

The Unnatural Political Demise of German Newark

Dan O'Flaherty

Newark History Society—April 16, 2018

On February 26, 1921, former Newark Mayor Jacob Haussling went into the bathroom of his home at 440 High Street, about where the Essex County College mega-structure is located today, stabbed himself repeatedly, and bled to death. His wife Nellie¹ told the *New York Times*: “They all left him. A few years ago he couldn't walk the streets without being stopped by thousands of friends. But that was all changed, and it broke his heart. They all left him, but I won't leave him.”

Indeed, a lot had changed in Newark since Haussling had left office just over six years before, on December 31, 1914, after losing his bid for re-election to a fifth term. One of the major changes during that time was the virtual disappearance of German Americans from Newark city government.

In 1914, when World War I broke out, the mayor was German, and so were two out of the five elected members of the Board of Street and Water Commissioners, two out of the four elected trustees of the City Home, and 8 out of the 31 aldermen (one seat was vacant). During the 34 years since William Fiedler became the first German American mayor in 1880, Germans had held the mayoralty for 12 years. By the end of 1917, and on the day that Haussling killed himself, there were only five elected officials in Newark, and none of them had a German surname (although Commissioner Raymond's mother was of German descent). With only one exception, no one with a German surname has been elected to city office since 1916. Almost the entire transition happened suddenly, in less than a year, in 1917.

The single exception was Frederick Breidenbach, who served one term on the commission and was mayor from 1922 to 1925, but was never powerful. Thomas Raymond, the streets and public improvements commissioner, and William Brennan, the public safety commissioner, had been the leading vote-getters in the 1921 election, and controlled the most important departments. Breidenbach was the fourth and next-to-last winner in 1921, became the revenue and finance commissioner. State law said that if the mayor left office, the revenue and finance commissioner took over and so when Alexander Archibald died in 1922,

¹ I thank Tim Crist for finding Mrs. Haussling's first name. The *Times* quoted her but did not report her name.

Breidenbach took over for the rest of his term. Breidenbach lost reelection, coming in seventh, in 1925, and ninth in 1929.

My job tonight is to explain why Germans disappeared so suddenly from Newark city government. The prevailing view is a benign story, something like natural succession: they got rich, they assimilated, they moved to the suburbs, they rode off gracefully into the sunset, and new immigrant groups succeeded them. The demise of German Newark is supposed to be so boring and natural that nobody seems to study it. But in fact, it was neither boring nor natural nor benign.

But that is a conclusion that I want to convince you of, not where I want to start. Tonight I want to explore three possible reasons for German disappearance: the traditional natural succession story, anti-German prejudice connected with World War I, and the change of government to the commission form in 1917. In the end, I will show that anti-German prejudice was probably the main reason for the sudden change. The Germans did not jump; they were pushed.

So four parts to the talk. First I will look at each of the three possible explanations: natural succession, anti-German sentiment, and government form. Then I will examine the historical record of elections to see which offers the most plausible explanation.

Natural succession

One basic problem with the natural succession story is that it implies that Germans were succeeded by groups who came to Newark in large numbers after they did. That is not true. They were succeeded by the Irish, not the Italians or the Jews.

Table 1 here

In fact, Italian and Jewish representation in Newark city government, which had been present since Lorenzo Bozcaino had been elected 15th ward alderman in 1905 and Louis Semel had been elected 3rd ward alderman in 1907 (possibly since Samuel Epstein had been elected 15th ward alderman in 1904), was wiped out at the same time that German representation was wiped out.

The other problem, of course, is timing: demographic change is usually gradual, especially without a specific precipitating event, while this change was abrupt.

On the other hand, demographic change probably did play a role. The German population of Newark did decline at this time, although not sharply.

There are two problems measuring German American population in the early 20th century.

First, German Americans are consistently identified only as immigrants, people born in Germany. The 1910 census has information about the second generation, but the 1920 census does not, and so we can't see how that changes. Questions about ethnic identification don't enter the census until 1960. So all we have is immigrants. The community could be thriving in higher generations while the first generation is declining.

Second, the boundaries of Germany changed between 1910 and 1920 as a result of World War I and the treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Versailles. Germany lost area in the west (to France), the east (to the new state of Poland), and the south (to the new state of Czechoslovakia); in all, about 10% of its population. The 1920 census enumerators did not ask people from this part of the world what country they had been born in, but what province, and then the published census assigned them to the country that that province was in in 1920. For instance, some people who were recorded as having been born in Germany in 1910 were recorded as having been born in Poland, France, or Czechoslovakia in 1920.

I deal with these two problems crudely by looking at comparative changes in foreign-born population as proxies for comparative changes in community population, and do several cuts at the problem.

First cut, just raw numbers. German foreign-born population in Newark fell 36% from 1910 to 1920. Irish foreign-born population fell 21%, but if you take 10% off the German fall for new boundaries, the difference is considerably less.

Second cut. The stories about natural succession in their purest form are about moving elsewhere in New Jersey, not out of New Jersey altogether on net. So suppose that net interstate migration of each ethnic group is zero, and the death rate is the same. Then the change in Newark population due to intra-state migration is the difference between New Jersey change and Newark change

Table 2 here

Similar picture. German-born population fell in Newark more than you would expect to see by looking at the state, and some of the reason for that appears to be movement to other parts of Essex, particularly Irvington. Irish-born population was falling too, but not as quickly.

Still, the exodus (700 people over a decade to Irvington and a thousand or so to the rest of Essex), does not seem huge or precipitous.

Another indicator of falling German-American involvement in Newark might be a decrease in the number of German-American organizations listed in the City Directory (especially since these organizational connections might be important for marshalling political support). George Robb compared the numbers in 1914 to those in 1918 and the early 1920s, and found no decrease (Robb, 2018).

One way that we can see whether demographic change was the main force driving the disappearance of German-Americans among elected officials would be to look at the trend from 1910 through 1916. If demographic change were the main factor, then we should see a strong downward trend. Table 3 compiles the number of German candidates who won election in Newark between 1910 and 1916. It shows no downward trend.

Table 3 here

Anti-German prejudice

The US has gone through periodic rounds of anti-immigrant sentiment, with different groups being targeted at different times: Catholics in the 1850s, Chinese in the 1880s, and Japanese in World War II, for instance. The current obsession with Mexicans, Haitians, and Muslims is nothing new. Between 1914 and roughly the mid 1920s, Germans were the focus.

The anti-German prejudice that I'm concerned with tonight is not some longstanding feature of American history, like the prejudice and stigma attached to some other groups. Instead it was transitory: "In 1908, a group of professional people, in rating the traits of various immigrant nationalities, ranked the Germans above the English and some respects judged them superior to the native whites." (Higham, 1998, p. 196, cited by Moser, 2012, p.169) And in 1933, a hundred Princeton undergraduates who were asked to attach adjectives to ethnic groups found Germans to be scientifically-minded and industrious (Katz and Braly 1933). But in between, the prejudice lasted for around a decade, and that decade was a key one in the history of German Newark.

Nationally, we know a lot about what happened.

Anti-German prejudice began to rise when Germany invaded Belgium, even though the US was still neutral, according to Petra Moser (2012).

During most of the 20th century up until 1914, generally over 40% of the operas that Metropolitan Opera performed were by German-language composers. This percentage fell rapidly after 1914 and was around 7% in 1918 and 1919 (Moser figure 1).

Moser also followed elections to seats on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE). To trade on the Stock Exchange, you had to purchase a seat from someone who had a seat already and wanted to hand it on, and then you had to pay the Stock Exchange an initiation fee (about \$20,000 in current dollars), and finally the NYSE Committee of Admissions had to evaluate you in terms of “personal and financial integrity.” You also had to be sponsored by two existing members. The committee had 15 members, and you had to get approval by two-thirds of the members present. Not everybody made it.

Moser compares election results for applicants with German-sounding names to results for applicants with Anglo-Saxon sounding names. She finds that the rate at which applicants with German-sounding names were rejected roughly doubled from the pre-war years to the war period (1914 to 1929), while the rejection rate for applicants with Anglo-Saxon sounding names stayed roughly the same. After 1929, the difference reverses. She subjects this finding to a number of rigorous tests, and it doesn't go away.

In New York, the Chemists' Club, the Lamb Club, and the New York Athletic Club expelled all German-born members, and banned the use of German on their premises.

Many cities, including New York, banned the teaching of the German language in public schools. The states of Ohio, Iowa, and Nebraska made it illegal everywhere.

Some of the responses would make us laugh today. Sauerkraut consumption fell by 75% between 1914 and 1918, and New York's grocers complained that “There is enough sauerkraut in stock to feed a good-sized German army.” Sauerkraut producers tried to change the name to “liberty cabbage.” Dachshunds became “liberty dogs,” and hamburgers became “liberty steaks.” Frankfurters, of course, became hot dogs.

But other responses were much more serious. Robert Prager, a German-American miner, was lynched in Collinsville, Illinois in April 1918. Eleven men were tried for his murder,

and all were acquitted. One juror reportedly shouted, “Well, I guess they can’t say we’re not loyal now.” (Schaffer, 1991, p. 26)

Once the US entered the war, the federal government added to the anti-German prejudice by treating German-Americans as suspect. The offices of the German-language newspaper, *Freie Zeitung*, in Newark were raided in October 1917 for allegedly printing stories critical of the US. The federal government’s Alien Property Custodian expropriated the Krueger brewery; Gottfried Krueger did not recover it until April 1919 (Office of Alien Property Custodian 1922, lines 861-862, page 682).

German-Americans responded by becoming less obviously German, “trying to pass.” German clubs became less popular, for instance. Moser looks at the first names given to babies in the US. From 1915 to 1916, the number of boys named Otto dropped by 34.7%, and the number named Wilhelm fell 35.0%.

What about Newark?

I have not been able to find any stories of direct anti-German prejudice in Newark before 1917, even though Moser’s data show that that prejudice started to increase nationally in 1914. For instance, contrary to what Moser found in New York, Newark’s 250th anniversary celebration in 1916 opened with a music festival in which German composers were significantly represented. Robb (2018) found that before the war started, the Newark papers were perceived (by German-Americans) to be less anti-German than the New York papers.

If we look at elections, as Moser did, we can see no sign of weakening German popularity through 1916. That was in table 3. (I will revisit this issue in a different direction in table 4 later.)

But beginning in 1917, several events show that Newark was affected like the rest of the country. When the US entered the war in April 1917, “German was removed from the program of study in high schools,” according to the Superintendent’s Report in 1920, although students already enrolled in German instruction were allowed to continue. (Newark Board of Education, 1920, 63rd and 64th Annual Reports of the Superintendent of Schools, p. 102). Before that, German was the most popular modern language: in the 1916-1917 school year, 2080 students were enrolled in German classes (the next most popular modern language was French with 597); by 1918 that number had fallen to 1210 (with French and Spanish both rising by a few hundred) (Table IV (1918)—Inventories by Subjects, High Schools, p. 222). There were only

about 6500 high school students total in 1916, fewer than a third of them in the college preparatory track. (1916 Superintendent's Annual Report, p. 113). The change in curriculum after 1916-1917 was major: "For years there was only one teacher of Spanish in the school system, now there are 16." (p. 102)

It does not appear that the popularity of the German language was declining before 1917. This is hard to see precisely, because high school enrollment was rising rapidly at this time, more than 10% a year (from 2010 in 1907 to 6461 in 1916 (1916, p. 113)). There were 1,685 students enrolled in German in January 1916, more than a quarter of total enrollment, but this number is not directly comparable with the 1917 figure ("Promotions and Failures," 1916).

The Board of Education minutes reveal no animosity toward Germans before 1917, and in fact I could not find any record of the Board of Education voting to drop German language instruction in either 1917 or 1918. On March 30, 1916, for instance, the Board received three medals from the German-American Alliance with a request that they be awarded to the students with the highest averages in German studies. Perfunctorily, the Board accepted the medals and turned the matter over to the Superintendent.

In December 1917 a patriotic group called "The Vigilantes" pressured the library to remove seven books deemed too pro-German from the library. John Cotton Dana and the library board resisted, but they were criticized in the national press (Robb, 2018).

In 1918 Newark German Hospital changed its name to Newark Memorial Hospital. In 1946 it became Lutheran Memorial Hospital and in 1952, Clara Maass Hospital.

In April 1918, the 10th ward Serritella political club petitioned the commission to change the names of German streets. The 10th ward was basically the southern part of the Ironbound, south of East Kinney Street and Delancy Street, more or less. The 10th ward had elected some German Republican aldermen in the early years of the 20th century, when it extended further north, but after the wards were re-drawn in 1913, Democrats Patrick O'Brien and Thomas Curran had been its only aldermen. In 1920, it had 323 Irish-born residents, 433 German-born, and 3052 Italian-born residents.

Because this was a question of streets, it fell into the bailiwick of Commissioner Raymond, who apparently worked on it for several weeks, and on May 9 proposed a resolution to change the following street names:

Bismarck Avenue became Pershing Avenue (not a great match with Garibaldi Avenue in this little neighborhood off McClellan Street)

Dresden Street became London Street (Dresden/London street was later vacated to make way for Route 1)

Bremen Street became Marne Street

Berlin Street became Rome Street

German Street became Belgium Street

Frankfort Street became Paris Street

Frederick Street became Somme Street

Hamburg Place became Wilson Avenue

The resolution passed unanimously, although Commissioner Brennan was not present. (Minutes of the Commission, p. 384). Even though a group from the 10th ward proposed the name changes, most of the streets affected were in other wards, especially the 12th. The commission minutes record no discussion or dissent, either by commissioners or the public.

Perhaps you don't think of high school subjects and street names as momentous, but they are symbols, and people care about symbols. Witness the current emotional involvement in the question of Confederate statues. If Newarkers were to wake up tomorrow and find that serious consideration were being given to banning the study of African American history, making Martin Luther King Boulevard into Jefferson Davis Street, and Roberto Clemente School into Donald Trump School, you might find more than a little dissent.

Change of government form

An alternative story of the German demise is that for some reason the type of politics that Germans practiced became obsolete when the government changed form in 1917. This was pretty clear the case with Italians and Jews—when the first ward and the third ward no longer elected aldermen, they could no longer elect their own representatives. Perhaps this was the case with Germans too. Or perhaps some other questions of style were relevant.

For this story to work, we would have to show two things: first, that the change of government form was not motivated by anti-German prejudice, and second, that it worked in a way that would have been detrimental to Germans in the absence of anti-German prejudice. I will show that the first condition is met, but not the second. But first I need to provide some background.

Background

Before 1917, Newark government was pretty complex. There were lots of elections. The general elections for Newark offices were held in November, every November, the same time as everything else, and after 1903, primaries were in September.

The Mayor was elected for a two-year term in even years, and had limited powers. He could veto certain actions of the Common Council. He could grant certain permits, revoke general licenses and grant permission to examine public records. He could appoint many officials, but he could not necessarily remove them, and many departments had to be run indirectly. So, for instance, the mayor could appoint the Board of Police Commissioners, but he could not appoint or remove a police director. Similar boards ran fire, assessments, and excise.

The Common Council had 32 members, called aldermen. Aldermen served two-year terms, and each of the 16 wards had two of them, one elected every year. The Common Council was pretty powerful.

The Board of Street and Water Commissioners (colloquially, the Board of Works) was also powerful. It had five members, each elected for three years, with either one or two commissioners elected every year in a 3-year cycle. This board ran the water system, the sewer system, and was in charge of streets, street-cleaning, and street lights. It also regulated railroads and street railways. The water department was then the largest part of city government, with a budget greater than the police department's, and development depended on getting streets opened up and water and sewer provided. The development of Port Newark and meadow reclamation were also among the board's responsibilities. The Board of Works had eminent domain powers.

Finally, City Home was the reform school, located in Verona. The board of trustees included the mayor, two members of the Common Council, and four elected representatives, one elected each year to a four-year term.

Before 1908, the Board of Education was also elected: two members from each of the 16 wards, just like the Common Council. In 1907, voters approved the “small board of education,” nine members appointed by the mayor. The election was close and similar moves had failed in 1899 and 1904.

So there was lots of representation, but nothing was simple. Parties were important, because these many officials were all elected at the November general election. The two major parties were competitive in Newark, and faction-ridden. Occasionally third parties and independents were successful, especially in 1912, when Theodore Roosevelt topped the presidential ballot in Newark, and in the 1915 Board of Works election.

Needless to say, many people thought that this system of electing 74 people before the small school board and 42 after it, with most serving only two years, was not sensible. Newark was governed under a charter that the state legislature had passed in 1859, and that had been amended often. The “short ballot” was a progressive cause, and Mayor Hausssling, hardly a progressive, also thought the system was weak. In the close election of 1907 to move to a small school board, votes for the school board are negatively correlated with proportion of the population born in Russia as of 1910, the proportion illiterate, and support for Hausssling in 1908; and it was negatively correlated with proportion Black in 1910.

In 1911, Hausssling proposed a new charter. The mayor would still be elected for a two-year term, but he would be able to appoint and remove many more officials. Legislative powers would be exercised by a commission of the mayor and four other elected members, with the mayor as president. In addition to regular legislative powers, this group would appoint the comptroller, the treasurer, the city clerk, and various assessment and taxation officials (Sweeney 1937)²

The proposal did not go anywhere. It had to be approved by the legislature, and Hausssling did not have the votes. Because of the 1859 charter, everything that Newark wanted to do to change its fundamental operations was a one-off. For instance, the ward lines were set by the state legislature.

² Since this is an informal secondary source two decades later, I am not totally sure about this account of the contents of the Hausssling proposal. Sweeney may have confused it with the Raymond proposal, which is similar. But Sweeney, who was a lawyer, names some of the members of the group that he says developed the proposal. The list includes Chandler Riker, who, according to his 1921 obituary, retired for reasons of ill health around 1912 and so would not have participated in developing the Raymond proposal.

The Walsh Act of 1911 changed this. Introduced by a Trenton assemblyman, Allan B. Walsh, it followed several meetings among groups from different cities that wanted to join the national movement toward commission government. What he proposed was that any city could switch to the commission government without legislative approval if it followed a process that started with a petition by the public and ended with a referendum. Governor Woodrow Wilson signed the Walsh Act.

So what is commission government? It started in Galveston, TX in 1900 after a hurricane had destroyed the town and dismantled its government. Rather than being stymied by the niceties of procedure and representation in this emergency, they replaced the old government with five businessmen—the commission—each of whom ran a set of departments like a business. When Galveston recovered from the hurricane surprisingly well, it kept this form of government and spread throughout the US. The Newark proponents of the commission described the appeal this way: “A non-partizan simplified efficient form of municipal management.”

In New Jersey, under commission government there were five commissioners elected at-large in a non-partisan election in May for four-year terms. When the five commissioners reorganized at the start of term, they chose a title for each—one was mayor and director of the public affairs, one was revenue and finance director, one was public safety director, and so on. At the reorganization meeting, they also decided what functions each department would have. So, for instance, in 1917-1921 Raymond was public works director, but he was also in charge of jitneys. And when Raymond became mayor in 1925, the public affairs department acquired streets, water, sewers, docks, garage, lighting, Port Newark, terminals, passenger omnibuses, and inspection of gas meters. Occasionally, particularly in Hudson County, a commissioner was “stripped” of almost all functions. But if you got along with your fellow-commissioners, you were king of your domain.

Notice that I did not say ‘queen.’ In Newark, only white men were commissioners.

The commissioners had both legislative and executive responsibility. And they also appointed municipal judges. They had all the power and no checks or balances. It was also an at-large system, and it is well-known that at-large systems reduce the representation of minorities (Trebbi et al., 2008).

The Walsh Act was innovative for New Jersey in another way too. Before the Walsh Act, the only way Newark could change how it was governed was to go to Trenton and to have both

houses of legislature pass a bill and the governor sign it. That was why the Haussling proposal of 1911 went nowhere. (To be sure, there were options that could be put in place at a local level through petition and referendum before the Walsh Act, but none of them were available to cities with special charters like Newark.)

The Walsh Act gave cities and their residents a new option: they could choose their form of government without going to Trenton, as long as the form of government that they chose was the commission. Specifically, to change any city government to a commission, you needed a petition signed by 20% of the number of votes cast at the most recent General Assembly election. Then a referendum had to be held on the third Tuesday following filing, and if it passed (and the number of votes in favor was at least 30% of the votes cast in the most recent General Assembly election), the first commission was elected on the fifth Tuesday after the adoption, and on the sixth Tuesday after adoption, the old city government was shut down completely and the new government took over. Basically nine weeks from filing to a whole new government.

This sort of option doesn't seem unusual to us now (although the speed does), because we're used to the Faulkner Act, which sets up a similar process for a different set of government forms and provides some choices. But the Faulkner Act was passed in 1950, and in 1911 the Walsh Act process was a major innovation.

After the Walsh Act was passed, commission government was a popular progressive idea, and many cities adopted it pretty soon: By the early 1950s, over 60 NJ municipalities had commission governments, including almost all of the large cities (Wolfe, n.d., p. 20)..

Was the change of government motivated by anti-German prejudice?

To answer this question, we have to look at what happened and why it happened.

In 1914, the Clinton Hill Improvement Association, led by Theodore Fettingler, mounted a petition drive for a commission, but it failed to get the required number of valid signatures. The Newark Commission Government Committee, which led that effort and continued the effort, had a president with a German name (Dr. William Buerman) and a finance committee chair with a Dutch or German name (Bernard. W. Terlinde), but the majority of officers had names that were identified as English.

In November 1914, Haussling lost to Raymond, who was the Republican candidate, and Raymond took office as mayor on January 1, 1915. Raymond began an extensive process to develop a new charter, and set up a committee that included John Cotton Dana and other

distinguished citizens. The basic plan that they came up with was a mayor, elected as mayor for a 4-year term, and a 5-member council, all elected at large for 4-year terms. There would also be a board of estimate, mainly appointed, to deal with finance and budget. This plan was not very different from Haussling's plan in 1911.

This idea had to go to Trenton, and it made some progress there, but it eventually stalled because of opposition from the regular Democratic Party, and from die-hard commission proponents. Raymond was re-elected, however, in November 1916, and carried Republican William Haas in with him to the Board of Works (raising the Republican majority there to 4-1), although the Democrats retained a 19-13 edge in the Common Council. Raymond was in pretty good shape politically, it seemed.

But he had enemies. Foremost among them were James R. Nugent and Uzal McCarter. Nugent had been corporation counsel under Haussling. More important he was head of the Democratic Party in Essex, and had been state chairman until Woodrow Wilson deposed him in 1911. McCarter was president of Board of Trade, which was later renamed the Chamber of Commerce, the president of Fidelity Bank, and the McCarter brother for whom Route 21 was named. He was also on the board of Public Service, where his brother Thomas was president (Cummings 1997). His fights with Raymond were over jitneys (McCarter wanted the Public Service street car monopoly to extend to the new technology of internal combustion buses), a proposed Newark Memorial building (memorializing the 250th anniversary), and the location of the public markets.

Before 1911, Nugent and McCarter would have had to lick their wounds, try to elect more aldermen and board of works commissioners in 1917, and wait until 1918 to come back at Raymond. But the Walsh Act gave them an alternative: commission government. So in summer 1917 Nugent and McCarter joined forces with the Clinton Hill Improvement Association, and gathered petitions for the commission form of government. They filed a sufficient number of petitions (certified by Alexander Archibald, an organization Democrat who was then city clerk) on September 22, and the election was scheduled for October 9.

Raymond was the major opponent of the commission; I did not find any other public figure. The Democratic organization was for it, the McCarters were for it, and so were reformers like the Newark News. But, stating that the commission movement was "an effort to eliminate me from municipal politics," Raymond raised five arguments against the commission (Raymond 1917):

“First—Government by a committee of five is not suited to a city the size of Newark.

“Second—Wherever tried it has proved extravagant because of log-rolling by commissioners to procure appropriations for their respective departments.

“Third—The taxpayers’ money is entirely unprotected. . . , [I]t is inconceivable that a sane mind would urge a financial system where the receiving, disbursing, and auditing functions are concentrated in one person.

“Fourth—It is a fundamental principle of good government to provide an executive check upon the action of deliberative bodies.

“Fifth—The rapidity with which Mr. McCarter and Mr. Nugent, , have rushed to the aid of the commission form of government should suggest that the Walsh act system is made for bosses and business interests.”

But it seems that Raymond realized he had been outmaneuvered, and did not seriously marshal his supporters against it. The commission won 19,069 to 6,053, and carried every ward. The vote, however, was not overwhelming—most losing mayoral candidates in the 20th century got more than 19,000 votes. Contrary to the public rhetoric, votes by ward in favor of the commission were positively correlated with Raymond vote in 1914 and 1916, and negatively correlated with Haussling vote in those years. In many ways, it was a reformer election: the correlation between vote for the small school board in 1907 and vote for the commission in 1917 is large and positive (even though the wards had been changed). On the other hand, the correlation between vote for the commission and 1920 German population is negative, and so is the correlation with 1920 Russian plus Polish population (which I take as a proxy for Jewish population). It’s not clear to me that Raymond’s characterization of the commission movement as a Nugent move was correct; since the referendum seemed to draw more Raymond votes in favor of the commission than Nugent votes.

The election of the first commission occurred on November 13. 80 candidates filed valid petitions to run. Realize that Newark had 42 incumbent elected officials at this time who were being booted out of office, and so 80 candidates should not be that surprising. The paper ballot was almost 32 inches long.

A number of slates were grouped together: The strongest were Nugent’s organization Democrats (city clerk Alexander Archibald, first ward alderman Angelo Bianchi, Hubert Hahn, Augustus Mitchell, and former sheriff John F. Monahan), the organization Republicans (former

Board of Works Commissioner (and developer of Weequahic) Frank J. Bock, Breidenbach, who had been a police commissioner, Arthur Denman, a current Board of Works commissioner, City Home Trustee Henry Guenther, and Assemblyman Harry Johnson), and a lot of independents, including Haussling, Raymond, and Board of Works Commissioner Charles Gillen. Gillen had been elected to the Board of Works in 1912 on Nugent's slate, broke with Nugent over a scandal involving Military Park, ran for re-election as an independent in 1915 and won, and ran for mayor as an independent in 1916 and lost. German names were all over: Hubert Hahn on the Democratic slate; almost the entire Republican slate, and other strong independents like Essex County Sheriff and former assemblyman Ralph Schmidt, and William Haas, a former 9th ward alderman who was coming off a resounding victory in the 1916 Board of Works election. I think Nugent was reasonably confident that even if Raymond and Gillen won, he could still control the commission, possibly in alliance with McCarter.

When the votes were counted, Nugent came close but did not win. Only two of his candidates, Archibald and Monahan, were elected. Gillen and Raymond were the top two vote-getters (Raymond got more first-place votes, but when lower rank votes were added, Gillen came out ahead). One big surprise was Brennan, who had never run for office before but came in third, ahead of the organization Democrats.

None of the Germans, either on tickets, or running independently, made it:

Bock on the Republican ticket was 8th.

Breidenbach on the Republican ticket was 10th.

Haussling was 12th.

City Home Trustee Guenther on the Republican ticket was 13th.

Hahn on the Nugent ticket was 14th.

Board of Works Commissioner Haas was 26th.

Sheriff Schmidt was 29th.

The long presence of German surnames in Newark city government was over except for Breidenbach's brief and unexceptionable term. This was the commission that changed the street names.

The Italians and Jews fared no better than the Germans. Bianchi lagged well behind the rest of the organization Democratic ticket, coming in 22nd. Themistocles Mancusi-Ungaro did surprisingly well, but 7th place was not enough. I could not identify any Jewish names in the top 20. No Italian or Jew would be elected to the commission until 1932, although these were the largest ethnic groups in Newark.

The new commission was not representative of Newark's neighborhoods either. Two commissioners lived downtown (Raymond, 16 Kinney Street, and Archibald in the 4th ward, 33 East Kinney Street), and one each lived in the Ironbound (Monahan, 103 Jefferson street in the 5th ward), Roseville (Gillen, 2 Gould Avenue in the 11th ward), and Vailsburg (Brennan at 155 Alexander Street in the 13th ward). What we would today call the South and North Wards were unrepresented, as was most of the Central.

When the commission first met on November 20, 1917, it deadlocked. Nugent had two votes, and if he could pick up one of the other three, he would have control (formally, become corporation counsel). Eventually, the three independents coalesced when Raymond agreed to give up his quest for the mayoralty. Gillen got the mayoralty, becoming the first Irish mayor in Newark history, but Raymond and Brennan got the departments they wanted. Raymond's ally, Jerome T. Congleton, became corporation counsel, not Nugent. But it was close.

So the change to the commission form of government was probably just a clever maneuver by Nugent and McCarter, not a reaction against German or Italian or Jewish influence. But in a more roundabout way, Nugent could make his move only because what appeared to be widespread dissatisfaction or indifference to the idea that all citizens should have a say in their government. On this dimension, Raymond's proposed charter was just as bad as the Walsh Act, and so was Haussling's 1911 proposed charter. I could not find anyone objecting to any of the charter proposals on the grounds that they would shut out many groups for participating in city government (although Raymond had an oblique reference to the commission being not the right size for a city the size of Newark in his attack on the commission proposa). The legislature could privilege the commission form because widespread participation counted for so little.

Italian representation, Jewish representation, and neighborhood representation were all collateral roadkill in the battle between Nugent and Raymond not because anyone particularly wanted them dead, but because no one wanted them alive enough to speak up and defend them.

Just as the change in government seems not to have been primarily motivated by anti-Italian or anti-Jewish prejudice, it seems not to have been motivated by anti-German prejudice either.

Would the commission form have reduced German representation without anti-German prejudice?

Was German representation collateral roadkill too? We have to look more deeply. The arguments about Italians, Jews, and neighborhoods are implicitly arguments about at-large representation. Minorities are supposed to be better represented with wards than with at-large elections. That was clearly true for the Italians and the Jews. Perhaps Germans with their dwindling population in Newark should be considered a minority in the same way (although the election history in table 3 suggests otherwise). Then they would have disappeared for the same traditional reason that Jews and Italians disappeared, along with the Common Council. But I think not.

Why did it happen?

Without anti-German prejudice, the 1917 election would have turned out quite differently and German-Americans would have been well-represented on the Commission, at least through most of the 1920s. I'm pretty sure of this conclusion, although with so many things happening at the same time in 1917,

There are two quick reasons for my conclusion and one detailed one. The first quick answer is to look at the Irish—they were a minority too, even smaller than the Germans, and yet they were the majority of the Commission until the early 1930s, a status they never enjoyed with aldermanic government. There never was an Irish mayor before the commission (and there was only one after it).

The second quick answer is to look at Jersey City. Jersey City also switched to the commission form, but in 1913, before the rise of anti-German prejudice. One of the new commissioners elected in Jersey City, George Brensinger, had a German name (Grundy and Caroselli 1970)..

The more complicated reason is that up until 1916 Germans did very well in at-large elections, and absent World War 1 they would have probably continued to do so in 1917. To see this, go back to table 3 again. There we saw that Germans were winning many at-large elections—for mayor, board of works, and City Home—right up until 1916. They did not rely on the Common Council for representation.

Table 4 gives more detail about this process. It deals only with the at-large offices, and it looks at votes, not just whether a candidate wins or not. It compares votes only within a party in a year, because partisan swings were very important in this period. Essentially, it compares German candidates with other candidates in the same party in the same year. (Comparing with candidates for the same office from the same party in the same year would be better, and there are methods for doing this, but on average the votes for the three offices are usually pretty close, and don't always line up the same way. The more sophisticated correction would not make much difference.)

Gillen's independent candidacies for the Board of Works in 1915 and the mayoralty in 1916, the two final years of aldermanic government, make the comparisons in table 4 somewhat difficult. In both years Gillen happened to draw primarily from a German candidate on the regular Democratic ticket—Kraemer in 1915 and Haussling in 1916. I treated Gillen as just another Democrat in both years, and so presented German popularity in the worst possible light for those two years.

Realizing the Gillen impact, there is no indication of declining German vote-getting ability in these years, consistent with table 3. Going into 1917, you would have expected German candidates to do very well in at-large contests.

But they did very poorly in 1917. If you look at the Nugent ticket as the Democratic ticket in 1917, table 4 might lead you to expect Hahn to run about 1000 votes ahead of Monahan (Hahn would have been the 5th member of the commission), and maybe 500-1000 votes behind the average of Archibald and Mitchell. But he ran 5000 votes behind Monahan and 2500 votes behind the average of Archibald and Mitchell—in an election with a much smaller vote overall. The Republican ticket was heavily German, and so within-ticket comparisons don't say much. But since 1914 the Republicans had won the mayoralty twice, won 4 out of 5 seats on the Board of Works, and all three contested seats on the City Home board. Yet they won nothing in 1917.

Or you can look at individuals. Compare, for instance, Brennan and Breidenbach. They were both about the same age (Brennan was born in 1872, Breidenbach in 1875), they were

both running for office for the first time, and they had both been appointed to the Board of Police Commissioners by Mayor Raymond. But Breidenbach was the president of the board while Brennan was a mere member, Breidenbach had spent all of his life to this point in Newark while Brennan had spent less than half. Breidenbach was running with the support of strong organization that had been dominated the last three elections in Newark. Brennan was running on his own. Breidenbach was German, and Germans were more numerous than Irish in Newark. Breidenbach clearly was the stronger candidate. But Brennan got 15,736 votes and Breidenbach, 9977.

Or compare Gillen with Haas. Haas got 17,500 more votes than Gillen in 1916, and was the top overall vote-getter in Newark, but he was 12,000 votes behind Gillen in 1917.

Other explanations for the simultaneous failure of so many strong and distinguished German candidates in 1917 are, of course, possible. But in a city that had just banned the teaching of the most popular modern language, where the federal government had raided one of the leading German-language newspapers and appropriated one of the iconic breweries, and where all the German street names were about to be erased, anti-German prejudice is the simplest explanation.

Conclusion

So what happened to the Germans? The end of German representation in Newark city government was by no means natural. Without World War I, it would have happened sometime, much more gradually, and probably in the late 1920s or early 1930s. The Germans would have been succeeded by the Italians and the Jews, not by the Irish. When a 66-year-old guy gets run over by a truck, doctors don't say he died of natural causes even though he was going to die sometime in the next few decades anyway.

This is not a pleasant story. The benign (and boring) story about natural succession is not accurate. Newark became more bigoted, less open, and less cosmopolitan. History does not always run in one direction; sometimes really bad things happen. Probably I don't have to remind people of this today, but that is one thing to learn from the past.

Newarkers made two big mistakes in the fall of 1917. The first one was to choose commission government, which shut Italians and Jews out of city government and had horrible fiscal controls. As Raymond thought it might, commission government led Newark to the

equivalent of bankruptcy in less than 17 years (I discussed this in an NHS program a few years ago). And then enough Newarkers succumbed to anti-German prejudice to shut the Germans out.

Did this matter to anyone but the Germans (which of course would be enough by itself)?

Quite possibly. The *New York Times* presented Haussling as merely a colorful character and his death as a human interest story, but in fact he was one of the great mayors of Newark. While Haussling was mayor and controlled the school board, three comprehensive high schools opened in three years: Central, East Side, and South Side (now Shabazz). Newark went from one high school to four, and democratized high school education. In the entire 37 years of commission government, only two more comprehensive high schools were opened (West Side around 1926 and Weequahic in the early 1930s), and even those took a long time.

Nationally, the period from 1910 to 1940 has been described as the “high school movement. “In 1910, just 9 percent of American youth earned a high school diploma, but by 1935 40 percent did” (Goldin and Katz, 1998, p. 2). The growth of high schools explains a greater proportion of US GDP growth in the first half of the twentieth century than any other single factor. But the Middle Atlantic states in general and cities like Newark in particular lagged well behind the rest of the nation in this movement (Goldin and Katz 1998).

Would continuing governmental influence for the nationality that took the Newark’s biggest steps in the high school movement have kept Newark closer to the curve? One can hope. Arkolakis, Lee and Peters (2018) show that in the late 19th century, cities with immigrants saw more patents and more patent citations, and that immigration was causing this inventive activity and the inventive activity in turn was raising productivity. Perhaps if the Germans had not been run out of city government, Newark could have stayed closer to the technological frontier longer.

Could it have been different? That’s a topic for another time.

References:

Arkolakis, Costas, Sun Kyoung Lee, and Michael Peters, 2018, European immigrants and the United States’ rise to the technological frontier in the 19th century, manuscript, Yale University.

Cummings, Charles, 1997, "McCarters helped shape city and state," Knowing Newark. Accessed on April 2, 2018 at <http://knowingnewark.npl.org/mccarters-helped-shape-city-and-state/>

Goldin, Claudia, and Lawrence F. Katz, 1998, "Human capital and social capital: The rise of secondary schooling in America, 1910-1940," National Bureau of Economic Research working paper 6439.

Grundy, Owen and Louis P. Caroselli, 1970, History of forms of government from early Dutch days to the present time. Accessed on April 2, 2018 at <http://www.cityofjerseycity.org/docs/grundy.shtml>

Higham, John, 1998, *Strangers in the Land*. New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press.

Katz, Daniel, and Kenneth Braly, 1933, "Racial stereotypes of one hundred college students," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 28(3): 280-290.

Moser, Petra, 2012, Taste Based Discrimination Evidence from a Shift in Ethnic Preferences After World War I, *Explorations in Economic History* 49: 167-188.

Raymond, Thomas L., 1917, "Mayor on Why He Opposes New Rule: Cites Five Reasons for Being Against Commission Form in Answering Criticism of Stand: Has Nugent Lined Up for It," *Newark News*, September 25. Accessed at New Jersey Reference, Newark Public Library, Newark Commission Government clipping file.

Robb, George, 2018, personal communication, April 11.

Schaffer, Ronald, 1991, *America in the Great War*. Oxford University Press.

Sweeney, Algernon, 1937, "A new charter for Newark: Candidates for city commissioner asked to pledge consideration of city's experience with a 1911 proposal," letter to the editor, *Newark News*, February 3. Accessed at New Jersey Reference, Newark Public Library, Newark Commission Government clipping file.

Trebbi, Francesco, Philippe Aghion, and Alberto Alesina, 2008, "Electoral rules and minority representation in U.S. cities," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 123 (1): 325-357.

U.S. Alien Property Custodian, 1922, Report of the Alien Property Custodian, 67th Congress, 2nd Session, Senate, document number 181. Washington, DC: U. S. Government Printing Office. Accessed March 25, 2018 at

<https://books.google.com/books?id=InEaAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA682&lpg=PA682&dq=Alien+Property+Custodian+and+Krueger&source=bl&ots=fN69TsLWHi&sig=oITJ0TrTmkzotBVmxrpPTpqN0UE&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj0zcu5jYjaAhVxUN8KHbeXDXcQ6AEIRTAD#v=onepage&q=Alien%20Property%20Custodian%20and%20Krueger&f=false>

Wolfe, Albert J, n.d., A History of Municipal Government in New Jersey Since 1798, Bureau of Municipal Information, New Jersey League of Municipalities.

Acknowledgments: I am grateful to Marion Bolden, Tim Crist, Natalie Borisovets, Mark Krasovic, Jose DaSilva, George Hawley, Jason Kaplowitz, Sun Kyoung Lee, Tom McCabe, Petra Moser, Bob Singer, Guy Sterling, Beth Zak-Cohen, and Myles Zhang for wisdom, corrections, advice, and assistance. I have benefited from the collections and assistance at the Newark Public Schools Historical Preservation Committee, the John Cotton Dana Library at Rutgers, the NJ Historical Society, and the Newark Public Library New Jersey Reference Room. The errors are my own.

Table 1: Comparison of Elected Officials by Ethnic Group: January 1, 1917 and January 1, 1918

	Jan. 1, 1917	Jan. 1, 1918
Mayor		
German	0	0
Irish	0	1
Italian	0	0
Jewish	0	0
Other	1	0
Board of Street and Water Commissioners		
German	1	None in office
Irish	1	
Italian	0	
Jewish	0	
Other	3	
Elected trustees of City Home		
German	2	None in office
Irish	0	
Italian	0	
Jewish	0	
Other	2	
Aldermen		
German	8	None in office

Irish		9	
Italian		1	
Jewish		2	
Other		12	
Commissioners			
German			0
Irish			3
Italian			0
Jewish			0
Other			2
Summary			
German	11		0
Irish	11		3
Italian	1		0
Jewish	2		0
Other	17		2

Table 2: Excess Population Loss, German and Irish Foreign-Born Population, 1910-1920

	German	Irish
Newark	2,632	109
Jersey City	1,014	404
Irvington	-748	-89
Balance of Essex	-991	-10

Source: Census of 1910, census of 1920. "Excess population loss" is the excess of the population loss over the population loss that would have occurred if the group had lost population in the particular city at the same rate that it lost population statewide. Negative excess population loss means population gain over the statewide benchmark.

Table 3: Number of German-Americans Winning Elections, 1910-1916

	Mayor	Board of Works	City Home	Aldermen	Total
1910	1	0	0	4	5
1911		1	1	2	4
1912	1	1	1	2	5
1913		0	0	5	5
1914	0	0	1	5	6
1915		0	1	2	3
1916	0	1	0	6	7

Table 4: German Advantage over Party-Year Running Mates in At-Large Newark Elections, 1901-1916

	Relative to Irish	Relative to Other
1901	-1,443	
1902		6
1903		-28
1904	2,097	1,622
1905		699
1906		-1,541
1907		
1908		485
1909	-481	8
1910	1,785	-1,047
1911		-656
1912	2,720	1,787
1913	1,105	
1914	1,511	24
1915	-10,142	-2,238
1916	-2,805	2,867

Source: Common Council Manuals, various years. Blanks indicate years where comparison was impossible because at least two candidates of the requisite ethnicities were not on the ballot for the same party. Gillen in 1915 and 1916 is counted as Democrat even though he was not running on the Democratic ticket. Offices are Mayor (in even years), Board of Street and

Water Commissioners (either one or two vacancies per year), and City Home Trustees (either one or two vacancies per year).

Appendix: Who is German in Newark?

Writing this paper, especially the quantitative parts has relied on being able to assign ethnicities to about 300 people who lived a century ago. This is not a foolproof process.

Following Moser (2012) I began with an assignment of names to ethnicities provided by List Service Direct, a firm that specializes in producing such lists for commercial purposes. Their algorithm is described in Moser (2012, p. 172). She notes that the algorithm is “optimized to match current-day naming practices,” and so will have weaknesses for identifying names a century or more ago.

I encountered several problems with the List Service Direct data, and had to amend.

1. Some names, including Haussling and Lebkuecher, were assigned to the unknown category. For these, I used supplemental data, often available in the Common Council Manuals. For instance, Haussling’s biography in those volumes said that his father was “a leader with the German-American element” in Newark.
2. Some names were assigned implausibly. For instance, A. Garfield Gifford, a Republican alderman from the 8th ward (Forest Hill and Silver Lake) was described as African American. I used the ancillary evidence and common Newark knowledge.
3. Some names that are common today in several European countries, including Germany, were assigned to other countries. For instance, Bock and Haas were labelled as Dutch, although they are also common names in Germany. I consider these names to be German. A major question that I want to examine is how the public reacted to these individuals. This is a public that reduced its sauerkraut consumption by 75% to demonstrate its loyalty to the US.
4. Jewish names (they are assigned that way by List Serve Direct) presented a particular difficulty. German Jews, of course, are German, but may be subject to different prejudices than other Germans. Moser, however, found that in the stock exchange elections, German Jews seemed to have been treated not much differently from other Germans. So I treat Louis Aronson, whose ancestry was German (from Ancestry.com) as German, although Aronson was also Jewish.³ (Aronson ran twice for City Home trustee on the Republican ticket, successfully, and once for mayor, unsuccessfully).

³ I am grateful to Bob Singer for confirming this fact. The evidence in the Common Council Manuals was suggestive but not definitive.

5. Many names are both German and Jewish—for instance, Baum, Epstein, and Scheininger. For these, I use both information from the Common Council manuals and Ancestry.com (with the help of Natalie Borisovets). So, for instance, 3rd ward aldermen Louis Semel and Herman Scheininger were born in Austria, active in many Jewish organizations, and considered Jewish by List Service Direct. I code them as Jewish, not German.
6. List Service Direct considered Arthur Denman to be Jewish, but Denman is also an English name and his ancestors came from England. I consider him to be English. Complete notes on names are available.