

\*music\*

Hal Gorby ([00:28](#)):

Traveling around Center Market today, you get the sense of a vibrant hub of small businesses, craft beer, and a true Wheeling staple, Coleman's Fish Market, but traveling back in time, this neighborhood, and what was known as the city's fifth ward was the heart of German Wheeling. Wheeling was the city on the make, made by scores of new immigrants. First, there were English, Scots and Welsh immigrants, but as the mid 19th century arrived, hundreds of Irish and German immigrants arrived in Wheeling to work at its developing iron glass brewing and transportation industries. And for the weary travelers arriving by river road and rail by the mid 19th century, they would have encountered a small German city. Wheeling was a very German town. It had German language newspapers, several German singing societies, German banks, and businesses. And of course, breweries and saloons. One of Wheeling's most famous citizens to come out of this era was German American brewer and entrepreneur Henry Schmulbach.

Hal Gorby ([01:35](#)):

In Victorian era Wheeling, no one else was more of a Renaissance man than Henry Schmulbach. He was involved in beer making, he had financial interests in iron mills, banks, bridge companies. He served as a member of the city board of public works. He built an amusement park for working class Wheelingites and was a noted philanthropist. He was also someone who reflected Wheeling's gritty working-class character. He was invested in the saloon trade in town, loved horse racing and gambling, and was often criticized for his corrupt influence on local politics and the lack of regulation of the proliferation of the city saloons, fake hotels, and of course, houses of ill fame. Oh, and he may have murdered a man in 1878, but we'll get to that later. Schmulbach was a household name by the 19 hundreds. In 1906, the newspaper, the Wheeling Intelligencer did a series of caricatures, a local version of a political cartoon, calling out those who have influence over the city. In this cartoon, Schmulbach is sitting at the top of the aptly named Schmulbach building that he built in downtown Wheeling along market street. Tucked under one arm are the fruits of his years of business success. Under the other arm is a streetcar and hanging at his feet are his bank book and a telephone receiver. He is wisely blowing off the suds of a big German mug of lager that he's holding in his left hand. To go along with the cartoon, here's what the paper printed in poetic verse.

Speaker 3 ([03:12](#)):

The Colonel Henry here we show he needs no panegyric, yet into type some facts we throw in language semi lyric. He owns a bunch of gilt-edge loans. He mixes with the bankers and then he owned some telephones, for politics he hankers. He hatches plans beneath his hat. He owns a tall skyscraper and many people tell us that he partly owns a paper. He runs a dandy street car line. And as a mild reaction, he mixes up with judgment fine, the suds of satisfaction. With busy head and sturdy frame, he labors for the masses. He gathers fame unto his name with every day that passes. We sing his praise because we know that you'll be glad to hear it. In stunted space, we've tried to show his enterprising spirit. Thus ends our crude and brief review with greetings now we close it. Well, Henry here's regards to you and Henry answers, prose it!

Hal Gorby ([04:09](#)):

Living during the height of Wheeling's Victorian glory age, Henry's life serves as a useful window into life in Wheeling when it was the state capital of West Virginia, a booming industrial sector, a rough and tumble center of working-class amusement and vice culture, and a city eventually hit hard by statewide

prohibition of alcohol in 1914. This is "Henry the life and legacy of Wheeling's most notorious brewer" production of Wheeling heritage media. I am your host, William Hal Gorby, a teaching assistant professor of history at West Virginia University in Morgantown, West Virginia, whose research has focused on Wheeling's working class and immigrant history during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Over the next few weeks, we will be looking at Henry's life and how it intersects with various key themes in Wheeling's history. We will examine the role of German immigration on the city, the development of brewery, hear about a crazy murder in the summer of 1878. Look into the efforts to address the city's growing urban troubles, reform efforts like prohibition and the role this history plays in historic preservation efforts and entrepreneurial rebirth going on throughout the city of Wheeling today.

New Speaker ([05:23](#)):

\*music\*

Hal Gorby ([05:33](#)):

Henry Schmulbach has always been a fascinating figure in Wheeling history and folklore. He was successful. He was a true character and he was mysterious as well. All these traits intrigued Ryan Stanton, currently a social studies teacher at Wheeling Park high school and the expert on Mr. Schmulbach's Life. We will hear from him throughout this podcast series. As Ryan explains, he was intrigued by Schmulbach after hearing about him in the college history class.

Ryan Stanton ([06:00](#)):

Yeah, so, uh, in 2006, I was, uh, in my senior year at West Liberty State College. And, uh, one of the last history classes that I took was the history of Wheeling, uh, with, uh, Dr. David Javersac. And what was kind of great about this class is we met once a week on a Wednesday and we would meet at historic locations, such as independence hall or the suspension bridge. And, um, you know, it was a very hands-on interactive class. And so, we met one day at Greenwood Cemetery, and we took a pretty extensive tour of the cemetery, but lastly, he ended with the story of Henry Schmulbach and Anton Reymann. And he told about how both of them owned the largest breweries in the state of West Virginia and how they sort of had this little competition amongst themselves when it came to that business and who could brew the most beer.

Ryan Stanton ([06:52](#)):

Um, and he told some interesting stories about both that I'm sure we'll talk more about in the podcast, but he ended, uh, his class by talking about how even today they're still competing with each other. Uh, both men contain the largest monuments or the tallest monuments in Greenwood cemetery, uh, Schmulbach being a giant Corinthian capital column, Corinthian capital. And, uh, Reymann, uh, is in the shape of an obelisk, but I was fascinated by how these guys were competitors, you know, in their lifetime. And even today you kind of have this fun kind of playful competition going on. So, I had already had an interest in the national road and taverns, and once I heard about Henry Schmulbach and Reymann, it just progressed from there. So, I started, uh, visiting the places that were still around in Wheeling, uh, today, as you know, from Schmulbach's home to the brewery, uh, to other places associated with Reymann. And I just wanted to basically tell their story, you know, uh,

Hal Gorby ([07:52](#)):

That's a, that's a great story about them competing in the afterlife, Uh, who, who won in terms of the tallest monument?

Ryan Stanton ([07:58](#)):

I've never actually measured. Um, but I'm a little partial to Schmulbach. So I'm going to go with, he has the tallest monument in Greenwood cemetery. Um, but I've never actually, uh, took the Liberty to measure. So, okay.

Hal Gorby ([08:13](#)):

Even in death, Schmulbach wanted to show that he was the most successful. His life would be one of rising success and would play a role in the modern development of Wheeling. Born on November 12th, 1844, in Braunschwandt, Hessen in Germany, Henry arrived in America at the age of eight, along with his parents, his sisters, Lizzie and Anna, and his paternal grandfather, who was also named Henry. They arrived in 1852 during a period of rising German immigration to the United States, following economic and political upheavals in their home country. From a poor background, Henry was able to rise through taking part in the riverboat trade that was crucial to the city's economy during the early 19th century. Here, he learned the trades that would make him successful.

Hal Gorby ([09:00](#)):

What was Henry's early life like in Wheeling? He sort of arrived as a German immigrant with his family in the 1850s. Uh, you know, what was his early years like?

Ryan Stanton ([09:09](#)):

So really at about age 10, he actually starts working on packet boats. And that's where he sort of, I think learns this art of entrepreneurship, um, and packet boats. They would have been used to transport male passengers, various goods, um, and were quite frequent on the Ohio river and probably pretty easy for someone of that age to secure some sort of, you know, odd job. Um, there's really no evidence that he, uh, had any formal schooling. A lot of it probably came on the river, but, uh, while not on the river, the church of the Schmulbach family was the First German Evangelical Lutheran Zion Church of Wheeling. So there, he was confirmed with the class of 1859. And, uh, he also probably attended some classes that they had to promote German heritage and language. And as a youth, he would ultimately, uh, in his teenage years be mentored by his uncle George Feller.

Ryan Stanton ([10:09](#)):

And they would enter the wholesale grocery business together. But actually he stops working on the river due to the Civil War and it became dangerous to operate on the river. And then him and his uncle transitioned to the wholesale grocery business and, uh, basically, uh, in Schmulbach's, uh, late teens, early twenties, his uncle retires and Schmulbach then transitions to the wholesale liquor business. And so, you know, I kind of liked to say that most of his education was very hands-on when it came to learning the art of business and, uh, learning how to be successful. We had some help along the way, uh, but this was a time in Wheeling to where if he had some ambition and some resources and some capital you could really, you know, make some quick cash. So.

Hal Gorby ([10:58](#)):

That hands-on experience was crucial to Schmulbach's life. Working in the packing boat, traffic, and then wholesale liquor distribution got him acquainted with a variety of ancillary industries you'd need to be successful in that day and age. Imagine starting your own business at the age of 18 or 19. That was how old Henry was when he became sole owner of a shipping company. By 1865, he and his uncle operated a liquor distribution company known as Henry Schmulbach and Co that dealt in importing and dealing

various liquors beers and wines. When his uncle retired, the company served as Henry's main source of wealth until he sold it in 1881. This was a crucial time in Wheeling. It was right after the civil war and Wheeling was still an expanding business hub and was also serving as the state's capital until 1885. So Schmulbach was able to take advantage of the various business opportunities to be made in the 1860s and 1870s. Already in his twenties, Schmulbach was expanding his business interests to other areas, particularly in stocks and real estate.

Ryan Stanton ([12:06](#)):

So at that young age, too, in his early twenties, he starts, uh, acquiring various stocks and businesses, uh, hotels, riverboats, uh, for example, he had a, a notable interest in the James hotel on water street. There was the Sprig house on main street and in 1873, by age 29, he had moved into a Victorian style residence at 2311 chaplain street that still stands today where he would live, uh, the better part of his life, uh, actually with his two sisters. Um, and today, if you go by this house, you can actually still see his initials, uh, on the wrought iron front gate of the house. It still says HS and still etched in the windows of the front door is his initials. And everyone kind of likes to joke around a little bit because the S kind of looks like it's in, uh, like a money sign. And so did Schmulbach have a little bit of an ego as he rose to power? Maybe, understandable, but it does resemble a money sign. But again, another thing that got me hooked on Schmulbach was as I walk around Wheeling, I can see so many things, um, that are still relevant to his lifetime.

Hal Gorby ([13:17](#)):

So, one of those entities Schmulbach eventually started buying stock in was the nail city brewery in south Wheeling. As an entrepreneur, it only made sense - why just sell someone else's beer when you could control the production and distribution of your own beer brand. By January, 1882, Schmulbach had controlling interest changing the brewery's name to the Schmulbach brewing company with a capital stock of \$80,000. The site was a very attractive, but rather underdeveloped investment opportunity up to that point. Built in 1855 by fellow German immigrant Frederick Ziglar, the brewery was located at what is now the top of 33rd street, in what was then called the borough of Richietown. While an excellent location. Ziegler was never able to sell more than 200 barrels of beer and ale a year. Thus in 1873, he sold it to a group of local men who renamed it the nail city brewing company, hearkening to the large and successful nail factories in the area like the nearby LaBelle. By April of 1874, it was producing about 120 barrels a day.

Hal Gorby ([14:25](#)):

Their beer was bottled across town and shipped to what was then a wide distribution network. Nail city brewing company beer was sent across the mountain state, as well as through Ohio, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and larger east coast cities. The brewery also benefited from a series of lagging caves cut into the nearby hillside extending about 400 feet into the hill behind the brewery site. Over the 1870s nail city rose from a small local brewery to one shipping its product to seven neighboring states. But of course it would take the ingenuity of Henry Schmulbach to expand and build upon these earlier developments.

Hal Gorby ([15:07](#)):

This podcast is brought to you by Clientele art studio, an art gallery and studio space in East Wheeling. From art shows to concerts, Clientele has event space, as well as multiple studios for rent. Learn more at [clientelestudio.com](http://clientelestudio.com). While Henry Schmulbach was in some respects, a self-made man, no recent

immigrant to Wheeling was successful apart from their distinctive immigrant community. Like immigrants elsewhere, Wheeling attracted those arriving in ever larger numbers from Western Europe. Scotch Irish and Welsh immigrants from our frontier era were being outpaced by many more from Ireland and the German states. Many Irish Catholic immigrants arrived in Wheeling to work on the river and labor on the construction of various infrastructure projects. German immigrants had long been in Wheeling since the 18th century, but the arrival of a larger mass of Germans in the 1850s would change the social economic and political makeup of the city and cities across the Midwest. In Wheeling their arrival also factored into the growing sectional divides in the country and state. By the time Henry arrived in Wheeling in the early 1850s, Wheeling was a city of 11,435 people with a diversified economy around iron, nails, glass, textiles, and brewing. The city benefited from its natural location along the Ohio river and the various major infrastructure projects like the national road, the Wheeling suspension bridge, and as the Terminus of the Baltimore and Ohio railroad by the 1850s. German immigrants were being pushed to emigrate by an economy losing out to competition. British and American manufacturing jobs were on the rise and with the growing population and stagnating wages in Western Europe, many Germans, especially craftsmen left for the United States.

Hal Gorby ([17:01](#)):

Politically, this was an era of revolution sweeping across Europe. Sean Duffy is a local historian and has written exclusively about Wheeling's immigrant history. The era before the civil war was particularly tenuous for Germans.

Sean Duffy ([17:15](#)):

Before the civil war in Europe, there were a lot of political uprisings. Particularly there were revolutions in 1830, which were known as the romantic nationalists revolutions in which, uh, they tried to replace the old monarchies with something more democratic, sort of a democratic monarchy. And in 1848 particular, particularly the German revolution, mirrored, those and other, in other places like France, where they actually were Bourgeoise revolutions. They tried to overthrow the monarchies and established democratic systems. So they were, they were radical revolutions and they were crushed. Uh, they all failed. And so a lot of the men in the, in the wake of those revolutions faced a terrible economy, they, they faced an overcrowded job markets, civil unrest, severe unemployment, uh, almost inconceivable hardships. Um, so many of them emigrated and, uh, the biggest destination was the United States, which they saw as a beacon of freedom and opportunity as did many immigrant groups.

Sean Duffy ([18:36](#)):

Um, so the Ohio county court records, uh, record the earliest naturalization of a German immigrant here in Wheeling in 1837. Now, uh, Johann Ludwig Stifel allegedly came to Wheeling in 1834-35. And it's one of those stories where he walked all the way from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. You hear that a lot in these immigrant stories that they walked from some ridiculous distance to come to Wheeling. A lot of people saw Wheeling as a place with land and opportunity in farming and in industry. But, uh, it wasn't like some of the earlier German immigrations that had to do with the religious freedom, like the Quakers in Pennsylvania. It had more to do with industry here in Wheeling. Uh, they needed cheap labor, of course, and they would actually recruit immigrants, placing advertisements in German language newspapers. And when these immigrants came to Wheeling and found work, they would write home and say, here's a great place. You should bring, you know, the friends and family come on over, this is something called chain migrations. These letters often got published in the same German language newspapers. So even more people came. And that's kind of in a nutshell before the civil war.

Hal Gorby ([19:57](#)):

German immigrants interacted with these earlier immigrants in the city. Again, here's Sean Duffy. Who were some of the earlier Immigrants that the Germans would have encountered if they, yeah.

Sean Duffy ([20:08](#)):

Some of the Groups, the Irish were here, uh, because of the famine, uh, roughly the same time, uh, the Welsh were here. Of course you can go back further and talk about the Zanes and other English, uh, descendants who were here. Uh, there were Scots Irish, of course, as they were all over Appalachia

Hal Gorby ([20:30](#)):

By 1850 Germans comprised Wheeling's main ethnic community, a mark that would stand until World War 1. They tended to settle in north Wheeling and in center market where they and their children accounted for one third of the population. Almost half of German men in the city were craftsmen, butchers, tailors, leather workers, Coopers, bakers, and brewers. Another third were laborers in the mills and shops. This group was much different than the earlier German immigrants in town, both politically and economically.

Sean Duffy ([21:05](#)):

Yeah. Uh, so there were sort of two German communities in Wheeling at the time. As I mentioned, a lot of Germans came over after the 1848 revolution. They were called 48ers and they settled primarily in what was called South of the Creek or Richietown in, uh, what is now center Wheeling and south Wheeling. Um, that group tended to be, uh, more sort of left-wing even radical in some time, in some places they were influenced by the revolutionary thinking they encountered in Germany before they left. The more, uh, settled group, which had actually been here earlier, lived primarily in, uh, north Wheeling. And they were comprised largely of, uh, German Catholics who were successful businessmen. So they had a different view. They tended to be Democrats, a little more conservative. Uh, those were the two groups that were here.

Hal Gorby ([22:03](#)):

As the city expanded in the early 1850s, German and Irish immigrants often got into local rows or fights throughout the working class neighborhoods. This was also a growing time of anti-immigrant politics led by the Know nothing party, which had a presence here in Wheeling. Much of this nativism took the form of anti-Catholicism. How did the German immigrants, uh, what sort of relationship did they have with some of these other established groups like the Irish in particular?

Sean Duffy ([22:34](#)):

Well, uh, you know, in some ways, uh, I remember reading about, uh, one of the parties they had at Wheeling Park, which at that time was a drinking, uh, German beer garden that, uh, Anton Reymann ran, uh, and, you know, the Germans and Irish were competing on who can drink the most beer. And, uh, you know, there was some rivalry there among the, uh, uh, Catholic and, uh, Germans and Irish. But of course, uh, with the, with the Germans, you had a large number of Protestants, some of whom were anti-Catholic. So there were a lot of run-ins, there were, uh, some fisticuffs, it was a rough area back then.

Hal Gorby ([23:19](#)):

Uh, I believe I've read somewhere where there was, uh, a large anti-Catholic riot that happened near where the, um, Catholic cathedral was, around this time that Henry would have been coming to Wheeling.

Sean Duffy ([23:32](#)):

Yeah, I, you know, I've, uh, I'm a member of the ancient order of Hibernians here in Wheeling, which was revived some years ago, uh, which was the sort of Irish, uh, fraternal organization that existed to protect Catholic properties and clergy from nativists, Know-nothings, people who were virulently, even violently anti-Catholic. And anti-immigrant, uh, you know, if you've seen the movie, uh, gangs of New York, some bill the butcher type characters. And, uh, as you mentioned, you know, the cathedral of course, was the center of Catholic life at that time. And the original cathedrals in the same location as the one now. A Papal representative came to town, a nuncio named Bedeni, and the nativists set out to make his life miserable. And there were reports in the paper of impending violence involving the nativists and a strike on the cathedral. So the Irish Catholics, the men of the ancient order of Hibernians and other groups that existed at the time, uh, kind of came to the aid of Bishop Waylon and the papal visitor and surrounded the cathedral and protected it. Uh, they were armed, they were ready for a violent conflict. Uh, among the nativists. This is the sort of surprising part were a lot of, uh, German Protestants who actually weren't fully assimilated were immigrants themselves, but, uh, were there, uh, participating in the, uh, nativist, uh, sort of, uh, seizure of, uh, the cathedral

Hal Gorby ([25:15](#)):

This Anti-Catholic sentiment over the visit by the Catholic papal nuncio Bedini in 1853 and 54, highlighted growing divides and underscored issues between native born and immigrant communities, as well as views on slavery and the upcoming civil war. This generation of German immigrants was very passionate about city affairs and engaged actively in the political debates and movements of the time. While Henry would rise through the small business class, many other Germans became quite active in the local labor movement. German workers helped shut down iron mills in December 1853 and joined Baltimore and Ohio railroad worker strikes in December of 1855. German immigrants were very active in civic celebrations and parades, setting a trend throughout this Victorian era. German bands accompanied annual fire company parades every September and provided most of the music for the dedication of the new federal customs house. Later, it would be independence hall. In February 1855, Germans formed their own militia company, the German rifles, who put on numerous marshal displays around town. Probably the most visible sign of German culture still in Wheeling from this time was the building of a massive series of churches.

Hal Gorby ([26:29](#)):

Germans built a reformed church, St. James Evangelical Lutheran, along with St. Alphonsus Catholic church near the center market house. By the time of the civil war, German immigrants would serve as a key constituency of the new Republican party and its anti-slavery positions. German immigrants supported Abraham Lincoln in 1860 for president, and they supported a budding movement - the novel idea that West Virginia should become its own state. During this 1860 campaign, Germans in south Wheeling openly supported the Republican party and its presidential candidate. And many of them helped to form the south Wheeling wide awakes. Chapters of wide awakes were popping up all over the country in an effort to drum up Republican support. The south Wheeling wide awakes, bought uniforms and torches and practice military style drilling. They even had a glee club. And on the evening of October 11th, 1860, these wide awakes put their skills to the test. They buttoned up their uniforms, got into formation, maybe even practiced some songs. Then they paraded through north Wheeling, a democratic

anti Lincoln stronghold. It didn't go that well. Eventually opponents began throwing rocks and wide awakes broke off to engage in fist fights before regrouping to finish their March. While they probably didn't change many opinions that day, German immigrants were openly supportive of the union cause time and time again.

Sean Duffy ([27:59](#)):

You have to, uh, acknowledge the fact that Germans were integral here in Wheeling to the statehood movement. Uh, there, uh, as the civil war began, of course there were, there was some, uh, division among the Germans. I already mentioned sort of the north south division. Uh, the idea that the north German Catholics tended to be Democrats and the south were a little more radical and supported the Whig party and the Republicans later, but they came together during the war. A lot of, there were a lot of German units formed to serve in the war here in Wheeling and, uh, politically, you know, they, they supported the union, even the Democrats who were German. Um, and they were, uh, they were very patriotic. They were concerned about, you know, um, being good Americans. That's why they came here. Uh, they, they were, uh, integral members of the community. We mentioned the German singing societies.

Sean Duffy ([29:05](#)):

That was a part of it. That was a way for them to reach out socially. They formed, uh, fraternal societies. They formed, um, uh, things like the Turner society, where they performed gymnastics. Uh, these were all kinds of things that, ways in which they influence the society at the time and made inroads. In business, of course, you had a lot of Germans who were successful. I already mentioned, uh, Johann Ludwig Stifel, Stifel Calico works in north Wheeling was a huge, uh, enterprise and his sons and grandsons went on to be successful and active members of the community. A lot of them serving on boards, serving in government. Uh, there were the farmers in, in, out the pike, in the pleasant valley, like Joseph Dimmi and, uh, the later the Dekemans who ran the, um, they were florists. There were businessmen like L.S. Good and Augustus Pollack who were Jewish Germans, uh, who were quite successful. And they were involved in numerous things. You know, like I said, they would serve on boards. They would be, uh, organize fraternal societies. And many of them served in politics.

Hal Gorby ([30:23](#)):

So, Henry Schmulbach arrived in Wheeling at a time when the German immigrants were seen as a positive and important influence on Wheeling's new role in the newly created state of West Virginia. They also would remake the cultural scene of Wheeling for the next generation or more

New Speaker ([30:39](#)):

\*music\*

Hal Gorby ([30:46](#)):

After the war, the description we often hear of Wheeling from this time is that it was a little German city. German was spoken around town and Germans were involved in business and politics. They were becoming the movers and shakers so to speak. As Henry was coming of age, he was part of these wider cultural changes to the city. Throughout its history, Wheeling had a number of German singing societies. These became some of the most popular cultural markers of Germantown during the life of Henry Schmulbach. The big three singing societies were the Arion, Mozart and Beethoven societies. If you worked at Schmulbach brewery, chances are, you were a member of the Mozart's society on 30th and

Jacob's street. Since most of its members were working class south Wheeling residents. If you were a wealthier individual, you might have belonged to the more exclusive Arion hall located on 20th and main streets and currently the home of Catholic charities. Other societies had different economic and cultural orientations, but they all came together for Sangerfests. Sangerfests were regional singing festivals held in Wheeling, and they were the high points of German Wheeling's cultural influence in the area. There were a few Sangerfests, one in 1860, another in 1885 and the city's largest one in 1906.

Hal Gorby ([32:12](#)):

So one of the unique elements, obviously, as we've talked about already here in terms of German cultural at this time, uh, is the role of German singing societies. And obviously we are here in Arion hall to sort of, uh, get some of the ambiance of that. Um, and also there were, Wheeling and its German community hosted a large number of regional sort of singing competitions as well, known as Sangerfests. Um, can you speak a little bit about, uh, some of these larger competitions and maybe, uh, what effect they had here in the city?

Sean Duffy ([32:43](#)):

Yeah, there were actually three, uh, Sangerfeste held here in Wheeling. The first one was in 1860, a smallish affair by comparison. 1885 was much larger. It was, uh, primarily held at a place called Alhambra palace. And, uh, it was a big, uh, sort of a skating rink and, uh, arena for events like this and Augustus Pollack happened to be the president of that particular Sangerfest. So, what they were were large, uh, sort of festivals at which singing societies from all over the region, whether it be Columbus, Ohio, Cleveland, Ohio, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, even Milwaukee, and places like that, which had large German populations as well, had their own singing societies. And they would all converge on Wheeling for like a week of partying and concerts and, uh, dance. And there would be bands playing in the streets and there would be, uh, parades and picnics and, uh, banquets, more formal occasions.

Sean Duffy ([33:52](#)):

So, in 1906, uh, Wheeling actually hosted its largest Sangerfest, happened to be the last one, of course. Um, and it was the central Ohio Sangerfest, actually moved for one year to Wheeling. And, um, uh, one, the court theater was the primary venue there. Now this building we're in the Arion hall was sort of the headquarters for the 1906 Sangerfest. So all of the groups met here and this is where most of the balls were held, but when it came to concerts, they were at the court theater. And, uh, at one point they promised to have 800, uh, singers on one stage at the Court, 800 male singers. And so that was a huge event. It was so oppressively hot that day, that week that they, they lost their, some of their attendance. And, uh, actually it turned out that the Court could not hold 800 men on one stage, it could hold 700.

Sean Duffy ([34:53](#)):

So they did have 700 singers on. It's hard to imagine. Now, if you were in the court theater, when it was a movie theater back in the seventies, it's hard to imagine how they could have fit that many people. Uh, but the, the stage area was much bigger then, uh, it was an elaborate event. Uh, there was a huge German flag behind the stage. There were American flags all around that. And, um, the Cleveland symphony orchestra was actually the musical, uh, uh, performer that day. And so, you know, just imagine the court theater filled with hundreds of people, some, um, flowing out onto the street because they couldn't get in to hear what had to be the largest group of singers ever in Wheeling at one time, singing in German and singing patriotic American songs in the court theater. It was quite an event and it always culminated in a parade and the parades in Wheeling back then were ridiculously long.

Sean Duffy ([35:53](#)):

You know, that would start, um, maybe let's say they started here at Arion Hall. They would go all the way up to Turner Hall, which was where the marsh building is now, way up to north, toward north Wheeling, way back down to south Wheeling and turn around and go back up, maybe chaplain street all the way up as far as they could. And in this particular case, they got on Schmulbach's incline in south Wheeling, went all the way back down to south Wheeling, and then they rode it up the hill to Mozart Park for a big party, uh, to end the festivities

Hal Gorby ([36:27](#)):

Led by Wheeling's big three German societies, an additional 24 visiting societies came to participate, primarily from the state of Ohio. Downtown Wheeling was very supportive with the main downtown structures like stone and Thomas draped in German and American flags. As Sean Duffy has noted, Wheeling was quote "transformed into a German version of New Orleans." Impromptu concerts and singing broke out all over Wheeling during the Sangerfest. Quote, "there was music in the air after the concert last night, the news register newspaper noted, and the inevitable high lee high low was sung freely on the street. All the visitors appeared to be having a good time. Many of the societies wore uniform caps, some of them with inscriptions in German, across the visor." End quote. Another popular event in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were German days. The Wheeling intelligence are noted that in August of 1908, a German day was held at Mozart Park quote "under the auspices of the German central union" end quote and featuring quote "amusements and novels, sports" end quote. With over 2000 at attendance, many heard music from the city's singing societies. During the preparations for German day in 1900, the Wheeling daily intelligence noted the following.

Hal Gorby ([37:53](#)):

Quote "German day has nothing to do with politics or parties. More than anything else, German day is a patriotic affair and more commemorative of what happened in America than in Germany. We are proud that the German settlers landed on American soil and had the dash and courage to open up an untrodden wilderness to civilization, bringing with them industries, teachings, and feelings that this is our country by adoption" end quote. It is truly amazing to hear this positive view of the Germans. Within less than 20 years, this type of statement would be heresy in Wheeling. Wheeling in Henry Schmulbach's time was the city on the make. As much as it was a diverse ethnic, melting pot of cultures. After the German immigrants who made Wheeling what it was in the 19th century, Wheeling saw the arrival of new immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe. These men and women would fill the growing labor needs of factory owners in the area. Congregating south of the Creek all the way through the mill town of Benwood in Marshall County, Eastern Europeans arrived from 1880 to the 1920s. Language and religious discrimination, military conscription, and poor agricultural harvest forced thousands to immigrate to the industrial Heartland. Wheeling attracted Italian, Greek, Lebanese, Polish Ukrainians, Croatians, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks among others.

Hal Gorby ([39:29](#)):

Today we celebrate these diverse cultures and the many ethnic festivals, common to Wheeling's summer recreational calendar. Polish days in south Wheeling, the Italian and Greek festivals in late July, the Maharaj and Lebanese festival in early August and October Fest at Oglebay park all continued to speak to the immigrant heritage that made Wheeling a great city. Like the Germans before them, working class neighborhoods would transition from predominantly German to the newer immigrant groups. In south Wheeling, Polish and Ukrainian immigrants would create their own Polonia and little Ukraine from 39th

to 48th streets. Greeks and Lebanese immigrants would come to dominate the ethnic map of center Wheeling - the same neighborhood once dominated by the German 48ers. Most like the Polish immigrants, toiled in unskilled labor gangs, working the blast furnaces and rolling mills at the steel factories. Men and women also worked at Northwood glass, Hazel Atlas glass.

Hal Gorby ([40:31](#)):

The Wheeling Can company on 48th street and as tobacco strippers at block brothers in south Wheeling. Many dug coal in the city and regions' various coal mines. But much like their German neighbors, these new immigrants would add to the cultural tapestry of Wheeling during this Victorian era. The Polish Catholics built a strong identity around St. Ladislaus parish on 45th street. Ukrainians around our lady of perpetual help and the Lebanese around our lady of Lebanon. These new immigrants followed the Germans in sponsoring various fraternal societies, sporting clubs, and organized musical groups that added a cultural flavor to the city well into the 20th century. Unlike German singing societies, now it was the Polish American rhythm Kings and their polka band program on WWVA radio or popular Ukrainian dance troupes that performed at the festival of nations at Oglebay park in the early 1930s or the Croatian children's tambourines and musical troupe of the 1930s. Each new immigrant group recreated a part of their cultural life in Wheeling and built off the role played by the German immigrants.

Hal Gorby ([41:41](#)):

Many of whom served as factory foreman, owners, political leaders and leaders in the labor movement for the new immigrants who followed them. In many ways it was these Germans who taught the new immigrants, what it meant to be American during this time. Immigrants were the heart and sinew of Wheeling throughout its history. The products and cultural attributes people associate with Wheeling often reflect the lived everyday experiences of the immigrants who lived throughout Wheeling's neighborhoods. And all of them could look to self-made immigrants like Henry Schmulbach as a model of success in the new world. As someone who continued to live in the working-class German culture of Wheeling, Schmulbach remained a hero to these new immigrants. So how does a German immigrant build a brewing empire in Wheeling, West Virginia? And how are his innovations at that south Wheeling brewery inspiring craft brewers today?

Hal Gorby ([42:38](#)):

And did you know that Schmulbach spent thousands of dollars on a park, just so people could drink beer there? That's in our next episode. This has been "Henry the life and legacy of Wheeling's most notorious brewer". This episode was written and narrated by me, William Hal Gorby. We had help in producing this episode from Wheeling heritage. Editing provided by Alex weld. Sound and music editing and recording done by Dillon Richardson and Johnathan Porter. Audio interviews were done with Ryan Stanton and Sean Duffy. Voice acting by TJ Hudak-Hill. Special research assistance from the Ohio county public library and previous research done by Ken Fones Wolf, Edward Wolf, Ryan Stanton, and Sean Duffy. Audio also came from newspaper articles, published in the Wheeling intelligencer, and Wheeling news register. This podcast is a production of Wheeling heritage media.