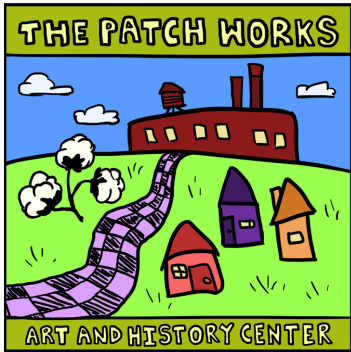


HOW 19TH CENTURY EUROPEAN INDUSTRIALIZATION BROUGHT US ALL TO CABBAGETOWN

By Nina & Jake Elsas, The Patch Works Art And History Center

Throughout much of the 19th century, hordes of Germanic peoples peacefully landed on U.S. soil. Relaxed immigration policies and zippy steamships offered Europeans the opportunity to cross the Pond with relative ease. In the end, approximately five



million German-speaking settlers made America their new home. Some left Europe because of various wars, political uprisings, and economic hardship. And some left because of persecution.

In particular, antisemitic violence throughout Germanic lands compelled thousands of “German Jews” to seek

safety and prosperity in the United States. By the middle of the 19th century, the number of European Jews living in the U.S. had increased tenfold. During an especially auspicious sixty-year period, from 1820 to 1880, approximately 150,000 Jews chose a new life in America, the vast majority of them being German-speaking... and damn proud of it.

Many of the German Jewish immigrants partaking in this mass exodus wouldn’t (or couldn’t) speak either Hebrew or Yiddish. In fact, once in the United States, most of them even opted to live in neighborhoods alongside German-speaking Catholics and Lutherans. German-American communities bonded over their loyalty to language, paying little mind to differences in religious dogma.

What’s also important to recognize is at THAT time – regardless of today’s nomenclature – there was no such thing as “Germany,” not until unification in 1871. Keeping this tidbit in mind, it’s therefore worth noting that the “19th century, German-Jewish immigrant” label, although oft-used, is a vast over-simplification that fails to recognize the various homelands from which many of these people hailed. In the 1800s, both German language and German culture were prevalent throughout Central and Eastern Europe, and the bulk of European Jews had fully embraced a “German” identity, regardless of their actual birthplace.

But why is this important? Well, getting back to Cabbagetown history – as we mentioned in a previous article – a young immigrant named Jacob Elsas arrived at Ellis Island in 1861. Although he had been born in Aldingen in the Kingdom of Württemberg (again, no such thing as “Germany”), Jacob’s family originated in Alsace... or Elsaß (Elsass) in German. But decades of conflict between France and the adjacent German-speaking regions had resulted in a territorial tug-of-war, and many of

the inhabitants of Alsace/Elsaß had simply gotten stuck in the middle. If it weren’t already obvious, Jacob’s last name was the result of his being Alsatian.

He also came from a family that knew a bit about textiles, mostly the weaving of cotton into mattress ticking, and older generations made sure to pass these skills down to the youngsters. But the rapid modernization of 19th century European economies – especially with regard to industrialization and improvements to mass production – hampered European Jews’ ability to practice their classic occupation of... peddling. Tradition! Thus, Jewish immigration was spurred not only by antisemitic persecution but also by an inability to compete with newer industrial practices.

There is a common belief that Jacob left his home out of fear of getting conscripted (a French invention that had only just taken root in other parts of Europe), but Württemberg in the 1860s was relatively calm and free of conflict. In our humble opinion, economic concerns probably played a larger role in his departure. Thus, the idea that a teenage Jacob – like many of his Jewish peers – may have found his business prospects in Europe dwindling due to rampant industrialization just makes his future successes even more fascinating (and not just a little ironic).

But, of course, **Fulton Bag & Cotton Mills** didn’t happen overnight. It would take twenty years living and working in the United States before Jacob could start constructing his first mill... on the land that was once home to the **Atlanta Rolling Mill**. And he certainly didn’t reach this milestone all on his own.

No one attains financial success without the help of others, a simple truth that persists to this day (no matter how much some wealthy people might wish to convince us otherwise). So, gentle readers, let’s sit back, relax, grab a drink, and get ready for Jacob’s twenty-year-long path to Cabbagetown, a journey that starts with him – 18 years old and penniless after his transatlantic travels – borrowing \$1 from a fellow immigrant.

JUSTACOS

JenChan’s recently launched **Justacos** – a lunchtime restaurant – from its Carroll Street space. Open 11a to 4p, Justacos serves a variety of tacos, like Vietnamese pork, fried shrimp, and Szechuan chicken, along with loaded nachos and ginger margaritas. You can order for delivery, takeout, or dine-in at the bar or on the parklet in front of the restaurant. On-site orders are placed using a QR code scanned by smart phones or at the takeout window. **A late-night taco menu is also in the works.**