

NOTE: GERMAN-AMERICANS (in German Army and otherwise) 1914-17

A hasty examination of pertinent sources here failed to uncover references to such American volunteers. The Wittke and Luebke studies cited below discuss in some detail German-American support of the homeland, but without reference to military support. Of course, many of the 19th and 20th century German immigrants left Germany for political reasons or to avoid conscription, so their apparent lack of enthusiasm for military service is not surprising. The 18th century religious immigrants would have been even less susceptible to such extremes of allegiance. Nonetheless, a few firebrands may have made the journey to the German trenches.

Another clue to why more Germans did not return home may be in a letter to the editor of the New York Times, 16 Mar 1915, p. 10. The writer, H. Nowa, lamented that the Allies were searching all vessels headed for Germany and he believed those eager to fight would be taken from the ships to spend the war in British or French prisons.

That problem of British control of the seas led to use of false passports by German aliens in the U.S. who were called home to serve their reserve obligations. For information on German officials in the U.S. who elicited support of Germany and developed the false passport scheme, see:

Bernstorff, Count. My Three Years in America. NY: Scribner's, 1920. 428 p. D619B47.

Ellis, Edward R. Echoes of Distant Thunder: Life in the United States, 1914-18. NY: McCann & Geohagen, 1975. pp. 165-67. E780E44.

Jones, John P., & Hollister, Paul M. The German Secret Service in America, 1914-18. Boston: Small, Maynard, 1918. 340 p. D619.3J64.
See esp Chap VII.

von der Goltz, Horst. My Adventures as a German Secret Agent. NY: McBride, 1917. 288 p.
D619.3G7A3.

von Papen, Franz. Memoirs. NY: Dutton, 1953. 634 p. DD247P3A313.

The case of Captain David Henkes, a German-American who refused to fight Germans in the trenches, is discussed briefly on page 359 of the National German-American Alliance hearings, cited below, and in the New York Times, 25 Feb (p. 1), 26th (pp. 5, 12), and 28th (p. 3), 1918.

On the German-American quandary in general, see:

Luebke, Frederick C. Bonds of Loyalty. Dekalb, IL: No IL U, 1974. 366 p. D620L83.

U.S. Congress. Senate. Comm on Judiciary. National German-American Alliance. Hearings, 65th Cong, 2d sess, 1918. 698 p. D620U55.

_____. Brewing and Liquor Interests and German Propaganda. Hearings, 65th Cong, 2d sess, 1919. D620U56.

Wittke, Carl. German-Americans and the World War. Columbus: Ohio State Archaeological and Hist Soc, 1936. 223 p. D620W63.

Perhaps further research should focus on the American Protective League and its work with Army intelligence. Although the League did not become fully active until war was declared, its agents would have been attracted to the families of German-Americans who had reportedly volunteered for German service.

Jensen, Joan M. The Price of Vigilance. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1968. 367 p. E743.5J4.

U.S. Military Intelligence Reports: Surveillance of Radicals in the United States, 1917-41. Frederick, MD: UPA, 1984. 34 reels. UB251.32U6Microfilm.

Incidentally, American reporters accompanied and observed the German Army early in the war. See Emmet Crozier, American Reporters on the Western Front, 1914-18. (NY: Oxford U, 1959; D632C76), esp Chap III.