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# Colorado's German Connection

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Colorado owes  
much of its  
heritage to the  
German



ernment and Federal Republic of Germany have designated this to be a year of celebration "to emphasize the close relationship" of the two nations.

And to celebrate Colorado's Germanic heritage, the Institute of International Education and the Goethe Club of Denver are sponsoring a German Heritage Festival Oct. 1 and 2 at Elitch Gardens.

Highlighting the weekend event will be lectures and slide shows tracing the history of German settlers in Colorado. Cultural exhibitions of German artifacts, demonstrations of their crafts



immigrants who  
settled here in  
the 1800s. They  
prospered, and  
gave back to the  
state what they  
gained



*The Turnverein Hall on East 12th Avenue near Larimer Street*

Stories By HOWARD M. KAPLAN  
*Denver Post Staff Writer*

THEY WERE STOLID, conservative, industrious. They prospered, and they left their mark. Names like Coors, Kountze, Boettcher, Kuner. They are old names, the first in a line of what became some of Colorado's most prominent families who built the foundation for today's Colorado and many of its institutions.

What links these widely disparate pioneers is their German heritage. Chief among them, without question, would be the dynasties of the Boettcher and Coors families in many categories of civic and cultural achievement, educational assistance, and community public service above and beyond the call of normal civic responsibility.

Following them, at a modest distance, would be the Kountzes, Kuners and Zangs. Certainly many other individuals — and smaller family groups — of German origin also contributed freely and willingly to their communities and areas, as well as to the state, but few have done so with the lasting impact of the relatively small circle of the business aristocracy. Generations of Boettchers, Coorses, and Kountzes have furthered the development and direction of Colorado.

This year marks 300 years of German immigration to the United States. In observance of the anniversary, the U.S. gov-

by some of the German-breed dog show also will be featured.

THE 1860 FEDERAL census tallied fewer than 2,700 foreigners in the portions of Kansas and Nebraska that soon were to be consigned to Colorado Territory. Within a decade, foreign-born settlers had more than doubled their share of the total population, claiming 15 percent of the Territory's nearly 40,000 citizens.

Arapahoe County, (of which Denver was then the seat of government), boasted the largest foreign-born population in Colorado with all of its residents, except for a few hundred, situated in what is now Denver. There were 500 Irish, 576 Germans, and 250 "English," including Scottish, immigrants. None, however, played any significant role in regional life or activity until after the Civil War.

The Germans, however, managed to staff a full company of the First Colorado Volunteers in that war. At its conclusion, the Germans in Denver, predominantly Prussians, formed the Turnverein, the longest-lived, continuously operating ethnic association in Colorado.

"So constant are references to Germans in Denver newspapers, especially after 1866, the first 15 years of Denver's immigration could be labeled the German years," wrote Professor Stephen Leonard, of the Metropolitan State College history department. Indeed, by the early 1870s, the Germans had become the foremost ethnic contingent in Denver. By 1880, they numbered almost 2,100 and by 1890 there were 5,373 — first-ranking in number of immigrants. Thus, between 1870-90, when Denver's population rose from less than 5,000 to more than 100,000, the Germans increased their numbers tenfold.

By 1900, Denver had 45 German societies; by 1910, the Germans comprised 43 percent of Colorado's entire population.

In 1870, Augustine A. Knoblach published Colorado's first German-language newspaper. Until that time, German residents had to rely on papers mailed in from larger eastern cities — Cincinnati, Chicago, St. Louis or Milwaukee. Knoblach's paper lasted only three months, but in 1871, his typesetter, Frank Kratzer started The Denver German Newspaper. In 1872, it was joined by another paper, The Colorado Journal, published by William Witteborg from Soest, Westphalia. Witteborg had traveled around the United States, working at the printing trade

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