

ALISON CLARK EFFORD, *German Immigrants, Race, and Citizenship in the Civil War Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013), 267 pp.

With persistent attention to the role of German-Americans before and during the Civil War, it is refreshing to see a study that encompasses this important era but also explores the decade that followed. Efford undertakes the critical examination of the German-American commitment to African American suffrage and citizenship. Her thoroughly documented research takes advantage of the entire range of published and archival resources and delineates an era that begins with the 1848 revolution and concludes with the contested presidential election of 1876. The study highlights the 'German Triangle,' Ohio, Missouri, and Wisconsin and, in particular, the metropolitan centers: Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Milwaukee. Efford considers this segment of the Midwest worthy of special attention because of a prevalent view that here German-Americans held the power of swing voters. The German newspapers of the Midwest, published in the cities of the 'Triangle,' provide valuable evidence of representative political positions and their evolution. Efford identifies an unexpected shift in what she considers the captivating image of the 'freedom-loving' German-American, "an immigrant man who asserted the value of cultural diversity while he took on slavery" (54). In the 1850s, the outspoken radicals were the major spokesmen for their ethnic community. They went beyond Abraham Lincoln's moderate position on race; they demanded the abolition of slavery and advocated citizenship and voting rights for freed African Americans. Nationally, German-American Midwesterners had reshaped the party that brought Lincoln to power. During the Civil War, the reputation of Germans as 'freedom loving' increased. The momentum of such reputation advanced the voting rights for freed slaves, contributing in 1870 to the passage of the fifteenth amendment, prohibiting racial discrimination in voting.

Ironically, the year 1870 can also be seen as a significant turning point in the German-American support for voting rights. It was the year of the Franco-Prussian War, in which Bismarck could claim a decisive victory over

France. The Iron Chancellor took steps to unite Germany and thereby achieved one of the goals for which the Forty-Eighters had fought. A nationalistic fervor pervaded German immigrant communities throughout the United States. The strong empathy for the fatherland had consequences for the immigrants' attitudes toward African Americans. Influenced by Germany's successful unification, German-Americans retreated from their support of black voting rights and reframed the debate in favor of national reconciliation. The shift also involved a movement away from the focus on equality to a view of ethnic superiority. In Efford's view, this shift relegates the popular image of the 'freedom loving' German to a myth. Since her book is, on one level, a political biography of Karl Schurz, the dramatic metamorphosis is also seen in this former Forty-Eighter's political career. In 1859, Schurz had declared that true Americanism profited from the all-assimilating power of freedom; it allowed "every people, every creed, every class of society" to contribute (81). After having supported African American suffrage in the 1860s, Schurz, as a United State senator and later as secretary of the interior, moved to a political stance that focused on conciliation and put less emphasis on African American citizenship. Efford's impressive study opens up new ways to understand the arc of radicalism that the refugees of the 1848 revolution generated. In that sense, the concept of the German-Americans as 'freedom loving' was, at least for the early phase of this history, not just a myth. Further research could clarify the extent to which the retreat from ensuring voting rights for African Americans was due primarily to the initiatives of German-American leaders or, in the broader context, to a powerful wave of retrenchment evident in both American political parties. There was, after all, a general loss of interest in reconstruction. The nation was turning its back on the problems of the South. Efford's well documented study nevertheless makes a strong case that the German-American leaders, influenced by the nationalistic and conservative trends under Bismarck's Germany, abandoned their earlier activism for African American suffrage.

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