Norddeutscher Lloyd and Baltimore
A Transatlantic Partnership

On March 23, 1868, just more than 150 years ago, the SS *Baltimore* steamed past Fort Mc Henry on its maiden voyage and docked at the newly-constructed immigration pier in Locust Point. The 141 passengers were the first of the 1.2 million immigrants who landed there up until 1914. The opening of the pier was the result of a partnership between the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and the North German Lloyd Company of the port city of Bremen, which transported these immigrants across the ocean. Up to 1890, the majority of these immigrants came from Germany, adding to the substantial German presence in Baltimore.

Trade connections between Baltimore and Bremen had begun in the 1790s. At that point, the U.S. had just gained its independence from Britain, and American ships were no longer limited in their destinations, which had been the case under British colonial rule. Baltimore was growing rapidly, the nation's third largest city by 1810, while Bremen was also a thriving independent city-state (Germany did not unify until 1871). Baltimore merchants had established a vibrant trade with Bremen, exchanging cotton and tobacco for linen and glassware. In fact, during 1794–99, half of the American ships landing in Bremen came from Baltimore. Bremen along with Hamburg, the other major German seaport, became America's second largest trading partner after Britain in that decade.[1]

The Napoleonic Wars of 1803–1815 disrupted trade, which resumed in 1815, recovering its vigorous pace. At this time, travel was entirely by sailing ships, which were usually owned by individual merchants or a partnership of merchants.

The year 1830 marked two important watersheds. Bremen lies on the Weser river forty miles upstream from its mouth on the North Sea; the city leaders became concerned about the river filling up with silt, so they established an artificial harbor at the mouth of the river for ocean-going ships, which they named Bremerhaven (or Bremen's harbor).

The harbor was to open on September 13, 1830, but on the day before, the Baltimore ship "Draper," under the command of Captain Hillert, jumped the gun and ran aground. The ship was promptly refloated. The city of Bremerhaven has commemorated the opening of the har-

bor with a plaque and has named a portion of the harbor "the Baltimore Pier."[2]

The second watershed event for Bremen took place when its merchants discovered that immigrants had become a profitable cargo. Tobacco exports to Bremen tripled from the 1820s to the 1840s. Cotton also became a major export, quadrupling in the same period. Tobacco was largely exported from Baltimore, while cotton was shipped from various Southern ports, especially New Orleans and also New York. At the same time, Bremen's main exports to the United States, linen and glassware, stagnated. As the merchandise cargo was small, westbound ships had space for passengers in the mezzanine, between the cargo hold and the deck. Eastbound ships were fully loaded with bulk goods and only took cabin passengers. It turned out that the immigrant trade became more lucrative than the export of German goods.

In the 1830s, most of the immigrant ships leaving Bremerhaven sailed under the Bremen flag. They carried immigrants to Baltimore and New York, at first in equal numbers. By 1844, however, New York began to move ahead of Baltimore as the largest port of entry.[3] From the 1820s to the 1830s, the total number of immigrants to the U.S. rose fourfold, and immigration to Baltimore increased by a similar proportion from 1,400 per year to 6,000. Improvements in transportation and logistics led to the increase in German emigration. Several German states created a customs union (*Zollverein*) which freed trade and travel. They abolished tolls on the rivers, and steamship travel, shortened the travel time, and decreased expenses to the embarkation ports. Lastly, the increased trade undercut the livelihood for many village craftsmen, who looked for a fresh start overseas.[4]

Between 1830 and 1860, eighty percent of the immigrants landing in Baltimore came from Germany, with most of the rest from Ireland. Baltimore was an attractive port of entry, as it grew rapidly up to 1860, keeping its place as America's third largest city. Baltimore differed from other East Coast cities, such as Philadelphia, New York, and Boston, where the Irish were the largest group. The decisive factor for this difference was the close Baltimore-Bremerhaven close trading relationship.

Up to 1865 most immigrants crossed the Atlantic in sailing ships, which took six to eight weeks. Wealthy passengers could afford cabins,

but the rest were packed into the mezzanine in crowded and unhealthy conditions. Passengers could go on deck for fresh air only when there was good weather, which was not always the case in the North Atlantic, especially in the winter. These sailing ships carried 160 passengers on average.

Transatlantic steamship travel was developing at this time; the American steamship *Washington* arrived in Bremerhaven from New York for the first time in 1847 after a seventeen-day voyage. Even though steamship passage was more expensive, it became more popular due to the convenience, speed and comfort, ending transatlantic travel by sail by the 1870s.

In 1857, two merchants of Bremen, Hermann Henrich Meier and Eduard Crusemann, pooled their resources to found the North German Lloyd Company. Their major goal was to establish steamship service between Bremerhaven and other European or overseas ports. Within six years, they established regular service with New York.[5]

With the end of the American Civil War in 1865, the directors of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad saw the opportunity to link ocean travel with rail travel. In January 1867, the President of the B&O, John Work Garrett, signed an agreement with Albert Schumacher, who represented the North German Lloyd's interests in Baltimore. The B&O agreed to build an immigration pier in Locust Point in Baltimore's harbor and to connect the pier with rail lines, which were already in existence. Immigrants could then disembark from North German Lloyd ships and board trains that would take them to the Midwest at a discounted rate. The North German Lloyd agreed to send at least one immigrant ship per month, but soon immigrant ships were arriving more frequently.

The German railroad network was likewise expanding and established connections with Bremerhaven in 1862. An immigrant could buy a package and travel by train, for example, from Munich to Bremerhaven, by steamship from Bremerhaven to Baltimore, and then by train to Saint Louis, a journey which by the turn of the century could be done in a little more than twenty-four hours. The North German Lloyd established a network of ticket agents all over Central and Eastern Europe to sell travel packages.

The first ship, the SS *Baltimore*, arrived at the Locust Point pier on March 23, 1868. Baltimoreans celebrated for three days, including a parade on Broadway. The passengers were the first of the 1.2 million who first set foot on American soil in Locust Point in the course of the next forty-five years. The vast majority traveled on North German Lloyd ships departing from Bremerhaven, while the rest embarked at Hamburg, Antwerp, or Liverpool.

According to the *Baltimore's* manifest or passenger list, twenty-six of the 141 passengers were children under ten, all traveling with adult family members. Only eleven were over forty (8%), and they were also traveling with a family. Eleven were cabin passengers, and the rest traveled in steerage. All were born in Germany, except for three who were American born. In addition, nine had lived in the U.S. and were returning. There was one doctor, eleven merchants, fifteen craftsmen of various trades, and forty farmers or sixty percent of the total. Only men were designated as having a profession or trade, with the exception of a "maid-servant," who traveled as a cabin passenger, most likely with her employer family.[6]

A survey of fifty-four ship manifests containing the names of 12,000 passengers arriving during 1868–1871 reveal that twenty-six percent of them remained in Baltimore, and most of the rest traveled to various locations in the Midwest, especially in the area known as the German triangle, between Cincinnati, Saint Louis, and Milwaukee. By the 1890s, the percentage of those remaining in Baltimore dropped to around ten percent, as the cities of the Midwest were growing rapidly and attracted more and more immigrants.[7]

As already noted, up to the 1890s, about eighty percent of the immigrants arriving in Baltimore came from Germany. The Germans who remained in Baltimore established a major presence. One quarter of the city's population in the latter third of the nineteenth century was either born in Germany or had parents born in Germany. They spread throughout the entire city and by 1894 had built thirty-two churches where they worshiped in their own language. Baltimore Germans published eight German-language newspapers, some daily, some weekly.[8]

Why did so many Germans come to the United States? They were the largest immigrant group from 1830 to 1890, four million out of a total

of 15.3 million. It would be instructive to understand who came. Some of the ship manifests list the professions of the passengers. A survey of twenty-seven ships between 1846 and 1871 reveals that fifty-two percent of the passengers were farmers, thirty-two percent were craftsmen, ten percent were unskilled laborers, servants, or workmen, and six percent were merchants or some other professional, such as parson, teacher, or doctor. From these figures, we can deduce that relatively few unskilled immigrants made the trip, nor were there many wealthy among the passengers.[9]

Many of the craftsmen came from rural areas, and their livelihoods were threatened by the emergence of a market economy and industrialization. They did not see a bright future in Germany and sought a better life in a more rapidly growing American economy. As for the farmers, small landholdings in western Germany predominated, but as farmers divided their holdings among their children, plots described as *Zwergwirtschaften* or dwarf economies, were becoming too small to support a family. The younger children had to go elsewhere, and the fertile soil and vast expanses of the American Midwest beckoned.

Between 1830 and 1870, the majority of immigrant farmers came from western Germany, and then their numbers dropped somewhat. In Germany, east of the Elbe River, large estates predominated, cultivated by agricultural laborers. Mechanization and foreign competition reduced the demand for labor, so the majority of emigrating famers during 1870–1890 came from east of the Elbe.[10]

The 1890s marked a major demographic shift; Germany was undergoing industrialization, and its cities began to absorb much of the population that would have emigrated, resulting in a drop in emigration after 1900 to one quarter of what it had been in the 1880s. Emigrants from German-speaking territories were replaced in even larger numbers by immigrants mainly from the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires, who made their way to Bremerhaven. In Baltimore, distinct immigrant neighborhoods emerged. Poles were one of the largest groups, living in the neighborhoods of Canton, Fell's Point, and Highlandtown, known as "Polonia." Czechs formed a "Little Bohemia," located northeast of Hopkins Hospital. Lithuanians congregated in West Baltimore, in an area where the University of Maryland professional schools are now located.

The largest group of these new immigrants were Jews from Eastern Europe, who settled in the Jonestown area.[11]

Immigration reached its peak between 1900 and 1914, with an average of 40,000 arriving annually in Baltimore compared with 7,000 during the years 1830–1870. Overall in the period 1830–1914, Baltimore was America's third largest port of entry after New York and Boston, and the second largest for Germans and the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe.

As for the North German Lloyd, it took over the entire immigrant trade from Bremerhaven by the 1870s, expanding to ninety-three ocean liners by 1914. Faster and larger, the ocean lines could cross the Atlantic in a week by 1900 and carry more than 1500 passengers. The Lloyd sent its largest number of ships to New York, and then to Baltimore. They also sailed to South America, Canada, Australia and the Far East. Overall, the Lloyd carried more immigrants to the U.S. than any other company.

An example of such a liner was SS *Kaiser Wilhelm der Große*, built in 1897, carrying 340 passengers in first-class cabins, 346 in second-class cabins, and 1074 in steerage with a crew of 500. Steerage usually consisted of bunk beds in a large hall. Each class had its own dining rooms and deck space. Business travelers and tourists tended to go first- or second-class, and immigrants traveled in steerage. Almost forty percent of the passengers traveled in the first two classes, as the North German Lloyd catered to a substantial number of affluent travelers, who were the most profitable passengers for the company.[12]

Steerage passage between Bremerhaven and Baltimore cost $30 in the 1890s; a second-class berth cost $46. The price of first-class cabins ranged between $112 and $2000, depending on the size and season. Although relative purchasing power is difficult to assess, it is instructive to note that an adult semi-skilled worker in the United States could earn $10 per week during the same period. A ship's passage in steerage was approximately equivalent to three weeks' wages.

The unexpected outbreak of World War I in 1914 brought an abrupt end to the Bremerhaven-Baltimore connection. Twenty-nine of the Lloyd's ships happened to be in American ports at the outset of the war and were interned. Once the U.S. entered the war in 1917, it confiscated

all of the Lloyd ships. At the end of the war, the Treaty of Versailles included reparations, in the form of ships, and the Lloyd had to turn over all its remaining large ships to the Allies.[13]

In the 1920s, immigration to the United States was greatly reduced by a series of restrictive laws. European immigration had been running at almost one million per year from 1900 to1914; but Congress in 1924 set a limit of 154,000 and assigned quotas for each European country based on each nationality's percentage of the ethnic make-up of the U.S. Immigrants also had to obtain entry visas from American consulates before boarding a ship traveling to the U.S.

As for Baltimore, the immigration pier burned in a mysterious fire in October 1917. After the war was over, the Lloyd initially had no ships, so no immigrants landed here.

Eventually, the Lloyd bought back or leased some of the ships it lost, but with the restrictive immigration laws and the loss of the immigration pier, Baltimore no longer served as a port of entry. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Lloyd offered transatlantic service to New York, but the number of immigrants was far fewer than before 1914. It goes without saying that World War II stopped transatlantic immigration entirely. Only by 1954 did the Lloyd reemerge as a transatlantic carrier, but the American immigration laws did not change, and immigration numbers remained small. In 1965, Congress ended the quota system and opened the doors to all nations. At that point, however, air travel had taken over, and the North German Lloyd shifted to cruises and then merged with the HAPAG Company of Hamburg in 1970. Since then, HAPAG-LLOYD has concentrated on container cargoes, becoming the world's fifth largest container company.[14]

Baltimore's immigration history is not well known; the immigration pier is gone, and there is no Ellis Island to restore. There is one marker: the congregation of the *Deutsche Vereinigte Evangelische Christuskirche* in Locust Point built the Immigrant House in 1904, a place where immigrants could find room, board and job placements, just five blocks from the Immigration Pier. In May 2016, the Baltimore Immigration Museum opened in the same building, telling the story of Baltimore's immigration history. Since then, the Museum has received inquiries from people all over the country (and a few from Europe), who tell of a great-grandpar-

ent or some other ancestor, who was one of the 1.2 million who arrived in Locust Point during the Great Wave of Immigration. This is the enduring legacy of the partnership between the North German Lloyd and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.

— Nicholas B. Fessenden
Columbia, Maryland

North German Lloyd Poster
1907
Courtesy
Archiv Historisches Museum
Bremerhaven

NOTES

1. Sam Mustafa, "The Role of the Hanseatic Cities in Early US-German relations. *Maryland Historical Magazine* (Fall, 1998) 265–283. Dirk Schroeder, "Friendship, Commerce and Navigation between the Free Hanseatic Republic of Bremen and Baltimore," unpublished article. Franz Josef Pitsch, *Die wirtschaftlichen Beziehung Bremens zu den Vereinigten Staaten*, (Bremen: Staatsarchiv der freien Hansestadt Bremen, 1974), 26–34.

2. Anja Benscheidt and Alfred Kube, *Bruecke Nach Uebersee* (Bremerhaven: Wirtschaftsverlag NW, 2006), 12–15.

3. Schroeder, "Friendship." Pitsch, 69, 104–5, 110, 140–63, 178–86, 225–41. Ed. Lars U. Scholl, *Bremen und Amerika* (Bremen: Hauschild, 2010), 24–25.

4. Mack Walker, *Germany and the Emigration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1954) 46–53.

5. Benscheidt and Kube, op. cit., 18–19, 30–35.

6. Immigrant Ships Transcribers Guild, ISTG.org. Transcribed from the National Archives; vol. 16, the "SS Baltimore," 3/23/68.

7. ISTG, Vols 4–18. *Baltimore Sun*, 7/13/1893, 1/1/1905, 1/1/1911. These newspaper articles contain annual reports of 100,000 immigrants landing in Baltimore; Nine percent gave Maryland as their destination.

8. J.G. Morris, "The German in Baltimore," *The Report* (1894). The most comprehensive account of Germans in Baltimore is by Dieter Cunz, *The Maryland Germans* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1948), 197–394. Germanmarylanders.org notes that thirty churches had German language services during 1900–1910.

9. ISTG, Vols 4, 5, and 16. These twenty-seven ships carried 2142 immigrants whose profession was identified.

10. Walker, passim.

11. For the most recent work on Baltimore's Jewish immigrants, see Eric L. Goldstein and Deborah R. Weiner, *On Middle Ground* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2018), 104–78. Two immigrant groups which came to Baltimore but did not leave from Bremen include Irish, who came in smaller numbers than the Germans, and Italians, who mostly entered the US through New York or Philadelphia and then traveled to Baltimore to settle in Little Italy and elsewhere.

12. Benscheidt and Kube, op. cit., 56–61.

13. Benscheidt and Kube, op. cit., 78–79.

14. Benscheidt and Kube, op. cit., 109–111. Hapag-Lloyd.com/en/about-us.

THE GERMAN CATHEDRAL
ZION CHURCH 1808 TO 1840
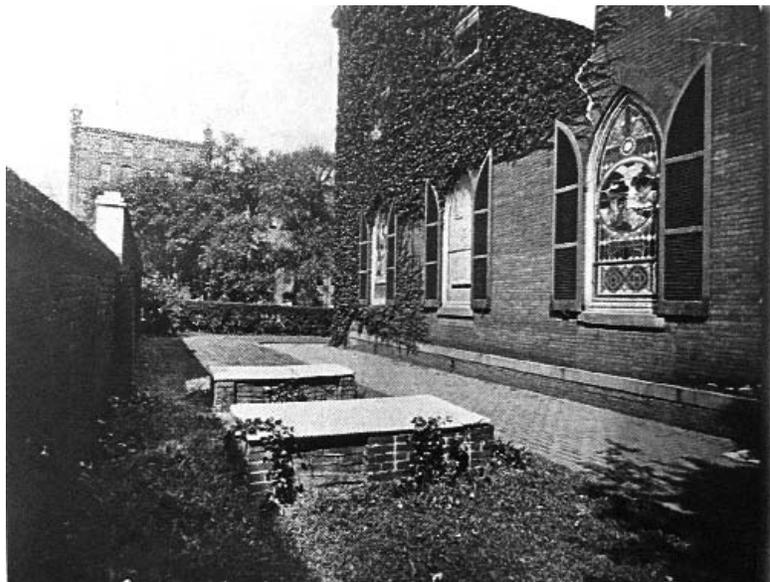
GRAVES OF
PASTORS GEROCK
&
NICOLAS KURTZ
PHOTOGRAPH CA. 1905