

SANTA CLARA'S GERMAN NEIGHBORHOOD

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During the nineteenth century, Santa Clara was home to a substantial German immigrant population. Many of these new arrivals clustered together in a neighborhood near what is now Santa Clara University. As the university has expanded, it has begun to impact portions of this historic neighborhood. Recent archaeological excavations have encountered many features related to this historic German neighborhood. Although analysis is ongoing, the material recovered from these features provides some insight into the lives of Santa Clara's ethnic German community.

TURMOIL IN GERMANY

During much of the nineteenth century, the area today known as "Germany" was a loose federation of fiefdoms held together under a weak monarchy. It served as a buffer zone between England, France, and Russia, which used it as a battlefield for their numerous wars and political maneuverings. Germany's borders fluctuated as a result of these various incursions. Despite the meddling of its neighbors, Germany surged ahead into the Industrial Revolution, rapidly increasing its production of coal, iron, and other industrial products. Industrial production was not the only thing to see a rapid increase; the area's population effectively doubled during the first half of the nineteenth century. Agricultural production was not capable of keeping up with the rapidly expanding population. This problem was exacerbated by serious crop failures in 1846 and 1847, which led to widespread starvation, further heightening an already unstable political situation. The result was the revolution of 1848, which led in turn to a series of social and political upheavals that rocked the country throughout the rest of the century.

As a result of the social turmoil in Germany, many fled their country. Known as the 1848'ers, many were political dissidents fleeing the government's violent backlash to the revolution. Others sought religious freedom, but most left in the hopes of bettering their economic position. Some moved elsewhere in Europe, but many looked to the developing nations of the New World as the place to make a new start. As a result, between 1848 and 1914 approximately six million Germans emigrated to the U.S., settling mostly in the cities of the East and Midwest, and the vast farming lands of the Midwest.

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Other German immigrants moved farther westward, and by the 1860s a substantial number of them had settled in and around Santa Clara, eventually making up 20 percent of the town's total population (Garcia et al. 2002; Garcia 2004; also see Figure 1). As was common elsewhere, they congregated together and formed their own ethnically German neighborhood. The area, mostly north of the campus, became one of mixed residential and commercial use, with a scattering of houses interspersed among a variety of businesses. Many of these businesses were German-owned, and provided a ready source of employment for newly arriving German immigrants.

The Eberhard Tannery was one of the biggest employers of these German immigrants. Jacob Eberhard was born in 1837 in the Grand Duchy of Baden, which later became part of Germany. He emigrated to the U.S. at age 15, and lived in Galena, Illinois for a number of years, learning the tanning and leather working trade. He later moved to California, where he eventually purchased the Santa Clara Tannery, after having married the previous owner's daughter. Although the tannery itself dated back to the Mission and

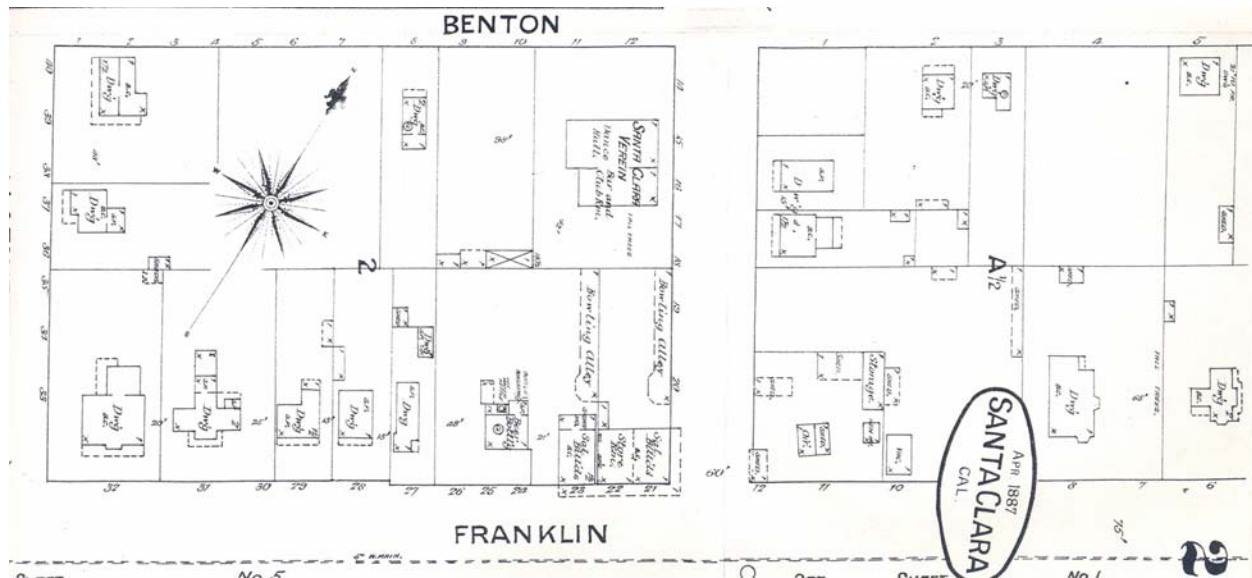


Figure 1. 1887 Sanborn insurance map, showing area north of SCU campus and Franklin Street.

Mexican periods, it was Eberhard who built it into one of the largest in California, producing over 900,000 lbs. of leather annually. He was a generous man, sharing the tannery's profits with his 70 or so employees. His house was located on what is now the SCU campus, and previously archaeologists have excavated a privy associated with his family's residence (Harris et al. 1995).

The Santa Clara Brewery, situated at the northeast corner of Benton and Alviso streets, was another important source of employment for the growing German community. George Lauck, the owner of the brewery, was born in Germany in 1838, and emigrated to the U.S. at age 16. Like Eberhard, he lived in Galena, Illinois for a number of years, learning the brewing trade. It is probably not a coincidence that the two men ultimately set up shop near each other, and many other German-Illinois community members eventually came to Santa Clara. Other German businesses in the neighborhood included bakeries, a beer-bottling plant, saloons, a paint shop, pharmacies, and other businesses essential to the daily lives of the local inhabitants.

Santa Clara's German neighborhood also had a lively social side. Aside from several saloons, the community also built the Santa Clara Verein. In 1880, Jacob Eberhard deeded his portion of Lot 2 on Block 402 to the Santa Clara Verein; the land was valued at \$800. An early history of Santa Clara County (Munro-Fraser 1881:55) describes what the building looked like at that time: "Their hall, a neat structure, is frescoed and tastefully ornamented, and is 60 ft. by 34 ft. with a commodious stage at one end. The Club is divided into a turn-verein for gymnastic exercises, as well as being for dramatic and musical affairs." The 1887 Sanborn map shows two rooms, a larger "dance hall" on the north side, and a smaller "Bar and Club Room" on the south side. Essentially a social club, the Verein served many functions, with a gymnasium that also served as an auditorium and dance hall, as well as a bar (McCormac-Groff 1979; Schaefer 1997). The Santa Clara Verein was reported to be the "IN" place, with many social gatherings held there as well as meetings for a variety of fraternal organizations.

By the late 1880s, Santa Clara's German population had become large and settled enough to support their own German-language newspaper. The neighborhood remained largely German until World War I. Although the U.S. remained neutral for most of the war, anti-German sentiment grew in America, and it became ever more problematic to openly profess pride in their German heritage. The final straw came when the U.S. entered the War in 1917 on the side of the Allies. Within a few years the cohesion of Santa Clara's German neighborhood began to fade. Over time most of the neighborhood's old buildings were torn down,

and their inhabitants faded into the general population. Today the only standing vestige of this once thriving community is a lone residence known as the Larder House, located on Alviso Street between Franklin and Benton streets.

ARCHAEOLOGY AT SCU

From historic Sanborn Insurance maps, researchers estimated where buildings had been located, and where intact archaeological deposits might be expected (Allen et al. 2004). In urban settings such as this, the focus is usually placed on outhouses and trash pits, which can provide snapshots of daily life in the past. From previous experience elsewhere on campus, archaeologists expected to remove a thick overburden of imported fill. Anticipating this, excavations proceeded with the aid of heavy equipment used to strip off three to five feet of modern fill, before encountering the nineteenth-century materials. Surprisingly, at times materials were encountered as much as 17 ft. below grade. This method of excavation revealed approximately 65 archaeological features, ranging from the Mission period to the modern era. Six of these features were definitively dated to the period when the neighborhood was predominately occupied by German immigrants.

These six features were a series of privies associated with a number of different households and businesses. Each was carefully hand-excavated. Most were redwood-lined, which helped to define their boundaries as excavation proceeded. Artifacts recovered from these features are currently under study. Preliminary results indicate that they were filled predominately with domestic materials, including tableware, food storage vessels, clothing items, toys, and the like.

THE EMIG FAMILY

By chance, of the six excavated features associated with the German neighborhood, four were associated with one German family, the Emigs (Figure 2). Jacob Emig was born in Germany in 1842, emigrated to the U.S. in 1867, and married a German woman named Elizabeth in 1868. Franz was born in Germany in 1853, emigrated to the U.S. in 1875, and married Sophia Frank in Santa Clara in 1876. Christopher was born in Germany in 1855, emigrated to the U.S. with Franz in 1875, and married Augustine Gubsen in Santa Clara in 1886.

Christopher went to work for the Santa Clara Tannery, later known as the Eberhard Tannery. Meanwhile Jacob and Franz established “Emig Brothers,” a consortium that operated a beer-bottling plant as well as a saloon on Franklin Street. The plant bottled the beer of George Lauck’s Santa Clara Brewing Company, as well as Fredericksburg Brewing Company beer, brewed in nearby San Jose. This facility was in operation by 1887 and over the years was staffed by several others of the Emig Family. The bottling plant lasted until about 1900, when the Santa Clara Brewery went defunct and the Fredericksburg brewery began to do most of their bottling in-house. The Emig family also established a carriage-painting shop. The beer-bottling plant was expanded to house the new business, which was run by Christian F. Emig.

Two of the excavated features were situated on the parcel behind the beer-bottling plant/paint shop. Not surprisingly the primary component of this feature was alcohol bottles, predominately glass beer and ceramic ale bottles. Also present were tablewares, drinking vessels, and other sundry items. One surprising component was a vast number of buttons (almost 400 in total) which, combined with the approximately 100 bluing balls used for whitening, indicates that someone was probably operating a laundry here as well. Although to date no documentary record has been found of such a facility here, the hot water kettle and bottle washing facilities at the bottling plant would easily have served the needs of a nineteenth-century laundry.

The saloon, known as the Tivoli, was located adjacent to the beer-bottling plant, and sported a bowling alley to the rear. Figure 3, noted as a “Bowling alley on Franklin Street” is likely a depiction of this facility. Recreational activities at saloons became increasingly important as competition increased. With bowling’s origin in medieval German peasant society, it seems a logical choice for entertainment in a saloon servicing a German-American clientele.



Figure 2. The Emig brothers. Front row (L to R): Henry and Jacob Emig. Back row (L to R): Franz, Christopher F. (Criss), and Christopher Emig. Henry, Jacob, Franz and Christopher are brothers. Christopher F. (Criss) is Jacob's oldest son. Lorie Garcia Historical Collection.

A single privy was excavated directly behind the saloon. Artifacts recovered from this feature included a wider assortment of alcohol bottles, tumblers, stemware, and other drinking vessels, and tablewares, probably used to serve patrons meals, as many saloons of the period offered free lunches to draw in customers.

Another excavated feature was a privy situated behind Franz Emig's house on Benton Street. Franz lived here with his wife Sophie and their five children. In contrast to the deposits associated with the commercial ventures, this feature should provide some insight into the daily lives of one German family. The artifact assemblage is much more diverse, and includes a wide variety of tablewares, food storage vessels, food remains, clothing items, and personal objects.

FUTURE AND CONTINUED RESEARCH

Initial pre-excavation research was conducted to provide researchers with enough information to be able to anticipate what might be found, and who it might be associated with. Now that archaeology has identified particular archaeological features of interest, we are going back and filling in the gaps in our

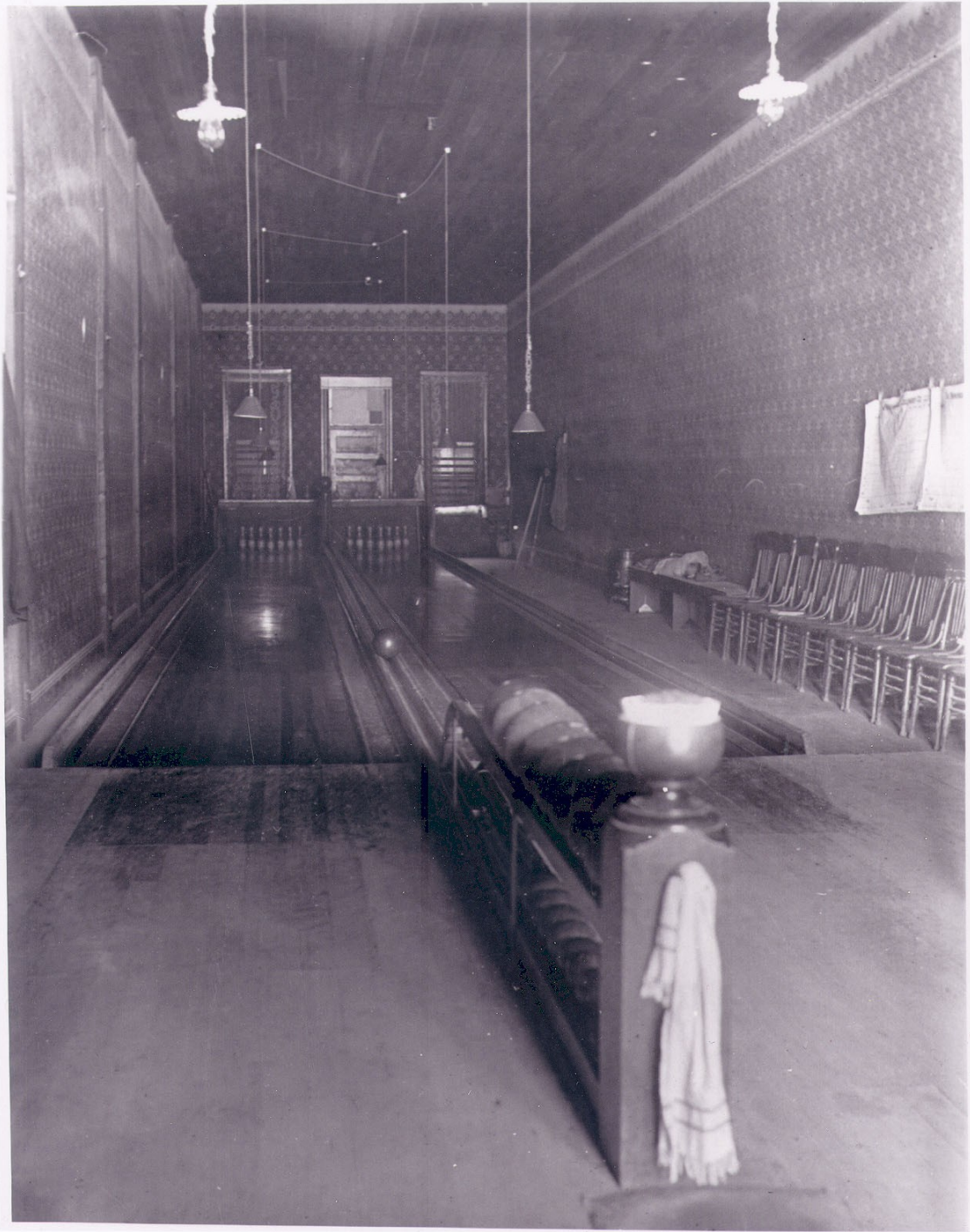


Figure 3. Bowling alley on Franklin Street (likely the alley associated with Tivoli Saloon). Courtesy of City of Santa Clara Historic Archives.

historical knowledge concerning the individuals associated with these features. More research is needed to flesh-out the history of and surrounding these people. Artifact analysis and interpretation are ongoing. Ultimately, the findings will be reported in a technical report and interpretive articles, and will include intra-site comparisons with other known ethnic German neighborhoods in California.

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