accept their restrictive definitions of ethnic identity as settled and representative facts rather than byproducts of specific socio-historical processes.

In summary, bringing together historical interpretations and critical heritage analyses provides an effective means to recover lost actors and events, accentuate local particularity, challenge fossilized narratives, reassess linear chronologies, and bore deeper into the past. By modeling this approach, *Recalling Ethnic Yorkville* demonstrates the dynamism of place-based ethnic identity and the role heritage making plays in these processes.

CONCLUSION:
THE ORIGINS, IMPLICATIONS, AND POSSIBILITIES OF RECALLING ETHNIC YORKVILLE
FROM KASSA TO YORKVILLE

Recalling Ethnic Yorkville grew out of personal curiosity. In 2016, I visited a “family research center” operated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) while vacating in Kanab, Utah. Since the late nineteenth century, the LDS Church has pursued a grand genealogical project to baptize in proxy those who lived and died prior to the revelation of the Mormon Gospel. Today, more than five thousand LDS Church family research centers located throughout the globe carry out this mission, while simultaneously providing limited public access to genealogy hobbyists and those in search of their ancestral roots.¹

Southern Utah may seem an odd place to inspire a project about a Manhattan neighborhood. Nonetheless, my visit to the Kanab family research center transcended time and space, in the process stimulating a desire to learn more about my ethnic background. The center’s chief researcher introduced me to one of my ancestors, identified in latinized form in a Catholic Church baptismal record as Christophorus Lechner. The Lechner family, according to this seventeenth century document, lived in Kassa, a city within Upper Hungary in the Kingdom’s northeastern corner. Kassa, now Košice, Slovakia, then served as that region’s principal municipality, a status it maintained until the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy in the wake of the Great War. In many ways, Kassa symbolized the Kingdom of Hungary’s multicultural character in microcosm. Christian and Jewish Hungarians, Germans, and Slovaks cohabitated in this place with Magyars enjoying political and social preeminence. Consequent to the city’s location and character, the Treaty of Trianon granted the newly minted Czechoslovak nation-state dominion over most of Upper Hungary, including Košice, in the wake of World War I. The city was briefly under Hungarian control during the Second World War, after which it rejoined

¹ Tanya Evans, “Genealogy and Family History,” in *A Companion to Public History*, ed. David Dean (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 175. The LDS established its Genealogical Bureau as early as 1888. Ibid.

Czechoslovakia pursuant to postwar settlements of Eastern Europe's borders. Since 1992, following the Velvet Revolution and the subsequent severance of Czechoslovakia, Košice has constituted the most populous city in eastern Slovakia.²

The discovery of Kassa-Košice as an ancestral home addressed longstanding questions about my family's identity while simultaneously raising new ones. Despite the Germanic surname of "Lechner," family lore asserts Hungarian ancestry. The prevalence of Germans in Upper Hungary's commercial and political hub offered a plausible explanation for this paradox. At the same time, the polyglot's sizeable German Jewish population opened the possibility that our family converted from Judaism to Catholicism at some point, a frequent occurrence throughout the Hungarian Kingdom's history. Finding the entire matter personally significant and intellectually gripping, and equipped with a modicum of training from the LDS family research center, I embarked on a journey to learn as much as possible about the Lechners of Kassa, including their migration to America in the late nineteenth century.³

This personal quest introduced me to yet another polyglot – this time in upper Manhattan. Vincze and Julia Lechner, my great-great grandparents, after arriving in the U.S. in 1888, resided in Hungarian Yorkville, then in its fledgling state, before relocating to other parts of Greater New York. Their connection to Yorkville exposed me to a world of which I had no prior knowledge. My initial online searches produced dozens of non-academic articles, blogs, and websites conveying nostalgic recollections of Germans and Hungarians, and to a lesser extent Czechs, Slovaks, Irish, and Italians, in twentieth century Yorkville. Eventually, this digital path led me to the Yorkville/Kleindeutschland Historical Society, operated by Kathryn Jolowicz, the German-American Steuben Parade, and the Magyar Ház, each of which animates Book II's critical examination of cultural heritage practices. It also revealed

² Nikola Regináčová, "Causes of Population Growth and Decline in Kosice in the 19th Century: A Historical and Demographic Analysis," *Studia Historyczne* 4 (2013): 453-468, 630; Zlatica Sáposová, "Voluntary Associations in Košice Slovakia – An Introduction to the Subject of Associations and Their Activities *Studia Historyczne* 4 (2013): 527-537, 630.

³ Slovakia Church and Synagogue Records, 1592-1935, Roman Catholic, "Baptism, Vincze Endre Lechner," in Family Search.

the closure of St. Stephen of Hungary Roman Catholic Church in 2015 as part of the New York Archdiocese's reorganization and consolidation plan known as "Making All Things New." The related stories of the displaced Hungarian American parishioners underscored the extent to which ethnic collectives continued to view Yorkville a vital site ethnic identity. A genealogical project initiated in the sparsely populated Mountain West had divulged an urban neighborhood in Gotham where Euro-American identity seemed bound up with a profound attachment to place, which, in turn, generated ethnic heritage production in the present. Fascinated by the contingencies and vagaries of ethnic identity, as well as the complex relationship between identity and place, I was hooked.⁴

FROM SOCIAL MEMORY TO HISTORY TO HERITAGE

Since at least the 1950s, social memories, shaped largely by Gotham's mainstream print press, have heavily influenced recollections of Yorkville's ethnic past. For decades, these newspapers served the interests of New York's native-born, white, Protestant elites. Even cursory review of Yorkville's digital footprint, overwhelmingly produced by non-academics with no historical training, evinces the influence this hegemonic narrative has had on vernacular representations of the neighborhood's Germans and Hungarians and the paucity of counternarratives. These widely circulated ahistorical claims elide German Yorkville's nineteenth century roots; link that enclave's origins to the General Slocum tragedy; pay scant attention to German and Hungarian agency during the Great War period; hyperbolize the prestige and influence of pro-Nazi and fascist groups operating or proselytizing in Yorkville during the thirties and early forties; and disregard for Hungarian Yorkville's rebirth driven by refugees during the late forties and fifties. The discrepancies, biases, and omissions embedded in the dominant narrative buttress the melting pot metaphor, a mythology that touts the civilizing power of an elusive mainstream

⁴ United States Census, 1920, "Vincence Lechner," in FamilySearch; United States Census 1910, Ward 19, "Vincent A. Lechner," in FamilySearch.

American culture. Paradoxically, New York City uses Yorkville's past to bolster its self-image as a city exceptional in its commitment to cosmopolitanism and cultural diversity. Boosterism masquerading as history also erases the role city officials played in the wartime "othering" of Yorkville's German and Hungarians as well as movement to transform Yorkville into an affluent corner of the Upper East Side.⁵

Book I maps the develop of this hegemonic discourse, referred to as the ethnic Yorkville imaginary, while also presenting an alternative interpretation of Yorkville's ethnic past developed using traditional modes of historical research and analysis. It juxtaposes Yorkville's two most notable enclaves to use comparison and contrast to enrich and complicate this history. This approach expands both ends of ethnic Yorkville's temporality. The historical narrative starts with German festive cultural practices in Yorkville during the nineteenth century and extends to the present in order to identify discursive turns in recalling ethnic Yorkville after the demise of the enclaves. The periodization between these temporal markers notes inflection points in the place-based ethnic identity and cohesion of Yorkville's Germans and Hungarians. This interpretation transcends neighborhood boundaries, whether official or imagined, by connecting Yorkville's hyphenates to translocal and national ethnic networks and to transnational practices and relationships. It also introduces individuals, institutions, and events omitted from the common tale. *Recalling Yorkville*, as a single interpretation, cannot rewrite the neighborhood's past or

⁵ Ethnic Yorkville's digital footprint exemplifies Carl Becker's well-known axiom: every person is a historian. Dozens of blogs, articles, and websites memorializing ethnic Yorkville's bygone ethnic enclaves and their lost and extant structures exist. Their creators range from members of the ethnic Yorkville diaspora to real estate companies to those with a more generalized interest in the Manhattan's history. Public historians should not dismiss these representations as incoherent bric-a-brac or nostalgic bunk. Rather, more academic study of these kinds of digital histories might illuminate the extent to which they represent a democratization of historical interpretation and place-based heritage or reify and echo hegemonic discourses in uncritical ways. Dana Schultz, "Germantown NYC: Uncovering the German History of Yorkville," 6sqft.com, July 11, 2016, <https://www.6sqft.com/germantown-uncovering-the-german-history-of-yorkville/>; "Welcome to the Heidelberg," Heidelberg Restaurant, <http://www.heidelberg-nyc.com/#about>; Greg Young, "Welcome to Yorkville: German Life on the Upper East Side," The Bowery Boys: New York City History, <https://www.boweryboyshistory.com/2020/06/welcome-to-yorkville-german-life-on-the-upper-east-side.html>; No Author, "Yorkville – Eine Kleines Deutschland," Forgotten New York, February 4, 2008, <https://forgotten-ny.com/2008/02/yorkville-ein-kleines-deutschland/>; Serena Horrigan, "#TBT: Yorkville of Yore," *Elegan Real Estate Blog*, <https://www.elegan.com/blog/2016/01/tbt-yorkville-of-yore>; Carl L. Becker, "Everyman His Own," *American Historical Review* 37, no. 2 (1931): 221–36, available through the American Historical Association, <https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/presidential-addresses/carl-l-becker>.

displace prevalent social memories. It can, however, demonstrate the merits of using sound historical methodology to critically engage with received wisdom.

Book II concerns itself ethnic Yorkville's heritage afterlives. It recognizes the value of connecting the revised historical interpretation to contemporary place-based ethnic heritage practices. In fact, interpreting an urban neighborhood's ethnic history would remain incomplete without examining its related heritage reverberations. The consensus narrative described above ignores these continuities, presumably because they do not fit neatly into the melting pot fable. Yet, the variegated ways the ethnic Yorkville diaspora continue to use neighborhood as a site of ethnic communion and reunion and the processes whereby former ethnic enclaves inspire, frame, and support the production of ethnic identity and cultural heritage are subjects worthy of study by historians, anthropologists, and sociologists. Book II, accordingly, critically evaluates four categories of contemporary ethnic heritage practices, each attached in distinct ways to Yorkville.⁶

A few major conclusions resulting from *Recalling Yorkville's* ethnic heritage case studies bear restatement here. Those in Book II stress the importance some continue to place on their Euro-American identities well after the time when they were presumed to have melted down into undifferentiated American whiteness. These findings challenge constructs such as symbolic ethnicity, which describes most contemporary ethnic heritage production as separate from the deep and "genuine" identities the foreign-born once constructed as means to adjust to life in the host country. It also underscores the extent to which contemporary hyphenates associate their ethnic identities with the local even when few vestiges of the past remain. The former parishioners of St. Stephen of Hungary drive these points home. Despite their steadily declining numbers, elderly men and women continue to travel into Manhattan, whatever the expense and inconvenience, to attend the weekly Hungarian-

⁶ Anagnostou, *Contours of White Ethnicity*, 1-28; Jerome de Groot, *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 2-13.

language Mass at St. Joseph's and to reconnect with friends at the post-service gathering. Within the German American experience, Kathryn Jolowicz has dedicated much of her adult life to preserving and sharing memories of German Yorkville. The dismantling of the enclave and the exodus of its ethnic residents only fortified her resolve to stay put.

Book II also reveals the contested nature of ethnic identity, as well as its tendency to exclude by self-definition. As articulated by scholar Yiorgos Anagnostou, "when a collective constructs an identity for itself, it also creates a perspective on Others."⁷ In the case of ethnic Yorkville, German Jewish identity is notably absent from the German-American Steuben Parade. Similarly, a vocal minority associated with the Magyar Ház reinforce an exclusively Christian construction of Hungarianness.⁸

Lastly, there are serious and sensitive questions regarding the likelihood of these practices to endure. For instance, who might emulate ethnic Yorkville's storytellers or defend the reputation and preserve the memories of German Yorkville in the manner of Jolowicz, *the* Yorkville historian? How might the German-American Steuben Parade's generic and commercialized Central Park Oktoberfest elide memories of its once vital relationship with Yorkville? How will the Magyar Ház's increased reliance on funding and support from the Hungarian government affect its programming or erode its attachment to its own local history? How long can Hungarian Yorkville's faith communities survive given their dwindling attendance and inability to attract younger congregants? Perhaps the most crucial question is: how might we recall Yorkville's ethnic past if the neighborhood ceases to serve as a site of ethnic heritage production? These questions reveal the precarious nature of ethnic heritage practices tied so tightly to an urban place subject to dramatic demographic and material changes. Over time, it seems likely that these practices will either cease to exist or become so detached from their historical moorings that they no longer preserve or provoke memories of ethnic Yorkville.

⁷ Anagnostou, *Contours of White Ethnicity*, 225.

⁸ Ibid. Gans, "Symbolic Ethnicity," 1-20; Waters, *Ethnic Options*; Alba, *Italian American*; Alba and Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream*.

FROM PESSIMISM TO POSSIBILITIES

Yorkville's few remaining commercial enterprises associated with German or Hungarian heritage also face uncertain futures. Schaller & Webber, the Heidelberg Restaurant, and the Budapest Café and Restaurant, formerly Andre's Café, constitute the only extant businesses capable of stimulating interest in the neighborhood's ethnic past. Although Jeremy Schaller, owner of the butcher shop-grocery bearing his family's name, recently rebuffed a developer's multi-million dollar offer for his space, the pressure for these businesses to sell out will only mount. Moreover, the inventory of ethnic Yorkville's non-commercial symbols is alarmingly low, with the few holdouts including the Liederkrantz clubhouse on East 87th Street, and two landmarked structures: the Yorkville Bank building at the corner of East 85th Street and Third Avenue and the First Magyar Reformed Church on East 69th Street. Ethnic Yorkville has become harder and harder to spot.

Despite ethnic Yorkville's evaporating materiality and precarious heritage practices, public history, through its theoretical underpinnings and methodological practices, which have informed *Recalling Yorkville* from its inception, offers cause for optimism. Public history seeks to render the past accessible, legible, and compelling for diverse audiences, while starting from a base of sound scholarship. Its practitioners possess the skill and training to see obscured pasts. They value multivocality and diversity, regularly engaging with multiple stakeholders to bring more perspectives to bear on historical questions. For these reasons, where others lament emptiness and loss, public historians see opportunities to convey its past.⁹

Indeed, numerous ways exist for public historians to engage with Yorkville's ethnic legacy. By producing, co-producing, and advocating for richer and more inclusive historical interpretations, public

⁹ Robert Weible, "The Blind Man and His Dog: The Public and Its Historians," *The Public Historian* 28, no. 4 (Fall 2006): 8-17; Bill Adair, Benjamin Filene, and Laura Koloski, "Introduction: Letting Go? Sharing Historical Authority in a User-Generated World," in *Letting Go? Sharing Historical Authority in a User-Generated World*, edited by Bill Adair, Benjamin Filene, and Laura Koloski (Philadelphia: Pew Center for Arts and Sciences, 2011), 8-11; Margaret C. Rodman, "Empowering Place, Multilocality and Multivocality," *American Anthropologist* 94, no. 3 (Sep. 1992): 640-56; Caitlyn DeSilvey, *Curated Decay: Heritage Beyond Saving* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 2-16.

historians can help create and promote content capable of enhancing existing walking tours, travel guides, and digital content. Public historians can also seize on the preservation community's renewed interest in Yorkville's ethnic, working-class history, as exemplified by FRIENDS. Additionally, they can consult with and assist grassroots efforts to preserve the Yorkville's ethnic heritage and expand its evidentiary resources. Kathryn Jolowicz, for instance, has written several chapters of a memoir covering her recollections of growing up in Yorkville's German enclave and her experiences as *the* Yorkville historian. This work has the potential to build on Marie Jastrow's books and thereby extend German Yorkville's chronology. Jolowicz has also developed a multi-panel historical exhibit that visually supplements her public presentations. Both the memoir and exhibit face uncertain futures. The memoir remains unfinished and no institution has accepted her invitation to hold the exhibit as a historical artifact. Likewise, Barbara Bollók, Hungarian Yorkville's leading advocate, possesses more than one thousand photographs of the neighborhood during the latter third of the twentieth century. These images depict the enclave during its rebirth following World War II as well as the gradual loss of its material elements during the 1970s and 1980s. Bollók would benefit from the advice and assistance of public historians on how to preserve these photographs as well as how to identify options for donation to a local archive. Institutions such as the Magyar Ház, St. Joseph's Church, and the neighborhood's extant Hungarian churches also possess archival materials in need of cataloging and organizing.¹⁰

The potential for cross-cultural collaboration provides another reason for hope. Presently, German American and Hungarian American heritage production occupy separate spheres. Despite her media presence and general ubiquity, the Hungarian heritage community has no knowledge of Jolowicz or the Yorkville/Kleindeutschland Historical Society. Jolowicz, in turn, sees the Hungarians as minor

¹⁰ Jolowicz Interview; Bollók Interview; Jastrow, *A Time to Remember*; Jastrow, *Looking Back*. The unsettled status of St. Stephen of Hungary's records, a byproduct its official merger with a nearby territorial parish, provides a clear case of threatened historical evidence. Public historians might help bridge the divide between the St. Stephen's Hungarian diaspora and the rector of St. Monica's, at least as regards these documents, in the spirit of preserving local and ecclesiastical history. Winer Interview.

players in ethnic Yorkville's drama. This study represents a modest attempt to help bridge such gaps. More broadly, public historians can raise awareness about the ethnic heritage production already happening in the community. They can also call on a shared sense of place to propose, champion, or guide joint historical exhibits, joint cultural heritage programming, or collaborative oral history projects. Starting with the neighborhood's two most prominent ethnic groups, these initiatives efforts could branch out to Yorkville's former Czech, Slovak, Irish, and Italian constituencies. Ultimately, cultural cross-pollination offers a means to enrich ethnic Yorkville's story while augmenting present heritage activities.¹¹

Most importantly, place-based histories related to migration and ethnic identity present opportunities to engage critically and publicly with the broader subject of immigration. *Recalling Yorkville* offers Yorkville's ethnic past as evidence for public conversations on this politically polarizing topic. Bad history and nationalizing mythology plague civic dialogue on immigration. Like their xenophobic progenitors, proponents of immigration restrictions today, overwhelmingly associated with the political right, promote a "good" versus "bad" immigrant binary to limit newcomers from Africa, the Caribbean, Central America, Mexico, and the Middle East while cleverly protecting the America's "nation of immigrants" boast. As translated, the implicit message reads: America is a "nation of *certain, preferably white*, immigrants." The non-linear and often conflictual journey of Yorkville's Germans and Hungarians into whiteness provides key insights to debunk the fictionalized European migrant who put his or her head down, submissively followed the rules, recognized the supremacy of white American

¹¹ Oral testimony typically plays a special role in the preservation of local history and expansion of the evidentiary record. A community-based oral history project managed by the Yorkville branch of the New York Public Library represents an existing effort with which public historians could partner. More specifically, oral historians trained in methodological best practices and informed by archivally based historical interpretations could bring some order and uniformity to the topics covered by the interviewees, which in turn would create more comprehensive records suitable for comparison. In addition to generating more and better evidence, oral histories can open pathways of reconnection for those dislocated from the neighborhood. In other words, they can reinvigorate a sense of place that connects Yorkville to its diasporic communities. These reconnections, in the aggregate, may increase interest in Yorkville's past and fuel additional heritage-related programming, such as panel discussions; micro-exhibits; digital crowdsourcing; and artifactual donations. "The New York Public Library Oral History Project," New York Public Library, <http://oralhistory.nypl.org/>.

cultural norms and political ideologies, willingly shed his or her language and customs, turned away from homeland concerns, transitioned through ethnic enclaves as quickly as possible in pursuit of the “American Dream,” embraced free market economics, and disappeared into the mainstream thus becoming “regular” Americans. Clearly, those who trace their ancestry to Europe have a vested interest in perpetuating this tall tale. This endorsement of America’s mythologized past only increases the urgency to infuse civic dialogue on immigration policy and law with well-researched migration histories. This laudable goal will require many hands.¹²

What started as a highly personal quest to know about my own identity grew into a multifaceted effort to study and convey an urban neighborhood’s ethnic past. *Recalling Yorkville’s* guiding principle – to examine the dynamism ethnic identity in a specific place – does not represent the final word on ethnic Yorkville. May it mark a new beginning.

¹² The Lower East Side Tenement Museum offers an exceptional model for using immigration history as a catalyst for informed civic dialogue. Maggie Russell-Ciardi, “The Museum as a Democracy-Building Institution: Reflections on the Shared Journeys Program at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum,” *The Public Historian* 30, no. 1 (Feb. 2008): 39-52; *History as Catalyst for Civic Dialogue: Case Studies from Animating Democracy*, eds. Pam Korza and Barbara Schaffer Bacon (Washington, DC: Americans for the Arts, 2005).

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