

(Re-)Imagining Germanness: Victoria's Germans and the 1915 *Lusitania* Riot

by

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B.A., University of Victoria, 2009

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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In May 1915 British soldiers stationed near Victoria instigated a retaliatory riot against the local German community for the sinking of the RMS *Lusitania*. The riot spanned two days, and many local residents eagerly took part in the looting and destruction of German owned businesses. Despite its uniqueness as the city's largest race riot, scholars have under-appreciated its importance for Victoria and British Columbia's racial narrative. The riot further signals a change in how Victorians understood Germanness.

From the 1850s onwards, Victoria's British hegemony welcomed Germans as like-minded and appropriate white settlers. I argue that race and colour shaped German lives in Victoria, for the most part positively. During the war however Germanness took on new and negative meaning. As a result, many Germans increasingly hid their German background. Germans maintained their compatibility with the British hegemony, largely thanks to their whiteness, well after German racial background became a liability.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

At 9 p.m. on a Saturday evening, 8 May 1915, all the other employees had gone home. Henry Macklin sat working at his desk, reviewing the company accounts in the Simon Leiser & Co., Ltd., Yates Street warehouse. Shouting voices – and what sounded like singing – caused him to pause in his paperwork and look up, wonder at what it could be. Suddenly a shattering crash from the storefront downstairs grabbed his attention. Jumping out of his chair and running downstairs, Macklin saw several uniformed men – soldiers – climbing in through the shattered windows. Through the gaping frames he could just see a large crowd milling about in the darkness outside, shouting and singing British patriotic songs. Powerless to stop the soldiers' looting of groceries and tobacco, Macklin fled through a back window out into Waddington Alley.

Macklin had found himself drawn up into Victoria, British Columbia's 1915 *Lusitania* Riot, an unprecedented outbreak in the city. For two days crowds of soldiers and civilians attacked and looted German-owned businesses. This contrasts with the March 1888 funeral of Wilhelm I, when the Honourable Mr. Robson, in the provincial legislative assembly, expressed the sentiment that "Britons all felt that they had lost a friend in the death of the Emperor William" and that the House, "in this remote quarter of the globe," should close out of respect for the deceased monarch.¹ The House adjourned and attended the memorial service the next day as a body. Businesses and shops closed, and all flags in the city were said to have been lowered to half-staff. Mourners – Germans and non-Germans alike – packed the Victoria Theatre, and those unable to get in crowded around in the neighbouring streets. In 1888 the crowd wished to express their

¹ *Victoria Daily Times*, 15 March 1888 (hereafter *Times*).

condolences for the loss felt by German people everywhere, and speakers stressed the shared feelings of regret felt by both British and Germans.

Public sentiment towards Germans in Victoria took on new meaning in the years after the 1850s, when Germans first began arriving in significant numbers in the city, leading up until the Great War. Within this arch the funeral of Wilhelm I illustrates the high-point of German compatibility. In the early years British Victorians welcomed Germans as equals, brothers of the same race. Over time this relationship shifted, in part due to changing notions of Britishness, but also alongside the growing strength of the German empire and a common German identity. This led to Victoria's Germans being understood in terms of national difference rather than racial difference. These national differences posed no real threat to German and British co-existence in Victoria, at least until the years leading up to the Great War. The anti-German riot offers a fascinating opportunity to study this shift, and its subtexts among the intersection of global politics with a local German identity or "Germanness".² Germans, who had once been brothers to British Victorians, became so foreign during the First World War that their neighbours turned on them, attacking any images of Germanness.

While much research has been done on racial and ethnic discourse and racism itself in British Columbia, little has been done specifically on German or German-language communities. Ethnic studies in Canada tend to focus on other ethnic groups when friction occurs in everyday relations, and compared to other non-white non-British

² "Germanness" has been described as the "cultural markers of ethnic German identity practiced by a community." These practices vary throughout space and over time. Krista O'Donnell, Renate Bridenthal, and Nancy Reagin (eds.), *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness* (University of Michigan Press, 2005), 1.

For the purposes of this study, "Germanness" refers to the set of cultural markers associated with German identity.

immigrants, Germans encountered little racial friction before 1915. This study focuses on the German presence in Victoria in the years before the First World War, fitting into a broader literature on the German-immigrant experience in Canada. Few scholars have investigated how German communities self-identified or fostered communal identity. Some scholars offer a model in their approach to post-1945 German communities and the role language and culture plays in self-identification as German-Canadian: Andrea Koch-Kraft's *Deutsche in Kanada: Einwanderung und Adaption* includes a questionnaire study distributed in both English and German to people of German-heritage in Edmonton to ascertain socio-economic standing.³ Christian Lieb's doctoral dissertation more broadly deals with post-Second World War German immigration to British Columbia. Lieb recognizes the varied experiences of German immigrants and their integration into Canadian society, ultimately challenging the idea that any one German-settler identity existed in Canada.⁴ British Columbia's pre-WW1 Germans have yet to be studied in this manner.

Surprisingly, a substantial part of the historiography on Germans in Canada comes not from Canadian but German scholars of Canadian Studies (*Kanadistik*). Though almost all primary sources are in English, a considerable portion of scholarly works and popular histories are in German. German language text implies an audience with a command of German language, suggesting either dedicated scholars of ethnic German communities, or a modern German audience interested in the German Diaspora. Harmut Frösche's *Die Deutschen in Kanada* is an example of *Erklärtsliteratur* (explanatory

³ For the questionnaire in both English and German, see Andrea Koch-Kraft, *Deutsche in Kanada: Einwanderung und Adaption (Germans in Canada: Immigration and Assimilation)* (Bochum: Unversitätsverlag Dr. N. Brockmeyer, 1990), Appendix 2, 295.

⁴ Christian Lieb, *Moving West: German-speaking Immigration to British Columbia, 1945-1961*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Victoria, 2008.

literature), offering a fact-primer on German immigration to Canada to complement the diaspora-narrative.⁵ Scholars of ethnic studies would do well to mark this concentration in the literature, as the position of Germans within broader Anglo-dominated communities across Canada presents an interesting addition to the Anglo-settler narrative.

Scholars of German communities in North America generally agree on a system of periodization of German immigration to the New World. This system separates immigration into three broad periods: pre-WWI, Inter-war, and post-1945. Mid-nineteenth century German immigrants were often political or social refugees to the U.S. and Canada, especially in the peak years approaching and immediately after the revolutions of 1848.⁶ Further social, economic, and political conflicts in Germany (such as crop failures) led to emigration to North America as well.⁷ One notable difference between Canadian and American immigration came in the early years of WWI, as many German-Canadians fled from hostile Canadian cities south across the border before the American declaration of war.⁸

German identity was not simply transplanted from the old world into the new; rather, though a continuity of social patterns helped establish a conceptual link between the homeland and Victoria, some local Germans sought to establish a unique communal Germanness.⁹ Historical Germans in these studies are often seen as the root of the

⁵ Fröschele, *Die Deutschen in Kanada*, 3

⁶ McLaughlin, "The Germans in Canada", *Canada's Ethnic Groups*, 4-5.

⁷ La Vern J. Ripplly, *The German-Americans* (Boston: Twayne Publishers/G. K. Hall & Co, 1976), 51

⁸ See, for instance, Lutheran minister Pastor Gerbich and his wife from Victoria to Washington state, both of whom eventually returned to Victoria when the U.S. entered the war; Meyer, "Lutherische deutschsprachige Gottesdienste in Victoria, B.C., 1891-1982", 30.

⁹ Lieb identifies the continuities of social patterns and their importance in the post-WW2 period, taking his departure from Franca Iacovetta's work on Italians in Toronto. See Franco Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* (Montreal-Queen's University Press, 1992), quoted in Lieb, *Moving West*, 7.

modern German-Canadian community. Lieb maintains that post-war immigration had its foundational roots for the immigrant experience in past German migrations to Canada, though for the purposes of his study he emphasizes the inter-war years.¹⁰

Sources differ on the nomenclature of “German”. One way of identifying Germans relies on historical political boundaries, which while perhaps the most expedient means of identifying Germans in census data is also the most imprecise. Germany has only formally been unified as a political body since the late nineteenth century. Before then “German” was widely applied and seldom defined with diverse subcategories not restricted to political borders. Identifying Germans solely on their nationality as German subjects overlooks naturalized German-Canadians who lived German culture.¹¹ Lieb builds on this distinction by demonstrating the similarities and differences in the immigration experiences of ethnic and national Germans following the Second World War. Indeed, German non-nationals were very much still considered German by themselves and their new host-country, for citizenship did not define racial categories, though it itself depended upon racial suitability towards citizenship.

Germans’ lives were shaped by both race and colour. Thomas Guglielmo has observed for pre-1945 Chicago, Italian immigrants could be both racially distinct (and somewhat inferior) due to their Italianness, all the while maintaining some privilege as “white” Europeans.¹² The case was similar for Germans in Victoria, both distinct in their Germanness and similar in their whiteness, though they were almost never thought of as

¹⁰ Lieb, *Moving West*, 16.

¹¹ For statements on the principle of fluid nationality, see the 1881 Canadian Naturalization Act (Toronto, Edinburgh: Carswell & Co. Law Book Publishers, 1884), v, 56.

¹² Thomas A. Guglielmo, *White On Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 8-9.

inferior. For pre-War Victorians, “German” meant a variety of things. In some cases commentators referred specifically to the German language. In 1911 an editor for the *Colonist* referred to the crowds in the city’s streets enjoying the Christmas season, with “men whose native tongue was German, or French, or Italian, or Greek, or goodness knows what else besides.”¹³ Elsewhere, “German” specifically referred to race, as it did when a visiting German newspaper editor praised Canada as “peculiarly adapted...for immigrants of the German race.” Though distinct in their Germanness, Victoria’s Germans shared a common whiteness with British Victorians. This connection did not necessarily mean that they were always equals, but, in practice, Canadian and British Columbian society readily welcomed Germans as “hardy, intelligent, and law-abiding.” Indeed, as Herr Wagner (the visiting German newspaper editor) pointed out, in Canada Germans could live alongside British immigrants who spoke a “closely allied” language, unlike the “alien race” German immigrants would find in South America.¹⁴

From the 1880s the Government of Canada aided in the construction of this discourse of compatibility by seeking out and welcoming German immigration.¹⁵ Laurier’s Minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton, was particularly noted for his encouragement of the immigration of small scale farmers to the Canadian West and the Prairies. The presence of these farmers, Germans among them, reflected the legitimacy of Canadian state control over these lands.¹⁶ Though most German immigrants actively sought by the Dominion were of the agricultural classes, politicians welcomed German

¹³ *Colonist*, 24 December 1911.

¹⁴ *Colonist*, 22 July 1904.

¹⁵ German-language literature sought to educate Germans on the reality and possibilities of settling in Canada; *Auskunft über die Dominion Canadas für deutsche Ansiedler*. Ottawa: Ministry of Agriculture, 1882.

¹⁶ Koch-Kraft, *Deutsche in Kanada*, 32.

capitalists. Canadian officials even put advertisements in German-language newspapers in the United States to attract German families already in North America.¹⁷ Some German capitalists published material to inform German investors about capitalist opportunities in the resource extraction industries in the province.¹⁸ This warm welcome offered to Germans did not distinguish individuals, but rather embraced all Germans universally, regardless of their heterogeneous backgrounds.

While Kathleen Conzen may caution against directly linking assimilation to residential patterns, the absence of an ethnically-German enclave in Victoria reflects a broader trend towards some ethnic heterogeneity in the city's residential areas.¹⁹ Local Germans capitalized on every opportunity – often through their clubs and cultural organizations – to celebrate their existence in the city. Victoria's Germans further took full advantage of their ability to succeed economically, an ability that was a direct result of their status as (usually) English-speaking Western European settlers. Furthermore, well-off Victorians had access to readily available land for residential developments.²⁰ Along with the economic privilege available to them, Victoria's Germans found themselves readily welcomed in Victoria's social and political circles. German ethnic and racial compatibility certainly played a fundamental role in ensuring their economic and social freedom compared with marginalized ethnic groups who did find themselves in marginalized enclaves.²¹

¹⁷ McLaughlan, *The Germans In Canada*, 11.

¹⁸ Notable among these was David Oppenheimer; Liddell, *Germans on Canada's Pacific Slopes*, 57n11.

¹⁹ Conzen, "Immigrants, Immigrant Neighborhoods, and Ethnic Identity", 606.

²⁰ Stanley, *Contesting White Supremacy*, 52.

²¹ Peter Baskerville previously identified the significance of birthplace and religion on the process of choosing boarders or a boarding house. Colour and religion seem to have been the primary determinants, trumping occupational class; Peter Baskerville, "Familiar Strangers: Urban Families with Boarders" *Social Science*

Though Victorians had some idea of what made a German during the 1915 Riot, historians encounter some trouble locating Germans within Anglo-dominant societies. Scholars such as Peter Liddell argue that, because Germans were accepted or “assimilable”, the assimilation of Germans into Anglo-Canadian society blurred the lines of Germanness as distinctive from Britishness.²² Focusing solely on German or Austrian nationals ignores other German-speakers who came to Victoria from the United States or other European states. Many of Victoria’s German residents did not come from Germany, but from a variety of places. Several came from the U.S., spring-boarding in from the California Gold Rush, drawn by the Fraser River or subsequent Gold Rushes. This trend continued into the twentieth century. In his study of German immigration to Canada, Hartmut Fröschle reports that on average between 1900 and 1914 only 10-15% of German immigrants to Canada came from the German Empire (*Kaiserreich*), while 40-45% came from Russia (including the Ukraine), 25% from South-eastern Europe, and around 20% from the United States.²³

Though by no means a majority, German-language individuals made up a prominent part of Victoria’s population before the Great War. Table 1 shows census data for 1881, 1891, 1901 and 1911 for Germans. The table shows that Germans made up only a small percentage of Victoria’s population in census years. This relatively low ratio of

History, 25:3 (Fall, 2001). More complex analysis of census data from the period is required before complex statements about Victoria’s urban fabric can be made. Emerging scholarship from a Victoria HGIS project questions Victoria’s ethnic enclaves and their relative heterogeneity as opposed to homogeneity; see Dunae et al, “Making the Inscrutable, Scrutable”, 2011.

²² Liddell, “Germans on Canada’s Pacific Slope”, 51; McLaughlin also stresses the interconnectedness and relation of the Teutonic and Anglo-Saxon because of the royal families’ common bloodline; K. M. McLaughlin, “The Germans in Canada”, *Canada’s Ethnic Groups* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1985), 10.

²³ Hartmut Fröschle, *Die Deutschen in Kanada* (Vienna: Österreiche Landsmannschaft, 1987), 8-9.

Germans should not be taken as an argument for their social, economic, or political absence.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Population of Victoria</u>	<u>Total Germans in Victoria</u>	<u>German % of Total Population</u>
1881	7,301	140	1.9%
1891	17,998	278	1.5%
1901	24,993	838	3.3%
1911	28,501	616	2.1%

Table 1 - Germans in Victoria by census year²⁴

No specific German-town existed, and Germans do not seem to have experienced any significant residential segregation. Elsewhere in North America during these years, homogenous German settlements were common.²⁵ Kathleen Conzen stresses that access to land and employment opportunities greatly influenced the emergence of ethnic enclaves. Early Victorians benefited from readily available property within walking distance to the majority of occupational sites in colonial and provincial Victoria. In other contemporaneous cities, migration chains of families or villages bound for the same place often led to the emergence of ethnic enclaves.²⁶ Not all German families came through group migration to Victoria (though the Sehls, Weilers, and Leisers did). Germans made up less of the population in Victoria than in cities such as Philadelphia where large

²⁴ Data taken from Canada, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th decennial censuses, districts of Victoria and Victoria City, 1881, 1891, 1901, and 1911, Dunae (ed.), *viHistory.ca*. Germans were identified in the 2nd and 3rd censuses as individuals whose fathers were born in Germany, in an attempt to identify individuals born elsewhere who could be assumed to be cultural German. For the 4th and 5th censuses, the newly added category of “race” was used to identify Germans.

²⁵ Take, for instance, Ontario’s Berlin, or Philadelphia’s Germantowns. I will return to these examples and how they might reflect on Victoria below.

²⁶ Kathleen Neils Conzen challenges the view that ethnic enclaves were simply a place of transition or acculturation into a new society. Instead, Conzen warns against over-emphasizing the link between assimilation and residential patterns; Conzen, Kathleen Neils. “Immigrants, Immigrant Neighbourhoods, and Ethnic Identity: Historical Issues.” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 66, No. 3 (December 1979), 604-6.

Germantowns could be found.²⁷ Victoria has elsewhere been referred to as showcasing a “hybrid urban population and a complex web of social interrelationships.”²⁸ Though this speaks more to Victoria’s history as a hub of Native and non-Native colonial space, it reflects the trend towards porous and permeable social space in British Columbia. Ethnic or racial lines did not necessarily mean rigid community boundaries in the colonial period; this continued to be the case – albeit at a diminished extent – in the imperial period as well. Whites found themselves normalized as “empire manifested itself most prominently in urban settings”, further alienating non-whites such as aboriginals and Chinese.²⁹

	1881				1891			
	<u>Germans</u>	<u>Total Population</u>	<u>German % of Total Population</u>	<u>% of Total German Population</u>	<u>Germans</u>	<u>Total Population</u>	<u>German % of Total Population</u>	<u>% of Total German Population</u>
Total	312	7301	4.3%	-	514	18017	2.9%	-
Lutherans	73	109	67.0%	23.4%	128	373	34.3%	41.0%
Catholics	93	1072	8.7%	29.8%	121	1955	6.2%	23.5%
Jews	32	76	42.1%	10.3%	51	152	33.6%	9.9%
Anglicans	19	2125	0.9%	6.1%	76	5753	1.3%	14.8%
Presbyterians	39	1156	3.4%	12.5%	72	3158	2.3%	14.0%
Methodists	7	766	0.9%	2.2%	31	2124	1.5%	6.0%
Other	49	1997	2.5%	15.7%	35	4502	0.8%	6.8%

Table 2 - German involvement in local religions, Victoria, B.C., 1881 and 1891³⁰

²⁷ In Philadelphia at the turn of the century German residents made up 16.5% of the city’s population. Germans organized themselves into two separate communities. Victoria’s Germans meanwhile were never greater than 4% of the total population.

²⁸ Patrick A. Dunae, John S. Lutz, Donald J. Lafreniere, and Jason A. Gilliland, “Making the Inscrutable, Scrutable: Race and Space in Victoria’s Chinatown, 1891,” *BC Studies* 169, Spring 2011, 79.

²⁹ Dunae et al, “Making the Inscrutable, Scrutable”, 51

³⁰ Data for Victoria taken from Canada, 2nd and 3rd decennial censuses, 1881 and 1891, Patrick Dunae, ed, *viHistory.ca*. “German” defined in both census years as individuals whose reported father’s birthplace was “Germany.”

	<u>Germans</u>	<u>1901</u>			<u>1911</u>			
		<u>Total Population</u>	<u>German % of Total Population</u>	<u>% of Total German Population</u>	<u>Germans</u>	<u>Total Population</u>	<u>German % of Total Population</u>	<u>% of Total German Population</u>
Total	820	25009	3.3%	-	587	27935	2.1%	-
Lutherans	145	352	41.2%	17.7%	104	474	21.9%	17.7%
Catholics	175	2195	8.0%	21.3%	111	1932	5.7%	18.9%
Jews	82	137	59.9%	10.0%	26	113	23.0%	4.4%
Anglicans	151	8212	1.8%	18.4%	93	9563	1.0%	15.8%
Presbyterians	77	4255	1.8%	9.4%	58	4674	1.2%	9.9%
Methodists	69	3252	2.1%	8.4%	93	3613	2.6%	15.8%
Other	121	6606	1.8%	14.8%	102	7566	1.3%	17.4%

Table 3 - German involvement in local religions, Victoria, B.C., 1901 and 1911³¹

Table 2 - German involvement in local religions, Victoria, B.C., 1881 and 1891 and Table 3 - German involvement in local religions, Victoria, B.C., 1901 and 1911 show the number of Germans and non-Germans recorded in census years as practicing a given religion, along with the percentage of total practitioners of that religion who were German, and the percentage of the German community of that religion. Germans tended to belong to a number of religions, including “traditional” German religions: Lutheranism, Catholicism, or Judaism. For the four Dominion census years (1881, 1891, 1901, and 1911), Germans predominately practiced Catholicism and Lutheranism. The German Jewish community remained constant throughout the period, hovering at around 10% of the total German population. In the later census years we see a rise in German participation among other forms of Protestantism; this may be because of increasing German immigration from the United States, or the children of early German immigrants converting to new religions, perhaps taking on the religion of their non-German spouses.

³¹ Data for Victoria taken from Canada, 4th and 5th decennial censuses, 1901 and 1911, Patrick Dunae, ed, *viHistory.ca*. “German” defined as those those enumerated of the “German race”.

Contrary to observations³² elsewhere, Victoria's Germans were not limited socially to traditionally German religious circles. Engagement within these non-German religious communities could offer further opportunity for socializing outside of one's language group, increasing the social network for marriage or business partnerships.

In other cities religious divides persisted in marking boundaries around families and communities. This was not specifically the case in Victoria, as Germans of the three main German religions lived together and celebrated together. Common-language may well have operated as a social icebreaker, facilitating the co-residency of some German families. German clubs overcame religious divides, with German Lutherans, Catholics, and occasionally Jews joining the same organizations. While German Jews actively took part in local Jewish organizations, their social circles were not restricted along ethnic lines and often overlapped³³ with German or other fraternal bodies, such as the Freemasons.³³ Religious differences did not stop Germans from working together as individuals. In 1869 both German Catholics and Lutherans sat on a club committee

³² Elizabeth M. Meyer, "Lutherische deutschsprachige Gottesdienste in Victoria, B.C., 1891-1982" ("German-language Lutheran Worship in Victoria, B.C., 1891-1982") in Hartmut Froeschle (ed.), *Deutschkanadisches Jahrbuch/German-Canadian Yearbook, Vol. VII* (Toronto: Historical Society of Mecklenburg Upper Canada Inc., 1983), 30.

³³ Tobias Brinkmann warns against the assumption that "German" Jews would necessarily be acquainted with German-culture, as many German-speaking Jews came from outside of the political boundaries of the Kaiserreich. Nevertheless, many of Victoria's Jews came from Germany, such as Simon Leiser or Dr. S. Hartmann; Tobias Brinkmann, "Jews, Germans, or Americans? German-Jewish Immigration in the Nineteenth-Century United States" in O'Donnell et al, *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness*, 112. The Congregation Emanu-El had 38 active members in the 1890s, many of whom were German (all were male). *Constitution and By-Laws of the Congregation Emanu-El*, Victoria, B.C., 1893, BCA MS-0059 (A00269). Members' wives also had a club, the Hebrew Ladies' Association, with 32 members in the 1890s; *Constitution and By-laws of the Hebrew Ladies' Association*, Victoria, B.C., 1896, BCA MS-0059 (A00269). The Jewish community boasted a chapter of the International Order of B'Nai B'rith as well.

Indeed, Jewishness was not always incongruent with being German: nineteenth century German-Jewish university fraternities actively asserted their Germanness, as Judaism operated less as a religion and more as a part of their heritage; Zwicker, *Dueling Students*, 110-1.

charged with planning a dance in honour of George Washington's Birthday.³⁴ Club membership could gloss over regional or religious differences and encourage harmony and service among the community. One German club organized the funeral of Richard Elhert at Hanna's Chapel on Yates Street in 1909. A year later in 1910 both the German Club and the (predominately German) Hebrew Association paid their respects at John Bloom's funeral.³⁵ Germanness was not a restrictive identity: Germans, themselves communally white, could also be Bavarian, Rhenish, or Prussian.

Many Germans enjoyed considerable economic and social success in the city. Several took part in capital investment at varying scales, opening significant businesses. German immigrants John Kriemler and Josef Spratt ran the Albion Iron Works in the 1860s; the foundry went on to be responsible for much of the steam boiler and other iron-goods manufacture on the coast in the early days.³⁶ Leopold Loewenberg arrived quite early in 1858, and almost immediately went into the real estate business, including dealing with land leases from the Indian Reserve in the Inner Harbour.³⁷ Victoria's German community was well-connected with Vancouver's Germans, such as in the case of the wealthy financiers Alvo von Alvensleben and Hans von Graevenitz.³⁸

³⁴ Lohse and Vigelius were German-born Lutherans, while Sehl and Loewen were German-born Catholics. Otto Hartnagle was Catholic, but born in Austro-Hungary. This data comes from the 1881 Dominion Census as British Columbia joined Confederation too late to take part in the 1871 enumeration. Canada, 2nd Decennial Census, 1881. Patrick A. Dunae, ed. *viHistory.ca*.

³⁵ *Colonist*, 30 May 1909; 2 April 1910.

³⁶ By the time the Iron Works closed in 1903, the company had been undergoing a steady decline in the years following the economic boom of the early 1890s; John S. Lutz, "Losing Steam: Structural Change in the Manufacturing Economy of British Columbia, 1860-1915". MA Thesis (University of Victoria, 1983), 59, 62, 154.

³⁷ Ramsay, "A History of the German Canadians in British Columbia," 20.

³⁸ Alvensleben arrived to the province quite destitute, but was able to establish an entrepreneurial empire through investment brokering of largely German off-shore funds in the province. Liddell, "Germans on Canada's Pacific Slopes", 54.

Several German professionals took up residence in the city as well. Herbert Otto Tiedemann's talents as a surveyor and an architect helped shape much of early Victoria, including the original colonial legislative buildings on James Bay. Tiedemann also led the surveying of Bute Inlet in anticipation of the original Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) Terminus.³⁹ There was also a fair-share of German doctors and dentists. Dentist Siegfried Moritz Hartman arrived in October 1877 and, despite his limited acquaintance with the English language, opened a barber shop. By 1880 he was practicing dentistry, starting off his career in Victoria by constructing a set of artificial teeth for Judge Crease.⁴⁰ Prominent hotels in the city were managed by Germans. The Driard Hotel, Victoria's most prestigious hotel at the time, was run by Gustav Hartnagle. The Bavarian Michael Young ran the New England Hotel. Hartnagle and Young both employed Germans among their staff; indeed, Lawrence Ebert, the Driard's house barber, and Louis Ebert, a baker at the New England were brothers from Frankfurt am Main.⁴¹ F. Lins was the German head-waiter at the Empress, as well as a founding member of the prestigious German Club.

Not all Germans were capitalists or professionals. Many excelled at crafting, employing skills learned in apprenticeships in Europe or in the U.S. This included furniture making. The Sehls and Weilers dominated this business for many years in Victoria. The Weiler and Weiler Bros. furniture empire represents well these family businesses. When Weiler retired in 1891, his four sons stepped forward to take over the

³⁹ Helmcken, *Reminiscences*, 264.

⁴⁰ Ramsay, *A History of the German-Canadians in British Columbia*, 29.

⁴¹ Lawrence Hafer, interviewed by Elizabeth Mayer, November, 1981, BCA, T3880:0003.

family business, each taking charge of an individual department.⁴² Ludwig Hafer began working in Victoria at the Albion Iron Works, but opened his own shop after the plant closed. Following his death in 1913, Mr. Kaufmann, a friend of the Hafer family, took over the business (The Victoria Novelty Works) on Government Street.⁴³

Victorians could patronize German businesses for a variety of foodstuffs. There were butchers and bakers, such as VanVolkenburg the butcher and Louis Wille, a baker. Of particular interest however is the over-representation of Germans in the brewing industry: though never more than 4% of the population, in the late nineteenth century Germans composed 30% of the owners of the 60 privately owned breweries established on Vancouver Island, at a time when brewing was a prosperous, though isolated, industry.⁴⁴ The first brewery in Victoria was the Victoria Brewery, opened by William Steinberger at Swan Lake in 1858, utilizing grain from Craigflower Farm in his first brews. A short time later however Steinberger moved the brewery into town, to Discovery and Government Streets, entering into a partnership with Christian Ochsner.⁴⁵ Though local Royal Navy contracts created a market for ale, local civilian tastes tended more towards German-style lager.⁴⁶

German-owned breweries provided much of the beer consumed in Victoria's many saloons and bars, also often owned by Germans. Frank Sehl managed the Teutonia Hall and Saloon in the 1860s. Not all beer consumed locally was brewed locally, as

⁴² Ramsay, *A History of the German-Canadians in British Columbia*, 26.

⁴³ Hafer had originally worked in Victoria for the Albion Iron Works. Kaufmann eventually left the shop however following the outbreak of the First World War. In the meantime, Mrs. Ludwig Hafer and her children moved to the family's summer-home on a farm at Mt. Keating. Lawrence Hafer interview, November 1891.

⁴⁴ Evans, "The Vancouver Island Brewing Industry, 1858-1917", UVic MA Thesis, 1991, 42.

⁴⁵ Evans, "The Vancouver Island Brewing Industry", 20-21.

⁴⁶ Evans, "The Vancouver Island Brewing Industry", 39.

foreign beers began threatening the local market. In the twentieth century local breweries had to compete with the increasing presence of macro-breweries like Wisconsin's Schlitz or the Munich-brewed Pischor beer offered at the Burnside Hotel in the early twentieth century.⁴⁷ Pither & Leiser also imported a large selection of German wines, principally from the Moselle wine-growing region of the Rhineland.⁴⁸ Though the foreign-brewed competition did not pose a serious threat at the turn of the century, breweries and bars would occasionally sign distribution agreements whereby a bar would take out a chattel mortgage from a brewery for venture capital. The bar would then use this money to purchase beer wholesale from the brewery to sell at a mark-up for the benefit of both parties.⁴⁹ While these agreements were not restricted to German-owned endeavours, business contacts made in social interactions would no doubt have helped forge such deals.

To better understand the riot's significance given these earlier contexts, I turn to photographs, existing documents from German-language organizations, and issues of the two main Victoria newspapers, the *British Daily Colonist* and the *Victoria Daily Times*. Unfortunately besides banquet-programs, no records remain from the German clubs themselves. Such records, were they available, would help demonstrate the membership and inner workings of the clubs and their relationship with the local community. As it is, the popular press remains the best source for demonstrating the extent of German-British

⁴⁷ See advertisements in the *British Daily Colonist* for Schlitz beer, for instance, 17 July 1903, 6. (Hereafter *Colonist*).

⁴⁸ See the advertisement in the *Colonist*, 27 January 1910. Wines from Rheinhessen and the Moselle Valley were imported via Deinhard & Co., based in Coblenz, Germany.

⁴⁹ See, for instance the agreement between Frederick Kostenbader and the Victoria-Phoenix Brewery for the Blanshard/Kaiserhof Hotel; "Kaiserhof Hotel", Phoenix Material, Labatt Brewing Records, BCA, Box 3 File 20. Following the 1915 Anti-German Riot Kostenbader transferred all rights to the Blanshard Hotel to Alexander McCool.

relations. Other sources dealing with Germans outside British Columbia and other ethnic groups within British Columbia further support the study.

White Victorians understood groups through a sliding hierarchical scale of races, with whiteness superior and crowned by Britishness.⁵⁰ Germans, who were often thought of as near relatives of the British, could be found at the top of this hierarchy. While the body of literature on race and whiteness is particularly deep, especially in regards to colonial constructions of non-whites in opposition to whites, I take inspiration from authors whose studies parse the whiteness of groups such as the Irish, Italians, and Scandinavians. Among these scholars are David Roediger, Matthew Frye Jacobson, Thomas A. Guglielmo, and Russell A. Kazal. These four authors operate on the assumption that race does not stem from biological fact, but rather social construction based in complex discourses of inclusivity and exclusivity that are pliable across geographical and temporal space, all as part of a “language of difference”. While whiteness in the United States was different than in B.C., we can nevertheless learn from how it operated southwards across the border. Furthermore, these authors offer a framework for critically considering the construction of common whiteness. Whiteness theory offers a means of making sense of the muddled relationship of race and colour by recognizing the constructed fraternity uniting individuals of different races together based upon their rhetorical whiteness.⁵¹

Race provided late nineteenth and early twentieth century observers a means by which to describe difference. Rather than describing biological certainty, these

⁵⁰ Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Soap, Light, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McLelland & Stewart, 1991), 105.

⁵¹ In the context of early twentieth century British Columbia and Victoria, race did not need specifically refer to one’s colour. An individual of the German race and another of the British race could both be described as white. For more on this distinction, see my discussion below.

differences were situational, based upon instable racial categories that were themselves subject to change. Roediger's *Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (1991) explores one such process of change, specifically how organized labour in the United States figured European immigrants as white or non-white. Though Victoria's Germans posed no noticeable threat to labour as Chinese labourers might have, Roediger's study is useful in that he exposes the discursivity of whiteness while emphasizing the relatively loose confines of racial categories across a temporal field (i.e., that awareness and collective opinion of a racial minority by a hegemonic group shifts over time). This further reveals the role of popular discourse in whitening certain racial groups. Roediger situates whiteness alongside an active struggle towards unity in face of a dangerous Other – usually African American workers.

Jacobson's *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (1998) more broadly investigates the processes of whitening European immigrants to the United States from the seventeenth to twentieth centuries. As Jacobson demonstrates, different European ethnic groups achieved whiteness at an uneven pace and at different times, with “Anglo-Saxon” or “Germanic” peoples (whom Jacobson identifies as English, Germans, and Scandinavians) elevated far quicker than “Celts” (French, Italians, Irish), with the whiteness of the former was often predicated on the exclusion of the latter. While Jacobson does not rely on the example of Chinese in America, it is easy to see how discourses surrounding Chinese exclusivity could further notions of white homogeneity. B.C. was a zone of unsure racial pedigree and relied on both exclusion and inclusion to help figure and affirm Anglo-Saxon and white suitability.

Thomas Guglielmo, whose study of pre-1945 Italians in Chicago I have already mentioned above, comes closest to the thematic framing of this thesis. Guglielmo's *White On Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* argues that there were two levels for figuring "race": colour (or "color race") and race, which could mean a variety of different things (language, ancestry, and so on).⁵² These two types of race operated on different though inter-connected levels from one another. Italians could be distinct because of their racialness, and therefore inferior to other Americans, while their uncontested whiteness offered them some superiority. This logic applies to Victoria's Germans, whose whiteness made them similar and acceptable to British Victorians, while their Germanness kept them distinct.

Finally, Kazal's *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity* (2004) investigates the gradual submergence of German identity into a broader understanding of Americanism. Germans, as Kazal concludes, could readily be considered as part of the "old stock" of white Americans, the new original Americans. Gone from the narrative are Native Americans or non-whites in favour of the founders of the white Anglo-Saxon Republic. Kazal explores how German whiteness and difference operated in America on a micro-scale, reflecting the earlier work of scholars such as Roediger and Jacobson. While Kazal specifically discusses the American Northeast and Philadelphia, his study offers a suitable framework for appreciating how Germanness could engage with Britishness in British Columbia.⁵³

⁵² Guglielmo, *White On Arrival*, 8-9.

⁵³ For a Canadian example of similar processes, see David Goutor, *Guarding the Gates: The Canadian Labour Movement and Immigration, 1872-1934* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007). While Goutor focuses on Canadian labour organizers' reactions to and shaping of immigration legislation, his study more broadly illustrates that processes similar to those identified by Roediger, Jacobson, and Kazal were taking place north of the 49th parallel.

Some scholars, particularly Marxist or empirical labour historians, have challenged whiteness studies in recent years. Eric Arneson characterizes whiteness as an imprecise canvas onto which historians project a-historical meanings.⁵⁴ Barbara Fields strikes out at the very idea of racialization at the centre of whiteness studies, the “rotten plank” by which scholars strew “race and races everywhere and then, *mirabile dictum*, discover them everywhere”⁵⁵ Both scholars deny the ability of historians to engage with historical identities without any empirical data. Their own studies focus on the material effects of racism rather than their underlying racial structures. Arneson further questions whether or not historians can ensnare public opinion from a limited number of out-of-context quotations, as public discourse was complex and fluid.⁵⁶ As Mariana Valverde reminds us, however, discourses have both textual/lingual as well as material manifestations. Historians should investigate how people talked about issues as well as the way in which people lived out those discussions in the material world.⁵⁷

Critics of whiteness studies tend to neglect one of the key components of such investigations: namely, the value in recognizing the privilege and origins of whiteness. Ruth Frankenberg called in 1993 for investigation into the “racialness” of the white experience, to raise awareness of the position of privilege within whiteness and further to challenge its transparency.⁵⁸ Often race studies tend to highlight only processes of Othering, of emphasizing, marking, and confirming difference. These studies fail to

⁵⁴ Eric Arneson, “Whiteness and the Historians’ Imaginations”, *International Working and Labor Class History*, No. 60 (Fall, 2001), 1-3.

⁵⁵ Barbara J. Fields, “Whiteness, Racism, and Identity,” *International Working and Labor Class History*, No. 60 (Fall, 2001), 51.

⁵⁶ Arneson, “Imaginations”, 18.

⁵⁷ Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water*, 10.

⁵⁸ Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Race*, 5-6.

recognize how concepts of sameness in racial worldviews were constructed and given power. Race delineated biological and cultural boundaries capable of structuring the world. If race marks difference, the inverse – that it marks sameness – must also be true. It is important therefore to investigate these samenesses to better our understanding of how race operated.

Alexander Saxton called in 1991 for an explanation of racial inequality that does not “invoke racism...as a causal factor” to describe the uneven relationship in social reality.⁵⁹ As this thesis argues however, Victoria’s Germans maintained an even social footing that only became unsure as war between Britain and Germany became inevitable. By investigating the experiences of Germans as whites I do not mean to ignore the historical mistreatment of non-whites or colonialism’s legacy, nor do I mean to minimize racist discrimination. I intend rather that this study will further our understanding of race in Victoria by addressing how one part of the “us” was constructed as one side of the “us” vs. “them” binary. British Columbia has been described as a “white man’s province” within a “White Canada”. Peter Ward and Patricia Roy contributed much to the early literature on white-state-crafting in British Columbia and Canada, a body that has recently benefited from additions by scholars such as Tina Loo, Carolyn Strange, Renisa Mawani, and Timothy Stanley. Often these state-processes took the form of legislative control over spaces and bodies, and the restrictions placed on non-white Others by white lawmakers. These authors focus on processes of exclusion, on groups denied the protection of white privilege.

⁵⁹ Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic* (London/New York: Verso, 1990), 16.

By problematizing whiteness and race, we challenge their combined and even continuing normativity. The white state-making process did not operate on a straightforward track – racial categories were contested and moulded in a complex and often shifting dialogue between hegemonic and marginalized ethnic groups on a variety of levels. This uneven dialogue formed part of a contested process, stratified along many levels – skin colour did not indicate whiteness or the privilege associated with it as readily as we might often think. Whiteness was never inevitable, and whites received their privilege in an unclear and complex process. I mean to uncover some part of this experience by questioning the place of Germans within Victoria in the years leading up to and during the Great War.

To do this, I present three body chapters. Chapter 2 explores the local cultural boundaries of Germanness and efforts to bring the community together. Local German clubs further nurtured a specific local German identity. Germans also “assimilated” relatively easily among British Victorians, hence the invocation of the “common Saxon origin” of Germans and British Canadians at the 1888 funeral for Kaiser Wilhelm. Though the thought underwent some reconsideration during the Great War, Germans were welcomed in Victoria, given their place of privilege in Victoria’s racial hierarchy.

Chapter 3 relates the events of the 1915 *Lusitania* Riot. The riot was actually two semi-connected events spanning the two evenings of 8 and 9 May 1915. Soldiers initiated the first riot at the Kaiserhof Hotel (though its name had been changed in 1914 to the Blanshard Hotel by manager Frederick Kostenbader). The next day civilians gathered in the city’s streets to discuss what had happened the night before and speculate on what was to come, before the violence and destruction resumed that evening. Chapter 4 steps

back and considers the multiple levels of significance of the riot. How did it arise? What happened that Germans could be so targeted? What happened immediately afterwards, as shopkeepers hurried to repair their broken windows?

As with Guglielmo's study of pre-1945 Italians in Chicago, this thesis argues that race and colour shape the experience of Germans in Victoria. Before the Great War, Victorians largely accepted German difference as inconsequential; in the years leading up to the war however these differences took on new meanings, with the 1915 Anti-German Riot providing a climax for the trend. Though the German-language dominated historiography suggests German-Canadian studies are only of interest to partisan German-speakers or German-descendants, the German experience in Victoria offers a fascinating case study of local identity construction. Race legitimized the eligibility of Germans as good white settlers in the pre-war period. During this time, the various German clubs helped construct and perpetuate an understanding of middle-class Germanness specific to Victoria, though it drew on broader German nationalist narratives. The First World War challenged much of the previous thought. Focus shifted from compatibility to latent differences now deemed untenable. Tensions came to a head following the sinking of the RMS *Lusitania*. Rioters altered Victoria's racial space by codifying storefronts as German and lashing out at urban manifestations of Germanness, thereby emphasizing foreign connections over any local social capital they may have had before the war. In the months following the riot Germans experienced considerably more alienation at the hands of the city council and their employers, and many left for Seattle or other neutral American cities. Other Germans were interred in state-run camps in the province's interior. While the riot did not initiate de-Germanification – indeed, it had

already begun with integration of Germans and their locally-born children – it certainly expedited the process.

Chapter 2: A *Heimat* on Vancouver Island: German Identity in Victoria Before the Great War

When Victorians attended the 1888 funeral for Wilhelm I, it was not out of any great loyalty for the Kaiser. Most British Columbians knew little of him, aside from his adjudication against the British claim in the San Juan Dispute in 1872.⁶⁰ Rather, white British Victorians crowded the streets and flooded the seats of the Victoria Theatre in a collective mourning with the city's German population. Despite any cultural differences, British Victorians shared many bonds with their German neighbours. This bond shared by the British and German communities was not a given, and had arisen only after considerable efforts on the part of the local German community, especially through the actions of their clubs. While it remains unclear to what extent the German clubs actually united all local Germans, they nevertheless projected a coherent sense of Germanness on Victoria's social stage.

To understand Germanness as it worked in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Victoria, I draw on Benedict Anderson's study of nationalism. Anderson situates the rise of nationalism in the latter half of the nineteenth century at a similar time as the

⁶⁰ The San Juan Dispute arose over the uncertain political status of the San Juan Islands in the Haro Straits between Southern Vancouver Island and Puget Sound, Washington. Both the Hudson's Bay Company (at that time the stewards of the Colony of Vancouver Island) and the American government claimed authority over the islands, by the presence of an HBC sheep farm on the part of the former and by settlers and an official Customs Authority presence on the part of the Americans. Tensions between the Americans and the HBC came to a head on the 15 June 1859 when an American settler shot one of Charles Griffins' pigs in an event that has come to be known as the "Pig War". Griffins, in charge of the HBC farm, called on Douglas for assistance. By October of that year the island was swarming with American and British troops. While no open hostilities ever erupted between the two nations' military forces, both the British and American governments were aghast when they learned of the local authorities' aggressions, and hurried to make peace. The boundary continued to be an issue of dispute, and the matter was eventually put before Wilhelm I to determine as a sober third party. Charles Griffins recorded his perspective of the conflict (including the determination of the soldiers on both sides to be perpetually drunk, and the negative impact that had on his European, Hawaiian, and Indian labourers) in his official journal; see Belle Vue Sheep Farm Journal, 1859, Hudson's Bay Company Archives [HBCA], B/15/a/1, Reel 1M16. See also Stephen Brown, "The Pig War", *Canada's History*, Vol. 80, No. 5 (Oct/Nov, 2000), 35.

decline of religion and monarchical dynasties. Prior to this, Anderson argues, religion and monarchies marked the spiritual and geographic boundaries between populations. As the concept of nations replaced these earlier dividing forces, nationalism gained credibility as an alternate way of marking boundaries and understanding groups of people based on “imagined communities.” Nationalism was not a political ideology *per se*, but rather a codified, structured identity similar to that offered by religion. An individual had a single nationality, much like one had a gender, and these labels were broadly applied with varying levels of self-input.⁶¹

These national identities, Anderson tells us, “are to be distinguished, not by their falsity or their genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.”⁶² In other words, the way in which a group imagines itself together is as worthy of study as its demographic boundaries. It is useful to think of Victoria’s Germans as such an imagined community in the years before the Great War. During this period Germans hammered out their identities on the anvil of cross-cultural experience. Meanwhile, back at home, Germans became increasingly aware of their own national identity, as well as in overseas communities like Victoria, synthesizing their diverse backgrounds into a coherent unity conceptually grounded by their common Fatherland.

White “sameness” obscured the lines demarcating German and British people, emphasizing instead their “racial consanguinity” as members of Anglo-Saxondom. Germans were related to Anglo-Saxons who were popularly conceived of as having emerged from “the forests of Germany.”⁶³ Germans were believed biologically suited to

⁶¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 5.

⁶² Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

⁶³ Jacobson, *Alchemy of Race*, 47.

the same climates as British people. According to one observer, Canada's climate was "almost identical" to that of Germany, unlike the "tropical regions" of South America, another popular destination for German immigrants. Canada's "new and progressive" institutions resembled those of Germany, and were reportedly appealing to the German desire for development. Alternatively, in South America, Germans would find themselves "under the domination of an alien race, speaking a tongue in no sense related to the Teutonic."⁶⁴ Further proof of German and British compatibility lay in popular views surrounding miscegenation. The anxiety directed at any interbreeding between settlers and aboriginals, or the feared subversion of domestic space by Chinese house-servants,⁶⁵ stemmed from concerns regarding the biological compatibility of distinct races.

Romances between British and German folk would not be considered miscegenation however, and any white offspring would be seen as beneficial to the province's white future.

Despite its discursivity, whiteness, indivisible with its incumbent privileges, was beneficial in late nineteenth and early twentieth century British Columbia.⁶⁶ White-superiority and British dominance helped justify the colonial process by which racial and

⁶⁴ *Colonist*, 22 July 1904

⁶⁵ These fears regarding the insidious presence of Chinese house-servants came to a head in the 1885 Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration. The commissioners were under the impression that Chinese house-servants would, in some instances, attend their mistresses while they were bathing, even going so far as to scrub their backs. This led to Chapleau and Grey, the commissioners, asking witnesses if these allegations were true. Dr J S Helmcken ultimately put their fears to rest, stating that it was an outright lie. Chapleau and Grey were upset to have had their time wasted, and entered their displeasure at having had time wasted on ludicrous stories stand on the record; see Canada, Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration, 1885, 59.

⁶⁶ For European settlers on Vancouver Island and in British Columbia in the mid-nineteenth century Aboriginal knowledge and labour were indispensable. These early days could be described as ones of exchange situated within unclear power structures. By the late nineteenth century however the Canadian state and British-style government had penetrated deeper into the new province, gradually tipping the scales in favour of white people; see John Sutton Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008).

ethnic groups were included or excluded. Whiteness did not always mean Britishness, either: in her Masters thesis study of racialization in Prince Rupert in northern British Columbia, Karla Greer recognizes the ability of whiteness to “shift” and include certain European immigrants in opposition to decidedly non-white Others.⁶⁷ Colonialism had largely erased indigenous peoples from the local landscape, a major success of which came with the 1911 displacement of the Songhees from their reserve in Victoria Harbour to Esquimalt. Meanwhile, Chinese individuals were disenfranchised and gradually excluded entirely through prohibitive legislation. Such treatment occurred within the context of a “great chain of being” whereby race designated a group’s place on a hierarchy of privilege.⁶⁸ Colonizers accepted themselves as white and civilized, and saw their projects as benefiting the development of a white British Columbia within a white Canada.

Whites were not born however with these distinctions already in place; colour had to be “learned” in such a way that the boundaries separating whites and non-whites appeared natural.⁶⁹ These cultural identities were not only performed, but fought for. Edward Said figures culture both as a “theater where various ideological causes engage one another” as well as a “battleground” where identities are tested and worked out in conflict with one another.⁷⁰ The cultural battle trope informs recent scholarship which describes racial and ethnic conflicts in early twentieth century and interwar American

⁶⁷ Karla Greer, “Race, Riot and Rail: The Process of Racialisation in Prince Rupert, B.C., 1906-1919”, MA Thesis, University of Victoria, 1999.

⁶⁸ Zaffaroni, “Great Chain of Being: Racism and Imperialism in Colonial Victoria, 1858-1871”.

⁶⁹ Guglielmo, “Encountering the Color Line in the Everyday: Italians in Interwar Chicago”, *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Summer, 2004), 49.

⁷⁰ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), xiii.

cities as the struggles of whites towards solidarity against black labourers.⁷¹ Similar processes were at work in Victoria and British Columbia, particularly in regards to anti-Asian agitation, but popular understandings of race already separated Germans racially from non-white Chinese and aboriginal persons. Germans arrived in Victoria already granted the status and racial privileges fought for by white ethnic labourers in American cities. Germans could furthermore become members of both the local and provincial governments, such as MPP H. F. Behnsen and city councillor Louis Vigelius, while Aboriginal and Chinese residents were excluded from local democratic processes.⁷²

Contrary to a modern observer's familiarity with the German *Bundesrepublik*, the idea of a unified Germany has been a long time in the making. While British Victorians may have had a sense of who among them was German, it was not so easy for Germans themselves. Though seemingly a recent fiction, late nineteenth and early twentieth century conceptions of German national identity emerged from long-standing debates

⁷¹ For studies of Chicago and Philadelphia see notable contributions to the Summer 2004 edition of the *Journal of American Ethnic History*, in particular Guglielmo, "Encountering the Color Line"; Arnold R. Hirsch, "E Pluribus Duo?: Thoughts on "Whiteness" and Chicago's "New" Immigration as a Transient Third Tier"; and Russell A. Kazal, "The Interwar Origins of the White Ethnic: Race, Residence, and German Philadelphia, 1917-1939," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Summer, 2004). For a similar Canadian study of organized labours efforts to shape and protect the Canadian work force, see Goutor, *Guarding the Gates*. This white solidarity is summed up in the phrase "white ethnicity", which David Roediger defines as the "consciousness of a distinct identity among usually second- or third-generation immigrants who both see themselves and are seen as belonging to definable ethnic groups." Kazal, "The Interwar Origins of the White Ethnic", 79; original from David R. Roediger, "Whiteness and Ethnicity in the History of 'White Ethnic' in the United States," in *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness: Essays on Race, Politics, and Working Class History* (Verso: London and New York, 1994), 183.

⁷² Much study has been done about the relationship of whites and non-whites to the suitability of government. For the American context, where Germans were equated with ancient democratic traditions "under the oak trees of old Germany", see Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*. For the British Columbian context see both Patricia Roy and Timothy Stanley's work on political discourses around the presence of Asians in public life; see Patricia E. Roy, *A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1989); *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man's Province, 1914-1941* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003); *The Triumph of Citizenship: The Japanese and Chinese in Canada, 1941-67* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); Timothy Stanley, *Contesting White Supremacy: School Segregation, Anti-Racism, and the Making of Chinese Canadians* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011). For comparisons between the control of Chinese and indigenous peoples in British Columbia, see Renisa Mawani, *Colonial Proximities: Cross-racial Encounters and Juridical Truths in British Columbia, 1871-1921* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009).

among German intellectuals and nationalists. Prior to the 1871 unification, German cultural unity was “elusive”, with those peoples living within the Holy Roman Empire and the German nation more attuned to their local traditions than any notion of a Greater Unified German (*Großdeutschland*). The unified Germany that we know today existed within the minds of these intellectuals and nationalists in a “paradoxical state of anticipation” for many years.⁷³ German nationalists as early as the fifteenth century traced their roots to the Roman occupation; central to their early attempts at cultural genealogy was the Roman historian Tacitus and his *Germania*. Unfazed by the fact that Tacitus never visited Roman-era *Germania*, early German nationalists found value in his praises of German “bravery and martial qualities.”⁷⁴ Liberal-minded Germans further approved of Tacitus’ praise of early Germanic merit-based command structures.⁷⁵

The Napoleonic Wars initiated a new era of communal German nationalism. What we today consider Germany was then a piecemeal collection of duchies and electorates, occasionally autonomous though often under the influence of the Republic of France or the Kingdoms of Prussia, Bavaria, Austria, or Hannover. By the mid-nineteenth century many German nationalists began calling for an end to German disunity, with many fighting for the grand unification of all German-speaking peoples – Prussian, Bavarian, Austrian, or German – into a *Großdeutschland* or “Greater Germany.”

⁷³ C. B. Krebs, “A dangerous book: the reception of the *Germania*”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus*, Edited by A. J. Woodman (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 280.

⁷⁴ In 1457 the chancellor of the Bishop of Mainz wrote an analysis of the contemporary German people, using Tacitus’ *Germania* as a guide against which to judge the “civilizing” effect of Christianity on previously “savage” Germans. These early cultural architects also emphasized the fact that, unlike Gaul, ancient Germany was never conquered by the Romans; see Herbert W. Benario, “Arminius into Hermann: History Into Legend”, *Greece & Rome*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (April, 2004), 84-5.

⁷⁵ Tacitus, *Germania*, Chp. VII. German nationalists also valued Tacitus as an account of a superior past that physically and spiritually reflected Germany’s ascendant superiority; Krebs, “A dangerous book: the reception of the *Germania*”, 284-6.

Hoffman von Fallersleben channelled this ambition in 1841 when he wrote the lyrics to *Deutschland über Alles*. In the song's first verse the singer expresses how they hold Germany "above all else in the world", and that Germany will unify together as brothers in "trust and defence." This unified Germany would stretch in the west from the Meuse to the Memel River in the east, and in the north from Denmark's border with Sweden to the Italian Adriatic coast.⁷⁶

A series of political and cultural revolutions shook Germany starting in the mid-nineteenth century. University and student societies embraced freedom of thought as one of their core principles, thereby fostering a love of liberalism within a new cadre of German elites.⁷⁷ The March Revolutions of 1848 meanwhile challenged the ideological and aristocratic core of Germany. Political unity gradually emerged in the nineteenth century, culminating in the formal unification in 1871 at the end of the Franco-Prussian War.⁷⁸ While this new German Empire was not as expansive as that envisioned by Hoffman von Fallersleben in *Deutschland über Alles*, the unification of the *Kaiserreich* with Wilhelm I as German Emperor brought together the German states that had existed in a contested state of unity and disunity for over a thousand years. For German nationalists, this new political unity simply confirmed their previous opinions regarding German racial, cultural, and linguistic unity.

Though Germanness relied in part on a specific German landscape, it was not trapped within Hoffman von Fallersleben's ambitious borders; rather, Germanness was

⁷⁶ Through the heartland of this *Großdeutschland* flowed the Rhine, a river declared by the *Colonist* in 1860 to have "always been a German river, ever since there was a German race, and that race still exclusively resides on its banks"; *Colonist*, 24 November 1860.

⁷⁷ German university life and *Bildung* became synonymous with academic freedom and self expression in the nineteenth century. This sense of freedom extended to the students' daily lives, allowing many German students to take part in fraternities and clubs; Zwicker, *Dueling Students*, 19.

⁷⁸ James Retallack, *Imperial Germany, 1871-1918* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 2.

mobile, able to travel great distances without eroding. In some cases travel and living abroad could actually “sharpen a sense of national identity” among Germans overseas through cross-national or –cultural experiences.⁷⁹ Such was the case with Victoria’s Germans: though they found themselves in a new landscape, their multicultural experiences did not compromise their longing for their *Heimat*. *Heimat* refers to the German philosophical idea anchoring one’s identity to conceptual and sentimental space. This feeling is located somewhere between the Romantic sense of the sublime and a sense of being at home.⁸⁰ While *Heimat* is often associated with the English word “home”, its significance for German identity transcends that of a superficial dwelling in favour of a deeper bond with a sentimental concept of place.⁸¹ German national and regional identities relied on such bonds.⁸² For the case of Victoria’s Germans before the Great War, *Heimat* should be understood as the communal cultural bonds to the homeland, even if individual memories of this homeland vary. *Heimat* could refer to unique spaces (cities, villages, provinces, or Germany itself). Such memories appealed to German immigrants, easing any homesickness by freezing “positive images in time, thus painting the church as larger, the air cleaner, and the fireside cozier than reality.”⁸³

⁷⁹ In his study of German Overseas’ Missions (*Deutsche Seemannsmission*, DSM), David Brandon Dennis details the attempts of German middle-class officials and ministers in far-flung foreign ports to offer German sailors on shore leave a “bridge to the Fatherland.” Dennis points out something that ministers at the DSM had not expected in their attempts to preserve Germanness and German masculinity among these sailors, namely that time in the *Handelsmarine* could re-affirm national identity through interactions with non-Germans and forced cultural alienations; Dennis, “Seduction on the Waterfront,” 199.

⁸⁰ Blickle, *Heimat: A Critical Theory of the German Idea of Homeland*, 1.

⁸¹ Elizabeth Boa and Rachel Palfreyman, *Heimat: A German Dream: Regional Loyalties and National Identity in German Culture 1890-1990* (Oxford Studies in Modern European Culture, 2000), 1.

⁸² Lekan, “German Landscape: Local Promotion of the *Heimat* Abroad”, 144; Blickle, *Heimat: A Critical Theory of the German Idea of Homeland*, 6.

⁸³ Matthew Lindaman’s study of the *Ostfriesische Nachrichten* in the American Mid-West highlights the ability of *Heimat* to bridge the old and new worlds together; Matthew Lindaman, “Heimat in the Heartland: The Significance of an Ethnic Newspaper” *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Spring 2004), 82.

Germans were not the only national group to have clubs: both the French and Chinese communities had their associated Benevolent Associations, and gentlemen of diverse (European) backgrounds joined fraternal organizations such as the Freemasons or Oddfellows. Elsewhere in the German context club membership countered growing urban anonymity, in particular in the Fatherland, but this does not seem to have been the case in Victoria, in so far as Victoria was not an alienating industrial centre on the same scale as Düsseldorf or Bochum.⁸⁴ Clubs did however combat a geographically segregated anonymity, lessening the distance from Germany on the far side of the world through the continuity of social leisure time. German clubs in Victoria further provided space where non-Germans could engage with German residents on the latter's terms. In many cases alcohol acted as a "social lubricant", facilitating co-ethnic socializing.⁸⁵ These broader identities rested upon usually invisible racial foundations. Such clubs should not be understood as a reflection of pre-existing Germanness, but rather an on-going dialogue between various parties to define the bounds of communal identity.

The legacy of German disunity might have thwarted club endeavours for a communal identity in Victoria; it certainly had elsewhere, with many clubs in large American cities (such as Philadelphia) exacerbating rather than easing regional or

⁸⁴ Abrams, *Workers' Culture in Imperial Germany*, 116.

⁸⁵ In his study of Philadelphia's Inter-war German community, Russell Kazal notes the space German-ethnic clubs played following the war in cross-ethnic relations. Club membership in Philadelphia following the Great War included far more non-Germans, particularly as clubs moved away from celebrating German cultural events to relying on the consumption of alcohol for leisure activities. It was within a context of white solidarity finding against anxieties regarding African American labourers that new members favoured previously German clubhouses with bars as racial spaces with readily accessible alcohol. Russell Kazal, "The Interwar Origins of the White Ethnic: Race, Residence, and German Philadelphia, 1917-1939", *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Summer, 2004), 98. Victoria's club executives in the pre-War period were almost exclusively Germans, with the notable exception of local jeweller and later mayor Charles Redfern. Redfern was secretary of the *Victoria Turn Verein* in 1866; *Colonist*, 1 June 1866.

religious boundaries.⁸⁶ This was not the case in Victoria. As with other fraternal organizations (of which many Germans were also members), German club membership offered a variety of social and economic perks, including social capital as acceptable, productive members of local society. German club meetings and events were rife with “situational affirmations”⁸⁷ where spatial and social interactions confirmed community boundaries. Local Germanness had to be learned and agreed upon as it was being actively constructed.⁸⁸ Germans engaged in activities understood as German, such as singing German songs, drinking beer, and celebrating German holidays in a move that legitimized their inward feelings of Germanness while projecting an acceptable cultural performance for non-German audiences.

Clubs offered a socially acceptable means of not only socializing but furthering one’s economic prospects. One club founded in 1909 declared in the *Colonist* that their principal aims were “the preservation of [German] national customs and language, and the cultivation of social intercourse.”⁸⁹ A song club proposed in 1891 would also predominately work for “the purposes of mutual assistance, with the additional idea of representing a singing society.”⁹⁰ Social intercourse meant more than simply making

⁸⁶ Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock*, 31-3. Clubs in Germany also highlighted class and religious divides by strengthening group identity; Abrams, *Workers’ Culture in Imperial Germany: Leisure and Recreation in the Rhineland and Westphalia* (Taylor & Francis, 1992), 118. Some scholars argue that overseas Germans, despite their regionally different backgrounds, actively sought to “invent” a pan-German ethnicity to apply to all Germans universally and equally; Thomas Lekan, “German Landscape: Local Promotion of the *Heimat* Abroad” in Krista O’Donnell, Renate Bridenthal, and Nancy Reagin (eds), *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness* (University of Michigan Press, 2005), 144-5.

⁸⁷ Guglielmo, “Encountering the Color Line”, 46.

⁸⁸ Kathleen Neils Conzen, “German Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity”, in *American and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred Year History*, ed. Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh (Philadelphia, 1985), 131; Lekan, “German Landscape: Local Promotion of the *Heimat* Abroad”, in *The Heimat Abroad*, 144

⁸⁹ *Colonist*, 23 February 1909.

⁹⁰ *Colonist*, 22 February 1891. No other mention of this club appears in the *Colonist*, perhaps because it failed to catch on. In a speech to the *Deutscher Verein* at an event in 1910, Frederick Kostenbader wondered why

friends. Members gained access to a network of connections they might otherwise not have, and membership in more than one club only increased the body of professional and social contacts. These networks further re-enforced clubs and their members as holders of social capital. Members leveraged this capital for credibility within Victoria's high society in a manner that guaranteed and furthered their own respectability through their presence at important local events, and by the attendance of colonial or imperial officials at their parties.

German pioneers initially formed two clubs in the 1860s: the *Germania Sing Verein* (Germania Song Club) and the *Victoria Turn Verein* (Victoria Gymnastics Club). The *Sing Verein* and the *Turn Verein* were the first local collectivized custodians of German identity, both of which held frequent and well-attended events where an imagined Germanness was displayed and negotiated between German and non-German attendees. Such co-imagining was not open to all, however: when the *Colonist* reported that tickets for one *Sing Verein* ball could be bought through the party committee in 1869, it was likely understood that tickets were available only for whites.⁹¹ Other events included monthly soirees for many years. Particularly popular were dances "noted for [their] pleasant and socieable character." Other times the all-male choir performed at benefit concerts. At the Firemen's' Benefit Gala in November 1864 the *Germania Sing Verein* performed a rousing rendition of Verdi's "Anvil Chorus" from *Il Trovatore*; the

many of these earlier clubs had failed. Germans were, in his words, "sociable creatures". Kostenbader supposed the failure of many German clubs may have been due to a lack of Germans in the city, though many earlier clubs had in fact had enough members; *Colonist*, 28 January 1910.

⁹¹ *Colonist*, 12 February 1869. The committee in charge of planning the ball were "Messrs. Heistermann, Jungerman, Vigelius, Hartnagel, Lohse, and Lowen [sic]."

club also joined the French-song club, *Les Enfants de Paris*, for a concert in February 1863 for the Lancashire Relief Fund.⁹²

The *Victoria Turn Verein* channelled a masculine element of German identity in Victoria during the 1860s and 70s. The *Turn Verein* was billed as a club “formed for the purpose of adding to [the members’] manly vigor by the judicious development of their muscle”, a vigour members gladly flaunted to their guests at a Coronation Day picnic in 1866 – including the young ladies – in feats of “gymnastic exercise.”⁹³ An impassioned editor extolled the virtues of the *Turn Verein* in 1873, hoping to revive interest and membership in the club. The editor called upon his fellow men of Victoria, whom he described as “shrivelled, cramped, and enfeebled, our shoulders drooping like weeping willows over tombstones, our manly chests contracting into the shape of spoons, our backs hunching up like a dromedary’s and our knees bending and knocking together like an automaton’s [sic], our youth and manhood prematurely decaying and presenting a sight melancholy enough to draw tears from and break the heart of any drill-sergeant.” Only through the vigorous exercises of the *Turn Verein* regime could men enjoy “the easy, manly stride, the well-developed limbs, the head erect, the steady hand, and the fire of the eye” of a well-conditioned athlete.⁹⁴

⁹² *British Daily Colonist*, 17 February 1863, 2. At other times the *Germania Sing Verein* allied itself with *Les Enfants de Paris* for musical outings and general shows of *bonhomie*: in July 1863 members of both clubs embarked on a boat-tour of Victoria’s coastline. When they returned to the harbour they sang God Save the Queen, the Marseillaise, and “other National hymns. The voices harmonized well and sounded remarkably soft and sweet on the water.” *Colonist*, 24 July 1863.

⁹³ *Colonist*, 27 June 1866, 3; 29 June 1866, 3. Though the *Victoria Turn Verein* has been largely ignored by students of British Columbia’s Germans, the club seems to have enjoyed some success in the colony before Confederation: a Ball in 1864 was attended by the Governor and his family, where it was noted that speeches were given in English and German. *Colonist*, 4 August 1864.

⁹⁴ *Colonist*, 30 July 1873.

Pre-War Victoria was as much a product of gender roles as it was of race or class boundaries. Masculinity helped anchor the German ethnic experience in the New World. David Brandon Dennis explores the role of German masculinity in his study of German Overseas' Missions at the turn of the twentieth century in Buenos Aires and New York. Dennis emphasizes the role of German masculinity as a "powerful agent in constituting national boundaries" operating on two levels: as Germany imagined itself within a rapidly globalizing world; and as overseas Germans collectivized themselves in foreign spaces.⁹⁵ The performance of manly German leisure activities abroad such as singing, hiking, beer-drinking, or gymnastics gave continuity to German masculine identity. This further provided a "conceptual link" between their current location and the *Heimat*. Gender and race were closely linked, and while the masculinities extolled by the *Victoria Turn Verein* were not exclusively German, they were masculinities unavailable to "feminine" Others. Membership in all-male clubs further maintained the differences separating masculinity and femininity, a duality that was upheld through socially acceptable interactions between the sexes.⁹⁶ Women typically attended club events as the potential or established heterosexual partners of male members.

Both the *Sing Verein* and *Turn Verein* events took place within a context of white camaraderie, stressing the will of German residents to operate within and engage with the broader community of other whites. Germans and British Victorians maintained a discourse of sameness, uniting the two populations in the city in co-ethnic white solidarity. At this point German immigrants were unwilling or unable to become truly British; while they could naturalize and gain the rights of the citizen (as many did), their

⁹⁵ Dennis, "Seduction on the Waterfront," 179.

⁹⁶ Zwicker, *Dueling Students*, 113.

accents and cultural trappings remained. Later generations, the children of the German pioneers, could become British.⁹⁷ Early German settlers, however, embraced their Germanness, and that was materially, culturally, and politically as good as being British. Not only were the Prussian and British royal families related, but German dress, manners, and food were intelligible and acceptable to British Victorians in the pre-war years. German culture was nothing like the “alien practices” of Chinese labourers in the city’s budding Chinatown.

German desire to fit in went so far that even when the *Germania Sing Verein* had the opportunity to celebrate a great German national victory at the end of the Franco-Prussian War, they declined. Elsewhere German communities celebrated the end of the war with much aplomb. In her study of the *Berliner Journal* in Ontario’s Berlin, Anne Löchte explores the role that war’s end had in communities reached by the paper, highlighting in particular the unifying spirit of the end of the war in the press, and the promotion of a pan-Germanic, pro-Prussian identity.⁹⁸ Such was not the case in Victoria. In January 1871 the club advertised its own gathering at the Colonial Hotel coinciding with the end of the war, but they were quick to reassure the public however that this occasion “was not one of thanksgiving...connected with or commemorative of the ‘victory of German arms in France’.” Rather, the party would be held at “the shrine of Epicurus” and celebrate peaceful living, demonstrated by the presence of “Frenchmen

⁹⁷ Frank Sehl’s grandson, Thomas Sehl, was one such individual. Born in 1899, Thomas Sehl joined the Royal Flying Corps during the First World War at their recruiting office in 1917 on Government Street. Sehl went on to later serve again against Germany in the Royal Canadian Air Force in the Second World War, eventually attaining the rank of Wing Commander; see Thomas Sehl, interviewed by Chris D. Main, Dr. Reginald H. Roy collection, Military Oral History Project, University of Victoria Special Collections, ID:00000130, 1978.

⁹⁸ Löchte, “‘We dont want Kiser to rool in Ontario’”, 112.

[who] will be found mingling in friendly sociality with their German fellow citizens.”⁹⁹

The club distanced itself from politics – they were not *nationally* German, and the victory of Prussia over France did not justify a Germanic celebration. This was not, however, a denial of their unique cultural identity, but rather an affirmation of their membership in a white brotherhood. Balls and dances offered *Sing Verein* members a chance to socialize not only with one another, but other ethnic groups as well, and these conversations over *hors d'oeuvre* or a pint of beer might lead to or even strengthen business relationships.

Members undoubtedly benefited from the social and business opportunities offered by club membership. By the 1880s Victoria was growing in size as the completion of the Esquimalt-Nanaimo and Canadian Pacific Railways “opened up” the west for settlement. Common whiteness was not forgotten, as the prominent display of “Saxon” solidarity at the public funeral for Kaiser Wilhelm I on 16 March 1888 at the Victoria Theatre shows. The funeral’s large attendance resulted in part from the co-imagining of Victoria’s British and German communities into a singular coherent body where the sorrows of one part could be felt by the other. While presiding over the assembly Reverend MacLeod echoed this sentiment, stressing the role their respective “common Saxon origin” had in binding the two together in “Anglo-Saxionship.”¹⁰⁰ Germans, it seems, could be both racially distinct while coming from the same racial origins as British Victorians.

At the time of Wilhelm’s funeral there was at least one minor German Club operating in Victoria, and a notice in the press following the funeral expressed the gratitude of the Club for the display of empathy shown by their non-German

⁹⁹ *Colonist*, 19 February 1871, 3.

¹⁰⁰ *Victoria Daily Times*, 16 March 1888.

neighbours.¹⁰¹ This was likely the *Concordia*, a German club whose very name exemplified the sense of harmony promoted by the earlier clubs.¹⁰² Though the members of the *Concordia* regularly held parties, these parties took place in a time of increased social opportunities in Victoria, and seem to have lacked the same influence over social occasions as the *Sing Verein* or *Turn Verein* in the 1860s and 1870s.

The *Concordia* folded by 1893, leaving the local German community under-represented with limited self-expression as the international presence of Germany shifted. The 1888 funeral of Wilhelm I and the ascension of Wilhelm II to the throne marked a change in German politics. Under Wilhelm II, Germany endeavoured to acquire overseas territories in Africa and Asia. To some extent, the German colonial experience and the production of colonial knowledge about the new territories helped cement German national identity.¹⁰³

The *Deutscher Verein*, a new German club, was founded in 1909 to preserve the members' "national customs and language" and further "the cultivation of social intercourse."¹⁰⁴ Germany's colonial acquisitions, as well as the naval arms race with Britain, offered a backdrop to this new club, leading to some understandable concerns on the part of many Victorians. An article in the *Colonist* in 1907 spoke to these anxieties, especially regarding Germany's increase in naval power. Ultimately however the article concluded that Germany was far more likely to "penetrate" Eastern Europe than pursue

¹⁰¹ *Colonist*, 20 March 1888.

¹⁰² *Colonist*, 23 February 1878. The *Concordia* first appears in the press in February 1878 with a report of a well-attended ball at the Skating Rink.

¹⁰³ The late nineteenth and early twentieth century Germany colonialist trade emerged partly independent of the long-standing *Hanseatic* trade networks. Indeed, nationalists in Berlin had more guiding influence over the colonial project than experienced *Hansa* merchants from Hamburg Bremen, and so on; David Ciarlo, *Advertising Empire: Race and Visual Culture in Imperial Germany* (Harvard University Press, 2011), 53.

¹⁰⁴ *Colonist*, 23 February 1909.

an extensive overseas colonial project.¹⁰⁵ Unsaid was the relief that relations between Germany and Britain would remain peaceful, so long as Germany did not challenge Britain's colonial superiority. For now however, Imperial and local officials welcomed Germans as immigrants in Victoria. Speeches and attendance at parties demonstrated this warm welcome. When German Imperial Consul Loewenberg reassured attendees to one gala in 1912 that Germany wanted only "to export merchandise, not men," Premier McBride responded that the province would always welcome Germans with open arms. As one guest put it, the "many ties [that] bind the English and German nations closely together" were "felt and strengthened and cemented" at *Deutscher Verein* events.¹⁰⁶

This new club embraced this different sort of Germanness, perhaps due to shifting demographics; fresh arrivals from the *Kaiserreich* had largely replaced the pioneers of the 1860s and 70s. Now, well into the twentieth century, the principle members were wealthy young capitalists and pseudo-aristocrats, and the *Deutscher Verein* wholeheartedly embraced the bourgeois German identity among its members. The rise of the *Deutscher Verein* coincided with a shift in the thinking about German identity in Victoria from camaraderie between Germans and Brits to a celebration of the "deep, horizontal comradeship" among Germans.¹⁰⁷ Germanness had always been one of the natural organizing categories of German residents, but earlier clubs had also relied on shared

¹⁰⁵ *Colonist*, 29 September 1907. An article ten years previous titled "Anglo-Saxon or Muscovite?" cast German-ascendancy in a totally different light. Taking its departure from a quote attributed to Napoleon Bonaparte that, one day, the world would be ruled by the "Teutons or the Muscovites", the author explored how that thinking reflected current affairs. Ultimately, the author equated the "Teutons" with the Germans, British, and Americans, and declared them already dominant in much of the world. The "Muscovites" (Asiatic Russians), on the other hand, were hardly as powerful. The article concluded with some musings on China, and how foreign domination of that country would confirm the supremacy of the Teutonic powers or the Russians; *Colonist*, 29 January 1898.

¹⁰⁶ *Colonist*, 27 January 1912.

¹⁰⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

interests. In Germany clubs existed to bring Germans with common hobbies together, as was the case with the singers of the *Germania Sing Verein* and the gymnasts of the *Victoria Turn Verein*. *Deutscher Verein* members had few things in common, other than their Germanness and their wealth. These later members of the *Deutscher Verein* embraced their new imperial consciousness, and though they may not have intended to include all German Victorians with them when they made statements about themselves as a group, the effect would have swallowed up non-member Germans into a nationalist Imperial German identity.

The executive of the *Deutscher Verein* brought new voices to the projection of localized German identity. Prominent among these men were wealthy young pseudo-aristocrats such as Alvo von Alvensleben and his wealthy Vancouver-based financier friends.¹⁰⁸ The club held lavish parties, far more opulent than those of the earlier clubs. Chief among the parties were the “Foundation Celebrations” (*Stiftungsfeste*) in honour of the Kaiser’s birthday and the founding of the club. *Stiftungsfeste* were held at the Driard and the Empress, Victoria’s most lavish hotels. *Stiftungsfeste* were not only birthday parties, but chances to celebrate the members’ German nationalism, distinct from the harmony celebrated by the *Germania Sing Verein* or *Victoria Turn Verein*. While the watch-word of the association could readily be “harmony” as F. W. Kostenbader put it in

¹⁰⁸ While Alvensleben was not among the executive, he was nevertheless notably present at every major gathering of the club. At its formation in 1909, the executive were as follows: “Honorary [sic] president, the Imperial German consul, Mr. Carl Loewenberg; president, Fred K. Kostenbaden [sic]; vice-president, Esten Strassburg; secretary, F. Lins; treasurer, W. Papke.” *Colonist*, 23 February 1909. The club’s first general meeting took place on 5 April 1909. At the time, the club totalled “nearly 70 members” and “was formed for the purpose of fostering German language, literature, song and social intercourse. Nearly all the leading German residents belong to the society already.” *Colonist*, 4 April 1909 .

1912, it would be a harmony not between white brothers but between German and British nationalisms.¹⁰⁹

Advertisements for the *Stiftungsfeste* drew on German archetypes and imagery. The poster for the January 1912 event centres on a resplendent and crowned *Germania* figure, the female personification of Germany.¹¹⁰ In one hand she holds aloft an oak branch, while the other arm clutches a shield with the Prussian eagle to her breast. Behind her the rising sun slips up past the horizon, shedding hope and new beginning on her as she goes forward, leaving behind the ruins of a castle symbolizing, perhaps, a distant past.¹¹¹ Another poster from January 1914 recalls Germanic narratives and the trope of “sword-wielding Germanic warriors” and knights, and depicts two armoured men-at-arms standing at a castle’s battlements.¹¹² Such images intentionally established a conceptual link between *Deutscher Verein* members in Victoria and their *Heimat*. Members of the club, regardless of where they came from, could trace some national lineage to the Fatherland.

¹⁰⁹ *Colonist*, 27 January 1912.

¹¹⁰ The *Germania* figure has been a constant figure in conceptualizations of German identity and culture. Today she is perhaps most recognizable for her prominence in the *Niederwalddenkmal* (Niederwald Memorial) at Rüdelsheim am Rhein, in the German state of Hesse near Frankfurt and Mainz. There she stands atop the memorial, holding aloft the crown of the Holy Roman Empire, watching over the Rhine River.

¹¹¹ “3. Stiftungsfest des Deutschen Vereins, Victoria, B.C., verbunden mit der Geburtstagsfeier S. M. des Deutschen Kaisers, Victoria, B.C., den 26. Januar, 1912“ BCA, Library NWp 325.711 D486 1912.

¹¹² “27. Jänner, 1914, Kaiser-Geburtstag: 5. Stiftungsfest des Deutschen Vereins, Victoria, B.C.“ BCA, Library NWp 325.711 D486 1914; Krebs, “A dangerous book: the reception of the *Germania*”, 289.



Figure 1 - Program for the 3rd Stiftungsfest of the *Deutscher Verein*, 1912 [Detail]. Image NWp 325.711 D486 1912 courtesy of the Royal BC Museum, BC Archives.

These posters also included elements of British Columbian imagery, situating club membership within already racialized local geographies. In the 1912 poster, two shields rest next to *Germania*, one showing the Prussian Eagle and the other the flag of British Columbia. Both shields further rest upon a field of maple and oak leaves. The poster for 1914 also shows the British Columbian flag, surrounded by maple leaves, and accompanied by the coat-of-arms of the Prussian and British royal families. At the men-at-arms' feet three flags lay jumbled, two of which are recognizable as the flags of the German Empire and the Dominion of Canada.¹¹³ With the Germanness of the *Stiftungsfest* re-enforced through German activities such as beer drinking, the singing of Germanic songs, and the celebration of the Kaiser's birth, the *Deutscher Verein* inserted itself and its members along with their German nationalist narrative into the foreign landscape of British Columbia. This narrative was so naturalized that it was

¹¹³ As the poster is in black and white it is difficult to identify the third flag, laying under that of the Dominion of Canada. It could perhaps be that of the German Confederacy, or an earlier version of the German Imperial Flag.

inconspicuous, leaving no objection to depicting *Germania* alongside Canadian or British images.



Figure 2 - Poster advertising the 5th Stiftungsfest of the *Deutscher Verein*, 1914. Image NWp 325.711 D486 1914 courtesy of the Royal BC Museum, BC Archives.

Deutscher Verein members further inserted their *Heimat* into the local landscape by singing at their events.¹¹⁴ German songs not only stressed the members' and attendees' camaraderie, but further invoked the "longing for belonging" of the *Heimat*, a belonging

¹¹⁴ Dennis, "Seduction on the Waterfront," 194.

expressed in part by British songs.¹¹⁵ In 1912 members and guests followed the royal toasts by singing the nations' respective royal anthems, *God Save the King* for King George V and *Heil Kaiser, Dir* for Kaiser Wilhelm II, followed by *Deutschland über Alles*. The assembly concluded the toasts with *Rule Britannia* and *The Maple Leaf Forever*, before ending the night with more German songs in honour of “commerce and fidelity.” These performances of Germanness were extended to non-German attendees unfamiliar with German practices, and lyrics were distributed to the gathering in order that guests and members could sing along alike.¹¹⁶ Two years prior the *Deutscher Verein* had concluded its toasts – during which Premier McBride was repeatedly praised as “the ablest man in government” – with a *Salamander* and a rousing rendition of *Die Wacht am Rhein*.¹¹⁷

Not all events were publicized or open to the greater public. In 1911 the club invited some local prominent non-Germans to a “Munich-style” *Oktoberfest* held at the clubhouse. Guests were treated to an “old German Village Council Sitting” presided over by Imperial Consul Loewenberg.¹¹⁸ Events such as these collapsed varieties of

¹¹⁵ Blickle, *Heimat: A Critical Theory of the German Idea of Homeland*, 6.

¹¹⁶ “Kaiser Geburtstagfeier und drittes Stiftungsfest des Deutschen Vereins, Victoria, 26 januar , 1912: Programm“, BCA, Library NWp 971.941 K13.

¹¹⁷ *Colonist*, 28 January 1910. A *Salamander* is a show of honour given to an individual or an organization in the tradition of German student fraternities (*Burschenschaft*). The *Salamander* is called by the chairman of the celebration, and after a count of three all attendees lift their full beer glasses and drink until they are emptied. This is usually performed as a group, after which the glasses are alternatively pounded on the table or rolled back and forth to create a great racket, usually with participants remaining otherwise silent. I witnessed a *Salamander* in April 2010 as a guest at the *Burschenschaft Alemannia* in Heidelberg. The limited description of the *Salamander* in the *Colonist* and some literature on German fraternities agrees with my personal experience; see Lisa Fetheringill Zwicker, *Dueling Students: Conflict, Masculinity, and Politics in German Universities, 1890-1914* (University of Michigan Press, 2011), 51. A stylized *Salamander* is also depicted in the 1954 musical *The Student Prince* (MGM Studios, 1954). *Die Wacht am Rhein* as a nationalist song is perhaps most famous from its depiction in Michael Curtiz's 1942 classic *Casablanca* (Warner Brothers Studios), where a group of Nazi officers are drowned out in their singing by bar patrons singing *La Marseillaise*.

¹¹⁸ Invitation to E. O. T. Scholefield, from the *Deutscher Verein*, 23 October 1911, BCA Verticle File “German Club” (52-1295).

Germanness – *Oktoberfest* being a celebration largely ignored outside Bavaria – into one consumable whole for guests and members alike. The club also held Christmas parties strictly for their members, as a chance to converse in German and celebrate the season in a German way. Christmas was one of the few *Damenabends*, or evenings where women were allowed to attend, either to accompany men or to meet them. Ludwig Hafer, one of the founding members of the *Deutscher Verein*, met his wife at a club event.¹¹⁹ The club also welcomed members' children at Christmas parties, and presents were provided by the club for the *Kinder*.¹²⁰ Events on these smaller scales such as the club's *Oktoberfest* and Christmas parties re-enforced members' sense of community.

The *Deutscher Verein* represented a new sort of Germanness beyond the white fraternity of the *Sing Verein* and *Turn Verein*. Now Victoria's Germans were rhetorically linked to the *Kaiserreich*, emphasizing their trans-planted national identity above their ethnicity. The presence of imperial officials at *Stiftungsfeste* emphasized this shift. *Stiftungsfeste* were from the beginning imperial affairs, with full consular approval of major events.¹²¹ *Stiftungsfeste* were usually chaired by the German Imperial Consul, flanked on his right by the Premier and the Mayor on his left as honoured guests, clearly indicating the intersection between the British Empire and the Wilhelmine *Kaiserreich*.

¹¹⁹ *Deutscher Verein* Christmas Party invitation, 12 December 1912, in BCA Verticle File "German Club" (52-1295); Lawrence Hafer, interview by Elizabeth Meyer, November 1981, BCA T3880:0003. For an elaboration on the delineations between male and female German social spheres in the American context, see Kazal, "The Gendered Crisis of the *Vereinswesen*" in *Becoming Old Stock*.

¹²⁰ *Deutscher Verein* Christmas Party invitation, 12 December 1912, in BCA Verticle File "German Club" (52-1295). One question of interest regarding the Christmas parties pertains to whether or not Jewish members of the club – if there were in fact any – were welcomed or present at the parties. Sadly, very few records exist from the *Deutscher Verein*, though notable German Jewish residents – Simon Leiser among them – attended other events.

¹²¹ In 1912 Loewenberg applied the seal of Victoria's Imperial German Consulate (*Kaiserlich Deutsches Konsulat*); "Kaiser Geburtstagfeier und drittes Stiftungsfest des Deutschen Vereins, Victoria, 26 januar , 1912: Programm" BCA, Library NWp 971.941 K13.

For the time being this intersection was a peaceful one of cooperation between Germans and Britons.

These *Stiftungsfeste* and their recognition of German national and imperial identity took place alongside an increasing awareness of German expansion. By 1914 *Deutscher Verein* events invoked the universality of Germanness despite the varied demographic backgrounds of German settlers in the City. This Germanness was situated within the British Columbian landscape, even if members of the community straddled both the New and Old worlds. There were no calls to investigate into the “philosophical poverty” – to borrow from Anderson – of Germanness at this stage. Germanness meant white privilege, and the imagined community of Germans in Victoria were afforded luxuries and opportunities other ethnic or racial groups were not. Locals had a unique awareness of Germanness, thanks in part to the actions of the various German clubs.

When the *Deutscher Verein* actively promoted German nationalism in the city, they celebrated their members’ prosperous, welcome lives on the periphery of empire. Germans were responsible for much of the business of the city and the province, and their influence was warmly welcomed by the press, the federal government, and the premier. As tensions mounted in Europe however Victoria’s Germans were left in an uncomfortable state. Despite these warm welcomes, there was a nagging awareness that conflict may one day break out between Germany and Britain, and it was unclear what effects this might have on local relations.

Rather than attempt to hide their Germanness, the *Deutscher Verein* continued to proudly invoke their distinctiveness from other Victorians, confident that peaceful past relationship would continue. An editor with the *Colonist* betrayed a general anxiety in

1910 however when, in wishing the Kaiser a happy birthday, he described Wilhelm II as “sometimes [setting] nervous people wondering what he is going to do next.” Wilhelm was also often seen as harbouring “designs against the peace of the world.” Conscious of these anxieties, club members did their best to diffuse growing tensions. MPP Behnsen boisterously declared in 1910 that he had recently received a telegram from the Kaiser himself promising peace between Germany and Britain forever.¹²² Such efforts had little effect however, and the *Deutscher Verein* closed its doors in 1914 as many prominent Germans left the city for Seattle or the Fatherland.

¹²² *Colonist*, 27 January 1910; 27 January 1912.

Chapter 3: Victoria's Germans and the Great War

Standing among the crowds on Yates Street on the evening of 8 May 1915, one would hardly believe they were standing before the warehouse of the same Simon Leiser who had contributed so much to the development of the city and the province. Looters eagerly made off with goods tossed from the shattered windows by soldiers inside the warehouse, as the crowd sang patriotic songs, cheering whenever a new window was broken. The night had begun simply enough, with a group of soldiers taking out their personal frustrations on the former Kaiserhof hotel where they believed local Germans were celebrating the sinking of the RMS *Lusitania* as a German victory. Emboldened by alcohol, the soldiers began breaking glasses and mirrors, setting off violence un-heard of in the city and ultimately culminating in the reading of the Riot Act.

In the days leading up to the declaration of war, crowds gathered to read war bulletins at the *Colonist* office in anticipation of full-blown hostilities between Britain and Germany. European leaders' posturing became front-page material for the press in Victoria, and as Germany and France entered into armed conflict it was clear that British Columbians stood ready to do their Imperial duty to Britannia. On 30 July 1914 the British First Fleet sailed for a destination undisclosed under sealed orders, known only to be somewhere in the North Sea, and though the British Government claimed these motions were of a "purely precautionary and defensive nature," Victorians weren't fooled: war was coming.

Austrian consuls, the nearest of which was in Vancouver, had recently recalled all active army and naval reservists of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in British Columbia. According to acting consul A. von Girsewald, no formal recall had yet come down from

the Imperial German government to the consuls. Girsewald nevertheless suspected that the city's 30 German reservists shown in his records "would all respond eagerly."¹²³ Meanwhile the 88th Regiment of Victoria Fusiliers actively sought recruits: an advertisement in the *Colonist* asked recruits to apply at the Regimental Institute, at the corner of Fort and Langley at 8.30 p.m. on Wednesdays, or at the drill hall at 8 p.m. on Thursdays.¹²⁴ Daily drills on streets and in parks served not only to train recruits but also to instil a sense of community involvement in preparations, and friends and family were kept up to date on present enlistments in the papers.

Although Canada's obligations to Britain in the event of conflict with Imperial Germany were unclear, the country's readiness to serve was not. As an editorial in the *Colonist* put it,

We are not by any means sure how [our duty] could best be discharged. That thousands of men would volunteer for service wherever they should be needed may be taken for granted, but it will be for the dominion Government, in consultation with the War Office, to decide whether that duty can be best discharged by sending a contingent to Europe or by keeping our forces at home. Of one thing we feel certain, namely, that every Canadian is prepared to stand by the United Kingdom through thick and thin.¹²⁵

British Columbia certainly stood ready. In a private interview with the *Colonist*, Premier McBride pledged the full support of the province, and urged Prime Minister Borden to support Great Britain.¹²⁶ McBride himself had already personally authorized the purchase of two submarines from a Seattle shipyard in response to reports of two German cruisers in the Pacific. Victorians could not help but feel vulnerable far out on the Pacific coast, as Victoria seemed poorly defended in the event of a German naval attack from the Pacific.

¹²³ "Recall of Reservists," *Colonist*, 2 August 1914.

¹²⁴ "Recruits Wanted," *Colonist*, 30 July 1914.

¹²⁵ "Canada's Duty," *Colonist*, 31 July 1914.

¹²⁶ "This Province Stands Ready," *Colonist*, 1 August 1914.

Officials, McBride included, worried that the German cruisers *Nürnberg* and *Leipzig* would be too much for the few guns at Esquimalt and the decrepit HMCS *Rainbow*. The submarines had originally been built for the Chilean Navy, but their payment had not yet come through. McBride pounced at the opportunity, and for a few days British Columbia had her own private navy for \$1,150,000 taken from the province's funds.¹²⁷

A few days later British Columbia transferred the submarines as its first material contribution to the war to the Navy. Meanwhile, hundreds of young men flocked to recruiting stations at Vancouver and Victoria. Victorians were eager to serve, and many hoped to join those young men already enlisted. Crowds gathered on 3 August 1914 at the drill hall of the 88th Victoria Fusiliers on Menzies Street to hear the music of the fife and drum corps of the regiment and watch the parade of the 5th Regiment. As spectators packed what floor space was available – the galleries already being quite full – a large group of young horsemen struggled to sign up for a proposed squadron of horse soldiers.¹²⁸

The next evening Great Britain declared war on Germany. As a part of the Empire, Canada immediately responded to the empire's call, the papers emphasizing Canadians' willingness to serve. With the formal declaration of war even more recruits flooded into Vancouver and Victoria, with the former being so overwhelmed at times that there were more applications than enlistments available. Some hopeful recruits, like former surveyor George Murray Downton, were turned away at Vancouver but found better luck in Victoria; those men lucky enough to enlist could look forward to countless

¹²⁷ Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History*, 381.

¹²⁸ Hopefuls for what would become the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles needed to be "(1) British subjects; (2), sober and of good character; (3), able to ride, and acquainted with a rifle; (4), between 18 and 45 years of age; (5), at least five feet four inches in height and not over 200lbs. All those with previous service of any kind must produce good discharges." "Mounted Infantry Unit for Victoria," *Colonist*, 2 August 1914.

parades and drills. In many instances networking proved invaluable, as Downton only managed to join the 88th Victoria Fusiliers after bumping into a friend of his who introduced him personally to Major Rous-Cullen, the recruiting agent.¹²⁹ Recruiters turned many other men away, for as of yet the demand for manpower was not so great.

From the very beginning the *Colonist* warned Victoria's Germans to keep a low profile, and avoid saying "anything offensive" if they happened to sympathize with Germany.¹³⁰ As the war effort ramped up, British Columbians suspected local Germans as saboteurs or spies of the *Kaiserreich*. With these fears in mind Victoria's Germans had few options in reacting to the war. Amid the growing tensions in 1914 the *Deutscher Verein* had closed its doors in March, and the Kaiserhof Hotel changed its name to the less inflammatory Blanshard Hotel, though Moses Leiser retained ownership and H. Kostenbader the liquor license and lease. While the name was changed to obscure the German connection to the hotel, Kostenbader did not bother to redecorate the interior of the hotel bar, where the German mottoes and images on the wall reminded Victorians of the German management.

After the declaration of war, Victorians looked at Germans with suspicion. Feeling themselves under scrutiny, some simply left the city. Reservists could return to Germany or Austria to serve in their armed forces, but many hoped to avoid the war altogether by staying in Victoria or leaving for the neutral United States.¹³¹ After the German Club closed, two of the three men on the lease for the clubhouse fled Victoria, leaving Henry Seidenbaum solely responsible for the rent of the premises on Government

¹²⁹ Geoffrey Murray Downton Collection, UVSC, SC195, 6-7.

¹³⁰ "Our German Citizens," *Colonist*, 5 August 1914.

¹³¹ Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History*, 378.

Street in Burns' Block, above the Dominion Transfer Co.¹³² Many Germans took refuge in Washington State, such as Lutheran Pastor Otto Gerbrich and former Consul and tobacco merchant Carl Lowenberg. Alvo von Alvensleben, the well-known Vancouver capitalist, also left; while he was not settled in Victoria, he was intimately connected with the city financially and with the German population socially, having been a frequent guest of honour at German Club events. Like other German capitalists, Alvensleben was unable to return to British Columbia to liquidate his considerable assets.¹³³

Many other Germans remained, determined to stay in the city. It is unclear how many Germans left the city; it is likely that more left than stayed, unable or unwilling to leave their local investments or families. Prominent businessmen such as Simon Leiser stayed, as did many middle or lower class Germans. One unemployed German labourer wrote to City Council expressing his loyalties to Britain and Canada, and denying any sympathy with the Kaiser. Victoria's Germans shared the man's attitude, that though of German birth or extraction they could be loyal to British Canada.¹³⁴

With the beginning of 1915, Victorians were increasingly sensitive to the war effort amid troubling reports of the fighting overseas, putting aside the "habit of self-

¹³² *Times*, 19 Jan 1916. Henry Seidenbaum is elsewhere referred to as the corruption "Siebenbaum" (Seven-tree) of the German surname "Seidenbaum" (Silk-tree).

¹³³ To this day rumours still circulate that Alvensleben had built a submarine docking station in one of his fish canneries near Prince George, presumably to support a German U-Boat campaign in the northern Pacific. Alvensleben was also the target of some talk in the Provincial Parliament in 1915: MPP Williams asked the Speaker if Alvo von Alvensleben had any material interests in B.C.'s resources, and if it was true that a firm in Seattle had recently been established to take over Alvensleben's affairs. Mr. Bowser replied that Alvensleben himself had no interests, but a company under the name of Alvo von Alvensleben Ltd. did, but that their 33 timber licenses had not been transferred since the beginning of the war. See B.C. Legislative Journal, Session 1915, Vol. XLIV, 69.

¹³⁴ The man went on to request employment from the city, a request that they ultimately rejected. It should be remembered that the war began during a time of economic depression which left many labourers in British Columbia (especially in the city) out of work. The presence of "enemy aliens" in the form of European unemployed labourers originally from Germany or Austro-Hungary influenced the decision to intern enemy aliens, a move seen as a reliable and quick way to not only deal with an excess population of unemployed but to ensure public safety. City of Victoria Council Minutes, 23 Nov 1914.

indulgence which had characterized their lives during the prosperous Edwardian days.”¹³⁵

Enlistment was actively encouraged, and recruits continued to flood enlistment centres in the province as it became increasingly clear that war would not be over by Christmas.

Many local young men had already managed to sign up, such as the son of former Lieutenant Governor James Dunsmuir, as Victoria emerged as an enlistment and mustering hub for soldier training. Victorians had lived for some time with the 5th British Columbia Regiment permanently stationed at Esquimalt, and were daily growing more accustomed to the presence of the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles (CMR) and the 88th Regiment of Victoria Fusiliers camped nearby at the Willows Exhibition Ground in Oak Bay.¹³⁶ Soldiers regularly paraded through town before returning to their quarters at the Willows, where soldiers were billeted in one of the exhibition halls (another was made into a dining hall) and the CMR camped in tents on the fairgrounds.¹³⁷

Though located as it was on the periphery of empires, Victorians had long been aware of the actions of the imperial powers. As the weeks passed the *Colonist* and *Times* regularly published images of fallen soldiers and casualty lists, together with reports of battles. Articles published with these reports introduced some of the more ghastly legacies of the war: the atrocities reportedly committed by German soldiers in Belgium and France. Rumours about the murder of Belgian babies continue today to be associated with German actions in Belgium, and the relayed stories published in the papers shocked

¹³⁵ Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History*, 376.

¹³⁶ Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History*, 377.

¹³⁷ War Reminiscences, Geoffrey Murray Downton Collection, UVSC, SC195, 7-10. The 88th had been gazetted as a Victoria regiment in 1912, and during the war the 88th trained and prepared replacements for units already overseas. By the war's end, over 4,500 recruits transferred overseas from the Victoria Fusiliers as reinforcements; Lt. Col. C. H. Bolton, "History of the 88th Regiment, Victoria Fusiliers," 88th Regiment Victoria Fusiliers Collection, UVSC, SC160, 2-3.

their contemporary readers.¹³⁸ The Canadian press, including Victoria's papers, took particular relish in relaying reports that a Canadian soldier had been crucified by German soldiers. Such overseas reports relied on Teutophobic language, depicting Germans as uncivilized pirates or "Huns."¹³⁹

British and British-sympathetic propaganda informed Victorians' daily understanding of the war. Press coverage was often relayed from English papers, and "translations" of German newspaper articles purported to show the German perspective; in reality these misconstrued excerpts from the German press did more harm than good to local opinion towards Germans, as was likely the editor's intention. Newspapers did not restrict themselves to simply reporting on German atrocities or misquoting the German Press. Editorials in the *Colonist* and *Times* engaged in deliberate anti-German or Teutophobic attacks. Central to the press' critiques of Germanness were the influence of Bismarck on Prussian militarism and the impact of German *Kultur*. The press often conflated Prussian militarism with Germanness and by extension *Kultur*, in an imprecise effort to convey the barbarity and belligerence of the German national character.

Blatant attacks on the German character led Victorians to an impasse: how were they to judge their German neighbours in light of the reported atrocities? Before the war began Victorians were aware, like the rest of the British Empire, that an increasingly

¹³⁸ Emphasizing German atrocities in Belgium was a common technique employed in Britain and her Dominions against the Germans and, in some cases, against the Turks. See M. L. Sanders and Philip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda during the First World War, 1914-18* (London: MacMillan Press, 1982), 142. For the American context, see Celia Malone Kingsbury, *For Home and Country: World War I Propaganda on the Home Front* (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 2010).

¹³⁹ "Hun" as a nickname for Germans originally emerged out of the Boxer Rebellion in China at the turn of the century in response to the dogged ferocity of German troops. Common interpretation holds that the term arose following a speech given by Kaiser Wilhelm II to German troops about to embark at Bremerhaven for the Pacific Station in 1900. In the speech, Wilhelm commanded the soldiers to take no prisoners and to treat the Chinese in such a way that soon the name of Germany be feared in China as western nations feared Attila the Hun. For the full text of the speech, see Kaiser Wilhelm II, „Hunnenrede" Bremerhaven, 27 July 1900. Accessible via Deutsches Historisches Museum, Dokumente, [<http://www.dhm.de>].

militarized Germany would pose a threat to British interests: as early as 1910 the *Colonist* had expressed some doubts regarding the Kaiser's aggressive foreign policy. More unease emerged at the 1912 *Stiftungsfest*, where MPP Behnsen ended a rambling speech stressing the advantages of British Columbia with a report that he had received a telegram from the King and the Kaiser, guaranteeing peace between their two nations. While Behnsen's over-indulgence with dinner likely fed his exuberance, his outburst suggests that growing tensions between the two imperial powers had intensified enough that a reassurance of peaceful intent, while not yet necessary, was welcome among the assembly. McBride then stood to respond to Behnsen's toast, re-stating the position that British Columbia welcomed peaceful German settlers.¹⁴⁰

In the first year of the war this foundational unease had been replaced by outright suspicion and Victorians increasingly objected to the presence of German elements in their daily lives. In February 1915 the city received a petition protesting the name of Coburg Street in James Bay as a German name, and a special committee on the matter later supported changing the name to Beckley Avenue.¹⁴¹ Local Germans tended to keep quiet amid these growing tensions. The extent to which British Victorians actively rejected Germanness is unclear, as advertisements for German businesses and German beer and wine continued to appear in the newspapers well into 1915. It could very well have been that Victorians could differentiate between their neighbours and actual agents of the *Kaiserreich*.

Whether or not Victorians had such a complex understanding of Germanness, the uneasy tolerance was further shaken by the sinking of the RMS *Lusitania* in May 1915,

¹⁴⁰ "Deutsche Verein Honors Kaiser," *Colonist*, 27 Jan 1912.

¹⁴¹ Beckley Avenue remains to this day; City of Victoria Council Minutes, 15 Feb 1915.

and anti-German sentiment as a result rose to a fever-pitch in the city. The Cunard Liner *Lusitania* had been torpedoed by a German U-Boat early in the morning of 7 May 1915 off the Irish Coast while en route from New York to Liverpool. While the debate continues today as to whether or not the *Lusitania* was a valid military target, contemporary critics focused on the deaths of the women and children among the ship's passengers as undeniable evidence of Germany's barbarity. Germany had at one time showed great potential as a just civilization, but the war and the sinking of the *Lusitania* forced Britons to reconsider the place of Germany in the world.

On 8 May 1915 the press cried out against what they saw as a senseless and barbarous act of violence against innocents. Headlines spoke of the "murder of innocents," and the *Colonist* declared above an expansive picture of the *Lusitania* that "Submarine Gets Over 1,400 Victims."¹⁴² Beaten to the punch, the *Times* in its usual evening-edition announced somewhat more specifically that "1,364 Were Murdered By The Germans."¹⁴³ The *Times* accused Germany of knowing "no laws of God or man" and proclaimed that the "powers of hell are arrayed with Huns." Editorials in the *Colonist* declared the sinking as barbarous and as the "fruits of *Kultur*." *Kultur*, according to the *Colonist*, could be understood "not in a contemptuous way, but in the same sense as we say "culture" when applied to the characteristics of Greece at the acme of her development. We mean by it the dominant type in the German national character." *Kultur* then was foundational to the German national character, which left some ambiguity for where Germans not attached to the *Kaiserreich* stood. While not all Germans could be

¹⁴² "Submarine Gets Over 1,400 Victims," *Colonist*, 8 May 1915.

¹⁴³ "1,364 Were Murdered By The Germans," *Times*, 8 May 1915.

considered bad, the editorial continued, we might look to Germany to avoid the worst effects of Prussian barbarity as one looks to Greece for her classical perfection.¹⁴⁴

An editorial in the *Times* titled “A German Triumph” reported that the Berlin Press rejoiced in “the blackest deed that ever stained a human soul as a new triumph of German naval policy.” Germans themselves had been duped, and their only offence lay in “trusting the word of [a] painted, tinselled savage who, through a trick of fortune, happened to be upon the German throne instead of the jungle.” It remained up to “Civilization,” the author continued, to wipe out German barbarism:

...there is no more room on this earth for the bestial savages who have been masquerading in the garb of culture and enlightenment than there was for the cannibals of Africa or the aborigines of America. Germany may chant paeans of triumph over the bodies of the innocent men, women and children she has murdered, she may laugh over the death struggles of the victims of her foul hatred, but as surely as there is a God in heaven she has wrought her own downfall and brought nearer that awful day of retribution when she will pay the full penalty for her fearful crimes against humanity.¹⁴⁵

The author further saw the sinking of the *Lusitania* as ushering in a new resolve towards the war. While the author proposed this as taking the form of increased enlistments, armament factories, shipbuilding, and the eventual crushing of Prussianism, it emerged in Victoria as a concentrated and vengeful backlash against local Germans in place of Germany.

Word quickly spread that several Victorians had gone down aboard the *Lusitania*. Particularly hard for the soldiers camped at Willows was young James Dunsmuir, who had recently left the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles in Victoria to take up an officer’s commission with the Scotch Greys. “Jimmy” (as he was affectionately known by his

¹⁴⁴ “Fruits of Kultur,” *Colonist*, 8 May 1915.

¹⁴⁵ “A German Triumph,” *Times*, 8 May 1915. It should go without saying that to the author, “Civilization” meant Britain, her Dominions, and her allies.

fellow soldiers) had taken passage on the *Lusitania* en route to Britain where he planned to join up with his new regiment. Frustrated perhaps by their inability to act out against the U-Boat crew, several soldiers left Willows Camp to exact any sort of revenge they could. At about 8 p.m. on Saturday 8 May, several soldiers and a few civilians, entered the bar of the Blanshard Hotel (formerly the Kaiserhof), looking for trouble. One soldier accosted the barman, asking him where his loyalties lay, and demanded that the barman hang up a Union Jack to affirm his loyalties to Britain. Whether or not the barman acquiesced to the demands remains unclear, but before long several soldiers clambered up onto the bar and began kicking glasses and bottles off. The soldiers took particular offence to the German imagery and mottoes on the wall of the bar.¹⁴⁶

As the bulk of the men in the bar began singing “Rule Britannia,” three other soldiers scaled the fire escape on the eastern side of the hotel. Once on the roof the soldiers strung up three Union Jacks from the flag pole and the roof’s edge. By the time they had returned to the bar below the other soldiers had already begun throwing furniture and humidors about, breaking all the mirrors and windows, and ripping down German sayings written upon the plaster walls. Soon several police officers arrived, and though they made an initial effort to break up the destruction as curious onlookers stopped to stare, they were reportedly told by the crowd that “no one was going to be placed in the patrol wagon to-night.”¹⁴⁷ Before the police could reply or call for help one of the soldiers yelled “To the German Club!”

¹⁴⁶ Unless specifically stated elsewhere, the narrative of the riot was composed primarily from the *Colonist* and *Times* coverage; see *Colonist*, 9 May 1915; *Colonist*, 11 May 1915; *Times*, 10 May 1915; *Times*, 11 May 1915.

¹⁴⁷ “Crowds Do Much Damage In the City,” *Times*, 10 May 1915.

The soldiers made their way south along Blanshard to Yates Street, turning towards Government Street, the crowd growing with each block. By the time they reached the Burn's Block at the corner of Government and Courtney it had swelled to several hundred people, and the street was packed from curb to curb. Some of the soldiers and young men forced their way up to the club's vacant second story premises above the Dominion Transfer Co, and the crowd below scrambled aside as the men hurled furniture, pictures, and papers through the glass windows. Furniture too big to fit through the windows was first broken apart before being shoved out into the street below.¹⁴⁸ From somewhere unknown the soldiers procured two portraits, one of King George V and the other of his late father, Edward VII; when the portraits were held up the crowd responded with a loud cheer.

As the last bits of furniture clattered onto the pavement, someone raised the cry "Back to the Kaiserhof!" The crowd by then was a reported two or three thousand, though the majority stood by as curious onlookers. More men joined the original soldiers in breaking into the hotel, some via upper windows reached from the neighbouring building on Johnson Street. Once inside the men forced all the occupants of the rooms to leave as they began hurling furniture and bedding out of the windows. One fellow reportedly took great delight in dancing through the *Biergarten* next to the hotel, smashing all of the electric light globes. Others forced their way into the storerooms of the hotel, raiding the liquor stock. While the press reported that beer kegs were smashed

¹⁴⁸ Some few sensationalized accounts written well after the riot make mention of a piano being forced through the windows of the German Club, but I have been unable to find mention of this in the newspaper coverage of the riot. That the soldiers also reportedly broke apart furniture that was too big seems to argue against a piano being forced out, as romantic an image as it may be.

and the liquor poured out into the street, it would not be a stretch of the imagination to think that some of the rioters helped themselves to a drink.

Though a picket of soldiers had arrived from Willows to bolster the police, nothing could apparently be done at this stage of the riot. The fire department was called in to extinguish a fire started in the *Biergarten* by some rioters burning mattresses and bedding cast down from the windows. Watching his police helplessly standing around, Police Chief Langley asked Fire Chief Davis to turn the fire hose upon the crowd. Davis declined, saying that it was not his duty to maintain public order, and that he feared the crowd would turn on him and hack the hose to pieces, then move on to attack the Fire Hall, damages for which he would be responsible.



Figure 3 - Damage to the Kaiserhof Hotel Bar following the Riot. Image C-07552 courtesy of Royal BC Museum, BC Archives

After an hour of destruction the crowd left “under the leadership of some of the bolder spirits” for Simon Leiser & Company’s warehouse on Lower Yates, leaving the

Blanshard Hotel looking “as if a cyclone had struck it.”¹⁴⁹ The majority of the rioters and onlookers stopped at Leiser’s warehouse where the windows were smashed and soldiers began throwing carpets, fruits, tea, and other goods outside to the assembled opportunistic onlookers-turned-looters. Leiser’s manager Henry Macklin was inside the warehouse when the rioters arrived. Macklin had been in his private office in the back when the men burst in, and he called the sixty-five year old Mr Leiser on the telephone to inform him of what was happening, and “held the receiver of the telephone open so that Mr Leiser at his residence could hear what was taking place.” Macklin then went out amongst the crowd, doing his best to discourage looting. In the back room plugs of tobacco were covered in blood as soldiers, their arms and legs cut on the broken glass of the windows, threw bundles to those outside. Some men tore the bars from the windows to better reach those people eagerly waiting in the street for goods.

The rioters had already thrown hundreds of pounds of almonds, tea, and honey out into the street when Macklin began wrestling with a soldier over a case of coffee. The soldier called Macklin a slew of foul names, and threatened to throw him out for the crowd to deal with. As the soldier turned to call his friends to make good on the threat, Macklin “struck him under the chin and knocked him down and made [his] escape.”¹⁵⁰ Down the road from Leiser’s warehouse at 1205 Wharf Street a smaller but equally dedicated band attacked the store of ex-Consul Carl Lowenberg. There looters ruthlessly raided tobacco, pipes, matches, and pen-knives, and Fire Chief Davis (who had followed them) anxiously warned them all to be careful, as the floor was strewn with matches

¹⁴⁹ *Colonist*, 9 May 1915.

¹⁵⁰ The next day Macklin noted with some surprise upon his return the next day that the case of coffee he had wrestled from the soldier was still laying on the ground; “Simon Leiser is Canadian Citizen,” *Times*, 10 May 1915.

tumbled from their boxes on the shelves. Meanwhile people continued to stream out of Leiser's warehouse with goods, and some earlier looters reportedly returned with wheelbarrows. While this went on some looters turned their attention to Moses Lenz's wholesale premises across the street. There the windows were also smashed, and men and women walked out with blankets and clothes in arm, boldly passing by the few assembled policemen "without hesitation."

Rumours circulated that Lieutenant Governor Barnard and his family had celebrated the sinking of the *Lusitania* because of his wife's assumed Germanness. She had been born to German parents – indeed, the prominent brewer Josef Loewen of the Victoria Brewery – but was born and raised in Victoria. Despite these rumours, the crowd did not make a concentrated effort towards Government House. As the night wore on they had little chance to make their way there, for at 1.30 a.m. 150 soldiers arrived from Willows, just as some of the rioters began throwing rocks at the windows of Pither & Leiser's wholesale liquor shop. The soldiers, together with the entire police force, convinced the crowds to disperse and head home. Police arrested twenty men and took them to police headquarters where they were released after their names had been taken.

The following day pictures of deceased *Lusitania* passengers who came from Victoria appeared on the *Colonist's* cover, pushing any coverage of the riot to later pages. Among those pictured was James Dunsmuir, whose death had in part led to the actions of the soldiers the night before. The papers largely condemned the riots and violence, and urged people in the possession of stolen goods to return them, or drop them off at the police barracks. If that was not persuasive enough, the police threatened (perhaps

emptily) that they also had the names of several people who were seen carrying off looted goods.

On Sunday morning the Police Commissionaires held a special meeting in the ruins of the Blanshard Hotel, where the Mayor and commissioners resolved “to request Colonel Holmes to provide a picket of soldiers for the protection of property, and the keeping of order.” The commissioners also resolved to request that the Liquor Control Board suspend all sale of liquor in the city and in Oak Bay for three days to prevent similar – or worse – violence from occurring.¹⁵¹ Soon afterwards License Inspector Hatcher informed all bars in hotels, restaurants, saloons, and otherwise of the resolution, and the order “was cheerfully obeyed in every instance.”¹⁵² The closure of liquor sales in Oak Bay cut soldiers off from liquor, and the military went to the further length of revoking all leave, ordering all those still off in Victoria to muster in the Victoria Transfer Company’s yard before marching back to Willows Camp. All members of the city police stood-by on duty, and were later joined by infantry guards from the 88th Fusiliers and the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles.

The mayor and police called for civilians to remain at home, but many people returned to the streets where they talked about the previous evening, singling out specific places they would like to see hit if the violence were to continue. One widely discussed target was the Victoria Phoenix Brewery, known to have been founded by the Germans Loewen and Erb, though it was now under British management. When the management caught wind of these plans, they quickly applied to the city for a police or military guard,

¹⁵¹ Board of Police Commissioners Minutes (9 May 1915), City of Victoria, City of Victoria Archives, CRS 112.

¹⁵² “Authorities Have Situation in Hand,” *Colonist*, 11 May 1915.

as did other businesses similarly targeted. While they waited for the guard to arrive, the brewery president Horace Newton and his secretary went through the premises, ensuring that all the doors were locked and goods secure.

Officers at Willows Camp had spent much of the afternoon assigning guard details. Robbie Ker, son of Victoria flour merchant Robert Ker and an officer with the 48th Battalion of Highlanders stationed at Willows, was put in charge of 50 men and told at 7 p.m. to march into town. Just as the platoon was leaving, Ker was instructed to commandeer a streetcar if he came across one to move the men more quickly into town.¹⁵³ Despite the city and military's preparations, violence broke out before the military guards could arrive downtown. Around the same time that Ker and his men began their march, people began milling about at Yates and Blanshard, eagerly discussing which Germans were "getting it tonight." The crowd was nearly entirely composed of citizens, all soldiers on leave having been called back to camp, and the rowdiest of Sunday's assembled were young men. Women, children, and older men were also noted as in attendance.

Sometime shortly before 8 p.m. two mounted police galloped up to the Phoenix Brewery. Their horses wheeling, one officer shouted through the locked gates to the two men inside that 2,000 people were headed down the street towards the brewery, and that they had best be ready for trouble makers. Almost immediately the mob began stoning the windows of the brewery, and using crow-bars they wrenched open the iron wagon gate on Government Street. As the rioters streamed into the brewery they set to breaking everything in sight and began looting large quantities of beer. Barrels too big to easily be

¹⁵³ John Adams, *The Ker Family of Victoria, 1859-1967* (Vancouver: Holte Publishing, 2007), 158.

carried off were stove-in and left to run off onto the brewery floor and out into the street. It was only when looters began leaving with loads of beer that the few employees, with the help of a group of soldiers that had just arrived, began loading beer into a car or wagon to salvage whatever they could. Before long the streetcar bearing Robbie Ker's guards trundled by, and as his men leapt off of the car they managed to scare the crowd off.¹⁵⁴ Some 3,158 litres of beer were lost or stolen, totalling \$237.59. These damages in the form of many pint and quart bottles, as well as eight barrels, formed a small part of the brewery's approximate \$3,200 in damages, which included the wrenched iron gates, broken machinery, bottles, a newly painted wagon, and various articles of the beer-maker's art.

Forced off by arrival of the guards, the large part of the crowd made off for the New England Hotel on Government, between Johnson and Yates Streets. A detail of the CMR arrived at the hotel before the mob, managing to dissuade the ring leaders, who led the "shouting gang" to Max Kilburger's jewellery store at Douglas and Fort via Yates Street. While an advanced guard again beat the crowd to the intersection, they were unable to stop some rioters from breaking in through the Fort St windows to make off with what jewellery they could. Guards found it difficult to force back those legitimately intent on destruction against the press of curious onlookers. Nevertheless, the police and soldiers managed to scatter the larger part of the rioters.

Before long word reached police headquarters (which was doubling as the military headquarters for the military pickets) that groups were simultaneously forming with violent intentions on Yates, Fort, and Government Streets. In what the *Times* later

¹⁵⁴ Victoria Phoenix Brewery to Messrs. Davis, Marshall, MacNeill & Pugh, 626 Pender St W., Vancouver, 11 June 1915. Labatt Brewery Records, BCA MS-1883 Vol 3 Box 3 File 22 "1915 Riot Papers"; Adams, *The Ker Family*, 158.

referred to as an “orgy of pillaging,” looters broke into the tailoring shop of Schaper & Glass at 721 Fort.¹⁵⁵ Men and women rushed in only to re-emerge with armfuls of expensive cloth, which they quickly carried away. In some cases looters stuffed goods into waiting motor-cars, while other reports told of women holding open sacks for their husbands to fill. Soon the crowd began throwing rocks at the Bonnet Shop run by the O. F. Paint Company next door and the Western Lands Ltd at 725 Fort. Just as people began entering the Bonnet Shop to carry off what they could, a friend of proprietor Oswald Paint shouted out that Paint was no German. These rioters then left Paint’s millinery, though they had already thrashed the shop’s interior. Meanwhile, other rioters broke into Hermann & Stringer’s clothes cleaning establishment at 848 Yates St and ransacked the place.

With much of the looting on Yates and Fort Streets exhausted, the crowds made their way back to Government Street and the New England Hotel, run by the Bavarian-born Michael Young. Evidently it was time for decisive action, as it was all the circle of CMR troopers could do to hold back the crowd from surging the hotel. Mayor Stewart, together with Major Ogilvie of the militia and Police Chief Langley sped through town from city hall to the New England in a motor-car, where they forced their way through the crowd into the zone protected by the picket line. Once there, Mayor Stewart stood up in the back seat and read, for the first time in the city’s history, the Riot Act to the citizens of Victoria.

Those gathered at the hotel failed to appreciate the significance of the Act, for they began throwing rocks over Stewart’s head to shatter the glass behind him, and the

¹⁵⁵ *Times*, 11 May 1915.

crowd struck up with “Rule Britannia” and other patriotic songs to drown out his words. As people gradually left downtown a group of men attacked Popham & Bros confectionary factory on Russell Street in Vic West, and though some damage was done by thrown stones, manager A E Ormond had managed to remove much of the stock earlier that day. Ormond had heard rumours that the premises was targeted as many believed Simon Leiser had a material investment concern in the undertaking, though he had actually sold his shares some time ago. Others stopped by at Geiger’s plumbing store on Fisgard to break the windows and fixtures in the belief that Geiger’s was a German name. A splinter group of youths or boys “emulating the larger crowd” threw stones through the windows of Hang Fah’s restaurant and Wing Hong Ching’s store on Fisgard.¹⁵⁶

Some 275 members of the 2nd CMR and 200 infantry were brought in to guard the looted businesses and other prominent German businesses. Soldiers were stationed at all major intersections with rifles, and cavalrymen were held on reserve near City Hall, ready to respond at a moments notice to anywhere in the city. Downtown restaurants provided hot coffee and sandwiches for the infantry guards, while the men of the CMR ate in the police barracks as they could only leave their horses in small squads.

Shopkeepers affected by the riots immediately turned to repairing damages, hurrying to get their businesses running as normal as soon as possible. Oswald Paint rushed to repair the windows of the Bonnet Shop next to Schaper & Glass on Monday morning.¹⁵⁷ At Simon Leiser’s warehouse on Yates Street workers could only gain access

¹⁵⁶ The 1915 directory lists a Hung Fer Low, baker, at 535 Figsard and Wing On Cheong & Co, grocers, next door at 537 Figsard. The spelling as Hang Fah and Wing Hong Ching comes from “Crowds do Much Damage in the City,” *Times*, 10 May 1915.

¹⁵⁷ “Bonnet Shop is to Bring Damage Suit,” *Times*, 10 May 1915.

after shovelling oranges out off of the main floor where they had been left, knee-deep, by the rioters on Saturday night.¹⁵⁸ When City Council sat for the first time after the riot on 10 May claims for damages had already begun coming in. Council read and received claims from Sargison on behalf of Herman & Stringer, as well as from Moresby, O'Reilly & Lowe for Hung Fah and Wing On Chung on Fisgard.¹⁵⁹ Over the next few months more claims trickled in, though some businesses like the Victoria Phoenix Brewery waited almost a year before submitting claims, unsure about the willingness of the City to pay.¹⁶⁰ In some cases businesses feared public reprisal if “German” businesses were seen applying to Council for recompense.

The city ultimately denied any responsibility or liability for damages. Businesses – more specifically, their attorneys – maintained that the city did bear responsibility as it fell to them to ensure the public safety; what’s more, several businesses had warned the city and Police and requested guards, which in the case of the Brewery arrived too late. The Dominion denied any responsibility on their behalf as well as that of the province, and urged businesses to make claims on local authorities.¹⁶¹ Claims sent to city council were read and received, and no further action seems to have been taken. Council then moved on to other matters, including discussing the possibility of a coming federal election. Councillor Sargent burst out that the city’s ignoring of the Lord’s Day Act set a bad precedent for citizens, “giving a loose reign of lawlessness.” Earlier that year council

¹⁵⁸ “Simon Leiser is Canadian Citizen,” *Times*, 11 May 1915.

¹⁵⁹ City of Victoria, Council Minutes, 10 May 1915.

¹⁶⁰ The Victoria Phoenix Brewery initially held back on their claim, hoping to wait until the war was over and tensions had eased, but their attorneys advised instant action as the period in which to make a claim lapsed after a year had passed. See correspondence between Victoria Phoenix Brewery and Davis, Marshall, McNeil & Pugh, “1915 Riot Papers,” Labatt Brewery Records, BCA MS-1883, Vol 3, Box 3, File 22.

¹⁶¹ Under-Secretary of State to E. P. Davis, 13 August 1915, “1915 Riot Papers”.

had suggested enforcing the Lord's Day Act in regard to liquor sales from 7 p.m. on Saturday evenings, in which case the Blanshard Hotel bar would never have been open on the Saturday night at 8 p.m., thereby preventing any of the "present state of disorder."¹⁶² While the Mayor called Sargent to order, many shared the spirit of Sargent's accusation that the city was at fault in their handling of the rioting.

But was the city liable for damages incurred in the riot? Council certainly thought not, and the Dominion sidestepped any responsibility. The *Times* referred to the precedent of the 1907 Anti-Asian Riot in Vancouver; there, residents made claims to the Dominion Government who then handed the bill afterwards to the City of Vancouver, who further refused liability.¹⁶³ With Vancouver's 1907 Anti-Asian Riot in mind, one editorial writer reminded officials and citizens alike that "after the dance is over the taxpayers will have to drop their coin in the hat for the piper."¹⁶⁴ Increases in taxes as well foreclosures and the "fall of the auctioneer's hammer" could be expected in the futures of many homeowners.

Both papers immediately began printing ads commissioned by various businesses attesting to the total absence of German labour or capital in their operations. In some cases this served to inform readers after the fact of looting that they ought not to have been targeted simply on suspicion or having a German-sounding name; other businesses pre-emptively proclaimed their British connections. Looters had simply taken advantage of the more destructive element of the crowd wherever possible, and rioters were often so

¹⁶² These accusations must have been weighing particularly heavy on Alderman Sargent's mind, as he interrupted a rather mundane discussion on whether or not it was appropriate for Council to express the opinion that they would rather not see a federal election while the war continued; "Alderman Sargent and Commissioner," *Times*, 11 May 1915.

¹⁶³ It remains unclear how this exactly played out.

¹⁶⁴ "Let Us Have Order," *Times*, 10 May 1915.

bent on destruction that they took little time to consider whether or not a business actually was German: “the tendency to loot was not directed altogether at concerns with German names, and a very short step indeed would have made the reign of lawlessness general.”¹⁶⁵ Prominent Germans also used the press to express their frustrations and affirm their British loyalties. The *Times* on 10 May heralded Simon Leiser as a “Canadian Citizen,” having been in the province for over 40 years. Leiser himself stated in an interview that he had turned down a million-dollar business opportunity in Seattle some years back, simply so he could stay in the town and province that he loved. Leiser, like others, planned to claim damages to the City, which in his case were likely to reach over \$35,000.

While the press assaulted the municipality, police, and military for not acting quickly enough, both papers praised Mayor Stewart for calling out the militia and reading the Riot Act on Sunday evening. The *Times* accused those in charge of preserving the public order “of simply encouraging the incorrigible element among the crowd to do its worst, and its example was followed by reputable people who, it is charitable to assume, in their excitement overlooked the fact that they were making themselves liable to prison sentences.”¹⁶⁶ Despite their earlier attacks on German *Kultur* and character, the press seemed shocked at the violence. Conceding no guilt in breeding antagonism among Victorians, the *Times* chided the rioters of Saturday and Sunday evening as exemplifying “the true Prussian, not the real British spirit.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ “The Looting,” *Times*, 11 May 1915.

¹⁶⁶ “The Looting,” *Times*, 11 May 1915.

¹⁶⁷ “Let Us Have Order,” *Times*, 10 May 1915.

Police and the press strongly encouraged those in possession of stolen goods to come forward. Soon enough parcels threatened to overflow from an office in the police headquarters set aside for the storage of returned items. Despite the Mayor's request that residents stay home, large groups of curious onlookers filled the streets on Monday evening; luckily, few tried to repeat the same violence of the previous two nights. Two men, reported in the *Times* to be Reginald Vernon and F. Simmons, were arrested for inciting a riot on Johnson Street at around 10 p.m. Shortly afterward Provincial Police Constable Owens arrested Richard Daft on Johnson as well, this time charged with unlawful assembly.¹⁶⁸ A few stragglers broke the windows of a house on Bushby near Dallas Road in what was the only damage done to a German residence that weekend. No other damages were reported Monday night.

The strong presence of guards may have dissuaded any further rioting. Watches put in place on Sunday night continued on through Monday, and the sale of liquor had been suspended on Sunday morning for three days. Infantry and cavalry pickets guarded businesses and premises all over the city (see Table 4).

¹⁶⁸ "Precautions Taken Prevent Any Riots," *Times*, 11 May 1915.

<u>Number of Guards</u>	<u>Premises</u>
25	Victoria Phoenix Brewery
25	Popham Bros., Vic West
25	Silver Spring Brewery, Esquimalt Road
25	E&N Railway bridge
25	Point Ellis Bridge
25	Government House
50	Government and Yates

Table 4 - Military Guards stationed in Victoria Following the Anti-German Riot

Smaller packets of troops were distributed throughout the downtown core, ready at a moment's notice if more danger was reported. Troops on the bridges at Point Ellis and the E&N controlled the flow of traffic in and out of downtown, while a further picket of mounted police patrolled Yates above Blanshard to Cook Street with members of the CMR patrolling Yates from Blanshard to the water. Police Chief Palmer, Major Ogilvie, and Mayor Stewart were on hand at police headquarters with motor-cars standing by in case the need arose to move soldiers quickly.

For many concerned citizens this readiness came too late, though it seems to have dissuaded any further violence on Monday night. The *Times* and *Colonist* give the impression that police and the military were ready to use whatever force necessary to extinguish any further action on the part of the crowd. As German shopkeepers picked up the shattered pieces of their businesses, they knew that the military and police had failed them. German Victorians felt betrayed and let down by their adopted city, a place that had welcomed them with open arms in the not too distant past.

Chapter 4: “There is Something Contagious in the Action of Crowds”: Germans, Victoria, and the 1915 *Lusitania* Riot

Historians of British Columbia have underappreciated the Victoria Anti-German Riot. Many have outright ignored the riot, while those who do include it often do so only to illustrate the province’s war-time political climate. Margaret Ormsby gives a typically short and inadequate account in her seminal *British Columbia: a History*:

Then a rumour spread that local Germans had celebrated the sinking of the *Lusitania* as a great German naval victory. Suddenly public indignation reached fever-heat. Led by soldiers, an angry mob descended on a German beer-garden, on a German brewery (owned by a British subject) and on the quarters of the German Club. Over \$20,000 worth of damage was done. To quell the disturbance, the Riot Act had to be read and the troops called out.¹⁶⁹

In Ormsby’s view the riot was simply an event, the result of “public indignation” or popular opinion fuelled by war reports from Europe. This view insufficiently recognizes the riot’s significance for an understanding of local history. The 1915 *Lusitania* Riot should prompt historians of the province to reflect on our views of how Victorians engaged with ideas of identity and belonging in a province founded on notions of race and colour. By setting aside pre-war German favourability, the crowd helps expose the instability of racial logics. German race and whiteness, markers that had helped Germans integrate for years, gave way to mounting British anxiety regarding Germany’s military threat.

Two scholars have stressed more complex underlying causes for the riot. Tracey Reynolds, in her *Masters’* study of attitudes towards “enemy aliens” in British Columbia,

¹⁶⁹ Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History*, 382. The attacks on Chinatown on Sunday night led Peter Liddell to further characterize the riot as “an outlet for general xenophobia as much as it was an expression of anti-German feeling”; Liddell, “Germans on Canada’s Pacific Slopes”, 55.

explores the riot within a Marxist framework, stressing the role socio-economic conditions played in fuelling the riot.¹⁷⁰ Charles Humphries expressed his dissatisfaction with xenophobia as the sole motivating factor for Victoria's riot. In a speech given to the B.C. Historical Society in 1971, Humphries analyzes the riot and raises broader questions about its significance. Why, Humphries asks, did the riot take place in Victoria and not other Canadian cities? Furthermore, what does the conduct of the crowd "in the face of a traumatic wartime occurrence" tell us about civil society?¹⁷¹ Though he does not answer his own questions, Humphries nevertheless recognized the importance of this aberration in Victoria's history.¹⁷²

Scholars and social commentators alike often seek an underlying "social malaise" or a "critical mass" in crowd size to explain the genesis of modern and historical riots.¹⁷³ While others may dispute our ability to understand these causes, I would like nevertheless to investigate the implications of the *Lusitania* Riot for an understanding of race in Victoria and British Columbia. Mariana Valverde, for instance, argues that "moral panics" – and, conceivable, riots – are "multi-dimensional" and at their very roots the coming together of distinct "social anxieties".¹⁷⁴ If we can perceive these distinct

¹⁷⁰ Tracey Reynolds, *A Case Study in Attitudes Against Enemy Aliens in British Columbia, 1914-1919*, MA Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1973, 64.

¹⁷¹ Charles Humphries, "War and Patriotism: The *Lusitania* Riot," *British Columbia Historical News*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (November, 1971), 16.

¹⁷² Humphries, "War and Patriotism", 20. Contemporary commentators also noted the riot for its uniqueness: "One of the senior officials ... says there has been no precedent for a generation of the reading of the Riot act, that therefore it is impossible to say what may happen"; *Times*, 10 May 1915.

¹⁷³ I borrow language here from a recent *MacLean's* article by Andrew Potter. Potter reflects on the 2011 Stanley Cup Riot following the loss of the Vancouver Canucks to the Boston Bruins. Ultimately he argues that rioting is a complex and opportunistic action, with complex roots. The "social malaise" often sought by psychologists or sociologists at the root of a riot are difficult if not impossible to pin down. Rather, Potter implies that we ought to view a riot as reflecting the society in which it occurs. Andrew Potter, "Why People Can't Help Themselves," *MacLean's*, 5 September 2011, Vol. 124, No. 33/34, 12.

¹⁷⁴ Valverde, *The Age of Soap, Light, and Water*, 14.

anxieties we can appreciate the social impact of such panics or riots, as well as their broader significance within their social context. In such a panic the difference encoded by Germanness took on new meaning: no longer was it something positive to be welcomed, but rather something insidious and against civilization.

The violent property damage of the *Lusitania* Riots contrasts sharply with the public show of solidarity at Wilhelm's funeral in 1888; these events trace the extreme boundaries within which Victorians responded to manifestations of Germanness. The surprise with which non-German contemporaries viewed the actions of the *Kaiserreich* in the opening months of the war left Victorians unsure of how they were to view their neighbours of German origins. Editorial staff at the *Colonist* appreciated the gravity of the situation facing local Germans with the declaration of war on 4 August 1914. The *Colonist* recognized the "honorable part in [the] civic, business and national life" of German residents in Victoria, but they cautioned those residents to "refrain from any expressions that may be construed as offensive." The paper further urged British subjects to be kind to the Germans, for "although their Fatherland may be at war, they are yet our friends and trusted neighbors and business associates."¹⁷⁵ From the war's beginning, Victorians struggled with thinking of their German neighbours as "locals", and even those who were naturalized British subjects were not included in the advice from the *Colonist* to the "British subjects." The war accelerated an increasingly widely-held unease that a militant Germany could pose a threat to international British superiority. This unease further made Germanness conspicuous and local Germans uncomfortable.

¹⁷⁵ "Our German Citizens", *Colonist*, 5 August 1914.

For British Victorians, it was unclear how they were to view their German neighbours in light of these changes. While Victorians continued accepting Germans, their differences took on new meaning during the riot. Prior to the war, Victorians had largely understood Germans as sharing certain samenesses with other white residents. German clothing, customs, and manners bore enough resemblance to those of the British to be normative. During the riot the crowd latched on to symbolic markers of difference, rapidly enforcing boundaries between Britishness and Germanness that had gradually become more apparent. German business owners quickly felt the material impacts of the riot, but in the following days other Victorians felt ill at ease with how the crowd had acted. German elites were honoured members of Victoria's respectable society, well-represented in business, the trades, and both the provincial and local levels of government. Above all, Germans had been and continued to be considered as members of the white race.

Though they were undeniably white in the pre-war period, we should not accept the white privilege of Germans as inevitable, but rather as a component of their imagined commonality with other whites. As Guglielmo identifies with the Chicago Italian community before 1945, an immigrant group must be accepted by other groups as well as official institutions as white, as well as by themselves.¹⁷⁶ Germans were not the only architects of their identity, as their neighbours and other whites had a hand in shaping their identity through acceptance and engagement with local German narratives. The struggle Victorians endured in re-evaluating their German neighbours during the war reveals this complexity. With this complexity in mind, we can approach the 1915 Anti-

¹⁷⁶ Guglielmo, *White On Arrival*, 6

German Riot on multiple levels to further our understanding of the dynamics of race relations in Victoria.

Race and colour help contextualize the 1915 *Lusitania* Riot. While one might argue that what the rioters contested was actually nationality, it was an explicitly white national identity inseparable from whiteness. Germans were inherently racialized, broadly as white but also more specifically as Teutonic, Germanic, or Saxon, similar to British Victorians.¹⁷⁷ Nationality could indicate race just as well as it could denote citizenship. The crowd did not target German national subjects, only locations coded as German that could stand in for the idea of Germanness as an Other. This coding took place in part within rioters' minds, informed by their pre-existing ideas of what it meant to be German. One might also argue that the crowd only targeted *ethnic* markers; such an argument under-appreciates the dependence of German ethnicity's visibility upon German whiteness. Indeed, ethnicity itself is a twentieth century construction intended to categorize cultural rather than biological differences.¹⁷⁸ The crowd applied Germanness to all those they felt sufficiently eligible, regardless of individual self-identification or citizenship. Michael Young, proprietor of the New England Hotel, was "extremely indignant at the damage done" and the fact that the crowd believed him to be a German. He was in fact a British subject for over forty years, and though he had been born in

¹⁷⁷ Reverend MacLeod's stress of German and British Saxon roots tied into a larger discourse of sameness at play in the United States. Many believed that Anglo-Saxons and Germanics were branches of the same tree, and "by many accounts Anglo-Saxons traced their very genius to the forests of Germany...[as] one branch of a freedom-loving, noble race of Germanic peoples"; Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 47.

¹⁷⁸ Guglielmo, *White On Arrival*, 7

Bavaria he had fought against the Prussians in 1866 before arriving in Victoria in 1871.¹⁷⁹

The 1915 *Lusitania* Riot sheds light on relations between whites in Victoria. By targeting local symbols of Germanness, the crowd marked “German” storefronts and spaces within Victoria’s urban landscape with new meaning. Spaces that had been accepted in Victoria’s streets for years gradually took on new significance as representations of German barbarism. Rioters took out their frustrations, especially on the German Club and the Kaiserhof, and further established firm boundaries between acceptable Britishness and unacceptable Germanness. On the Sunday night the crowd lashed out at other images of Germanness. While some attacks appear to have been specifically premeditated (the Victoria-Phoenix Brewery, for instance), others seem to have been more random, based on Germanic names, rumours, or proximity to other “German” businesses.

The 1907 Anti-Asian Riot in Vancouver and the 1915 Victoria riot have much in common. In both cases international tensions played out in local spaces. Rioters symbolically attacked their targets through looting or destruction of property, and while no individuals were physically hurt little attention was given to the broader implications. Violence worked to alienate the target group, confirming rhetorical difference, even if everyday interactions could still be relatively peaceful. In both cases officials blamed a criminal element for precipitating the violence.¹⁸⁰ Lastly, Victoria and Vancouver had not experienced violence on so large and concentrated a scale in recent history. Victoria had

¹⁷⁹ Michael Young further denied that he had “any sympathy with the Germans in the present strife”; *Colonist*, 11 May 1915.

¹⁸⁰ Following the riot local police scoured all incoming passenger vessels to Victoria from the Strait of Georgia for “yeggmen” coming to the city to start more trouble; *Times*, 10 May 1915.

hosted a very large anti-Chinese demonstration in 1885, but beyond a few speeches shouted from a lumber cart-turned-pulpit at City Hall, no physical damage was done and demonstrators stayed out of Chinatown.¹⁸¹ Earlier in 1860, the so-called “Theatre Riots” erupted between a handful of black and white men over admittance to the Colonial Theatre, but the small-scale fighting there did not match the wide-spread participation of the anti-German riot.¹⁸² Furthermore, despite their similarities, the 1907 Vancouver and 1915 Victoria riots took place within drastically different racial narratives. The 1907 riot fits into a narrative of disenfranchisement, exploitation, and restriction, and ultimately displacement; it would be years before Japanese and Chinese Canadians could experience what Patricia Roy describes as a “triumph of citizenship” – or acceptance into mainstream Canadian society.¹⁸³ The 1915 riot, on the other hand, represents the turning point in how Victorians understood Germanness.

The Victoria riot is also interesting for its uniqueness: no-where else in the Dominion did a similar riot break out following the sinking of the *Lusitania*. Some residents thought otherwise, imaging themselves as part of a larger anti-German movement; the *Times* was quick to contradict this notion.¹⁸⁴ Many of the causal factors for the riot in Victoria were shared across Dominion and the Empire; indeed, anti-German propaganda was distributed throughout the Dominion, presenting the conflict as

¹⁸¹ *Colonist*, 23 May 1885.

¹⁸² The riot began when two black men were denied entrance to the Colonial Theatre. The two forced their way in and sat amongst the audience, but when white patrons tried physically to remove the two men a fight broke out. Before long the theatre was rushed by a crowd of black men armed with clubs. Two lamps were thrown in the scuffle, setting part of the theatre as well as a black man’s clothes on fire. Before long the police were called, and they arrested seven men. When the violence was done, “several of the colored men bought tickets for the gallery, to which they ascended and remained quiet during the performances”; see “Riot at the Theatre”, *Colonist*, 6 November 1860.

¹⁸³ For an investigation of this narrative in the same period in Prince Rupert, B.C., see Karla Greer, *Race, Riot and Rail: The Process of Racialisation in Prince Rupert, BC, 1906-1919* (MA Thesis, UVic, 1999).

¹⁸⁴ *Times*, 10 May 1915.

one of good versus evil. Other causes, such as the recent economic downturn, applied widely as well. Politicians had even stressed that German-Canadians should not be blamed, as this was a war with Germany and Prussian militarism. Prime Minister Borden stressed that Canada was at war with “military autocracy” and not the German people, above all those who had settled in Canada.¹⁸⁵

For some of the soldiers stationed at the Willows Exhibition Grounds at Oak Bay, this distinction was not so clear. These soldiers had endured a brutal, cold winter, camped on the open exhibition grounds beside the beach. Many of the soldiers had been billeted in the Exhibition Hall, but the doors were seldom closed and the ocean wind blew in through the cracks. The men of the CMR were even more unfortunate: they had spent the winter in tents pitched on the fairgrounds.¹⁸⁶ The slowness of mobilization frustrated these men, eager as they were to serve King and country. Coupled with the brutal winter, their frustration left the men of the 2nd CMR and the 88th Fusiliers looking for chances to get to what they had signed up for: fighting Germans.

For those soldiers their chance came with the news of the *Lusitania*'s fate. The *Colonist* and *Times* reported that the stories of German celebrations seemed to have only been rumours, but nevertheless some people – particularly soldiers – took them to heart.¹⁸⁷ Even Frances Barnard, the Lieutenant-Governor, was suspected of celebrating

¹⁸⁵ Robert Borden, quoted in Reynolds, “A Case Study in Attitudes Towards Enemy Aliens in British Columbia, 1914-1919”, 35. Originally from Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, *Official Report of Debates Special War Session*, 19 August 1914, 14-15.

¹⁸⁶ General George R. Pearkes, interviewed by Ruth Chambers, 21 October 1975, BCA 1787:0001.

¹⁸⁷ Rumours of German celebrations during the war were not always unfounded. One unfortunate incident arose in Vancouver when Paul Kopp held a lavish party at his Point Grey residence during the Battle of Ypres. Many assumed he intended the party to celebrate the battle, when it is more likely it was simply poorly timed; Reynolds, “A Case Study in Attitudes Towards Enemy Aliens in British Columbia”, 62.

with his “German” wife at Government House.¹⁸⁸ Robby Ker, good friend to Dunsmuir and son of Robert Ker of Brackman & Ker, later recalled how he remembered the riot beginning. According to Ker, some soldiers were sitting “peacefully” in the bar of the Blanshard Hotel when Frederick Kostenbader came downstairs from a private party he had been holding for his friends. Kostenbader was reportedly quite drunk, and raised his glass to toast the Kaiser in German. In Ker’s recollection, it was not a result of soldiers on the prowl for destruction, but rather this toast that caused the outrage and violence.¹⁸⁹

General George R. Pearkes’ recollection of the Saturday night’s rioting differ from Robbie Ker’s however. Stationed in Oak Bay at Willows as a Private with the 2nd CMR, Pearkes recalled the anger his fellow soldiers felt upon hearing of the death of James (“Jimmy”) Dunsmuir, a “good horseman,” aboard the *Lusitania*. Rumours spread throughout the camp of local Germans celebrating at the Kaiserhof. Pearkes and his friends arrived late to the hotel but still in time for the second round of destruction, later recalling the furniture tossed from the upper-storey windows. Soon afterwards Pearkes

¹⁸⁸ Barnard’s wife was a Victoria-born daughter of Joseph Loewen, of the Loewen and Erb brewing partnership. Staff at Government House published a statement in the *Colonist* to deny the “absurd rumours” of pro-German celebrations. The *Colonist* further stated that no Germans or Austrians were employed at Government House; *Colonist*, 12 May 1915. According to the police, a recently fired employee began spreading the rumours of German celebrations; *Times*, 11 May 1915.

¹⁸⁹ Robbie Ker, interviewed by Reg Roy, September 1965. Ker Papers, BCA, Mss 793, Box 4, File 11. For one narrative of this encounter, see Adams, *The Ker Family of Victoria, 1859-1976: Pioneer Industrialists in Western Canada*, pgs 154-158. My thanks go to local historian John Adams for bringing this reference to my attention.

“Former” submariner Walter Roberts later recalled a far more preposterous story in a letter to the editor of the *Times*, which deserves quoting not for its historical accuracy, but for its absurd Teutophobia:

“Members of the German club put on a wild celebration after every great victory of the German army that had walked rough-shod through France and had, as it looked, almost won the war... The behaviour of the Germans and German collaborators, to say it mildly, was disgraceful. They had all the pictures of the crop of German generals, including the Kaiser, plastered all over the walls of the club. They had a great celebration there after every German victory. The night the *Lusitania* was sunk was their last great celebration at the German club. The brewery supplied the club with truck-loads of booze, all free.” Roberts then recalled that he and his fellow sailors “decided to stop it once and for all,” breaking into the German Club where “some of those old sailors grabbed a moustache in each hand, knocked the heads together and threw the owners out head first”; “A Night at the Club,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 2 September 1958, in “German Club,” Vertical File, BCA (52-1295).

returned to camp at Willows, where he and several other former police were told to mount up and head back into town to guard the Victoria Phoenix Brewery.¹⁹⁰ While Pearkes recalled rumours that Germans were celebrating at the Kaiserhof, he emphasized instead the actions of Jimmy Dunsmuir's friends as the major starting point of the action. Pearkes also stressed the generally rotten conditions at Willows Camp and the recent wet and cold winter's effects on the soldiers' attitudes.

Jimmy Dunsmuir's loss was a unique blow for Victoria. When the news arrived in Victoria that the *Lusitania* had been torpedoed reports quickly followed of who had been aboard the vessel when it went down. Among the hundreds of women and children mourned in the press had been young Jimmy Dunsmuir, the local son of a former Lieutenant Governor and friend to many of the soldiers camped in Oak Bay. News of his death outraged his close friends, and the influence of alcohol pushed some of them over the edge. A group of them had then gone to the bar at the Blanshard Hotel looking for trouble. It did not matter to those soldiers at the Kaiserhof whether they were fighting Prussian-Germans or just local manifestations of Germanness, as they were interchangeable. The German images and mottoes on the wall of the Kaiserhof were an immediate target for the frustrations of the men, and the *Deutscher Verein* clubhouse similarly offered a physical target for anti-German aggressions.

Whatever their motivations, the soldiers' initial alcohol-fuelled attacks spurred other rioters into action. While the soldiers actively sought revenge on the local German community for their friend's death, other Victorians quickly became involved for less clear reasons. Some civilians may have hoped to get back at Germany and release war-

¹⁹⁰ General George R. Pearkes, interviewed by Ruth Chambers, 21 October 1975, BCA 1787:0001.

time frustrations, while others may have simply been interested in an excuse to steal expensive goods from shops with easily-carried merchandise such as pipes and bolts of cloth. Even more were likely caught up in the rush of excitement that accompanies a riot; as the *Colonist* apologetically put it, “there is something contagious in the action of crowds.”¹⁹¹ Issues of race and its cognate nationality played a central role in the riot, and while the mob would not have seen every stone thrown or bolt of cloth stolen as an attack against Prussianism, anti-German sentiment justified their behaviour. The rioters did not act entirely indiscriminately, as most stores raided had some – though often unproven – connection to Germanness. Several strikes were furthermore obviously premeditated, such as the Victoria-Phoenix Brewery. Civilians had freely talked on Sunday afternoon of looting the brewery, and brewery staff made some attempts at barricading the premises. Despite these preparations, the crowd came prepared with crowbars to wrench open the iron wagon-gates on Government Street.¹⁹²

The riot also reflected on Victorian society in an uncomfortable way as it challenged the rhetoric of sameness that had described Germans over the previous 50 years. “Total war” as a militaristic ideology mobilizing entire populations against the foe may have informed this shift in thinking, as the relationship between the nation and the foe could only be conceptualized in a binary of good and evil. Propaganda on the British, Canadian, and American home fronts enforced this binary by contrasting innocents at home with the “savage” Hun overseas.¹⁹³ Governments leveraged fear to motivate young

¹⁹¹ *Colonist*, 11 May 1915.

¹⁹² Victoria Phoenix Brewery to Messrs. Davis, Marshall, MacNeill & Pugh, 626 Pender St W., Vancouver, 11 June 1915. “1915 Riot Papers”, Labatt Brewery Records.

¹⁹³ For the American context and the dehumanization of Germans in home front propaganda, see Celia Malone Kingsbury, *For Home and Country: World War One Propaganda on the Home Front* (University

men into enlisting with the thought that they would be preserving their wives, mothers, and sisters from uncivilized Germans in Europe.¹⁹⁴ This ideology combined with the local soldiers' frustrations to re-enforce the differences between Germans and the British.

During the war, Victorians re-imagined German differences that had previously been acceptable. These differences came to replace sameness in a "situational affirmation" of how Germanness was understood, thereby erecting boundaries between two previously unified groups.¹⁹⁵ Rioters targeted symbols of Germanness in a move inconsistent with the previous respectability of Germans, ignoring their "racial consanguinity".¹⁹⁶

If anything, the crowd's actions reflected more harshly on Victoria's self-identity as a modern, respectable, middle-class city than how they perceived Germanness. Middle-class social reformers saw cities in this period as organic entities in need of moral purification, and the crowd's violence threatened to crack the city's tenuously thin "veneer of civilization."¹⁹⁷ Prior to the riot, white middle-class Victorians had considered their city as peaceful. In a reflective piece on Christmas Eve 1911, one *Colonist* editor described the crowd in the city's streets in glowing terms, for if it were not "the best crowd in all the world, it must be among the superlatively good... Christians, Jews, Mohammedans, Buddhists, followers of Confucius all mingled" on the street, with "men whose native tongue was German, or French, or Italian, or Greek, or goodness knows

of Nebraska Press, 2010), 219. For the British context, see M. L. Sanders and Philip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda During the First World War, 1914-18* (London: Macmillan Press, 1982), 137.

¹⁹⁴ Kingsbury, *For Home and Country*, 225-6; Sanders, *British Propaganda During the First World War*, 138

¹⁹⁵ Guglielmo, "Encountering the Color Line in the Everyday", 46.

¹⁹⁶ Jacobson, *Becoming Old Stock*, 121.

¹⁹⁷ Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water*, 130-2.

what else besides, [and] men who represented the Celtic, the Gaelic and the Saxon stock.”¹⁹⁸ The riot’s violence challenged this image of peaceful civility, and observers quickly noted how un-British the crowd had acted on those two evenings.

Following the 1907 Vancouver Riot, social commentators condemned the actions of that mob as un-British, and eight years later those in Victoria also declared violent rioting unbecoming of “civilized” white people.¹⁹⁹ Victorians had to reconcile themselves with the instability of their own identity in the face of the crowd’s actions. Mariana Valverde characterizes “Britishness” in this period in Canada as a calmness connected with the social purity movement, entirely disconnected from nature.²⁰⁰ Similar themes of appropriate white behaviour came out following the 1915 riot: the *Times* went so far to chide the crowd to say that the mob had demonstrated “the true Prussian, not the real British, spirit.” Britons, the editor continued, did not “deal harshly with an enemy when he is helpless” – even if he was a German.²⁰¹ Implied here was the assumption that Britons were civilized white people with considerable self-control and a due sense of fairness, and that the crowd’s actions compromised the composure dividing Prussians from Britons. By attacking “German” businesses, white middle-class Victorians had unwittingly compromised the very civility upon which their collective consciousness was based.

The papers wasted no time in condemning the rioting as un-British and senseless. Attacks on German businesses in Victoria had no immediate or material impact on the

¹⁹⁸ *Colonist*, 24 December 1911

¹⁹⁹ Michael Barnholden, *Reading the Riot Act: A Brief History of Riots in Vancouver* (Vancouver: Anvil Press, 2005), 37. The riot further raised fears of the ability of whites and Asians – particularly Japanese – to live together peacefully; Ormsby, *British Columbia: a History*, 351.

²⁰⁰ Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water*, 105.

²⁰¹ *Times*, 10 May 1915.

war effort overseas. Rioters had employed imprecise definitions of Germanness, with no clear common understanding. In their eyes, Germanness could come from images like those on the walls of the Kaiserhof, or in the form of German language or German-sounding names. The *Colonist* reported that very few of the attacked shops belonged to Germans; rather, the mob targeted “Canadians” or British subjects who had lived for decades in the province.²⁰²

Many Germans feared for their safety following the riot, as many Victorians persisted in marking who was or was not a German. Gossips accused people who had German-sounding names of being German, prompting many non-Germans to telephone the *Colonist* for advice on how to convince others that they were not in fact German.²⁰³ Some mis-identified Germans, such as Harry Schroeder and Mr F. Kroeger, wrote directly to the *Colonist* to clear their names.²⁰⁴ Putting locals under such scrutiny emphasized German difference, even though many were British subjects and loyal Canadians. Even the Jewish community sought to avoid the public’s roving gaze by cancelling religious classes, perhaps out of a fear that they might be confused with promoting German culture.²⁰⁵ In what may have been a symbolic gesture of capitulation,

²⁰² *Colonist*, 11 May 1915.

²⁰³ The *Colonist* staff felt exasperated at the tenacity of those who constantly suspected their neighbours of being Germans, ultimately declaring that “there is no way of convincing people of anything when they do not to believe it. We have grave doubts if the citizen who said, “My gracious, I wish my name was Kelly,” would have been considered an Irishman, even if his wish had been granted”; *Colonist*, 12 May 1915.

²⁰⁴ Harry Schroeder, the proprietor of the Linden and Home Grocery, attested that he was born in Ontario to a German father and a Scotch mother, and that his family had been in Canada since his father was eleven years old; *Colonist*, 12 May 1915. Mr Kroeger simply stated that he was born in the United States to Danish parents, and that he had been in Canada for thirty years. Furthermore, he denied having anything but disgust for “the Teutons”; *Colonist*, 15 May 1915.

²⁰⁵ This was ultimately the Rabbi’s decision, for which the Committee of the Congregation Emanu-El later scolded him. In their opinion the Rabbi ought to have solicited their advice rather than “taking advice from outsiders re: closing religious classes.” At least three of the five members present at that meeting were German-born Jews; Congregation Emanu-El Minutes Book, 13 June 1915, BCA MS-0059 (reel A00279); Canada, 5th Decennial Census, 1911. Accessed via *viHistory.ca* (Patrick A. Dunae, ed).

Kostenbader sold his lease for the Kaiserhof Hotel to Alexander J. McCool shortly after the riot, and Max Leiser resigned from the board of the Pither & Leiser liquor distribution company.²⁰⁶

People were unsure how to act in the days following the riot. Though the mayor and the police called for civic order, businesses anxious to avoid attack took out advertisements in the papers denying the engagement of any German or Austrian employees. The Weiler Bros. furniture company, for instance, reported that “at present the capital in the firm is entirely British, and that no member of the Staff is either a German, or an Austrian; every one of them is a British Subject, from the Management down to the Office Boy.”²⁰⁷ Other businesses fired German employees. Many of those who were sacked left the city to protect their own safety, run out of town to nearby American cities.

The press blamed the Anti-German Riot on an insidious “criminal element” within the crowd, though some well-meaning spectators naturally became caught up and joined in the violence. On both nights the crowds contained rioters and spectators.²⁰⁸ Arrests made following the riot reflect that foreign criminal element, as many of the men

²⁰⁶ “Kaiserhof Hotel” Victoria Phoenix Brewery, Labatt Brewery Records. MS-1883, Vol 2, Box 3, File 20. Max Leiser remained owner of the building as well as the holder of the liquor license, which he further leased to McCool for \$3,000 a year. Among the lease transfer papers is a list of chattel goods such as glasses and bedding included in the lease; some goods, such as the cigar boxes, were still listed as damaged in the riot when the deal took place on 30 June 1915. Leiser did however resign his position from the board of Pither & Leiser, which had been sold in 1912 to William Geoghegan. It appears that Leiser resigned immediately following the anti-German riot; see Ronald Greene, “Token History: The Kaiserhof Hotel”, *BC Historical News*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (2003), 38.

²⁰⁷ The original Weiler family were German-born, but by 1915 all those still involved were born in North America and were British subjects; *Colonist*, 13 May 1915.

²⁰⁸ In Vancouver it was reported that Chinese, Japanese, and Sikh labourers milled about amongst the rioters, unharmed. The local press initially blamed a “small disorderly element” of drunk “outside agitators” as precipitating the riot; Roy, *A White Man’s Province*, 195.

arrested were labourers from Southern Europe.²⁰⁹ While the Magistrate's records confirm the involvement of foreigners and a seedy criminal underbelly, Victorians must have known that these outsiders alone were not responsible for the violence. Other accounts reported the presence of women and children, with one photograph in particular confirming the reports of women and children. Those shown in the photograph (see Figure 4) were largely spectators, but they were of various social classes. Some wore old, ill-fitting clothing, while others wore freshly shined shoes and clean suits. Women were also in attendance, made-up and appearing to enjoy the evening's excitement.²¹⁰ The *Colonist* urged all those in possession of stolen goods to return them as soon as possible in order that they would receive amnesty.²¹¹ Though police recovered some stolen goods, the public was not always helpful. In some cases the police executed search warrants on private premises, while other people's consciences got the better of them. One anonymous individual telephoned police before leaving a package at Oak Bay Avenue and Fort Street containing two dozen pipes stolen from Loewenberg's store.²¹²

²⁰⁹ Among the 27 individuals charged in connection with the riot were ten Greeks or Italians, one Irishman, 13 English Canadians, two Chinese men, and one other male. All were charged with either drunkenness, possession of stolen goods, or unlawful assembly. Only one woman (an English Canadian) was arrested, together with her English Canadian husband. The Greeks, Italians, and Chinese men were exclusively charged with possession of stolen goods, the Irishman with drunkenness, and the English Canadians alternatively with possession (eight charges), unlawful assembly (four charges), and drunkenness (one charge); City of Victoria, Magistrate Record Book, 1913-5. CVA, CRS 116; 16/C/9/file 1. At least four charges were eventually dropped, with the remainder convicted and sentenced to a month's imprisonment with hard labour; *Colonist*, 22 May 1915.

²¹⁰ "Demonstrators wrecking the Kaiserhof Hotel after the sinking of the SS Lusitania," Photograph taken 8 May 1915, BCA Visual Records, A-02709.

²¹¹ *Colonist*, 11 May 1915.

²¹² While the editors of the *Colonist* hoped that charges would be laid against those whose premises were searched, it does not appear to have happened; *Colonist*, 13 May 1915.



Figure 4 - Crowd at the Kaiserhof Hotel [Detail]. Image A-02709
courtesy of the Royal BC Museum, BC Archives

Victorians gradually forgot many elements of the anti-German riot. People ignored the crowd's respectable participants, and a few guilty labourers took the blame for the hundreds of other rioters. German sameness – their whiteness – was forgotten during the riot, ignored in favour of markers of difference – their Teutonic race. In the end, the riot itself has been forgotten in the collective consciousness of Victoria, absent from official and popular memory. Ultimately, we should understand the riot as part of a larger continuum of constructed Germanness in Victoria. The riot marks the instability of race, as its power to delineate peoples into distinct categories only so far as language and material elements erect boundaries. Rioters clasped onto markers of difference where previously sameness had been the foundation of British-German relations in the city. But their race did not doom them, for their whiteness allowed many Germans an avenue of escape: de-Germanification by simply becoming “white Canadians.”

Even when Germanness came under direct rhetorical attack in the early days of the war, many hastened to differentiate between friendly local Germans and militaristic Prussians. Later, when rioters began physically attacking German manifestations, most Germans did what they could to avoid being socially ostracized. They had lived for many years in the province and city, and were generally well known to be upstanding citizens. Germans maintained their social status even in internment, where they were treated as a privileged class of officers.²¹³ Furthermore, the children of German immigrants were allowed to become Canadian citizens decades before the Asian communities targeted in Vancouver's 1907 Anti-Asian Riot.

The war did not initiate de-Germanification, rather accelerating a process already underway for some time. De-Germanification had begun in a way with those initial German pioneers who stressed their desire to live communal with British folk. As the meaning of Germanness shifted, taking on a negative connotation, more and more Germans turned to more "British" identities. The war – and especially the riot – gave added incentive towards appearing more English, emphasizing markers of sameness over markers of difference that might align oneself with the *Kaiserreich*. Many local Germans ceased being German Victorians, emphasizing instead their naturalization. Such was the case with businesses that, though originally German-run, stressed the British subject status of their owners and investors. Simon Leiser was one of many local Germans who stressed their local service and connections over their loyalties to Germany.

Historians have underappreciated Victoria's *Lusitania* Riot and what it has to say about Victoria during the Great War. Contemporary newspaper reports and later

²¹³ Reynolds, "Attitudes Towards Aliens in British Columbia", 105; see also my discussion in the next section.

interviews demonstrate the weakness of the argument that the riot was simply a show of “general xenophobia” or a rejection of Germans. Rather, it marked the high point in a broader rising tide of German unacceptability. Soldiers mourning the loss of James Dunsmuir started the riot, and other Victorians gradually joined in before starting their own riot the following evening. Attacks by the crowd on “German” businesses enforced Otherness, thereby justifying the mob’s looting as retaliation against the *Kaiserreich*. For many local Germans, the riot left them with two options: fall-back on their identity as white, English-speaking residents of Victoria, or leave the city. Luckily for most, they and especially their children could become invisible in British society.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The lull following the riot before the war's end left Victoria's Germans unsure of where they stood. Some provincial politicians and their constituents demanded that Germans be removed from society, with many calling loudly for internment. Others hoped that the government could seize and sell German-held "lands, coal rights, water rights, stocks in companies, and other properties," but Premier Bowser informed the legislature that only the federal government had authority over enemy aliens and their property.²¹⁴ Victoria city council supported German segregation and internment. Internment itself was a federal initiative beginning with Order in Council 2721 on 27 Oct 1914, marking a shift in the official attitude towards Germans in Canada.²¹⁵ Despite this move, Germans retained some level of racial privilege. Interned Germans enjoyed privileges usually reserved for enemy "first class officers."²¹⁶ German-speaking Austrians were often interned alongside Germans, as other members of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (particularly Ukrainians) were treated as Prisoners of War. German prisoners meanwhile took part in book clubs and distance-education. Such programs were not without their critics: the YMCA, while visiting a camp to set-up prisoner amusement programs, protested at the comforts afforded to German prisoners. While German

²¹⁴ Sessional Papers, British Columbia, Session 1916, Vol. XLV, 18 April 1916, 96. Unlike Japanese Canadian internment during the Second World War, there appears to have been no wide-scale seizure of German-owned property during the internment process.

²¹⁵ Farney and Kordan, "The Predicament of Belonging," 85.

²¹⁶ On 25 May 1915 Council endorsed a letter from North Vancouver calling on the Premier and Prime Minister to intern "all Germans, Austrians and Turks and to employ them on public works." Council Minutes, City of Victoria, 25 May 1915.

prisoners took their ease, Austro-Hungarian internees – many of whom were illiterate – toiled in forced labour, building roads in the province’s interior regions.²¹⁷

The Great War’s impact had a considerable impact on German-Canadian identity, and the 1915 Anti-German Riot reflected the conflicted view of Victorians towards their German neighbours. Lack of physical violence against German individuals during the riot should not subtract from the effect changing opinions towards Germans had on their visibility in society. Local Germans had already been in a very uncomfortable place. The riot’s violence gave added incentive for de-Germanification among local Germans.²¹⁸

Lawrence Hafer’s family, at their farm and summer-home at Keating Cross Road in Saanich, shifted their everyday conversations from German to English in 1915.²¹⁹ The riot also challenged how Victorians understood themselves within a settler-colonial society. The frustration felt by soldiers stationed at Willows Beach, was transformed into righteous indignation by the loss of their friend Jimmy Dunsmuir. When the soldiers went downtown to attack the Kaiserhof, they set a precedent for other Victorians to lash out at their German neighbours. The *Lusitania* Riot shook that same respectable Victoria, presenting the crowd after the fact with an unfamiliar image of themselves that they struggled to reconcile.

²¹⁷ Bohdan S. Kordan, *Enemy Aliens, Prisoners of War: Internment in Canada During the Great War*, (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 75, 84; Reynolds, “Attitudes Towards Enemy Aliens in British Columbia,” 105.

²¹⁸ While Kazal and others rightly identify the impact of the Great War on German-American identity forging, the situation in that country was quite different. Late U.S. entry into the war arguably accelerated de-Germanification in that country. See Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock*, 190-3. Prohibition in the U.S. also impacted local German identity, as it tended to hamper the collective drinking of alcohol, the foundation of so many *Vereine*. Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock*, 193; for the importance of alcohol consumption to *Vereine* in Imperial Germany as the “lubricant of urban life”, see Abrams, *Workers’ Culture in Imperial Germany*, 63-66.

²¹⁹ Lawrence Hafer interview.

The riot requires more nuanced understanding of white-relations in British Columbia. Before the war, British Victorians had largely accepted and sought out Germans as potential settlers in the province. Germans were among Victoria's most prominent citizens, well-represented in all social, political, and economic circles. They were allowed to co-exist with non-German Victorians while maintain their distinctive culture. This difference did not become foreign until the Great War, when Victorians began associating their neighbours with a foreign national identity, thereby inferring loyalty to the *Kaiserreich*. While this was predominately not the case, Victorians did not stop to ask local Germans where their loyalties lay. Germanness became alien and no longer indicative of racial compatibility.

Whiteness, while it might not untangle culture, race, and nationality, offers a tentative framework for thinking about how people could be both distinct and alike. As Guglielmo demonstrated with Italians in Chicago before 1945, groups could both be white and racially distinct. For Germans in Victoria this meant that they could be superior because of their whiteness, a trait they shared with their British neighbours, yet still distinct on the basis of their Germanness. This also allowed Germans the ability to merge into British Victoria. Unless they made themselves conspicuous (as they did during many of their celebrations), local Germans were largely invisible among other white non-Germans. This is clear in the case of children of German immigrants, for like the Kazal's "old stock" Germans of Philadelphia, they "integrated" into British respectable identity in Victoria while maintaining many of their own community's cultural markers before 1914.

German identity before the Great War was fluid and complex. Germans themselves navigated through their British-dominate society while retaining and

expressing their Germanness. These individuals were part of an imagined community that appeared to outside observers to smooth over regional and religious boundaries. Despite their fluidity, the boundaries of this community were sufficient enough to project group coherency. German group identity helped inform local notions of German racialness, as well as confirming their whiteness.

The space between German race and whiteness widened as reports of the distant European war conflicted with prior experience of local Germans. British Victorians turned with suspicion to their now-foreign neighbours, looking on their differences in new ways. The *Lusitania* Riot and its violence shook not only how Victorians viewed Germans, but how they viewed themselves as well. Many condemned the faceless mob as “un-British”, and, upon further reflection, some questioned whether or not local Germans were suitable targets. Germans were meanwhile left in an uncertain position. Their Germanness, no longer an identity of which to be proud, became incompatible with a peaceful life. Left with few other choices, local Germans could either leave the city, or reject their Germanness and become as inconspicuous as possible.

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