

Presidential Documents

Proclamation 6931 of October 5, 1996

German-American Day, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Germans were among the first settlers of the United States. They, like other immigrants to our country, came to America seeking a better life for themselves and their families. In building this better life, they have immeasurably enriched the lives of their fellow Americans.

From the beginning of the colonial period and throughout the history of our republic, German Americans have contributed their intellect, wealth, and culture to building, defending, and improving American life. Organized settlement in America by Germans began as early as 1683, with the arrival of German Mennonites in Pennsylvania at the invitation of William Penn. Pennsylvania soon became the center and stronghold of German settlement throughout colonial times as small, vigorous communities spread to Maryland and the other colonies. Today, robust German-American communities can be found throughout the United States.

The strength of character and personal honor so important in the German cultural tradition have also found their way into the core values of American society. More U.S. citizens can claim German heritage than that of any other national group. And every successive generation of German Americans seems to produce new heroes and heroines who earn the admiration of a grateful world.

For example, Carl Schurz served as a Union General in the Civil War and later rose to become a distinguished American statesman, both as Senator from Missouri and as Secretary of the Interior. Johann Peter Zenger, the publisher of *New York Weekly Journal* in the early 18th century, was an early and vigorous champion of the free press in America. And German-born Albert Einstein made monumental and historic contributions to our understanding of the universe.

Our culture has also benefited abundantly from German-American women. Anna Ottendorfer was a talented newspaper publisher and philanthropist. The four Klumpke sisters enriched American life with their contributions to art, medicine, music, and astronomy, while Lillian Blauvelt and Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler enhanced American music.

America has welcomed Germans in search of civic freedoms, and their idealism has reinforced what was best in their new country. German-American men and women have contributed immensely to the fabric of our Nation, and it is appropriate that we pause to honor their important role in building our country.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim Sunday, October 6, 1996, as German-American Day. I encourage Americans everywhere to recognize and celebrate the contributions that millions of people of German ancestry have made to our Nation's liberty, democracy, and prosperity.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fifth day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

William Clinton

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