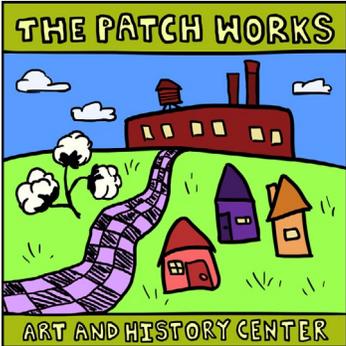


ONE OF THE MOST ILL-INFORMED IMMIGRANTS EVER? OR PERHAPS JUST PLAIN UNLUCKY?

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

In last month's "Chapter" on *The History of Cabbagetown*, we mentioned that there's still some debate as to why teenager Jacob Elsas moved to the United States in 1861. The popular belief is that he fled the Kingdom of Württemberg due to the threat of being conscripted into the local army and fighting in some godforsaken, muddy European battlefield.



If this is truly the case, then Jacob would be, without a doubt, one of the most ill-informed immigrants – or perhaps just plain unlucky – because he left a relatively peaceful homeland and landed right smack dab in the American Civil War. Not the smartest move.

Looking back at all his future accomplishments, we would like

to think that Jacob wasn't a total idiot. We – perhaps being a smidge idealistic – would like to believe that his decision to uproot was based more on his desire to achieve the American Dream (and follow rainbows and unicorns to financial success). Being the self-appointed authors of this version of Cabbagetown history, we at *The Patch Works* are gonna stick by the American Dream theory, even if there's absolutely no proof whatsoever. Sure, there's always the possibility that he really was just an impetuous teenager making bad choices. He certainly wouldn't be the first.

But retelling history can often be challenging, because sometimes there's too little proof and sometimes... well... there's too MUCH proof. What we mean is that sometimes different sources provide concrete facts that completely contradict each other. Yet those impossible, paradoxical details are right there, at our fingertips, written in black and white. Ouch! Brain freeze! People cannot be in two places, doing two opposite things at the exact same time, right? Or caaaaaaan they? Casting Quantum Theory and Branching aside, sometimes historians have to choose a side or – to be a tad more accurate – discuss all the possibilities, sincerely believing that the "truth is out there," but without wormhole-powered time travel no one will ever really know it.

Take comfort! *The Patch Works* is dedicated to telling Cabbagetown history as an almost *Marvel-esque Multiverse*, with gobs of realities and enigmatic weirdness. What motivated Jacob to schlep across the ocean is the least problematic topic when it comes to an honest discussion of his life. There's so much more! Like, for instance, the fact that he was a bastard (the daddy-less kind, not the "what a friggin' bastard" kind) gets tempered with historians' frequent use of the term "orphan" when describing his lineage. His momma Jeanette was very much alive in 1861 when Jacob immigrated to the USA. She didn't kick

the bucket until 1873. But the word "bastard" is so gauche. Better to say he was an "orphan."

By far, our favorite and unsolved conundrum is: how in the hell did Jacob end up in the South??? This is a powder-keg of a discussion that could potentially launch a thousand ships and obliterate ancient, dynastic civilizations. It's THAT explosive. We at The Patch Works have pored over delicate documents in the *Georgia Tech* archives that tell absolutely impossibly different tales. According to letters and documents dating back to the turn of the century – on up to the mid-1900s – Jacob's journey to Atlanta is described in paradoxes that would've made Stan Lee green with envy. Zombie Stan Lee smash!

In the end, the essence of this Hydra-like narrative boils down to two opposing camps: those who believe he merrily sauntered down to Georgia of his own free will vs. those who staunchly believe he was... wait for it... conscripted into the Union Army. Ha! Wouldn't that be freaking hilarious?!?!?!? Wackier still is that most of the historians who believe Jacob left Württemberg to escape European conscription also unironically claim that he was conscripted HERE. Man, can't a Jewish brother catch a break? Can you imagine the look on Jacob's face when the army came a-knockin' on his front door???

Well, it might be true. Or not. Either way, in 1861 Jacob landed at Ellis Island, borrowed a buck to get to German-Jewish Heaven (aka Cincinnati), where one of his uncles lived. But just to confuse historians even more, his uncle was also named Jacob. Jacobs everywhere! Uncle Jacob is now referred to as Jacob the Elder, while our Jacob is the Younger. But this confluence of multi-Jacobs, as well as the fact that many (and completely unrelated) Alsatians carried the last name of "Elsas/Elsass," probably led to the Gordian Knot that is Jacob the Younger's path to Cabbagetown.

Untying a single thread from the knot, we know that Jacob departed Cincinnati in 1864, after saving up some dough by working for his Uncle Elder-Elsas. But whether he set off for the American South as a civilian or soon-to-be Yankee... well... cliffhanger. **Let's hold off and tell the Tale of Two Jakes next month...**

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.**