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Russell A. Kazal. *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004. xvii + 383 pp. $35.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-691-05015-7.

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This may just be the best community study yet on German-Americans, and one of the best on any ethnic group. The reason is hinted at in my title: this study examines both the social and economic structure of the German community of Philadelphia, and its culture and self-identification--as well as the ways these interacted with one another and changed over time. Kazal is fully conversant with both quantitative, census-based approaches--the erstwhile New Urban/Social History--and newer cultural approaches which he applies, though not uncritically, with great effect. He takes on a somewhat later time segment than most census-based studies, beginning only with the waning of mass immigration at the turn of the twentieth century, and spanning the crucial era of World War I and its aftermath, down into the 1930s. His study focuses on two contrasting neighborhoods: the working-class district of Kensington, which was nearly half German in 1900, and the rather misnamed streetcar suburb of Germantown, where the German stock even then accounted for less than 10 percent. Kazal applies the block-front census sampling techniques pioneered by Olivier Zunz to arrive at these figures; a second sample from 1920 reveals a much different population makeup, especially in working-class Kensington. If the average German there lived on a block with a German majority in 1900, by 1920 only a quarter of the neighbors on his block were German; most of the difference was accounted for by an increase in Eastern Europeans (pp. 66, 122). These local parameters had a considerable effect on the ways Philadelphians of German background reworked their multiple identities in interaction with the larger society.

The fading of German-American ethnicity might seem to be a familiar story by now, but Kazal opens up a new dimension with the prime question he asks of his material: "If many Americans of German background were leaving German ethnic circles at the beginning of the twentieth century, where did they then go" (p. 4)? The thesis of the book could perhaps be summed up as a paraphrase of Marx's comment about people making their own history: people invent their own ethnicity, but they do not invent it out of whole cloth. This study focuses particularly on four ethnic subcultures (middle-class *Vereins-*

deutsche, working-class socialists, Lutherans, and Catholics), each of which followed a somewhat distinctive path into a different part of the American mainstream. Lutherans, and particularly the better situated ***Vereinsdeutsche*** with whom they often overlapped, typically ended up defining themselves as old stock or even "Nordic"Americans, stressing their colonial roots in the New World and distancing themselves from more recent immigrant arrivals from Southern and Eastern Europe. On the other hand, working-class and Catholic Germans--again two groups that were hardly mutually exclusive--became increasingly exposed to people of other European origins and came to identify themselves (even if the term had not yet been invented) as white ethnics, distancing themselves above all from black newcomers in nearby neighborhoods. And already before World War I, women in particular were becoming more and more involved in a mass consumer culture that lured them out of their neighborhood shops and into downtown department stores.

Beyond his census sample, Kazal draws upon a wide variety of primary sources: newspapers in both English and German; Lutheran and Catholic parish records; records of voluntary associations, mixed as well as German (not just the usual suspects such as Turnvereine, the Cannstater Volksfest Verein, and the Saengerbund, but also the Business Men's Association of Germantown, its YMCA, and even the nativist Patriotic Order Sons of America), all of which displayed some German names on their rolls. Throughout, the author shows an eye for the telling detail, such as ads for radio sales in the German-language press on the occasion of the 1928 Tunney-Heeney boxing match that testified to interest in non-ethnic, national popular culture, and helped the ethnic press sow seeds of its own demise. Or the guest list at a twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of immigrant son Henry Pletcher and his bride Cecelia Horan that included just a handful of German names but an "overwhelming number" of Irish (p.73). Except for rendering as "Party Day" what was apparently ***Parteitag*** (party convention) in the original (p. 155), Kazal's readings and translations from the German-language press are most felicitous and to the point.

This study profits immensely from the breadth of Kazal's peripheral vision, which places Philadelphia Germans into the context both of Germans in other parts of the country, and of other immigrant groups that took similar or different trajectories into the mainstream. The only area that comes up somewhat short in the comparison are immigrants, German or otherwise, in rural areas. As the author recognizes, the "old stock" option was obviously more viable in a state where Germans constituted one-third of the colonial population than where they fell below one-tenth, or where settlement dated only from the nineteenth century. And Germans were less quiescent in Midwestern areas where they constituted a larger population share than in the east where they were a small minority. But Kazal is certainly correct in his conclusion that "what happened to German America represents, to some degree, an extreme version of the changes wrought in other immigrant ethnic groups by the larger assimilative pressures and processes of the past century. The retreat from German-American identity during and after World War I played a key role in the demise of an earlier, more pluralist America and the rise of a more exclusive and conformist American nationalism" (p. 261).

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