

IMPACT REPORT



GERMAN
AMERICAN
HERITAGE
FOUNDATION

2025

PRESERVING HERITAGE.
STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY.
BUILDING OUR FUTURE.



HONORING **OUR PAST**, INSPIRING TOMORROW.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to preserve, promote, and educate about the impactful contributions Americans with German-speaking ancestry have made to the building of our nation while inspiring younger generations to rediscover their transatlantic roots.

OUR VISION

By 2029, GAHF will be recognized as a national voice and leading resource for those of German-speaking ancestry to preserve, educate, and advocate while nurturing a new generation of cultural stewards.

Our goal is to make the German American history more readily available to a broader audience and suitable for all ages, to foster mutual understanding and increase public knowledge about the rich heritage of all Americans of German descent.

The German-American Heritage Foundation of the USA (GAHF) structures goals, objectives, and measures to address four strategic pillars:
preserve, educate, advocate, and sustain.



PRESERVE



EDUCATE



ADVOCATE



SUSTAIN

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DEAR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS,

As we reflect on 2025, we are proud to share a year of meaningful progress and renewed purpose for the German-American Heritage Foundation. Looking ahead to our upcoming 50th anniversary as well as America250, we introduced a new strategic plan that sharpens our focus on three core pillars: preserving our shared heritage, educating future generations, and advocating for the continued relevance of German American contributions in today's world.

This past year marked an exciting step forward in expanding our reach through the creation of a virtual museum in partnership with Google Arts & Culture. This initiative allows us to bring German American history and culture to a truly global audience, opening new doors for engagement and discovery in an increasingly interconnected and digital world. Our efforts to reach and support the next generation isn't just limited to increasing our online footprint, but we are also delighted to support young people through our Maria Tillmann-Geschwent Scholarship Program by welcoming two outstanding new recipients who are continuing their study of the German language and deepening their cultural connections.

Our close collaboration with the German and Austrian Embassies here in Washington, DC, remains a cornerstone of our work, strengthening transatlantic ties and enriching our programming and exhibitions. Our signature Magic of Vienna trip is now in its third year as a highlight of immersive cultural programming, and continues to grow in popularity as it brings our mission of forging transatlantic connections to life in a uniquely engaging and memorable way.

We concluded the year with the thought-provoking art exhibition Palimpsest, featuring three talented female artists from the greater Washington, DC area. Through diverse media and styles, their work explored layered cultural identities and the enduring influence of heritage.

None of this would be possible without your continued support.

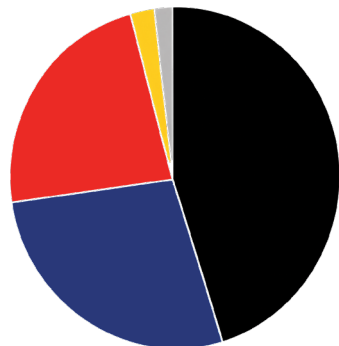
Thank you for being part of our community and for helping us carry this important work forward.

With Gratitude,

Christiane Schmidt
Board President

Katja Sipple
Executive Director

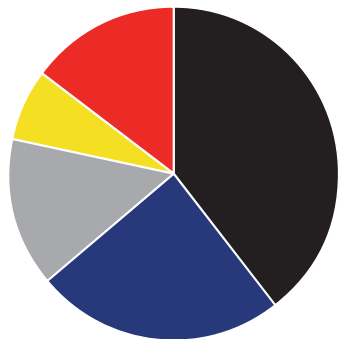
SOURCE REVENUE



Individual Fundraising	46%	\$116,000
Investment Income	29%	\$75,000
Memberships	23%	\$60,000
Other Fundraising	2%	\$4,500
Other Income	1%	\$3,300

TOTAL: \$258,800

ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES



Operational	40%	\$102,750
Exhibits & Programs	24%	\$63,150
Special Projects	14%	\$37,500
Fundraising	7%	\$17,987
Support Services	14%	\$37,413

TOTAL: \$258,800

OUR EXHIBITS



Palimpsest Art Exhibit



Immigration to America: A Journey in Time

OUR EVENTS



German-American Day Walk

Christmas Concert: Apline Singers



THE MAGIC OF VIENNA TRIP

This past season, the German-American Heritage Foundation brought supporters and friends to Vienna for an unforgettable journey rooted in heritage and connection. Guests experienced the elegance and tradition of Vienna's most iconic cultural moments, including the renowned Philharmonic Ball at the Musikverein Concert Hall and a traditional Viennese ball at the Hofburg Palace full of living expressions of history where music, movement, and tradition came together across generations.

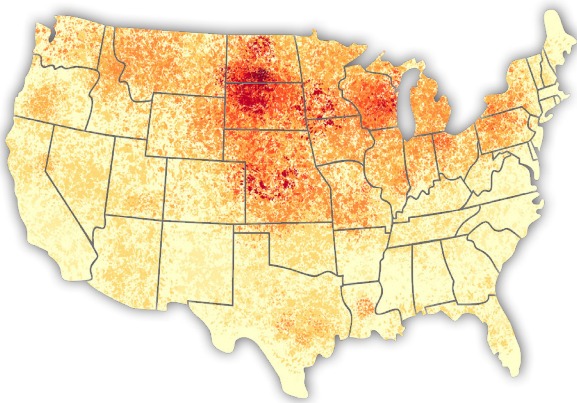
OUR **IMPACT** IN 2025



PERCENTAGE
OF AMERICANS
CLAIMING
GERMAN
ANCESTRY



44,164,758 PEOPLE IN THE
U.S. ARE THOUGHT TO BE
OF GERMAN ANCESTRY IN
2018



Museum and
Online Visitors

36,800+

ONLINE & IN-PERSON

Social Media
Audience

16,000+

Scholarships & Educational Outreach

\$5,000



Maria Tillmann-Geschwent Scholarship

Dinner Dance Honoring GAHF Donor Gary Lee Koerner at the Austrian Embassy



The entrepreneur and industrialist Henry Ford once said: "Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success."

On Oct. 1, we achieved all three steps by celebrating a special donor and long-time member of our German American family, Gary Lee Koerner from Vienna, Va., with a dinner dance at the Austrian Embassy in Washington, DC. We are so grateful to our wonderful community, including Gary's friends, who came together and enjoyed a lovely evening with Austrian and German delicacies and the atmospheric music of The Olde Vienna Quartet whose music paid tribute to Johann Strauss II. We also thank Her Excellency Petra Schneebauer, Ambassador of Austria, for her gracious hospitality, and for taking time out of her busy schedule to attend the event. This was a premier for us with a focus on introducing our mission and vision, building community support, and nurturing relationships.



Most of you are familiar with our annual Distinguished German American of the Year Award Gala, which has been a long-standing fixture on our calendar to draw attention to the achievements of immigrants from Germany and beyond, and please be assured that we will have another significant event in the future. We have embarked on an ambitious and exciting strategic planning journey earlier this year to prepare for the 250th birthday of America and our own 50th anniversary, which is intrinsically connected with the Bicentennial of 1776 that planted the seed for a national organization dedicated to German American heritage and history, and plan to have a number of smaller events across the country to strengthen existing connections and to develop new relationships.

German Americans Linked to Iconic Structures in Washington, DC



The U.S. Capitol with its unique dome is a symbol of American political power and a beacon of democracy that is recognized across the globe. The story of two men who were intricately involved in designing and building the current iron dome, which replaced a smaller wooden structure that had been destroyed during a fire, has been mostly forgotten. The first man is Thomas Ustick Walter, the fourth architect of the Capitol, who is recognized as the founder of the American Institute of Architects, was a prolific architect who worked on more than 400 projects during his lifetime. His grandfather Frederick Jacob Walter, emigrated from Germany in 1749, and arrived in Germantown, Philadelphia as an orphan after both parents died at sea. Thomas U. Walter was one of the most influential American architects of his era. In 1851, President Millard Fillmore selected him to lead the expansion of the U.S. Capitol, a project that accompanied him for 14 years of his life.

Walter is often credited as the man who designed the iron dome, but the actual design and miniature model was done by his employee, August Gottlieb Schoenborn, a German immigrant who arrived in the United States in 1849. He had trained as an architect at the Technical Institute and School of Art in Erfurt, and by 1851 he had found a position as a draftsman under Thomas Walter. With only a small scale model and some very rough drawings to work from, Schoenborn produced highly detailed architectural plans, including the original drawings for the new iron dome of the Capitol. Initially, Walter did not believe that Schoenborn had done the work himself, but he was quickly satisfied that Schoenborn was a trained architect. His second contribution was the design of an iron library that replaced the Capitol library which burned down on Christmas Eve 1851. President Fillmore was highly impressed with Schoenborn's work, and often visited him in the architectural offices at the Capitol.

A third important German American, the engineer and architect John A. Roebling, who designed the Brooklyn Bridge, contributed his expertise with wire ropes, and spent some months working on the Capitol Dome project.

The Washington Monument

This renowned structure also benefited from the knowhow of a German immigrant: German-born architect and metallurgist William Frishmuth, who hailed from the Franconian town of Coburg, had established a foundry in Philadelphia after his immigration. In 1876, this foundry produced the first authenticated aluminum castings made in America. Frishmuth had previously done plating work for the Washington Monument, which led to the Army Corps of Engineers requesting him to construct an artistic metal cap that would also serve as the terminus of a lightning rod for the monument's top. Frishmuth suggested aluminum for its color, the fact that it would not stain, would polish well, and its ability to be engraved with inscriptions. In 1884 he cast the aluminum cap, which was the first architectural use of aluminum.

German American Day at the Museum



This year's German American Day celebration took place on two days. On Oct. 5, our former board member and professional tour guide Ron Kosmahl conducted a German Heritage Tour in collaboration with the German Embassy through Washington, DC's historic "Little Germany," which began at our museum. On Oct. 6, we invited author and transatlantic expert Peter Sparding. In addition to our speaker, we also welcomed the German Deputy Chief of Mission Martin Thümmel along with Tobias Bergner and his colleagues from the German Embassy.

Peter's recent book *No Better Friend? The United States and Germany Since 1945* explores one of the world's most important, and rapidly complexifying, international partnerships. A German American himself who has lived and worked in Copenhagen, Berlin, Washington, DC, and Kansas City, his writing is an exciting and easy-to-read narrative about the complicated interplay between Germany and the United States vis-à-vis a rising China, and the domestic challenges facing both countries. His presentation also offered an outlook on how this other special relationship might function going forward, and what role German Americans can play when it comes to creating and maintaining interpersonal relationships and cultural exchanges. Audience questions also touched upon the diversity of the German American community and the emphasis on regional identification, which has historical roots, the role of the Cold War and the resulting decades-long presence of U.S. troops in mostly southern Germany, and the appeal of cultural traditions. Please stay tuned as we will be offering a similar presentation with Peter Sparding online at a later date.





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