

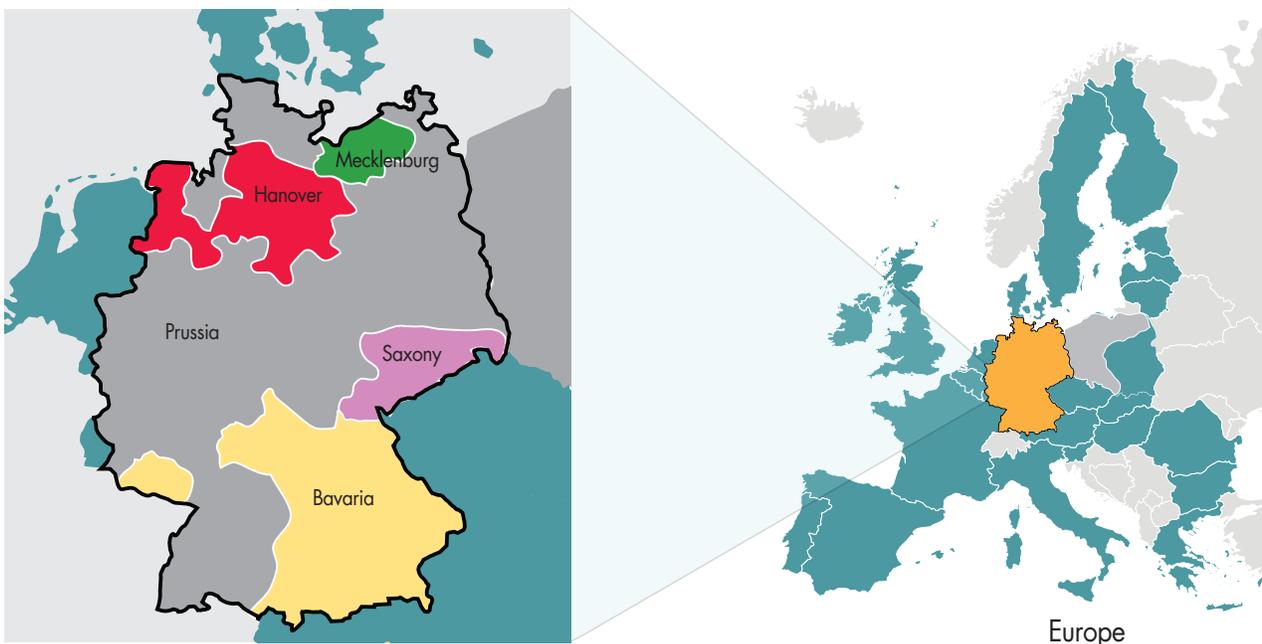
By the Kansas Historical Society

Moving to America

Of all the ethnic groups who immigrated to Kansas, Germans came in the largest numbers. They migrated mainly in the late 1800s. Most came in family groups. The exception to this is the Volga-Germans who came from Russia as part of a mass migration.

The history of Germany is complicated. During the 1800s there were three German countries. There was the German Confederation, the German Empire, and the Kingdom of Prussia. Within these political and geographical units there were many smaller states such as Mecklenburg, Saxony, Bavaria, and Hanover. Immigrants from these countries and states were called Germans because they spoke a similar language. Most of these countries and states do not exist today. Some are part of present-day Germany.

In 1848 a revolution shook the area that became Germany. The working class people wanted a government run by a constitution. When that did not happen, many people immigrated to the United States. German immigrants frequently moved first to another state before settling in Kansas. Immigration to Kansas came over a long period of time. By the 1880s, 45 percent of the immigrants from Europe that settled in Kansas were from German-speaking countries.

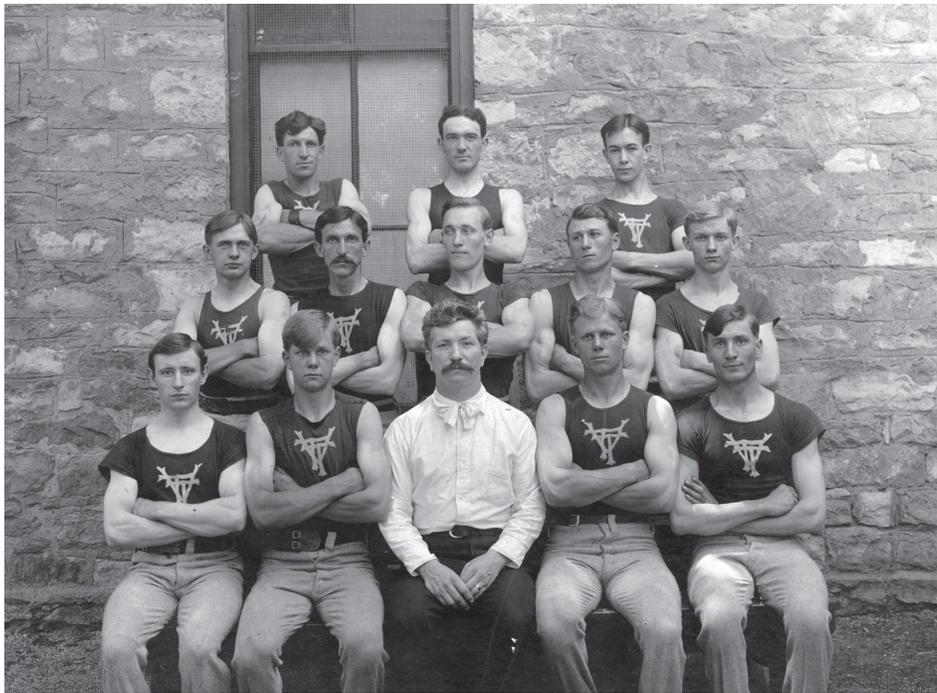


The Germany of today is outlined in black.

Germans in Kansas

Germans were very proud of their traditions and of their language. There were many communities in Kansas where people spoke German. Many new immigrants moved there just because of the German language. Families taught their children to speak German even if they were born in the United States. Often these children would speak English at school and German at home. German-Americans often continued speaking the language for two or three generations.

One of the first newspapers published in Kansas was written in German. This happened before Kansas became a state. More than 120 German language newspapers were published in Kansas. Sometimes they were published in both English and German.



One of the traditions these settlers brought to Kansas was a Turnverein (pronounced turn-vuh-rine). It was a combination social and athletic club. This club was located in Shawnee County.