

Abstract

This paper aims to explore the ways in which German-Americans in Galveston, Texas developed their political ideologies and uncovers why they generally accepted secession after the presidential election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860. Through examining German immigration to Texas, settlement in Galveston, and economic, social, and cultural identity on an overwhelmingly Confederate island, this essay will demonstrate how interactions between German-Americans and their Anglo-Texan neighbors shaped German-American opinions on secession directly before the Civil War. German-Americans in Galveston had a complicated relationship with secession. Unlike the majority of southerners, they did not hold vested interest in the future of slavery, nor did they have strong cultural ties to the South. Rather, many German-Americans felt deep loyalty to their new homeland and strove to do whatever appeared best for the state of Texas. This paper argues that, while at first, many German-Americans in Galveston leaned toward unionism, after the election of President Abraham Lincoln, opinion greatly shifted. When it became clear that Texas was going to secede from the Union, most Galvestonian Germans accepted secessionism and allied with their Anglo-Texan neighbors, assimilating into the wider Galveston dogma to maintain their economic and social standings and to prevent the resurfacing of anti-German sentiments in the South. The attack on Ferdinand Flake's print shop by a German-American mob serves as an important case study that demonstrates how far Germans were willing to go to protect their self-interests and their community in Galveston, Texas.

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