

German Immigrants in the United States

As early as the 17th century, many German immigrants have been attracted to leave their country for a promising life in the United States. Today, approximately one-quarter of Americans claim some degree of German ancestry.

October 6 is celebrated to commemorate the day on which Germantown, Pennsylvania was founded by Franz Daniel Pastorius in 1683 and settlement in the North American colonies began. Latest research, however, has shown that 18 German immigrants were among the residents of the British colony of Jamestown, Virginia, as early as 1608.

In the years following, many of the German immigrants rose to prominence in the national life of the United States and helped to shape American history and institutions. Among many names which come to mind are

- **Peter Minuit** (*1580 in Wesel, † 1638 in the West Indies) who bought the island of Manhattan from the Native Americans for 60 Dutch guilders and became *New Amsterdam's* (now called New York) first governor
- **Jacob Leisler** (*1640 Frankfurt, † 1691 in New York) who has been credited by historians as the first politician to demand unity among the colonies
- **Peter Zenger** (*1697 in Upper-Palatinate, † 1746 in New York) a journalist, who won a historic court case in 1735 establishing the freedom of the press
- **Baron Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben** (*1730 in Magdeburg, † 1794 in Oneida County, N.Y.), who trained and fought with Washington's troops during the American Revolutionary War
- **Carl Schurz** (*1829 in Liblar, † 1906 in New York), who fled from German prisons to America, there became a close friend of President Lincoln and commanded troops in the Union Army, then became Senator of Missouri and finally Secretary of the Interior
- **Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau** (*1888 in Bielefeld, † 1931 in Santa Barbara, CA) who directed films like "Nosferatu" and "Sunrise"
- **Henry Kissinger** (*1923 in Fuerth/Bavaria), Secretary of State under President Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford.