

Educator's Guide to Lost German Chicago at the Dank Haus German Cultural Center



Introduction

Lost German Chicago, an exhibit located on the 4th floor of the Historic DANK-HAUS, features German-American history, traditions, artifacts and profiles of prominent German-Americans. The museum features:

- A focus on German-American History in Chicago
- Artifacts and photos from several German-American organizations, including DANK Chicago, the Germania Club, Rheinischer Verein and German-American choirs.
- Showcase of German-language newspapers, restaurants and personalities here in Chicago.

The exhibit features art, artifacts and memorabilia reflecting the Chicago German community over the years. Rare archives that have been entrusted to DANK are proudly displayed. Highlights include 30 feet of hand carved panels depicting Wagnerian operas (formerly installed in the Germania Club) commissioned by the Oscar Mayer family, tables of Turner trophies, Hessen Verein standards, items from dozens of area restaurants including the original Red Star Inn, photos, and filmed interviews of our living legacies to German Chicago - senior members of DANK Chicago.

Teacher Background Information

The goal of Lost German Chicago is to shed light on the lost history and heritage of the millions of Chicagoans who made up the German community.

Though immigrants came from many different regions of Germany, the bond that held the Chicago German immigrant community together was the German language. German settlement in Chicago centered on the North Side, and in smaller enclaves on the South Side. The South Side community quickly dispersed. The North Side or "Nord Seite", was heavily populated by Germans, and centered near the area of Lakeview. With Lincoln Avenue as its main artery, this community pulsed with German life. Germans who arrived here became the most economically successful ethnic group, establishing schools, churches, and monuments. German immigration peaked in 1890, when stricter immigration policies along with a booming German economy slowed the flow of immigrants to a trickle. The German community in Chicago correspondingly began to atrophy. World War II brought a small influx of German refugees to Chicago. German Jews, intellectuals, those opposed to the Hitler regime, and Germans from Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia immigrated to Chicago during this time. The artifacts found in the Lost German Chicago exhibit can be categorized into several themes. They are:

- Beginnings - The immigrant experience coming to America
- Religion and Education
- Beer Brewing
- German Businesses Large and Small
- Leisure and Recreation
- War and Reaction
- Germania and other German Clubs

Artifacts in the exhibit also highlight the following historic events:

- Haymarket Bombing
- Columbian Exhibition of 1893 (World's Fair)

Suggested Pre-Visit Activities

Key Concepts

- Immigration
- Community
- Culture
- Discrimination
- Social Groups and Institutions

Grades 3-5

- Find Germany on a map. Compare the size of Germany to the USA.

Research the common departure points from Germany and entry points into the USA. Have students draw possible routes on a world map. Next, draw possible routes from USA entry points to Chicago. Illustrate the German Flag. Within Germany are 16 federal states (Bundesländer). Assign each student a German federal state flag to research and illustrate. What do the various symbols on the flag mean? Compare and contrast the flags. What similarities and differences exist?

Research and write a paragraph describing the contributions of one of the following German Americans:

Frederick Sulzer

Carl Schurz

John Peter Altgeld

August Spies

Leonard Wells Volk

Oscar Mayer

Research and describe the Haymarket Affair.

The 1893 Columbian Exposition (World's Fair) took place in Chicago. What presence did the Germans have at the fair? Research and describe one contribution, invention, or business that was a part of the World's Fair in Chicago (i.e., Vienna Sausages, Sonneberg Toys, The German Village, etc.)

Many schools and churches were established in Chicago by German immigrants. What services did these places provide to the German immigrant community?

German clubs, or "Vereins", provided German immigrants a place to band together with other German language speakers, supporting the traditions and rituals of their homeland. Research what clubs existed in Chicago during the late 19th and early 20th century and which clubs exist today.

Since education became a core focus of religious institutions, maintaining and preserving the German language was very important in both Lutheran and Catholic private schools. Learn some common German words and phrases. (Schule = school, Guten Tag! = Good Day!, Wie gehts? = How are you, Auf Wiedersehen = Goodbye)

Many German immigrants that arrived in Chicago during the 19th century were skilled craftsmen. Name businesses that were founded by German immigrants.

German-Americans contributed much of their culture to the Chicago area. What foods, music, dress, crafts, did German immigrants introduce to America? Have a German Cultural Party where students research and describe German dress (dirndl, leiderhosen, etc), prepare and serve German food (Wurst, breads, kuchen, etc.) and play traditional German music.

Grades 6-8

(While activities aimed at grades 3-5 can be utilized as well, the following activities are more suited to upper elementary/middle school students)

The journey from Germany to Chicago was expensive for German immigrants. Research the cost to emigrate from Germany to Chicago in the late 19th century. Compare to the cost of emigrating today. Within Germany are 16 federal states, (Bundesländer). Analyze the crests for each state. What do the symbols and colors represent? Compare and contrast the similarities and differences between the crests. Have students design a crest for their own community. Describe the symbols and colors chosen and their significance.

Compare and contrast the immigration experience of the Germans to that of another group, (i.e., Irish, Mexicans, etc).

Research a prominent German American living in Chicago at any time in history. Describe their contributions to the city and to the German-American population. How might have Chicago been different if that person didn't exist?

What were the causes and effects of the Haymarket Affair? Prepare a visual aid describing the event.

Beer brewing and how/when it was consumed was an integral part of the German immigrants' experience in Chicago and their relations with the rest of the community. Research how prohibition affected the German brewing industry. What were the causes and effects of the 1854 Lager Beer War?

How did German Americans deal with anti-German sentiment and discrimination especially after World War I? Compare and contrast this discrimination with other cultural or racial groups at any time in history in the U.S. Create an illustration, and/or write a paragraph to describe how discrimination affected the German Americans living in Chicago.

Recommended Reading:

Small Strangers: The Experiences of Immigrant Children in America, 1880-1925 (American Childhoods) by Melissa R. Klapper

German Immigrants (Immigration to the United States) by Lisa Trumbauer and Robert Asher

The German Americans (Major American Immigration) by Peg Ashbrock

The German American Family Album (The American Family Albums) by Dorothy Hoobler, Thomas Hoobler, and Werner Klemperer

How I Became an American by Karin Gundisch and James Skofield

Exploring the Chicago World's Fair, 1893 (American Sisters) by Laurie Lawlor

Fair Weather by Richard Peck

Missing from Haymarket Square by Harriette Gillem Robinet

Chicago History for Kids: Triumphs and Tragedies of the Windy City Includes 21 Activities (For Kids series) by Owen Hurd and Gary Johnson

Illinois State Standards

A visit to the exhibit and the activities included in this guide meet the following Illinois State Standards for Social Studies:

14.D.2 Explain ways that individuals and groups influence and shape public policy.

14.D.3 Describe roles and influences of individuals, groups and media in shaping current Illinois and United States public policy (e.g., general public opinion, special interest groups, formal parties, media).

15.E Understand the impact of government policies and decisions on production and consumption in the economy.

16.A.2a Read historical stories and determine events which influenced their writing.

16.A.3a Describe how historians use models for organizing historical interpretation (e.g., biographies, political events, issues and conflicts).

16.A.3b Make inferences about historical events and eras using historical maps and other historical sources.

16.A.2c Ask questions and seek answers by collecting and analyzing data from historic documents, images and other literary and non-literary

sources.

16.C.2c (US) Describe significant economic events including industrialization, immigration, the Great Depression, the shift to a service economy and the rise of technology that influenced history from the industrial development era to the present.

16.C.3c (US) Describe how economic developments and government policies after 1865 affected the country's economic institutions including corporations, banks and organized labor.

16.D.3a (US) Describe characteristics of different kinds of communities in various sections of America during the colonial/frontier periods and the 19th century.

17.A.2b Use maps and other geographic representations and instruments to gather information about people, places and environments.

17.D.2b Identify different settlement patterns in Illinois and the United States and relate them to physical features and resources.

18.A.2 Explain ways in which language, stories, folk tales, music, media and artistic creations serve as expressions of culture.

18.A.3 Explain how language, literature, the arts, architecture and traditions contribute to the development and transmission of culture.

18.B.2a Describe interactions of individuals, groups and institutions in situations drawn from the local community (e.g., local response to state and national reforms).

18.B.3a Analyze how individuals and groups interact with and within institutions (e.g., educational, military).

18.B.3b Explain how social institutions contribute to the development and transmission of culture.

18.C.3b Explain how diverse groups have contributed to U.S. social systems over time.