



Clara Harsh, Book Review of: *The Cincinnati Germans After the Great War* by Don Heinrich Tolzmann. 2013 (1987) 244 pp. index. softcover. ISBN 9780806356204 Clearfield Company. \$27.50 + \$5.50 P&H.

This new edition has an introduction by the author and an every name index, both adding value to the original. The period after the “Great War” or World War I has had much written about the economy, the social changes and the urbanization of the United States. There is very little written about the changes that were felt by the many U.S. citizens of German descent. Statistics indicate that there were more than 40% of citizens with German heritage.

The war years had dealt harshly with them, from name-calling (Hun, Kraut and worse) to shunning, boycotting their businesses, closing their theaters and deleting them from society functions. The German-American community survived the war almost intact by adapting to the times. The book, however, deals with the post-war problems faced by this large segment of U.S. citizens.

German-American Alliance merely changed its name to the American Citizens League. Several leaders arose in the community who helped keep the German-American culture alive. Among them was Dr. H. H. Fick who was supervisor of the German-English instruction in the public schools. He prepared a whole series of textbooks for the schools that were known as the “Cincinnati Plan” and children were taught German beginning in the first grade. In the height of the anti-German sentiment in 1917, the situation changed abruptly. A few citizens began to clamor for German to be removed from the curriculum, but it was not a majority. Enrollment in German classes began to decline and the number of German teachers was reduced. The Ohio Ake law made instruction in German in public and private schools below the 8th grade illegal from 1917 to 1923, and the German department was effectively closed. Instruction was later resumed at the high school level, but educators complain that two years of instruction is not enough to learn the language.

Tolzmann describes the German language newspapers that were published before the War and how their circulation was diminished by the effects of the anti-German influence and by the lack of knowledge of the German language as its instruction was curtailed in the public and parochial schools. There were 15 German language newspapers in 1918, but the number had been cut to six by 1932.

The nativist movement sought to eliminate anything that was German: books, music, literature, poetry, breweries and anything else that appeared to be German. The Hamilton County Academy of Medicine passed a resolution that eliminated German quotations, literature, books, portraits of German scientists, use of anything made in Germany and study in Germany.

Perhaps, after this extreme reaction to all things German, we can be grateful that the United States has survived and reached a less judgmental era.