

The German Forty-Eighters in Illinois

...

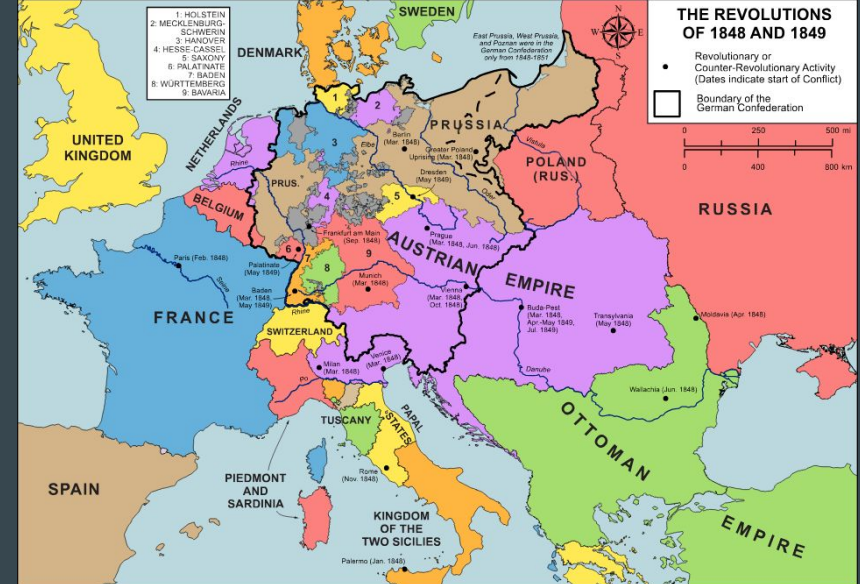
By Harris Dorgan

Europe, 1848



Source: Westera, Rick. "Historical Atlas of Europe (24 February 1848): Year of Revolution Begins." Omniatlas. <https://omniatlas.com/maps/europe/18480224/>.

Germany, 1848



Source: "The Revolution of 1848–49." German History in Documents and Images. <https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/from-vormarx-to-prussian-dominance-1815-1866/the-revolution-of-1848-49>.

Illinois German population, 1860

104

STATE OF ILLINOIS.

TABLE No. 5.—NATIVITIES OF POPULATION.

UNITED STATES.			FOREIGN COUNTRIES.		
Alabama.....	1,565	Pennsylvania.....	83,025	Asia.....	49
Arkansas.....	620	Rhode Island.....	2,222	Africa.....	19
California.....	175	South Carolina.....	3,283	Australia.....	27
Connecticut.....	11,762	Tennessee.....	32,012	Atlantic Islands.....	453
Delaware.....	1,888	Texas.....	294	Belgium.....	236
Florida.....	87	Vermont.....	18,223	British America.....	20,120
Georgia.....	1,347	Virginia.....	32,978	Central America.....	24
Illinois.....	706,523	Wisconsin.....	4,771	China.....	3
Indiana.....	62,016	District of Columbia.....	343	Denmark.....	712
Iowa.....	4,948	Territories.....	80	England.....	41,745
Kansas.....	99	At sea.....	178	Europe, (not specified).....	90
Kentucky.....	60,183	Not stated.....	3,955	France.....	9,493
Louisiana.....	568			German States:	
Maine.....	7,455	Aggregate native.....	1,387,308	Austria.....	2,106
Maryland.....	16,476			Bavaria.....	12,437
Massachusetts.....	19,023			Baden.....	9,598
Michigan.....	5,516			Hesse.....	10,184
Minnesota.....	285			Nassau.....	1,585
Mississippi.....	794			Prussia.....	24,547
Missouri.....	12,234			Württemberg.....	5,096
New Hampshire.....	7,938			Germany, (not specified).....	63,341
New Jersey.....	15,474			Total Germany.....	130,804
New York.....	125,508			Great Britain, (not specified).....	620
North Carolina.....	13,297			Greece.....	
Ohio.....	121,887				
Oregon.....	31				

Chicago German population, 1850-1910

Table 1

Population of Chicago, 1850-1910: Comparison of Total, Foreign-Born, and German Population⁽²⁾

	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910
total population (absolute numbers)	29 963	109 206	298 977	503 185	1 099 850	1 698 575	2 185 283
per cent native American with foreign parents	—	—	—	—	29,5	42,8	41,8
per cent foreign-born	52,3	50,0	48,4	40,7	41,0	34,5	35,7
German-born:	5 094	22 230	52 316	75 205	161 039	170 738	182 281
absolute numbers and per cent of total population	17,0	20,4	17,5	15,2	15,2	10,1	8,3

Source: Bureau, US Census. 2021. "1860 Census: Population of the United States." Census.gov. <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1864/dec/1860a.html>.

Source: John B. Jentz and Hartmut Keil, "From Immigrants to Urban Workers: Chicago's German Poor in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, 1883-1908," VSWG: Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte 68. Bd., H. 1 (1981), 61.

German occupations in Chicago, 1880

Table 2

Employed German Males in Chicago by Occupational Status and Major Occupations, 1880^(a)

2a. Occupational Status ^(b)	% of total employed German males
1. professional high white-collar	1,4
2. proprietary low white-collar	20,0
3. skilled crafts	37,4
4. unskilled	35,8
5. other	5,4
total	100,0

(a) Source: Systematic sample taken by the Chicago Project of German households in Chicago in 1880, based on the Ms. Schedules of the U.S. Census On Population for 1880.

2b. Major Occupations for Categories 2-4 by per cent of total employed German Males

2. propr. and low white-collar	%	3. skilled crafts	%	4. unskilled	%
store clerk	1,8	carpenter	3,4	laborer	13,8
clerk	1,6	tailor	2,1	teamster	1,6
saloon keeper	1,4	butcher	1,7	works in tailor shop	1,1
bookkeeper	1,0	painter	1,7	works in lumber yard	1,0
peddler	0,8	dressmaker	1,6	sailor	0,8
grocer	0,6	cabinet maker	1,5	sewer	0,7
		machinist	1,3		
		shoemaker	1,3		
		cigar maker	1,2		
		baker	1,0		

(b) Occupational status categories were adapted from the Philadelphia Social History Project.

²⁷ The German Society repeatedly warned lower level German professionals and white-collar workers like store clerks and bookkeepers not to come to America: see 40th Annual Report (1893-94), p. 10; also 39th Annual Report (1892-93), p. 8.

Source: Jentz and Keil, "From Immigrants to Urban Workers," 62.

Report about the Forty-Eighters, 1849

This Senator has made a publication in one of the Wisconsin papers, in which he states that he has been abused by the Legislature of that State, in their instructions, which he calls a "bill of attainder," and that "he has nothing more to fear of their baseness or to hope from their justice or magnanimity." And adds, "that until the insult is withdrawn, he shall consult his own feelings and honor, and those of the friends who stand by him, as to the time, place and manner, when, where and how, he shall reply to the indignity."

Some 200,000 German immigrants, mostly men of means, more or less compromised in the revolutions, are expected to reach America during the summer—probably adding some millions to the funds in the country. The investments for German account in our national and state funds are said to be very large.

A Washington correspondent says: "We are assured that a force of Dragoons will immediately be detailed to the Rio Grande to put down the Indians, with instructions to pursue them till captured or annihilated. The people of Texas are to be protected from further invasions of the Comanches."

DEAD SEA EXPEDITION.—Messrs. Lea & Blanchard have just published, in a large and elegant octavo volume, a full and complete history of the

out? 30 days! How many have you on board? 91 souls! Are you bound in? Yes! A pleasant passage to you! The same to you my fine fellow! And the two ships separated after sending up nine most tremendous cheers."

There is a new expedition on the way to ascertain the sources of the Nile. Rev. Mr. Rabmann, a missionary of the Church, located on the eastern coast of Africa, four degrees south of the Equator, recently penetrated a hundred miles inland, and came to a mountain, covered with perpetual snow. It is supposed that the Nile draws its supply of water from this source. Dr. Bialoblotzky, from England, is now engaged in endeavoring to solve the mystery.

RETURNED.—A man by the name of Luther, with his wife, left Alton two years' since for San Francisco. He has just returned with his wife, having made money enough to gratify his desires. How much that is, is not said. He showed the editors of the St. Louis Republican, a bag containing some 20 lbs. of the metal. He confirms all the previous accounts of the abundance of gold in California.

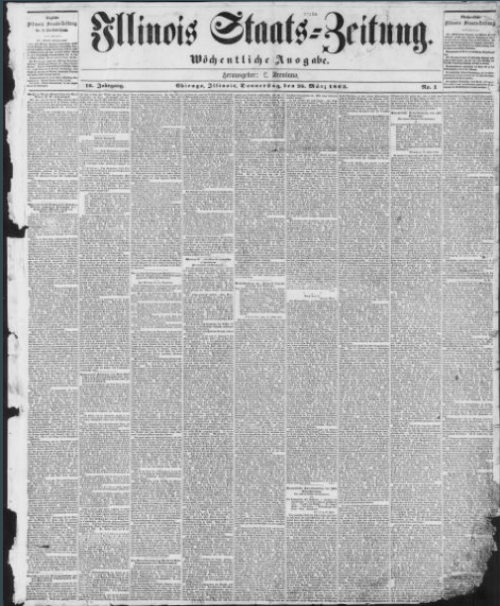
Indian ravages on the Rio Grande.—By a telegraphic despatch from New Orleans of June 9th, we have most melancholy details of Indian ravages which sweep tempest-like toward civilized

"I have been directed to the practicability of a through the country, even My opinion is, that no will present itself. With from the route it pursued, throughout the whole line not exceed ten feet in a mile points, as it may be carried half the way. But few of a single arch will suffice to build one or more points of natural foundations for abutments, limestone for lime good timber of every variety ready, almost where purpose, are strange, across the valley of the Canada connecting link between extremes of our continent."

THE BRITISH COLONIAL POSSESSIONS OF GREAT CANADA, NOVA SCOTIA, NEW BRUNSWICK, NEWFOUNDLAND, and the other islands of the West Indian possessions, Malta, the Ionian Islands, the Cape of Good Hope, Sierra Leone, Gambia, the Cape Coast, and St. Helena, cost £3,170,388; and the cost of the colonial empire upon the mother country in the year 31st of March cost of £9,743,354 solely

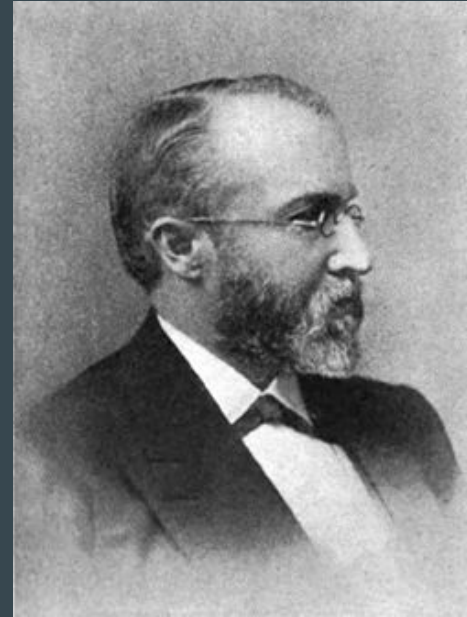
Source: Sangamo Journal, June 25 1849.

Example of the Illinois Staats-Zeitung



Source: Illinois Staats-Zeitung, March 26 1863.

Photograph of George Schneider



Source: Paul Selby (1906). "George Schneider". Papers in Illinois history and transactions. p. 330.

Report on Lincoln's speech in Bloomington



Source: Papers of Abraham Lincoln.
<https://papersofabrahamlincoln.org/documents/D200799>.

The “Dutch Plank” of the Republican Platform

Rights of Citizenship.

14. That the Republican party is opposed to any change in our Naturalization Laws or any State Legislation by which the rights of citizenship hitherto accorded to emigran's from foreign lands shall be abridged or impaired; and in favor of giving a full and efficient protection to the rights of all classes of citizens, whether native or naturalized, both at home and abroad.

Source: A Reprint of the Original Broadside Containing the Republican platform of 1860, Adopted by the National Republican Convention held in Chicago, May 17, 1860.] Chicago, 1860. | library of Congress. Accessed April 24, 2026. <https://www.loc.gov/item/rbpe.0180010b/>.

Article on Germans in the Midwest

Within a year or two the movement of abandoning the sham Democracy, has been in progress among the Germans, and now there are comparatively but a few left in the ranks of that unprincipled organization. In Illinois, they are, almost unanimously, Republicans, and in Ohio, where they have been gradually coming over to the support of the Republican party, they are now deserting the Democracy in scores, being disgusted by the illiberal and pro-slavery tendencies of the Buchanan politicians of that State. And now we are gratified to learn, in Wisconsin the same general movement is in progress. In that State the Germans are holding meetings, and by hundreds resolving to oppose the party that has deceived them.

Source: Sangamo Journal, October 2, 1857.

Article on protests by the German Lincoln Club

[From the Alton Courier.]
AN IRISH REPUBLICAN SPEAKS!
THE CITY HALL FULL!
FREEDOM OF SPEECH SUSTAINED!

Last evening was the occasion of what will justly be regarded as one of the most important meetings of the campaign. We had a speech from Wm. J. Masterson, Esq., of St. Louis.

It had been said about town all the afternoon that he would not be allowed to speak. That he is an Irishman and a Catholic, and yet a Republican, seems to be unpardonable in the eyes of many of the Irish of the city. We did not believe the threat would be put into execution, but we think it had the effect to put Republicans on their guard.

About eighty of the Wide Awakes and German Lincoln club turned out with their torches and made a short march through the streets, preceded by music, and a large canvass hall, inside which were lights, which was rolled along, and deservedly attracted a great deal of praise and admiration.

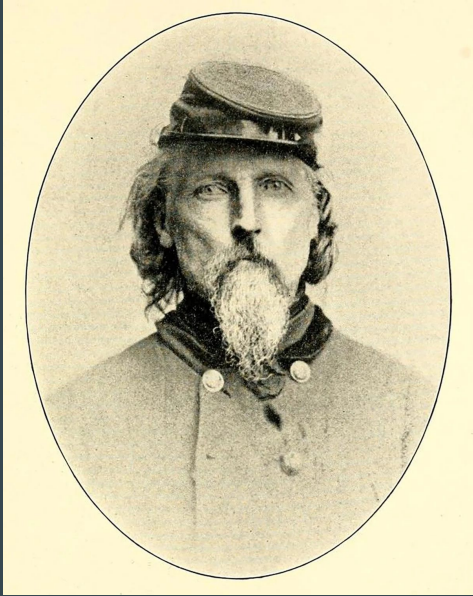
Arrived at the Hall, an audience was found assembled which comfortably filled it. Mr. Masterson was introduced by John Tribble, Esq., and was received with loud and hearty cheering. He at once proceeded to pour hot shot into the ranks of Democracy, and kept doing so for about an hour, receiving much applause.

Outside, during the speaking, some twenty or so were congregated, of whom half a dozen were not sparing of cursing and denunciation, and we heard more than one suggestion to stone Mr. Masterson as he came out. What would have been done we of course cannot say; but Messrs. O'Ryan, Hugh Maguire and James Maguire, deserve the thanks of all lovers of good order for their efforts to keep down the rebellious spirit of the crowd.

The speaker passed out unmolested, and was escorted to the Alton House by the Wide-Awakes. Thanking them, he intimated that he might be with us again before the canvass closes. We shall be glad to see him.

Source: Sangamo Journal, August 23rd, 1860.

Image of Friedrich Hecker



Source: Burlet, Jürg. "When Baden's Revolutionaries Retreated to Switzerland." Swiss National Museum, December 17, 2025.
<https://blog.nationalmuseum.ch/en/2024/07/when-badens-revolutionaries-retreated-to-switzerland/>.

Officers of the 82nd Regiment



Source: The 82 Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment.
<https://civilwartalk.com/threads/the-82-illinois-volunteer-infantry-regiment.126794/>.

Article about German Davenport demonstrators

Was die Operationen der Agitation betrifft, so sind die Berichte in dem Augenblicke, in welchem wir dieses schreiben, noch ziemlich verworren. Doch scheint so viel gewiss zu sein, daß die Truppen des General Hunter (wenigstens theilweise) auf der John's Insel landeten, die von Charleston durch den Stone und Myles-Fluß und eine kaum 3 Meilen breite Landenge getrennt ist. Vom südlichen Ende der John's Insel bis nach Charleston ist es kaum 3 Meilen; die Insel ist 16 Meilen lang und 8 bis 10 breit. Ihren nördlichen Theile entlang haben die Rebellen auf verschiedenen Punkten Batterien am Stone Flusse errichtet, um unsere Schiffe am Hinauffahren und unsere Truppen am Ueberschreiten der Insel zu verhindern. Die Landenge zwischen dem Stone und Myles Flus ist auf's manichfache besetzt und die dortigen Hauptfortifikationen können nöthigenfalls von der Stadt aus beschoßen werden. Aus diesen Daten ersieht man, daß ein Angriff auf Charleston auch von dieser Seite aus nur unter gewaltigen Kämpfen vor sich gehen kann. Auf den übrigen Kriegshauptplätzen hat sich wenig von Belang ereignet. Die Räumung (und Verbrennung) Pensacola's durch unsere Truppen hat sich befüllt. — Die Potomac Armee ist durch neue Schneestürme am Rappahannock festgehalten; doch wird sie durch Streifzüge der Rebellenreiterei und durch Demonstrationen von Rebellenstruppen am Shenandoah fortwährend im Wagem erhalten. Das immer wieder auftauchende Gerücht, daß sich die Rebellen zur Räumung Richmonds und ganz Virginien anschließen, ist natürlich vorerst als total müßig zu betrachten. Allerdings scheinen unter den dortigen Rebellenstruppen manichfache Translokationen vor sich zu geben; aber sie berüchtigen noch lange nicht zu der Annahme, daß die Rebellen Virginien räumen wollen, sondern sie entspringen weit wahrscheinlicher dem Wunsche, nöthigenfalls einem Plänenangriff von Forttomm oder Suffolk aus besser beizugehen zu können.

Source: Illinois Staats-Zeitung, April 9, 1863.

Article after the Emancipation Proclamation

Ich brauche kaum erst zu bemerken, daß die Sklaverei dieser ganzen Rebellion zu Grunde liegt und daß sie in Missouri den Krieg immer von Neuem entzündet. Dank dem Old Abe, ist in Arkansas diese Frage beigelegt. Alle Unionsmänner und Nicht-Sklavenhalter im Staate acceptiren die Emanzipations-Proclamation als Gesetz und zwar mit Freuden. Indem die Sklavenhaltenden Rebellen (und alle Sklavenhalter sind Rebellen,) mit ihren Sklaven aus dem Staate flohen, ward die Negersfrage in diesem Staate bereits geordnet. Nur Eins ist zu fürchten! Wenn die Ver. St. Regierung die Verwaltung dieses Staates einem conservat'ven Vorosklaverei-Manne anvertraut, der den reichen Sklavenhaltern zu Willen ist und in ihnen die Hoffnung erregt, daß die Emanzipationsproclamation „ein bloßer Hauch“ sei (wie Rollins von Missouri sich ausdrückt), und daß ihnen das Sklavenhalten auch ferner gestattet sein werde, dann wird dieser Staat auf Jahre hinaus für die Union verloren sein und von einem Guerillakrieg, wie der in Missouri, heimgesucht werden.

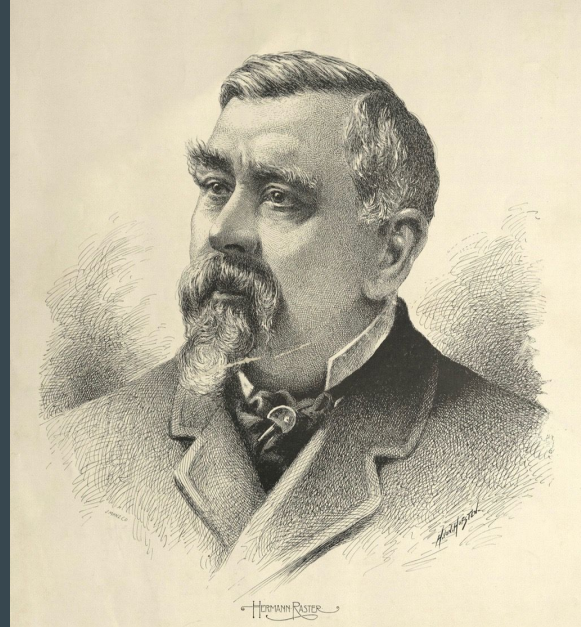
Source: Illinois Staats-Zeitung, October 20, 1863.

Photograph of Anton C. Hesing



Source: Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, vol. 35, no. 3 (Sept. 1942), pg. 268.

Image of Hermann Raster



Source: "Hermann Raster (1827-1891) - Find a Grave Memorial." Find a Grave.
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/68128620/hermann-raster>.

Criticism of Edward Stanton

Selbst der N. Y. Herald ist empört über Sigel's Behandlung.
Wir finden in den Zeitartikelspalten des N. Y. Herald folgenden kurzen Artikel:
„Die naturalisirten Bürger und der Krieg.“
Die Art, wie der Kriegsminister die Generale Sigel und Meagher, welche die Deutschen und Ir-länder repräsentiren, behandelt hat, ist wirklich schändlich. Diese Herren sollten aktive Commandos in der Armee haben; und der Umstand, daß sie nicht im Besitze eines solchen Commando's sind, beweist, daß Hr. Stanton von einem Neste jenes verabscheuungswürdigen Know-Nothing - Geistes angesteckt ist, der vor einigen Jahren wucherte.“
Uebrigens hätte der Herald seinen gerechten Tadel nicht sowohl gegen den ihm verhassten Kriegsminister Stanton richten sollen, als gegen den Ober-Know-Nothing Galleck, den faktischen Herrn und Meister im Kriegsdepartement, der den Kriegsminister in die Position eines bloßen Bureau-Chefs hinabgedrückt hat.

Source: Illinois Staats-Zeitung, June 4th, 1863.

Transcript of a letter from William Massenberg

1 B 2

RECEIVED
NPA
3000
e

GERMAN

Illinois Staats Zeitung, April 6, 1872.

Wm. Massenberg to the Editor of the Illinois Staats Zeitung:

"Greatly astonished I see what interpretation you give my letter in the Chicago Journal of March 22nd. Nothing was further from my thought than to defend the recently adopted so-called Temperance Law. My German colleagues in the Legislature will testify that I did everything I could to prevent its adoption - and, that is to say, by the only means at our disposal, namely, by submitting a substitute. My law simply prohibits the sale of intoxicating drink to known drunkards, to those already intoxicated, to minors, and, in cases where a member of the family forbids the bar-keeper orally or in writing the sale of liquor to an alcohol addicted relation.

Source: Foreign Language Press Survey. https://flps.newberry.org/id/5418474_2_1_0751.



Source: "Erinnerung an den Befreiungskampf in der verhängnisvollen Nacht 18.-19. März 1848", Kreidelithographie, koloriert, gedruckt im Verlag Winckelmann, Eigenth. v. C. Glück, Berlin, Signatur rechts unten nicht lesbar, wohl Blatt II, post-1848 und zeitgenössisch (genaues Datum unbekannt), gescannt von User:APPER, siehe <https://www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/item/MRY6LN4XHOSUJMQMOUHQDPMGMCJBYGN>

1848 was one of the most significant years in 19th-century European history, with the continent being engulfed in numerous revolutions. Although each revolution had competing political ideas, most of the leadership was organized by classical liberals who promoted progressive ideas that advocated for democracy and individual liberty and challenged the monarchical and often feudal European status quo. One of the most significant revolutions of the year occurred in Germany. In 1848, Germany was a Confederation of 39 sovereign states that was ruled by a Federal Assembly of monarchs. The German Revolution of 1848 attempted to unite Germany as a single nation with a political system that adhered to the values of classical liberalism. The Revolution failed, and a mass emigration of political refugees ensued.

The United States was one of the most desirable destinations for German emigrants after 1848. In America, the wave of German immigrants immediately following the failure of the 1848 Revolution became known as the “Forty-Eighters.” Due to the nature of the revolution, most of the Forty-Eighters were politically liberal. As a group, they played a notable role in shaping American politics of the mid-to-late 19th century. One of the most popular locations for Germans to settle in was Illinois. Because of this, Illinois serves as an effective case study for the impact of the German Forty-Eighters on American reform movements in the mid-to-late 19th century. By examining the role of the Forty-Eighters in Illinois, it becomes clear that their impact was directly related to the political philosophies of the Revolution. It also becomes clear that to fully understand their impact, solely examining the notable leaders ignores the importance of the German-Americans as a political group after the 1848 wave of immigration.

To understand the political worldviews of German Forty-Eighters, it is crucial first to understand the situation in Germany leading up to the 1848 Revolution. Europe in the mid-19th century was an incredibly unstable environment, both politically and economically. The historian

Eric Hobsbawm provides a detailed account of the complex situation of the 19th century and the events that contributed to the creation of those conditions in *The Age of Revolution*. He explains that the British Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution bookmarked the 18th century and set the stage for what would be a tumultuous 19th century. The Industrial Revolution demonstrated the success of an economic system based on industrial capitalism and prompted the spread of economic liberalism throughout Europe. Hitherto, the economic systems of Europe concentrated wealth into an upper class of nobles and lords, with the vast majority of the population consisting of peasants who worked the lands controlled by the nobles and lords. As this system was replaced by capitalism, the noble class lost its power, and many peasants were forced to find industrial jobs in urban areas, uprooting the lives of those belonging to all economic classes. Politically, the French Revolution of 1789-1799 normalised classical liberalism as the predominant progressive ideology of the time and provided a blueprint for radicals on conducting a revolution that could overthrow the monarchical status quo of the many centuries previous.

The dramatic change in material conditions brought about by the Industrial Revolution and the onset of capitalism, combined with the inspiration generated from the French Revolution, created a Europe where, by the 1840s, revolution seemed inevitable for both the upper and the lower classes. Germany was far from an exception to this feeling of inevitable change. As historian Bruce Levine described in “The Spirit of 1848”, “The economic disasters of the 1840s made German society's general economic crisis acute, and the same desperation that now propelled thousands abroad also increased conflict at home, raising the stakes as well.” Both Hobsbawm and Levine report a quote from the American consul to Amsterdam from 1847, commenting on the German emigrants who were passing through Holland. According to the

report, “All well-informed people express the belief that the present crisis is so deeply interwoven in the events of the present period that ‘it’ is but the commencement of that great Revolution, which they consider sooner or later is to dissolve the present constitution of things.” As was the case throughout Europe, the combination of political change with a dramatic alteration of material conditions created a situation in Germany that felt untenable to its people. For many Germans, like the ones described by the American consul to Amsterdam, immigration to a place with better opportunities was the best option—an attitude that is partially responsible for the first wave of immigration to America. But for many others, particularly the political radicals who had grown up inspired by the first French Revolution, and who recognized that multiple major uprisings were brewing throughout Europe, a revolution at home was the best option.

1848 was the year of revolutions throughout Europe and is often referred to as the “Springtime of Nations,” with each major insurgency in a nation inspiring an insurgency in another nation. The German revolution failed, and many of the Germans who participated feared significant reprisal from the authorities of the restored German Confederacy, making emigration a necessity for safety. But even for Germans who were not direct participants in the Revolution, the failure to change the dire status quo motivated immigration to the U.S.. Mass German immigration to America began in the first half of the 19th century. To those still in Germany by the 1840s and 1850s, American society came to be seen as a near paradise, where the poor had an opportunity to find work and potentially achieve wealth, and the democratic political system meant that leadership was determined by merit. Whereas the onset of capitalism in Europe forced the peasantry into harsh industrialization, where the poor felt they were paid far from their worth,

America was recognized for its vast expanse of capital and productive material resources, which promised to give Europeans in poverty the ability to find dignity and a stable livelihood.

The mass exodus in the aftermath of 1848 caused the German-American population to increase three and a half times more than the native-born population. By 1860, there were 1.3 million German immigrants in the U.S., accounting for 4% of the country's entire population. The impact of this was exacerbated by the fact that Germans were geographically concentrated in the same areas, with three-quarters living in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan, and Iowa. Because German-Americans generally lived so close together, the cultural and political ideas that they brought as a group were amplified among themselves and became something that community leaders had to consider. In the context of the wave of immigration after 1848, the liberal ideals of German immigrants made them an important political bloc, especially in a state like Illinois that was divided on issues like slavery. By 1860, close to 8% of the state's population was German-born. In the major industrial hub of Chicago, that number was closer to 20.5%.

If a primary reason for immigration to the U.S. was to escape the industrialization of their homelands, many Germans would end up disappointed by the economic conditions of America. Although some German immigrants, particularly those better off financially, were able to establish a better life, most had to find manufacturing work in the quickly developing Chicago. By 1880, only 1.4% of employed German males in Chicago had a professional high-collar occupation. Just like Europe, the U.S. was in the process of industrializing, and the immigrants who came from poor backgrounds had to take the low-paying manufacturing jobs.

Despite this, Germans were still typically in a much better situation than most other immigrant groups. This is particularly true for the political refugees who held leadership roles in

the 1848 Revolution. The coming of these wealthier political refugees was predicted in Illinois. On June 25, 1849, the Sangamo Journal reported, “Some 200,000 German immigrants, mostly men of means, more or less compromised in the revolutions, are expected to reach America, during the summer—probably adding some millions to the funds in the country. The investments for German accounts in our national and state funds are said to be very large.”

Politically, the Forty-Eighters found their voice as the 1850s progressed. As Alison Clark Efford explained in “German Immigrants, Race, and Citizenship in the Civil War Era,” “German Americans had always maintained that their cultural background should be no impediment to American citizenship, but during the decade before the Civil War, many of them began to link this idea to antislavery politics....[M]ost...Forty-Eighters saw antislavery as a natural extension of the liberal nationalism that they had fought for in Europe.” At the time, the most effective means for spreading a political message among groups was newspapers. In Illinois, the number of newspapers increased from 43 titles in 1840 to 300 titles in 1860. This increase included many titles by Forty-Eighters, including the Illinois Staats-Zeitung. The paper was founded in 1848, but became a weekly title in 1851 after being taken over by George Scheinder, who fought in German Revolution and used the paper to oppose slavery and nativism. The policies supported by Scheinder, the Staats-Zeitung, and the majority of Forty-Eighters aligned with the newly formed Republican Party. German-Americans became a major part of the Party’s base. By 1876, the Illinois Staats-Zeitung became known as the leading Republican newspaper of the Northeast, despite being printed in German.

A significant factor in why the Republican Party aligned so well with the values of the Forty-Eighters was that the Forty-Eighters actually had a role in shaping the policy of the Party, particularly when it came to the Party’s stance on immigration. Four months before the first

Republican National Convention in 1856, a group of newspaper editors from Illinois, united by their opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, met in Bloomington for the Illinois Anti-Nebraska Convention. The meeting was initially set up to find a political candidate for President who opposed the Kansas-Nebraska Act, but would end up establishing the foundation for the Republican Party. Among the attendees was Scheinder and the German editor of the Journal of Quincy, both of whom represented the German-American voice. Their presence demonstrates the importance German-Americans were thought to have to the Republican Party as a political bloc. Another participant of the meeting was Abraham Lincoln, who travelled from Springfield. Lincoln was invited by Scheinder because they had been personal friends since 1853. At the meeting, the group formalized resolutions objecting to the expansion of slavery into free territories, calling for the reinstatement of the Missouri Compromise, and advocating for the protection of the First Amendment. The group also passed a resolution, written by Scheinder himself, that supported immigration and admonished Know-Nothingism.

At the Republican National Convention of 1860, Scheinder served as a delegate, along with three other fellow Forty-Eighters, including Gustave Koerner, who was also from Illinois. Koerner helped write a pro-immigration resolution, referred to as the “Dutch Plank,” that was along the same lines as the resolution Scheinder proposed at the Illinois Anti-Nebraska Convention. It was adopted as the fourteenth resolution in the official Republican Party platform, and is the picture on the right. The resolution was a significant win for all immigrant groups, but the fact that it was crafted by German immigrants demonstrates both the liberal ideas that German-Americans brought as well as the impact they were able to have in politics. The role that Scheinder and Koerner had in particular demonstrates the strength of German-Americans as a political unit in Illinois.

The German-American contingent in Illinois responded to the favorable Republican Party platform engineered by notable Forty-Eighters with overwhelming support. An article on the political leanings of German-Americans in the Midwest in the October 2nd, 1857 edition of the Sangamo Journal said that, “In Illinois, they are, almost unanimously, Republicans.” In turn, Republicans understood the importance of the Forty-Eighters as a voting bloc. In 1859, Lincoln, with the Republican nomination in sight, purchased a secret ownership stake in the Illinois Staats-Zeitung to influence the support of liberal German-Americans.

By late 1860, a German Republican Club had been created in Illinois, as evidenced by its mention in the September 5th, 1860 edition of the Sangamo Journal. This support extended to the nomination of Lincoln and the 1860 Presidential campaign. Former revolutionaries such as Ernst Violand, who immigrated to New York after being condemned to death for his participation in the 1848 Revolution, found himself settled in Peoria, Illinois, lecturing, writing for the newspapers, and making stump speeches for the Republican Party. German-Americans also organized as a group in Illinois, forming the German Lincoln Club and attending protests in support of Lincoln. According to the August 23rd, 1860 edition of the Sangamo Journal, “About eighty of the Wide Awakes and German Lincoln club turned out with their torches and made a short march through the streets....”

When the Civil War broke out in 1861, German-Americans in Illinois continued their support for anti-slavery and Lincoln. In the first six months of the war, 6,000 Germans enlisted and were often put in regiments consisting mostly of other German-Americans. Among these ranks were multiple regiments led by Forty-Eighters. A notable German-American Civil War veteran with ties to Illinois was Frederick Hecker. In Germany, Hecker was one of the most important leaders of the German Left in the 1840s. He attempted to organize a revolt in 1848 and

1849 before emigrating to America and settling in Summerville, near the Belleville region. In the Civil War, Hecker was given command of the 24th Regiment, a newly formed regiment of German volunteers, although it fell apart due to a lack of confidence in Hecker's ability as a military leader. Hecker found more success after being given command of the 82nd Regiment from Chicago, another German volunteer regiment. The 82nd was part of the Fourteenth Corps of the Army of the Potomac, which consisted mostly of German troops and leadership. Organizing the army around ethnic groups was a common Union strategy at the start of the war due to shared languages and pre-established cultural communities.

The impact of the German 48ers in the Civil War was particularly noticeable in the Illinois regiments because most of the immigration to Illinois came as a result of the Revolution, which was not entirely the case in other areas highly populated by Germans, like New York or Ohio. Following the conclusion of the war, the 82nd was celebrated in Chicago on June 19th, 1865. In a speech, Chicago Mayor John Wentworth praised the 82nd, stating, "A few years ago there was a cry raised that foreigners could not be trusted and that an attempt was made to disenfranchise you, but when at last the time came that tried men's souls...you have done honor to your adopted countries." Amid the anti-immigrant sentiment that was popular in the mid-19th century, service in the Civil War provided German immigrants an opportunity to prove their worth to their new country. In Illinois, the unique number of regiments formed by Forty-Eighters added complexity to that idea. Despite being born in Germany, the Forty-Eighters were drawn to the founding values of the U.S. because they sought to implement similar values in their own country. Service in the Union army appealed to Forty-Eighters as a means to continue fighting for the values that had been inscribed upon the Forty-Eighters as a group as a result of the material conditions of mid-19th-century Europe.

Much of the wider German-American support for the Union in the Civil War was based on their strong support of abolitionism. In Illinois, they staunchly supported abolitionists, even perceived radicals such as John Brown. The April 9th, 1863 edition of the Illinois Staats-Zeitung reported on a major Republican electoral victory in Davenport that inspired crowds of demonstrators. As described in the paper, a “jubilant crowd marched through the streets singing the John Brown song.” The actions of the crowd were celebrated by the paper as the article proclaimed, “Long live abolitionist Davenport!”

The Illinois Staats-Zeitung consistently printed strong pro-abolitionist messages. For example, an article from September 22nd, 1863, read, “[W]e radicals consider the complete abolition of slavery as the indispensable condition for the readmission of a rebel state as a full-fledged member of the Union.” The often-radical support the Illinois Staats-Zeitung expressed for the cause of abolition demonstrated that the Forty-Eighters who ran the newspaper felt strongly about the cause. It also demonstrated that even the average German-American wanted to read literature that strongly supported abolition, showing the impact that the liberal ideals of the Forty-Eighters had on German-Americans as a group.

However, German support for abolition had many racist undertones. As Mischa Honeck argued in “We Are the Revolutionists”, the social structures in which the Forty-Eighters existed were structurally racist, and they failed to break from the inherently racial framing of opposition to slavery that the system of abolitionist protest as a whole was tethered to. As Honeck explains, “Paramount to the dislike of slavery was the white farmer's fear that by tilling next to black slaves he might ultimately be mistaken for one. Consequently, most German American free-soilers found nothing hideous about homestead initiatives welcoming only 'free white persons' to vacant public lands.”

Forty-Eighters from Illinois provided no exception to this idea. Honeck describes the arguments of the aforementioned Freiderich Hecker, furthering, “Doing nothing to stop the influx of ignorant, save Africans' from the South, Friederich Hecker argued, magnified the threat of a slave revolt that could turn out far bloodier than the fearsome Haitian revolution.” Although the Forty-Eighters strongly supported abolition, they also exhibited the same perception of racial superiority that was present throughout the white leadership of the abolitionist movement.

Immediately after the Civil War, Forty-Eighters from Illinois continued their close connection with the Republican Party. The Illinois Staats-Zeitung was purchased by Anton C. Hesing in 1867, a German-American who immigrated in 1839. He brought Hermann Raster, a former leader in the 1848 Revolution who became a well-known writer for the New Yorker Abend-Zeitung upon immigration to America. Both Hesing and Raster were staunch Republicans and used the paper to support Republicans in return for Republicans to support Germans. Hesing, who established himself as the political boss of Chicago Germans in the 1860s, leveraged his control over German-Americans in Chicago to push against nativism and put other German-Americans in local government positions.

Even before Hesing bought the paper, the Staats-Zeitung fought against nativism. For example, in the midst of the Civil War, the paper levied criticism towards War Secretary Edward Stanton, arguing that Stanton was “infected by a remnant of that despicable Know-Nothing spirit which flourished a few years ago.”

Another important issue for Germans was the free consumption of alcohol, making opposition to alcohol control a crucial political topic for leaders such as Hesing and Raster. In 1872, the Staats-Zeitung criticized William Massenberg, a German-American who served in the Chicago legislature, for supporting a Temperance Law. In the April 6th edition of the paper, the

Editor wrote, “The principle says that not the drunkards shall be punished for the damage they do, but the innkeepers. The Drunkards are to be coddled and rewarded and made into agents ‘provocateurs’ against the innkeepers. That is the magnificent ‘principle’ with which Mr. Massenberg declares himself in agreement....The whole intent and meaning of his letter to the Journal was to present him to the American temperance advocates as a fit candidate for Secretary of State. The intent and meaning of it is to recommend him to the German anti-Temperance people....We would have to lie if we were to say that the double face that Mr. Massenberg exhibits inspires in us any feeling that resembles esteem....”

The incident is an example of the paper’s ability to put pressure on politicians to support policies that benefit German-Americans. That same year, Hesing and Raster informed the Republican Party that they would lose the German vote if they supported the prohibition movement. At the Republican National Convention, they were able to pressure the party to adopt a platform that disapproved of the State and the Federal Government from passing “any unconstitutional laws for the purpose of removing evils,” a resolution that attempted to reject the prohibition movement. Because of his involvement, it became known as the “Raster resolution.”

Examining the impact of the Forty-Eighters on American politics as a whole requires exploring both important leaders and the common German immigrant. A significant factor in why the Forty-Eighters were such a notable wave of immigrants was that they were political refugees who had experience organizing a revolution and could use that experience to organize others around them to promote the change they wanted to see. Figures such as Gustave Koerner, George Schneider, Friedrich Hecker, and Hermann Raster, all of whom were participants in the 1848 Revolution, were crucial political organizers in Illinois and were important contributors to the early policy of the Republican Party. With that said, solely focusing on the top of the

movement ignores that the opinions of the Forty-Eighters established them as a crucial political bloc.

The economic conditions that created the Revolution also spurred mass immigration to America. Although many political refugees were well-off, most people affected by the Revolution were not, which was a primary reason for the Revolution in the first place. The political spirit that was motivated by the poor economic conditions was liberal because, at the time, liberals managed to frame themselves as advocating for radical change to the status quo. Thus, after German immigration to the U.S. en masse after 1848, they developed as a strong, politically active voting bloc that supported progressive ideas like abolition. With the help of the German-American leaders who had participated in the Revolution, the Republican Party was able to capture that vote. Illinois serves as an effective case study for this because German support for the Republican Party was particularly strong in Illinois. Much of this was because Chicago became a significant hub for poor German immigrants because of its growing industrial economy, a theme that is consistent with immigration throughout the country. On top of this was the fact that many of the early policies of the Republican Party were organized in Illinois, meaning Forty-Eighters were able to leverage the power of the post-1848 German voting bloc to push for a party platform that benefited German-Americans and advocated for many of the liberal ideals Germans fought for in 1848.