

THE HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM PRESENTS...

★ UNITED DECORATING CO. ★

~*~ 1899-1997 ~*~

"Decorations for All Occasions"

98 YEARS OF PARADES, FUNERALS,
GRAND OPENINGS, & MASQUERADE BALLS



This exhibition made possible by a generous grant from the New Jersey Historical Commission



EXHIBITION CURATORS: Robert Foster and McKevin Shaughnessy

COVER LOGO AND CONCEPT: McKevin Shaughnessy

BROCHURE DESIGN: Claire Lukacs

RESEARCHER AND WRITER: Holly Metz

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS are from the collection of the Kirchgessner family except for contemporary photos by Robert Foster (front and back covers, pages 3 and 16); Y.M.C.A. "Hut" photo from the Hoboken Y.M.C.A. collection (page 9); and the image of President Wilson's motorcade (page 10) from the Hoboken Public Library.



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THE HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM was formed in 1986. Its purpose and objectives are many. We hope to stimulate interest in the city's history, architecture, and genealogy. We offer exhibits, lectures, and walking tours, maintain a museum space in Hoboken's City Hall, and publish a magazine, *Hoboken History*, and a bi-monthly newsletter.

The Museum also assists in the preservation of historic documents and landmarks, and acquires artifacts relating to our city's rich history. We work with organizations with similar interests, such as the Hoboken Board of Education and the Hoboken Historic Preservation Commission, to create educational programs.

As one of the most active organizations in Hoboken, we are always looking for new volunteers and members to assist us. If you would like to become a Museum member and receive *Hoboken History* in the mail, gain reduced rates on admission to Museum events, and receive discounts on Museum gift items, write HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM, P.O. Box 707, Hoboken, NJ 07030, or call (201)656-2240.



UNITED DECORATING CO.

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An exhibition

by the

HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM

Sponsored by the New Jersey Historical Commission

June 27, 1997

City Hall, Hoboken

*Special thanks to George and Dolores Kirchgessner for sharing
their stories, memories, and artifacts with the Museum.*





35th anniversary of United Decorating Co., 1934, showing three generations of the Kirchgessner family: William (second generation), Robert (first), Catherine (second), George (third).

INTRODUCTION

"United Decorating Company, Hoboken, New Jersey, 1899–1997" surveys 98 years of local, state, and national history through the window of the oldest business in continuous operation on Washington Street. For when Robert Kirchgessner opened United Decorating Co., on Hoboken's main street in 1899, the German-born decorator and maker of costumes and banners inaugurated a tradition of helping Hoboken and surrounding communities commemorate many of their brightest, and most solemn, public events: uproarious political rallies and gala masquerade balls, the funerals of dignitaries, baseball games, ship dedications, grand Depression-era re-openings of local banks, and celebrations of Elks, Moose, and marksmen.

United Decorating Co. continues today, at the same 421 Washington Street location, under the stewardship of Robert's grandson, 78-year-old George Kirchgessner. Until recently, George regularly hung flags, banners, and



George and Dolores Kirchgessner in the storefront, 1989.

bunting for graduations, mayoral inaugurations, and special civic celebrations, including the 150th anniversary of the first organized baseball game, observed this past Spring. With his wife, Dolores, he runs the storefront shop, which continues to sell costumes, while also introducing items unavailable (and even unthinkable) in his grandfather's time: "green mouth" trick chewing gum, funky plastic novelties, and postcards of Frank Sinatra.

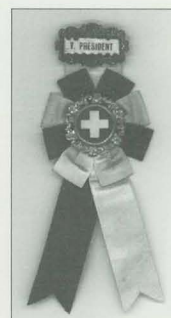


United Decorating Co. advertising handbill, circa 1918.



United Decorating was often hired to decorate Hoboken storefronts for business anniversaries, circa 1938.

But very little—materially—has been lost of United Decorating's past: the tiny storefront is packed with hundreds of artifacts, dating back to the store's founding. Dozens of these objects, on loan from the Kirchgessner family, form the core of this exhibition, the Hoboken Historical Museum's tenth. Combined with text, and Museum objects and photographs, United Decorating's artifacts allow us to consider, from the vantage point of 421 Washington Street, nearly a century of events of municipal, state, and national significance.



Badge for German social group, assembled at United Decorating.

transportation. But they also promised spectacular and novel events, including an aeronautical display by Wilbur Wright around the Statue of Liberty, and fleets of military and "peace" ships illuminated by "hundreds of searchlights and tons of red fire." Water parades with sailing reproductions of the 1609 *Half Moon* and Fulton's 1807 *Clermont*, as

Electricity was available in Hoboken from 1886, when the city's chief engineer turned the switch at the Monroe Street electric plant, allowing exterior lamps to be illuminated. But for many Hobokenites, electricity continued to be a novelty for years thereafter. According to George Kirchgessner, some families did not install interior electric lights until the late 1920s.

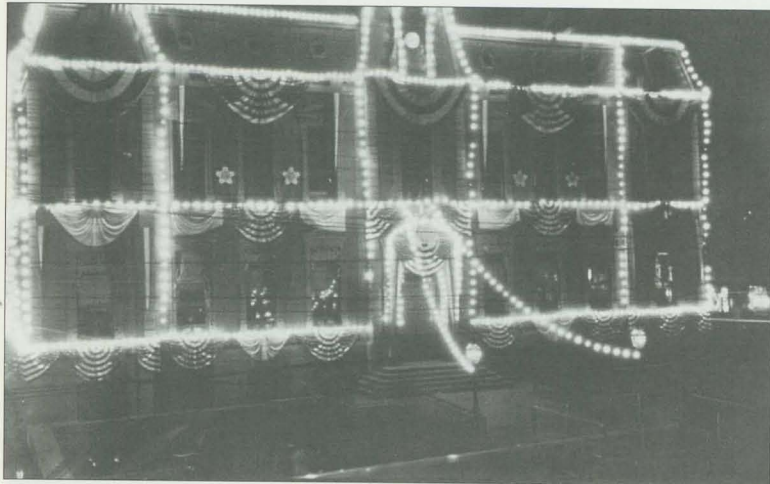


Photo postcard of Hoboken City Hall during Hudson-Fulton "Mardi Gras," 1909.

well as numerous street processions, ensured festivities on both land and water.⁹

Although the Hudson-Fulton Celebration centered around New York State locations, Hoboken was not to be outdone, nor would city fathers allow Hudson's Hoboken landing, Fulton's Hoboken-based steam navigation experiments, and the steam inventions of Hoboken patriarch John Stevens, to go unrecognized. It sponsored its own "Hudson-Fulton Mardi Gras" to coincide with the New York festivities, and established itself as "the only city to celebrate locally on the Jersey shore."¹⁰

United Decorating was called upon to decorate Hoboken's City Hall for the October 6th and 7th Mardi Gras, "one of the biggest celebrations in Hoboken's history."¹¹ For a week prior to the celebration, Robert Kirchgessner's display of flags and bunting drew high praise, along with accolades for an independent electrician's show of lights. "At night the blaze of thousands of incandescent lights on the City Hall, and other public and private buildings, make Hoboken a veritable white city," noted one reporter.¹²

Hudson River before Fulton's *Clermont* was designed," was greeted by clanging bells and armloads of confetti. At the end of the parade, a Mardi Gras King and Queen, selected by popular vote through the local paper, were escorted by a Hoboken riding club to the grand, fancy dress ball at the Odd Fellows Hall, where the festivities continued until four o'clock the following morning.¹³

CELEBRATIONS IN "LITTLE BREMEN" AND SCHUETZEN PARK

From the 1880s to 1918, the influx of German immigrants to Hoboken was so great the mile-square city became known as "Little Bremen." With its German beer gardens, piers lined with German ocean liners, German-language theaters, and numerous athletic clubs devoted to boating, rowing, and marksmanship, Hoboken was a fine location for a



Social club committee wearing identical costumes, circa 1905. Emma Kirchgessner seated first row, right.

German-born decorator of civic celebrations. Many of the city's celebratory events were held in the fraternal Independent Order of Odd Fellows Hall, 414 Washington Street—fortuitously located across the street from United Decorating. Erected in 1853, and subsequently renovated in 1881 and 1893, the Odd Fellows Hall was known as “the Mecca for gatherings of all sorts,” and a “meeting place of a dozen or more lodges and societies.”¹⁴

Several of the more prestigious societies had their own headquarters, however, including the Hudson Street Deutscher Club, with “200 members, all prominent citizens of German origin,”¹⁵ and the Quartet Club on Tenth and Washington Streets, “one of the foremost singing societies in the State of New Jersey,”¹⁶ which regularly hired Robert Kirchgessner to decorate their second-floor ballroom.

Directories of the period list over 100 clubs, societies, and charitable and benevolent



Interior of Odd Fellows Hall with decorations, circa 1900.

organizations in the city, three dozen of which were German, including several societies established solely for German women.¹⁷ Except for the months when ballroom interiors were too warm, parties, fancy dress balls, and exclusive theatrical performances filled the social calendars of Hoboken's many German residents—the Kirchgessners among them.

From family photographs, we know Robert Kirchgessner alone belonged to at least three



Independent Order of Odd Fellows Hall, Hoboken.

German social organizations, including the music club M. Gesang Verein Lyra, founded in September 1870. In one photograph taken during the early years of this century, we see him with his trademark mustache and puckish smile, standing below the club banner. Other photos show Emma Kirchgessner with identically-dressed members of a social club committee; Katherine and Robert dressed in theatrical costume; and Robert with colleagues from one of Hoboken's *schuetzen* (marksmen) clubs, triumphantly adorned with badges earned at target shooting contests—and most likely acquired through Kirchgessner's company.

From its very beginning, United Decorating was tied to *schuetzen* events, in Hoboken and in Schuetzen Park. A short trolley-ride away from Washington Street, North Bergens's Schuetzen Park was established in 1875 as a recreational site for marksmen, their annual Plattdeutscher Volksfest, and later, their retirement home, in what was then known as Union Hill.¹⁸ Each August, United Decorating provided decora-



Laying the cornerstone for No. 1 School, now David E. Rue School, 1913. Robert Kirchgessner watches from Third Street.

tions for the Park's festivities; and because the popularity of marksmanship in turn-of-the-century Hoboken was so great, the company was also hired by local *schuetzen* to embellish Washington Street. German and American flags, draperies, and banners lined the route taken by the equestrian parade to Union Hill.

In addition to decorating for temporal events, United Decorating helped the city celebrate concrete accomplishments, too. A building trend accompanied Hoboken's tremendous growth in pre-World War I population (at its height in 1910, more than 70,000 people resided in the Mile Square City—a vast leap from the 43,000 listed in 1890). Most of the city's public schools, many of its banks, and a 1911 addition to City Hall were built during this boom. Robert Kirchgessner's need for records of his work allows us an image of the 1913 celebratory cornerstone-setting of Hoboken's No. 1 School, on Third and Garden Streets. In the foreground are a cluster of city officials, including Mayor Martin Cook; but in the background, atop a Third Street building, is Robert Kirchgessner, admiring his display, and watching history in the making.

WORLD WAR I

As early as 1914, the *Jersey Journal* reported, "the sorrow of war made itself felt" in Hudson County's German community. Conflict had broken out in Europe, the August 24 account continued, and officials of the fortieth annual Schuetzen Park Plattdeutscher Volksfest "were

busy gathering funds to help their brethren in the Fatherland" obtain German Red Cross battlefield aid.¹⁹

Within the year, Hoboken's marine and rail terminals, docks, piers, and diverse manufacturing base were experiencing a boom, stimulated by the war needs of European allied forces.²⁰ Heightened focus on the war with Germany, notes historian Howard B. Furer, brought fierce anti-German sentiment to the city, and "the charge of potential disloyalty" against foreign-born residents.

Although many German Hobokenites had not yet become United States citizens, they had lived—and prospered—in Hoboken for years, and the children of many were American-born. Civic virtue and sworn loyalty to their adopted country did not prevent them from being denounced as "enemy aliens," however, and when the U.S. declared war against Germany, their ostracism intensified.

On April 6, 1917, more than 250 local dock workers were fired simply because they were German-born. Federal agents and armed soldiers seized the Hoboken docks and ocean liners owned by Germany's North German Lloyd and Hamburg-Amerika Lines, heralding the designation of River Street—"the heart of Hoboken's German section"—as a military zone. Two hundred German-born Hobokenites were arrested and brought to Ellis Island for deportation.

Armed with a federal law that prevented enemy aliens from living within a half-mile of any



Cafeteria, Hoboken Y.M.C.A. "Hut," during World War I.

military zone, government officials evicted hundreds of German families and closed their shops. The government would later concede the law was unworkable for Hoboken—its mile-square dimensions would have necessitated the forced removal of at least 90 percent of the German population, and hundreds of Hungarians, Turks, and Austrians besides—but permitted the eviction of Germans from River Street. They were confined to another section of the city, patrolled by soldiers.

Germans suddenly found themselves in a city stripped of the trappings of German culture and community that had once invigorated it. Restaurants, clubs, and theaters were closed; those that remained obscured their German

Hoboken, reminders of the war were inescapable: The city was the point of embarkation and debarkation for three million doughboys during the years of United States involvement in World War I.

Thousands of servicemen crowded the city, waiting to be shipped overseas. Diversions had to be developed, especially since a federal law had closed all taverns within a half-mile of the military zone. Many servicemen passed time in the Y.M.C.A. "Hut," built in Hudson Square Park (Fifth and Hudson Streets) to offer hot showers, billiards, and reading rooms. Welcoming the troops were United Decorating's red-white-and-blue draperies, which remained on display for the duration of the war.

Following the historic Versailles Peace Treaty that ended the Great War, President Woodrow Wilson returned from France on the *George Washington*, docking at the Third Street Pier in Hoboken on July 8, 1919. There the president greeted thousands of cheering, flag-waving residents from a reviewing stand draped with flags by United Decorating. Much was made in the papers the following day, of President Wilson's comment that "Hoboken is a beautiful city."²³

The display of flags and bunting, which reporters said "broke all records for decorations up to that time," was only matched by the "gala appearance" United Decorating helped Hoboken present in honor of Armistice Day, November 11, 1919. "Practically every home,



Billiard Room of the Y.M.C.A. "Hut," 1918.

orientation. Even the prestigious Deutscher Club von Hoboken, founded in 1864 "to foster the German language, social intercourse, the furtherance of art, and the science of music," changed its name, to the "Union Club."²¹

In concert with their neighbors, most of the city's German families became totally engrossed in the war effort, conserving food, planting "victory gardens," and enduring "heatless Mondays" (when all buildings did without heat to allow more coal for military use.)

The Kirchgessners did their part, too, and more—for they were vendors of one of the city's most popular wartime items: American flags. In cities across the country, flag retailers reported "an unprecedented demand and run-away market" created by the war.²² And in



President Wilson's motorcade from Hoboken piers, July 8, 1919.

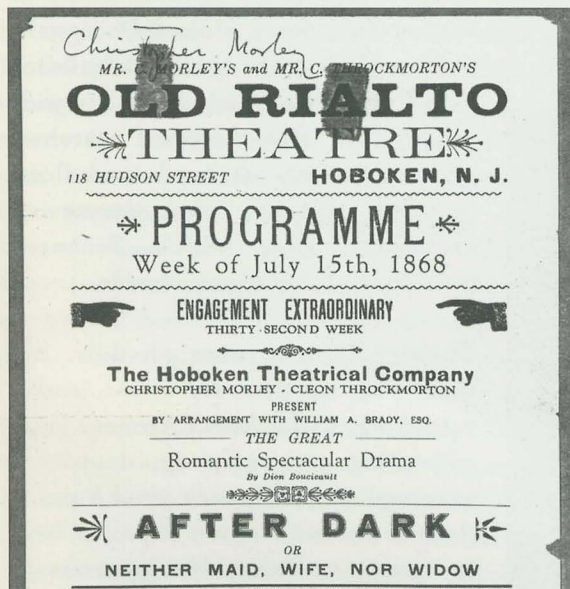
public building, and business place in the city," the Jersey Journal reported, "displayed the national colors,"²⁴ as Hoboken celebrated the returning servicemen and the end of military occupation of its waterfront.



Complimentary ticket to a masquerade ball.

MASQUERADE BALLS

Although Emma and Olga Kirchgessner brought success to United Decorating with their carefully stitched committee suits and other fancy dress costumes, the company's rental of elaborate costumes didn't really begin in earnest until 1929, when William purchased costumes from the failing local Rialto Theater. Patrons who had flocked to the Rialto from New York a year earlier to see playwright Christopher Morley's theatrical revivals of old melodramas, were turning from live events to cinema for entertainment.



A detail of the program for *After Dark* production by Christopher Morley, 1928.

In a sense, Morley's productions of *After Dark* and *The Black Crook* forestalled the inevitable; as early as 1915, "moving picture exhibitions" in Hoboken outnumbered theater halls three to one.²⁵ The Kirchgessners were personally aware of this trend, as they owned a nickelodeon in New York City. Robert Kirchgessner purchased the early movie theater as a business investment, and Frank and William were dispatched to collect cash from the tiny silent-film showcase.

The passing of the Hudson Street Rialto had also been preceded by the passing of the Empire vaudeville house at the same address; decades earlier it had been the site of Hoboken's first theater, the Germania. The Rialto, and the Lyric—on whose stage New York theatrical star Lily Langtry had regularly performed—became third-run moving picture houses after their 1929 closings.²⁶

But first the old theater yielded to United Decorating dozens of costumes of gypsies, pirates, cowboys, Uncle Sam, monks, and French aristocrats with their own tiaras. Hudson Street "sign man" Leo T. Devlin was hired to hand-letter the company's costume list, which, George Kirchgessner notes, has remained in the 421 Washington Street storefront "all through the thirties, forties, fifties, and sixties. It's always been there."

All through those years, fancy dress balls, and then Halloween parties, were popular entertainments for Hoboken families, and United Decorating rented out the Rialto costumery. William Kirchgessner would repair the elaborate tiaras and crowns as they deteriorated; sometimes he would make new ones himself, such as the sheik's headdress he fashioned out of a trimmed derby hat rolled with material.

United Decorating remained one of the area's premier centers for rental costumes up to the 1980s, when its fragile Rialto Theater stock was retired in favor of packaged, for-sale merchandise.



Young boy in fancy dress costume for German society party.



Frank Kirchgessner in cowboy costume.

AFTER THE CRASH

The Stock Market Crash of 1929, attributed to "the collapse of a great speculative wave that swept over the country," tumbled down on Hoboken, too, changing the face of the city, and altering the lives of many of its citizens.²⁷

Less than two years after the October crash, the Steneck Trust Company of Hoboken, once a symbol of stability and prosperity, was closed by the State Department of Banking and Insurance because of "substantial capital impairment."²⁸

Public reaction was immediate, especially at the Fourth and Adams Street branch, "in the heart of the Italian colony in the western end of the city." Within a half-hour of the bank's closing, a crowd of about 4,000 Italian men and women—some of whom were crying—was said to "surge about the doors of the bank," followed shortly thereafter by "policemen of Italian extraction," sent to "ease their fears."

The police told the crowd "they would probably get their money in a day or two," the *Jersey Journal* reported. But that promise would not be fulfilled for more than two years, when a new bank, Seaboard Trust, replaced Steneck.

In the intervening years, "stories of unbelievable hardship" were reported in the *Journal*, as

depositors begged for relief while their life savings remained inaccessible. An Italian grape dealer with a family of eight to support could not get credit to carry on his business, even though Steneck held \$15,000 of his money; an elderly couple, with a passbook listing \$8,000, was reported living without gas, water, or electricity.²⁹

The entire city seemed to be held hostage, as merchants hesitated to advance credit to local depositors, and the City of Hoboken, with one million dollars in Steneck's coffers, was forced to borrow from month to month to meet payroll.³⁰

After an attorney-led group calling itself the Steneck Depositors and Investors Protective Association attempted to get the bank to re-open and failed, thousands of Hoboken depositors attended public meetings at which new plans, vigorously backed by clergy, were hammered out. The bank's president and vice-president were indicted for fraud, but their trial was repeatedly delayed while their lawyers argued that "with 30,000 depositors of the closed bank inflamed against them, it would be impossible to get an impartial jury."³¹

Finally, on August 15, 1933, came the triumphant opening of the Seaboard Trust to replace Steneck, and plans to make whole its former depositors. United Decorating was hired to drape the bank building with flags and bunting for a city-wide celebration. Five-thousand marchers and more than 50 bands and floats paraded through the streets of Hoboken, after which Seaboard opened its doors to vast crowds.

Three policemen were on duty, but there was "no disorder at the bank," according to the *Journal*. Despite years of waiting and suffering, depositors were said to be "in such good humor, that the Second Platoon of police, held in reserve at Police Headquarters to serve in case of emergency, was dismissed."³²



City-wide celebration of the grand opening of Seaboard Trust (originally Steneck Trust Company of Hoboken), August 15, 1933.

SIGNS OF THINGS TO COME WORLD WAR II

Unlike the period surrounding World War I, there was little anti-German or anti-Italian sentiment in Hudson County during World War II. And yet, prior to U.S. involvement in the Second World War, many Hudson County Italian and German immigrants supported the *Fascisti* and Nazi administrations in their homelands. As early as 1930, when Hoboken was celebrating the 300th anniversary of the deeding of the land to "Hoboken's first white settlers," local Socialist Italians protested that *Fascisti* supporters intended to "use the occasion to demonstrate for the King of Italy and Mussolini," and they could not join a march where "Italians in America wished to express allegiance to foreign rulers."³³

Such allegiance, however, was never openly declared in the march that closed the gala,³⁴ a nine-day event that most certainly received assistance from United Decorating. Press accounts praise a "daring and unique" aviation demonstration by trans-Atlantic flier Clarence Chamberlin over the Stevens Institute athletic field and a brilliant pyrotechnic display of portraits of Hoboken's founding fathers and Mayor Bernard McFeely.³⁵

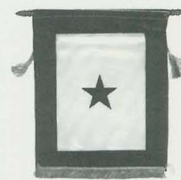
By 1931, Italians had superseded Germans as Hoboken's leading foreign-born population, though German-born residents still made up nearly ten percent of the entire population, with countless more native-born citizens of German ancestry.³⁶ Political sympathies varied among these and other Hudson County Germans, but newspaper coverage of the pre-war period shows some were staunch supporters of the elected government of Adolph Hitler.

At an April 1935 dinner sponsored by the Red Star Line and held aboard the Hoboken-docked *S.S. Westernland* for Hoboken businessmen and Hudson County German organizations, "more than half the gathering stood at attention and gave the Nazi salute as 'Deutschland Uber Alles' was sung following

the American national anthem," according to a *Jersey Journal* report. "An even greater number joined in the salute as 'Horst Wesel,' a Nazi song which has become the national anthem of the Third Reich, burst forth, apparently spontaneously." A parade followed, welcoming the Red Star liners, the first ships flying the German flag to dock in Hoboken since 1914. Before a crowd of 25,000, more than 2,500 members of 35 Hudson County German societies marched, with about 100 marchers dressed in Nazi uniforms. Despite protests by Jewish veterans of World War I, 16 flags bearing the Nazi swastika were carried in the parade. Mayor McFeely, the *Journal* reported, responded to critics by pointing out that the State Department had sanctioned the swastika flag, along with the red-white-and-black flag of the German Republic, as that nation's official banners.³⁷

George Kirchgessner recalls working on a job for longtime Schuetzen Park clients prior to U.S. entry into World War II: with his father, he installed flags emblazoned with swastikas. Newspaper coverage of the June 1935 German Day fete noted "a feature of the observance was the dedication of three new flags: one American, one German Republic in red, white and black, and one Nazi flag." Park attendance was estimated at 5,000. Thirty-three German societies attended; more than 100 members of the Deutsche Marine Verein of New York were dressed in black breeches, boots, and caps, and wore swastika arm-bands. The principal address, delivered by the president of Hudson County's United German-American Societies and vice-president of the Union City Board of Education, "attacked 'professional Jews,'" the *Journal* reported, "calling on them to desist from their agitating."³⁸

Press accounts indicate the most vigorous Hudson County protests against Nazism prior to U.S. involvement in World War II—including the burning of an effigy of Hitler—were initiated by veterans of all backgrounds, including, as anti-Nazi sentiment burgeoned, some German veterans. In 1938, representatives of a Jersey City post of the German War



Service flags offered for sale at United Decorating, circa 1942.

Veterans in America told reporters they would substitute the word "convention" for "*bund*"—used in the past to refer to a national or state convention—because the German term had become identified with the reviled, pro-Nazi German-American Bund, an office of which was located in Union City.³⁹

By August 1940, when the sixty-sixth annual Plattdeutsch Volksfest was held at Schuetzen Park, "the theme of the entire ceremony was patriotism to the United States, and decorations were in American flags only." Following an automobile parade from the Lackawanna Ferry in Hoboken, members of the Plattdeutsch Volksfest Verein of New York and New Jersey sang the "Star Spangled Banner." Every speaker, "without exception," the *Jersey Journal* noted, "stressed that the Volksfest Verein was strictly a charitable organization, owing allegiance only to the United States."⁴⁰

This patriotic theme only intensified by 1941, when the United States entered the war. Flags and flag mounts—often for block flag-raisings—flew out the door of United Decorating, which also began selling items meant to encourage support for the war effort, including window flags designed to show the service record of family members, decorations for bond drives, and finally, banners to welcome returning G.I.s home.

George Kirchgessner entered the U.S. Army during the Spring of 1942, but before he was called to service, he worked at Hoboken's Bethlehem Steel Shipyard, converting passenger ships to troop ships, and assisted his father at United Decorating, providing decorations for ship dedications.

1946 BASEBALL CENTENNIAL

Of course, United Decorating was there for the gala celebration of June 19, 1946, marking the 100th anniversary of the first organized game of baseball, played on Hoboken's Elysian Fields.

After a luncheon at Meyer's Hotel, where Hobokenites hobnobbed with baseball bigwigs, the ceremonies began. Crowds of baseball enthusiasts and an impressive list of dignitaries—including entertainers George Burns and Gracie Allen; baseball commissioner Happy Chandler; legendary umpire Bill Klem; "Clown Prince of Baseball" Al Schacht; National League president Ford Frick; and 82-year-old Jocko Fields, the oldest living person to play baseball on the original Elysian Fields— assembled at a viewing stand ornamented by United Decorating, on Eleventh and Hudson Streets. Earlier, a plaque declaring Hoboken as the birthplace of baseball had been installed nearby.

The well-publicized event drew film crews, who set up equipment to document the ceremonies, in which dozens of parade floats were displayed, including a large-scale reproduction of an 1866 Currier and Ives print, produced by Hoboken-based Maxwell House, the event's sponsor; a comic baseball skit, created by Maxwell House radio stars Burns and Allen for the occasion, was broadcast live over WOR; veterans of World War II and the Demarest High School Red Wings played a game of baseball; and movies from the 1945 World Series were screened.⁴¹

POLITICAL PARADES, CITY CELEBRATIONS, AND FUNERALS

Tipped into United Decorating scrapbooks are photographs of city celebrations spanning several generations, beginning with Robert Kirchgessner's work for the 50th anniversary of



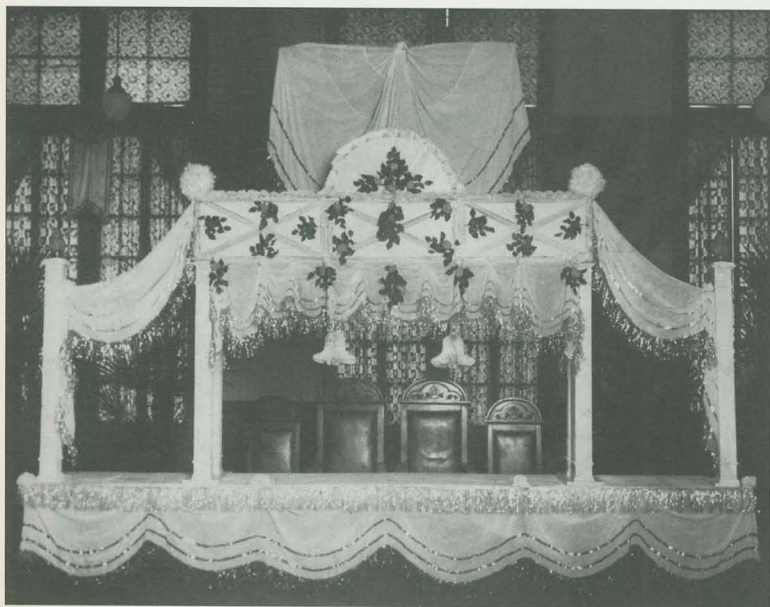
Jagels & Bellis Coal Company float, Fourth of July parade, 1912.

the incorporation of the City of Hoboken, on March 28, 1905.

The city was said to have “be-buntinged itself to death” that day, with each house “bedecked with flags and bunting” and “strings of lanterns blocks long [making] the streets as light as day.” Ten-thousand marchers and more than 100 floats, carriages, and automobiles covered a parade route two miles long through city streets. Included in the last division of local clubs were members of the Robert Davis Association of Hudson County, wearing on their coat lapels silk badges bearing the democratic political organization’s name.⁴²

Fifty years later, United Decorating was there to hang draperies and bunting for the City Centennial. No longer involved in “street work,” Robert’s son, William, and grandson, George, focused on storefronts and the City Hall reviewing stand, behind which the top-hatted Mayor John Grogan, Governor Robert Meyner, and grand marshal Colonel Basil Stevens took in a three-hour parade.

The 15,000-strong March 1955 parade was the highlight of a week-long, citywide celebration,



Wedding dais by United Decorating Co., at Hoboken’s Odd Fellows Hall.

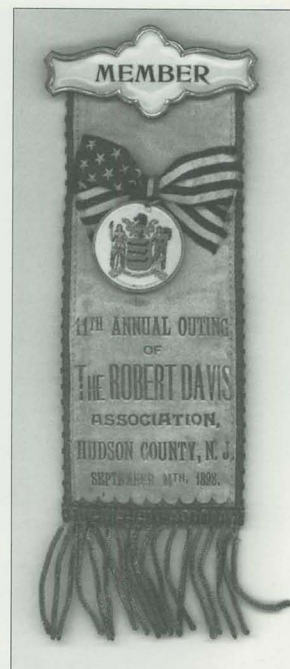
in which Hudson Square Park was renamed Stevens Park in honor of Hoboken’s founding citizen (and Col. Steven’s forebear). Parade

floats depicted various aspects of Hoboken’s history or referred to the city’s industrial present, ranging from a float for “Miss Centennial Beauty” sponsored by a meat products company, to models of bubble-blowing bottles of 7-Up, Tootsie-rolls, and an “old-fashioned tea party” courtesy of Thomas J. Lipton, Inc.⁴³

Just one year prior, Hoboken’s Chamber of Commerce had gone all out—with decorations assistance by United Decorating—sponsoring a music festival for Stephen Foster Week. The composer had resided at 601 Bloomfield Street in 1854, when he wrote and published his ballad “Jeanie With the Light Brown Hair.”

United Decorating’s scrapbooks also feature turning points in the city’s political course: Every victorious mayoral inauguration needs flags and a dressed bandstand, and the company has been there to provide them since the early 1930s. And when the city loses a leader, as it did when standing mayor Tom Vezzetti—the self-described “wackiest mayor in America,” who swept into office in a seemingly miraculous upset victory over longstanding incumbent Steve Capiello—died of a heart attack in 1988, United Decorating draped City Hall in mourning black.

Political groups of all stripes and a vast range of Hudson County social organizations have called upon United Decorating to provide them with banners over the years: the Christopher Columbus Memorial Committee, Schuetzen Park Carnivale, Turk’s Social and Athletic Club, N.A.A.C.P. Freedom Fund Dinner Dance, the Slavonian Benevolent Society... The list hints at changes in the city’s ethnic



Silk badge for the Robert Davis Association of Hudson County, circa 1905.



Firemen's monument bedecked with bunting, circa 1910.

character, as well as a continuous stream of civic-minded residents.

After more than five decades of climbing ladders, George Kirchgessner limits his decorating work today to a choice few Hoboken events. But inside 421 Washington Street are tiny signs of all the municipal and social events for which banners were made: a slew of political buttons, offered for sale.

UNITED DECORATING 1997

Any Hoboken kid in need of mustache wax, fright wigs, or "snapping" gum (it snaps your fingers if you try to pull a piece from the pack), or a teacher looking for American flags, old Hoboken postcards, or a portrait of Martin Luther King, will make her way to 421 Washington Street. For in addition to decorating local events, United Decorating has been selling contemporary novelties, costumes, and postcards for almost two decades.

"We went into novelties heavily in the eighties, when we gave up rentals [of costumes]," George Kirchgessner recalled recently. "You couldn't keep up with all the stuff they're looking for today. Everyone sees television and they expect that!" Besides, he added, "no one really rents any more," so United Decorating made the switch to selling packaged costumes.

The big hits at United Decorating, though, are the novelties. Costume-buying customers flock to the store for Halloween, but kids and adult pranksters stop in regularly to stock up on stink bombs, rubber rats, fake ice, and the ever-popular plastic dog-doo.

United Decorating gets lots of catalogs these days, from novelties suppliers all over the country. Many more companies are involved in the business. So what encourages George and Dolores to buy one novelty over another? "You have a hunch it's going to do something, that people will buy it for a reason," George explained. And he and Dolores found "the more we had, the more people would come in. It drew people in."

Regular postcard buyers come in, too, often to check out the store's diverse supply of older views of cities and towns, especially those in New Jersey. Postcard hunters from the tri-state area know to stop in at United Decorating for the vintage cards, categorized by topic. And everyday browsers find a selection of old and new: on the racks in February or December are old Valentine's Day or Christmas postcards, right alongside the new cards of Sinatra, Springsteen, and the New York City skyline—photographed from Hoboken.

Stepping into United Decorating is like paging through a family album—of an entire city. Curious about the Union Club? United Decorating has pictures of it before *and* after it changed its name. Wonder about the creation of the Lincoln Tunnel? William Kirchgessner decorated the ground-breaking. Looking for a postcard of one of Hoboken's old beer gardens? Go to United Decorating.

"United Decorating 1899–1997" has gleaned from that source. But if you really want to know Hoboken, a stop at 421 Washington Street is a must.



NOTES

FREQUENTLY CITED NEWSPAPERS, books, and collections have been abbreviated as follows: Evening Journal of Jersey City: EJ (The *Evening Journal of Jersey City* was the precursor of today's *Jersey Journal*); Jersey Journal: JJ; Scot M. Guenter, *The American Flag, 1777–1924: Cultural Shifts from Creation to Codification* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990): AF; Hoboken Public Library collection: HOB; Hoboken Historical Museum collection: HHM.

1. See Polk's Directory from 1901 through 1909, advertisement in the 1910 *Souvenir Fiftieth Anniversary Exempt Volunteer Firemen of the City of Hoboken, 1860–1910*; and interview with George Kirchgessner [GK], January 1997.
2. See 1925–1926 *Parker's Directory* for the City of Hoboken.
3. Unless otherwise noted, United Decorating facts are from interviews with GK, January–March, 1997. Transcripts HHM.
4. According to GK, sign man Leo T. Devlin was, at the very least, responsible for painting the United Decorating logo on the 1935 truck; the painted placard listing costumes, on display at City Hall, was also created by Devlin.
5. Interview, GK, January 28, 1997.
6. Wendy Kaminer, summarizing AF in "God's Stars and Stripes: A Burning Issue?" *The Nation*, April 28, 1997.
7. AF, Chapters 7 and 8.
8. Hudson-Fulton Celebration flyer, no author, from the collection of the Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.
9. EJ advertisement, September 25, 1909.
10. "Success of Mardi Gras Assured," EJ, September 25, 1909.
11. EJ, editorial, September 27, 1909.
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14. "Fire Guts Big Hall in Hoboken," JJ, December 26, 1911.
15. John J. Heaney, *The Bicentennial Comes to Hoboken*, booklet published July 4, 1976: 78.
16. Frances Sinisi, "Remember When...", JJ clipping, dated 1971, Hoboken History vertical file HOB.
17. 1915 *Polk's Directory*.
18. Schuetzen Park information from interview with manager Chris Wolf, March 11, 1997. Transcript on file with HHM.
19. "Fortieth Annual Volksfest Closes," JJ, August 24, 1914.
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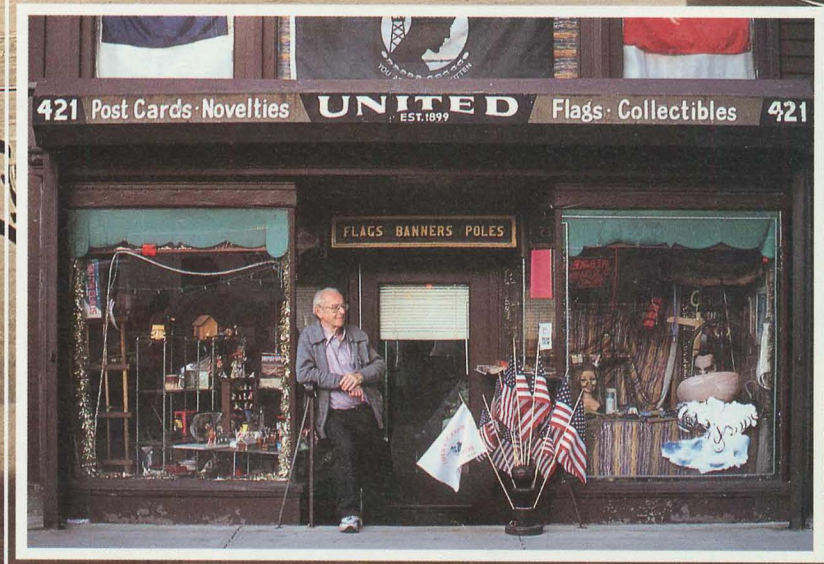
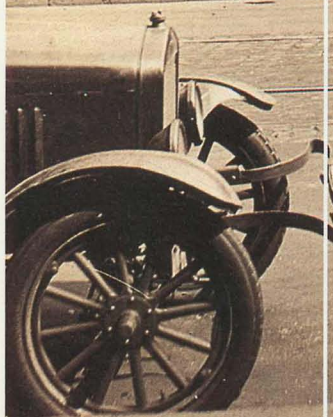
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Booklet: United Decorating Co., 1899-1997. Decorations for All Occasions." 98 Years of Parades, Funerals, Grand Openings, & Masquerade Balls. An exhibition by the Hoboken Historical Museum, Sponsored by the New Jersey Historical Commission, City Hall, Hoboken, June 27, 1997. Pamphlet, 8-1/2" wide x 11" high, 16 pp plus cover, illustrated.

[front cover]

The Hoboken Historical Museum presents...

United Decorating Company

1899-1997

"Decorations for All Occasions"

98 Years of Parades, Funerals, Grand Openings, & Masquerade Balls

This exhibition made possible by a generous grant from the New Jersey Historical Commission.

[inside front cover]

EXHIBITION CURATORS: Robert Foster and McKevin Shaughnessy

COVER LOGO AND CONCEPT: McKevin Shaughnessy

BROCHURE DESIGN: Claire Lukacs

RESEARCHER AND WRITER: Holly Metz

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS are from the collection of the Kirchgessner family except for contemporary photos by Robert Foster (front and back covers, pages 3 and 16); Y.M.C.A. "Hut" photo from the Hoboken Y.M.C.A. collection (page 9); and the image of President Wilson's motorcade (page 10) from the Hoboken Public Library

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THE HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM was formed in 1986. Its purpose and objectives

are many. We hope to stimulate interest in the city's history, architecture, and genealogy. We offer exhibits, lectures, and walking tours, maintain a museum space in Hoboken's City Hall, and publish a magazine, Hoboken History, and a bi-monthly newsletter.

The Museum also assists in the preservation of historic documents and landmarks, and acquires artifacts relating to our city's rich history. We work with organizations with similar interests, such as the Hoboken Board of Education and the Hoboken Historic Preservation Commission, to create educational programs.

As one of the most active organizations in Hoboken, we are always looking for new volunteers and members to assist us. If you would like to become a Museum member and receive Hoboken History in the mail, gain reduced rates on admission to Museum events, and receive discounts on Museum gift items, write HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM,

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1997 HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM

[page 1]

United Decorating Company

1899-1997

"Decorations for All Occasions"

98 YEARS OF PARADES, FUNERALS,
GRAND OPENINGS, & MASQUERADE BALLS

An exhibition by the

HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM

Sponsored by the New Jersey Historical Commission

June 27, 1997

City Hall, Hoboken

Special thanks to George and Dolores Kirchgessner for sharing their stories, memories, and artifacts with the Museum.

[page 2, full page photo]

[caption: 35th anniversary of United Decorating Co., 1934 showing three generations of the Kirchgessner family: William (second generation), Robert (first), Catherine (second), George (third).]

[page 3]

INTRODUCTION

"United Decorating Company, Hoboken, New Jersey, 1899-1997" surveys 98 years of local, state, and national history through the window of the oldest business in continuous operation on Washington Street. For when Robert Kirchgessner opened United Decorating Co., on Hoboken's main street in 1899, the German-born decorator and maker of costumes and banners inaugurated a tradition of helping Hoboken and surrounding communities commemorate many of their brightest, and most solemn, public events: uproarious political rallies and gala masquerade balls, the funerals of dignitaries, baseball

games, ship dedications, grand Depression-era re-openings of local banks, and celebrations of Elks, Moose, and marksmen.

United Decorating Co. continues today, at the same 421 Washington Street location, under the stewardship of Robert's grandson, 78-year-old George Kirchgessner. Until recently, George regularly hung flags, banners, and bunting for graduations, mayoral inaugurations, and special civic celebrations, including the 150th anniversary of the first organized baseball game, observed this past Spring. With his wife, Dolores, he runs the storefront shop, which continues to sell costumes, while also introducing items unavailable (and even unthinkable) in his grandfather's time: "green mouth" trick chewing gum, funky plastic novelties, and postcards of Frank Sinatra.

But very little—materially—has been lost of United Decorating's past: the tiny storefront is packed with hundreds of artifacts, dating back to the store's founding. Dozens of these objects, on loan from the Kirchgessner family, form the core of this exhibition, the Hoboken Historical Museum's tenth. Combined with text, and Museum objects and photographs, United Decorating's artifacts allow us to consider, from the vantage point of 421 Washington Street, nearly a century of events of municipal, state, and national significance.

[photo lower left: United Decorating was often hired to decorate Hoboken store fronts [Herold's Bake Shop] for business anniversaries, circa 1938.]

[photo middle right: United Decorating Co. advertising handbill, circa 1918.]

[photo lower right: Badge for German social group, assembled at United Decorating.]

[page 4]

UNITED DECORATING AND THE KIRCHGESSNER FAMILY "DECORATIONS FOR ALL OCCASIONS"

Not much is known about Robert Kirchgessner prior to his arrival in Hoboken. He was born in Germany in 1858 and owned a candy store in Jersey City before moving in 1899, with his German-born wife, Katherine, and four children, Frank, Emma, Olga, and William, to 421 Washington Street.

Alternately listed in early Hoboken directories as "costumer" or "decorator," Robert had established himself as both by 1910—as well as badge-maker; supplier of flags and banners; installer of canopies; and a specialist in "committee suits," the hand-made, fancy dress outfits worn by organizers of the city's numerous parties, concerts, and theatrical events. Robert made sure he joined the decorators' union early on, so no job would be closed to him, and belonged to numerous German social clubs, which furthered his business.' Within fifteen years, United Decorating had out-bid or outlasted all of its competitors; it became the only purveyor of flags and decorations listed in the Hoboken directory. Company ads included a slogan, presented to this day on business cards: "Decorations for All Occasions."

In its earliest years, United Decorating Co. rented the first floor Washington Street walk-up from wine-seller Charlie Weinacht. Later it expanded operations to include a downstairs shop for flags, bunting, make-up, wigs, masks, and men's costumes, while retaining the upper floor for "the ladies costume department," overseen by Katherine.³

Along with her husband and four children, Katherine also assembled badges ordered by civic and fraternal groups, in what was to become a family business tradition. United Decorating was—and continues to be—almost entirely family-run. Besides using the services of the local "sign man" to paint the United Decorating logo on trucks and to produce placards listing available costumes, the only other outside employees were those hired on occasion to assist with the decoration of large buildings.¹

Frank had training as an electrician, and soon left Hoboken for Jersey City, marriage, and his own company. Hand-sewing on committee suits, and later, work on sewing machines, became the province of Olga and Emma Kirchgessner, whose handiwork on costumes and rosettes can be seen on display in "United Decorating, 1899—1997" Photographs also show the "German colors" they stitched together— red, white, and black draperies affixed to buildings for pre-World War I celebrations of the local Schuetzen Corps, a German club devoted to marksmanship.

[photo middle left: Wagon embellished by United Decorating, in front of 421 Washington Street, circa Robert Kirchgessner, wearing a tie, stands on steps.]

[photo bottom left: Bank opening, 14th Street, Hoboken. Now the offices of the Hoboken Reporter.]

[photo bottom right: United Decorating's first truck, a Model T.]

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The vast majority of photographs on exhibition are from the collection of the Kirchgessner family, whose interest in photography spanned three generations, and who had an obvious business need for documentation. For many years, George Kirchgessner recalls, mounted prints of United Decorating displays and committee suit-wearing customers (including a hand-colored image featuring Robert and Katherine) lined the walls of the stairwell up to the second floor ladies' costume department. Dozens of photographic postcards, many taken by William when he first became interested in photography, demonstrated available rental costumes; all were modelled by members of the Kirchgessner family in the backyard of 421 Washington Street, camouflaged by a painted backdrop and an artificial palm usually rented out for parties.

Before Olga left the family business to marry pattern-maker William Smith, she joined her sister to pose in drum majorette costumes. Emma, photographed earlier in Annie Oakley costume, married, too, and the couple moved for a brief period to an apartment above United Decorating. She died in 1931.

By then William, listed as United Decorating's Vice President, was essentially running the family business, and introducing new items based on opportunity and excellent

business acumen. Theatrical lights and costumes, sold to United Decorating by Hoboken's failing theaters, were introduced for rent, as orders for fraternal badges and other mainstays of the teens and twenties were on the decline. His wife, Catherine, in keeping with the tradition started by her late mother-in-law, ran the ladies' costume department and "minded the store" downstairs when William was called out to decorate local halls and storefronts.

Robert Kirchgessner died in 1936. That same year, his grandson, George, got his driver's license and became William's right-hand man until he left for World War II service in 1942. When George returned, and all through the 1950s, father and son worked together, hanging banners, bunting, and draperies — often in an official capacity for the city of Hoboken. "I was his helper," George recalls, "then he became my helper."

In 1955 the Kirchgessner family bought 421 Washington Street, after renting there for more than half a century; that same year, George and Dolores Kirchgessner married.

Over the next 42 years, George and Dolores would see Hoboken change from a city of shipyard workers, to a bleak urban center, to a bedroom community for Wall Street workers. They stayed on at 421 Washington Street, meeting the familiar needs of Hoboken families: hiring out canopies and carpet chairs, making weddings special with flame lights and dais draped in white and silver, hanging bunting and banners, and, in the storefront shop, selling postcards, flags, and costumes, along with the novelties adored by kids of all ages.

The Decorator's Art, 1899-1997

United Decorating has certainly varied its inventory over the past 98 years, but in many ways, its basic products have remained remarkably consistent. Flags, decorations, and draperies — though fashioned today of nylon, polyester, or plastic, instead of the cotton, muslin, and silk of the past—are still the company's stock-in-trade. George Kirchgessner continues to order from the same company his grandfather used: Annin & Co., the world's oldest and largest flag manufacturer, head-

[photo left: Olga and Emma Kirchgessner, modeling rental costumes.]

[photo top right: George Kirchgessner with 1935 United Decorating vehicle, 1936.]

[photo middle right: Emma Kirchgessner as Annie Oakley.]

[photo middle right: William Kirchgessner self-portrait, in Indian costume.]

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quartered in New Jersey for most of its 150 years.

And yet, each generation of Kirchgessners has introduced innovations to the business, too, sometimes in response to political shifts. Increased or altered use of the American flag, for example, has long been fueled by war and "nationalist anxiety about increasing immigration"—an ironic twist considering the immigrant status of United Decorating's

founder, Robert Kirchgessner made lavish use of U.S. flag-imprinted fans, pull-downs, butterflies, centers, and draperies (named after their decorative shape or use), until a code of flag etiquette, compelled by legislation in the early 1920s, condemned such practices. The national flag, the code asserted, should be considered "as a living thing;" consequently, it must never be used as drapery "in any form whatever." Red, white, and blue bunting was the recommended substitute, and was quickly incorporated into company displays.

In the early years, even the longest extension ladder was not enough for very tall buildings. Robert Kirchgessner "had to go up the stairs and stretch out the windows," George Kirchgessner explains. "You'd go up on the roof and hang the decorations down. Then you'd come down, tie it on the next floor, and work your way down."

Most often, change occurred at United Decorating in response to technological developments. The elimination of trolley wires brought an end to United Decorating's "street work," and allowed the company to focus on the decoration of storefronts. Until the Great Depression, Olga and Emma Kirchgessner worked as hand-sewers on mourning draperies, rosettes, and committee suits; today with the increased availability of inexpensive, machine-made products, nearly all United Decorating stock is catalog-purchased and most are made of synthetic fabrics and plastics.

Hand-work has not entirely disappeared from the decorating business, however. George Kirchgessner developed an expertise in banner design, in which letters made of show card are carefully fixed with ticket hooks to a cloth background. George's photographs of his own displays over the past fifty years show banners of increasing complexity and skill, designed for weddings, talent shows, political fund-raisers, and community meetings.

1909 Hudson-Fulton Celebration

One of Robert Kirchgessner's first business cards proudly announced an impressive accomplishment: "Decorator for Hudson-Fulton Celebration and Mardi Gras." The Hudson-Fulton Celebration, held from September 25 to October 9, 1909, commemorated 300 years of Hudson River-based commerce and transportation, and was said to be "the greatest and most brilliant of its kind ever held in America." Hudson communities from New York Harbor to Canada participated. Organizers described the celebration as a commemoration of the importance of Hudson River commerce, the 1609 discovery of the river by Henry Hudson in the Half Moon, and Robert Fulton's contributions to steam

[photo top left: Imported ticket hooks affix show card letters to drapery.]

[photo middle left: Showcard lettering and banners for Grogan election campaign"; text below is as found on banner in image:

END HOBOKEN'S DISGRACE BY VOTING

FOR MAYOR John J. Grogan

FOR COUNCILMEN AT LARGE

E.J. BORRONE S.E.MONGIELLO L.. DE PASCALE

* WARD COUNCILMAN * 1ST WARD L. HAACK 2ND WARD E. MURNANE
3RD WARD A. DAMATO 4TH WARD T. GIORDANO 5TH WARD T. O. REILLY
6TH WARD J. BARTLETTA
VOTE ROW "B" and BE FREE]

[photo bottom: Business card, circa 1909.]

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transportation. But they also promised spectacular and novel events, including an aeronautical display by Wilbur Wright around the Statue of Liberty, and fleets of military and "peace" ships illuminated by "hundreds of searchlights and tons of red fire." Water parades with sailing reproductions of the 1609 Half Moon and Fulton's 1807 Clermont, as well as numerous street processions, ensured festivities on both land and water.

Although the Hudson-Fulton Celebration centered around New York State locations, Hoboken was not to be outdone, nor would city fathers allow Hudson's Hoboken landing, Fulton's Hoboken-based steam navigation experiments, and the steam inventions of Hoboken patriarch John Stevens, to go unrecognized. It sponsored its own "Hudson-Fulton Mardi Gras" to coincide with the New York festivities, and established itself as "the only city to celebrate locally on the Jersey shore."

United Decorating was called upon to decorate Hoboken's City Hall for the October 6th and 7th Mardi Gras, "one of the biggest celebrations in Hoboken's history." For a week prior to the celebration, Robert Kirchgessner's display of flags and bunting drew high praise, along with accolades for an independent electrician's show of lights. "At night the blaze of thousands of incandescent lights on the City Hall, and other public and private buildings, make Hoboken a veritable white city," noted one reporter.

Electricity was available in Hoboken from 1886, when the city's chief engineer turned the switch at the Monroe Street electric plant, allowing exterior lamps to be illuminated. But for many Hobokenites, electricity continued to be a novelty for years thereafter. According to George Kirchgessner, some families did not install interior electric lights until the late 1920s.

On October 7, 1909, an estimated 200,000 onlookers lined the two-mile parade route and cheered 8,000 marchers (many in high hats and frock coats), dozens of decorated carriages, motor cars, and floats representing "practically every Industry of Hoboken." A model of John Stevens' steamer Phoenix, "which Hobokenites declare floated in the waters of the Hudson River before Fulton's Clermont was designed," was greeted by clanging bells and armloads of confetti. At the end of the parade, a Mardi Gras King and Queen, selected by popular vote through the local paper, were escorted by a Hoboken riding club to the grand, fancy dress ball at the Odd Fellows Hall, where the festivities continued until four o'clock the following morning.

Celebrations in "Little Bremen" and Schuetzen Park

From the 1880s to 1918, the influx of German immigrants to Hoboken was so great the mile-square city became known as "Little Bremen." With its German beer gardens, piers lined with German ocean liners, German-language theaters, and numerous athletic clubs devoted to boating, rowing, and marksmanship, Hoboken was a fine location for a

[photo left: Photo postcard of Hoboken City Hall during Hudson-Fulton "Mardi Gras," 1909.]

[photo bottom left: Social club committee wearing identical costumes, circa 1905. Emma Kirchgessner seated first row, right.]

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German-born decorator of civic celebrations. Many of the city's celebratory events were held in the fraternal Independent Order of Odd Fellows Hall, 4,14 Washington Street — fortuitously located across the street from United Decorating. Erected in 1853 and subsequently renovated in 1881 and 1893, the Odd Fellows Hall was known as "the Mecca for gatherings of all sorts," and a "meeting place of a dozen or more lodges and societies."

Several of the more prestigious societies had their own headquarters, however, including the Hudson Street Deutscher Club, with "200 members, all prominent citizens of German origin, and the Quartet [sic - Quartett] Club on Tenth and Washington Streets, "one of the foremost singing societies in the State of New Jersey," which regularly hired Robert Kirchgessner to decorate their second-floor ballroom.

Directories of the period list over 100 clubs, societies, and charitable and benevolent organizations in the city, three dozen of which were German, including several societies established solely for German women. Except for the months when ballroom interiors were too warm, parties, fancy dress balls, and exclusive theatrical performances filled the social calendars of Hoboken's many German residents — the Kirchgessners among them.

From family photographs, we know Robert Kirchgessner alone belonged to at least three German social organizations, including the music club M. Gesang Verein Lyra, founded in September 1870. In one photograph taken during the early years of this century, we see him with his trademark mustache and puckish smile, standing below the club banner. Other photos show Emma Kirchgessner with identically-dressed members of a social club committee; Katherine and Robert dressed in theatrical costume; and Robert with colleagues from one of Hoboken's schuetzen (marksmen) clubs, triumphantly adorned with badges earned at target shooting contests—and most likely acquired through Kirchgessner's company.

From its very beginning, United Decorating was tied to schuetzen events, in Hoboken and in Schuetzen Park. A short trolley ride away from Washington Street, North Bergen's Schuetzen Park was established in 1875 as a recreational site for marksmen,

their annual Plattdeutscher Volksfest, and later, their retirement home, in what was then known as Union Hill. Each August, United Decorating provided decorations

[photo left: Interior of Odd Fellows Hall with decorations, circa 1900.]

[photo right: Independent Order of Odd Fellows Hall, Hoboken.]

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for the Park's festivities; and because the popularity of marksmanship in turn-of-the-century Hoboken was so great, the company was also hired by local schuetzen to embellish Washington Street. German and American flags, draperies, and banners lined the route taken by the equestrian parade to Union Hill.

In addition to decorating for temporal events, United Decorating helped the city celebrate concrete accomplishments, too. A building trend accompanied Hoboken's tremendous growth in pre-World War I population (at its height in 1910, more than 70,000 people resided in the Mile Square City—a vast leap from the 43,000 listed in 1890). Most of the city's public schools, many of its banks, and a 1911 addition to City Hall were built during this boom. Robert Kirchgessner's need for records of his work allows us an image of the 1913 celebratory cornerstone-setting of Hoboken's No.1 School, on Third and Garden Streets. In the foreground are a cluster of city officials, including Mayor Martin Cook; but in the background, atop a Third Street building, is Robert Kirchgessner, admiring his display, and watching history in the making.

WORLD WAR I

As early as 1914 the Jersey Journal reported, "the sorrow of war made itself felt" in Hudson County's German community. Conflict had broken out in Europe, the August 24 account continued, and officials of the fortieth annual Schuetzen Park Plattdeutscher Volksfest "were busy gathering funds to help their brethren in the Fatherland" obtain German Red Cross battlefield aid."

Within the year, Hoboken's marine and rail terminals, docks, piers, and diverse manufacturing base were experiencing a boom, stimulated by the war needs of European allied forces.~° Heightened focus on the war with Germany, notes historian Howard B. Furer, brought fierce anti-German sentiment to the city, and "the charge of potential disloyalty" against foreign-born residents.

Although many German Hobokenites had not yet become United States citizens, they had lived—and prospered—in Hoboken for years, and the children of many were American-born. Civic virtue and sworn loyalty to their adopted country did not prevent them from being denounced as "enemy aliens," however, and when the U.S. declared war against Germany, their ostracism intensified.

On April 6, 1917, more than local dock workers were fired simply because they were German-born. Federal agents and armed soldiers seized the Hoboken docks and ocean liners owned by Germany's North German Lloyd and Hamburg-Amerika Lines, heralding the designation of River Street — "the heart of Hoboken's German section" — as a military zone. Two hundred German-born Hobokenites were arrested and brought to Ellis Island for deportation.

Armed with a federal law that prevented enemy aliens from living within a half-mile of any

[photo top left: Laying the cornerstone for No. 1 School, now David E. Rue School, 1913 - Robert Kirchgessner watches from Third Street.]

[photo bottom right: Cafeteria, Hoboken Y.M.C.A. "Hut," during World War I.]

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military zone, government officials evicted hundreds of German families and closed their shops. The government would later concede the law was unworkable for Hoboken — its mile-square dimensions would have necessitated the forced removal of at least 90 percent of the German population, and hundreds of Hungarians, Turks, and Austrians besides — but permitted the eviction of Germans from River Street. They were confined to another section of the city, patrolled by soldiers.

Germans suddenly found themselves in a city stripped of the trappings of German culture and community that had once invigorated it. Restaurants, clubs, and theaters were closed; those that remained obscured their German orientation. Even the prestigious Deutscher Club von Hoboken, founded in 1864 "to foster the German language, social intercourse, the furtherance of art, and the science of music," changed its name, to the "Union Club."

In concert with their neighbors, most of the city's German families became totally engrossed in the war effort, conserving food, planting "victory gardens," and enduring "heatless Mondays" (when all buildings did without heat to allow more coal for military use.)

The Kirchgessners did their part, too, and more—for they were vendors of one of the city's most popular wartime items: American flags. In cities across the country, flag retailers reported "an unprecedented demand and runaway market" created by the war." And in Hoboken, reminders of the war were inescapable: The city was the point of embarkation and debarkation for three million doughboys during the years of United States involvement in World War I.

Thousands of servicemen crowded the city, waiting to be shipped overseas. Diversions had to be developed, especially since a federal law had closed all taverns within a half-mile of the military zone. Many servicemen passed time in the Y.M.C.A. "Hut," built in Hudson Square Park (Fifth and Hudson Streets) to offer hot showers, billiards, and

reading rooms. Welcoming the troops were United Decorating's red-white-and-blue draperies, which remained on display for the duration of the war.

Following the historic Versailles Peace Treaty that ended the Great War, President Woodrow Wilson returned from France on the George Washington, docking at the Third Street Pier in Hoboken on July 8, 1919. There the president greeted thousands of cheering, flag-waving residents from a reviewing stand draped with flags by United Decorating. Much was made in the papers the following day, of President Wilson's comment that "Hoboken is a beautiful city."

The display of flags and bunting, which reporters said "broke all records for decorations up to that time," was only matched by the "gala appearance" United Decorating helped Hoboken present in honor of Armistice Day, November 11, 1919. "Practically every home,

[photo left: Billiard Room of the Y.M. C.A. "Hut, "1918.]

[photo lower right: President Wilson's motorcade from Hoboken piers, July 8, 1919.]

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public building, and business place in the city, the Jersey Journal reported, "displayed the national colors," as Hoboken celebrated the returning servicemen and the end of military occupation of its waterfront.

Masquerade Balls

Although Emma and Olga Kirchgessner brought success to United Decorating with their carefully stitched committee suits and other fancy dress costumes, the company's rental of elaborate costumes didn't really begin in earnest until 1929, when William purchased costumes from the failing local Rialto Theater. Patrons who had flocked to the Rialto from New York a year earlier to see playwright Christopher Morley's theatrical revivals of old melodramas, were turning from live events to cinema for entertainment.

In a sense, Morley's productions of *After Dark* and *The Black Crook* forestalled the inevitable; as early as 1915. "moving picture exhibitions" in Hoboken outnumbered theater halls three to one. The Kirchgessners were personally aware of this trend, as they owned a nickelodeon in New York City. Robert Kirchgessner purchased the early movie theater as a business investment, and Frank and William were dispatched to collect cash from the tiny silent-film showcase.

The passing of the Hudson Street Rialto had also been preceded by the passing of the Empire vaudeville house at the same address; decades earlier it had been the site of Hoboken's first theater, the Germania. The Rialto, and the Lyric — on whose stage New York theatrical star Lily Langtry had regularly performed — became third-run moving picture houses after their 1929 closings.

But first the old theater yielded to United Decorating dozens of costumes of gypsies, pirates, cowboys, Uncle Sam, monks, and French aristocrats with their own tiaras. Hudson Street "sign man" Leo T. Devlin was hired to hand-letter the company's costume list, which, George Kirchgessner notes, has remained in the 421 Washington Street storefront "all through the thirties, forties, fifties, and sixties. It's always been there."

All through those years, fancy dress balls, and then Halloween parties, were popular entertainments for Hoboken families, and United Decorating rented out the Rialto costumery. William Kirchgessner would repair the elaborate tiaras and crowns as they deteriorated; sometimes he would make new ones himself, such as the sheik's headdress he fashioned out of a trimmed derby hat rolled with material.

United Decorating remained one of the area's premier centers for rental costumes up to the 1980s, when its fragile Rialto Theater stock was retired in favor of packaged, for-sale merchandise.

[photo top left: Complimentary ticket to a masquerade ball.]

[photo left: A detail of the program for After Dark production by Christopher Morley, 1928.]

[photo top right: Young boy in fancy dress costume for German society party.]

[photo bottom right: Frank Kirchgessner in cowboy costume.]

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After the Crash

The Stock Market Crash of 1929, attributed to "the collapse of a great speculative wave that swept over the country," tumbled down on Hoboken, too, changing the face of the city, and altering the lives of many of its citizens." Less than two years after the October crash, the Steneck Trust Company of Hoboken, once a symbol of stability and prosperity, was closed by the State Department of Banking and Insurance because of "substantial capital impairment."

Public reaction was immediate, especially at the Fourth and Adams Street branch, "in the heart of the Italian colony in the western end of the city." Within a half-hour of the bank's closing, a crowd of about 4'000 Italian men and women — some of whom were crying — was said to "surge about the doors of the bank," followed shortly thereafter by "policemen of Italian extraction," sent to "ease their fears."

The police told the crowd "they would probably get their money in a day or two," the Jersey Journal reported. But that promise would not be fulfilled for more than two years, when a new bank, Seaboard Trust, replaced Steneck.

In the intervening years, "stories of unbelievable hardship" were reported in the Journal, as

depositors begged for relief while their life savings remained inaccessible. An Italian grape dealer with a family of eight to support could not get credit to carry on his business, even though Steneck held \$15,000 of his money; an elderly couple, with a passbook listing \$8,000, was reported living without gas, water, or electricity."

The entire city seemed to be held hostage, as merchants hesitated to advance credit to local depositors, and the City of Hoboken, with one million dollars in Steneck's coffers, was forced to borrow from month to month to meet payroll.

After an attorney-led group calling itself the Steneck Depositors and Investors Protective Association attempted to get the bank to re-open and failed, thousands of Hoboken depositors attended public meetings at which new plans, vigorously backed by clergy, were hammered out. The bank's president and vice-president were indicted for fraud, but their trial was repeatedly delayed while their lawyers argued that "with 30,000 depositors of the closed bank inflamed against them, it would be impossible to get an impartial jury."

Finally, on August 15, 1933 came the triumphant opening of the Seaboard Trust to replace Steneck, and plans to make whole its former depositors. United Decorating was hired to drape the bank building with flags and bunting for a city-wide celebration. Five-thousand marchers and more than 50 bands and floats paraded through the streets of Hoboken, after which Seaboard opened its doors to vast crowds.

Three policemen were on duty, but there was "no disorder at the bank," according to the Journal. Despite years of waiting and suffering, depositors were said to be "in such good humor, that the Second Platoon of police, held in reserve at Police Headquarters to serve in case of emergency, was dismissed.

[photo lower left: City-wide celebration of the grand opening of Seaboard Trust (originally Steneck Trust Company of Hoboken), August 15, 1933.]

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Signs of Things to Come World War II

Unlike the period surrounding World War I, there was little anti-German or anti-Italian sentiment in Hudson County during World War II. And yet, prior to U.S. involvement in the Second World War, many Hudson County Italian and German immigrants supported the Fascisti and Nazi administrations in their homelands. As early as 1930 when Hoboken was celebrating the 300th anniversary of the deeding of the land to "Hoboken's first white settlers," local Socialist Italians protested that Fascisti supporters intended to "use the occasion to demonstrate for the King of Italy and Mussolini," and they could not join a march where "Italians in America wished to express allegiance to foreign rulers."

Such allegiance, however, was never openly declared in the march that closed the gala,³ a nine-day event that most certainly received assistance from United Decorating. Press accounts praise a "daring and unique" aviation demonstration by trans-Atlantic flier Clarence Chamberlin over the Stevens Institute athletic field and a brilliant pyrotechnic display of portraits of Hoboken's founding fathers and Mayor Bernard McFeely.³

By 1931 Italians had superseded Germans as Hoboken's leading foreign-born population, though German-born residents still made up nearly ten percent of the entire population, with countless more native-born citizens of German ancestry. Political sympathies varied among these and other Hudson County Germans, but newspaper coverage of the prewar period shows some were staunch supporters of the elected government of Adolph Hitler.

At an April 1935 dinner sponsored by the Red Star Line and held aboard the Hoboken-docked S.S. Westernland for Hoboken businessmen and Hudson County German organizations, "more than half the gathering stood at attention and gave the Nazi salute as 'Deutschland Uber Alles' was sung following the American national anthem," according to a Jersey Journal report. "An even greater number joined in the salute as 'Horst Wesel,' a Nazi song which has become the national anthem of the Third Reich, burst forth, apparently spontaneously." A parade followed, welcoming the Red Star liners, the first ships flying the German flag to dock in Hoboken since 1914. Before a crowd of 25,000, more than 2,500 members of 35 Hudson County German societies marched, with about 100 marchers dressed in Nazi uniforms. Despite protests by Jewish veterans of World War I, 16 flags bearing the Nazi swastika were carried in the parade. Mayor McFeely, the Journal reported, responded to critics by pointing out that the State Department had sanctioned the swastika flag, along with the red-white-and-black flag of the German Republic, as that nation's official banners.

George Kirchgessner recalls working on a job for longtime Schuetzen Park clients prior to U.S. entry into World War II: with his father, he installed flags emblazoned with swastikas. Newspaper coverage of the June 1935 German Day fete noted "a feature of the observance was the dedication of three new flags: one American, one German Republic in red, white and black, and one Nazi flag." Park attendance was estimated at 5,000. Thirty-three German societies attended; more than 100 members of the Deutsche Marine Verein of New York were dressed in black breeches, boots, and caps, and wore swastika arm-bands. The principal address, delivered by the president of Hudson County's United German-American Societies and vice-president of the Union City Board of Education, "attacked professional Jews," the Journal reported, "calling on them to desist from their agitating."

Press accounts indicate the most vigorous Hudson County protests against Nazism prior to U.S. involvement in World War II — including the burning of an effigy of Hitler — were initiated by veterans of all backgrounds, including, as anti-Nazi sentiment burgeoned, some German veterans. In 1938, representatives of a Jersey City post of the German War

[5 photos right side: Service flags offered for sale at United Decorating, circa 1942.]

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Veterans in America told reporters they would substitute the word "convention" for "bund"—used in the past to refer to a national or state convention—because the German term had become identified with the reviled, pro-Nazi German-American Bund, an office of which was located in Union City.

By August 1940 when the sixty-sixth annual Plattdeutsch Volksfest was held at Schuetzen Park, "the theme of the entire ceremony was patriotism to the United States, and decorations were in American flags only." Following an automobile parade from the Lackawanna Ferry in Hoboken, members of the Plattdeutsch Volksfest Verein of New York and New Jersey sang the "Star Spangled Banner." Every speaker, "without exception," the Jersey Journal noted, "stressed that the Volksfest Verein was strictly a charitable organization, owing allegiance only to the United States."

This patriotic theme only intensified by 1941 when the United States entered the war. Flags and flag mounts—often for block flag-raising—flew out the door of United Decorating, which also began selling items meant to encourage support for the war effort, including window flags designed to show the service record of family members, decorations for bond drives, and finally, banners to welcome returning G.I.s home.

George Kirchgessner entered the U.S. Army during the Spring of 1942, but before he was called to service, he worked at Hoboken's Bethlehem Steel Shipyard, converting passenger ships to troop ships, and assisted his father at United Decorating, providing decorations for ship dedications.

1946 Baseball Centennial

Of course, United Decorating was there for the gala celebration of June 19, 1946, marking the 100th anniversary of the first organized game of baseball, played on Hoboken's Elysian Fields.

After a luncheon at Meyer's Hotel, where Hobokenites hobnobbed with baseball bigwigs, the ceremonies began. Crowds of baseball enthusiasts and an impressive list of dignitaries — including entertainers George Burns and Gracie Allen; baseball commissioner Happy Chandler; legendary umpire Bill Klem; "Clown Prince of Baseball" Al Schacht; National League president Ford Frick; and 82-year-old Jocko Fields, the oldest living person to play baseball on the original Elysian Fields — assembled at a viewing stand ornamented by United Decorating, on Eleventh and Hudson Streets. Earlier, a plaque declaring Hoboken as the birthplace of baseball had been installed nearby.

The well-publicized event drew film crews, who set up equipment to document the ceremonies, in which dozens of parade floats were displayed, including a large-scale reproduction of an 1866 Currier and Ives print, produced by Hoboken-based Maxwell House, the event's sponsor; a comic baseball skit, created by Maxwell House radio stars

Burns and Allen for the occasion, was broadcast live over WOR; veterans of World War II and the Demarest High School Red Wings played a game of baseball; and movies from the 1945 World Series were screened.

Political Parades, City Celebrations, and Funerals

Tipped into United Decorating scrapbooks are photographs of city celebrations spanning several generations, beginning with Robert Kirchgessner's work for the 50th anniversary of

[photo bottom right: Jagels & Bellis Coal Company float, Fourth of July parade, 1912.]

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the incorporation of the City of Hoboken, on March 28, 1905.

The city was said to have "be-buntinged itself to death" that day, with each house "bedecked with flags and bunting" and "strings of lanterns blocks long [making] the streets as light as day." Ten-thousand marchers and more than 100 floats, carriages, and automobiles covered a parade route two miles long through city streets. Included in the last division of local clubs were members of the Robert Davis Association of Hudson County, wearing on their coat lapels silk badges bearing the democratic political organization's name.

Fifty years later, United Decorating was there to hang draperies and bunting for the City Centennial. No longer involved in "street work," Robert's son, William, and grandson, George, focused on storefronts and the City Hall reviewing stand, behind which the top-hatted Mayor John Grogan, Governor Robert Meyner, and grand marshal Colonel Basil Stevens took in a three-hour parade.

The 15,000-strong March 1955 parade was the highlight of a week-long, citywide celebration, in which Hudson Square Park was renamed Stevens Park in honor of Hoboken's founding citizen (and Col. Steven's forebear). Parade floats depicted various aspects of Hoboken's history or referred to the city's industrial present, ranging from a float for "Miss Centennial Beauty" sponsored by a meat products company, to models of bubble-blowing bottles of 7-Up, Tootsie-rolls, and an "old-fashioned tea party" courtesy of Thomas J. Lipton, Inc.

Just one year prior, Hoboken's Chamber of Commerce had gone all out — with decorations assistance by United Decorating — sponsoring a music festival for Stephen Foster Week. The composer had resided at 601 Bloomfield Street in 1854 when he wrote and published his ballad "Jeanie With the Light Brown Hair."

United Decorating's scrapbooks also feature turning points in the city's political course: Every victorious mayoral inauguration needs flags and a dressed bandstand, and the company has been there to provide them since the early 1930s. And when the city losses a

leader, as it did when standing mayor Tom Vezzetti — the self-described "wackiest mayor in America," who swept into office in a seemingly miraculous upset victory over longstanding incumbent Steve Cappiello — died of a heart attack in 1988, United Decorating draped City Hall in mourning black.

Political groups of all stripes and a vast range of Hudson County social organizations have called upon United Decorating to provide them with banners over the years: the Christopher Columbus Memorial Committee, Schuetzen Park Carnivale, Turk's Social and Athletic Club, N.A.A.C.P. Freedom Fund Dinner Dance, the Slavonian Benevolent Society... The list hints at changes in the city's ethnic

[photo bottom left: Wedding dais by United Decorating Co., at Hoboken's Odd Fellows Hall.]

[photo upper right: Silk badge for the Robert Davis Association of Hudson County, circa 1905.]

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character, as well as a continuous stream of civic-minded residents.

After more than five decades of climbing ladders, George Kirchgessner limits his decorating work today to a choice few Hoboken events. But inside 421 Washington Street are tiny signs of all the municipal and social events for which banners were made: a slew of political buttons, offered for sale.

United Decorating 1997

Any Hoboken kid in need of mustache wax, fright wigs, or "snapping" gum (it snaps your fingers if you try to pull a piece from the pack), or a teacher looking for American flags, old Hoboken postcards, or a portrait of Martin Luther King, will make her way to 421 Washington Street. For in addition to decorating local events, United Decorating has been selling contemporary novelties, costumes, and postcards for almost two decades.

"We went into novelties heavily in the eighties, when we gave up rentals [of costumes]," George Kirchgessner recalled recently. "You couldn't keep up with all the stuff they're looking for today. Everyone sees television and they expect that!" Besides, he added, "no one really rents any more," so United Decorating made the switch to selling packaged costumes.

The big hits at United Decorating, though, are the novelties. Costume-buying customers flock to the store for Halloween, but kids and adult pranksters stop in regularly to stock up on stink bombs, rubber rats, fake ice, and the ever-popular plastic dog-doo.

United Decorating gets lots of catalogs these days, from novelties suppliers all over the country. Many more companies are involved in the business. So what encourages George and Dolores to buy one novelty over another? "You have a hunch it's going to do

something, that people will buy it for a reason," George explained. And he and Dolores found "the more we had, the more people would come in. It drew people in."

Regular postcard buyers come in, too, often to check out the store's diverse supply of older views of cities and towns, especially those in New Jersey. Postcard hunters from the tri-state area know to stop in at United Decorating for the vintage cards, categorized by topic. And everyday browsers find a selection of old and new: on the racks in February or December are old Valentine's Day or Christmas postcards, right alongside the new cards of Sinatra, Springsteen, and the New York City skyline—photographed from Hoboken.

Stepping into United Decorating is like paging through a family album—of an entire city. Curious about the Union Club? United Decorating has pictures of it before and after it changed its name. Wonder about the creation of the Lincoln Tunnel? William Kirchgessner decorated the ground-breaking. Looking for a postcard of one of Hoboken's old beer gardens? Go to United Decorating.

"United Decorating 1899—1997" has gleaned from that source. But if you really want to know Hoboken, a stop at 421 Washington Street is a must.

[photo top left: Firemen's monument bedecked with bunting, circa 1910.]

[end main text]

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Notes

Frequently cited newspapers, books, and collections have been abbreviated as follows: Evening Journal of Jersey City: EJ (The Evening Journal of Jersey City was the precursor of today's Jersey Journal); Jersey Journal: JJ; Scot M. Guenter, *The American Flag, 1777—1924: Cultural Shifts from Creation to Codification* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990): AF; Hoboken Public Library collection: HOB; Hoboken Historical Museum collection: HHM.

1. See Polk's Directory from 1901 through 1909 advertisement in the 1910 Souvenir Fiftieth Anniversary Exempt Volunteer Firemen of the City of Hoboken, 1860—1910; and interview with George Kirchgessner [GK], January 1997.

2. See 1925—1926 Parker's Directory for the City of Hoboken.

3. Unless otherwise noted, United Decorating facts are from interviews with GK, January—March, 1997. Transcripts HHM.

4. According to GK, sign man Leo T. Devlin was, at the very least, responsible for painting the United Decorating logo on the 1935 truck; the painted placard listing costumes, on display at City Hall, was also created by Devlin.

5. Interview, GK, January 28, 1997.
6. Wendy Kaminer, summarizing AF in "God's Stars and Stripes: A Burning Issue?" The Nation, April 28, 1997.
7. AF, Chapters 7 and 8.
8. Hudson-Fulton Celebration flyer, no author, from the collection of the Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.
9. EJ advertisement, September 25, 1909.
10. "Success of Mardi Gras Assured," EJ, September 25, 1909.
11. EJ, editorial, September 27, 1909.
12. EJ, October 5, 1909.
13. EJ, October 5-8, 1909.
14. "Fire Guts Big Hall in Hoboken," JJ, December 26, 1911.
- 15- John J. Heaney, The Bicentennial Comes to Hoboken, booklet published July 4, 1976: 78.
16. Frances Sinisi, "Remember When...," JJ clipping, dated 1977: Hoboken History vertical file HOB.
17. 1915 Polk's Directory.
18. Schuetzen Park information from interview with manager Chris Wolf, March 11, 1997. Transcript on file with HHM.
19. "Fortieth Annual Volksfest Closes," JJ, August 24, 1914.
20. Unless otherwise indicated, all Hoboken-related World War I facts are from Howard B. Furer, "Heaven, Hell or Hoboken," Hoboken History (1994); 3-10 reprinted from the Autumn 1974 issue of the New Jersey Historical Society's New Jersey History.
21. Jersey Observer, clipping from HOB vertical file on city clubs, dated March 1935.
22. AF: 163.
23. "Wilson is Due at Hoboken at Three O'Clock," JJ, July 8, 1919, and JJ editorial, July 9, 1919.

- 24- "Armistice Day is Celebrated: Bayonne and Hoboken are Gala With Patriotic Colors Today," JJ, November 11, 1919.
25. 1915 Hudson County Business Directory.
26. Encyclopedia of New Jersey (New York: Somerset Publishers, 1983:250.
27. "Stock Prices Again Tumble in Last Hour," JJ, October 23. 1929.
28. "State Officials and Hudson Bank Men Confer 7 Hours Before Course is Determined," JJ, June 27. 1931. Unless otherwise stated, early reports of the Steneck Bank closure are from this source.
29. "With Thousands in Closed Bank, Steneck Depositors Have to Beg," JJ, October 15, 1932: I.
30. Ibid.
31. JJ, June 22-24. 1933.
32. JJ, August 16, 1933.
33. "Italian Tilt Clouds Close of City Fete," JJ, October 11, 1930.
34. JJ October 13, 1930.
35. JJ, October 7-8, 1930.
36. "Foreign Born in Hoboken Listed," Jersey Observer, October 3, 1931.
37. "U.S. Takes Tax as Dinner Is Held on Liner in Hoboken... Many at Gathering Give Nazi Salute," JJ, April 10, 1935; "Swastika Paraded Despite Jewish Veterans' Protest," JJ, April 22, 1935.
38. "Germany Day Fete is Held," JJ, June 24. 1935.
39. "City Fathers Get Report on Bund Fracas," JJ, October 6, 1938; "German Veterans Drop Term 'Bund'," JJ November 15, 1938.
40. "Americanism Stressed at Verein Volksfest," JJ, August 12, 1940.
41. "Baseball Centennial to Be Celebrated in Hoboken," JJ, June 7, 1946; "Hoboken Today Commemorates First Known Baseball Contest," JJ, June 19, 1946.

42. "Badges That Recall Glory of Davis Association," Jersey Observer, December 29, 1934; Heaney, Bicentennial Comes to Hoboken, 126.

43. JJ, March 26 and 28, 1955; "General Parade Order of the Hoboken Centennial Parade" and assorted clippings HOB vertical file, Centennial.

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