

WHAT AMERICANS SAID ABOUT SAXONY, AND WHAT THIS SAYS
ABOUT THEM: INTERPRETING TRAVEL WRITINGS OF THE
TICKNORS AND OTHER PRIVILEGED AMERICANS

1800-1850

by

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ABSTRACT

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In the first half of the nineteenth century, Saxony became an increasingly popular destination for American travelers. After first examining the forces behind the travel trends in order to provide historical context, this study analyzes American travelers' perceptions of Saxony as recorded in their travel writings, with particular emphasis on George and Anna Ticknor's journals from Europe. In doing so, it sheds light on aspects of Anglo-American leisure-class identity between 1800 and 1850.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, educated upper-class New Englanders had very little real knowledge of Germany and its people, and their only image of Saxony

would likely have been in connection with Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation. What information these Anglo-Americans did have about the current literature and thought of Germany generally came via English-language magazines, often first published in Britain. But at the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, travel to and within Europe began to be attractive, especially as word spread among American elites that Germany offered the best universities in the world. George Ticknor and a handful of other young New England aristocrats studied at Göttingen with such success and fame that it began a snowballing trend of American students flocking to German universities for the next century. Meanwhile, privileged Americans increasingly began to discover the attractions of Germany in other capacities as well, often as a part of a Grand Tour of Europe that served to enhance their status in society. Though Germany initially lagged far behind more familiar destinations like Great Britain, France, and Italy in popularity, by the middle of the nineteenth century, it was on the rise as a favorite destination for American travelers. When, in the process of traveling Germany, Americans discovered the small Kingdom of Saxony tucked away into the heart of the German Confederation, it quickly won their praise and by mid-century was becoming a beloved place to visit or even reside. Again, George Ticknor (with his family this time) was at the forefront of this trend, settling in Dresden for half a year in 1835-1836. Welcomed into the highest noble and royal societies of Saxony, the Ticknors (as Boston Brahmin taste-makers) were likely to have been major factors in fanning the flames of later American enthusiasm for Saxony.

The perceptions that the Ticknors and other contemporary American travelers

revealed about Germany—and Saxony in particular—reflected aspects of their own identities. For example, they admired the Saxon monarch and royal family. When they favorably compared the “liberal” Saxon court with the “despots” of other European countries, this indicated their American republican heritage. On the other hand, when they sided with the “paternally beneficent” government of the Saxon king against the “ingratitude” of the people, they underscored their own patrician background and authoritarian ideals. Meanwhile, they lauded the Saxon educational system and the enlightened state of the general population, showing the importance they placed on public education and responsibility. They raved about the cultural treasures in the museums of Dresden, because they appreciated cultivation, yet had little access to such quality collections in America. Their response to commercial Leipzig was ambivalent, but courtly and refined Dresden appealed to these aristocrats. Believing that the quality of the soil has a strong effect on the quality of a population, they adjusted their impressions of the complex Saxon/Prussian border regions to fit whatever stereotype they wanted to emphasize at the time: that of the enlightened but unjustly persecuted Saxon peasants or that of the miserable degraded Prussian boor. The observations reflected in early nineteenth-century American travel writings reveal that images of the “other” were fluid and depended on the viewer’s own state of mind, background, and value system. In writing about their perceptions of other lands and peoples, these American travelers actually revealed a lot about themselves.

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INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, not many Americans had been to Europe. Fewer had visited the German states, and hardly any had set foot in the small central German Kingdom of Saxony. By the latter decades of the 1800s, well-to-do Americans were traveling to Europe in crowds, studying by the thousands in German universities, and taking up residence in the friendly and beloved Saxon capital, Dresden. Although the greatest effects were seen after 1850, it was during the first half of the century that the critical underlying developments—rising American affluence, improved transportation, increasing knowledge of foreign lands, growing prestige of travel abroad, etc.—occurred in both the United States and Europe that led to these results and dramatically changed what Americans knew and thought about the Old World.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Germany was relatively little known in New England, one of the most culturally influential regions of the United States, which tended to relate most closely to England. After the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, a trickle of Americans—at first mainly students from New England—began to discover Germany. Over the next few decades, as wealthy Americans began to travel more in general, this trickle grew into a flood, so that already by mid-century Germany had developed a strong reputation in the Northeastern United States as a destination for intellectual and cultural travel. As more and more American travelers spread out over the European continent, an increasing number of them naturally found their way to the Kingdom of Saxony as

everywhere else. Due partly to its less easily accessible location in the interior of Europe (see Figure A.2 in the appendix), however, Saxony experienced a somewhat belated boom of American visitors in comparison to popular destinations along better-established routes. But by mid-century, steamships and railroads had made distant travel easier, faster, and more affordable, and the first American visitors to Saxony had built up its reputation, so that as the nineteenth century wore on, the little kingdom became an increasingly popular destination for American travelers. Since American travel to Saxony was subject to most of the same major forces shaping American travel to Europe and especially Germany, it is necessary to first analyze the large-scale factors behind the patterns of American travel to the Old World—in particular to Germany—and then to interpret how travel to Saxony fits within the overall context. Interestingly, the growth of American travel literature publishing throughout the nineteenth century parallels the growth of American international travel itself, which finds its echo in the pattern of American travel to Saxony.

These travel narratives by early nineteenth-century Americans not only tell us about the lands that the travelers experienced, they also tell us about the authors themselves. By taking the writings of Americans traveling in Germany in the first half of the 1800s as historical documents, we can learn quite a bit about the social, political, economic, and environmental state of the German lands at that time. At the same time, we can also use these writings as a mirror to reflect the mindsets of the Americans who penned them as their own expectations and worldviews were confronted by foreign lands and ways. This can shed light on aspects of early nineteenth-century American identity,

and ways in which travel in Germany influenced its formation. Some of these aspects of identity might have been common to Americans generally, but since those who traveled to Europe and wrote about their experiences were usually only members of the highly educated, more privileged classes (and quite often from New England), most of what we learn about identity relates specifically to them.

Focusing the study on Saxony in the first half of the nineteenth century allows us to restrict our scope to a more easily manageable size and to explore new historical ground. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Saxony became a very popular travel destination (even residence!) for Americans. But before 1850, only a relative handful of Americans had visited it and written about their experiences. Some of these early visitors, like George and Anna Ticknor and Henry Dwight were well positioned to spread the fame of Saxony to fellow Americans via word of mouth in influential circles or by the publishing of a popular book, respectively. The fire of later interest in Saxony was probably first kindled by these and other early nineteenth-century American travelers. At the same time, the pattern of growing American travel to Saxony was similar to (and related to) the trend of increasing American travel abroad in general throughout the nineteenth century.

This study gives particular attention to the journals of both George and Anna Ticknor, most of which have never been printed.¹ George Ticknor's memoirs, *Life*,

¹ Images of the journal manuscript pages are available on microfilm; the originals reside in the Dartmouth College Library. George and Anna Ticknor, *Microfilm Edition of the Travel Journals of George and Anna Ticknor: In the Years 1816-1819 and 1835-1838* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Xerox University Microfilms, 1974).

Letters, and Journals of George Ticknor,² published in 1876, are frequently cited by historians. However, they only contain limited—and heavily edited—excerpts from his eighteen volumes of European travel journals. The Ticknors are well placed as historical witnesses to (and arguably catalysts for) the beginnings of significant American travel to Germany. Their experiences in Europe anticipated popular travel patterns of thousands of their countrymen in later decades. Is this only coincidence, given their influential position in elite Boston society and even throughout the entire USA? They are historically significant figures whose journals need to be closely examined. Therefore, this study will focus most closely on the Ticknors with regard to aspects of American identity reflected in perceptions of Saxony.

Some of these broader topics have already been studied by other historians, and they help put this study of Americans in Saxony into context. William Stowe's *Going Abroad: European Travel in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* is an authoritative study of the phenomenon of American travel abroad in the 1800s.³ Stowe examines the roles that international (particularly European) travel played in American society in the nineteenth century. Initially a prerogative of only the very most privileged, travel abroad became a key symbol of social prestige. As the century wore on and an upwardly-mobile American society started traveling in mass, the European Grand Tour became a ritual that everybody who was anybody was expected to do. This travel craze also coincided with a

² George Ticknor, *Life, Letters, and Journals of George Ticknor*, ed. Anna Ticknor and George S. Hillard, vol. 1-2 (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1876).

³ William W. Stowe, *Going Abroad: European Travel in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Victorian-era habit of journaling and letter-writing, which produced the hugely successful genre of American travel literature. Harold F. Smith's *American Travellers Abroad: A Bibliography of Accounts Published before 1900* gives a nearly complete, annotated list of the books that these travelers produced.⁴ A 350-page pure annotated bibliography, it makes the scope of this genre of literature tangible, and its useful indexes of places and occupations offer a glimpse of the most popular destinations and the types of people who made these trips. Nineteenth-century travel literature has proven a fruitful field for analysis of historical contact between cultures, as well as the formation of cultural identity. Mary Suzanne Schriber, for example, focuses on the travel writing of women in *Writing Home: American Women Abroad, 1830-1920*, shedding light on the male-dominated American society in which women worked within prescribed roles and expectations of womanhood in the process of asserting their own distinctive voices as travelers and travel writers.⁵ By recognizing that men's and women's travel writing was subject to many of the same cultural values as well as technological factors and market forces, while also demonstrating differing perspectives based on gender, Schriber illuminates the contrast between aspects of general American identity and gendered views of the world. A fascinating study could be done by using Schriber's approach to analyze the travel journals of Anna Ticknor with respect to those of her husband George Ticknor.

⁴ Harold F. Smith, *American Travellers Abroad: A Bibliography of Accounts Published Before 1900*, 2d ed. (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1999).

⁵ Mary Suzanne Schriber, *Writing Home: American Women Abroad, 1830-1920* (Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia, 1997).

Focusing specifically on Germany, historians have studied George Ticknor and other important early Americans' associations with that country. Traditionally, most of these have studied topics like German literary or educational influences on the United States. Using these to understand the development of German cultural influence in nineteenth-century America helps us to keep the Ticknors' contributions in perspective and to better grasp the trajectory of American identity formation with respect to German influences. Henry Pochmann's great tome, *German Culture in America: Philosophical and Literary Influences, 1600-1900*, is a good place to start.⁶ With encyclopedic breadth but sometimes limited depth, Pochmann surveys the field of German thought and literature in America and finds an unbroken thread of interest in German culture extending from colonial to modern times, in which Ticknor and friends are mere stepping stones along the path to the Transcendentalists and beyond. While this conclusion diminishes Ticknor's traditional role in the dissemination of German literary culture in America, it does not affect interpretations of his influence in other spheres, like the American travel craze to Germany. One major theme running throughout this thesis will be that Ticknor's experiences illustrate pivotal moments in the development of nineteenth-century American travel patterns to Germany.

A few important studies have examined George Ticknor's life, his European travels, and his position as a cultural mediator between Germany and the United States. For all that has been done, however, there is still plenty of unexplored material in

⁶ Henry A. Pochmann, *German Culture in America: Philosophical and Literary Influences, 1600-1900* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1957; reprint, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978).

Ticknor's unprinted journal manuscripts, which offer a much deeper view of his experiences and thoughts than his published memoirs, not to mention a wealth of historical information. For one thing, Ticknor was a man of letters, and many of the studies devoted to him and his journals come out of the field of language and literature rather than history. They tend to be sort of a mixture between historical and literary analysis. Frank Ryder has studied the Ticknor journals. He leans toward a historical examination in his two-part article "An American view of Germany—1817" and "George Ticknor on the German Scene," where he details some of the general impressions Ticknor has of the Germans, and argues for the publication and broader study of Ticknor's historically-valuable journals.⁷ Ryder also contributes a more literary article on the relationship between George Ticknor and Goethe to a loose collection of "George Ticknor and So-And-So" studies that appeared in *PMLA* in the mid-twentieth century.⁸ Ticknor knew and had correspondence with so many important historical figures, that there might almost be no end to the number of studies like this that could be done. Orié William Long has written one of the earliest of these, exploring the relationship between

⁷ Frank G. Ryder, "An American View of Germany—1817," *The American-German Review* 25, no. 3 (1959): 16-19; idem, "George Ticknor on the German Scene," *The American-German Review* 25, no. 4 (1959): 28-30.

⁸ Frank G. Ryder, "George Ticknor and Goethe—Boston and Göttingen," *PMLA* 67 (December 1952): 960-972. Similar studies of relationships between George Ticknor and notable literary Europeans include Edwin H. Zeydel, "George Ticknor and Ludwig Tieck," *PMLA* 44 (September 1929): 879-891; Judson Stanley Lyon, "Wordsworth and Ticknor," *PMLA* 66 (June 1951): 432-440. A similar type of study—though not with a literary interest—is Ingo Schwarz, "Transatlantic Communication in the 19th Century: Aspects of the Correspondence Between Alexander von Humboldt and George Ticknor," *Asclepio* 56 (February 2004): 25-39.

Ticknor and Thomas Jefferson.⁹ A broader historical analysis of literary interest is Long's much-quoted *Literary Pioneers: Early American Explorers of European Culture*, which analyzes the experiences of six of the earliest and most significant American students in Germany and the European cultural influences they brought back with them to the United States.¹⁰ In both of these works, Long makes use not only of Ticknor's journals, but of archival letters as well. *Literary Pioneers* has become something of a classic text in the study of German cultural influence in the United States, and Long ascribes a larger role to these six "literary pioneers" (George Ticknor, Edward Everett, Joseph G. Cogswell, George Bancroft, Henry W. Longfellow, and John L. Motley) than what Pochmann might be comfortable with. Finally, the most complete historical study on the life and times of George Ticknor is surely David B. Tyack's *George Ticknor and the Boston Brahmins*.¹¹ This book is invaluable for putting Ticknor into the context of nineteenth-century Boston and New England Brahmin society, and for showing how that background shaped Ticknor's life and relationships at home and abroad. Using every available archival source about Ticknor, Tyack analyzes the cultural influences that acted upon him to explain the mind of the man. Tyack provides an unvarnished yet balanced view of Ticknor—a much more real and human depiction of him than that found in his official biography edited by his wife and daughter. All of these studies about Ticknor

⁹ Orie William Long, *Thomas Jefferson and George Ticknor: A Chapter in American Scholarship* (Williamstown, Mass.: McClelland Press, 1933).

¹⁰ Orie William Long, *Literary Pioneers: Early American Explorers of European Culture* (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1963).

¹¹ David B. Tyack, *George Ticknor and the Boston Brahmins* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967).

and the other early American mediators of German culture are at least forty years old, though! Very few recent studies have focused on the Ticknor journals, and few have offered twenty-first-century reinterpretations of the “literary pioneers” narrative.

The recent scholarship in this area that is relevant to this thesis paper has occurred largely in the spheres of cultural identity/perceptions studies and cultural transfer research. Hermann Wellenreuther takes the former approach in his book chapter “‘Germans Make Cows and Women Work’: American Perceptions of Germans as Reported in American Travel Books, 1800-1840.”¹² Acknowledging a growing body of research into cultural stereotypes as seen in travel writings, and arguing that Americans saw few regional distinctions within Germany, he contributes a short analysis of general American images of Germans (slow pace of life, bad smoking and drinking habits, women working too hard, and irreligiousness) as a window into American cultural identity at the time. His conclusions are useful, but broad, due to the brevity of his article. Much of his research builds upon Dirk Voss’s M.A. thesis, and when Voss expanded his thesis into a Ph.D. dissertation, “National Stereotypes About Germans in American Travel Writings, 1815-1914,” he was able to probe much more deeply than Wellenreuther into the primary sources and the backgrounds of Americans’ images of Germans, though he also expanded the time frame.¹³ Like Wellenreuther, Voss feels that

¹² Hermann Wellenreuther, “‘Germans Make Cows and Women Work’: American Perceptions of Germans as Reported in American Travel Books, 1800-1840,” in *Transatlantic Images and Perceptions: Germany and America Since 1776*, ed. David E. Barclay and Elisabeth Glaser-Schmidt, 41-63 (Washington, D.C.: German Historical Institute; Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

¹³ Dirk Voss, “National Stereotypes About Germans in American Travel Writings, 1815-1914,” Ph.D. diss., (University of Oklahoma, 2000).

Americans generally lacked an understanding of regional differences among Germans. In analyzing the roots of these stereotypes, he concludes that they shifted with the changing political, economic, and social states of the two nations. Voss does reference George Ticknor's journal manuscripts, but Wellenreuther does not. Neither of them use Anna Ticknor's journals.

Narrowing the focus of cultural perceptions research to a regional level can be productive. Whereas Wellenreuther and Voss pursue general American stereotypes of the German nation, Eberhard Brüning has written several articles taking a closer look at American travelers' perceptions of the Kingdom of Saxony in particular.¹⁴ He has convincingly argued that Saxony held a special place in the hearts of nineteenth-century Americans, out of proportion to its relative size and political importance. George Ticknor is an important witness in these studies, but unfortunately, Brüning does not seem to have had access to Ticknor's journal manuscripts, only the published memoirs. This has limited the depth to which he can take Ticknor as a primary source (so has the fact that his publications on this topic are only chapters and articles in length). He also

¹⁴ Eberhard Brüning, "'It is a glorious collection': Amerikanische Bildungsbürger des 19. Jahrhunderts auf 'Pilgerfahrt' zur Dresdner Gemäldegalerie," in *Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen Dresden 1996/1997*, 99-105; idem, "König Johann von Sachsen und sein amerikanischer Bewunderer und Freund," *Sächsische Heimatblätter* 38, no. 1 (January-February 1992): 48-52; idem, *Das Konsulat der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika zu Leipzig*, (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1994); idem, "Sachsen mit amerikanischen Augen gesehen: Das Sachsenbild amerikanischer Globetrotter im 19. Jahrhundert," in *Neues Archiv für sächsische Geschichte*, ed. Karlheinz Blaschke, vol. 67 (1996): 109-131 (Weimar: Verlag Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1997); idem, "'Saxony Is a Prosperous and Happy Country': American Views of the Kingdom of Saxony in the Nineteenth Century," in *Traveling Between Worlds: German-American Encounters*, ed. Thomas Adam and Ruth Gross, 20-50 (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 2006); idem, "Entdeckung eines 'sehr bemerkenswerten Ortes'. Reiseeindrücke amerikanischer Bildungsbürger des 19. Jahrhunderts in und um Leipzig. Teil 1," *Stadtgeschichte: Mitteilungen des Leipziger Geschichtsvereins e.V.*, no. 1 (2001); and idem, "Entdeckung eines 'sehr bemerkenswerten Ortes'. Reiseeindrücke amerikanischer Bildungsbürger des 19. Jahrhunderts in und um Leipzig. Teil 2," *Stadtgeschichte: Mitteilungen des Leipziger Geschichtsvereins e.V.*, no. 2 (2001).

does not use Anna Ticknor's writings. Thomas Adam has helped to partially fill this gap by contributing a book chapter on "Germany Seen through American Eyes: George and Anna Eliot Ticknor's German Travel Logs."¹⁵ Adam analyzes the journal manuscripts of both Ticknors to show their perceptions of and relationships with Dresden high society, and in the process points to the existence of an integrated transatlantic upper class. This may be the only study to date that takes real advantage of Anna Ticknor's insightful journals.

Adam has also recently begun to approach the topic of nineteenth-century American relations with Saxony from the cultural transfer perspective. In "Cultural Baggage: The Building of the Urban Community in a Transatlantic World," he traces the origins of the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Boston Public Library to American perceptions of similar institutions in Germany (particularly Saxony), and uses these cases to investigate the dynamics of cultural exchange. George Ticknor features prominently in this study.¹⁶

Finally, Anja Becker makes a valuable contribution to the history of American-Saxon relations in her doctoral dissertation, "For the Sake of Old Leipzig Days ... : Academic Networks of American Students at a German University, 1781-1914."¹⁷ She

¹⁵ Thomas Adam, "Germany Seen through American Eyes: George and Anna Eliot Ticknor's German Travel Logs," in *Transatlantic Cultural Contexts: Essays in Honor of Eberhard Brüning*, ed. Hartmut Keil, 151-163 (Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 2005).

¹⁶ Thomas Adam, "Cultural Baggage: The Building of the Urban Community in a Transatlantic World" in *Traveling Between Worlds: German-American Encounters*, ed. Thomas Adam and Ruth Gross, 79-99 (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 2006).

¹⁷ Anja Becker, "For the Sake of Old Leipzig Days ... : Academic Networks of American Students at a German University, 1781-1914." Ph.D. diss., University of Leipzig, 2006.

studies the evolving relationship between Americans and the University of Leipzig up to the First World War, and delves deeply into the experience of these foreign students in Leipzig. She incorporates George Ticknor's journal manuscripts as sources to the extent that he touched on this topic.

This present thesis locates itself in the historiography next to the abovementioned studies of nineteenth-century American identity by Brüning, Adam, Wellenreuther, and Voss. Whereas Voss and Wellenreuther deal with general American images of Germans as a single nation, I argue that American travelers to Germany in the early nineteenth century actually perceived specific regional differences among the Germans. Even if they did not have the same nuanced perspective of these regional identities that the Germans did, Americans still recognized that there were differences between Northern and Southern Germans, as well as between Prussians, Austrians, Saxons, and Bavarians, for example. This shapes my approach to the subject in ways distinct from Voss and Wellenreuther, leading me not to dwell on national-level perceptions of identity, but to focus particularly on a single region to extract its unique contribution to the history of American identity formation. That region in this study is Saxony. Similar studies could be made about Prussia, or Baden, or Austria, perhaps. Saxony is especially rich, because first, it probably lured more Americans in relation to its size than other German states; and second, because it developed a strong and distinct set of images in the American traveler's mind, which in turn reflects strong and distinct aspects of American identity. Understanding what appealed to many Americans about Saxony tells us a lot about who they were. Brüning and Adam have recognized this and contributed insightful studies on

the subject. But these have been within the limited format of book chapters and articles, so there still remains much room to explore American perceptions of Saxony in greater detail and depth. A third reason Saxony offers such rich material for this subject is because American travelers wrote so much about it. George and Anna Ticknor offered by far the most significant accounts of American perceptions of Saxony in the first half of the nineteenth century. Brüning does not deal with their copious journal manuscripts, and Adam has only studied the Ticknors' relationship to Dresden in 1835-1836. In this thesis, I explore American perceptions of all of Saxony during the entire formative first half of the nineteenth century, with special emphasis on the Ticknor journals.

What makes travel writings such valuable historical sources, and why are the Ticknors in particular so important? This study focuses on perceptions of others in the formation of self-identity, and travel writings are excellent witnesses to this dynamic. As foreign travelers perceive countries and people different from them, they strive to make sense of this, evaluate the good and bad qualities they find, and reject or accept aspects according to their ideals. This often tells us as much or more about their own values and sense of identity than it does about the other lands and people they are experiencing. To be sure, there is much important, accurate historical information about Saxony in the American travelers' accounts. But the historicity of what Americans wrote about Saxony is less important in this study than what their perceptions say about their own identity. Meanwhile, on a more macro level, I have also found aggregate American travel literature of Europe to be an interesting tool for conceptualizing travel trends to various countries over time.

As for the Ticknors, they were among the earliest Americans to explore Saxony and spend significant time in Dresden. This alone gives their journals weight. In addition, the Ticknors were some of the most influential leaders of society in Boston during the nineteenth century, and Boston was a leading American cultural center. What the Ticknors thought and did had wide ramifications in nineteenth-century New England and even America. They integrated into the highest levels of society all over Europe as well, and thus served as early and influential transatlantic cultural ambassadors. They kept journals very diligently, thoughtfully recording their views of European society, institutions, individuals, and events. They wrote hundreds of pages on Saxony alone. The fact that George and Anna Ticknor both wrote parallel accounts of their 1835-1838 residence in Europe adds an intriguing level of depth and balance to their writings. And yet these journals have been largely unexamined by historians. Anna Ticknor's in particular are almost completely untouched by scholars. These journals are a gold mine of information, and in this thesis, I take a step toward rectifying the scholarly neglect that they have suffered for more than a century.

The field remains wide open for future studies using these and other approaches to explore the formation of American identity, American-German cultural contacts and perceptions of each other, and the Ticknor journals. Due to the nature of American travel and travel writing in the early nineteenth century, this thesis deals almost exclusively with the American social elites, and especially those from New England. It is not within the scope of this paper to examine universal or lower-class American perceptions of Germany. Also, I have only taken a relatively small (though significant) portion of the

Ticknors' European journals. They would also be excellent sources for studies relating to other countries of Europe besides Germany. Furthermore, it would be interesting to see Anna Ticknor's journals analyzed in the context of other contemporary female travel writings, in which her husband's parallel journals could offer a male gender counterbalance.

PART 1

UNDERSTANDING THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF
EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN
TRAVEL TO GERMANY

CHAPTER 1

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 Relevant History of Saxony to 1850

For several hundred years, from medieval times until 1806, most of central Europe was organized into a conglomeration of states known as the Holy Roman Empire. A united Germany did not exist, but the Holy Roman Empire was composed of hundreds of dynastic German states, many of them quite small. Borders were extremely fluid, and they changed often according to the fortunes of the ruling families, as they acquired or lost regions due to marriage, inheritance, diplomacy, warfare, etc. Saxony, for example, had once been a large territory in the northwest of Germany, named for an ancient Germanic tribe. It was a powerful medieval duchy, and its dukes became the first dynasty of Holy Roman Emperors beginning in the tenth century. Two centuries later, however, it was broken up when its ruler fell from imperial favor. Its western territories became incorporated into other states and ceased to be called Saxony. The eastern part of the Duchy fell to the ruler of Anhalt, and this brought that remnant into union with the region around Wittenberg to the southeast. Wittenberg became the capital, and in 1356 Saxony was raised to an Electorate. Having a vote in electing the Holy Roman Emperor made it one of the most powerful states of the empire. When the ruling dynasty died out in 1423, the Electorate of Saxony was acquired by the House of Wettin, who were the Margraves of Meißen, a large and significant territory to the southeast (where the modern

Free State of Saxony is today). With the Wettins' adoption of the prestigious title of Electors of Saxony, the name Saxony had finally completed its migration southeastward, far from the original lands and people it used to designate.¹⁸ The Wettin family soon split into an Albertine and an Ernestine branch, the former of which eventually came to dominate the electoral lands, including Wittenberg and Meißen, while the latter retained some territories in Thuringia, a neighboring region to the west, in what is now central Germany. The Electorate of Saxony gained a few more territories over the years, but by the end of the Thirty Years' War in 1648, it had finally more or less assumed its definitive boundaries.¹⁹ When the general term Saxony is used in this study, it refers to these Albertine lands unless otherwise specified.

Saxony was well-positioned at a trade crossroads of Europe. Particularly Leipzig benefited from the intersection of several different trade routes. Over time, and with privileges granted by the government, medieval annual markets in the city grew into large international trade fairs that brought buyers and sellers together in Leipzig even from distant lands of Europe and Asia.²⁰

Martin Luther started his Protestant Reformation in 1517 in Wittenberg, in the Electorate of Saxony, and it gained an early following in both the Ernestine and Albertine territories. Saxon electors and dukes protected and supported Luther, and within a few

¹⁸ The original medieval Duchy of Saxony bequeathed its name to the modern state of Lower Saxony in northwest Germany. This land is not part of this study.

¹⁹ Katrin Keller, *Landesgeschichte Sachsen* (Stuttgart: Ulmer, 2002), 18-24.

²⁰ Rudolf Kötzschke and Hellmut Kretzschmar, *Sächsische Geschichte* (Augsburg: Weltbild Verlag, 1995), 154-155.

decades, they made Protestantism the state religion.²¹ At the end of the seventeenth century, however, the Albertine Elector Frederick Augustus I of Saxony (also called Augustus the Strong) converted to Catholicism in order to obtain the throne of Poland. He and his Saxon successor wore the Polish crown in the early eighteenth century, but they were unable to keep Poland in the Wettin possession beyond that. The lasting effect, however, was that from this point on, the Electorate of Saxony, whose population was overwhelmingly Protestant, had Catholic rulers. This disturbed the Protestant citizens, because the Electors could have enforced the Peace of Augsburg and compelled all their subjects to convert to Catholicism with them. Instead, they allowed increasing religious tolerance. Beside the dominant Protestantism, the Catholic Church was also restored, although its members remained a minority.²²

By this time, Dresden was the capital of Saxony, and Frederick Augustus I and his successors began the works that would ultimately bring lasting glory and fame to the city—as well as to Saxony in general—even after political power waned. Augustus was known for his revelry and ostentatious lifestyle, but he was also renowned for his patronage of the arts. It was during his and his successors' reigns in the early to mid-eighteenth century that European porcelain was invented in Meißen, that Dresden acquired most of the riches of its art gallery and other collections, that great architectural works like the Zwinger Palace and the Frauenkirche in Dresden were undertaken, that

²¹ Keller, *Landesgeschichte Sachsen*, 165-169.

²² *Ibid.*, 148, 175-176.

Johann Sebastian Bach established himself at Leipzig, and that many other cultural achievements were made.²³

The French Revolution at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries shook all of Europe. Victories by French troops allowed Napoleon to permanently dissolve the Holy Roman Empire in 1806. In the ongoing wars, Saxon Elector Frederick Augustus III (reigned as elector 1763-1806) tried to remain neutral but was unable to. The Saxon army joined Prussia's against Napoleon and were defeated. Napoleon made the Electorate of Saxony into a kingdom, and the former elector now became King Frederick Augustus I (reigned as king 1806-1827). As the wars raged on, Saxony often found itself caught in the middle, both politically and territorially. It was ravaged by battles, the ultimate of which was the great "Battle of the Nations" at Leipzig in 1813, where a European coalition decisively defeated Napoleon—and his ally Saxony. Saxony, seen as a traitor to the victorious powers, was forced by the Congress of Vienna in 1815 to cede 58 percent of its territory with 42 percent of its population to neighboring states (mostly Prussia) as punishment.²⁴ The reduced Kingdom of Saxony took its place in the new German Confederation, which was formed in 1815 to replace the defunct Holy Roman Empire.

This German Confederation, which was made up of 39 states from Luxembourg to Silesia, and from the North and Baltic Seas down to Istria on the Adriatic, is the "Germany" referred to in this study for dates from 1815 on. American travelers in the

²³ Köttschke and Kretschmar, *Sächsische Geschichte*, 274-276.

²⁴ Keller, *Landesgeschichte Sachsen*, 24-27.

first half of the nineteenth century typically did not use the political term “German Confederation” when referring to this area of central Europe. They generally just called it “Germany.” As they traveled within the land of “Germany,” they distinguished between states such as Prussia, Austria, Saxony, etc., and regions like Bohemia and Moravia (territories of Austria). After 1815, when American travelers referred to Saxony, they generally meant the Kingdom of Saxony, the political unit ruled by the Albertine line of the Wettins. Occasionally an American might refer to Ernestine territories (like the Duchy of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, for example), as belonging to Saxony in a broader sense, and on some maps, these duchies were called “The Saxons.” Somewhat more frequently, early nineteenth-century American travelers would also look at the lands of the former Electorate of Saxony which had been lost to Prussia as having a historically Saxon identity.

The inhabitants of the Kingdom of Saxony were fond their long-reigning monarch Frederick Augustus I. He was quite conservative, however, and when his brother Anthony succeeded him in 1827, many hoped for liberal reforms. King Anthony (reigned 1827-1836), over seventy years old, at first continued his brother’s traditional ways. Popular hunger for change erupted into uprisings against the government in 1830, but rather than squash the rebellion by force, Anthony entrusted himself to the will of the people. He appointed a new government, accepted his nephew Frederick Augustus as co-regent, and reformed the state into a constitutional monarchy. These measures won him the goodwill of the people.²⁵

²⁵ Köttschke and Kretzschmar, *Sächsische Geschichte*, 321-323.

Frederick Augustus III (reigned 1836-1854) succeeded Anthony as King, and in 1848-1849 he also faced a revolt of the people seeking liberal reforms. This was part of unsuccessful Europe-wide attempts at revolution. In Dresden in May 1849, even the municipal guard revolted. This time, however, the king called in Prussian troops to help him quell the rebellion. They put down the uprising and the revolution in Saxony failed.²⁶

1.2 Introducing George and Anna Ticknor

George Ticknor was born in Boston on August 1, 1791. His father, Elisha Ticknor, had grown up on a farm, but with a Dartmouth College education, his adult career progressed from schoolteacher to grocer to banker. In the latter two he achieved a measure of prosperity and a respectable position in Boston society. Upon retirement in 1812 he devoted himself to public school reform. George Ticknor's mother had also been a teacher, so young George grew up with a strong education from both his parents. He was offered admission to Dartmouth before the age of ten, but he did not actually attend until age fourteen. He studied there from 1805 to 1807, but felt he "learnt very little," so he continued studying under a tutor for three more years and developed a deep love of classical literature. But in 1810, Ticknor began to study law in preparation for a more prestigious career than literature was likely to bring him. He practiced law from 1813 to 1814, but tired of it quickly. When he read Madame de Staël's *De l'Allemagne* and Charles Viller's *Coup-d'Oeil sur les Universités*, and learned of the incredible opportunities for education at the unrivalled German universities, he made up his mind to

²⁶ Keller, *Landesgeschichte Sachsen*, 258-261.

study at the most renowned one of all, Göttingen. He prepared by studying the German language and some of its literature, and then he traveled around the United States to become acquainted with it first and to obtain letters of introduction from prominent American men like Thomas Jefferson and John Adams.

With his friend Edward Everett, George Ticknor studied at Göttingen from 1815 to 1817. While there, he was offered the Smith Professorship of French and Spanish Languages and Literatures at Harvard. In order to prepare for this position, he traveled through France, Italy, and Spain over the next two years. While in Europe, he used his letters of introduction to make the acquaintance of many of the greatest minds—especially literary and academic—in Europe. Returning to Boston in 1819, he began his Harvard professorship, which he held until he stepped down in 1835 after a noteworthy teaching career that nevertheless left him frustrated due to his inability to achieve large-scale reforms of the university.

In 1821 he married Anna Eliot, the daughter of Samuel Eliot, a wealthy merchant. About the same time, Elisha Ticknor died. The inheritance from his father and the dowry of his wife enabled George Ticknor and his family to live in luxury. The Ticknors became very involved in the highest circles of Boston society. Throughout his life, George Ticknor held various influential positions in the community. He was a member of the Primary School Board (1822-1825); a trustee of the Boston Athenæum (1823-1832) and in 1833 its vice president; a director (1827-1835) and vice-president (1841-1862) of the Massachusetts Hospital Life Insurance Company; a trustee of the Massachusetts General Hospital (1826-1830); as well as a trustee of the Boston Provident

Institution for Savings (1838-1850). He also helped found the Boston Public Library in 1852, serving on its board of trustees (1852-1866) and as the board's president in 1865.

George and Anna Ticknor had four children, but only two of them survived into adulthood. Anna Eliot Ticknor was born in 1823. An infant daughter died in 1825, and in 1834 they lost their only son at age four. A last daughter, Eliza, was born around 1832 or 1833.

After the death of their son and George Ticknor's resignation from Harvard, the family spent three years (1835-1838) in Europe for the sake of Anna Ticknor's health, their daughter Anna's education, and the cultural and social advantages the experience would offer. They spent time in the United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and France, with extended residences in Dresden, Rome, and Paris. This time George and Anna Ticknor were able to meet almost every important person in Europe, it seems. Not only men of letters, but also politicians, nobles, and even royalty welcomed the Ticknors and their friendship.

In 1849, George Ticknor published his major work, the *History of Spanish Literature*, which was received with acclaim and validated his reputation as a scholar. George and Anna Ticknor made one more voyage to Europe in 1856-1857 to collect books for the new Boston Public Library. They lived the rest of their lives in Boston, at the center of high society as before. George Ticknor died on January 26, 1871, and Anna Ticknor died in 1885.²⁷

²⁷ For this brief biography I have made use of information in George Ticknor, *Life, Letters, and Journals*, vol. 1-2; Tyack, *George Ticknor and the Boston Brahmins*; and Henry Grattan Doyle, "George Ticknor," *The Modern Language Journal* 22 (October 1937): 3-18.

CHAPTER 2

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN TRAVEL TO GERMANY IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

2.1 Limited American Familiarity with Germany and Saxony around the Turn of the Century

2.1.1 Knowledge about Germany in the early USA

What did Americans know about Germany in the early nineteenth century? Two young New Englanders, on the verge of becoming influential culture brokers between Germany and the United States, both felt at the time that Germany had been rather unknown to Americans. In 1816, George Ticknor wrote to Thomas Jefferson that

with its [Germany's] political organization and consequence, I believe we are sufficiently familiar in America, but its literature is a kind of *terra incognita* [*sic*] to us. Its language is so strangely different from all the foreign dialects we have been accustomed to learn, and their classical authors are all so recent, that it does not enter into the system of our education nor, until Mad. de Staël's book came among us, was its history or condition talked about or thought of.²⁸

Even as late as 1829, Henry Dwight of New Haven expressed the similar observation that “Germany has been, until within a few years, a *terra incognita* to most Americans.”²⁹

As telling as these observations are, they need to be seen in context. The United States represented a complex cultural milieu, whether New Englanders were aware of it

²⁸ Quoted in Orie William Long, *Thomas Jefferson and George Ticknor: A Chapter in American Scholarship* (Williamstown, Mass.: McClelland Press, 1933), 13.

²⁹ Henry E. Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany, in the Years 1825 and 1826* (New York: G. & C. & H. Carvill, 1829), iii.

or not. Most obvious were the cultural connections to England. The original thirteen states had formerly been British colonies, which to a large degree were dependent upon Britain politically, economically, and culturally. The United States was born out of these colonies' struggle for independence from Britain, and as the nation expanded and new states joined the Union, the British-oriented foundational narrative became part of the national cultural heritage of these new states as well, even if their previous history had been focused elsewhere than Britain.³⁰ With English being the de facto national language (other languages being more regionally limited), the English influence ingrained itself deeply into general American culture, and this has tended to mask contributions from other cultures. In New England within living memory of British colonial rule, Dwight and Ticknor would have felt this influence especially strongly.

However, while a large portion of the American population identified predominantly with the English, other ethnicities made up substantial portions of citizenry as well, even within the original British colonies. German-Americans themselves were an estimated eight to nine percent of the population at the time of the Revolution (with little additional immigration until the 1820s).³¹ But their concentrations varied greatly from region to region. While New England had been “virtually

³⁰ This is apparent to one who grows up in the United States and learns the traditional (Anglocentric) narrative of U.S. history in school and in popular culture. Even though the land that became my home state of Oklahoma was part of *Spanish* colonial claims in 1776 (not to mention home to various Native American tribes), we Oklahomans patriotically celebrate our nation's independence from Britain every Fourth of July, along with the rest of the United States, most of which also had little or no real colonial history with Britain.

³¹ Hans W. Gatzke, *Germany and the United States: A "Special Relationship?"* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), 28, 30.

untouched” by early German immigration, the Middle Atlantic and Southern states were home to numerous German communities, many large, and some over a century old.³² Albert Bernhardt Faust suggests some figures for the German population of each state or region as of 1790. According to his estimates, Germans only made up 0.8% of New England’s total population, but close to 37% of Pennsylvania residents! The other states fell in between: West Virginia—27% German; Maryland—13%; South Carolina—12%; New York, New Jersey, and Georgia—11%; and Delaware, Virginia, and North Carolina—5%. According to these numbers, about 43% of all Germans in the early USA lived in Pennsylvania.³³ These proportions were probably similar a decade later at the dawn of the nineteenth century.

It would be natural to expect that the presence of people from German backgrounds would contribute to a broader American knowledge of Germany and German culture. And it probably did wherever there was a significant group of Germans. Wellenreuther sees evidence of more outmoded, unrealistic stereotypes of Germans among New Englanders, who had much less contact with them in the early 1800s, than in other regions of the country.³⁴ At the same time, some historians argue that the German inhabitants did not propagate their culture in the early United States as influentially as they potentially could have. The commitment to preserving their traditional cultures and

³² Pochmann, *German Culture in America*, 40; Gatzke, *Germany and the United States*, 28.

³³ Albert Bernhardt Faust, *The German Element in the United States: With Special Reference to Its Political, Moral, Social, and Educational Influence*, vol. 2. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1909), 12-16.

³⁴ Wellenreuther, “Germans Make Cows and Women Work,” 44-45.

dialects actually led many of the Germans to turn inward and settle in isolated “cultural islands.”³⁵ And rather than serve as conduits of information between Germany and the United States, these old, well-established colonies of German-Americans seem to have maintained relatively little contact with the former fatherland.³⁶ To the extent that German-Americans did exert cultural influence on Anglo-America, this was often due to the efforts of active individuals—patriots and merchants, for example—rather than the community at large.³⁷

So while certain regions of the country had strong German (or other ethnic) identities, the dominant culture in the United States was Anglocentric. The majority of Americans spoke English. The national political system had grown out of English colonial institutions and traditions, so it therefore favored the dominance of Anglophone culture on the national level. Anglo-Americans at the time often took it for granted that English was the root of the national American culture. If they lived in relatively homogeneous New England (like Ticknor and Dwight), they may have been unaware of the strength of other ethnicities throughout the country. Or they may have simply found it convenient to ignore other cultures living in their midst, out of a belief that a land which had formerly (and recently) been English colonies would naturally remain Anglocentric. Cushing Strout argues that for most of the colonials, the sense of identification as Englishmen had been very strong, as exemplified in a statement by

³⁵ Pochmann, *German Culture in America*, 41; Voss, “National Stereotypes,” 12.

³⁶ Voss, “National Stereotypes,” 11-12.

³⁷ Pochmann, *German Culture in America*, 41, 49-50.

Founding Father Francis Hopkinson of Philadelphia in the 1760s: “We in America are in all respects Englishmen, notwithstanding that the Atlantic rolls her waves between us and the throne to which we all owe our allegiance.”³⁸ This was especially true in New England. Strout writes that John Adams, from Boston, “was proud of his region above all others because its people, as he told his wife, were of ‘purer English blood’ and ‘descended from Englishmen too, who left Europe in purer times than the present.’”³⁹

So, given this background at the turn of the nineteenth century, influences from Germany reached Anglophone America most effectively through the medium of the written word. The English-language literature of the early United States was still dependent upon that of England itself (or in Ticknor’s words, “England’s [literature] is our own”), so as the English began to take note of the German literary renaissance in the late eighteenth century, Anglo-America followed suit.⁴⁰ Books translated from the German language came via Britain to the United States, but Anglophone Americans’ first introduction to German authors and their works usually came in American-published magazines.⁴¹ Magazines were a very important medium in the early United States. More affordable and accessible than books, they were widely read, informing their readers of current events and keeping them connected with the latest important literature from

³⁸ Cushing Strout, *The American Image of the Old World* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963), 7.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

⁴⁰ Edward Ziegler Davis, *Translations of German Poetry in American Magazines, 1741-1810* (Philadelphia: Americana Germanica Press, 1905), 1, 3-4; Ticknor quoted in Long, *Thomas Jefferson and George Ticknor*, 13.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

Europe.⁴² In the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, the number of German works translated into English in American magazines increased from year to year, indicating a growing interest in them by a non-German-speaking American public.⁴³ In addition to literature, a taste also developed for German philosophy and theology.⁴⁴ Most of these American translations of German works were issued in the three great publishing centers: Philadelphia, New York, and Boston.⁴⁵

So to a certain degree, it is surprising that Dwight and Ticknor thought of Germany as “a *terra incognita* to most Americans.” Even in New England it would have been possible to read translations of German works and get an idea of the history, current literature, and cultural developments in Germany. One of the foremost experts in German scholarship at the time, in fact, was William Bentley of Salem, Massachusetts.⁴⁶ Thus, it is clear that a degree of knowledge about Germany existed in the early United States. From the large German populations in certain regions, to the growing appearance of German literature and scholarship in American magazines and journals, to the scholars and merchants and politicians who served in their own ways to bridge the divide between the two peoples, Americans at the dawn of the nineteenth century had access to a fair amount of information about Germany. Nevertheless, Ticknor and Dwight in New

⁴² Ibid., 9-11.

⁴³ Ibid., 12.

⁴⁴ Pochmann, *German Culture in America*, 62-63.

⁴⁵ Davis, *Translations of German Poetry in American Magazines*, passim.

⁴⁶ Pochmann, *German Culture in America*, 51-56.

England still had the *impression* that the majority of Americans had little real knowledge of Germany beyond its political arrangement, at best maybe a simple idea of its literature and scholarship, and no understanding of the language. And for the sake of this study, that is the real point. Ticknor and Dwight might have been wrong about Germany being a *terra incognita* to most Americans. But they must have had a reason to make this assumption. Naïve or not, it seems to have been the prevailing opinion among educated upper-class New Englanders like Ticknor and Dwight. It is precisely this demographic that made up the majority of early nineteenth-century American travelers to Germany (the subject of this study).⁴⁷ Since these early travelers were especially influential in setting the tone for Anglo-American perceptions of Germany, and since this study deals with those perceptions, Ticknor and Dwight's impressions convey a lot of meaning. So when this study speaks of the perceptions of "American travelers" in the first half of the nineteenth century, it is understood to mean educated, upper-class, white Anglo-Americans who were more likely than not from New England.

2.1.2 Anglo-American knowledge about Saxony

If these early nineteenth-century Anglo-Americans had only this limited knowledge of Germany, what, if anything, might they have known about Saxony? It is difficult to say for sure, but some clues can give us a speculative idea. Saxony doubtless had at least some vague name recognition among the educated, even if they knew very little about Germany. For one thing, it was common knowledge that Anglo-Americans

⁴⁷ Voss, "National Stereotypes," 21; Wellenreuther, "Germans Make Cows and Women Work," 50.

had Anglo-Saxon roots.⁴⁸ Even though historic Anglo-Saxons had little or nothing to do with the nineteenth-century Kingdom of Saxony, American familiarity with the term “Saxon” might have led to a sort of vague sense of connection with the German kingdom. This would have been a tenuous connection, if it existed at all; nineteenth-century American travelers to Saxony do not allude to it in their writings.⁴⁹ An argument can be made on much firmer ground, however, that Protestant Americans were familiar with Saxony as it related to their great religious reformer Martin Luther. They often referred to him as a Saxon, they credited the Saxon rulers with aiding the spread of his message, and they thought of Wittenberg as a (historically) Saxon city.⁵⁰ Thus, at least in this capacity, Saxony does seem to have entered into the American education of the time.

⁴⁸ A survey of American writings from the early to mid-nineteenth century reveals too many instances of Anglo-Americans referring to themselves and their culture as Anglo-Saxon to cite here. Is it possible that Anglo-Americans found this term a convenient way of referring to themselves after independence, allowing them to avoid calling themselves English?

⁴⁹ An analogous situation does appear, however. In some cases, it seems that Americans visiting Bohemia almost expected to find a land full of gypsies, due to confusion between two definitions of the English word “Bohemian.” Henry Wikoff once described a band of gypsies as “handsome, with their dark eyes, swarthy complexions, lithe figures, and Bohemian air. Many wore a gay bandanna, gracefully arranged and partially enveloping their raven hair. This strange race wandered into Europe from Asia in the fifteenth century.” Bayard Taylor seemed to conflate some of this gypsy reputation into his idea of Bohemia, writing, “The very name of Bohemia is associated with wild and wonderful legends, of the rude barbaric ages. ... The civilized Saxon race was left behind; I saw around me the features and heard the language of one of those rude Slavonic tribes, whose original home was on the vast steppes of Central Asia.” See Henry Wikoff, *The Reminiscences of an Idler* (New York: Fords, Howard & Hulbert, 1880), 191; and Bayard Taylor, *Views A-foot: Or, Europe Seen with a Knapsack and Staff*, 9th ed. (New York: George P. Putnam, 1850), 140.

⁵⁰ Just some of the many places references like these can be found are Hugh Swinton Legaré, *Writings of Hugh Swinton Legaré ... Consisting of a Diary of Brussels, and Journal of the Rhine; Extracts from his Private and Diplomatic Correspondence; Orations and Speeches; and Contributions to the New-York and Southern Reviews*, vol. 1, ed. Mary S. Legaré (Charleston, S.C.: Burges & James, 1846), 139; George H. Calvert, *First Years in Europe* (Boston: William V. Spencer, 1866), 174; Henry Wheaton, *The Progress and Prospects of Germany: A Discourse Before the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Brown University, at Providence, R.I., September 1, 1847* (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1847), 12; and Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 262.

And after the Napoleonic Wars, Leipzig vaulted to fame as the battlefield of Napoleon's great defeat in 1813. That this was of widespread knowledge and interest to educated Americans is implied by the enthusiasm and reverence with which American travelers in Saxony made pilgrimages to the battlefield (see section 5.8.1).

Educated Americans probably also had some exposure to basic contemporary information on the Kingdom of Saxony, whether they remembered learning it or not. At the very least, the information was available. Take the school textbook *Elements of Geography, Ancient & Modern* as one example (among many). It was published in Boston first in 1819 and served the New England area. Its author, Joseph E. Worcester, was a "textbook writer of considerable significance."⁵¹ In fact, the president of Harvard certified that this "is the book made use of in the examination of candidates for admission into the University of Cambridge."⁵² The 1822 edition of *Elements of Geography* named Saxony as "the smallest kingdom in Europe," gave general population totals for the kingdom and the major cities, and remarked on the religion, literature, industry, and natural resources of the country. It called Saxony "one of the best cultivated portions of Germany." About Dresden, it said it "is one of the handsomest towns in Europe. It is noted for its collections of the fine arts, and for its manufacture of porcelain." Leipzig, a "beautiful town," "is remarkable for being the principal mart of German literature, for its great fairs, and for its distinguished university." And the book also says that the Saxon

⁵¹ Geoffrey J. Martin, "The Emergence and Development of Geographic Thought in New England," *Economic Geography* 74 (1998): 3.

⁵² J. E. Worcester, *Elements of Geography, Ancient and Modern; with an Atlas*, 2d ed. (Boston: Cummings and Hilliard, 1822), iv.

dialect is the purest form of the German language, and Saxony's literature is "greatly distinguished in Germany."⁵³ This offers us a glimpse of the basic information about Saxony that Americans might have been exposed to in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

All good atlases and maps of Europe at the time also depicted Saxony—with more or less prominence—as it was one of the kingdoms of Europe. It may have been the smallest of these at the time, but having been a much larger and more powerful electorate in the Holy Roman Empire not many years before, it carried historical weight out of proportion to its current size. Dresden and Leipzig always appeared on these maps, and sometimes another Saxon city or two if space permitted. See Figures A.5 and A.6 in the appendix for maps of Europe and Germany as found in the atlas accompanying Worcester's *Elements of Geography*. Harvard students, if not a broader New England population, would have seen these particular maps.

However, none of this proves that early nineteenth-century Anglo-Americans actually knew anything about Saxony. It just shows that a certain amount of historical and basic current information was available about the kingdom, and suggests that educated Americans had likely been exposed to some of this information at one time or another. The same, of course, could probably be said for many of the states of Europe. In fact, Prussia and Austria likely received more attention than Saxony. But regardless of how much information was actually available, Dwight and Ticknor indicated that among educated Anglo-American New Englanders in the early nineteenth century, good

⁵³ Ibid., 132-133.

knowledge of Germany was rare. We can probably assume that these Americans knew even less about Saxony at the time, except for perhaps some scattered historical facts relating to the Reformation and the Napoleonic Wars. American merchants involved in commerce with the European continent would probably have been familiar with Leipzig due to its great trade fairs, but it is doubtful that they disseminated much information about Saxony throughout American society. The major American travel writers who described the Leipzig fairs wrote as if their readers were unfamiliar with them, and they also did not mention the presence of other American merchants. One final tantalizing—yet ultimately empty—link between New England and Saxony is the fact that the college district of Hanover, New Hampshire (where Dartmouth College was located) had actually been named Dresden in the late 1770s and early 1780s. Though the origin of this name is uncertain, there is no evidence of local German influence. It may have been chosen simply for linguistic reasons: “Dresden” comes from an old Sorbian word indicating a settlement in a riverside forest, which would have described the New Hampshire town. Or, it may have been a randomly chosen German city name to match others in the area, like Hanover, for example.⁵⁴ (Even Hanover only had a superficial association with Germany in name only.)⁵⁵ George Ticknor’s father Elisha graduated from Dartmouth in

⁵⁴ Dick Hoefnagel and Virginia L. Close, “Dresden: What Is in the Name?” *Dartmouth College Library Bulletin* 38 (November 1997) [journal online]; available from http://www.dartmouth.edu/~library/Library_Bulletin/Nov1997/toc.html.

⁵⁵ Several towns in colonial New England took German names merely to pay tribute to the Hanoverian succession to the British throne. Often these towns did not even have a single German inhabitant. See Voss, “National Stereotypes,” 11.

1783, so he very likely experienced the town's days as Dresden.⁵⁶ George Ticknor himself attended Dartmouth from 1805 to 1807, but curiously, he apparently never commented on the coincidence that his old college town had once had the same name as the Saxon capital that he later grew to love. So despite evidence of faint connections to Saxony and opportunities to learn about that kingdom, it appears that Anglo-Americans—and especially New Englanders—in the early nineteenth century had little more than a basic awareness of the historical importance of Saxony. They claimed to be ignorant about Germany in general, as well.

2.2 Anglo-American “Discovery” of Germany and Saxony

Yet New Englanders took the early lead in rediscovering Germany, seeking out its educational offerings, and introducing its literature, ideas, and sometimes institutions to American audiences. Ticknor was among the first to do this. Having resolved in 1814 to advance his studies at a German university, he needed to prepare himself with more than just English translations of German writings; he needed to learn the language. Ticknor related how difficult this was to do in early nineteenth-century New England. He reported having great difficulty finding locally the right books and a teacher to help him learn the German language. He had to borrow a German dictionary from New Hampshire, not being able to find one in his home state, and the closest thing he could find to a German tutor could only help him with the Alsatian dialect. Ticknor had been introduced to the idea of study in Germany in the first place not by any American

⁵⁶ George Ticknor, *Life, Letters, and Journals*, 1:1.

information, which was limited, but by French and British accounts of that land and its universities.⁵⁷

But New England's relative unfamiliarity with Germany quickly changed. By the 1830s and 1840s, Boston had become caught up in a literary, philosophical, and musical "German craze," which it began exporting to other parts of the country.⁵⁸ And just a generation later, privileged American society had already gotten to know Germany so well that William Cullen Bryant, in an 1869 speech to drum up support for the establishment of the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, could appeal to his audience by referring to the well-known treasures of Saxony:

Yet beyond the sea there is the little kingdom of Saxony, which, with an area less than that of Massachusetts, and a population but little larger, possesses a Museum of Fine Arts marvelously rich, which no man who visits the continent of Europe is willing to own that he has not seen.⁵⁹

How did this remarkable transition come about? How did upper class Anglo-Americans become enthralled by—and increasingly knowledgeable about—the distant land of Germany? Why did Saxony especially earn such a beloved place in their hearts? There were many contributors to these developments, but this study focuses on George Ticknor and his wife Anna, who stood at the forefront of the movements.

Before Ticknor and his contemporaries, a handful of Americans had already found their way to Germany during the first four decades of the new American republic.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 11-12.

⁵⁸ Barrett Wendell, *A Literary History of America* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900; reprint, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), 296 (page citation is to the reprint edition); Pochmann, *German Culture in America*, 359.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Adam, "Cultural Baggage," 83-84.

But these did not represent a larger American trend, nor did their pursuits there awaken a general awareness of Germany among Americans. In 1766 Benjamin Franklin had visited a meeting of the Royal Society of Science in Göttingen.⁶⁰ From time to time some American student would actually go to study at Göttingen or another German university, though before the Revolution, privileged Americans had looked first to England to finish their education.⁶¹ There were also already colonies of American residents in London and Paris, and American artists, merchants, diplomats, and even casual travelers could be found throughout the Continent.⁶² Surely some of these unknown expatriates made unrecorded visits to Germany. We know that Aaron Burr briefly visited Germany during his 1808-1812 exile in Europe, but his residence there probably found little interest in the United States. He was an outcast from American society, and even if Americans were interested in finding out more about him and what he did in exile, his journals from Europe were not published until 1838.⁶³ Perhaps the American whose early visits to Germany had the most potential to inform the American public was John Quincy Adams. Besides having lived in Europe from age eleven to seventeen, he served from 1794 to 1801 as the U.S. minister to various European courts,

⁶⁰ Faust, *The German Element in the United States*, 2: 206.

⁶¹ Ibid., 208-209; Jurgen Herbst, *The German Historical School in American Scholarship: A Study in the Transfer of Culture* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1965), 13; Becker, "For the Sake of Old Leipzig Days . . .," 127-128.

⁶² Foster Rhea Dulles, "A Historical View of Americans Abroad," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 368 (November 1966): 12.

⁶³ Aaron Burr, *The Private Journal of Aaron Burr, During His Residence of Four Years in Europe, With Selections from His Correspondence* ed. Matthew L. Davis, vol. 2. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1838). Even Americans abroad shunned Burr. See p. 68.

including Prussia. Although his journal accounts of this period were not published until 1874, and so were not available to the wider American reading public, a series of “Letters on Silesia” that Adams sent to his brother during travels in that region in 1800 were published in the Philadelphia periodical *Port Folio* in 1801.⁶⁴ Still, Ticknor and the other early New England students going to German universities seem not to have been aware of these letters; or at least they did not mention being informed or influenced by them in any way.

The end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 marked the beginning of a long American tradition of traveling to Germany for educational and cultural self-improvement. Travel to Europe in general began to steadily increase from this period on, due to more safety on the continent after Napoleon’s exile, to the establishment of regular trans-Atlantic passenger sailing routes, and to peace and rising affluence in America.⁶⁵ But in addition to the traditional attractions of art, culture, and history that Europe had long been famous for, Americans also quickly discovered an enthusiasm for German university education.

2.2.1 Americans studying in Germany

In 1815, Ticknor and fellow Bostonian Edward Everett arrived in Europe to study at the University of Göttingen. They were joined there by Joseph Green Cogswell in 1816 and followed by George Bancroft in 1818, both also of Massachusetts. The return

⁶⁴ Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795 to 1848*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1874-1877; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1970), 240-241 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

⁶⁵ Dulles, “Historical View of Americans Abroad,” 12.

of these men a few years later from their successful studies in Europe sparked an American trend of studying in Germany. Prior to their Göttingen experience, prevailing American wisdom seemed to discourage such foreign studies. In the eighteenth century, even Thomas Jefferson had said,

Let us view the disadvantages of sending a youth to Europe. To numerate them all would require a volume. I will select a few. If he goes to England he learns drinking, horse racing and boxing. These are the peculiarities of English education. ... He forms foreign friendships which will never be useful to him. ... It appears to me that an American coming to Europe for education loses in his knowledge, in his morals, in his health, in his habits and in his happiness.⁶⁶

Jefferson used the example of England, but continental Europe would have held similar threats to the American student. Apparently, this logic “expressed the opinions of many Americans of that period.”⁶⁷ In 1818, before setting sail for Europe, Bancroft heard similar advice from former President John Adams. “I was introduced to Mr. Adams,” he recalled in 1877, “as one about to repair to the University of Göttingen. He did not omit expressing his opinion dogmatically that it was best for Americans to be educated in their own country.”⁶⁸ Bancroft’s biographer Mark Antony DeWolfe Howe goes on to explain that

the fashion of foreign study for young Americans with teaching or preaching ahead of them was just beginning to prevail. Ticknor and Cogswell, besides Everett,

⁶⁶ Quoted in Donald J. Shank, “The American Goes Abroad,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 335 (May 1961): 100. See also Strout, *American Image of the Old World*, 26-27.

⁶⁷ Shank, “The American Goes Abroad,” 100.

⁶⁸ Mark Antony DeWolfe Howe, *The Life and Letters of George Bancroft*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1908), 32.

afforded shining examples of what a young man of promise, in Bancroft's immediate academic circle, might well do with himself.⁶⁹

Their studies in Germany had benefited them greatly and prepared them for distinguished careers, the first step of which was a professorship at Harvard University upon their return from Europe. Their success encouraged subsequent generations of ambitious scholars to follow their example and changed the conventional wisdom about the most profitable places for Americans to study.

Even Jefferson opened his mind to the merits of Europe as he followed Ticknor's studies abroad and his ensuing accomplishments back home. Granted, it must be said that from the beginning, Jefferson apparently did not try to dissuade Ticknor from his plans to study in Europe, regardless of the opinions he had expressed on the matter years earlier. In fact, he supported Ticknor's travels by sending letters of introduction with him to important men in Europe, and by commissioning him to buy choice books abroad for Jefferson's library. But he may have initially had somewhat different hopes or expectations of Ticknor's future plans than Ticknor himself did. For example, in his 1815 letter of introduction to Albert Gallatin, U.S. Minister to France, Jefferson noted that Ticknor "had prepared himself for the bar, but before engaging in business he proposes to pass two or three years in Europe to see and to learn what can be seen and learnt there. Should he on his return enter the political line, he will go far in that career."⁷⁰ Perhaps this was just complimentary rhetoric about Ticknor from one

⁶⁹ Howe, *Life and Letters of George Bancroft*, 1:32.

⁷⁰ Quoted in Long, *Thomas Jefferson and George Ticknor*, 9.

politician to another, but if Jefferson had known Ticknor better, he would have understood that the latter's trip to Europe was meant to be a permanent break with his past in the legal field, and that he had no interest in entering politics either.⁷¹ Ticknor assured Jefferson in 1818 that his European education would serve different ends: "For political distinction, I have no ambition—no *thought* even and never have had."⁷²

Jefferson also had different ideas about the most profitable places for Ticknor to study, and, on this point, Ticknor taught Jefferson about the new German supremacy in Western learning, at least in the study of languages and literature. Jefferson's old prejudices were clear in a letter to George Ticknor's father, Elisha, in February 1816, where he wrote,

I am much pleased to learn that he is so well satisfied with his situation at Gottingen, but Paris and Rome will please and profit him more. He will return fraught with treasures of science which he would not have found in a country so engrossed by industrious pursuits as ours, but he will be a sample to our youth of what they ought to be, and a model for imitation in pursuits so honorable, so improving and so friendly to good morals.⁷³

Jefferson still viewed the traditional European centers of learning, like Paris and Rome, as the best places to study. Ticknor, however, sent Jefferson letter after letter glowing with praise for German scholarship. In March 1816, he even wrote,

I find Göttingen so entirely suited to my purposes, the opportunities and means and inducements to pursue those studies to which I mean to devote my life are as admirable here, that I have determined to protract my stay in Europe in order to enjoy them one year longer.⁷⁴

⁷¹ George Ticknor, *Life, Letters, and Journals*, 1:23-25.

⁷² Quoted in Long, *Thomas Jefferson and George Ticknor*, 24.

⁷³ Quoted in *ibid.*, 16.

⁷⁴ Quoted in *ibid.*, 17.

His planned visit to Paris would have to wait; Göttingen was more important. Ticknor went on to declare that in Germany, “the means and opportunities for pursuing the study of languages ... are ... entirely unrivalled,” that “Germany was farther advanced in the study of antiquity than any other nation,” that Germany was now twenty years ahead of England in the study of the classics, and that Germany had “more learned professors and authors at this moment than England and France put together.”⁷⁵

After receiving reports like this, Jefferson wrote to Elisha Ticknor about his son: “The account he gives me of the German literature is very interesting; and such as I had not been before apprised of. It seems well worthy of his avail and he is accordingly sowing the seed of what with his genius and industry will yield a rich harvest.”⁷⁶ The Francophile Jefferson may not have previously been aware of the growing intellectual prestige of Germany, but George Ticknor was changing that. Finally, after spending several months in Paris, Ticknor was able to compare Germany and France firsthand, and he sent Jefferson the following assessment: “In the physical and exact sciences, I presume there is nothing in Europe like Paris; but in all that related to what is commonly called learning, England and Germany vastly exceed her.”⁷⁷ By this time, Jefferson was convinced that study in Europe—and even Germany—could benefit Americans. And Ticknor had assured him that Germany was ready to emerge from obscurity to gain a reputation as one of the best places for men of letters to study.

⁷⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*

⁷⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, 19.

⁷⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, 21.

Just as Ticknor had opened Jefferson's eyes to the educational opportunities in Germany, he with Everett, Cogswell, and Bancroft began to awaken the American elite society—especially in New England—to Germany's intellectual and cultural offerings. Everett advised that America could learn a lot from Germany about the development of a great university system, but not much from England. He also established a German library at Harvard with books he brought from Göttingen.⁷⁸ Bancroft and Cogswell were so inspired by their study in Germany that they “devoted a few years to an attempt to introduce some parts of the German system of education” by founding the Round Hill School in Massachusetts, which operated from 1823 until 1839.⁷⁹ Ticknor tried to reform Harvard according to concepts he learned in Germany. And as these men advanced in their various careers, it is not difficult to imagine that they sometimes discussed the advantages of a German education within their impressive social circles.⁸⁰ This must have been a persuasive argument for many parents to send their sons to Göttingen and other top German universities.

These four were really the first and most influential apostles of the new idea that Germany was the place to go for men of letters who wanted to advance their education beyond what America could offer. Though a couple of isolated individuals had preceded

⁷⁸ Faust, *The German Element in the United States*, 2:211-212.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 213; Pochmann, *German Culture in America*, 74.

⁸⁰ Everett went on to become overseer and president of Harvard, a U.S. Congressman, Governor of Massachusetts, foreign diplomat, and Secretary of State. Cogswell superintended the Astor Library in New York. Bancroft enjoyed popularity as a historian, served as Secretary of the Navy, established the U.S. Naval Academy, and was appointed U.S. minister at various times to Britain, Prussia, and the German Empire. Ticknor established himself as the authority on Spanish literature by writing its history, and was an active leader in several Boston institutions, especially the Boston Public Library, which he helped found, supply, and run.

them in Göttingen, they were the first in a snowballing trend that saw thousands of American students flocking to German universities throughout the rest of the nineteenth century and beyond. Jurgen Herbst agrees that “initially it had been the glowing reports of Ticknor and his friends at Göttingen and of early German-trained natural scientists and physicians that favored the predilection for study in Germany.”⁸¹ David Tyack has called them “academic missionaries” who “returned to Harvard hoping to show Americans the meaning of scholarship and culture.”⁸² In fact, Bancroft himself was Everett’s first convert. He went to Göttingen in the first place upon Everett’s recommendation that Harvard should send someone there to follow him.⁸³ Another American who found himself in Göttingen because of the influence of this first generation was Jesse Burton Harrison. Originally from Virginia, he heard so much praise from Jefferson of Ticknor’s education, that he went to Harvard to hear Ticknor’s lectures himself. In 1823 he wrote back to Jefferson about how much better foreign universities were than those in America, leading John T. Krumpelmann to conclude, “Here Harrison is already speaking as a disciple of Ticknor.”⁸⁴ A few years later, Harrison collected letters of introduction and advice about study in Germany from Ticknor and others, and began his Göttingen

⁸¹ Herbst, *German Historical School*, 9.

⁸² Quoted in Carl Diehl, *Americans and German Scholarship, 1770-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 73.

⁸³ Howe, *Life and Letters of George Bancroft*, 1:31.

⁸⁴ John T. Krumpelmann, *Southern Scholars in Goethe’s Germany* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 46.

education in 1829. Harrison was just one among several Southern scholars with similar stories. Krumpelmann notes that

the fact that German universities then began to attract Southern students away from the previously visited British institutions was due at least in part to the influence which Harvard University and its “Literary Pioneers” [Ticknor, Everett, Cogswell, Bancroft, and a couple later followers] exerted both directly and through the founder of the University of Virginia, Thomas Jefferson, on ambitious young intellectuals of the Southern States.⁸⁵

Americans began studying at German universities in ever-increasing numbers. Though definitive statistics are unavailable, estimates abound. Charles Thwing has suggested that 1,500 Americans may have studied at German universities before 1870, but Carl Diehl thinks this is incorrect, and conservatively postulates a number closer to 640 (plus or minus fifteen percent) before 1870.⁸⁶ We can estimate that perhaps only 1/3 of that total studied there before 1850, if we extrapolate Diehl’s figures.⁸⁷ Regardless of the gross numbers, some striking trends are evident that allow us to grasp more historical meaning. From the handful of pioneers at Göttingen prior to 1820, American registrations at German universities increased dramatically each decade into at least the 1870s, so that by 1900—or the latest 1920—nearly 9,000 Americans had studied in

⁸⁵ Ibid., xi.

⁸⁶ Carl Diehl, “Innocents Abroad: American Students in German Universities, 1810-1870,” *History of Education Quarterly* 16, no. 3. (1976): 323, 340-341 n. 11. This article was slightly revised and republished as a chapter under the same title in Diehl, *Americans and German Scholarship*, 50-69. The article is easier to read because it contains helpful tables of data, which sometimes include information not given in the text of the book chapter.

⁸⁷ Diehl, “Innocents Abroad,” 323-325. Diehl’s representative sample shows 343 registrations and 264 Americans in German universities before 1870 (some students registered at multiple universities). He shows about 33% of those totals before 1850 (115 registrations and 88 students). Since he thinks the full total was closer to 640 Americans in Germany before 1870, perhaps 213 (1/3 of 640) studied there before 1850.

Germany.⁸⁸ Between 1810 and 1850, almost 70% of students whose origins are known came from New England (33% from Harvard, 11% from Yale, and 25% from elsewhere), while New York contributed almost 9%, the Middle Atlantic around 14%, and the South less than 8%. No known students came from the Midwest until after 1850. After 1850 the proportion of Yale students greatly increased, even surpassing Harvard in the 1860s.⁸⁹ Diehl admits that these numbers show some bias due to better information about prominent individuals from well-known American colleges, and thus this sample somewhat overrepresents the Northeast region (and Harvard and Yale in particular).⁹⁰ But the difference would be a matter of degree; the fact remains clear that during the first half of the nineteenth century, New England was the biggest contributor to a growing trend of Americans at German universities.

The most popular universities overall were Göttingen and Berlin. Before 1840, Göttingen alone attracted maybe 45% of the known American students, while Berlin pulled close to another 30%. During the 1840s, Berlin surged to 45% while Göttingen fell to under 12% as Americans discovered other universities in Germany. After 1850 Göttingen regained its dominance, with Berlin still accounting for a significant share, and throughout the rest of the century, Heidelberg, Leipzig, and other universities also gained

⁸⁸ Daniel Fallon, "German Influences on American Education," in *The German-American Encounter: Conflict and Cooperation between Two Cultures, 1800-2000*, ed. Frank Trommler and Elliott Shore (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001), 83, 85. Fallon writes that "careful scholarship counting the number of American scholars studying in Germany decade by decade from 1850 through 1930 has yet to be done," and accepts a total of 9,000 Americans in Germany by 1900, whereas Herbst accepts the figure of 9,000 by 1920. See Herbst, *German Historical School*, 1. Also see Diehl, "Innocents Abroad," 324-325;

⁸⁹ Diehl, "Innocents Abroad," 331.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 322.

popularity among Americans. Halle, however, experienced its peak popularity before mid-century, drawing up to 18% of American students in the 1840s, but falling off dramatically after that.⁹¹

Study abroad—and increasingly in Germany—quickly became an important part of a privileged American education. As growing numbers of Americans improved themselves by study in Europe, more felt compelled to do so to keep up with the rising professional standards. James Fenimore Cooper observed this phenomenon among doctors already in 1827 or 1828 while living in Europe:

Indeed, the well-educated American physician very commonly enjoys an advantage that is little known in Europe. After obtaining a degree in his own country, he passes a few years in London, Edinburgh, Paris, and frequently in Germany, and returns with his gleanings from their several schools. This is not the case with one individual, but with many, annually. Indeed, there is so much of a fashion in it, and the custom is attended by so many positive advantages, that its neglect would be a serious obstacle to any very eminent success.⁹²

Germany was beginning to take its place alongside the most-respected centers of European learning, and a German degree was becoming an important career booster.

2.2.2 Non-student American travelers to Germany

Students made up an important part of the ranks of American travelers in Germany. But they were not the only ones discovering the appeals of the various German lands—perhaps just the best-documented ones. Foster Rhea Dulles’s “Historical View of Americans Abroad” names other major groups of Americans who began to

⁹¹ Ibid., 324.

⁹² James Fenimore Cooper, *Notions of the Americans: Picked up by a Travelling Bachelor*, vol. 2 (London: Henry Colburn, 1828), 129. Though this book was first published in 1828, Cooper had already started writing it in 1827. See James Franklin Beard, ed., *The Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960), 146.

travel to Europe in ever-increasing numbers after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Some like the aforementioned Cooper were promoting business abroad. Paris, Rome, and Florence lured art students. Churches often sent their clergymen for inspiration and rest. Some people hoped to regain health with a trip abroad. And many sought cultural education, personal improvement, and social status by making a pilgrimage to the Old World. As David Tyack says, “In Brahmin Boston a European trip provided many a pilgrim with a pedigree by association.”⁹³ Sufficient numbers of these travelers stayed abroad long enough that American expatriate communities grew in major European cities. For most of these non-student American travelers (especially the early ones), Germany was not the main destination. The traditional Grand Tour required they spend time in England, Paris, and Italy, with maybe a swing through picturesque Switzerland and then up the romantic Rhine Valley and out through the Low Countries, while in the early days, “only a few of the more venturesome went farther afield to northern Germany, Spain, or other parts of the Continent.”⁹⁴ Saxony, tucked away in the interior of central Europe, appeared on very few American itineraries in these early days.

Ticknor and his early Göttingen companions probably had a much smaller influence over the variety of other travelers to Germany than they did over the students who went there. The ever-growing hordes of American travelers to Europe were driven by a complex array of factors (some of which, of course, would have applied to the students as well). Although the primary destinations had traditionally been—and

⁹³ Tyack, *George Ticknor and the Boston Brahmins*, 164.

⁹⁴ Dulles, “Historical View of Americans Abroad,” 12-13.

generally remained—the United Kingdom, France, and Italy, increasing numbers of Americans traveling in Europe under improving travel conditions surely meant that Germany would have eventually received its share of American visitors regardless of whether it appealed to students or not. The nineteenth century saw a rise in American economic prosperity, greatly expanding a privileged class who had money and leisure time. Since America was also believed to lack the cultural refinements and treasures of Europe, many in this growing upper class traveled to Europe to claim the prestigious cultural and social advantages associated with it.⁹⁵ When transatlantic steamships came into service in the 1840s, they made travel abroad much faster and therefore more convenient. Before long they also began to offer second-class fares, which greatly reduced the cost of an overseas voyage, making it more accessible to a wider range of people. Whereas only a few thousand Americans were going abroad annually before this time, steam travel allowed as many as 30,000 per year in the 1840s, and up to 100,000 in the 1890s. Though travel on the continent was revolutionized by the expansion of railroads, this effect did not happen until after mid-century.⁹⁶ Prior to that, travelers still faced slow travel by diligence, or stagecoach.⁹⁷ The mass American “discovery” of

⁹⁵ Stowe, *Going Abroad*, 5-6.

⁹⁶ In 1836, George Ticknor, traveling by coach between Meissen and Leipzig, commented on seeing the construction of the first long-distance railway line in Germany:

We crossed the Mulda, by a beautifully constructed stone bridge erected in 1831, where, twenty years ago, I crossed it by a clumsy ferry; & on our left hand saw, as we also saw at several other places in the course of our ride, the beginnings of the rail-road, which is now constructing between Leipzig & Dresden & in whose stock, the most absurd speculations have been made during the last winter. See George Ticknor, *Microfilm Edition of the Travel Journals of George and Anna Ticknor: In the Years 1816-1819 and 1835-1838* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Xerox University Microfilms, 1974), vol. 4, 13 May 1836.

⁹⁷ Dulles, “Historical View of Americans Abroad,” 13-14.

Germany toward mid-century seems to have coincided with a similar boom in travel to other countries; therefore, they were probably all fueled by the same factors, specifically those named above. The main difference is that the well-known United Kingdom, France, and even Italy were already receiving a greater degree of American travel interest in the 1810s and 1820s before Germany started coming into its own as a destination in the 1830s and after.

2.3 American Travel Literature as a Window to Nineteenth-Century American Travel Patterns to Europe

Raw data on how many American travelers visited which countries during which years probably does not exist. But hundreds of them did leave detailed records of their voyages, due to the remarkable nineteenth-century travel writing phenomenon. William Stowe makes the point that at that time, “the traveling class was a reading class, and travel was seen as a preeminently literary activity.”⁹⁸ First of all, these travelers were typically the educated elites, with schooling in the (European) classics.⁹⁹ They also came from a society that valued and expected productivity, despite the fact that most of them were part of a “materially nonproductive” leisure class.¹⁰⁰ For example, David Tyack writes that, even though Ticknor was a member of the privileged Boston Brahmin class,

one demand he could not ignore was the command common to all classes that a respectable man must work. Tocqueville found that in America it was more honorable to labor than to enjoy elegant leisure, turning the European ‘point of honor quite round.’¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Stowe, *Going Abroad*, 13.

⁹⁹ Voss, “National Stereotypes,” 21.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

¹⁰¹ Tyack, *George Ticknor and the Boston Brahmins*, 188.

Despite this work ethic, these privileged Americans still qualified as a leisure class as Thorstein Veblen uses the term.¹⁰² They eschewed physical labor—it was the work of the lowest class—and they enjoyed the comforts and privileges of wealthy aristocracy.¹⁰³ Yet with physical labor off-limits to them, the call of productivity still prevailed. Intellectual work was especially honorable. Writing, therefore, was seen as a favorable way of contributing to society, and

its association with travel lent the respectability of productive labor to an activity more frequently associated with frivolity and conspicuous consumption. The happy conjunction of the two helps account for the popularity of both travel and travel writing in the United States in the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁴

Finally, travel literature was a genre in which almost any journaling traveler could find an audience. By publishing an account of foreign travel, the author became an authority.¹⁰⁵ Granted, many did not write *well*, but there was such demand for these works that almost

¹⁰² Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912).

¹⁰³ “It is unpleasant,” wrote George Ticknor in Saxony in 1836, “to see men working so hard & so much like the lower orders of creation.” See George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 4, 5 June 1836. In a journal entry from 1817, George Ticknor clearly showed how he viewed societal stratification, and how manual labor was only fit for the lowest class. In reflecting upon the nature of German society, he described the “lowest clafs” (“Peasantry, Mechanicks, Labourers”), the “Middling Clafs” (“the Inhabitants of towns, & including all occupied in commerce ~ all persons in learned profefsions ~ all inferior officers of the Govt. &c &c —”), and the “Nobility.” George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3, 1817. To a certain degree, these classes had counterparts in American society, and the Ticknors were clearly not members of the lower or middle classes. In Dresden, they associated far more frequently with the nobility than with the bourgeoisie, or “second rate elegant,” as Anna Ticknor called them. See Anna Ticknor, *Microfilm Edition of the Travel Journals of George and Anna Ticknor: In the Years 1816-1819 and 1835-1838* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Xerox University Microfilms, 1974), vol. 3, 26 April 1836.

¹⁰⁴ Stowe, *Going Abroad*, 11.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

anyone, it seemed, could publish some “Reminiscences of Rambles Abroad” (to make up a stereotypical title).

Harold F. Smith’s bibliography of known American travel accounts published before 1900 includes close to 2,000 books.¹⁰⁶ Almost all of these date from the nineteenth century. Smith has helpfully included notes about the content of each book (including which foreign countries each book deals with), and an index of places allows one to find all the books that refer to any given country or place. An analysis of these books can give us an idea of the relative popularity of various destinations. Taking publication dates into account may also shed some light on travel trends over time. This will help us to put American travel to Germany into the broader perspective of American travel to Europe in general. The results, however, should be seen as *indicative* rather than absolutely conclusive. First of all, Smith’s bibliography only lists books, and yet a great many nineteenth-century travelers published their narratives serially in hometown newspapers and later also in national periodicals.¹⁰⁷ Second, this approach does not give us any idea of what parts of a country the travelers visited, what they did there, or how long they stayed. For example, Matthias Bruen’s 1823 *Essays, Descriptive and Moral: On Scenes in Italy, Switzerland, and France*, which hardly mentions Germany at all except for a brief pass through the Tyrol, counts as a visit to Germany equally as much as Henry Dwight’s 1829 *Travels in the North of Germany, in the Years 1825 and 1826*,

¹⁰⁶ Smith, *American Travellers Abroad*. The original edition from 1969 listed over 1,800 titles, but the second edition has been expanded (p. v), and with 351 pages at roughly 5 ½ entries per page, probably contains well over 1,900 titles.

¹⁰⁷ Smith, *American Travellers Abroad*, vii, ix.

which deals almost exclusively with that land. Third, although most of these books were published within a couple of years of the travels they tell of, some were not published until decades later. This is especially true of memoirs like George Ticknor's, which describes travel in Europe in the 1810s, 1830s, and 1850s, but was not published until 1876 after Ticknor's death. This lag time between travels and publication should be kept in mind, but on average it seems to be short. As a case in point, Americans traveled abroad less during the Civil War, and this is immediately reflected in the lower rates of publication during the 1860s, possibly with some slight residual effects into the 1870s as well. Finally, we should consider that rates of travel publishing may be related to other factors beyond just rates of travel. The market may have demanded or resisted travel books at various times, so that rates of publishing may have been higher or lower in proportion to rates of travel in different periods. Similarly, printing and distribution capabilities may have improved over time and facilitated more books entering the market than in earlier periods. Despite the potential influence of these hypothetical variables, however, the rates of publishing travel books still seem to echo the anecdotal evidence we have of the rates of American travel abroad. Therefore, a graph of the books published decade by decade that deal with travel in various European countries can give us a visual indication of general travel trends.

Figure 2.1 shows the number of travel books published by Americans about various European countries in the nineteenth century according to decade. From a small handful of books about travel in the United Kingdom and France before 1820, the totals spike to hundreds of books for several countries in the latter decades of the nineteenth

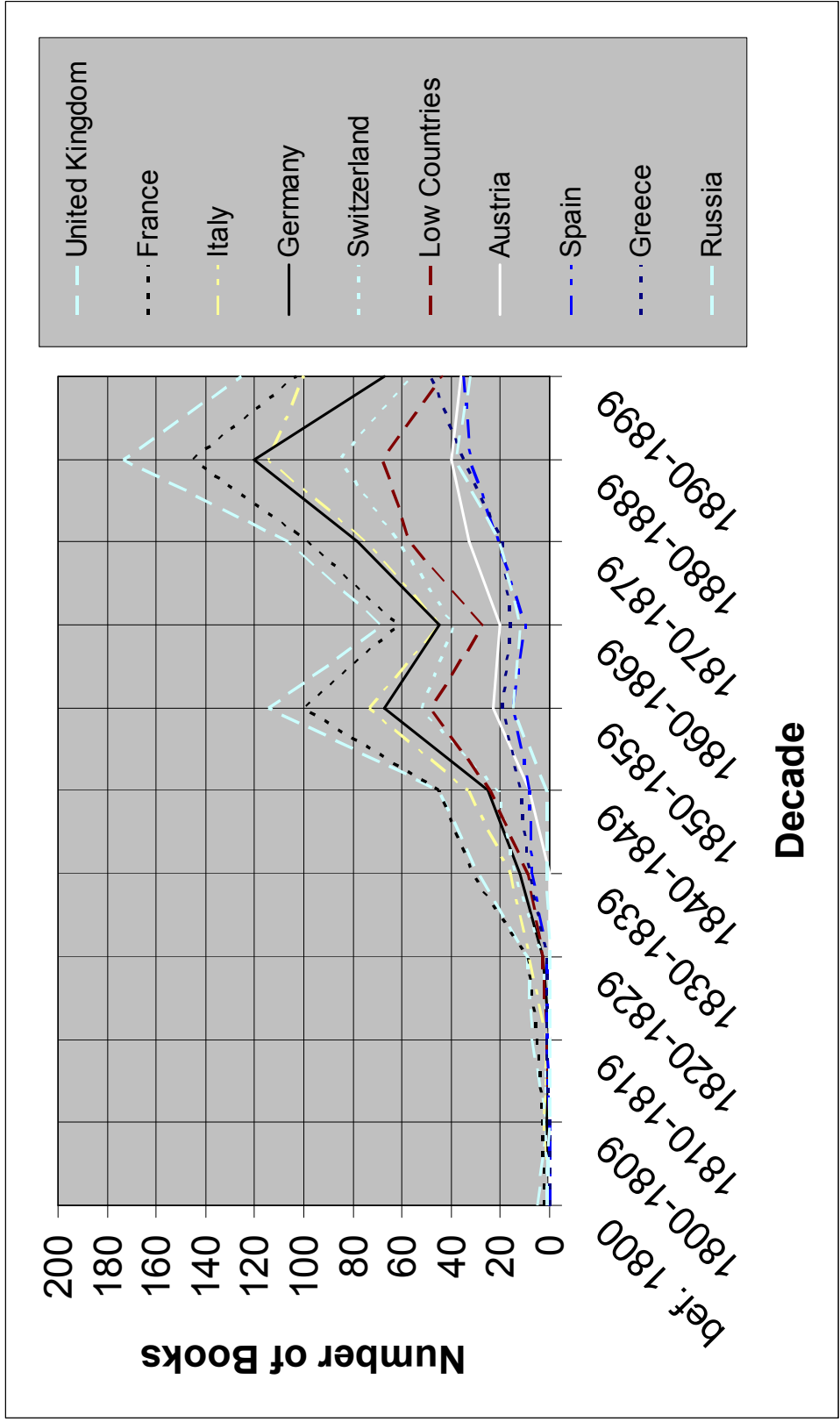


Figure 2.1 Total published American accounts of travel in Europe before 1900, by decade.
 Analysis of data in Smith, *American Travellers Abroad*.

century. Only a small fraction of these books was published before 1850; the vast majority came in the second half of the century. But the growth had already begun to accelerate in the 1830s and 1840s. The dip during the 1860s due to the American Civil War was also quite marked, as is the fact that it was merely a temporary decrease in an ongoing trend of growth. The decline during the 1890s is curious, but since it is not relevant to this study, it will not be examined. Perhaps travel book publication dropped off due to a satiated market or to other changes in society, if not due to an actual decrease in travel abroad. What is important for our study—beyond seeing the general growth of European travel literature and the travel it reflects—is the relative popularity of European destinations over time. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the UK (listed individually in Smith’s index as England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales) and France started out as the most popular places for travel writing, followed by Italy from the 1820s on. In the 1830s, Switzerland and Germany surged toward Italian levels of popularity, with the Low Countries (in Smith’s index listed as Belgium, Holland, and Netherlands) and others not far behind. By the 1840s, Germany, the Low Countries, and Switzerland were relatively equally popular, still gaining in popularity, but still somewhat behind third-place Italy. Crossing mid-century into the 1850s saw Germany pull ahead of Switzerland and the Low Countries into almost equal popularity with Italy, where it remained for the next several decades. The United Kingdom and France never had competition for most-favored status among American travelers to Europe.

Most of these results come as no surprise. The United Kingdom and France proved enduringly the most popular places for travel writing because of their longtime

traditional connections with North America and because of their geographical location. From colonial ties to Mother England, to wartime alliances with France, to ongoing trade with both, the United States' transatlantic relationships were probably the strongest with these two nations. An additional factor that fostered close bonds was language. Most Americans spoke English, and the well-educated of them also spoke French.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, due to familiarity with Britain and France and their respective languages, it would be natural that most American travelers to Europe probably intentionally planned visits to those countries. But even if their destination was farther inland and they had no interest in Britain and France, transatlantic travelers would have probably docked in Liverpool or Le Havre first anyway, before being able to continue to other countries, so a visit to the UK or France may have been in some cases unavoidable.

The status of Italy is also not surprising, due to its renown for art and its classical past. In addition to cultural travelers on the Grand Tour, Italy especially attracted artists. For aspiring American artists in the nineteenth century, the United States did not offer adequate training in their craft, so they had to go to Europe. In the late 1700s on through about 1820, American artists often received training in England, but Italy then became the destination of choice, due to its artistic heritage, its picturesque ruins, and affordable living. Rome and Florence attracted a colony of over one hundred American artists from 1830 to 1875.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ The lingua franca of the European high society was French, and the Ticknors arrived in Europe already having a basic ability to speak it, as can be seen throughout all their European journals.

¹⁰⁹ Strout, *American Image of the Old World*, 68.

Germany, as we have seen, began the nineteenth century almost unknown to Anglo-Americans. It started to gain popularity after the 1820s when growing numbers of Americans began traveling deeper into the Continent and writing home about it. As the attractions of Germany became better known, it was able to compete with the other time-honored destinations of Europe.

Surely the proliferation of travel literature had a reciprocal effect on travel itself. As more accounts were being published by more travelers, stateside readers learning about the wonders of Europe must have been themselves enticed to travel abroad. Books by Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper, who lived in Europe (including Germany) for parts of the 1820s and 1830s, as well as other lesser-known authors, may have planted a seed of longing in the hearts of other Americans to experience similar adventures in Europe. Informal letters from travelers to friends and family back home must have also helped acquaint Americans with Europe. Their impact is probably impossible to measure, but anecdotal evidence suggests that they were circulated among eager audiences (however limited). For example, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody of Massachusetts wrote in 1822 about George Ticknor that

during the whole of his five or six years residence [1815-1819] on the continent he kept a journal in which he describes the persons, characters, & domestic life of the most interesting people he saw & was acquainted with, as well as the places he visited &c. This journal he has lent to many persons since his return and all concur in thinking it the most interesting account of the kind they ever saw.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, Boston, to Maria Chase, Salem, Mass., 12 June 1822, Peabody Family Papers, 1820-1853, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

When Ticknor returned to Europe between 1835 and 1838 with his family, he and his wife both kept detailed journals. Anna Ticknor inserted a margin note in later years explaining her journaling process: “I wrote it rapidly, for my time was quite as much filled as my strength would bear, & about once a month, sent home the sheets, to serve as letters to my sisters, & several friends.”¹¹¹ It is not hard to imagine that, after reading numerous books, newspaper serials, magazine reviews, and letters from friends telling about travel in Europe, many Americans at home would itch to go abroad.

Although Germany was relatively unknown among Anglo-American societal elites at the start of the nineteenth century, it soon caught on in popularity and became one of the favorite destinations in Europe as the century progressed. The first Americans to discover it after 1815 began to recommend it to students and also to publish books about its people and places. Especially from the 1830s on, as more Americans began to flood the continent, and as travel to and within Europe became more efficient, more of these travelers began to push farther into Germany and to write about it, perpetuating the cycle that helped to familiarize the Anglo-Americans with Germany.

This is probably also more or less the pattern that acquainted Americans with the Kingdom of Saxony and led to its eventual popularity as a travel destination. Saxony was not a great, well-known military or political power in central Europe, as its neighbors Prussia and Austria were. And, located relatively deep in the heart of the continent, nowhere near the travel routes between England, France, and Italy, it was quite out of the

¹¹¹ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3, 12 May 1836. (Note was probably written in 1850 and inserted into the 1836 journal entry.)

way for American travelers primarily interested in visiting the classic highlights of the Grand Tour. It would have to wait for the rising tide of American travel to wash these crowds of transatlantic visitors farther into the European continent, while its growing reputation based on reports from its early American visitors would provide the current that directed a flow of travelers onto its soil.

CHAPTER 3

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN TRAVEL TO SAXONY

3.1 Early, Limited American-Saxon Trade Relations

For those Americans who may have been interested, there was a certain amount of information on Saxony available even before the nineteenth century. But as we have seen, most Anglo-Americans were not paying close attention to Germany at that time. Merchants and politicians may have been the only such Americans in the eighteenth century with an eye on Saxony, because of the great fairs at Leipzig. William E. Lingelbach points out that, as “the distributing point for central Europe,” “no other city on the Continent could rival it in the importance of its trade.”¹¹² Even as the United States was claiming its independence, John Adams was looking ahead to economic opportunities in Europe, and wrote to George Washington that

the Electorate of Saxony, with a fruitful soil, contains a numerous and industrious people, and most of the commerce between the east and the west of Europe passes through it. The fairs of Leipsic have drawn considerable advantages for these four years from our trade. This power will see with pleasure the moment which shall put the last hand to our independence. The rest of Germany, excepting Hamburg and Bremen, have no means of opening a direct commerce with us.¹¹³

¹¹² William E. Lingelbach, “Saxon-American Relations, 1778-1828,” *The American Historical Review* 17 (April 1912): 517.

¹¹³ John Adams, Braintree, Massachusetts, to the President of Congress, 4 August 1779, in Francis Wharton, ed. *The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States*, vol. 3 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1889), 284-285.

Indeed, Saxony was very interested in establishing a formal trade treaty with the newly independent United States, because existing American demand for Saxon products promised to grow now that colonial relations with Great Britain had been abolished. In the early years of the new republic, Saxon diplomats courted Benjamin Franklin and other American leaders in hopes of a treaty, but the chaotic postwar economy and lukewarm official interest on the American side stymied the effort.¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, despite almost no diplomatic relations between the countries, a fluctuating level of trade managed to survive throughout the rest of the eighteenth century.¹¹⁵ Saxon cotton and linen products made their way to America, where they were well known in Philadelphia at least, and American hides were sold in Leipzig.¹¹⁶ These often went through middlemen, which increased the trading risk, so that as the nineteenth century dawned, Saxony began again seeking direct trade with America, including a chargé d'affaires and a trading company. The outbreak of the Napoleonic Wars in Europe ended these efforts.¹¹⁷ Finally, peace returned and trade resumed, and in 1825 an Elb-Amerikanische Compagnie was formed. It only lasted until 1828, but it accomplished some healthy trade during its existence. Meanwhile, 1826/1827 saw the beginning of the first ongoing state-level relations as Saxon consuls were established in the major American ports of New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, as well as a Consul general of Saxony to the United

¹¹⁴ Lingelbach, "Saxon-American Relations," 518-530.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 530.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 528, 531, 532.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 533-534.

States. (This, incidentally, was brought about through the work of Alexander H. Everett, the American minister at Madrid and brother of Edward Everett.)¹¹⁸ At the same time, the USA opened a trade consulate in Leipzig.¹¹⁹

Although informal American-Saxon trade from the late eighteenth century had through fits and starts finally developed into official diplomatic trade relations by the second quarter of the nineteenth century, how this actually influenced American *travel* to Saxony remains unclear. Certainly businessmen would have made the trip abroad. It would be interesting to see if they left any early records of their experiences in Leipzig. It appears, however, that commercial connections with Saxony played little role in attracting the general masses of American travelers and students that came in ever-increasing waves throughout the nineteenth century. While many Americans made trips through Leipzig (and often even stayed a few days and raved about the fair, if one was occurring at the time), “Leipzig was for many U.S. citizens just simply a kind of in-between stop on the way to or from Dresden.”¹²⁰

3.2 American Travelers Discover the Attractions of Saxony, Especially Dresden

Dresden was the primary reason Saxony eventually won the hearts of nineteenth-century Americans. It was the capital of the kingdom, governed by a royal family considered just, cultivated, relatively liberal, and friendly to foreigners. Due to the influence of this enlightened court, art and culture flourished. Dresden was home to a

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 537-539

¹¹⁹ Brüning, *Das Konsulat der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika zu Leipzig*, 9.

¹²⁰ Brüning, “Entdeckung eines ‘sehr bemerkenswerten Ortes,’” no. 1:6. Translation mine.

world-class art museum and other fine collections, an excellent theater and opera, thriving intellectual life, and an impressive high society that was even accessible by foreigners with the right credentials and letters of introduction.

The earliest American reports of Dresden all overflowed with praise and recommended the city as a place well worth visiting. However, it appears that a good three decades or more passed before Dresden began receiving large numbers of American travelers on a regular basis. The growth of this interest in Dresden seems to somewhat reflect the general trend of travel to and travel writing about Germany that has already been discussed and graphically portrayed in Figure 2.1.

3.2.1 Early American responses to Dresden, and their influences on public perceptions of Saxony

In 1800, John Quincy Adams, then U.S. Minister to Prussia, made a trip to Silesia, and on the way back to Berlin, he passed through Saxony, where he spent a few days in Dresden. He sent regular letters home to his brother about this trip, and his brother allowed these to be published serially as in the Philadelphia magazine *Port Folio* in 1801, apparently without the author's knowledge.¹²¹ The portion of the letters written from Saxony speaks favorably of the country, but not in much detail nor with the glowing praise that later visitors would write about it. Adams was so pleased with this place on a previous visit, that he said it was "with no small satisfaction that we now have an opportunity of renewing our visit here," and he mentioned the scenic landscape, the picture gallery, the Elector's collection of prints ("one of the finest in the world"), the

¹²¹ John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795 to 1848*, edited by Charles Francis Adams, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1874-1877; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1970), 240-241 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

good roads, and the fine linen and porcelain manufactured in the region.¹²² The remarks were positive, but they were not the kind of recommendation that would send tourists flocking there. It is also unclear how widely read these “Journals of a Tour through Silesia” were in America. Walter Reichart speculates that Irving might have been familiar with them before his stay in Dresden and excursion to Silesia.¹²³ They were, after all, prominently printed on the first page of each of the *Port Folio*’s first forty-five issues (of which only a few would have dealt with Saxony), and were of enough interest to prompt unauthorized publication in London in 1804, Breslau in 1805, and Paris in 1807.¹²⁴ But Ticknor and his New England compatriots seem not to have been aware of them when they went to Europe in the 1810s. Nevertheless, for some Americans, Adams’s letters from Silesia probably provided their first glimpse—however vague and fleeting—of Saxony from the perspective of an American traveler.

Ticknor and Everett were among the next known Americans to spend time in Saxony. During a break from their Göttingen studies in 1816, they traveled around the north of Germany, spending a week in Leipzig and Berlin, and two weeks in Dresden (see Figure A.7 in the appendix for Ticknor’s travel route). Ticknor was very impressed by many of the things he saw. These three cities alone take up nearly a volume of his

¹²² John Quincy Adams, *Letters on Silesia, Written During a Tour Through that Country, in the Years 1800, 1801* (London: J. Budd, 1804), 139, 235, 246, 252-255, 259-261.

¹²³ Walter A Reichart, *Washington Irving and Germany* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1957), 91.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 180 n. 105.

journal.¹²⁵ Some forty-six pages are devoted to Leipzig, more than three-quarters of which discuss the university and other educational institutions (since one of the major purposes of Ticknor's travels was to learn about German education).¹²⁶ In addition to the university ("one of the largest, most respectable, and ancient in the world"), Ticknor found Leipzig important as a trading city ("for its size the most important in Europe") and for the great "Battle of the Nations" where Napoleon had been defeated three years prior ("the Marathon of our own times, where the inroads of a tumultuous barbarism were finally stopped").¹²⁷ Leaving Leipzig, Ticknor and Everett passed through Meißen, where Ticknor duly wrote about the fine porcelain manufactured there, but actually spent more ink (about five pages) describing a local school.¹²⁸ For Dresden, Ticknor wrote a full seventy pages, partly about the impressive royal library, the royal family, and about visits with local scholars, to whom he had letters of introduction from Göttingen. But mostly he discussed the art treasures of the city, especially those in the "Gallery of Pictures, which has made the name of Dresden so famous through the world," and which he visited several times during that trip.¹²⁹ Although Ticknor referred to the worldwide fame of the picture gallery, it is hard to know how much he knew about this museum

¹²⁵ Anna Ticknor and George S. Hillard, ed., *Life, Letters, and Journals of George Ticknor*, vol. 1. (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1876), 107.

¹²⁶ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 2, 13-19 September 1816.

¹²⁷ George Ticknor, Leipzig, to Edward T. Channing, 17 September 1816, in George Ticknor, *Life, Letters, and Journals*, 1:107.

¹²⁸ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 2, 20 September 1816.

¹²⁹ See *ibid.*, 23 September 1816 for quote; see *ibid.*, 20 September – 6 October 1816 for all entries.

from information available in America. He mentioned having “read the admiration of Lefsing, and Herder & Winkelmann,” so he likely gained much of his knowledge about Dresden’s gallery from German sources after arriving in Göttingen.¹³⁰ It seems likely that at that time, Dresden still had not gained a widespread reputation in the United States. One of the most popular, acclaimed engravings of the gallery’s most important painting, the *Sistine Madonna*, by which Americans became familiar with the beloved painting and gallery, had only been completed that year.¹³¹ Decades later, Ticknor reminisced in a letter to King John of Saxony, “When I passed a month [*sic*] there in 1816, I had never heard of any person from the United States who had made a visit to your city as I then did for its peculiar agreements.”¹³² Even so, Dresden was not necessarily the highlight of Ticknor’s four-year sojourn in Europe, and his journal—though passed around among Boston Brahmins—was not actually published (and then only partially) until 1876. Therefore, at this early time, Ticknor probably did not really increase American public awareness of Saxony as a worthy travel destination, even though he was becoming an influential advocate of Germany in general.

The next prominent American to appear in Dresden was probably Irving, who lived there for more than half a year, from November 1822 to July 1823, during an extended residence in various parts of Europe. Reichart believes that Dresden may have been recommended to Irving by some European he met or perhaps from an American

¹³⁰ Ibid., 23 September 1816.

¹³¹ Brüning, “It is a glorious collection,” 105.

¹³² George Ticknor, Boston, to King John of Saxony, 4 July 1869, in E. Daenell, ed., *Briefwechsel König Johanns von Sachsen mit George Ticknor* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1920) 156.

magazine article. Walter Scott, whom Irving knew, had spent considerable time in Saxony and may have recommended it to him.¹³³ During an earlier stay in Heidelberg, Irving had also met a Saxon nobleman in his hotel, who may have suggested Dresden.¹³⁴ He might have also seen and been influenced by two letters from Europe published in 1818 in the *Analectic Magazine* of Philadelphia, which sang the praises of Dresden. It is known that Irving received American magazines and newspapers, and that in early 1819 he was reading the *Analectic*.¹³⁵ At any rate, he was aware before his arrival of Dresden's reputation for "taste, intellect, and literary feeling," which were things that appealed to him.

Irving also wanted to learn German better, and he had the idea that Dresden "is the best place to acquire the German language, which is nowhere as purely spoken as in Saxony."¹³⁶ Although other American travelers do not seem to have sought out Saxony for linguistic reasons like Irving did, they may have been aware of this reputation. This information was available in the United States at the time. For example, Worcester's 1822 *Elements of Geography* said this about the German language: "It is one of the most extensively spoken languages in Europe; and exists in the greatest purity in Saxony."¹³⁷ Saxony also had its own short entry in the textbook, where the point was repeated: "The

¹³³ Reichart, *Washington Irving and Germany*, 62.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 48, 61.

¹³⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*, 62.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹³⁷ Worcester, *Elements of Geography*, 2d ed. (1822), 131. The description of Saxony on pages 132-133 makes it clear that "Saxony" here refers to the post-1815 Kingdom of Saxony, and not to any other region that might have some historical association with the name "Saxony."

German language is spoken here in its greatest purity, and the literature of Saxony is greatly distinguished in Germany.”¹³⁸ Irving had probably not seen this 1822 edition of *Elements of Geography*, but the first edition (1819) likely made the same claim for Saxony’s dialect, and it is possible that Irving could have read it in that edition of the book. Or perhaps *Elements of Geography* was merely echoing a more widely held American view of the German language, in which case Irving could have picked the idea up from some other American source.¹³⁹

Irving arrived in Dresden without any letters of introduction, but his friend the English Ambassador John Morier personally introduced him to “the large English colony” and the rest of Dresden society, and, less than a month after his arrival, to the royal family.¹⁴⁰ Irving enjoyed some celebrity in Dresden; several of his works had already been translated into German, and some of them had in fact just been published in Dresden a couple months before, so his reputation had preceded him.¹⁴¹ He made much of his time there, keeping a schedule full of social events, visits to the theater, and boar hunts with the king. He even befriended an English family and fell in love with their eighteen-year-old daughter (though nothing but friendship came of it).¹⁴² Despite his memorable experience in Dresden and the extent to which he used Germany as an

¹³⁸ Ibid., 132.

¹³⁹ Since many American travelers seemed aware of the history of the Reformation, this reference to the pure German spoken in Saxony may have been due to the standardized German language established by the Saxon Luther’s translation of the Bible into his own vernacular.

¹⁴⁰ Reichart, *Washington Irving and Germany*, 71, 175-176 n. 6.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 70-71.

¹⁴² Ibid., 71-106 passim.

inspiration for his stories, he does not seem to have published works explicitly dealing with Saxony, by which American readers could have become more familiar with that kingdom, and his journals and letters were not published until 1862.

George Henry Calvert from Maryland, an early student at Göttingen, traveled to Saxony with his uncle and aunt in 1824. During a brief stop in Leipzig, Calvert visited university lectures and met with professors.¹⁴³ In Dresden, he had the impression that he was one of the first Americans in that city, and probably *the* first that the King of Saxony had ever met. He had no idea at the time that Irving had preceded him by a year and a half. Calvert began his account as only a republican American would: “To me, Dresden is memorable, that there I first beheld a King. A King!”¹⁴⁴ He then related an amusing story that gives an idea of how relatively unknown Saxony was to Americans—and Americans were in Saxony—at that time:

It was then a custom for the royal family, when at the summer-palace in Pilnitz, to dine on certain days in public; that is, into a gallery overlooking the dining-room spectators were admitted, tickets being issued by the proper official. ... At the appointed hour, (a wholesome early one if I remember right,) we, with a few other excessive naturalists, were seated in the predominating gallery, and in a few moments the regal party, about a dozen in number, entered and took their seats with the unceremonious ease of well-dressed citizens around a family dinner-table. Persons royal being objects of everybody’s knowledge, we upstairs were acquainted with the company below, while they knew no more of us than that we were individuals selected for over-curiosity. ... It was, at all events, proper—being congregated together in the banquet-hall—that they at the table should on their side be made acquainted with us. Accordingly by the plate of the King was laid a list of all the spectators, made out with police-particularity, country, profession, age of each one being given. ... When the King came to *American* his Majesty ejaculated, *Mon Dieu!* and cast his royal eyes up to the gallery, expecting doubtless to recognize

¹⁴³ Calvert, *First Years in Europe*, 136-137.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 138.

the American by his skin. This movement was followed all round the royal board, and the disappointment was probably general that among the lookers-on above there was neither a red man nor a black man.

When you consider the interior geographical remoteness of Dresden, that in 1824 there was neither locomotive nor steamboat in Germany; that during the Napoleonic wars few Americans travelled in Europe; that at that time we never had been diplomatically represented at Dresden; it may be honestly inferred that his Saxon Majesty had never consciously looked on a citizen of the United States, and therefore, that I was as novel a sight to him as he was to me, and thus that on the score of new sensations the Democrat and the King were quits.¹

¹ This was written before the publication of Washington Irving's *Life and Letters*, where we learn that in 1822 he spent several months at Dresden, and was a frequent guest at the palace. As one swallow does not make a summer, one American, even one so attractive and distinguished as Mr. Irving, could hardly have been sufficient to impress the notion of American nationality upon the brain of the sluggish old King; so that although the sensation I gave him was not a virgin one, it was akin to that, just as second love is sometimes almost as warm as first.¹⁴⁵

Calvert's fellow American in Göttingen, Henry Dwight, traveled around Northern Germany in 1826 and also had experiences in Saxony (as elsewhere) that made him realize how seldom Americans were venturing into the interior of Germany at that time. Many Germans seem only to have been familiar with stereotypes and legends of Americans. Dwight's landlady at Leipzig told him of the response she received when talking with her neighbor about having an American boarder. Dwight wrote that the neighbor,

who had always associated the idea of cannibalism with that of an American, asked her, if she did not fear to remain in the house with me. She replied, that as I was perfectly harmless, she had yet discovered nothing to excite her fears. She then wished to know, if I was not black.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 139-141.

¹⁴⁶ Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 318.

Similarly, a person in Cologne had once insisted to Dwight that “the Americans are all black.”¹⁴⁷

It might have been Dwight’s 1829 book *Travels in the North of Germany, in the Years 1825 and 1826*, that finally put Saxony (along with other German places) on the map for many Americans. Eberhard Brüning, an expert on nineteenth-century American perceptions of Saxony, notes that this book “was widely read by the New England intellectual elite,” and that “the prestigious *North American Review* reviewed it extensively.”¹⁴⁸ That twenty-nine-page review from the October 1829 issue discussed in depth the major points of Dwight’s book, and concluded with a somewhat tepid commendation:

For the present, we must content ourselves with recommending Mr Dwight’s *Travels in the North of Germany*, as a work containing many valuable details, not unmingled, however, with mistakes, which a longer residence, a closer observation, or more preparatory study, might have enabled a foreign tourist to avoid.¹⁴⁹

A later American student at Göttingen, John Lothrop Motley, and his mother are known to have read Dwight’s book, because when he wrote home to her in 1832, he confirmed that the accounts of student duels that she had read “in Dwight’s ‘*Travels in Germany*’” were true.¹⁵⁰ Jesse Burton Harrison, studying in Göttingen in 1830, also attested to the book’s widespread interest when he wrote from Weimar about a duchess who “spoke of

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 318.

¹⁴⁸ Brüning, “‘Saxony Is a Prosperous and Happy Country,’” 22-23.

¹⁴⁹ “Dwight’s *Travels in Germany*,” review of *Travels in the North of Germany, in the Years 1825 and 1826*, by Henry E. Dwight, *The North American Review* 29 (October 1829): 417.

¹⁵⁰ John Lothrop Motley, *The Correspondence of John Lothrop Motley*, ed. George William Curtis, vol. 1. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1889), 20; Brüning, “‘Saxony Is a Prosperous and Happy Country,’” 23.

having received Dwight's book from Froriep" and "said they were naturally anxious to see what impression Germany made on America."¹⁵¹ While these references do not mention Dwight's discussion of Saxony in his *Travels*, the portion of the book that he devotes to Saxony is significant, and anyone who read the entire work would have gained a wealth of information and insight into the cities, people, government, and institutions of that kingdom. He also named Dresden as "the classic city of Germany" and agreed that in most respects it merited being called the Florence of Germany.¹⁵²

Dresden continued to draw the occasional American traveler in the following years, some of whom left records among the growing number of travel accounts toward mid-century. But though American travel to Dresden and Saxony in general was certainly increasing—along with American travel to everywhere else—there is no real indication of a substantial American colony residing at Dresden in the first half of the nineteenth century. To be sure, Dresden had long had a colony of English expatriates. Irving encountered them in 1822/1823. And when the Ticknor family settled in for a half-year residence there from 1835 to 1836, they made some good English friends, who told Anna Ticknor that "they thought there could not be less than sixty or seventy English people here now."¹⁵³ But as for Americans choosing to live in Dresden for an extended period of time, it seems the Ticknors were among the earliest pioneers in a new trend (just as George Ticknor had been as a Göttingen student back in 1815). Irving had

¹⁵¹ Quoted in Krumpelmann, *Southern Scholars in Goethe's Germany*, 66. Froriep here is apparently Ludwig Friedrich von Froriep (1779-1847), a physician in Weimar at the time.

¹⁵² Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 348-349.

¹⁵³ Anna Ticknor *Travel Journals*, vol. 3, 29 November 1835.

preceded the Ticknors with a residence in Dresden thirteen years earlier, and Cooper and his family lived there for several weeks in 1830, but other than these exceptions, there were probably few Americans living long-term in Dresden before the 1840s and likely mid-century. But at some point in the second half of the nineteenth century, a significant American colony took root there. George Ticknor marveled at this development, writing to his friend King John of Saxony in 1869,

No small number of the richer, and more favoured of my countrymen and their families are now in Europe, led there by the attractions of its great capitals and the cheapness of living, which here owing to our taxes is become costly. But, I think, that, in proportion to its size, no city draws so many as Dresden. And I am glad of it. When I passed a month there in 1816, I had never heard of any person from the United States who had made a visit to your city as I then did for its peculiar agreements. Nor was it much different when I spent there the winter of 1835—36 with my family so happily, nor when we were there again for a shorter time, about a dozen years ago [1856]. But, I think, that it is now become for Americans, who seek a pleasant residence and a good place for the education of their children, the favourite city of Europe. It is a capital of moderate size, with the intellectual and artistic resources of one of the largest, — all under a kindly and faithful government, which, as we know, protects and favours strangers.¹⁵⁴

Others in latter decades of the nineteenth century also commented on this American love affair with Dresden.¹⁵⁵

Interestingly, Dresden's surge of popularity seems to have come somewhat belatedly compared with the other capitals of Europe. Aaron Burr alluded to a group of Americans living in Paris as early as 1810.¹⁵⁶ Wilbur Fisk wrote that as of 1835, "Paris contains a great many Americans; probably there are from the United States, in the city of

¹⁵⁴ George Ticknor, Boston, to King John of Saxony, 4 July 1869, in Daenell, ed., *Briefwechsel*, 156.

¹⁵⁵ See Brüning, "'Saxony Is a Prosperous and Happy Country,'" 26-27.

¹⁵⁶ Burr, *Private Journal of Aaron Burr*, 2:68.

Paris, continually from two to three thousand, and this number is yearly increasing.”¹⁵⁷ Meanwhile in 1836 Fisk observed that “the visiters from the United States to Rome are growing more numerous every year. The present year there have been two or three hundred.”¹⁵⁸ These may have been temporary visitors in addition to the “shifting American colony” of over a hundred artists in Rome and Florence between 1830 and 1875.¹⁵⁹ Even Geneva in 1836 had plenty of Americans, according to Philip Hone: “This place is filled with English and Americans. Our hotel is the fashionable resort of the latter, of whom there were thirty-four a few days since” (including the Ticknors).¹⁶⁰ Yet in 1836, George Ticknor felt that Americans had not discovered Dresden in the way they would in later years, or for that matter in the way they already had discovered Paris, Rome, and Geneva.

¹⁵⁷ Wilbur Fisk, *Travels in Europe; viz., In England, Ireland, Scotland, France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, and the Netherlands*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1838), 84.

¹⁵⁸ Fisk, *Travels in Europe*, 343.

¹⁵⁹ Strout, *American Image of the Old World*, 68.

¹⁶⁰ Philip Hone, *The Diary of Philip Hone, 1828-1851*, ed. Bayard Tuckerman, vol. 1. (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1889), 228.

PART 2

IMAGES OF SAXONY AS A FOIL FOR INTERPRETING
ASPECTS OF AMERICAN IDENTITY

CHAPTER 4

AMERICAN TRAVELERS' PERCEPTIONS OF GERMANS AND GERMANY

4.1 What Travel Writings Can Tell Us

4.1.1 Using travel writings about others to learn more about their authors

For privileged Americans, Saxony surged from a little known foreign country to a beloved travel destination during the 1800s. Although it reached its peak popularity in the second half of the century, the basic developments promoting that transition came before 1850, with the post-1815 peace, advances in travel technologies, increasing American affluence, the boom in American travel to Europe, and particularly the growing practice of studying at German universities. But those were just the large-scale factors that opened the door for many Americans to discover Saxony, along with Europe in general. In order to understand Saxony's particular charms for early nineteenth-century American travelers, we need to take a closer look at why Americans chose to travel there, and what they thought about it. Since travel writing was such a popular activity at that time, we have abundant materials from which to obtain a picture of these Americans' perceptions of Saxony.

At the same time, if people's writings tell us nearly as much about the authors as they do about the subjects on which they write, then the travel journals of nineteenth-

century Americans can give us insight into their own identities.¹⁶¹ As they experienced Saxony and wrote about it, we can now learn something about this little kingdom from close to two centuries ago. But we learn about it through American eyes, so first of all, the information reflects what they found noteworthy according to their particular perspectives, and second, we learn something about the visitors' own Americanness as a consequence. These travelers did not produce pure, objective accounts of the Germany and Saxony that they traveled through, even if they tried. They evaluated (often explicitly) what they saw in terms of what they were familiar with, sometimes approving of and sometimes rejecting aspects of the unfamiliar culture they found around them. They interpreted what they witnessed through their own personal worldviews, which had generally been formed in the United States of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Since these American backgrounds are implicit in the texts of their travel writings, we can try to identify some of the particularly American features in order to get a better idea of these travelers' identities as Americans. Many of the features will point to aspects of a broad, common American identity. Others may reflect a regional heritage or simply personal idiosyncrasy.

4.1.2 Why the Ticknors' travel journals are so important

In analyzing early nineteenth-century American perceptions of Saxony and the aspects of American identity that they mirror, this study concentrates primarily on the European travel journals of George and Anna Ticknor. Putting the focus on two individuals (especially from the same family) can be risky, tempting us to see what may

¹⁶¹ Schriber, *Writing Home*, 4-5, 9; Voss, "National Stereotypes," 3-4.

be unique personal attitudes as representative of the broader American population. So we must be careful not to overgeneralize conclusions. Frequent glances at travel literature from other contemporary sources will help serve as a corrective, enabling us to recognize aspects of common Anglo-American elite identity as opposed to mere personal views.

At the same time, the Ticknors' journals are extremely important sources that merit this focused attention when exploring American travelers' perceptions of Saxony. First, they are some of the most remarkably detailed and informative records kept by Americans in Saxony during this early time period. The Ticknors were prolific journal writers. On an 1816 excursion from Göttingen to some of the central and northern German states, George Ticknor wrote around 170 pages on Saxony (and the recently lost former Saxon provinces) alone. In 1835-1836, during a residence in Dresden with his family, he wrote close to another 170 pages on Saxony, while Anna Ticknor penned nearly 200. In these journal entries, the Ticknors not only chronicled their daily activities, they also methodically described and analyzed the societies, cultures, institutions, and lands that they saw around them. In many cases, it is evident that they had done prior research in order to make sure they had a good understanding of the historic, demographic, and biographical facts that they presented. Clearly the journals were not meant to be a private record of mere personal thoughts and family life. They were shared among friends and family at the very least, and they were intended to be instructive to contemporaries and historically valuable to posterity. George Ticknor himself explained his painstaking approach, saying that his journal was

written out in its present form, wherever I stopped long enough to do it, from slight memoranda made on the spot in little note books which I carried on my person.

I, however, prepared myself as well as I could, by collecting beforehand in other Ms. note books statistical, historical & geographical facts concerning the countries I intended to visit. ...

In Göttingen where I established myself in less than three months after landing, I worked more in earnest. Especially before beginning a long journey through the North of Germany, with which Everett & myself filled a six weeks vacation, in the Autumn of 1816, I prepared myself by reading ample accounts of all the universities, high schools, cities and distinguished people we were to visit. I took plentiful notes of them, which I plentifully used in my Journal before I got back. ...

In this way this journal was made up and sent home to my family in small parcels as I found opportunities.¹⁶²

Anna Ticknor, too, tried to write her journal as thoroughly as possible, knowing that it was to be read by others. Like her husband, she kept daily notes to remind her of what she needed to write about later when she had time, and she generally tried to set aside time in the evenings to journal.¹⁶³ At one point she prefaced a particularly descriptive passage by saying, “Shall I not enumerate it for the benefit of my great grand children (to whom this valuable work is to be handed down?”¹⁶⁴ In the margin of another entry she (apparently years later) inserted an apology for having omitted a particular detail, admitting, “My journal was written rapidly, & sent home to my sisters, which is the excuse, for its extreme minuteness in trifles, & for some of its many deficiencies. Even I, familiar as I am with the author, am impressed at the amount.”¹⁶⁵ Not only was Anna Ticknor intentionally writing for an audience, she also wanted her journal to be accurate,

¹⁶² Quoted in Steven Allaback and Alexander Medlicott, Jr., eds. *A Guide to the Microfilm Edition of the European Journals of George and Anna Ticknor* (Hanover, N.H.: Dartmouth College Library, 1978), 3-4.

¹⁶³ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3, 25 March 1836, May 1836, 16 November 1835.

¹⁶⁴ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3, 31 December 1835.

¹⁶⁵ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3, 24 January 1836.

readable, and of historical interest to future generations. Thus, the Ticknor journals are not superficial, hastily thrown-together diaries. They are careful, thoughtful documents written to inform readers then and in the future.

A second reason that their journals are worth special attention is that the Ticknors were significant historical figures whose travels to Germany heralded the beginnings of major new trends that would grow to phenomenal proportions later in the 1800s. This is not to say that the Ticknors themselves single-handedly sparked these trends, but it could certainly be argued that they played a key role. In fact, Brüning asserts precisely that:

George Ticknor (1791-1871) was one of New England's leading scholars and men of letters—one of that generation immediately preceding the Transcendentalists. He was regarded as one of the great mediators of European culture, which he had thoroughly studied during his first trip in Europe (1815-1819).¹⁶⁶

George Ticknor's position in the 1810s as a pioneer in the American love affair with German universities has already been discussed. His family's 1835-1836 residence in Dresden (like Irving's and the Cooper family's before them) likewise occurred at the dawn of an American passion for that city. Due to their influential place in an influential New England society—they seem to have played an important role. At any rate, they are well-positioned to serve as spokespeople for the early wave of American travelers to Saxony.

A third justification for focusing on the Ticknors' journals is that so far they have largely been overlooked by historians. Some of George Ticknor's journal entries were edited and published (with the help of his widow and daughter) in 1876 in the two-

¹⁶⁶ Brüning, "König Johann von Sachsen," 49. Translation mine.

volume memoir *Life, Letters, and Journals of George Ticknor*. While these published accounts are widely known and well-studied, they omit huge and significant portions of George Ticknor's Germany journals, and what sections they do include are heavily edited. As for Anna Ticknor's copious journals, they appear to have never been published.¹⁶⁷ Only a few scholars, like Orie W. Long, Frank Ryder, Edwin Zeydel, David Tyack, Thomas Adam, Dirk Voss, and Anja Becker have made use of the Ticknors' Germany journal manuscripts in their historical studies; in fact, perhaps only Adam has given real attention to those of Anna Ticknor. There is still plenty of unexplored material in these journals relating to American perceptions of Saxony.

And in learning about Saxony through American eyes, we will learn about the Americans who viewed it. These American visitors analyzed the cultural, social, educational, economic, and political structures in that little kingdom and either approved of or rejected what they found, in efforts to affirm their own American ways or to seek to change aspects of them. In this way, Saxony was more than an appealing travel destination. It gives us a foil for interpreting American identity.

4.2 Germans and Germany Viewed through American Eyes

From 1815 to 1819, young George Ticknor studied and traveled in many countries of Europe: England, Scotland, France, Italy, Spain, and several of the German

¹⁶⁷ I am aware of one insignificant exception. *The Atlantic Monthly* published an excerpt from Anna's journal in 1927 under the title of "Polite Travel in the Thirties: From the Diary of Mrs. George Ticknor." It covered the very beginning stage of their 1835 trip to Europe, starting with their departure from Boston on May 25th and ending in Liverpool on June 27th. Most of the narrative is from the sea voyage. Needless to say, it contains nothing about Germany. See Anna Ticknor, "Polite Travel in the Thirties: From the Diary of Mrs. George Ticknor," *The Atlantic Monthly* 140 (July – December 1927): 56-65.

states. Years later in 1835, at a time when it seemed that “all the world” was going to Europe, Ticknor took his wife and two daughters back to the Old World that he already knew so well, where they spent the next three years.¹⁶⁸ Like most American travelers, they spent time in the traditionally popular locations of England, France, and Italy, including residences of almost five months in Rome and six in Paris. But of all places, their first major settled destination of their trip was the Kingdom of Saxony. After several weeks exploring the British Isles, the Ticknors left the beaten path and made their way across the patchwork of confederated German states to settle down in Dresden for half a year, from November 1835 to June 1836. They saw few other Americans in Saxony during that time. Why did Ticknor choose to take his family to Saxony at a time when relatively few other Americans seemed interested in traveling to the interior of Germany, let alone to a small kingdom of modest wealth and small political or military importance? Besides the fact that Washington Irving had once told Ticknor that the winter he spent in Dresden was one of the pleasantest of his life, Saxony—and Dresden in particular—held certain appeals that Ticknor would have remembered from his own 1816 visit and which must have induced him to return.¹⁶⁹ Many of these factors were probably also draws for the other Americans who would find Saxony a pleasant place to visit in subsequent years. In examining the qualities that Americans attributed to Saxony,

¹⁶⁸ Philip Hone, a member of New York high society, wrote in his diary on June 1, 1836, “All the world (our world) is going to Europe. The packet-ship ‘Europe’ sailed this morning for Liverpool with thirty-five passengers; among the number were Professor Ticknor and family, of Boston.” See Hone, *Diary*, 1:144.

¹⁶⁹ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3, April 1836, “Dresden. – Our own Life there.”

it will be helpful to begin at the general level of how Americans viewed Germany overall, and then work down to more specific, localized perceptions.

4.2.1 Experiencing borders: American travelers' recognition of Germany's fragmented nature

Although early American travelers referred to the 39 states of the German Confederation collectively as “Germany,” they were not under illusions that Germany was a unified state or a homogeneous nation. For one thing, the experience of crossing state borders every few miles in some places left no doubt about Germany’s political fragmentation. Some examples from George Ticknor’s travels illustrate how very aware a traveler was of the various kingdoms, duchies, grand duchies, landgraviates, principalities, electorates, free cities, and such that broke up the German map (see Figure A.8 in the appendix for the Ticknor family’s travel route in Germany). Ticknor summarized a trip with his family across central Germany in 1835:

Nov. 16. Day before yesterday, after leaving Hanau, we rode one post in the Kingdom of Bavaria, since which, we have been in the dominions of the Elector of Hesse Cassel, until the two last posts before Eisenach when we came into Saxe Gotha, which, however, has ceased to be an independent Government, having fallen, by inheritance, into the Coburg line of the family. To day, we passed through Gotha, ~ then through Erfurdt, which is Prussian; and then came on, in good season, to Weimar.¹⁷⁰

Since travelers usually had to pass through checkpoints and show passports when they crossed these borders, it would have been clear that they were arriving in a new state.

Ticknor illustrated this rule in 1816 by citing the tiny Thuringian territories as exceptions:

in all the little Principalities & particularly in Weimar there is more civil and political Freedom than in Germany generally ~ a circumstance, which I have often

¹⁷⁰ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3, 16 November 1835.

had occasion not only to observe but to feel since ~~in~~ Weimar, Gotha &c are y^e only territories thro' which travelling is permitted without a pass.¹⁷¹

Other clues to the political fragmentation would have been local flags and other markers. Upon crossing the Rhine River with Edward Everett and Stephen Perkins in 1815 into a German country for the first time, Ticknor remembered being “admonished by the black eagle at the first chausée house we afterwards came to, that we were within the dominions of the King of Prussia.”¹⁷² George Palmer Putnam, on the other hand, claimed that in 1836 he saw few indications of the differences between the territories:

In coming to Leipsic from Switzerland, I passed through no less than eight independent states and principalities, viz: the ‘Grand Dutchies’ of Baden, Hesse-Darmstadt, Saxe-Weimar, Saxe-Gotha, Hesse-Cassel, the free city of Frankfort, and the kingdoms of Prussia and Saxony. The boundaries of these great little dutchies are marked by a stone on the way-side, inscribed, ‘Weimar,’ ‘Gotha,’ etc., as the case may be. I observed nothing else to indicate that the country was governed by so many different masters. There is nothing on the route deserving the name of scenery: even a gentle hill to relieve the dull, tame prospect of long and often barren plains, occurs but seldom.¹⁷³

Yet even in claiming that the traveler finds little to distinguish one territory from another, Putnam showed that he was very well aware of each separate state that he passed through. He also pointed out that the borders were designated by landmarks. As for finding “nothing else to indicate that the country was governed by so many different masters,” he

¹⁷¹ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3, October 1816, “Jena University.”

¹⁷² George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 1, 31 July 1815.

¹⁷³ George Palmer Putnam, *The Tourist in Europe: or, A Concise Summary of the Various Routes, Objects of Interest, &c. in Great Britain, France, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, Belgium, and Holland; with Hints on Time, Expenses, Hotels, Conveyances, Passports, Coins, &c.* (New York: Wiley & Putnam, 1838), 246.

appears to have been looking specifically for natural boundaries in the landscape, of which he found few on his route.

As Americans traveled across the borders of the various German states, they observed the people, the countryside, the villages, and cities and checked them against their own stereotypes of “the German nation,” while also comparing the different regions of Germany to each other. Americans certainly had preconceptions of the “German race” that pertained to all Germans.¹⁷⁴ Dirk Voss has explored most of these attributed characteristics quite well in his Ph.D. dissertation, “National Stereotypes About Germans in American Travel Writings, 1815-1914.” But in arguing that “American travelers failed to notice the tremendous differences in language and culture among the German-speaking population of Central Europe,” Voss goes too far.¹⁷⁵ Many of the early educated travelers did notice the differences. They were fascinated by them, and we will see how they actively tried to discern the distinctions between Northern Germans and Southern Germans, or Prussians and Saxons, for example. Nevertheless, Voss’s main point here still has some merit, but it needs to be nuanced. He writes:

¹⁷⁴ Early in the nineteenth century, classically-educated Americans unfamiliar with contemporary Germans often based their stereotypes upon Tacitus’s and Caesar’s accounts of Germania. Upon his first arrival in Germany, George Ticknor

sought in vain for the manly or rather gigantick forms, which Cæsar has given to the Germans or the blue eyes & light complexions of wh. Tacitus speaks Certainly, however, the ~~the~~ universally red hair of y^e Germans, wh. almost all the writers of the age after Augustus mention . . . has disappeared. . . . I think, therefore, upon y^e whole, that the race of men in Germany has ~~materially~~ changed since the times of Cæsar and Germanicus.

See George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3, 1817, “Germany. Towns & cities. People” – “Germany. The People.”

¹⁷⁵ Voss, “National Stereotypes,” 27. Wellenreuther also writes, “For the early nineteenth century, I do not perceive such a regionalization of the American image of Germany.” See Wellenreuther, “Germans Make Cows and Women Work,” 44 n13.

The burghers of Straßburg appeared to these travelers quite as German as the citizens of Berlin or Vienna. If the local residents spoke a German dialect, the visitors from the New World characterized them as Germans. But American notions of a language-based national identity stood in contrast to the regionalism of most Germans. Asked for their identity, most burghers of Straßburg would have answered “Alsatian.” Frankfurters saw themselves first of all as *Frankfurter* but not as *Deutscher*. Thus American visitors already expressed a loyalty to the nation-state that most Germans did not develop until the unification of the German Empire in 1871.¹⁷⁶

Americans generally did consider all speakers of a German dialect to be members of the German nation, and all states in the German Confederation to be part of a greater Germany. (This is also essentially how the terms “German” and “Germany” are used in this paper.) And certainly many Americans who stayed home would have been as clueless about German regionalism as Voss describes.¹⁷⁷

But the Americans who traveled to Germany in the early 1800s were not so naïve. They may have also shared this nation-state perspective of Germany with their fellow Americans, but it did not totally blind them to Germany’s various regional identities. And despite the way they viewed Germans as a collective nationality, they were often aware that Germans themselves conceived of their identity primarily in local terms. Dwight, for one, astutely recognized this reality, writing that “the union of this country into one nation is ... an almost hopeless event. It has so long been divided into a great number of petty duchies, electorates, and kingdoms, that every thing like nationality of

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Even so, with the availability and popularity of books like Dwight’s *Travels in the North of Germany*, as well as opportunities to find out about Germany from friends and other countrymen who had traveled there, even many homebound Americans would have been able to learn of the fragmented state of the German Confederation.

feeling has ceased to exist.”¹⁷⁸ Perhaps Dwight was more of an expert on the Germans than most American travelers. But since his book was a popular resource for Americans who were interested in learning more about Germany, his readers also knew what he knew. Two decades later, in 1847, former U.S. Minister to Prussia Henry Wheaton, in making a speech to the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Brown University, could refer to Germany’s regionalism in rhetorical questions, which might imply that his listeners already had a certain knowledge of these facts and did not need them explained directly. Wheaton contrasted the stronger feelings of national identity among the English and Americans with the lack of such common feelings among Germans:

Traverse Germany, in the wide extent of that beautiful and variegated land, and tell me if you find any general national character pervading all the thirty-nine sovereign states composing the Germanic Confederation, with their multiplied variety of social classes, of political institutions, of religion, manners and customs. Do the Suabian, the Saxon, the Austrian, and the Prussian constitute one nation, even in the same sense and in the same degree in which the English and the Anglo-Americans may be said to constitute one people, though swayed by distinct and independent sovereignties, with different forms of political institution? Do even the subjects of the Prussian monarchy, constructed as it has been by gradual accretions, the fruits of purchase, of conquest, of inheritance, of secularization, and of usurpation,—do the Rhinelander, the Brandenburger, the Saxon, the Silesian, the Westphalian, the East Prussian,—do all these, by their incorporation into one state, with its powerful means of centralization, constitute one nation like France, or like England, in which each pulsation of the heart is felt in every limb?¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 235. It is interesting to note that in 1829, Dwight was contemplating the prospect of the Germans (despite their regional diversity) united as a “nation” and thinking that long ago—before political divisions—a “nationality of feeling” must have existed among all German people. Many modern historians consider this type of national identity to have only begun to develop late in the eighteenth century. Regardless of when it originated, this concept seems to have been so far developed by 1829, that Dwight thought nationality was a natural and ancient form of identification. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1983), 4.

¹⁷⁹ Wheaton, *Progress and Prospects of Germany*, 14-15. Ironically, as the nineteenth century progressed, this very provincialism, which Wheaton (like Dwight) said prevented a national unity, played a role in actually contributing to a national cohesion. Celia Applegate explains that throughout the nineteenth century, a strong sense of identification with the local *Heimat* (or homeland) developed

And even if Wheaton's picture of a divided Germany was news to some listeners (or readers, since the speech was shortly thereafter published), it just means they were that much better informed afterwards. This is another situation, like Dwight's nearly twenty years before, where an expert on Germany was in a position to familiarize a segment of the American public with German realities. People like this were "multipliers," who "through their written documents as well as their conversations and lectures shaped the opinions and images held by their contemporaries and subsequent readers."¹⁸⁰ Add to this all the other literature on Germany that was being published, other unknown speeches, and the increasing numbers of Americans who had personally traveled to Germany and kept their eyes open for the regional differences, and it becomes clear that at least some in the United States would have been very aware of the diverse regionalized character of Germany.¹⁸¹

throughout Germany. She argues that this nostalgic focus on regional identity and pride simultaneously pointed to the larger community of a German nation. The *Heimat* was not an isolated region unto itself, but rather a proud and unique constituent of a greater Germany, to which it contributed its own special folkways. In essence, "it offered Germans a way to reconcile a heritage of localized political traditions with the ideal of a single, transcendent nationality. Heimat was both the beloved local places and the beloved nation; it was a comfortably flexible and inclusive homeland, embracing all localities alike." See Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1990), 6-11.

¹⁸⁰ Waldemar Zacharasiewicz, *Images of Germany in American Literature* (Iowa City, Iowa.: University of Iowa Press, 2007), 11.

¹⁸¹ It is also interesting to consider that the United States in many respects actually had a more ethnically diverse population than the German Confederation. Yet because the American states were more politically united than those of Germany (and probably also because they lacked the ancient feudal history that had created and entrenched Germany's regional divisions), Americans (or at the very least, the culturally dominant Anglo-Americans) could feel that they were a unified nation. James Fenimore Cooper even wrote to a British correspondent that "the inhabitants of states, living a thousand miles asunder, speak of each other with more kindness, in common, than the inhabitants of adjoining counties in England, or provinces in France." See Cooper, *Notions of the Americans*, 74.

4.2.2 Generalized stereotypes of the Germans

And yet knowledge of Germany's fragmentation did not prevent Americans from also forming broad stereotypes of the general German "nation" as a whole (whether one existed or not). Lumping diverse sets of people together according to general similarities and attributing group characteristics to them is easy to do, and it helps groups define their own identity with respect to others. Americans even tended to overlook their own various regional identities when they were abroad, referring to other Americans as "fellow countrymen" even when they came from different states with different traditions and ways of speaking.¹⁸² In a similar way, they were able to stereotype Germans on both this artificial "national" level as well as the regional level simultaneously. Voss and Wellenreuther recognize the former, and here their analyses seem correct and insightful. American travelers in the early 1800s portrayed Germans in general as slow, awkward, ugly, unrefined, fond of beer and food, addicted to smoking, unobservant of Sunday as a sacred religious day, and making their women do hard physical labor like slaves or animals. Yet they also considered them to be philosophical, poetic, producing some of

¹⁸² This is evident in the primary sources in general, and Cooper declared it outright in a letter to his British correspondent. He wrote that at home in the United States, only New Englanders call themselves Yankees, but internationally, all Americans from all regions of the country—even the South—are proud to wear the appellation. "Thus it is apparent," he wrote, "that the term has two significations among the Americans themselves, one of which may be called its national, and the other its local meaning." See Cooper, *Notions of the Americans*, 69-73. For just a few representative examples of other Americans identifying with "countrymen" abroad, regardless of regional origin, see Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3, 24 January 1836; vol. 4, 20 May 1836; George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 4, 20 May 1836; Taylor, *Views A-foot*, 138, 152-153, 156, 310; and Robert Baird, *Visit to Northern Europe: Or, Sketches Descriptive, Historical, Political and Moral of Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland, and the Free Cities of Hamburg and Lubeck, Containing Notices of the Manners and Customs, Commerce, Manufactures, Arts and Sciences, Education, Literature, and Religion, of Those Countries and Cities*, vol. 2 (New York: John S. Taylor & Co., 1841), 118, 171.

the world's finest scholars.¹⁸³ Of course, some of these qualities related more to the peasantry, while others applied mainly to the learned, but these are the types of images that Americans had in their heads as they traveled through the countries of Germany. According to Voss, these stereotypes reflected the current economic and political situations of the United States and Germany. The United States was a politically united, rapidly industrializing country with a large, unified internal market and an increasing time-is-money attitude. Germany, meanwhile, had just come out of feudalism and was still largely agrarian, was politically less united, and had comparatively little trade flowing between its protectionist states.¹⁸⁴ American travelers were also proud of their democratic republic and the opportunities that it boasted for every individual, while they saw "despotic" German rulers as holding back the advancement of the lower-class German citizens.¹⁸⁵ Wellenreuther points out the contradictions in the Americans' praise of republican equality and their simultaneous pursuit of individual material progress, even to the point of seeking the exclusive, genteel lifestyle represented by a European tour.¹⁸⁶ Thus, Americans abroad interpreted German habits in ways that allowed them to flatter themselves that they were of a more advanced civilization. But even so, Germany boasted better universities than the United States, as well as a national literature that the young American nation could only envy and aspire to. In the ways that Americans

¹⁸³ Voss, "National Stereotypes," passim; Wellenreuther, "Germans Make Cows and Women Work," passim.

¹⁸⁴ Voss, "National Stereotypes," 1-2, 22-23; Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 235.

¹⁸⁵ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3, 1817, "Germany. The People."

¹⁸⁶ Wellenreuther, "Germans Make Cows and Women Work," 61-63.

considered themselves better than Germans, they affirmed their idea of the superiority of their nation. In the areas that Americans felt Germans had the advantage, they hoped to learn from them and adapt the better German models to American society.¹⁸⁷

4.2.3 *Regional stereotypes of the Germans*

4.2.3.1 Northern vs. Southern Germany

As they traveled from state to state within the German Confederation, Americans discovered regional variations in the land and people. The most significant distinction that the Americans perceived was between Northern and Southern Germany. The fundamental difference between these two groups of Germans was religion, with the Main River and the Ore Mountains representing the rough dividing line between North and South. Dwight explained the major differences:

Northern Germany is Protestant, while southern Germany is Catholic. The former in literature is enlightened, the latter is comparatively in the shade. The ignorance and superstition of the Austrians and Bavarians, are despised and ridiculed by the Germans north of the Mayne, while the heresy of the latter is equally odious to their southern brethren.¹⁸⁸

Dwight and Ticknor, who had learned their German history, mentioned that animosities between Northern and Southern Germans—particularly between Northern Germans and Austrians—dated back to the period of religious wars. Ticknor noted that “the North & y^c South ... have been in fact two distinct Empires ever since the Reformation and the Peace of Westphalia,” and Dwight added that “since that period, they [the Northern

¹⁸⁷ This resulted in intentional cultural transfer of (Americanized versions of) German institutions such as universities, libraries, museums, and kindergarten. See, for example, Adam, “Cultural Baggage,” 79-99.

¹⁸⁸ Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 237.

Germans] have ceased to regard the Austrians as brethren. They now blend with the feeling of hostility that of contempt, and when they speak of the Emperor's subjects, you usually discover a sneer."¹⁸⁹

American travelers found more than just religious differences between Germans north of the Main and those south of it and in Austria. Ticknor particularly liked to observe the common people. In 1817 he wrote,

As to the improvement of the peasantry it is different in different parts of the country. In Austria, Bavaria and all the South, they remain still comparatively ignorant & grofs – in the North it is better, tho' here a real reform has been effected only in Saxony, the Saxon Houses, and a part of Prussia, and nowhere I think, is their condition as good as it is in Scotland & probably not so good as in England
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...

Since he wrote this assessment shortly before actually visiting Southern Germany for the first time, he must have obtained his information from the many books that he studied about each country that he traveled in. A few days or weeks later, he was able to augment this book knowledge with some firsthand experience, when he finished his time in Göttingen and traveled south through the Electorate of Hesse, the Grand Duchy of Hesse, the Free City of Frankfurt, and the Grand Duchy of Baden on his way into France via Strasbourg. Along this route, he noticed that the people in the area of the Main and south of it preferred wine to beer, which he thought was one of the reasons for the “carelessnes & lightnes of character in the people, which I have never seen at all in North Germany.”¹⁹¹ As a matter of fact, he observed:

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.; George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3, 1817, “Germany. Religion.”

¹⁹⁰ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3, 1817, “Germany. Peasantry.”

¹⁹¹ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 4, March 1817, “Frankfurt. Friederich von Schlegel.”

The change of character in y^e Population on this side of y^e Mayn is decisive. I have seen no such full, strong, contented peasantry – no such neat, comfortable houses – no such commodious, well built ~~healthy~~ villages any where in North Germany. Our Postillon, too, to day for the first time took half a pint of wine instead of the liquid fire he would have taken under ye. name of schnaps if he had lived ~~at the~~ North of Frankfurt ~ and the very lowest clafses of people, I find, already consider ~~it~~ wine necessary to their subsistence, so that it is to the people here what cyder is in New-England. I do not suppose all y^e changes I have witnessd to day proceed from wine-drinking, but I do not question that many of them do, for besides that ~~this~~ wine ~~unquestionably~~ has a kindly effect on y^e constitution it is the source of incalculable benefit by preventing the introduction of the burning destruction of their whiskey &c. The rest is to be accounted for from the increased fertility of y^e soil and the consequent greater facility of subsistence.¹⁹²

So in one way, Ticknor’s prejudices were confirmed when he perceived a decisive change in the character of people living south of the Main. The South turned out to be different from the North after all. Of the South, however, Ticknor only experienced this wine region. At that time in 1817, he was not able from his own experience to compare the people he saw in Hesse or Baden to other Southern Germans in Bavaria, Austria, or Württemberg. He would not visit these regions until 1836. Nevertheless, he seems to have felt that he had seen enough of the South to be able to distinguish it from the North.

In another way, perhaps, Ticknor’s image of Southern Germans may have been complicated by finding a healthier, stronger, more contented peasantry living in nicer homes in better villages than those he saw in Northern Germany, especially when he was expecting to see a population more “comparatively ignorant & grofs” than that in the North. Even if they were ignorant and coarse, they seemed more content and relatively better provided for (at least in the area he saw) than those in the North. Interestingly, he attributed much of this difference to the Hessian fondness for wine over the hard liquor of

¹⁹² George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 4, 1 April 1817.

the Northerners. Ticknor personally had strict standards regarding alcohol (at that point in his life he did not drink wine), which may have reflected a Puritanical New England background, but he did not condemn the responsible consumption of alcoholic beverages.¹⁹³

He traced the remaining differences to the more fertile soil in that area than what he had known throughout most of the North. Soil was a feature that many early nineteenth-century Americans observed carefully as they traveled throughout Europe, apparently out of a general belief that the quality of a civilization was in large part due to the quality of the soil that it inhabited.¹⁹⁴ Many of the early nineteenth-century American travelers came from the northern United States, yet though their regions may have been industrializing, many of them—even the urban elites—still seem to have felt a certain closeness to the land.

Ticknor always paid attention to people's physical characteristics, exemplifying a wider American interest in physiognomic theories, which tended to support hierarchical conceptions of race, class, and nature in general. In 1836, after a residence in Dresden and other travels in Northern Germany, the Ticknor family crossed the Ore Mountains, journeyed through Bohemian Austria, and spent two weeks in Vienna. There, Ticknor wrote his observations about the people's physical appearance:

The race of men has been constantly improving since we left the North, growing stouter and better proportioned. In Bohemia, they looked better than in Saxony or

¹⁹³ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 1, 18 October 1815.

¹⁹⁴ Among the various Americans who reported on the quality of local soil in their travel writings were George Ticknor, Anna Ticknor, Henry Dwight, George Rapelje, Aaron Burr, and John Quincy Adams.

Prussia, and here they are better yet, and often remind me even by their features of our New England race, for the Northern German character is much effaced.¹⁹⁵

In this statement, Ticknor indicated the ordered way in which he and other Americans viewed humanity. These physical differences made Austrians “better” than the “effaced” character of the Northern Germans, including Saxons. Not surprisingly, Ticknor placed his own people, the New Englanders (and here he was doubtless thinking only of New Englanders of English stock), essentially in the position of a standard by which the appearances of other peoples are to be judged. Nineteen years earlier (before having visited Austria), Ticknor had more directly compared his images of Germans to Americans, and found the latter superior:

They [Germans] approach undoubtedly ~~much~~ nearer to us, than they or we do to the southern [Latin] tribes; but still yy. differ from us ~~very much~~ even in their structure & forms of yr. bodies. In size, & height I do not know that there is any material variety; but their bodies are certainly rounder than ours ~ that is, it is farther from their sternum to their spine. ~~than ours.~~ In Physiognomy y^e difference is more material. Their face is broader & ye. forehead generally lower – their cheek-bones too are oftener prominent & their chin shorter than ours. As to y^e expression, too, there is a ~~great~~ difference; but that is a matter for Lavater & not for me, though as far as feeling goes in this terra incognita, I think we have the advantage.¹⁹⁶

The Lavater that Ticknor refers to was Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741-1801), a Swiss physiognomist whose writings were some of the most popular German texts translated and published in American magazines in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.¹⁹⁷ In Germany he achieved fame as a mystical theologian, but his

¹⁹⁵ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 4, 19 June 1836; quoted in Long, *Literary Pioneers*, 58-59.

¹⁹⁶ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3, 1817, “Germany. The People.”

¹⁹⁷ Scott Holland Goodnight, *German Literature in American Magazines Prior to 1846* (Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin, 1907), 26-27.

Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe (Leipzig, 1775-1778), which sought to reduce physiognomy to a science, established his reputation abroad.¹⁹⁸ Even as late as 1861, the *New American Cyclopaedia* seemed persuaded that Lavater's physiognomy had merit. "Though he was sometimes deceived," the encyclopedia admitted, "the remarkable skill of Lavater in detecting character by some slight feature was often proved."¹⁹⁹ In addition to Ticknor, other American travelers also referred to Lavater, or at least to the idea that "the general character of a nation is plainly stamped on the countenances of its people" (in the words of Bayard Taylor).²⁰⁰ Americans may not have always arrived at the same conclusions about Germans based on their pseudoscience, but they tirelessly observed and interpreted. Calvert thought that "the [European] inhabitants have a sad look," a "look, transmitted from generation to generation," in contrast to the American, whose countenance "is alive with intellect and feeling and hope."²⁰¹ Anna Ticknor, too, once mentioned how much she was pleased by "the intelligent American physiognomy."²⁰² Charles Loring Brace related an odd story of how, in a conversation with Germans, "I said something about the shape of head of the Germans, and the breadth of the front part as greater than in the American, corresponding to their greater ideality and hopefulness." When his German

¹⁹⁸ George Ripley and Charles A. Dana, ed., *The New American Cyclopaedia: A Popular Dictionary of General Knowledge*, vol. 10 (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1861), 352.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Taylor, *Views A-foot*, 100.

²⁰¹ Calvert, *First Years in Europe*, 17-18.

²⁰² Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3, 4 February 1836.

companions reacted with shock that he would believe such things, he assured them that sensible people in America generally did not believe in full-blown phrenology, and explained that

we did not believe that the brain determined the mind, but that certain traits or rather tendencies of the soul were connected with certain shapes of the head, just as they were with certain shapes of the features. And that the value of the science to me, was not in the manipulation, or in the determination of character from the head, but in its *analysis of human nature*. It was the only *practical* mental philosophy which I knew. It was the only one which analyzed and put together *tendencies* (Eigenschaften) of character, and showed the results which they form in the every-day development of human nature. ... This concerned itself ... with the observation of human nature, as it appears to us. I thought its value as a practical philosophy could not be better shown, than by the universal use of its terms, now through both England and America.

As to Craniology, its division of organs on the head, I considered it defective; yet in its main principles, I had never known it fail with any head.²⁰³

Regardless of an individual's belief or doubt about specific details of physiognomy and related pseudosciences like phrenology and craniology, early nineteenth-century American travelers often accepted general physiognomic theories. In some cases, they went so far as to link body shape and facial features with racial rank along a scale of human perfectibility. In others, they simply interpreted overall facial expression as a sign of the kind of life a person—or a people—lived. Since these travelers came from the privileged American societies, where high social standing was of immense importance, scrutinizing a person's physical appearance was a way for these aristocratic Americans to estimate a person's worth. Good breeding was indicated by attractive physical

²⁰³ Charles Loring Brace, *Home-Life in Germany* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1853), 339-340.

features.²⁰⁴ The “logic” behind such a belief is indicated in the writing of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., himself a Boston Brahmin:

Money kept for two or three generations transforms a race,—I don’t mean merely in manners and hereditary culture, but in blood and bone. Money buys air and sunshine, in which children grow up more kindly, of course, than in close, back streets; it buys country-places to give them happy and healthy summers, good nursing, good doctoring, and the best cuts of beef and mutton. ... As the young females of each successive season come on, the finest specimens among them, other things being equal, are apt to attract those who can afford the expensive luxury of beauty. The physical character of the next generation rises in consequence. It is plain that certain families have in this way acquired an elevated type of face and figure, and that in a small circle of city-connections one may sometimes find models of both sexes which one of the rural counties would find it hard to match from all its townships put together.²⁰⁵

Tyack quotes a humorous episode in which George Ticknor was once telling William M. Thackeray that “one mark of a gentleman was to be well-looking, for good blood showed itself in good features. ‘A pretty speech,’ cries Thackeray, ‘for one broken-nosed man to make to another.’ All Boston has been secretly tickled with it.”²⁰⁶ With Americans coming from this kind of background, it is no wonder that ideas about physiognomy were a popular tool that they employed to categorize the different nations of people with whom they came into contact. And since they generally judged good looks to be those most similar to their own, they could use physiognomic “science” to “prove” that they were a higher order of people than others.

²⁰⁴ Tyack, *George Ticknor and the Boston Brahmins*, 177-178.

²⁰⁵ Oliver Wendell Holmes, *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table* (Boston: Phillips, Samson & Company, 1858), 303-304.

²⁰⁶ Quotation of James Russell Lowell in Tyack, *George Ticknor and the Boston Brahmins*, 178.

4.2.3.2 Prussia as an example of more localized distinctions

Having established stereotypical distinctions between Germans and other peoples, and between Northern Germans and Southern Germans, nineteenth-century American travelers also sought differences among the smaller regions of Germany. Not every single region or state had a unique image for these Americans, but the more prominent ones did. Austria, for example, was seen as militaristic, authoritarian, and oppressive (some of this may have been how Protestant travelers viewed a Catholic land).²⁰⁷ Prussia, especially, conjured up strong mental images for American travelers, which they often contrasted with their images of Saxony. Therefore, we will examine American stereotypes of Prussia in some detail.

Prussia was probably one of the best-known German states, due to its huge size and its political and military importance. But not all parts of Prussia could be considered properly “Prussian.” Several regions with their own unique, independent, local histories and identities had been added to the Kingdom of Prussia by the Congress of Vienna in 1815. An example were the Rhine and Westphalian Provinces in the west, which for many Americans was their first taste of Germany if they entered from the Netherlands along the Rhine River (like the Ticknors). To accurately characterize the land and inhabitants of the Kingdom of Prussia would have been difficult. Depending upon the region of Prussia in which they traveled, Americans found fertile soil or barren sand, vineyards or grain fields, Catholics or Protestants, and much other variety.

²⁰⁷ Voss, “National Stereotypes,” 76-79.

But the province of Brandenburg with the Prussian capital, Berlin, had a more specific image to the American traveler. Most notably, American visitors consistently commented on the dreary, sandy landscape. Though separated by decades, they spoke with one voice on this topic. At the turn of the century, John Quincy Adams called the soil in the vicinity of Berlin “sandy and poor,” where he traveled “chiefly through pines and sands.”²⁰⁸ In 1816, Ticknor “saw literally nothing except the barren sand plain” the minute he crossed the border from Saxony into Prussia, which “grew every mile worse and worse” as he traveled northward toward Berlin, to the extent that when he looked around, he “saw no end to the wearisome waste.”²⁰⁹ Seven years later, Calvert, traveling almost the same route, remarked that “for the greater part of these two days our road lay through a sandy level covered with pines.”²¹⁰ In 1836, Anna Ticknor commented repeatedly on the land as she rode through it. From the Duchy of Anhalt-Dessau, the Ticknors entered Prussia, and “leaving all beauty behind us, and finding nothing but flat, sandy plains,” made their way to Wittenberg.²¹¹ If a people’s fortunes were determined by the soil on which they lived, American travelers could hardly expect to find prospering communities in such a wasteland. And the population in the countryside lived up to expectations, as Anna Ticknor found: “The soil is very poor, and cultivation seems

²⁰⁸ John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs*, 1:227, 203.

²⁰⁹ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 2, 6-7 October 1817.

²¹⁰ Calvert, *First Years in Europe*, 152.

²¹¹ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3, 15 May 1836. Wittenberg, in fact, had formerly been Saxon land. For a discussion of Americans’ perceptions of this city and its place in their images of Saxony and Prussia, see section 5.9.1 of this thesis.

to have been given up, as hopeless. The few cottages and people, we saw, looked wretchedly poor.”²¹²

But even as she was noticing the poverty of the land and the people, Anna Ticknor had to admit that there was an unexpected side to Prussia:

The soil is very poor, and neither villages nor people looked thriving or happy. This struck me yesterday, as well as to-day, for the fourteen miles [from Potsdam] to Berlin ought not to create a separate judgment. Yet Prussia is a most vigorous and flourishing country, and whatever belongs to government establishments is thorough, if not always judicious.²¹³

Whatever impression the dull Brandenburg countryside gave, the capital painted an altogether different picture. In Anna Ticknor’s words,

Berlin is certainly a splendid city, large, active, thriving, full of liberal institutions and encouragements to industry & improvement It is growing, in all ways, and will, no doubt, hereafter impress its power upon learning and science, as it already has on the political condition of the world.²¹⁴

Berlin defied conventional wisdom. Here was a thriving city standing like an oasis in the middle of a wasteland. What enabled it to succeed against the odds? Calvert explained the phenomenon thus:

Berlin has none of the natural furtherances which a great city needs for a queenly preëminence and full prosperity. It has neither hills beneath and about it, nor a flowing river with depth and expanse of water, nor fertile fields around for the daily freshening of its markets. None of these has the Prussian metropolis, which lies in a barren, sandy plain, on a sluggish, petty stream. And yet it is now one of the foremost cities in Europe, having a population of more than half a million. The capital of a large kingdom, when once it gets to count from sixty to a hundred thousand souls, grows rapidly by the momentum given it by wide metropolitan privileges. Sovereign will first made Berlin a capital, and then regal wilfulness made

²¹² Ibid., vol. 4, 30 May 1836.

²¹³ Ibid., vol. 3, 17 May 1836.

²¹⁴ Ibid., vol. 4, 29 May 1836.

it a capacious town. The arbitrary, indomitable Fritz [Frederick the Great, reigned 1740-1786)], finding it too circumscribed for his ambition, enclosed a large outside area, and ordered his subjects to cover the enclosure with houses.²¹⁵

Anna Ticknor agreed that royal initiative had made Berlin what it was. She said that, despite being surrounded by sand,

the liberality and good taste of the king, has made it a splendid city externally; and the encouragement of the arts, the care of providing the best means of instruction in all departments, and to open them liberally to all who wish to improve, and the general industry and activity make it a place well worth seeing and highly to be respected.²¹⁶

Berlin had another advantage: it was the capital of the enormous Kingdom of Prussia. George Ticknor noticed that the capitals of Europe were usually wealthy and magnificent at the expense of their surrounding countrysides. He wrote,

The accumulation of wealth, which, since the ~~dissolution~~ failure of y^e feudal system has always flowed to y^e capital instead of remaining in the country, has brought convenience & splendour into ~~all~~ the fashionable parts of ~~all~~ the great cities. That the remainder is as dark & poor & wretched as in the smaller towns or perhaps even more so, is, of course, to be expected, since ~~an~~ one extreme ~~always~~ produces its opposite in equal extravagance.²¹⁷

And Berlin happened to have a much larger kingdom to draw wealth from than most German capitals. Since so much of its growth had occurred recently, it had a new, modern appearance in contrast to other cities of Europe that still showed their medieval roots. This reminded Dwight of America:

Berlin is a very beautiful city, containing nearly two hundred thousand inhabitants. Its resemblance to the large towns in our country is greater than that of any other

²¹⁵ Calvert, *First Years in Europe*, 160. Although Calvert's visit to Berlin came in 1824, he gave a population figure from closer to the time of his book's publication in 1866.

²¹⁶ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 4, 26 May 1836.

²¹⁷ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3, 1817, "Germany – Villages, towns &."

city I have seen in Europe. The new part of the town has been erected within the last century, and shows its recent origin in every edifice. Its streets are rectangular like those of Philadelphia, and are rather wider than those of our towns.²¹⁸

Ticknor also considered Berlin beautiful.²¹⁹

Yet for all its beauty, modernity, and importance, Berlin could not compete with the more humble Saxon capital, just to the south, for the hearts of those who had visited both. “Berlin,” wrote Calvert, “although six times the size of Dresden, has for the aesthetic traveller fewer attractions.”²²⁰ Anna Ticknor agreed:

I shall not be sorry when we have finished up Berlin. It contains a great deal that is worth seeing, and so it must be seen; but there is little antiquity about it that is interesting, and the specimens of art, seem more articles of wealth and possession than to derive their value and interest from their own beauty, or their age. The great effort seems to be to make old things appear new.²²¹

In other words, “Dresden looks much more like the capital of a rich & ancient monarchy” than Berlin, and that appealed to these New World travelers.²²² And Prussia in general, despite being a “vigorous and flourishing country” with rulers that seemed relatively liberal and enlightened, failed to impress the Americans with its quality of life like Saxony did.

²¹⁸ Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 114. Dwight’s population figure for Berlin is smaller than Calvert’s given above, because Dwight’s book was published nearly four decades earlier.

²¹⁹ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 2, 8 October 1816.

²²⁰ Calvert, *First Years in Europe*, 161.

²²¹ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 4, 25 May 1836.

²²² George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 4, 21 May 1836.

CHAPTER 5

AMERICAN TRAVELERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SAXONS AND SAXONY

5.1 Introduction

Having looked at American perceptions of Northern and Southern Germany in general, and Prussia in particular, we now have a better context for analyzing how American travelers viewed Saxony. In comparison to other German lands, Saxony fared well in Americans' attitudes. Just what made Saxony so special in the hearts of these American visitors? It was actually a combination of factors—cultural, aesthetic, social, and economical—that elite Americans were predisposed to perceive in Saxony and appreciate. These will become clear as we follow the early American travelers in their explorations of Saxony in the first half of the nineteenth century.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, if Anglo-Americans knew anything about Saxony at all, it probably had to do with Luther and the Reformation, the Leipzig trade fairs and battlefield, and possibly the Dresden art gallery and/or Meissen porcelain. But as increasing numbers of Americans traveled there in successive decades, Saxony's fame grew and distinct images emerged in the growing body of travel writings. Adams's "Letters on Silesia" published in 1801 in the *Port Folio* might have informed some readers about what was then the Electorate of Saxony, but most of his comments as he

passed through the region are brief and matter-of-fact.²²³ George Ticknor, traveling with Edward Everett fifteen years later, made a much more thorough exploration of Saxony and commented insightfully on many features of the country that would be echoed by subsequent American travelers over the next several decades as Saxony's reputation grew. The letters and journals that Ticknor sent back to friends and family in 1816 must have been some of the first such detailed accounts of the region that his audience had read from the pen of a countryman. But the Kingdom of Saxony that Ticknor visited in 1816 was already different from the Electorate of Saxony that Adams had visited in 1800. As Dwight said, Saxony "was so diminished in its territory by the Congress of Vienna, that it now forms one of the weakest European monarchies."²²⁴

5.2 Saxons as Noble Victims

5.2.1 American empathy for Saxons regarding their territorial cession to Prussia

Visiting the area just the following year, Ticknor was in a unique position to observe some of the effects of the recent changes. During a semester break at Göttingen, he and Everett made a few-weeks' trip through Prussia and Saxony, where they researched important educational institutions and visited cities, scholars, and battlefields. Ticknor used every opportunity possible to study as much as he could about the countries. The things he learned aroused his empathy for the diminished little Kingdom of Saxony. Heading towards Leipzig via Weimar in September 1816, they first had to

²²³ As a matter of fact, though he has brief positive words for various parts of Saxony, the only thing he spends much time praising is the Elector's collection of prints in Dresden. See John Quincy Adams, *Letters on Silesia*, 246-261.

²²⁴ Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 339.

cross through a section of Prussian territory that, until the Congress of Vienna just the previous year, had belonged to Saxony. Interested in the local perspective on the change of government, Ticknor wrote,

From Eckartsberg to beyond Lützen, we were in that part of Saxony, which was given up to Prussia, and I was curious to see what was the feeling of the people on their new transfer. I therefore spoke freely with all I met, on the point, and I found that all, even the lowest of classes, who generally feel so little here, felt a bitter regret and sometimes indignation at the change, and two, in particular, in speaking of the days of the Saxon Government, called them “their golden times”. – Two or three miles from Lützen we, at last, entered Saxony, shorn of its glories & strength.²²⁵

The people with whom Ticknor spoke were subjects of the King of Prussia, but there was no doubt that they were still Saxons at heart. This was Ticknor’s first introduction to the Saxon homeland, and it must have made an impression.²²⁶ A few days later, Ticknor wrote that a “true Saxon – hates the Prussians & Buonaparte with rival animosity – and loves his own little enlightened & industrious country with all his heart & strength.”²²⁷ And a few days after that, Ticknor referred to “the animosity” toward the Prussian “nation from all parts of Saxony,” explaining that “the disputes & bitternefs between Saxony & Prussia are ~~now~~ extremely rancorous.”²²⁸ Finding that “y^e Saxon peasants are

²²⁵ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 2, 14 September 1816.

²²⁶ For an analysis of the power of the local homeland (*Heimat*) in shaping the regional and national consciousness of Germans, see Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials*. Although Applegate focuses specifically on the Pfalz region in western Germany, the study suggests ways to interpret the real and significant aspects of *Heimat* identity in Saxony and other regions as well.

²²⁷ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 2, 26 September 1816.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, October 1816, “Dresden. Elgin Marbles. Mad. Brun.,” “Dresden. Baron Oelsen, Mengs’s Casts.” This Saxon animosity toward Prussia actually went back at least to the Seven Years’ War in a defeat by Prussia, and it was fueled over the next century by subsequent Saxon losses and Prussian gains, as Prussian power grew and Saxony’s influence waned. Of course, Prussia’s acquisition of most of Saxony in 1815 inflamed the passions to a new level. This rivalry with Prussia became a major part of

more communicative than those of Prussia or Hannover,” Ticknor interviewed a few more of them as he and Everett, making their way from Dresden to Berlin, crossed the northern border of Saxony and once again entered Prussian territory that had formerly been Saxon. He recorded that they “entered the ceded part of Saxony at Elsterwerda.”

As they passed through the region,

I took ~~great~~ pains to speak with every man, I met in the ceded part of Saxony, on the subject of the cession. Without a single exception, I found a decided dislike of Prussia openly expressed even by those in Prussian pay – and as open an attachment to Saxony. The number of persons was not, to be sure, above six or seven; but so distinct an expression of their feelings to a stranger showed a ~~very~~ rooted ~~abhorrence~~ dislike of their present masters in a country, where it is so rare to hear an opinion expressed on politics as it is in Germany.²²⁹

Ticknor was getting the unequivocal message that the proud Saxons loved their native land and despised the Prussians for taking much of their territory and people. And though he realized that Saxony’s cession to Prussia was a form of punishment for Saxony’s alliance with Napoleon during the war, he felt that dismembering this state without regard to the character of the people nor their needs for resources was extraordinarily unfair.²³⁰ In a section titled “Injustice to Saxony,” Ticknor wrote in his journal on the three-year anniversary of Napoleon’s great defeat at the Battle of Leipzig, and he expressed remarkable solidarity with the Saxon people over their losses:

The three last days, which I have passed in Leipzig are the most memorable in its memorable history and yet they are an anniversary which the Leipzig people do not notice. It was y^e emancipation of Europe; but it was partly by the ruin of Saxony,

Saxon identity. See Hartmut Zwahr, “Foreword,” in *Saxony in German History: Culture, Society, and Politics, 1830-1933*, ed. James Retallack (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), xiv-xv.

²²⁹ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 2, 6 October 1816.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 6 September 1815.

that this great battle was won; & therefore no true Saxon ~~will~~ now rejoices in it. Indeed, I have seen many, who could not quite conceal their regret that y^e French times were gone by, and spoke of coming troubles & revolutions in Europe with a kind of ~~concealed~~ suppressed satisfaction, which showed how bitterly y^y. feel their wrongs. In this feeling all Europe, except y^e two countries yt. have profited by the unjust division sympathizes with them. England & France, who agreed on almost no other point at y^e congress of Vienna agreed in protesting against this violence – Spain & portugal, tho' so distant from y^e ~~instant~~ interest were not indifferent – & even all y^e little states of Germany, who, on common occasions are glad eno' to pull one another down united generally against this palpable piece of injustice. Glad, therefore, as I should be to see y^e battle of Leipzig celebrated with all pomp & thanksgiving, I cannot claim it at y^e hands of y^e Saxons.²³¹

For Ticknor, part of Saxony's image seems to have been that of the noble victim, worthy of sympathy. And this image was not limited to Ticknor; he was merely one of the first to show it. The same attitudes are evident in Dwight a decade later. In the ceded part of Saxony (which, now under Prussia was called the Province of Saxony), Dwight found the same Saxon hostility towards Prussia, fresh as it ever was, and explained that splitting Saxony broke up ancient bonds formed by intermarriages, institutions, and history. Furthermore, the Saxon government

has for many years, and almost for ages been so mild and so enlightened, that the Saxons have long felt an enthusiastic attachment to their sovereign. The Saxon Prussians, in addition to these evils, are now compelled to pay much heavier taxes than [*sic*] their brethren in Saxony; and at the present time they are no more reconciled to this union, than when it took place.²³²

The picture he painted makes it very clear that to be a Saxon, subject to the government of Saxony, was a real blessing, while subjection to Prussia was, in comparison, a state of misery:

²³¹ Ibid., vol. 3, 18 October 1816.

²³² Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 154.

Although most of that part of Prussia, over which I have passed since leaving Trauenbrietzen, (Halle however is excepted,) was separated from Saxony and united to Prussia more than ten years since, at the Congress of Vienna, it has lost as yet very little of the Saxon, and acquired very little of the Prussian character. Its dialect is Saxon, much of its territory is in fertility genuine Saxony, and it is much more proud of its Saxon fame during the Reformation, than of the prowess of the armies of Frederick and Blucher. Besides the glorious recollections awakened by the part their ancestors sustained in freeing the human mind from the bondage of superstition, they have other reasons for desiring to remain Saxons, which are more immediately operative. One of the most important is, that the taxes of Saxony are much lighter than those of Prussia. The latter country, hemmed in as she is by France, Russia, and Austria, is under the necessity of maintaining a standing army, larger in proportion to her resources, than any other power in Europe. The southern part of Prussia, particularly Silesia and a part of Saxon Prussia, is fertile; while the northern half, with the exception of a few small tracts of land, is by nature excessively poor. The greatest proportion of taxes consequently falls on the south, and the inhabitants groan under their burdens. ‘Because our taxes are so much heavier than they formerly were, and than those of Saxony now are;’ was the reason every one gave me, in answer to the inquiries why they did not like the Prussian as well as the Saxon government. The Prussians, in this part of the kingdom, speak with a freedom about their monarch and his government, that forms a contrast to the sealed lips or the whispers of the inhabitants of the metropolis. It reminded me more of the freedom of political conversation in France, than any thing I have heard in Germany.²³³

Dwight presented the Saxon subjects of Prussia as victims, and named several reasons why it was better to belong to Saxony than to Prussia. These reasons happened to be issues that many contemporary Americans—based on their own nation’s history—would have strongly identified with: Protestant faith, limited military and taxation, and free speech. Saxony claimed a pivotal place in the Protestant Reformation, which Dwight says had freed “the human mind from the bondage of superstition” (Martin Luther’s city Wittenberg had been part of Saxony until it was ceded to Prussia); Saxony did not keep the kind of standing army that Prussia did; its taxes were thought to be much lower; and

²³³ Ibid., 272-273.

Saxon people seemed more inclined to free speech than most other Germans. Thus, Saxons were people that Americans felt they could identify with in many respects, at least to a greater extent than with other Germans. This also made it easy for Americans to see Saxons as victims of injustice, inclining them to feel empathy for this people and its truncated land. This empathy would not have been enough by itself to create an ongoing American interest in Saxony, but it does seem to have formed a part of Saxony's image in the American mind. By regarding Saxons as noble victims and feeling compassion for these good, honest, unfortunate folk, Americans may have predisposed themselves to perceive Saxony more favorably than Prussia—that big, proud, militaristic, bullying neighbor to the north. The underdog image is an endearing one.

5.2.2 Saxony ravaged by more than its share of wars

Another reason for the noble victim image is that Saxony had suffered many devastations from being caught in between outside warring powers. The scars from the most recent war were still visible to American visitors in the first several years after 1815. Ticknor himself heard firsthand accounts of the horrors, as in this interview with a peasant woman near the damaged town of Stötteritz in 1816:

She said that she never left y^e village during the battle and spent most of the time in a cellar to keep out of y^e way of y^e balls & bombs; – that she did not know but the country had gained by the victory and she hoped it had, for she had lost enough by it – that she had two sons killed in y^e battle – and that her husband and remaining son had died of the hospital fever, wh. immediately after y^e campaign ravaged Saxony – and that now she was left quite alone in the world to get her bread as she could. The village which is ~~very~~ small, suffered terribly she said, during y^e battle & it was easy to see that many houses had been burnt down; but this was nothing she went on, to the times, when they all had y^e hospital fever, that came out of Leipzig and there were not well ones enough left to take care of y^e sick or to bury the dead, so that in

one house, which she pointed out to me, a man and his wife remained many days unburied till assistance came from Leipzig.²³⁴

But Napoleon's were just the latest in a long history of wars that had ravaged the land, and this contributed to Saxony's victim image. Dwight called Saxony "the great battle-ground of Germany, and Germany more than any other country, the battle-ground of Europe."²³⁵ Not only, he pointed out, was it sandwiched between the two great German rivals, Prussia and Austria, it was also in the direct warpath of French and Russian armies whenever they fought each other. It faced ruin and destruction in the Thirty Years' War and the Seven Years' War, as well as the recent Napoleonic Wars.²³⁶ Dwight felt it was a credit to the Saxon character that they persevered through all these catastrophes:

It has been not merely the great scene of conflict, but has been compelled to nourish foreign armies, as well as to feel the devastations which they spread around them. Still, so fruitful is the soil, so great the industry of the inhabitants, so universal their intelligence, and I should also add, so wise has been the administration of the government, that Saxony has entirely recovered from these repeated and terrible ravages, in a shorter period than any other country which has been equally afflicted. The inhabitants often spoke of these calamities, and of the dangers to which they were exposed, with a feeling awakened only by sad experience.²³⁷

Dwight saw that, although Saxons were victims, they were not helpless nor hopeless. He was impressed at how quickly they were able to recover, and attributed this resilience to their fertile soil, their industry and intelligence, and their wise government. The image of

²³⁴ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3, 17 October 1816.

²³⁵ Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 339.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 339-340.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 340.

these hard-working people pulling themselves up by their bootstraps seems to have appealed to early American travelers.

5.3 The Fertility of Saxon Soil

As the early nineteenth-century American traveler passed through the former Saxon lands and into Saxony proper, the Kingdom of Saxony, what other images would he or she have formed of this land and its people? One of the first impressions, as noted above, was usually the quality of the soil and the appearance of the landscape. As was often the case, well-informed American travelers already had an expectation of this land based on their European sources. And in this case, sight confirmed reputation: Saxony was one of the most fertile places in Europe. Many travelers, including George and Anna Ticknor, John Adams, and John Quincy Adams, commented on the fertility of Saxon soil.²³⁸ Dwight especially effused about “the celebrity which Saxony has so long enjoyed, for the fertility of its soil,” to the extent that “the word Saxony, to the ears of the Germans, and to those of all travellers who have associated much with them, is synonymous with fertility.”²³⁹ He also boldly pointed out the direct connection he saw between quality of land and quality of inhabitants:

Its soil is surpassed by none in Europe of a similar extent, with the exception of Lombardy and the Netherlands, and is equalled by none in Germany, unless by that part of Baden immediately bordering the Rhine. It is almost literally filled with inhabitants; but so rich is the soil, and so comparatively light are the taxes, that the peasants here are better clad, better educated, and enjoy more of the comforts of life, than in any part of Europe I have seen. They can universally read and write, while

²³⁸ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 4, 31 May 1836; John Adams, Braintree, Massachusetts, to the President of Congress, 4 August 1779, in Wharton, ed. *Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence*, 3:284-285; John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs*, 1:228.

²³⁹ Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 258-259.

some of them take one or more newspapers, and have some knowledge of the literature of Germany. A few of them have libraries, and in this respect, as well as in the amount of their incomes, and in the comforts of life, they resemble our farmers of the northern states, more than any of the peasantry of the continent, many of whom are but little elevated above the blacks of the southern states. The villages here are much larger, cleaner, and better built, than any others in Europe, and are truly gladdening to the eye of the traveller, so long accustomed to the dirty villages of France and to the miserable-looking houses of the peasantry of sandy Prussia.²⁴⁰

For Dwight, rich soil and light governance were prerequisites for a productive, educated, healthy population. Under these conditions, even peasants could rise to a high level of civilization, almost on par with American farmers. Again, here is an example of a nineteenth-century American rating his own people toward the top of a hierarchy of human civilization. Dwight's American traveler is happy to finally find in Europe such an advanced, refined population where the villages look good and even the people of the land are cultured. In other words, Saxony gladdens the American traveler's eye by being more like home than other places in Europe.

5.4 The High Quality of the Population

5.4.1 Educated and cultivated

Saxony's reputation as a well-educated, cultured nation was a significant aspect of American travelers' image of it. Dwight called Saxony and Prussia "the two most enlightened countries on the continent, ... both rapidly advancing in knowledge and science."²⁴¹ He said that Saxons consider Prussians inferior to themselves in that "love of learning, which has for so long a period distinguished Saxony, even in Germany," and

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 339.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 347.

though this claim had historical merit, Dwight saw the coming day when Saxony would no longer enjoy intellectual superiority over certain regions of an ascendant Prussia.²⁴² But at least for the time being, Dwight could still speak of Saxony's "learning and intelligence, which now elevates that little state above every other."²⁴³ Bancroft, in fact, a few years before Dwight, wrote that Prussian education was already the best in Germany.²⁴⁴ But often, Americans named Saxon and Prussian education together as among the best in Germany or even Europe, like Horace Mann did in 1843.²⁴⁵ Saxony's intimate association with the Protestant Reformation provided the foundation for much of its enduring educational repute. Protestants made the expansion of education a priority from the very beginning.²⁴⁶ Then, an extensive school reform law in 1835 propelled Saxon education to the cutting edge of modernity, and made it a model for later foreign reformers—like American Horace Mann and Brit John Bashford—to study in hopes of improving education in their own countries.²⁴⁷ Even as early as 1816, George Ticknor took a break from Göttingen to roam Saxon (and former Saxon) lands and study various exemplary local educational institutions.

²⁴² Ibid., 346-347.

²⁴³ Ibid., 347.

²⁴⁴ Howe, *Life and Letters of George Bancroft*, 1:89-90.

²⁴⁵ Horace Mann, *Life and Works of Horace Mann*, ed. Mary Mann, vol. 3, *Annual Reports on Education* (Boston: Horace B. Fuller, 1868), 258.

²⁴⁶ John L. Bashford, *Elementary Education in Saxony* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1881), 2.

²⁴⁷ W. Pätzold, *Geschichte des Schulwesens im Königreich Sachsen*, (Leipzig and Frankfurt a.M.: Kesselringsche Hofbuchandlung (E. v. Mayer) Verlag, 1908), 143.

5.4.2 *Content and quiet*

Another quality about Saxony that struck American travelers, especially the Ticknors, was the contented, quiet, orderly way in which inhabitants seemed to live their lives. In many cases, this observation was made of the peasantry or artisans, though it was also often claimed for the population at large. To an extent, George Ticknor considered this a trait of Saxons in general—not just the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Saxony, but also those of other Saxon states ruled by the Ernestine branch of the Wettin dynasty, which were clustered in the region of Thuringia to the west of the Kingdom of Saxony.²⁴⁸ In the Grand Duchy of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, for example, he “found every where traces of that humane and advanced civilization, which does so much credit to the Saxon character, and renders the Saxon population so contented and moral.”²⁴⁹ But usually he spoke of the Kingdom of Saxony. This “pleasant, quiet land of Saxony,” he says, has a population that “inspires more confidence, & seems more contented & comfortable” than that of Prussia.²⁵⁰ Anna Ticknor seemed even more impressed by this quiet, contented spirit, which was especially manifest in the city of Dresden. She repeatedly commented on it. Two days after arriving in Dresden, she wrote in her journal, “We are much struck with the good order & quiet of this pleasant city. Perhaps they are too quiet, for much gaiety of spirits, for I have not heard a shout, nor even a loud

²⁴⁸ These Saxon states were the Grand Duchy of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, the Duchy of Saxe-Meiningen, the Duchy of Saxe-Altenburg, and the Duchy of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha (the latter two were formed in 1826 by a reshuffling of territories after the breakup of the Duchy of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg).

²⁴⁹ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3, 17 November 1835.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, 31 May 1836.

voice from the streets, since I have been here.”²⁵¹ A month later, seeing throngs of people assembled for a public celebration of the king’s birthday, Anna Ticknor’s original impression was confirmed: “The quiet and docility of such a mass struck me repeatedly in the day. Though pressing earnestly together, it was perfectly easy to pass through the densest part; a token also of kind & accommodating tempers.”²⁵² After all the day’s events, Anna Ticknor summed up, “And so the day ended, happily and peacefully, no disturbance, no noise, no hurry: – I should have liked it better, if there had been more noise and token of gay spirits; but it is a quiet population.”²⁵³ It was pleasant to be among such a mild people, even if they were less exciting than one might wish. A person could feel safe in Dresden, whether in the market crowds or leaving a theater at night.²⁵⁴

Anna Ticknor attributed this to the character of the people more than to the presence of security forces:

The lowest class of hard working shop keepers, mechanics, and those, who fill the streets, at their various employments, strike me very much, they have so quiet, contented and industrious an appearance. ... There are no urgent solicitations, no teasing to buy, but all try to gain an honest penny; and they live so simply, are so contented with light fare, and so thankful, cheerfully, agreeably thankful for your patronage, it is a pleasure to buy. ... There is, I am told, terrible poverty among the peasantry, in some parts of the country, but quiet and order are still universal. There is no beggary in the streets.

There is to be sure, a vigilant police, and sentinels before the palaces and public buildings, are hints not to be disregarded; but there is nothing to repress, no symptoms of mischief, or ill-temper or rudeness. ... It is a kind-hearted, gentle,

²⁵¹ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3, 22 November 1835.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, vol. 3, 27 December 1835.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, January 1836, 26 April 1836.

industrious people, giving a stranger the pleasant sensation of confidence in their honesty and good intentions, & affording the pleasure of a sort of sympathy.²⁵⁵

Although Anna Ticknor claimed that “quiet and order are still universal” throughout the country of Saxony, these qualities were most often observed in Dresden. They may indeed have been common to Saxons in general, but Leipzig could make a different impression. After one night there, Anna Ticknor did not find the same kind of quiet order that she was used to in the capital:

Leipsic is certainly an unsavoury and uninteresting place, to a visiter of one night. I was waked this morning, with a rattling and clattering of tongues, as if of an army of monkeys; such as is never heard in my good refined city of Dresden, and, looking out upon the narrow street below, found a butter and egg market, beneath the windows, vegetables, flowers and all sorts of things stretching away in the distance, there being certainly more women and tongues than any thing else.²⁵⁶

Then again, this may not have accurately reflected the normal local temperament, since Anna Ticknor also mentioned that Leipzig “looks very busy & active, the impulse of the great fair has not yet passed away, for it is but just over.”²⁵⁷ Even if quietness was not quite as universal in Saxony as some thought, American visitors still admired Saxons for their overall contentedness. Taylor observed, “As far as I have yet seen, Saxony is a prosperous and happy country. The people are noted all over Germany for their honest, social character, which is written on their cheerful, open countenances.”²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ Ibid., vol. 3, 26 April 1836; see also further description of the “good temper” of the Dresdeners in *ibid.*, vol. 3, 15 January 1836. George Ticknor, too, made very similar observations in his *Travel Journals*, vol. 3, 20 December 1835.

²⁵⁶ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3, 14 May 1836.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., vol. 3, 13 May 1836.

²⁵⁸ Taylor, *Views A-foot*, 134.

5.4.3 *The respectable royal family*

Much of this contentedness was related to their government. “The people,” Anna Ticknor wrote, “are notoriously contented with their rulers.”²⁵⁹ We have already seen how low taxation endeared Saxons to their king. American travelers also frequently commented on other qualities of the royal family that made them respectable in the eyes of their subjects and foreign visitors. Specifically, the Americans pointed out their piety, humility, intellectual cultivation, and relative “liberality.”

American visitors very often commented on the interesting circumstance that the King of Saxony was a Catholic, whereas the vast majority of Saxons were Protestants.²⁶⁰ Regardless of who held the throne in the early- to mid-nineteenth century, the situation was the same. In 1835, during the reign of Anthony (1827-1836), Anna Ticknor remarked that “it seems strange that the king of a protestant people, should be a strict catholic.”²⁶¹ Dwight explained of the previous monarch, Frederick Augustus (reigned as elector 1763-1806, as king 1806-1827), that, though the people would prefer their sovereign to share their faith, they were happy with his rule: “so much has he acted like a father to his people, that they would not exchange him for the best Protestant king in Europe.”²⁶² Although his personal belief appeared to be deep and genuine, he allowed

²⁵⁹ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 4, 31 May 1836.

²⁶⁰ For a couple typical examples see Legaré, *Writings of Hugh Swinton Legaré*, 1:139; and Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 357-358.

²⁶¹ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3, 22 November 1835.

²⁶² Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 356.

his subjects full freedom to practice their Lutheran faith, and gave no preference to those who converted to Catholicism.²⁶³

George Ticknor saw King Frederick Augustus in 1816 at a moving Mass. Afterwards the royal family exited the chapel by a long hall, passing close by Ticknor on their way back to the castle, which prompted Ticknor to observe,

The King passes here without any guard and in an inconsiderable attendance through the midst of his people who love him, ~~I think~~ it is said more truly than any people in Europe now love their sovereign; and here at an appointed place, every one who chooses is permitted and requested to deliver his petition in person, which it is certain, the King himself, as personally reads and considers, for he is a man of much character and independence.²⁶⁴

This personal attention to individual cases offers a glimpse of the character of the man who was called Frederick August “the Just.” Ticknor gave another example of this king’s sense of justice, which he contrasted with an earlier king’s dishonesty in creating most of Dresden’s *Großer Garten* (Great Garden):

The [earlier king’s] love of splendor was, however, greater than his love of justice, and when he had got the land and made a beautiful Garden for his own recreation and that of his people, he refused or neglected to pay for it. – His successor was not more scrupulous – and it may be considered a striking instance of the conscientious honesty of the present King, that after a lapse of above sixty years, he called together the representatives of these creditors, of his own accord and payed the debt with compound interest.²⁶⁵

Dwight, like Ticknor, also said of Frederick Augustus in 1826, “He is more beloved by his subjects, than any monarch on the continent, and often when speaking of him, they

²⁶³ Ibid., 356-358. Ticknor also remarked that King Frederick Augustus’s faith was sincere—see George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 22 August 1816, vol. 4: 1817, “Germany. Religion.”

²⁶⁴ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 2: 22 September 1816.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., vol. 2, 30 September 1816.

call him our good old king.”²⁶⁶ Dwight directly linked the happy state of the Saxon people to the wise administration of this king:

When he looks around him, and beholds the poverty of Prussia, the semicivilization of the Russians, the physical character of the Austrians, and contrasts them with the prosperous and intelligent Saxons, he finds at least in times of peace, a satisfaction, which his neighbours may look for in vain. I can scarcely conceive of a more enviable situation, ... than that of a monarch, who like Frederick Augustus, can look upon his people with the feelings of a parent, and discover wherever he goes, that they regard him with the strongest affection; who in looking around him, sees prosperity blessing the labours of his industrious subjects, and finds them continually rising in the scale of existence; who in traversing his dominions, learns that there is not a village where the means of instruction are not provided for every peasant, and that scarce an individual exists, who has reached adult years, that has not availed himself of the opportunities which have been afforded to him, to gain knowledge; who, at the same time, perceives a literary enthusiasm and research among the enlightened men of his nation, by which the boundaries of the human mind are enlarged, and discovers that the happiness of the world has been greatly augmented by the institutions he has founded and patronised, remembering as he does, that prayers are continually ascending from the hearts of his subjects, that he may long be continued to them, as the greatest earthly blessing which they can receive.*

* This good old King died a few months after the date of this letter.²⁶⁷

Frederick Augustus’s successor, Anthony, and his family were almost as highly praised by American observers, even though the Saxon people had once revolted against him. Upon arriving in Dresden in 1835, Anna Ticknor was briefed by the English minister, Francis-Reginald Forbes, on the status of the royal family:

M^r. Forbes says, there cannot be more sensible or simple people, than the aged king, and his connections, nieces & nephews, for he has no children. Five years since, a partial revolution took place here, the people feeling with much respect for their sovereign, considerably more liberal than he did, and he was induced, (to save his

²⁶⁶ Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 356.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 357.

place) to accept his nephew [Frederick Augustus II] as a sort of co-king. He is called co-regent, and is, I hear, an intelligent and judicious person.²⁶⁸

Anna Ticknor initially exhibited some skepticism about how beloved the king actually was. Upon witnessing throngs of Saxon subjects filling Dresden's squares to celebrate King Anthony's eightieth birthday, she wrote,

He has been highly delighted at the notice taken of the day, and I suppose has as much right to be, as any such puppet can have; for he has been harmless, civil, and honest, and I have been told so often, that he is loved here, that I begin to believe it. But it remains to be seen, or rather to be heard, where the suggestions for these honours, and the money to pay for them comes from.²⁶⁹

George Ticknor did not doubt the sincerity of the people's affection for the king, but he regarded King Anthony as so old that he could be no more than a kindly, harmless, weak ruler. He wrote that the birthday celebration "was a fête extremely creditable to those who gave it, & to the Old King to whom it was given, for it was a tribute to mere honesty & good intentions; the King, having, I believe, no other attractive qualities whatever."²⁷⁰

Yet King Anthony's "honesty & good intentions" won him Americans' approval. Henry Wikoff, writing in 1880, recalled his brief 1835 visit to Saxony and in an embellishment of history says of "the sagacious Anthony":

There was not a more popular man in Germany than Anthony, the reigning King of Saxony. He was the first who made up his mind, shut his eyes, and swallowed the constitutional pill. To be sure, a little pressure was necessary. Insurrections broke out in Dresden and Leipsic in 1831; but, rather than fight about it, he consented to consign absolutism to the tomb of the Capulets, and granted a constitution. It was working well, and everybody was satisfied.²⁷¹

²⁶⁸ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 23 November 1835.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 27 December 1835.

²⁷⁰ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 27 December 1835.

²⁷¹ Wikoff, *Reminiscences of an Idler*, 326.

This quote from Wikoff is an example of how myth can overshadow history. Wikoff was likely just reporting what he had heard. He did not take the time to get his facts straight; the insurrections he referred to actually occurred in 1830. Americans liked to believe that the Saxon kings were uniformly loved by their people, and that their rule was enlightened, progressive, and modern. But Wikoff erred when he said King Anthony was the *first* to grant his people a constitution. Southwestern German states had had constitutions since 1815. Thus, Saxony was a “relative latecomer to the German family of constitutional monarchies,” a fact that would not have been lost on the Saxon population, which grew increasingly restless in the 1820s until a revolution finally gained them the constitutional changes they wanted.²⁷²

But despite episodes like the 1830 revolution, American visitors found much to admire about the Saxon monarch. In fact, they were impressed by the entire royal family. Americans mainly respected their character, for the small kingdom had relatively little remaining military or political power, or wealth of income, which royalty are so often judged by. The Saxon rulers’ opulent riches from a century before had been greatly diminished, as George Ticknor wrote in 1835:

It was once a rich Kingdom. From 1697 to 1763, the Electors of Saxony were Kings of Poland, & had great revenues at their command, which were still very ample, until the fall of Buonaparte & the cruel partition of Saxony in 1815, when it was reduced to its present limits of a million and an half of population, with an income

²⁷² James Retallack, “‘Why Can’t a Saxon Be More Like a Prussian?’ Regional Identities and the Birth of Modern Political Culture in Germany, 1866-67,” *Canadian Journal of History* (April 1997), 3, [journal online]; available from http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3686/is_199704/ai_n8761196/pg_1. See also Hartmut Zwahr, *Revolutionen in Sachsen: Beiträge zur Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte* (Weimar, Cologne, and Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1996), 38-39.

of a little less than three million three hundred thousand dollars of our money applicable to the purposes of the state.²⁷³

Yet this image of an unpretentious ruling family who distinguished themselves by the nobility of their hearts and minds rather than by ostentatious displays of wealth and power seemed to appeal to staid New Englanders like the Ticknors.²⁷⁴ The more Anna Ticknor saw of them, the more she was struck by their “respectability and good feeling.”²⁷⁵ George Ticknor asserted that

nothing can be more respectable, than the private character of the whole of the royal family – they seem, too, to be much respected and valued by their subjects – especially the old King, who is perfectly honest and well-meaning, and the co-regent, who is looked upon as a capable and efficient governor of the state.²⁷⁶

Some of them were distinguished for their genuine literary accomplishments. Princess Amalia wrote and published a popular play, “Der Oheim” (“The Uncle”), under the pseudonym Amalie Heiter in 1835. Her brother, Prince John (who later reigned as king from 1854 to 1873), was a renowned translator of Dante under the pseudonym

²⁷³ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 22 November 1835.

²⁷⁴ Anna Ticknor overtly claimed to scorn the materialistic emptiness of vain riches, but her writings also betray a certain fascination with wealthy displays. Take, for example, her response to the treasures in the *Grünes Gewölbe*: “It is melancholy to think of the time, taste and talents wasted, and of the immense amount of idle riches hoarded here; – for what! To be sure, it would be still worse to destroy such things, and some body must hoard them, or they would not be riches.” Also, whenever Anna attended events at court, she always wrote detailed descriptions of the jewels that all the royalty wore. Yet even these fine riches did not contradict the royal family’s reputation for moderation and simplicity in comparison to other European royalty. The treasures they displayed were old, inherited riches from wealthier ages. See Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 1 January 1836, 17 February 1836, 31 March 1836.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 3: 4 April 1836.

²⁷⁶ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 26 December 1835.

Philalethes.²⁷⁷ Growing out of a love of Dante and literary interests in general, George Ticknor and Prince John formed a friendship that survived from 1836 until Ticknor's death in 1871.²⁷⁸ But not only was Prince John admirable for his intellect (according to Motley, "Prince John would have been a distinguished professor, if he had not happened to be born in the purple"), Ticknor was also pleased with his humility, remarking that "nothing could be more simple and unpretending than his manner."²⁷⁹

The Ticknors were so impressed with the personal character of the royal family, and with the wise and effective administration of the Kings of Saxony throughout the nineteenth century, that they apparently viewed them through rose-colored glasses. When revolutions gripped Europe in 1848, George Ticknor initially thought Saxony would be immune, because of the Wettins' beneficent rule. From the comfort of his Boston home, he wrote to Prince John, "In Saxony, where your family has so long governed its people in gentleness and love, we cannot believe that the relations of Prince and subject will be seriously disturbed."²⁸⁰ When citizens of Dresden revolted in the 1849 May Uprising, calling for a more liberal government, Ticknor was baffled:

It seems absolutely incredible, that there should be any large body of the people in Saxony so dissatisfied or so suffering, as to be willing to risque their lives to obtain changes which the King finds it contrary to his duty to grant. That there should be

²⁷⁷ Roger Paulin, "An Unpublished Letter of King John of Saxony (Philalethes) to George Ticknor," *German Life and Letters* 41 (July 1988): 426-429

²⁷⁸ For the exchange of letters that kept their friendship alive despite three and a half decades of living on different continents, see Daenell, ed., *Briefwechsel*; and Paulin, "Unpublished Letter." For an additional scholarly analysis of this relationship, see Brüning, "König Johann von Sachsen," 48-52.

²⁷⁹ Motley, *Correspondence*, 1:144; George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 8 January 1836.

²⁸⁰ George Ticknor, Boston, to Prince John, Pillnitz, 30 July 1848, in Daenell, ed., *Briefwechsel*, 29.

violent men there and prolétaires, is to be expected. In these troubled times, they appear every where. But there cannot be many such in Saxony, who were born and bred there. The government of your family has been too kind, too faithful, too paternal; – the people are too well off in their material resources and have been too well taught to understand their own position and rights, as well as what they owe to others to be much infected with a spirit of violence.²⁸¹

By suggesting that the revolt was the work of a foreign “Jacobin” minority, Ticknor reconciled his view of the Saxons as a content population who adored their rulers with the fact that they were now taking up arms in discontent against these rulers. To the Ticknors and other Americans viewing Saxony from the same perspective, the government and the people were (or should have been) one big happy family.

The benevolent administration of the monarchy, the civilized population that it provided for, and the richness of the nation in culture if not in revenue, were united in a description by Anna Ticknor:

It is in the character of the people, the gentle and humane tone of its government, and its public institutions, that the little kingdom of Saxony finds its distinction now. Education is carefully provided for, laws are strictly and impartially enforced, and therefore observed, and great attention is now beginning to be paid, to the regulation of prisons, and the best modes of punishment. The more I have seen of the poverty of the peasantry, and known of the circumscribed means of the nobility, the more wonder I feel at the splendour and riches of the collections in art, and for instruction; for the contrast grows constantly stronger to me.

The reigning family are very rich by long inheritance; they do what can be done to increase the prosperity of the people, and their private liberality is honourable to them. At the same time, they are able to preserve these beautiful collections, and to add some treasures to them; and, having had the good sense to place over each, men fitted by science & taste, to preserve and improve the articles and arrangement, the justice done to such treasures is as gratifying as the information gained by them, and the pleasure from their intrinsic beauty.²⁸²

²⁸¹ George Ticknor, Boston, to Prince John, Pillnitz, 2 June 1849, in Daenell, ed., *Briefwechsel*, 39.

²⁸² Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 26 April 1836.

5.5 Opportunities for Cultural and Educational Improvement

Most of the early nineteenth-century American travelers were highly educated societal elites, and one of the big reasons for traveling to Europe was to advance their education in ways that the United States could not provide.²⁸³ Many were seeking the best universities, the most important museums, and the locations where the great events of Western history actually happened. The Ticknors represented this group at its education-seeking extreme. As a student, George Ticknor announced, “The whole tour in Europe I consider a sacrifice of enjoyment to improvement,” and then made good on this statement by doing almost nothing but learning.²⁸⁴ When not in university classes, he was methodically researching educational institutions, cities, and art, even during his “vacations.” Back in Europe two decades later with his family, Ticknor was less intensely studious, but there was no doubt that this sojourn was also meant to be an “improving” experience. Little Anna (the oldest daughter) was provided with tutors in music, art, and language the moment the family settled in a city, while the parents established themselves in the best society, attending theater, opera, balls, museums, etc. But they were not interested in superficial glamour; they privately scorned people they considered stupid, while pursuing intelligent interactions with those whose character and learning they respected. In their quiet moments at home, George Ticknor would read Dante and Shakespeare to the family, and Anna Ticknor would write in her journal religiously. Even when she was too tired to do much else, she still “lounged

²⁸³ Voss, “National Stereotypes,” 21; Stowe, *Going Abroad*, 6.

²⁸⁴ George Ticknor, to Mr. Haven, Portsmouth, July 1814, in George Ticknor, *Life, Letters, and Journals*, 1:23.

industriously.”²⁸⁵ For travelers like this, who wanted to use every experience for self-improvement, a destination needed to have a high level of quality educational and cultural offerings. Saxony earned a reputation for providing some of the best of these experiences that money could buy, especially in relation to its small size.

5.6 Dresden, the Main Attraction

Most of this opportunity for Americans for cultural education was found in Dresden. For this reason and others, Dresden was the main attraction for Americans coming to Saxony in the first half of the nineteenth century.²⁸⁶ It was one of the most important places Irving, the Coopers, the Ticknors, and countless others later in the century came to reside for months or more. It also made a worthwhile stop for those whose main destination was somewhere else (for example, as they traveled between Prussia and Austria); some of these short-term visitors wished they could stay longer.²⁸⁷ Dresden was not an especially large capital, like Paris, London, Berlin, or Rome. But it was a pleasant city that boasted world-class galleries and collections, a welcoming royal court and high society (to the right people), and a low cost of living. This combination of factors strongly appealed to educated American travelers looking for opportunities for improvement.

²⁸⁵ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 4: 27 May 1836.

²⁸⁶ In the second half of the century, in addition to Dresden, Leipzig was also a significant draw for Americans, as large numbers of them came to study at the university there.

²⁸⁷ Wikoff remarked, “I was so carried away by its attractions that I had half a notion to abandon [Edwin] Forrest, and let him proceed alone to Paris.” See Wikoff, *Reminiscences of an Idler*, 325. Legaré also wished he could have stayed longer. See Legaré, *Writings of Hugh Swinton Legaré*, 1:142.

5.6.1 “The pleasant and excellent character of this agreeable little city”

Approaching Dresden—from any direction—travelers found the city picturesque, both from its scenic situation at a curve of the Elbe River, with hills looming in the distance, and also from the spires of the city rising “in just the right spots,” visible for miles.²⁸⁸ The overall atmosphere of the city was pleasant, and it was noted for its quietness and cleanness.²⁸⁹ As George Ticknor saw it,

The whole city is clean & nice The streets themselves are well paved, & constantly swept; they have side-walks, which are not common on the continent; and they are beautifully lighted at night with gas. The police is good ~ not severe nor obvious – for the population is, by its very nature, quiet, orderly & industrious. . . . Indeed, in the great points of cleanliness, lighting by night & quiet order, I do not know that a city can be more respectable. In each of these particulars, it is much in advance, for instance, of even Boston. . . .

But, though the general air & look of Dresden is good, it has hardly any really fine buildings, architecturally considered.²⁹⁰

Anna Ticknor agreed with her husband that, “taken as a whole, Dresden cannot boast of much architectural beauty, but it is all well, thoroughly, and neatly built.”²⁹¹ This tasteful unity of architecturally understated buildings gave her, upon entering the city, an “impression of elegance, that I have not received from the first sight of any other

²⁸⁸ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: April 1836, “Dresden. Its Churches,” “Dresden. Its general appearance; its walks, gardens &c.”; Taylor, *Views A-foot*, 128-129; Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 26 April 1836; George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 2: 20 September 1816.

²⁸⁹ Taylor, *Views A-foot*, 129; George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 2: 22 November 1835. See also a long section in Anna Ticknor’s journal where she describes being “constantly more and more struck with the pleasant and excellent character of this agreeable little city” and the pleasant nature of its inhabitants, in Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 15 January 1836.

²⁹⁰ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: April 1836, “Dresden. The city; its streets; its police,” “Dresden. The Palaces.”

²⁹¹ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 26 April 1836.

capital.”²⁹² Granted, Dresden did possess some grand palaces, which George Ticknor identified as the *Schloß* (i.e., *Residenzschloß*, or Royal Palace), the “Palace of the Princes,” the Brühl Palace, the *Zwinger*, and the Japanese Palace. But for Ticknor, these palaces did nothing to enhance Dresden’s aesthetic appeal. He felt that the first three of these “palaces, – enormously large & out of all proportion to the wants of a Kingdom like Saxony even when its wants were greatest, – produce hardly any effect,” but that “they are as nothing compared with what was devised in the wasteful days of the Polish Kings,” of which the latter two were examples. The churches were only a little easier on Ticknor’s eye than the palaces, but his overall impression was that, despite a few pretentious eyesores, “still, the appearance of Dresden is good, taken as a whole.”²⁹³

And Dresden was growing—in a good way. Between his first visit in 1816 and his family’s residence there in 1835-1836, George Ticknor noticed this ongoing development:

It has been improved, too, and has increased materially in size since I was here twenty years ago & especially within the last ten years, so that, in many parts of the city there is an air of freshness and in all a neatness that belongs only to what is well-sustained & preserved ~ an air which it is always gratifying to witness & which brings with it ideas of contentment & cheerfulness.²⁹⁴

By 1836, according to Ticknor, Dresden’s population was, “including its military, ... something more than seventy thousand inhabitants, or just about as large as Boston.”²⁹⁵

²⁹² Ibid., 20 November 1835.

²⁹³ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: April 1836, “Dresden. The Palaces.” – “Dresden. Its Churches.”

²⁹⁴ Ibid., April 1836, “Dresden. Its general appearance; its walks, gardens &c.”

²⁹⁵ Ibid., April 1836, “Dresden. The City. Its size & appearance.”

This military presence was something in particular that Anna Ticknor said would “strike Americans very much on their first knowledge of Dresden.” Soldiers were “always visible, as if war or disturbances were constantly present.”²⁹⁶ But in the Dresden that the American visitors knew, peace ruled. George Ticknor recalled that “the only disturbance I have seen was made by a drunken Englishman.”²⁹⁷

“Another thing, too,” the Ticknors felt, “that adds to the pleasant & cheerful look of Dresden is, its gardens & publick walks.”²⁹⁸ Because of Dresden’s agreeable atmosphere, with its neatly paved streets and its “nice promenades, and cheerful walks,” the Ticknors enjoyed going for rides and walks in town.²⁹⁹ The old city ramparts, the Brühl Terrace, and the Great Garden became some of their favorite places (among many) to get outdoors, enjoy the city, and observe the local people.³⁰⁰

The picturesque setting, nice parks, clean appearance, peaceful atmosphere, and general charm of Dresden made it a very pleasant city to spend time in for many

²⁹⁶ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 26 April 1836. Despite the ubiquity of soldiers in Dresden, this did not detract from Saxony’s image as a peaceful state, which placed its “faith in something besides cannon,” in contrast to the military reputations of its neighbors Prussia and Austria. See John Weiss, ed., *The Life and Correspondence of Theodore Parker, Minister of the Twenty-Eighth Congregational Society, Boston*, vol. 1 (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1864), 236. Even though Anna Ticknor thought Dresden maintained a large, visible military presence, she still referred to Saxony as “a nation ... that can summon, in time of war, only 20,000 effective men.” See Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 17 February 1836.

²⁹⁷ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: April 1836, “Dresden. The Palaces.”

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, April 1836, “Dresden. Its general appearance; its walks, gardens &c.”

²⁹⁹ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 23 November 1835. See also George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: April 1836, “Dresden. Its general appearance; its walks, gardens &c.”

³⁰⁰ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: April 1836, “Dresden. Its general appearance; its walks, gardens &c.,” “Dresden. The Grofse Garten; other gardens &c.”

Americans. But by itself, this was not enough to merit the long journey deep into the heart of Germany. According to George Ticknor,

Dresden attracts strangers, I think, chiefly by its remarkable publick institutions & collections in the arts; and by the state of society which such institutions & collections naturally create. – Among these the first place is to be given, no doubt, to the Gallery of Pictures.³⁰¹

These institutions and collections were what truly put Dresden on the map for Americans, so we now turn to them.

5.6.2 *The Picture Gallery*

By far the Americans' favorite collection was the *Gemäldegalerie*, or Picture Gallery. Every visitor to Dresden absolutely had to make a pilgrimage to this museum. In fact, it was this gallery that Americans most knew Dresden for. Brüning makes this point as he explores nineteenth-century American relationships with this gallery in his article, “‘It is a glorious collection’: Amerikanische Bildungsbürger des 19. Jahrhunderts auf ‘Pilgerfahrt’ zur Dresdner Gemäldegalerie.”³⁰²

Americans in the first half of the nineteenth century did not always give the Picture Gallery exactly the same rank, but without exception they agreed that it was at least one of Europe's great galleries. John Quincy Adams was the first known American to record this sentiment, saying in 1799, “It is one of the finest collections in Europe.”³⁰³

Dwight agreed a quarter-century later:

³⁰¹ Ibid., April 1836, “Dresden. Gallery of Pictures.”

³⁰² Brüning, “‘It is a glorious collection,’” 99-105.

³⁰³ John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs*, 1:230.

The gallery of Dresden is among the most celebrated of Europe; indeed, it has no equals except those of Florence and the Louvre; and the latter of these, since it has been deprived of much of its stolen glory, is considered by many as inferior to that of this city.³⁰⁴

Some Americans had an even higher estimation of the collection. Taylor considered it an “unrivalled collection.”³⁰⁵ Ticknor went so far as to say that “it is the great attraction in Dresden – the finest of all their admirable collections, the finest single gallery in the world.”³⁰⁶ Going into more detail, he explained,

Perhaps more pleasure would be enjoyed in the Tribune at Florence than in any single hall of the Dresden Gallery – but south of the Alps there is no such collection of the northern schools as there is here; & neither in France nor England is there such a collection of the Italian masters. As a whole, therefore, I look upon the Dresden Gallery as ~~quite~~ unrivalled.³⁰⁷

The Picture Gallery offered Americans a chance to learn the history and the schools of the Old Masters all in one place, by viewing original works. Such an opportunity did not exist in the United States at the time.³⁰⁸ Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts, for example, was not founded until 1870, and New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art not until 1872 (in fact, it was inspired by European art museums).³⁰⁹ Brüning says

³⁰⁴ Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 369.

³⁰⁵ Taylor, *Views A-foot*, 130.

³⁰⁶ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 21 December 1835.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, April 1836, “Dresden. Gallery of Pictures,” “Dresden. Historical Museum.”

³⁰⁸ Ernest Earnest, *Expatriates and Patriots: American Artists, Scholars, and Writers in Europe* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1968), 94.

³⁰⁹ Adam, “Cultural Baggage,” 83-87. In another article Adam argues that the founding of these two museums in particular served strategic purposes as well as altruistic: in establishing the MFA, Brahmins defended their cultural dominance of Boston even as political leadership of the city shifted away from them in the wake of massive Irish immigration; the founding of the Met by the old elites of New York was part of an effort to assert their cultural power and group identity by excluding the new elites from the philanthropic endeavor. These and similar examples of strategic philanthropy (e.g. the Boston Public

that these Americans, whose country had yet no great art tradition of its own and whose museums had only just gradually begun collecting original Old Masters from Europe in the early 1800s, found it an overwhelming experience to stand before a famous original painting that they had previously only seen in engraved copies.³¹⁰ When they had time, Americans liked to spend hours in the gallery and return day after day, in order to become familiar with the artists and schools. John Quincy Adams revealed that the Dresden Gallery served as a world-class learning experience for him:

Was again at the gallery of pictures this forenoon; and in the afternoon with Mrs. Adams, to take our leave of it. ... I have had here leisure to view one of the finest collections extant of the Italian and Flemish schools, more attentively than I had ever an opportunity before. It has given me a little further insight into the principles and history of the art, or rather has served to convince me how little I knew of them before, and how little in so short a time it is possible to acquire.³¹¹

George Ticknor (as usual) was even more studious than others. His 1816 journals indicate that he visited the gallery on at least eight out of the sixteen days that he was in Dresden.³¹² This was part of an intentional, systematic process to educate himself on the art:

I began this morning a ~~serious~~ study of this ~~wonderful~~ remarkable collection – and, in a way, too, which I think is the best to study any ~~great~~ large collection of paintings. I divided them, first according to the schools, and then according to the

Library) reveal that the American aristocracy was able to appropriate Europe to its advantage in a variety of ways. Not only did travel abroad give them social prestige, but philanthropically bestowing adaptations of European institutions upon their home cities also helped them consolidate social power. See Thomas Adam, “Buying Respectability: Philanthropy and Cultural Dominance in 19th-Century Boston,” *Traverse: Zeitschrift für Geschichte / Revue d’histoire* 13, no. 1, *Philanthropie und Macht, 19. und 20. Jahrhundert / Philanthropie et Pouvoir, 19^e et 20^e siècle* (2006): 29-46.

³¹⁰ Brüning, “It is a glorious collection,” 101.

³¹¹ John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs*, 1:235.

³¹² George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 2: 20 September – 6 October 1816.

masters, selecting ~~only~~ such of the last, as were most worthy, since the few days I am here will be far from sufficient to see half the gallery with any discretion, All this, too, I shall again & again repeat; and when I am familiar with them, will make some remarks on the best pieces for my own advantage & improvement hereafter.³¹³

Twenty years later, Anna Ticknor also learned a lot about art from the gallery—in a more passive way than her husband had—due to the good organization of the exhaustive collection:

The picture gallery, that I have often mentioned is arranged in immense halls, not remarkably well lighted, for no light comes from above; but it is so splendid a collection, and ~~is~~ so well arranged, that, to complain of any thing seems truly captious, as well as ungrateful. When M^r. Ticknor was here in 1816, there were 1300 pictures; now, there are 2000, arranged first by periods, then by schools, and, with any sort of attention, one cannot help gaining knowledge, on the subject.³¹⁴

The most famous and beloved painting in the entire gallery was unquestionably Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*.³¹⁵ It brought some American viewers to silence; it caused others to pour forth effusive praise. Americans were familiar with this world-famous painting from copies they had seen at home. Willis wrote that "all the world knows it by engravings and copies."³¹⁶ Because of this, Dwight thought any description would be superfluous, saying, "It has been so often described, that I will not trouble you with a perusal of its thousandth delineation."³¹⁷ Motley, on the other hand, while saying, "It is

³¹³ Ibid., 25-26 September 1816.

³¹⁴ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 26 April 1836.

³¹⁵ Americans at the time often called it the *Madonna di San Sisto*.

³¹⁶ Willis, "Invalid Rambles in Germany," 297.

³¹⁷ Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 371. Willis put it more colorfully: "The difference between seeing and reading of pictures is as great as between eating a dinner and hearing of it; and as this gallery, besides, has been described by writers innumerable, I will hurry over my mention of it." See Willis, "Invalid Rambles in Germany," 298.

the only picture which awes me into silence,” wrote his mother a lengthy description of the original painting, saying, “As you are perfectly familiar with the composition by the engraving, I do not apologise for speaking of the picture.”³¹⁸ The engraving he referred to was an 1816 work by Johann Friedrich Müller, which he said “gives a very good idea of the composition.”³¹⁹ But even though the engraving was “really a work of genius,” and even though Motley considered it “perhaps, the best engraving which was ever made of any picture,” it was still inferior to the original painting.³²⁰ Motley was “pretty well persuaded that the ‘Madonna di San Sisto’ is the first picture in the world.”³²¹ Others may have agreed. Willis and his brother, having just arrived in Dresden,

concluded to make a rush through the rain in search of the gallery and its famous *Madonna del Sisto*, though, in a less extreme case, I would have carefully avoided the injustice to Raphael, of bringing so congealed a heart to receive a first impression of his picture.³²²

Willis said that, once at the museum, “the *Madonna del Sisto* was, of course, our first point of pilgrimage.”³²³ George Ticknor’s heart, by contrast, was anything but congealed when he first beheld the *Madonna*. He had an almost religious experience, which he wrote down in order to preserve the memory; in many respects it was very similar to how other Americans also perceived the painting:

³¹⁸ Motley, *Correspondence*, 1:136.

³¹⁹ Brüning, “It is a glorious collection,” 105; Motley, *Correspondence*, 1:137.

³²⁰ Motley, *Correspondence*, 1:137-138.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 135.

³²² Willis, “Invalid Rambles in Germany,” 290.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 297.

In the afternoon, we went thro' the Gallery of Pictures, which has made the name of Dresden so famous through the world; and though I had read the admiration of Lefsing, and Herder & Winkelmann, it surpassed my ~~highest~~ expectations. From looking at a collection of above thirteenthundred pieces an ~~single~~ hour or two, I cannot, of course, ~~venture to~~ say anything; but of the effect of one piece, on my unpractised eye, I cannot choose but speak, for I would not willingly hereafter lose the recollection of what I now felt. I mean the picture of the Madonna holding the child Jesus in her arms – with Sixtus V. and St. Barbara below adoring the vision, which is brighter & holier than ever appeared to the imagination of devotion – and two angels at the bottom of the piece lost in contemplation, tho' too highly raised above all mortal feeling to be moved with surprise or wonder like the earthly saints above them. I had often heard of the power of fine paintings & I knew that Raphael was commonly reckoned the master of all imitation, and that this was one of the highest efforts of his skill; but I was not prepared for such a vision. I did not before imagine it had been within the compafs of human talent to have formed a countenance of such ideal beauty & purity as the Madonna's, on which a smile would have seemed earthly and unholy – or a child, like Jesus, where the innocence of infancy is consecrated & elevated but not marred in any of its natural sweetness & fascination by the ~~full~~ inspiration of the divinity, which beams forth in the mild [sic] but fixed earnestness of his looks. I was not prepared for this, for I had never before seen a work of one of the great masters ~~of the art~~ – and even now that I have seen it and felt ~~all~~ the influence of Raphael's Genius descend upon me, I find it almost impossible, on looking back, to ~~imagine~~ believe that there is still a point of ~~perfection~~ in the art, which ought to produce the ~~overwhelming~~ effect, that this piece produced on me, as I stood before it, even while I was still ignorant that it was the great work, which Europe had come here to admire and enjoy. –³²⁴

A couple of days later he stayed late at the museum until “it began to grow dark, & I left the Gallery, after having stood before Raphael's Madonna till I could no longer distinguish the colours, with a devotion, which perhaps, came hardly less warm from the heart than that of St. Sixtus or St. Barbara.”³²⁵ For Ticknor and many others like him,

³²⁴ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 2: 23 September 1816.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 25 September 1816.

viewing the *Sistine Madonna* was more than just art appreciation. It was a sacred devotion.³²⁶

It was also a prime example of the ritualization of travel. Stowe says of nineteenth-century travelers that “the sights that they went to see, and even the thoughts and feelings that they expected to have, were dictated by tradition and passed down in guidebooks and travel accounts.”³²⁷ Standing in awe at the *Sistine Madonna* was a requirement of any visit to Dresden, much like viewing the *Mona Lisa* is a traditional part of a trip to Paris today.

The *Sistine Madonna* and the Picture Gallery as a whole endeared themselves so strongly to American visitors that travelers often lamented having to leave. Taylor expressed his pain at parting thus:

I have just taken a last look at the gallery this morning, and left it with real regret; for, during the two visits, Raphael’s heavenly picture of the Madonna and child had

³²⁶ By contrast, Harriet Beecher Stowe gave the most critical appraisal of the painting by an American that I have studied. In 1853 she “went to Dresden as an art-pilgrim, principally to see Raphael’s great picture of the Madonna di San Sisto, supposing that to be the best specimen of his genius out of Italy.” Murray’s guidebook had built the picture up so much that she was actually disappointed upon first sight of the painting. She found it faded and drab, arranged in an annoying composition with an ugly Pope Sixtus, a superficial St. Barbara, and a useless old green curtain. The Madonna and Child and the two little angels below, however, held her attention, excited her ponderings, and touched her spirit. See Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands*, vol. 2 (Boston: Phillips, Sampson, and Company), 340-343.

The picture still entralls American visitors today. My own journal records an experience with distinct echoes of my countrymen who preceded me to Dresden by a century and a half. As a study abroad student in Heidelberg in 1999, I took an excursion sponsored by the University of Heidelberg’s international student office to Dresden, Potsdam, and Berlin. In my limited time there I hurried through the *Grünes Gewölbe* and the *Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister* (Picture Gallery). I chronicled the experience—not quite as eloquently as my nineteenth-century predecessors—thus:

The latter was a world-class art museum with most of the great names represented: Canaletto, Raphael, Rembrandt, Rubens, Vermeer, Dürer, Van Eyck, and lots of others. I Got To See The “Sixtinische Madonna” By Raphael!! (I don’t know what it’s called in English). The very one with the two famous little angels! I was so excited!!

³²⁷ Stowe, *Going Abroad*, 17.

so grown into my love and admiration, that it was painful to think I should never see it again. There are many more which clung so strongly to my imagination, gratifying in the highest degree the love for the Beautiful, that I left them with sadness, and the thought that I would now only have the memory.³²⁸

Anna Ticknor, also, after having visited the collection many times in her six-month residence in Dresden, lingered there in the last month, “feeling how soon I shall see it no more.”³²⁹

Americans loved Dresden for many reasons, but the Picture Gallery was the foremost among them. It exerted an incredible power over these travelers, and it became the defining asset of a city brimming with amazing collections. It even earned Dresden its Italian nickname, the Florence on the Elbe.³³⁰ And although the gallery had countless praiseworthy paintings, the *Sistine Madonna* stood out among them. Brüning credits its acquisition as a pivotal moment in the development of Dresden as a beloved American travel destination.³³¹

5.6.3 Other collections

In addition to the Picture Gallery, Dresden boasted numerous other impressive collections and institutions that appealed to American visitors. The Ticknors, in their quest for improvement, carefully explored and described them all. Running in second place to the Picture Gallery, Anna Ticknor felt that “the next most remarkable collection is that of the engravings, of which there are 300,000, very beautifully & accurately

³²⁸ Taylor, *Views A-foot*, 129.

³²⁹ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 7 May 1836.

³³⁰ Brüning, “It is a glorious collection,” 99.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 105.

arranged.”³³² Housed in a wing of the Zwinger, this was what John Quincy Adams had known in 1800 as the “Elector’s collection of prints,” and had admired as “one of the finest in the world.”³³³ During that visit to Dresden, Adams seems to have paid more attention to this collection than anything else, and even that was not enough to satisfy him. He wrote that “after spending two forenoons in viewing it, we had only to regret that we could not devote every morning to it for as many weeks. It contains all the best engravings extant, from the pictures of all the famous painters of the various schools.”³³⁴ This meant that it was a good place to become acquainted with the best of Western art without having to travel all over Europe to see the originals. Adams purchased three prints to bring back home with him, “which,” he says, “I hope, will one day give some idea to our friends in America of what these high-famed paintings are.”³³⁵ According to George Ticknor, this

very valuable & interesting collection of engravings & Drawings, ... like the Gallery here, would do honour to any monarchy in Europe, however rich or splendid. ... Two things are remarkable about this establishment. First its completeness & extent; Secondly, it is remarkable for its exact arrangement, – so that you can have, in a moment, what you ask for.³³⁶

A similar collection in terms of concept was the collection of casts of the great sculptures of classical antiquity, which were made by the Saxon painter Raphael Mengs.

³³² Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 26 April 1836.

³³³ John Quincy Adams, *Letters on Silesia*, 252.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 254.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 255.

³³⁶ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: April 1836, “Dresden. Collection of Engravings.”

They were displayed in a large hall under the Picture Gallery, and as a student in 1816, George Ticknor visited them several times with increasing delight, calling it a “pleasure, which I find grows upon me ~~very~~ fast and I begin to prefer going there to going to the Picture Gallery.”³³⁷ Like the collection of engravings, it offered a high-quality substitute for original masterpieces scattered throughout Europe, and was an excellent place to learn about sculpture throughout history. Ticknor gushed,

A finer establishment than this for the purpose of forming the unpractised eye and giving a classical tone to the opening talent of young artists, I cannot imagine. Here are collected in a form only less perfect than that of the originals nearly all that antiquity has left to an age of less taste & talent and which has been gathered at the price of princely treasures in the Galleries of Paris, Vienna, Madrid, Naples, Florence, & Rome, – here it is all collected & arranged in one ~~admirable~~ fine hall with ~~great~~ taste & skill, and thrown open to y^e study and admiration of all who have talent and all who love the arts.³³⁸

Ticknor studied these casts in preparation for seeing the original works in Florence, Paris, and Rome, and even after seeing all the collections of Europe’s other major art capitals, in 1836 he still said that the collection of casts is “the best, no doubt in the world and is an excellent introduction to the study of the antique, wherever statues and bas reliefs are to be found.”³³⁹ Apparently he was not the only one who loved the collection so much, because he mentioned that on one “delightful” visit in 1816, “three hours passed unnoticed away, and I ~~at last~~ left the collection, perhaps for the last time, with a regret, which, when I have heard or read the accounts of travellers and amateurs, I did not think I

³³⁷ Ibid., vol. 2: 3 October 1816.

³³⁸ Ibid., 26 September 1816.

³³⁹ Ibid., 29 September 1816, vol. 3: April 1836, “Dresden. Casts.”

should ever feel myself, & almost believed ~~it~~ to be affected in them.”³⁴⁰ This comment points to the reputation of this collection of casts beyond Dresden. This was one of the many collections that travelers praised abroad, putting Dresden on the map.

Anna Ticknor mentioned the *Rüstammer*, or collection of armor, as “another of the remarkable and splendid collections, for which Dresden is so famous.”³⁴¹ At the time of the Ticknors’ visit in the 1830s, it was also located in the Zwinger, and was going by the name of Historical Museum, because it had recently been expanded and rearranged, and included many historical articles beyond mainly weapons.³⁴² George Ticknor found its current arrangement “so much more intelligible and useful than it was formerly,” when he saw it in 1816.³⁴³ For Anna Ticknor, it was “the most curious & interesting display of past times, of manners, arts and luxury, that can be imagined.”³⁴⁴

The *Grünes Gewölbe* (Green Vault) dazzled visitors with its rich collections of jewelry and treasures of all kinds. Anna Ticknor claimed that these halls in the basement of the Royal Palace “contain the most valuable and curious collection of jewelry, & ancient specimens of art and invention, in all Europe.”³⁴⁵ Both Ticknors were at a loss to relate the magnitude and value of the collection; it boggled the imagination.³⁴⁶ It was so

³⁴⁰ Ibid., vol. 2: 3 October 1816.

³⁴¹ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 23 December 1835.

³⁴² George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: April 1836, “Dresden. Historical Museum.”

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 26 April 1836.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 30 March 1836.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.; George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 31 March 1836.

overwhelming, that before they had made it through the whole museum, awe gave way to overdose, and these practical New Englanders found themselves feeling “melancholy to think of the time, taste and talents wasted, and of the immense amount of idle riches hoarded here,” which essentially were no more than “whimsical or useless objects.”³⁴⁷ Nevertheless, they conceded that riches, by their nature, are meant for hoarding, and besides, many of them actually have artistic and historical value and are useful for learning about past societies and customs.³⁴⁸ Therefore, Anna Ticknor felt that the *Grünes Gewölbe*, together with the *Rüstkammer*, formed “a more distinct and lively instruction of life and manners, in past centuries, than exists any where else.”³⁴⁹

In the Japanese Palace was a Gallery of Antiques containing ancient pieces of art from classical antiquity, mostly in marble and bronze. Of this collection, Anna Ticknor found “many curious, but only a few beautiful.”³⁵⁰ George Ticknor was more positive, saying that it was very well arranged, and even though it was less valuable than other collections in the city, it “does honour to Dresden, and is not a small item in the account, which goes to make it, as Herder calls it, the Florence of Germany.”³⁵¹

Another floor of the Japanese Palace contained a large collection of porcelain. Dresden and the nearby city of Meißen were renowned for the manufacture of porcelain,

³⁴⁷ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 30 March 1836; George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 31 March 1836.

³⁴⁸ Ibid. (both)

³⁴⁹ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 26 April 1836.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: April 1836, “Dresden. Gallery of Antiques.,” vol. 2: 25 September 1816.

and this collection displayed not only local craftsmanship, but pieces from Asia and other parts of the world as well. George Ticknor even learned that “they are about to add our Philadelphia ware.”³⁵² Anna Ticknor described the collection as “a mess of porcelain of all countries and ages, enough to feed all the inhabitants of Saxony from. Heaps upon heaps, some very beautiful, and a great deal very curious.”³⁵³ It was “arranged with scientific skill,” so that the history of the local ware could be seen chronologically and the production procedure understood.³⁵⁴ The value of this collection, George Ticknor remarked, lay in its completeness.³⁵⁵

One of the most impressive and useful collections in Dresden was the Royal Library, also housed in the Japanese Palace. The Ticknors marveled at its size (over 300,000 volumes) and its organization. Anna Ticknor called it “a splendid Colossus in literature,” and George Ticknor enthused that “the library is beyond all praise,” having “its order is as perfect as anything well can be” and an “administration as liberal as can be asked.”³⁵⁶ He felt that the only library in all of Germany that could even compare with Dresden’s was the one in Göttingen. Both well organized and administered, their major difference lay in the fact that Göttingen’s contained more recent books, while Dresden’s

³⁵² Ibid., vol. 3: “Dresden. Casts.”

³⁵³ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 26 April 1836.

³⁵⁴ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: April 1836, “Dresden. Collection of Porcelaine.”

³⁵⁵ Ibid., April 1836, “Dresden. Casts.”

³⁵⁶ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 26 April 1836; George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 2: 23 September 1816, vol. 3: April 1836, “Dresden. Library,” “Dresden. Gallery of Antiques.”

had more old ones.³⁵⁷ One of the important distinctions of the Dresden library, according to George Ticknor, was that “probably in History and the related Branches it is the first library in the world,” and Taylor agreed that it contained “the most complete collection of historical works in existence.”³⁵⁸ Its lending policies were regarded as quite liberal. Dwight explained that the library was open six days a week, and any citizen could visit and use it. Students and many others were permitted to take books home.³⁵⁹ Anna Ticknor specified that “any respectable resident in Dresden” may borrow books, as well as “strangers, who are introduced by a note from a foreign Minister.”³⁶⁰ George Ticknor took full advantage of this opportunity in 1836, declaring, “I have sometimes had fifty or sixty volumes at my lodgings; & there is no limit to the time a stranger may keep them, unless somebody else asks for them, when, at the end of a month, they are sent for. I have books now, that I have had three months.”³⁶¹ Fisk gave data on the contemporary level of library patronage, stating that in 1835 “there were two thousand four hundred and eighty-five readers in Dresden, and five hundred and twenty out of the city, making three thousand and five different readers for the year.”³⁶²

³⁵⁷ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 2: 23 September 1816.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 3: April 1836, “Dresden. Gallery of Antiques.”; Taylor, *Views A-foot*, 131. Dwight, however, seems to have had a different opinion. His impression in 1826 was that “the library of Göttingen can boast of a more valuable historical collection.” Even so, he agreed that Dresden had more “works on classical literature.” See Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 360.

³⁵⁹ See Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 360.

³⁶⁰ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 26 April 1836.

³⁶¹ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: April 1836, “Dresden. Library.”

³⁶² Fisk, *Travels in Europe*, 471.

American visitors saw that the Royal Library was well used by the citizens of Saxony, and that it had a positive effect on them. Dwight wistfully desired such a splendid resource for the improvement of his own country: “The influence of this library in elevating the character of the Saxon nation, will be felt for ages. Such a one in the centre of the United States, like the fountains of Syria, would cause the almost literary desert of our country, to rejoice and blossom as the rose.”³⁶³ George Ticknor held the same views, and, inspired by his early experiences as a student in Göttingen and his time later in Dresden, he tried over the years to arouse interest in founding a similar library in Boston. In the 1850s, the idea finally caught hold, and Ticknor played an influential role in the establishment of the Boston Public Library on even more liberal and more public terms than the great libraries he loved in Germany.³⁶⁴

Thus, American visitors highly valued the various collections in Dresden, and were impressed by their “great wealth, liberality, and thoroughness.”³⁶⁵ Americans not only found there some of the most valuable resources available to augment their own limited educational means in the United States, they also recognized the role that these institutions played in the relatively enlightened and cultivated Kingdom of Saxony. Anna

³⁶³ Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 361.

³⁶⁴ Anna Ticknor and George S. Hillard, ed. *Life, Letters, and Journals of George Ticknor*, 2:299-304. This story of cultural transfer comes with a twist. Thomas Adam has made an intriguing study of how the Royal Saxon Library at Dresden influenced Ticknor in the conception and establishment of the Boston Public Library. Ticknor, however, adapted the Dresden model to Boston’s needs, arranging for even freer and more public lending practices than those at Dresden, primarily in an effort to educate and improve the lower classes. In the 1890s, Constantin Nörrenberg (re)imported to Germany this “American” concept of the public lending library, unaware that the Royal Saxon Library in Dresden had been the original inspiration. See Adam, “Cultural Baggage,” 79-99.

³⁶⁵ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 26 April 1836.

Ticknor wrote that these collections “are well used, and enjoyed too, for the Saxons have taste, and they visit all these establishments, with attention and pleasure.”³⁶⁶ Dwight reversed the causality, believing that these institutions did not just reflect fine local taste, but argued that the Saxons’ taste and knowledge had been *formed* (at least in part) by these establishments:

Two such institutions as the [picture] gallery and library of Dresden, you will easily suppose, exert a most auspicious influence on the taste and intellect of the inhabitants, and to this influence is this metropolis not a little indebted, for the superior cultivation of its citizens to those of any other town in Germany.³⁶⁷

Americans seeking cultural enrichment found a plentiful source in Dresden. The world-class galleries and collections made a name for the city throughout Europe and eventually America. It was fitting that these great institutions should be located in the little Kingdom of Saxony. To American observers, the refined character of the Saxon people made these top-quality cultural achievements possible and successful, while at the same time, these institutions continued to refine the Saxon character further and elevate the nation toward the higher ranks of civilization.

5.6.4 Additional opportunities for a lifestyle of high culture

Due to Saxons’ appreciation for high culture, the royal patronage of arts and promotion of learning, and the rich cultural resources of the capital, it is not surprising that Dresden was home to thriving art scenes, whether visual, performance, or literary. These arts offered members of the high society opportunities to enjoy high culture, and

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 360.

many Americans who spent time in Dresden made sure to take advantage of some of them. They were ways for Americans to participate in “improving” activities.

The Ticknors visited the theater numerous times for plays and operas, which they really enjoyed. They were not able to say that the quality of Dresden’s theater surpassed that of all other cities, but they found it excellent nevertheless.³⁶⁸ According to Dwight, the Dresden theater had improved greatly and acquired a nice reputation under the directorship of Ludwig Tieck, the great German man of letters. Despite his able leadership, however, the theater was limited by resources and by the preference the Dresdeners gave to opera. Tieck “viewed the stage, when properly conducted, as a most powerful means of elevating the intellectual character of his countrymen.”³⁶⁹ The Ticknors and other intellectual, upper-class Americans who traveled in Saxony would doubtless have shared this view.

Tieck was probably the most significant figure in the literary circles of Dresden. In fact, George Ticknor said that Tieck, “since Goethe’s death, is the acknowledged head of German Literature.”³⁷⁰ Over sixty years old at the time of the Ticknors’ residence there, Tieck’s fame as a Romantic poet, novelist, and literary critic had already been established. Due to their common interests in literature, Tieck and Ticknor formed a good relationship. Ticknor, one of the world’s experts on Spanish literature, admired Tieck’s library and especially his collection of Spanish books, which he considered better

³⁶⁸ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 22 November 1835.

³⁶⁹ Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 364.

³⁷⁰ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 29 November 1835.

than most, but not as good as his own.³⁷¹ Ticknor participated several times in Prince John's "Academia Dantesca," of which Tieck was a part, where a small group of literary men discussed Dante and the Prince's translation work. The Ticknors knew that Tieck "has universally the reputation of being the best reader in Germany," and they both frequently went to Tieck's home to hear him read aloud—usually Shakespeare—to gatherings of listeners.³⁷² George Ticknor explained that Tieck hosted daily *soirées*, and that "this reading is an exercise of which he is very fond & in which he often indulges his friends & the society, that assembles at his house every evening."³⁷³ Ticknor himself was a noted reader of Shakespeare, so he especially enjoyed the opportunity to listen to Tieck's readings.³⁷⁴ Granted, this close association with Dresden's literary society may have been more characteristic of the Ticknors than of Dresden's other American visitors—even residents—in general. Edwin Zeydel says that "Ticknor undoubtedly stood closer to Tieck than any other American."³⁷⁵ But Tieck's mere presence in Dresden as the foremost of a vibrant literary community shows the kind of intellectual spirit that enriched society.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Ibid., vol. 3: 21 January 1836.

³⁷³ Ibid., April 1836, "Dresden. Society. Our own Life there.," 21 January 1836.

³⁷⁴ Zeydel, "George Ticknor and Ludwig Tieck," 884.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 891. However, it should be noted that Motley had also met Tieck in 1834, and Tieck also "spoke of Cooper, Irving (whom he knew in Dresden, and whom he admired very much)." See Motley, *Correspondence*, 1:36. But even these acquaintances seem to have been very casual and brief. Irving, for example, seems to have been hardly aware of Tieck's literary importance. See Reichart, *Washington Irving and Germany*, 78.

The situation in the visual and plastic arts, however, was surprisingly different. George Ticknor observed that, though Dresden was full of artists taking advantage of the city's great opportunities for training and launching their careers, the state of the arts there was actually not as high as he would have expected.³⁷⁶ Dresden was full of great art, but not many great artists. Though there were plenty of artists (whom the Ticknors often saw "studying, working and copying in the gallery"), Anna Ticknor felt that their impact in local society was small relative to their numbers: "The artists, I suppose, form still another circle of their own, for I have met only one in general society. Dresden is full of them, good, bad and indifferent."³⁷⁷ Although the Ticknors did not spend much time within the circles of artistic society, they did visit some artists' ateliers, perused their works, and employed a couple as instructors in painting and German for their daughter Anna. Even if Dresden could not boast such a famed art culture as Florence or Paris, it still had more to offer than any place in America at the time. Therese aus dem Winkel, little Anna's German tutor, was a minor local artist who eked out a living by painting copies of works in the Picture Gallery and by offering instruction in languages and on the harp. Anna Ticknor contrasted her situation in Dresden with the state of American society: "How would such a woman endure our American life? Here, she is in good society, and the theatre, a succession of fine concerts, intercourse with artists, and the gallery, are her refreshments, and almost necessities; and, what is more, they cost her

³⁷⁶ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: April 1836, "Dresden. Publick Collections."

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, April 1836, "Dresden. Society."; Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 26 April 1836.

almost nothing.”³⁷⁸ America still lacked the depth of cultural resources that cities like Dresden enjoyed.³⁷⁹

5.6.5 Participation in elite society

A particularly intriguing aspect of Dresden’s appeal for privileged American travelers was the opportunity to participate in an Old World noble society. As Stowe has pointed out, travel to Europe—being in this period almost invariably an upper-class luxury—gave Americans a chance to demonstrate that they belonged in the high social classes.³⁸⁰ Dresden, with its relatively down-to-earth royal court (which, however, quaintly observed old-school formalities) and the circles of nobility that surrounded it, offered Americans with the right connections and background a welcoming reception into an exclusive world of titles, prestige, and honor. Historians like Brüning and Adam have explored the social implications of American participation in the highest class of Dresden society. Brüning says that the royal family set a friendly tone by observing conservative, traditional court etiquette while permitting a liberal, even casual contact with others, in stark contrast to the courtly styles of its immediate neighbors, Prussia and Austria.

³⁷⁸ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 27 March 1836.

³⁷⁹ In a similar sign of America’s limited artistic opportunities, George related the story of meeting an artist in Dresden in 1835/1836 who claimed to have known him in Weimar in 1816. This artist recalled asking him at that time if he should emigrate to America. He said that Ticknor dissuaded him, because he showed promise as an artist, and that, “in America, he would not be able to form himself to such eminence as he could at home.” Ticknor admitted this was “a piece of advice which was, I think, judicious; but which I do not at all remember to have given.” See George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: April 1836, “Dresden. Arts & Artists.”

³⁸⁰ Stowe, *Going Abroad*, 5.

Educated upper-class American visitors who were properly introduced could come into the sphere of the Saxon court, even though they lacked the proper aristocratic titles.³⁸¹

There is a tension here between the openness and liberality of the Saxon court to well-bred, non-noble American intellectuals and its traditional exclusion of similarly respected and accomplished Europeans who happened not to be members of the nobility.

An example of this contradiction is found in Anna Ticknor's journal:

The Countess Harrach is a lady of the bourgeois class, who married Count Harrach, who is nearly double her age, as is so common in Europe to gain a title and establishment. She is not admitted at Court, from want of noble birth, though the daughter of Count Harrach, by a former marriage is the present wife of the king of Prussia, with the title of princess de Liegnitz.³⁸²

In 1817 George Ticknor had also commented on this strict adherence to rigid class distinctions in German courts:

In a court, even so small & polished as that at Weimar no native not noble is permitted to appear at court – and this is carried so far, that if a noble-man marries a simple citizen he cannot bring his wife to court, while at y^e same time, a noble lady marrying a citizen loses her rank – and throughout all Germany the line which divides the noble from the unhonoured blood of the country is as difficult to pass as the Styx and as irremovable to those who are over.³⁸³

Given this seemingly inflexible system, it seems surprising that untitled foreigners like the Ticknors could have ever broken into the upper echelons of German courtly society. On the other hand, perhaps a key to the Americans' access was their very foreignness— Ticknor had remarked that no *native* not noble could be admitted to court. European class structures had congealed over centuries and the barriers between them were not

³⁸¹ Brüning, "König Johann von Sachsen," 48.

³⁸² Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 8 May 1836.

³⁸³ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 1817, "Germany. Nobility."

easily broken. But Americans came from outside the system altogether. Their class structures were not as rigidly defined, and movement between them was more fluid.³⁸⁴ Perhaps the highest European nobility perceived it as less of a threat to their station to associate with American outsiders (who bore the proper introductions and gentility, of course) than to associate with other Europeans of lower classes. Yet it is just as true that—to the extent that American society was structured into unofficial classes—the Ticknors and most other early nineteenth-century Americans in Europe came from the highest circles, the closest American equivalent to European nobility. They may not have had formal titles, but they acquired labels. Although the term “Brahmin” had apparently not yet been applied to the Ticknors and their ilk in the 1830s, it is a useful anachronistic way to refer to the aristocracy of New England at this time, just like the “Four Hundred” would later come to signify the select of New York.³⁸⁵ Alexis de Tocqueville referred to this class, saying, “Society [in America], at least the society in which we have been introduced, and I think that it is the first, resembles almost completely the upper classes of Europe.”³⁸⁶ In Europe, the Ticknors thought that they belonged naturally with the nobility. Most of their social time in Dresden was spent among the aristocracy, so that when they attended an event at a rich bourgeois banker’s house one evening, they only knew a few English expatriates among the hundred or so guests, “for, as society in

³⁸⁴ Tyack, *George Ticknor and the Boston Brahmins*, 175-177; Eric Homberger, *Mrs. Astor’s New York: Money and Social Power in a Gilded Age* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002), 1-3.

³⁸⁵ Tyack, *George Ticknor and the Boston Brahmins*, 177; Homberger, *Mrs. Astor’s New York*, 4.

³⁸⁶ Quoted in Tyack, *George Ticknor and the Boston Brahmins*, 174.

Dresden is very strictly divided into exclusive circles, and as this circle was altogether bourgeois, we found ourselves almost without acquaintance.”³⁸⁷

Washington Irving was one of the first Americans to enjoy the upper crust of Dresden society. He wrote in 1823,

I have been most hospitably received and even caressed in this little capital, and have experienced nothing but the most marked kindness from the king downwards. My reception, indeed, at court has been peculiarly flattering, and every branch of the royal family has taken occasion to show me particular attention, whenever I made my appearance. . . . It is one of the most formal and ceremonious [courts] in Europe, keeping up all the old observances that have been laid aside in other courts. The king is an excellent old gentleman, between seventy and eighty, but a staunch stickler for the old school. . . . I have dined with the king, and been at a number of balls and soirees given by the different members of the royal family; as at these balls every one must be in uniform or court dress, they are very showy.

Among the other institutions which the king keeps up, is a grand hunting establishment in the old style. As this is the only place in Europe where any thing of the kind is maintained in the ancient manner, I have been very much interested by it. . . . I have followed the king twice to the boar hunt; the last time we had a fine run of upwards of two hours.³⁸⁸

Of course, much of Irving’s warm reception may have been related to the fact that his celebrity as an author had already preceded him.³⁸⁹ He wrote in his journal about his presentation at court, mentioning that “Prince John talked to me in English about my works” and that “when the King entered & went round the circle I was introduced & he spoke to me very flatteringly about my works.”³⁹⁰ Acceptance at court also meant

³⁸⁷ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 8 February 1836.

³⁸⁸ Washington Irving, *The Life and Letters of Washington Irving*, ed. Pierre M. Irving, vol. 2 (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1862), 138-139.

³⁸⁹ Pierre M. Irving, ed., *The Life and Letters of Washington Irving*, vol. 2 (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1862), 127.

³⁹⁰ Washington Irving, *Journals and Notebooks: Volume III, 1819-1827*, ed. Walter A. Reichart, vol. 3 (Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), 98-99.

acceptance into the aristocratic circles and their frequent *soirées*, balls, theater visits, etc. Irving enjoyed his few months' association with the elite of Dresden.

The Ticknors provided the most comprehensive and detailed description of the Dresden court from the American point of view, and Brüning has examined the unique ongoing friendship between George Ticknor and Prince (later King) John.³⁹¹ In addition to the royal court, the Ticknors were closely connected with Dresden's high society in general. Adam has used their case to illustrate the phenomenon of Americans using Europe as a means of gaining or affirming social prestige, and he argues furthermore that the Ticknors' Dresden experience demonstrates the existence of a transatlantic upper class that, in some ways, had more in common within the same class across national borders than it did with other classes within the same nation.³⁹² We have already seen how foreign nobles were welcome in European courts, whereas local non-nobles were not. And marriages were more likely to occur between noble families from different countries than between nobility and lower classes of the same country. The Ticknors even discovered that the upper-class acquaintances they made throughout Europe often knew or were even related to other New England elites in the Ticknors' circles at home. Pointing to this network of transatlantic relationships, Adam says that "the interwoven and integrated nature of the American and European upper class became obvious."³⁹³ This was one factor that made it relatively easy for the Ticknors to slip naturally into the

³⁹¹ Brüning, "König Johann von Sachsen," 48-52.

³⁹² Thomas Adam, "Germany Seen through American Eyes," 151-163.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, 156.

Dresden high life. Another was the distinct class stratification that existed in both nations, even despite America's egalitarian ideals. As Adam puts it, "Boston with its established and guarded upper class, the Brahmins, reflected closely Dresden's class oriented society."³⁹⁴ The "republican" Ticknors may not have had a noble title, but they belonged to the upper class of American society, which by analogy was the closest rank the United States offered to European aristocracy.³⁹⁵ An additional factor that facilitated transition between the American upper class and a European one was a similarity in forms of etiquette. The American aristocracy in the nineteenth century increasingly borrowed its tastes and styles from the English and French.³⁹⁶ Meanwhile, French was a *lingua franca* in high society on the European continent, and American aristocrats were often conversant in the language.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 159.

³⁹⁵ The Ticknors were republicans in the sense that they believed in the ideals of their American representative government, which they asserted was founded upon the freest institutions possible and relied upon educated and responsible individuals. Although George Ticknor articulated these positions more frequently, forcefully, and idealistically as a young man in Europe in the 1810s, he can still be seen arguing for the advantages of republican government with Metternich in 1836. Indeed, Ticknor called himself a republican among the courts of Germany. Nevertheless, Ticknor also had authoritarian inclinations, and did not think republican governments would necessarily be good for Europe. His status in Boston society also adds a touch of paradox to the thought of him as a republican. Tyack demonstrates this tension by frequently calling Ticknor a republican and at the same time labeling him "The Autocrat of Nine Park Street." Tyack puts it this way: "Politically at home neither in Europe nor America, he was that anomaly, a republican Tory." See Tyack, *George Ticknor and the Boston Brahmins*, 3, 155-170; George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 5 January 1836, 16-17 February 1836.

³⁹⁶ Homberger, *Mrs. Astor's New York*, 5-6.

³⁹⁷ Adam, "Germany Seen through American Eyes," 155-156.

Etiquette provides the structures by which societies operate and define their identity.³⁹⁸ Americans arriving in Europe and wanting to be accepted into the highest circles had to follow protocol.³⁹⁹ Introductions were crucial; as outsiders, they had to come recommended by an insider. Immediately after arriving in Dresden in November 1835, George Ticknor began delivering letters of introduction that he had brought from notables he knew to notables he was hoping to know.⁴⁰⁰ He started with Ludwig Tieck and Baron Bernhard von Lindenau (who, as Premier of the State of Saxony was “the most significant statesman of Saxony in his time”).⁴⁰¹ Ticknor also wasted no time in calling on Forbes, the British Minister to Saxony, who was then able to open other important doors for him. Forbes introduced him right away to General Karl von Watzdorf, the officer of the royal house, and less than a month later, introduced him to King Anthony himself.⁴⁰² Anna Ticknor was presented at court less directly. She and a group of other ladies seeking admission to the court each had to leave fifty calling cards with Mad. Jordan, “who, being the only foreign lady connected with the Court, has the task of presenting all foreign ladies.” The next day, she returned to Mad. Jordan, who introduced the crowd of foreign ladies to the “Grande Maitresse of the princess Regent” and to other “dames d’honneur” associated with the royal court. Over the next couple of days, dozens

³⁹⁸ Judith Martin, *Star-Spangled Manners: In Which Miss Manners Defends American Etiquette (For a Change)* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), 33-34.

³⁹⁹ Adam, “Germany Seen through American Eyes,” 155-156.

⁴⁰⁰ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 21 November, 1835.

⁴⁰¹ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 29 November 1835; Kötzsche and Kretzschmar, *Sächsische Geschichte*, 320. Translation mine.

⁴⁰² George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 29 November 1835, 26 December 1835.

of calling cards from Dresden's noble ladies arrived for Anna Ticknor in response to the introductions. Now the Ticknors were ready to attend the formal New Year's Day reception by the entire royal family. At the palace, Forbes first introduced them to the Grande Maitresse, who led them to the reception hall where they along with maybe thirty other foreigners formed a semicircle and waited for the royal family. As the king, co-regent, princes, and princesses entered, the Grande Maitresse introduced the visitors. After a half-hour ceremony, the party went into another hall, where the court sat down at tables to play cards, while the guests enjoyed refreshments, visited with each other, and perhaps most importantly, made their way to each table and bowed or curtsied when the royalty looked up. After cards, they were able to speak a while with the members of the royal family, but like all events at the Saxon court, the evening ended early.⁴⁰³ With proper introductions and receptions out of the way, the Ticknors instantly found themselves attending frequent balls, soirées, theater outings, and other high society functions, including the most formal court balls. Probably the greatest sign that the Ticknors were welcome in the inner sanctum of Dresden society was the lifelong friendship that George Ticknor formed with Prince (later King) John.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰³ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 28 December 1835 – 1 January 1836; George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 1 January 1836.

⁴⁰⁴ From King John we have a glimpse of the impression George Ticknor made on his royal friend. Even if etiquette forms were similar in the transatlantic high society, they were not identical in the United States and Europe. Ticknor stood out somewhat for his republican habits, though not enough to exclude him from Dresden court society. As King John later reminisced,

At this time I made an interesting acquaintance—that of an American, in fact—George Ticknor from Boston, who had made himself known as a writer, and particularly through that came into close contact with me, since he had also occupied himself much with Dante. He was (or rather is) a man of clear, impartial opinions, who also observed our European relations without partisan eyes. And yet according to the way of an American of conservative principles. Simple and sometimes casual in his manners (he came to me, for example, in his overcoat), he had nothing in his being of republican

Having thus firmly established themselves in Saxony's highest class, the Ticknors were then able to pass along this privilege to others who were fit for it. George Ticknor was in a position to introduce later American travelers to the important people of Dresden (and other cities where he had contacts too, for that matter), and he did this frequently. References to his introductions and recommendations, whether made by letter or in person, can be found throughout his journals, correspondence, and even in writings of other contemporary Americans. Having the Ticknors as insiders to Dresden society created an incentive for other Americans to visit that city. Some, like Legaré and William Wilkins, who were already American ministers to other European countries, would have had access to Dresden's rulers and nobility simply because of their official positions as U.S. government representatives. Still, their visits to Dresden were enhanced by the Ticknors' connections. The first thing Legaré, U.S. chargé d'affaires in Brussels, did the morning after arriving in Dresden late the night before was to announce his arrival to his friends the Ticknors.⁴⁰⁵ George Ticknor immediately invited Legaré to the court, because "all the world would be there."⁴⁰⁶ Although he declined the offer because of travel-weariness, he spent much of his five days in town with the Ticknors, admitting that his stay in Dresden "was rendered most agreeable and profitable to me by my friend

thoughtlessness. I saw him a lot in society; he was also a participant in my little circle of men [Academia Dantesca]. Since then I have remained in correspondence with him. In this way he described for me the political conditions of America, and I in return reported to him about the European conditions.
Quoted in Brüning, "König Johann von Sachsen," 50. Translation mine.

⁴⁰⁵ Legaré, *Writings of Hugh Swinton Legaré*, 1:139-140.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 140.

Ticknor and his amiable wife, (for without them it was impossible I should have turned my time to so much account,).⁴⁰⁷ Wilkins, U.S. Minister to Russia, during a week-long stop in Dresden, also found the Ticknors to be helpful in integrating into the society. He spoke no French or German, which were the primary languages spoken among the upper class, which could have made socializing difficult, even though he was accompanied by Henry Tudor, a multilingual, accomplished traveler.⁴⁰⁸ Ticknor related how his position in Dresden society was able to aid Wilkins:

Just at dark this Evening, he [Wilkins] sent his black servant to me, – who speaks very good french; – with a card of Mad. de Zeschau inviting Mr. W. to a ball this Evening, – Mr. Wilkins being anxious to know before he ventured too far whether Mr. de Zeschau could talk English. I could not clear up this matter for him; but I told him, I should be glad to take him with me, as I was also invited. This removed all his scruples; – & so I called for him at IX. o’clock, and having got, as well as I could, through introducing him to Mr. de Zeschau who spoke but little English & to Madame de Zeschau who spoke none at all, I presented him to the British minister, Lady Rancliffe, the Stroganoffs, Baron Schroeder, & a few other persons, who could talk with him.⁴⁰⁹

Other Americans, who did not have access to Dresden’s court and noble circles through an official government position, had to have proper introductions from an insider. Ticknor was the connection for many of them. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, himself on a tour in Europe to prepare himself for Ticknor’s old position at Harvard, was planning to visit the Ticknors in Dresden in the spring of 1836, but his wife’s death in

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 19 January 1836. This Tudor, an Englishman, had just published a *Narrative of a Tour in North America* in 1834.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

Rotterdam the previous November, changed his plans.⁴¹⁰ When Motley and his family lived in Dresden from 1851 to 1853 while he worked on his book *The Rise of the Dutch Republic*, Ticknor wrote recommendations for him to Prince John and the royal court.⁴¹¹

Even as late as 1869, Ticknor was still making use of his influential contacts to open doors for his friends in Dresden. In July of that year he wrote a letter to King John, saying that “among the many Americans who propose to pass the next winter in Dresden are two of my friends, whom I cannot fail to remember on this occasion.” He named the friends (one a daughter of Everett and the other a Civil War general), and suggested that Longfellow might decide to go to Dresden too. He briefed the King on aspects of their biographies that showed them to be worthy of his acquaintance (in Longfellow’s case, it was his translation of Dante), and commended them “to your Majesty’s protection and kindness.”⁴¹² A month later he wrote again to the king about his sister-in-law’s family, even though there was only one “gentleman” in the group, saying,

They intend to pass some time in your own Dresden, which like Athens, is “ever to strangers hospitable”. As such, I ask permission to commend them to your Majesty’s kind protection; and I do it more earnestly, because I think nobody remains in Dresden, out of your palace, to whom I can commend them at all. For when we were there on a short visit in the Summer of 1856, we formed no new acquaintance which indeed your Majesty’s kindness at Pillnitz rendered superfluous; – and death has been fatally busy, with the large circle that rendered us happy during the winter we spent in Dresden thirty-four years ago.⁴¹³

⁴¹⁰ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 27 December 1835; George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: later-written note added to the entry for 20 November 1835.

⁴¹¹ Motley, *Correspondence*, 1:143-144.

⁴¹² George Ticknor, Boston, to King John of Saxony, 4 July 1869, in Daenell, ed., *Briefwechsel*, 156-157.

⁴¹³ George Ticknor, Boston, to King John of Saxony, 5 August 1869, in *ibid.*, 160-161.

With Ticknor's impressive connections and his willingness to use them, it may not be surprising that Americans were interested in visiting Dresden. Certainly Ticknor would not have pulled strings for just anybody. But over the years, he wrote letters of introduction to Dresden for numerous upper-class Americans whom he knew and trusted. Under the right circumstances, he was even able to arrange for the favor of the King of Saxony!

5.6.6 Affordability

One final factor that enticed Americans to Dresden was its affordability. Travelers who spent any significant amount of time there in the first half of the nineteenth century commented on the "power of living cheaply in Dresden."⁴¹⁴ With its uncommonly rich cultural and social offerings, all available at a cheaper price than they would have cost elsewhere, Dresden allowed many Americans to enjoy a higher status and standard of living than they otherwise would have been able to afford.⁴¹⁵

Washington Irving commented on this in 1822, saying,

The living, in fact, is wonderfully cheap in many of the finest cities of Germany. In Dresden, for example, I have a very neat, comfortable, and prettily furnished apartment on the first floor of a hotel; it consists of a cabinet with a bed in it, and a cheerful sitting room that looks on the finest square. I am offered this apartment for the winter at the rate of thirty six shillings a month. Would to Heaven I could get such quarters in London for any thing like the money.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁴ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 13 December 1835.

⁴¹⁵ Brüning, "Saxony Is a Prosperous and Happy Country," 26; Adam, "Germany Seen through American Eyes," 153-154.

⁴¹⁶ Washington Irving, *The Life and Letters of Washington Irving*, 131.

Cooper, also familiar with cities all over Europe, wrote, “Dresden is the cheapest place we have inhabited, though Florence would not be dear, were it not for the knavery of the domestics. One can live in Dresden for about the same money as in New-York.”⁴¹⁷

Giving more details about the lifestyle he means, he wrote,

The manner of living all over Europe is much the same. You get a furnished apartment, in a large house, commonly a hotel or palace, and you keep your own menage, as at home. We travel with two servants, a cook and valet, and hire others in the country. The prices vary, however, according to the towns. This is the only place we have been in, which appears cheap to us. . . . I think we might live here, for about \$3000 a year, pretty well. I am sure that no one can keep a carriage, and live in Paris, in any sort of style, for less than \$8000. Indeed the Parisians say that \$10,000 are necessary for a good menage, and that without entertaining.⁴¹⁸

The Ticknors were also pleased at what they could obtain in Dresden for their money, although they never admitted directly that the cheapness was an advantage to themselves.

George Ticknor described their arrangements as superior to those in previous cities they had visited:

I have employed myself chiefly since I have been here in getting well established for the winter; – and I think I have succeeded. We have engaged in the Hotel de Rome, a suite of six excellent rooms, opening into each other, & another one quite near them for my man servant; the principal parlour being five & twenty feet by twenty, & the whole very comfortable, & I have engaged a nicer carriage than I could get in London, with a coachman & footman, so that we have capital quarters to live in, an excellent table to ourselves; & five servants of our own, besides the attendance at the Hotel, which is more prompt, than I have yet found any where else. Mrs. T. thinks we are better off than we were at the Clarendon. Perhaps we are, though we do not dine from plate; – certainly we are better off than we were at Dublin, or any where else except London, since we came from home.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁷ James Fenimore Cooper, Dresden, to Peter Augustus Jay, 15 July 1830, in James Fenimore Cooper, *The Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper*, ed. James Franklin Beard, vol. 1 (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960), 418.

⁴¹⁸ James Fenimore Cooper, Dresden, to Mrs. Peter Augustus Jay, 26 July 1830, in *ibid.*, 428.

⁴¹⁹ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 22 November 1835.

As for others in Dresden, George Ticknor specifically pointed to the benefits they derived from the affordable cost of living. Commenting that even the nobility were not very rich, he acknowledged, “But living is cheap & they keep fine equipages, have pretty country seats &c & live very well.”⁴²⁰ He also mentioned that “there are a good many English living here, but none of them are interesting persons; & all but two families are living here from motives of œconomy.”⁴²¹ Three and a half decades later, in 1869, Ticknor credited this enduring affordability for encouraging a wave of American visitors:

No small number of the richer, and more favoured of my countrymen and their families are now in Europe, led there by the attractions of its great capitals and the cheapness of living, which here owing to our taxes is become costly. But, I think, that, in proportion to its size, no city draws so many as Dresden.⁴²²

With its magnificent collections, its relatively accessible high society, and its fine quality of living, all for less than what these things would cost elsewhere, it is no wonder that once word got out, Americans began swarming the little Florence on the Elbe.⁴²³ Dresden offered excellent, affordable opportunities for climbing the social ladder. It

⁴²⁰ Ibid., April 1836, “Dresden. Society.”

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² George Ticknor, Boston, to King John of Saxony, 4 July 1869, in Daenell, ed., *Briefwechsel*, 156.

⁴²³ Not only Americans came to Dresden for all these reasons. Dwight says that these attractions also lured Germans to the city. See Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 348-349:

Dresden is the classic city of Germany, and a favourite summer residence with all those Germans, who are attracted by the charms of polished society. The splendid collection of paintings which its gallery presents, even to one coming from Rome or Florence, the beauty and variety of its scenery, and the superiority of its opera, undoubtedly exert quite as powerful an influence in attracting strangers, as the intelligent circles to which they are introduced. The Germans universally call it their Florence, and in most respects, the name is not misapplied.

became so popular, that Brüning writes, “Thus, the ‘image of Dresden’ became more or less the ‘image of Saxony.’”⁴²⁴

5.7 Leipzig, the Other City

After Dresden, Leipzig stood in second place in the American perception of Saxony.⁴²⁵ In most respects, however, it had a different image than Dresden. In fact, it had many different facets to its image, and it variously attracted and repelled different Americans for different reasons throughout different periods of the nineteenth century. In certain negative ways, it almost seemed like Dresden’s antithesis. In other, more positive ways, it shared in the high reputation of Saxony, while also offering its own unique opportunities. Leipzig was not the seat of a royal court, nor did it boast collections of art and treasure like Dresden’s. Some Americans considered its population less quiet and refined, giving the city an unpleasant atmosphere. At the same time, in good Saxon fashion, it had its own impressive claims to educational and literary achievement. Furthermore, it was a world-renowned commercial center, due to its huge annual fairs. The other major aspect of Leipzig’s image in the early nineteenth-century American mind was its association with Napoleon’s great defeat in 1813, and this will be discussed in a later section. Two good studies on Americans’ perceptions of Leipzig, as mentioned in the introduction, are Anja Becker’s doctoral dissertation, “For the Sake of Old Leipzig Days ... Academic Networks of American Students at a German University, 1781-1914,” and Brüning’s two-part article, “Entdeckung eines ‘sehr bemerkenswerten

⁴²⁴ Brüning, “Saxony Is a Prosperous and Happy Country,” 45.

⁴²⁵ Brüning, “Entdeckung eines ‘sehr bemerkenswertes Ortes,’” no. 1:5.

Ortes'. Reiseindrücke amerikanischer Bildungsbürger des 19. Jahrhunderts in und um Leipzig." Brüning's article, "'Saxony Is a Prosperous and Happy Country': American Views of the Kingdom of Saxony in the Nineteenth Century," also includes much similar material on Leipzig.

5.7.1 General American views of Leipzig

In the first half of the nineteenth century in particular, Leipzig was always eclipsed by Dresden in American travelers' accounts. Those who did stop there for a visit were usually on the way to or from Dresden, and rarely spent as much time in Leipzig as they did in the capital. Leipzig, after all, had no *Sistine Madonna* and no royal court. George Ticknor spent several days there in 1816, visiting professors, researching the university, experiencing the Michaelmas fair, and touring the nearby battlefield. But even though he found much to fascinate him, upon his return to Saxony nineteen years later, he insisted to his family that there was nothing to see in Leipzig; they had missed nothing by arriving in the city after dark and leaving before dawn the next morning.⁴²⁶ They had a better chance to get an impression of Leipzig a few months later as they stopped there for a day on their journey from Dresden to Berlin in May 1836. The Ticknors were not particularly impressed, especially when they compared it to quiet, clean, orderly Dresden. George Ticknor wrote:

As soon as we entered its gates, we found ourselves in the midst of the bustle & stir of a merely commercial city. The great Easter fair has now been over four or five days and the streets, filled with wagons loaded & lading, bore witness to it; while the quickened step of the population & their eager look left no doubt of the extraordinary activity & prosperity, which now reigns among them. The inhabitants

⁴²⁶ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 19 November 1835.

are now about 43 000 in number, & rapidly increasing – partly owing, I suppose, to the thrift of trade every where, At any rate the bustle, spirit & movement of things here constituted the most complete contrast to the quiet and tranquil state of things at Dresden.⁴²⁷

Anna Ticknor, having never had any positive experience in Leipzig with which to balance this visit, reported in even harsher tones:

We found the narrow streets filled with a most cruel succession of disagreeable odours and ugly people, no side walks, and the pavement so poor and so dirty. But it looks very busy & active, the impulse of the great fair has not yet passed away, for it is but just over. ... Leipsic is certainly an unsavoury and uninteresting place, to a visiter of one night.⁴²⁸

Other American visitors had nicer general impressions of Leipzig. Irving thought that “some of the Streets in Leipsick are very picturesque.”⁴²⁹ Dwight liked many of the parks and promenades.⁴³⁰ So did Taylor.⁴³¹ The defunct medieval city walls had been torn down and the moat filled in over the course of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and they had been converted into parks, gardens, and promenades that encircled the city in a uniquely attractive way. As American visitors discovered, these public spaces were favorite places for pleasure outings.⁴³² So even if Leipzig was not

⁴²⁷ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 4: 13 May 1836.

⁴²⁸ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 14 May 1836.

⁴²⁹ Washington Irving, *Journals and Notebooks*, 3:189.

⁴³⁰ Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 316.

⁴³¹ Taylor, *Views A-foot*, 127.

⁴³² For a detailed history of the conversion of Leipzig’s medieval fortifications into a city promenade ring, see Pit Lehmann, “Vom Verteidigungsgelände zum Promenadenring,” in *Leipzig um 1800: Beiträge zur Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte*, ed. Thomas Topfstedt and Hartmut Zwahr (Beucha: Sax-Verlag Beucha, 1998), 7-15.

interesting to a “visiter of one night,” as Anna Ticknor thought, perhaps one only needed an additional day to feel more attached. Taylor wrote,

I have now been nearly two days in this wide-famed city, and the more I see of it the better I like it. It is a pleasant, friendly town, old enough to be interesting, and new enough to be comfortable. There is much active business life, through which it is fast increasing in size and beauty. Its publishing establishments are the largest in the world, and its annual fairs attended by people from all parts of Europe. This is much for a city to accomplish, situated alone in the middle of a great plain, with no natural charms of scenery or treasures of art to attract strangers. The energy and enterprise of its merchants have accomplished all this, and it now stands, in importance, among the first cities of Europe.⁴³³

Taylor spoke of the “active business life” as a positive thing, whereas the Ticknors seemed disturbed by all the entrepreneurial bustle.

Putnam was a rare American who opted to visit Leipzig and *not* Dresden. He pointed out the advantageous location of the city: “Here am I, in the very heart of Germany, in the centre of Europe, within ten hours’ ride of Dresden, one day of Berlin, two of Prague, three of Munich, four of Warsaw, ten of St. Petersburg, and a few more of Rome, Constantinople, and Jerusalem.”⁴³⁴ What Putnam saw as an advantage to the American traveler also happened to be one of the major reasons for Leipzig’s commercial success: Leipzig lay at major trade crossroads of Europe.⁴³⁵ It was easy to get to. This was a pleasant convenience for American travelers like Putnam, and it also led to the

⁴³³ Taylor, *Views A-foot*, 125.

⁴³⁴ Putnam, *The Tourist in Europe*, 244.

⁴³⁵ Robert Beachy, *The Soul of Commerce: Credit, Property, and Politics in Leipzig, 1750-1840*, *Studies in Central European Histories*, ed. Thomas A. Brady and Roger Chickering, no. 34 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), 33.

city's commercial character ... for better or for worse, depending on how American visitors were inclined to feel about it.

Becker makes the point that Americans' impressions of Leipzig were often ambiguous.⁴³⁶ Even individuals often felt that there were things to like and things to dislike about the city. Between any two people, there was even more likelihood of a difference of opinion. Wikoff and his traveling companion, the famous actor Edwin Forrest, could not agree on whether Leipzig was worth stopping in and seeing. Wikoff "would gladly have tarried here for a little time, if only to inspect the famous battle-field where Napoleon's career was virtually terminated, in October 1813," but Forrest was too anxious to get to Paris; he could not be bothered to waste time in Leipzig.⁴³⁷ Brüning says that "the attractions of this metropolis in the northwest of Saxony were of a different kind [than Dresden's] – more of interest to businesspeople, scholars, and students and less to leisure-seeking travelers or sightseeing tourists."⁴³⁸ Thus, Ticknor enjoyed Leipzig more as a student and scholar in 1816, but showed little interest in it in 1835 and 1836 as a Boston Brahmin family man seeking the best of culture and society. Still, whether a person liked Leipzig or not, most of them admitted that the city had some significant claims to fame.

Ticknor enumerated the main aspects of Leipzig's image in an 1816 letter:

Leipsic is a very remarkable place, and presents itself to everybody who comes with a judicious acquaintance with it, under three distinct forms, – a city associated with

⁴³⁶ Becker, "For the Sake of Old Leipzig Days ...," 124-125.

⁴³⁷ Wikoff, *Reminiscences of an Idler*, 328.

⁴³⁸ Brüning, "Saxony Is a Prosperous and Happy Country," 36-37.

many famous recollections in early history, and the Marathon of our own times, where the inroads of a tumultuous barbarism were finally stopped; as a trading city, for its size the most important in Europe; and as a University, one of the largest, most respectable, and ancient in the world. The second is, of course, the aspect in which it is first seen by a stranger.⁴³⁹

Since the second was the most obvious, we will examine it first.

5.7.2 Trade fairs

Leipzig was world-famous for its trade fairs, which it held at New Year's, Easter, and Michaelmas each year.⁴⁴⁰ We have already seen that “no other city on the Continent could rival it in the importance of its trade,” and that even at the birth of the United States, the Founding Fathers were extolling the opportunities of these fairs and hoping to set up ongoing trade relations with Saxony, which were finally achieved with the establishment of a U.S. consulate in Leipzig in 1826.⁴⁴¹ Early American visitors to these fairs were amazed by their size and scope, both in goods and in nationalities represented. Brüning believes that “Dwight has to be credited with the first authentic description of an introduction to the peculiarities of the Leipzig fairs ... ,” but when he wrote this, he apparently did not have access to Ticknor's journal manuscripts, only the heavily edited selections published in *Life, Letters, and Journals of George Ticknor*.⁴⁴² A decade prior to Dwight, in October 1816, Ticknor and Everett experienced the Michaelmas fair in

⁴³⁹ George Ticknor, Leipzig, to Edward T. Channing, 17 September 1816 in George Ticknor, *Life, Letters, and Journals*, 1:107.

⁴⁴⁰ Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 313.

⁴⁴¹ Lingelbach, “Saxon-American Relations,” 517.

⁴⁴² Brüning, “Saxony Is a Prosperous and Happy Country,” 39. Brüning might be right, if he means the first *published* description of the fairs by an American. Ticknor's journals, though circulated among friends and family, were not published until 1876, and even then the section on the Leipzig fair was not included.

Leipzig, and Ticknor wrote a vivid perspective on it, “compared with which Bunyan’s Vanity Fair was dull & empty”:

The first thing that struck us in coming into the city and in attempting to go about it was of course, the throng of the Fair, of which, we have now the third and last week. This is an ~~very~~ ancient institution. It was first established in 1155 – but did not well succeed and was finally settled on the foundation & nearly the system on which it has ever since subsisted in 1175. It is ~~very~~ remarkable how an island town like Leipzig, whose situation does not seem ~~at all~~ to favour commercial enterprise should still have gained such ~~prodigious~~ importance that Merchants come here from y^e walls of china to y^e North Sea – from Asia, from Africa, and America to buy and sell and get gain. In pafsing through the crowded streets, which like y^e squares are filled with booths & temporary shops of all kinds, I have met this morning not only Jews of all characters, countries, & drefses, but Turks, Greeks, Persians, Rufsians, and Americans – nay more, one third of the signs in the city are written in Hebrew as well as German for the benefit of y^e circumcision and the number even of Rufsians and Greeks is so considerable that I have seen many signs in their tongues also. ~ Indeed, in this respect Leipzig is the Cairo of Europe – the common point in which all y^e nations of y^e earth meet to trade & traffick. The great support of y^e Fair is, however, y^e Polish Jews who come here in immense numbers with specie only – purchase goods of all kinds – & spend y^e interval between Michaelmas & Easter in traveling through ~~all~~ the North of Europe & Asia and retailing them to y^e Swedes, Norwegians – Rufsians – Siberians – Kamschatcans – Cofsacks &c &c. ... The amount of Goods introduced here cannot be calculated, as a great proportion is subject to no excise – but, the number of persons who have been at y^e fair is estimated at nearly or quite twenty thousand – the lowest estimation I have heard being sixteen and y^e highest twenty three.⁴⁴³

By contrast, the Easter fair was larger. According to Dwight, “The fair at Easter is much the longest, Eighty thousand strangers have been registered at the police-office at a single fair.”⁴⁴⁴ The Easter fair was likely larger, but the report of eighty thousand visitors is probably too high. Between 1814 and 1830, the Leipzig fairs usually saw around

⁴⁴³ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 16 October 1816. I have omitted a lengthy section where Ticknor gives a very unflattering, racist description of these Polish Jews. Most other Americans at this time who wrote about these Polish Jews also shared Ticknor’s prejudices and aversions to them, with the possible exception of Willis, whose lighthearted writing showed a less hostile position. See Willis, “Invalid Rambles in Germany,” 280.

⁴⁴⁴ Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 313.

twenty thousand visitors—give or take a couple thousand—per year *combined*. The number of outsiders attending the fair often grew from year to year, but the commercial importance of the fairs was actually decreasing during this time, a fact that American travelers generally would not have noticed.⁴⁴⁵

The variety at these fairs was striking. Ticknor even mentioned that

we found in a booth, a Mulatto dressed up as our North American Indians are in picture-books and pased off on a wondering crowd, ... as a Cannibal caught near Philadelphia! It was ~~one of the~~ a most gros & disgraceful deceptions I ever saw in my life.⁴⁴⁶

In addition to Ticknor, Willis and Dwight wrote (and actually published) descriptive accounts of fairs in Leipzig in the first half of the nineteenth century, and Willis's is particularly colorful for his several-page observation of the various national costumes that he saw there.⁴⁴⁷ Dwight was also amazed at the diversity of nationalities, writing that "the traveller who wishes to write a description of lands which he has never seen, may here find materials to enliven the pages of his work."⁴⁴⁸ American politicians and merchants were interested in the commerce transacted at the Leipzig fairs. But for the casual traveler, it seems that the fairs were more fascinating for their cosmopolitan atmosphere.

⁴⁴⁵ Beachy, *The Soul of Commerce*, 187-188.

⁴⁴⁶ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 16 October 1816.

⁴⁴⁷ Willis, "Invalid Rambles in Germany," 272-287.

⁴⁴⁸ Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 313.

5.7.3 “Literary reputation”: Leipzig University and other schools

But there was more to Leipzig than periodic fairs. In the words of Dwight, “Leipzig is not more distinguished for its commercial than for its literary reputation.”⁴⁴⁹ It was home to a venerable university, other exemplary educational institutions, and a thriving book trade associated not just with the fairs, but with some of the most important publishing houses in Germany or even Europe.

If Leipzig was little more than an afterthought to American travelers in Saxony before 1850, in the second half of the nineteenth century it came into its own as a travel destination, due to the huge surge in popularity of its university among American students abroad. Becker in her dissertation studies the experiences and academic networks of these American students. She points out that between 1781 and 1852, only five American students are reported to have matriculated at Leipzig University, and two of these are doubtful. At this time, American students preferred to go to Göttingen or Berlin. The period from 1853 to spring 1870, however, saw Leipzig begin to show a greater appeal, as thirty American students enrolled. Then, between fall 1870 and the turn of the century, some 1,140 Americans poured into Leipzig University.⁴⁵⁰ A major reason for the low American attendance at Leipzig University in the first half of the nineteenth century was probably a result of the low opinion of this university by Leipzig’s early American visitors, despite its historical position as a leading European

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., 335.

⁴⁵⁰ Becker, “For the Sake of Old Leipzig Days ...,” 68.

university.⁴⁵¹ Before ever actually visiting Leipzig, Ticknor referred to its university by reputation, placing it among the first class of all German universities, along with Göttingen, Berlin, and Heidelberg.⁴⁵² Together with Halle and Jena, it had been one of the “great lights of German learning” in the 1700s.⁴⁵³ However, after having spent a few days in Leipzig visiting the university’s institutions, buildings, and professors and adding what he had learned to his prior research, Ticknor concluded that the Leipzig University was stuck in the past:

1. The first remarkable trait in the Leipzig character is an adherence to old forms and old modes of thinking, which is entirely against y^e Genius of Germany which despises forms & is fond of novelty. – This is to be seen in y^e preservation of so many old customs at y^e University – ... in short in a general antiquated air and tone, which it is impo[s]sible not to perceive. ...

2. This difference separates them from other literary establishments & other literary men, & makes them more exclusive than I have yet seen any. In consequence of this, nearly all y^e Profefsors are, contrary to y^e general practise, Saxons & Leipzigers – and, what is equally remarkable, y^e instances of Leipzig profefsors accepting a call to other universities are ~~very~~ rare. This second trait, therefore, is a kind of exclusive literary patriotism, which I have ~~often~~ sometimes found rather obtrusive & ridiculous. ...

3. The third trait was a certain subdued and humbled tone – a want of an ~~upright~~ absolute Independence, ...

From these three unpleasant traits in y^e Leipzig character, comes no doubt some good – If yy. are old-fashioned yy. have y^e old-fashioned minute learning – if yy. have an exclusive & a vain spirit, it attaches them more to yr. own University & gives them more of an esprit de corps – and if yy. are poor yy. are industrious. Still these traits remain ~~faults~~ or weaknesses, which a more liberal mode of thinking & more favourable circumstances would ~~certainly~~ remove, but, which in Leipzig will probably remain indelible characteristicks.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., 102-107.

⁴⁵² George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 2: September 1816, “Remarks on German Universities.”

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., 18 September 1816, September 1816, “Remarks on German Universities.” In fact, Ticknor’s criticisms of the university were quite valid. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Leipzig University still clung persistently to many outdated medieval forms that prevented it from advancing and

Becker notes that Dwight also perceived Leipzig University as old-fashioned and outdated, so that he more or less shared Ticknor's pessimistic view of the current state of the university.⁴⁵⁵ It is true that, like Ticknor, he also referred to the persistent use of Latin when other German universities were using their native language, and he observed that Göttingen had in some ways overtaken Leipzig as the premier university in Northern Germany.⁴⁵⁶ But Dwight's judgment of the university, while not nearly as thorough as Ticknor's, was also not as dim:

Ask an inhabitant of the Rhine, the Vistula, the Danube, or the Baltic, where is the Attica of Germany, and he will answer, Saxony. To the student, the very word Saxony has a charm, which more than any other awakens a national pride, in his being able to say that he is a German. Though ages have rolled over this university, it has lost none of its youthful vigour, and even during the last twenty years, it has been equalled by very few in the number of its students, and in literary fame. ... It still maintains its high reputation in classical literature, holding the first rank among the German universities.⁴⁵⁷

In these two assessments of Leipzig University—a disappointed one by Ticknor and a positive one by Dwight—we see what might possibly be the intriguing first signs of later American trends. Becker finds it likely that Ticknor passed along his negative impression of Leipzig University to others. Citing Ticknor's career as a distinguished Harvard professor from 1819 to 1835, she writes that “no Harvard students traveled to

improving with the changing times. It did not begin to significantly reform its archaic institutions until 1830, but after that it was able to reclaim its place as one of the leading universities in Germany. For a detailed history of the state of Leipzig University at the beginning of the nineteenth century and its reform path into modernity, see Matthias Donath, “Zwischen ‘Augiasstall’ und ‘Universitas litterarum’ . Die Universität Leipzig um 1800,” in *Leipzig um 1800*, 43-59.

⁴⁵⁵ Becker, “For the Sake of Old Leipzig Days ... ,” 104.

⁴⁵⁶ Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 335-337.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 336.

Leipzig in order to matriculate until the late 19th century. In contrast, Ticknor was succeeded at Göttingen by a small wave of American students, many of them with Harvard affiliation.”⁴⁵⁸ However, if Ticknor turned Americans away from Leipzig, Dwight may have influenced the start of the trend towards it. One of only two confirmed Americans to study at Leipzig during the first half of the nineteenth century was Dwight’s cousin, Theodore Dwight Woolsey, in 1828. Becker suggests that Dwight’s opinion of Leipzig played a role in Woolsey’s selection of that university; indeed, Dwight provided Woolsey with a letter of introduction to one of the professors there.⁴⁵⁹ Woolsey, whom Becker characterizes as “less outspokenly critical of Leipzig” than Ticknor, then returned to the USA and became a professor at Yale in 1831, even serving as the institution’s president from 1846 to 1871.⁴⁶⁰ Interestingly, from the 1850s, Yale students began studying at Leipzig, and Becker wonders if Woolsey had some influence on this.⁴⁶¹ At any rate, American impressions of Leipzig university in the first half of the nineteenth century seem to have been ambivalent, and though the university was well-known, it was not a major draw for American visitors to the city during that era.

Enhancing Leipzig’s reputation as a highly educated, literary city were its exemplary schools, several of which were at least partially funded by the city to educate the poor. Dwight praised Leipzig for its these institutions and described five schools for

⁴⁵⁸ Becker, “For the Sake of Old Leipzig Days ... ,” 105.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 71-72.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*

the poor, four parochial schools, a school for the wealthier citizens, and private schools.⁴⁶² Ticknor had checked out one of these schools, the *Freischule*, in 1816, and paid an even more detailed visit to an additional school, the *Thomasschule*, a boarding school that he regarded as exceptional.⁴⁶³ Mann also visited Leipzig in 1843 while researching European (especially German) educational institutions with the intent of improving America's educational system.⁴⁶⁴ He deplored the state of schoolhouses throughout Europe, making

one exception in favor of Leipsic, in the kingdom of Saxony, which, in addition to having one of the best systems of education, if not the very best, to be found in any city of Germany, has also excellent schoolhouses; and the one last erected as a charity-school for poor children is the best of these.⁴⁶⁵

With such rich educational offerings, Leipzig must have contributed significantly to Saxony's enlightened character.⁴⁶⁶

To a small extent, some of Leipzig's educational institutions even drew Americans to the city, though, like the university, this was primarily a trend of the latter half of the 1800s. Becker mentions that, especially in the later decades, several Americans studied at the Leipzig Conservatory, which opened in 1843. One enrolled that

⁴⁶² Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 320-322. See also Brüning, "Entdeckung eines 'sehr bemerkenswerthes Ortes,'" no. 1:16-17.

⁴⁶³ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 2: 17-18 September 1816. For a bit more discussion on this point, see Becker, "For the Sake of Old Leipzig Days ...," 112-113.

⁴⁶⁴ Horace Mann, *Life and Works of Horace Mann*, ed. Mary Mann (Boston: Lee & Shepard Publishers, 1891), 174.

⁴⁶⁵ Mann, *Life and Works*, vol. 3, *Annual Reports on Education*, 266.

⁴⁶⁶ For further discussion of alternative educational opportunities in Leipzig, see Becker, "For the Sake of Old Leipzig Days ...," 111-121.

very year, and this first American was likely Willis's brother.⁴⁶⁷ Willis had visited his brother in Leipzig in the summer of 1845, staying a month.⁴⁶⁸ He gave the reason for his brother's attendance at this conservatory, saying that the Germans had long placed a high value on developing the talents of the musically gifted. In what seems to be another example of a direct Yale-Leipzig connection, Willis wrote that at that time,

the importance of this powerful element of education was agitated among the professors of Yale College, and ... it was the impulse of this movement which determined my brother, just then graduating at Yale, to follow his strong natural bent, and substitute the cultivation of music for a learned profession. He is now at Leipsic, completing his fourth year of study of musical composition.⁴⁶⁹

5.7.4 "Literary reputation": Home to central Europe's book trade

Another major reason for Leipzig's literary reputation was the thriving bookselling and publishing industry that the city was home to.⁴⁷⁰ Much of the business was transacted at the fairs, and many major publishers were based out of Leipzig.⁴⁷¹ Putnam visited the city in 1836 and wrote,

The book trade is carried on here very extensively, and with a great deal of system. Leipsic is the head quarters for the business in all the German states, and all publishers in other places have their agents here. You will be surprised, perhaps, at the fact, that the number of new books published annually in Germany, is greater than all issued during the same time in Great Britain and France put together.* ...

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁸ Willis, "Invalid Rambles in Germany," 287.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., 265-266.

⁴⁷⁰ See also Becker, "For the Sake of Old Leipzig Days ...," 319-320 for examples of early nineteenth-century American perspectives on the Leipzig book trade, as part of a larger discussion of Americans seeking to acquire books and libraries abroad for use in the United States.

⁴⁷¹ Taylor, *Views A-foot*, 128.

*The average number of new works per annum, issued for the first time in Great Britain in the last three years, is about 1200; in France, 4,000; in Germany, 6,000.⁴⁷²

Dwight had said something very similar a decade earlier:

The love of authorship renders the German press more active than any other in the world. Leipzig is the great book market for the centre of the continent, not merely for works printed in German, but for those in classic and oriental literature, and for all the modern languages of Europe. The books printed in Germany are to a considerable extent published and sold here. ...

You will easily believe, ... that the great booksellers of Leipzig transact an amount of business unequalled by any in Europe, a few of those in London and Paris being excepted. The number of volumes sold by each of them, is probably several times as great as are sold by Murray, or by Longman & Co. as German books do not cost more than one-third as much, as those printed in England.⁴⁷³

For Theodore Parker, this aspect of Leipzig was one of the most noteworthy features of the city. He wrote, “I wandered all about it, and a nice place it is too, with its 143 booksellers, its Brockhauses, its Tauchnitzes, its Schneiders, and Fleischers,” naming some of the biggest firms in the industry.⁴⁷⁴ Literarily-inclined Americans in Leipzig sometimes could not resist the opportunity to see these important publishing houses. In 1836, Ticknor visited, “partly on business, & partly as a curiosity, Brockhaus, the great German publisher, who, to a great degree, controls the whole bookselling trade of Germany.”⁴⁷⁵ Putnam, meanwhile, found that “Mr. Tauchnitz’s establishment is one of the most extensive in the trade. He showed me the stereotype plates of his well-known

⁴⁷² Putnam, *The Tourist in Europe*, 247-248.

⁴⁷³ Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 333-334, 335.

⁴⁷⁴ Theodore Parker, Auerbach’s Keller, to Dr. Francis, 12 June 1844, in John Weiss, ed., *Life and Correspondence of Theodore Parker, Minister of the Twenty-Eighth Congregational Society, Boston*, vol. 1 (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1864), 240.

⁴⁷⁵ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 4: 14 May 1836.

editions of the Greek and Latin classics, ...”⁴⁷⁶ Leipzig’s book publishers and book fairs were an important part of the city’s literary image, but besides people on business like Ticknor (who in 1856 went to Leipzig and other cities to buy books for the new Boston Public Library), Americans generally did not travel to Leipzig for the sake of its book industry.⁴⁷⁷ Nevertheless, while they were there, they often found it significant enough to at least comment on.

5.8 Saxony’s Other Attractions for American Travelers

5.8.1 Historic battlefields

One of the activities Americans liked to do while they were in Saxony was to visit historic battlefields. Many of these foreigners displayed a remarkable knowledge of the history of European wars that had raged across the land. And with Saxony “the great battle-ground of Germany, and Germany more than any other country, the battle-ground of Europe,” this was an extraordinary place to relive in the imagination some of the great battles that had helped shape European history.⁴⁷⁸ Many American travelers in Saxony found it impossible to resist telling the tales of Gustavus Adolphus and Albrecht von Wallenstein in the Thirty Years’ War; and Prince Józef Antoni Poniatowski, Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher, and Napoleon Bonaparte in the wars that bear the latter’s name. Because of recentness of those Napoleonic Wars, nineteenth-century Americans tended to give them much more attention.

⁴⁷⁶ Putnam, *The Tourist in Europe*, 248.

⁴⁷⁷ George Ticknor, Berlin, to Edward Everett, 20 September 1856, in George Ticknor, *Life, Letters, and Journals*, 2:312-313.

⁴⁷⁸ Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 339.

When Ticknor and Everett toured the area in 1816, it seemed as if the smoke had only just cleared from the devastations and glories of these battles of a couple years prior. Ticknor was aware that the events of those days were momentous occasions in the history of Europe, and he was in a position not only to see the early effects of them, but also to talk with individuals who had lived through them in recent memory. He was truly fascinated by this history, and his detailed knowledge of it is evident in his journal entries. As he traveled by carriage across the European countryside, he frequently noted the battlefields he happened to cross and commented on the significant events that happened there. These references became much more frequent once he entered Saxony. A typical example is this entry from September 14, 1816:

After dining at Naumburg, we continued our journey again thro' a fine country⁴⁷⁹ which like that we saw in the morning had been so often ravaged by the French, and yet always recovered again by its own fertility, until we came near by Lützen into the immense plains of Leipzig and passed on our right the village of Großgörschen, where Blücher fought the tremendous battle of May 2. 1813, and which the peasants are now just rebuilding.⁴⁸⁰

There were some battlefields, however, that merited more than passing comments. They were important enough to make a special trip to, stop at, and tour in minute detail. The Battle of the Nations at Leipzig, where Napoleon suffered his significant defeat, was the foremost of these. In Ticknor's words,

Oct. 17. – We could not, of course, think of leaving Leipzig for the last time, without visiting the modern Marathon – the field on which the flood of barbarism was a second time prevented from deluging Europe. To day, therefore, the anniversary of the battle, we took a Guide, who understood ~~all~~ the positions, and just

⁴⁷⁹ Ticknor's scrawl looks more like "county," but "country" seems to make more sense here.

⁴⁸⁰ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 2: 14 September 1816.

after sunrise set out to visit the spot on which three years ago one half of Europe was assembled in battle-array against the other.⁴⁸¹

He then spends the next eight pages describing the fourteen-mile tour they took that morning through the nearby countryside and villages, and records the events that took place in the various locations. He desired more than factual knowledge of the battle; he wanted to experience it. The following morning, “that I might enjoy the terror of the day that set Europe free,” Ticknor went up to the observatory in the tower of the Pleißenburg and surveyed the entire battlefield with a telescope.⁴⁸² Here he imagined the battle playing out on the plains around him, to the extent that “when I had looked & thought & imagined till my eyes grew dim, & my head swam & throbbed with the effort ~~& emotion~~ I descended from y^e tower filled with feelings, which will probably never be repeated & which I shall certainly never forget.”⁴⁸³ He then went and paid devotion at the monument to the fallen Polish prince and marshal Poniatowski, “with feelings which a Pole would not have thought unworthy of y^e spot.”⁴⁸⁴ Even as he rode out of Leipzig the next day on

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., vol. 3: 17 October 1816.

⁴⁸² Ibid., 18 October 1816.

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid. Poniatowski, fighting for the French, was covering the French Army’s retreat during the Battle of Leipzig. But the retreating French destroyed the Elster River bridge over which they had escaped, before Poniatowski and his troops could reach it. He and other soldiers, therefore, had to plunge into the river. Already wounded, Poniatowski was unable to reach the other side and drowned. His bravery in battle and his tragic end turned him into a legend and a rallying cry for Poles fighting for their nation. A monument to his memory was erected near the spot where his body was recovered. For more on this history and a local perspective of his monument, see Dieter Walz, “180 Jahre Völkerschlacht bei Leipzig: Ereignisse und Sachzeugen im Waldstraßenviertel,” in *Waldstrassenviertel* (Leipzig: PRO LEIPZIG, 1993), 57-63.

his way back to Göttingen, he continued to write pages about other battles which had taken place in the areas he was traversing.

Ticknor was not the only American visitor interested in Napoleon's battles (or for that matter, those of earlier wars) in Saxony. Irving also ascended the Pleißenburg tower in 1823 for a bird's-eye view of the Leipzig battlefield, as did Calvert in 1824 and Taylor in 1845.⁴⁸⁵ Nathaniel Parker Willis in 1845 wandered the battlefield and visited Poniatowski's memorial, and so did Taylor.⁴⁸⁶ Dwight, too, said that he liked to visit Poniatowski's monument and reflect on the outcome of the Battle of Leipzig.⁴⁸⁷ Anna Ticknor in 1836 and Mann in 1843 showed interest in visiting the memorial to Jean Victor Marie Moreau by Dresden, commemorating the spot where he was mortally wounded by a cannonball while plotting against Napoleon's forces at the Battle of Dresden.⁴⁸⁸ These visitors and others noted in their books and journals their thoughts and feelings as they saw the historical battlefields of Saxony. None of them indicated that a pilgrimage to a battlefield was a primary reason to travel to Saxony. However, once they were in that country, they found it worthwhile to learn what they could about significant battles there, and to experience the proper feelings of respect.

⁴⁸⁵ Washington Irving, *Journals and Notebooks*, 3:136; Taylor, *Views A-foot*, 126.

⁴⁸⁶ Willis, "Invalid Rambles in Germany," 269-272; Taylor, *Views A-foot*, 128.

⁴⁸⁷ Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 316-317.

⁴⁸⁸ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 24 April 1836; Mann, *Life and Works of Horace Mann* (1891), 203.

5.8.2 Model educational institutions

We have seen that the Ticknors often referred to the Saxons' high education level. They and other Americans who visited Europe in the early nineteenth century, being of the more privileged strata in society, were themselves well educated and in turn placed a high value upon education. This was one of the qualities they admired in Saxony. Not surprisingly, they found some of the main reasons for the Saxons' good education in the quality schools throughout the land. Leipzig's excellent schools have already been pointed out. Saxony was known for others as well. Some of them served as models for American educational reformers.

Probably the most famous one was technically not even Saxon ... anymore. Schulpforta, near Naumburg, had long been one of the most important *Gymnasia* in all of Germany.⁴⁸⁹ Historically part of Saxony, it had been lost to Prussia along with so much other territory after the Congress of Vienna. Ticknor paid a special visit there less than two years after this event and wrote twenty-two pages in his journal about the school, recording in minute detail its history, structure, curriculum, daily schedule, and discipline, with obvious intent to learn how America's schools could be improved. Although it had been recently transferred to Prussia, Ticknor realized its history belonged to the history of Saxony. He wrote,

It was, like almost all the other institutions of this kind in Saxony, originally a religious establishment, the first distinct notice of which is as early as 1137 when it was mentioned in a papal Bull under y^e name of Cœnobium Portuense, As a

⁴⁸⁹ For a history of Schulpforta, see Hans Gehrig, *Schulpforte und das Deutsche Geistesleben* (Darmstadt: Hans Buske Nachf., 1943) and Fritz Heyer, *Aus der Geschichte der Landesschule zur Pforte* (Darmstadt and Leipzig: Hans Buske Nachf., 1943[?]), reprinted together by Justus Weihe, ed. (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, [1993?]).

Cloister, with however ~~but~~ few Monks, it remained till y^e time of y^e Reformation & then with many other salutary changes, three of y^e most considerable religious institutions in ~~the country~~ Saxony were changed to literary institutions & made publick schools for the whole Land. These three were Pforte, Meissen – and Merseburg, (afterwards removed to Grimma), and this change was effected by Maurice, the great Elector in 1543. The solemn dedication & opening of Pforte took place Nov. 1. 1543 and from that time to y^e present day it has been y^e first school in y^e Land & a principal source of the learning of Germany.⁴⁹⁰

Even though it was outside the bounds of the Kingdom of Saxony, its existence and achievements were still a credit to Saxony's reputation of educational superiority. Ticknor was not the only American who noticed Schulpforta. Bancroft, during his studies in Germany, also researched German educational institutions. As tutor to young Frederic Henry Hedge, whom he brought with him to Europe in 1818, Bancroft chose to place Hedge in Schulpforta.⁴⁹¹

Another prestigious school in Saxony was located at Meißen, and of course Ticknor visited it too. He and Everett obtained a guided tour of “the great school there” and Ticknor wrote six pages in his journal about this school, “which since the division of Saxony & y^e consequent celsion of y^e Schulpforte to Prufsia has become the most considerable in the country [of Saxony].”⁴⁹² These and other respected schools did not

⁴⁹⁰ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 2: 23 September 1816. He abbreviated the name Schulpforta to Pforte. Also see vol. 3: 23 October 1816, where he again commented about this school, It has been above two-hundred and seventy years the first elementary school in Germany – and educated nearly nine thousand pupils, if not all for high learning, at least nearly all for usefulness – and such as it is, it numbers on its catalogue many of the greatest names of the last centuries Grævius, Ernesti, Klopstock, Fichte, &c and many of the first ~~living~~ scholars, men of letters – and Statesmen now living in Germany.

⁴⁹¹ Howe, *Life and Letters of George Bancroft*, 1:97; Pochmann, *German Culture in America*, 73. Due to his German education, Hedge later became an important figure in the development of Transcendentalism. See Pochmann, *German Culture in America*, 144-148.

⁴⁹² George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 2: 20 September 1816.

interest most of the Americans who visited Saxony as they interested Ticknor. But for people like Ticknor and Mann, who hoped to reform American education, Saxony was an important place to examine successful German methods of education.

5.8.3 *Meißen porcelain*

Meißen was probably the third-most-mentioned Saxon city in early nineteenth-century American travel accounts. There was more to Meißen than a famous school, of course. The city was much more renowned for its porcelain. Early nineteenth-century American travelers were generally aware of this, and they occasionally even toured the porcelain factory there. This was little more than a curiosity, however. Ticknor paid a studious visit to the factory in 1816, and wrote about the history of the porcelain and of the factory, and a little bit about the procedure for making the porcelain. In the end, his judgment of the product was that “the ware is ~~very~~ beautiful & ~~very~~ fine but did not seem to me equal to y^e [English] Wedgewood, which is lighter & whose colors are more delicate.”⁴⁹³ When he returned to Meißen with his family in 1836, they were unable to see the factory because it was closed due to a holiday. This did not seem to bother the Ticknors at all; Anna Ticknor barely mentioned it, and George Ticknor wrote, “We did not go in, which we regretted very little, as we have seen the whole history of the Meißen ware better at Dresden, than it can be seen here; & elsewhere the manufacture of Porcelaine generally.”⁴⁹⁴ Most other Americans, if they mentioned Meißen porcelain at all, also did not see it in Meißen, but admired it at the *Grünes Gewölbe* in Dresden. John

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., vol. 4: 12 May 1836.

Quincy Adams in 1799 did so and remarked that it was “not equal to that of Berlin.”⁴⁹⁵ Meissen’s fame for the manufacture of fine porcelain may have in some way contributed to the image of Saxony in the American mind, but this was not a compelling enough reason to entice Americans to travel out of their way to visit the city. The usual reason Americans found themselves in Meissen was because they were en route between Dresden and Leipzig.

5.8.4 Scenic Saxon Switzerland

One place that American visitors did enjoy going out of their way to was the Saxon Switzerland. If the landscape of Saxony was considered pleasant enough simply because it was more varied and fertile than the barren sand plains of nearby parts of Prussia, the Saxon Switzerland added a much deeper dimension to Saxony’s reputation for natural beauty. This scenic region straddled the Saxon-Bohemian border where the Elbe River carved dramatic sandstone formations out of the Ore Mountains. Dwight said of it,

Among all the rambles which a traveller can enjoy in the north of Germany, there is none which is so much celebrated as the Saxon Switzerland. “Have you seen the Switzerland of Saxony,” is the question which every one of your acquaintances in Dresden puts to you, before you have been here a week. “You must visit it,” he tells you in reply to your answer in the negative. “I hope you will not leave this country until you have seen our Switzerland,” says another. “You have of course visited our Alps?” says a third. To avoid the commiseration which always flows from your negative reply, you order a carriage, and tell the driver to conduct you to this fairy scenery, looking neither to the right nor the left.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁵ John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs*, 1:236.

⁴⁹⁶ Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 372-373.

Of course, everyone realized these modest mountains did not truly resemble the Swiss Alps. Ticknor made this point by relating an amusing story about King Anthony:

It is most unmeritably called the Saxon Switzerland, for, – picturesque as it is – it has certainly nothing of the Swiss character about it. The kind old King of Saxony illustrated this fact rather whimsically this winter by saying to Mr. Forbes – On l'appelle la Suifse Saxonne; mais elle ne ressemble plus à la Suifse, que moi, je ne ressemble à la Venus de Medicis – et regardez moi, Monseieur – regardez moi; said the old gentleman, pointing to his shrunk & withered little person.⁴⁹⁷

But the fact remained that the Saxon Switzerland was breathtakingly beautiful. It inspired its visitors to pen pages describing the rocky cliffs, the wild forests, the dark hollows, the flowing rivers, and the panoramic vistas of mountain chains stretching off into the hazy blue distance. Whether reading Dwight, Taylor, or either of the Ticknors, the accounts sound remarkably similar.⁴⁹⁸ The untamed romantic landscape refreshed the spirits of those who had become accustomed to urban society. Some travelers, like those just named, were able to spare several days for rambling around the area at their leisure, usually using a hotel at the village of Schandau for their base. Others, like John Quincy Adams, simply made a day trip out from nearby Dresden to observe the landscape from the legendary Königstein fortress (“which has never been taken,” as nearly every traveler made sure to mention).⁴⁹⁹ The Saxon Switzerland was a significant reason why Americans (especially those Americans who traveled in northern Europe and did not see the real Switzerland) raved about the beauty of the Saxon landscape. As Mann said, “No

⁴⁹⁷ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 4: 3 June 1836.

⁴⁹⁸ Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 372-381; Taylor, *Views A-foot*, 134-139; George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 4: 1-5 June 1836; Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 4: 1-5 June 1836.

⁴⁹⁹ John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs*, 1:236-237.

one can have any adequate idea of the face of Saxony, who does not visit this miniature of Switzerland.”⁵⁰⁰

5.9 The Saxon Cession to Prussia: A Complex Contribution to American Perceptions of Saxon Identity

Not all aspects of the American image of Saxony came from within the boundaries of the Kingdom of Saxony. Historically, the name “Saxony” had been associated in one way or another with several territories across large portions of Northern Germany (not to mention the remote Saxon heritage in England). Over time, “Saxony” or “Saxon” has meant different things in different contexts, and some of these various vague connotations probably lurked in the background of Americans’ image of contemporary Saxony. Some of these associations—to the extent they existed—would likely be too subtle to study here, but at least one is fairly pronounced. The regions of the former Electorate of Saxony that had been ceded to Prussia at the Congress of Vienna continued to contribute complex associations to the American idea of Saxony in the first half of the nineteenth century, even though they were not a part of the Kingdom of Saxony. The case of Wittenberg illustrates both a positive and negative side to the image, and how Americans selectively attributed to Saxony the traits they saw most fit.

5.9.1 The problem with Wittenberg in the American image of Saxony

For centuries Wittenberg had been an important part of the Electorate of Saxony. Even though Saxony lost it to Prussia in 1815, in some respects Americans continued to identify it as Saxon. Of course, Wittenberg’s main claim to fame was the Protestant

⁵⁰⁰ Mann, *Life and Works of Horace Mann* (1891), 206.

reformer Martin Luther. Probably most of the Americans who traveled to Europe in the early 1800s—especially the many who hailed from New England—were Protestant, and their writings show that they held Luther in high regard. Luther, furthermore, was known to have been a Saxon. Wheaton, the former U.S. Minister to Prussia, in his speech at Brown University, attributed much of the achievement of Western civilization to this “Saxon reformer.” He said that mankind is indebted to Germany

for two of the greatest promoters of their moral improvement. To Germany we owe that mechanical invention which lends wings to thought [Gutenberg’s printing press], and that great moral revolution which has purified Christianity from its grossest corruptions, and adapted it to promote the onward progress of humanity. . . . Guttenberg and Luther—two immortal names — sufficient to give lustre to any age or nation!⁵⁰¹

He called them “heroes of civilization, these conquerors in the realms of thought,” and referred to Luther’s city, “Wittemberg, where the Saxon reformer burnt the bulls of Leo, and kindled that mighty flame which can never be extinguished. American liberty is the daughter of British liberty, and they are both the children of the Reformation.”⁵⁰² American travelers often shared this grateful view of Luther as the rescuer of Christianity and the emancipator of men’s minds.⁵⁰³ A visit to Wittenberg was often something of a

⁵⁰¹ Wheaton, *Progress and Prospects of Germany*, 3-4.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵⁰³ For a particularly dramatic example, see Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 262: “Luther conferred upon Northern Germany, and on the world, a greater blessing than has been imparted by any other individual during the last seventeen centuries.” On p. 77 he specifically attributed Germany’s educational superiority to Protestantism:

Whence comes this difference between Germany and other nations? It doubtless results, in a very considerable degree, from the impulse which the Protestant religion gave to the public mind in the northern part of this country. The efforts of Luther and Melancthon to improve the schools and gymnasia, as well as the spirit of investigation which they excited, has been felt from age to age, and the effect will, probably, continue to the end of time.

pilgrimage for the more devout among them. As Dwight said, “To a Protestant, and to every one who loves mental freedom, it will long remain a hallowed spot, as it was once the scene of the labours, and now contains the ashes, of two of the greatest reformers [i.e. Luther and Melancthon].”⁵⁰⁴ Ticknor wrote about his and Everett’s stop in the city in 1816:

The first thing we went to see was the chh. of y^e Virgin or, as a Protestant would rather call it, the chh. where Luther used to preach. ...

Luther’s chamber, too, we saw, and it moved a very different class of feelings from those I had experienced in the apartments of Frederick & Voltaire at Sans Souci, for a moment after entering it I found myself without knowing it, uncovered. ... I have seen few things in Europe that have more deeply moved me than this, and I came away with a higher trust in y^e gratitude of the world, when I had seen yt. this humble & obscure room had been preserved three centuries & amid such tremendous revolutions, unchanged out of respect to the memory of y^e great man, who had once lived in it.⁵⁰⁵

In 1836 he visited Luther’s room again and said, “It is holy ground.”⁵⁰⁶ Legaré, that same year, also sought Luther’s memory in Wittenberg and made the historical Saxon connection:

Wittenberg is no longer Saxon, ... the ashes of Luther lie in what may be called foreign ground. To be sure, the King of Saxony is a Catholic, and perhaps it is fit that the chief of Protestant Germany [the King of Prussia] should have the guardianship of its most precious and sacred shines [*sic*]. Potsdam, Frederick, Voltaire,—Wittenberg, the unfortunate Elector, Luther.—What a contrast.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., 259.

⁵⁰⁵ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 15 October 1816. Ticknor’s use of “uncovered” here refers to having taken off his hat.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., vol. 4: 15 May 1836.

⁵⁰⁷ Legaré, *Writings of Hugh Swinton Legaré*, 1:139.

Of course, depending on one's confession, not all Americans thought Luther was worth reverence. Calvert related the internal struggle that his Catholic uncle faced upon viewing the bronze statue of Luther in Wittenberg's market square:

To my uncle it was not permitted to know Luther. He regarded him with that stolid, insatiable, Romish aversion, whose unutterability is deepened by the fear that mingles with the hate. If at any time the mighty shadow of the Giant crossed the disk of his sensations, it was only to be thrust angrily down into the nameless pit, to be there the compeer of Lucifer, chewing forever, beside that prime rebel, the bitter cud of bootless remorse for an impious revolt. But my uncle being preëminently an æsthetic traveller, caring little for history, or geology, or ethnography, or statistics, could look with critical calmness, with judicial impartiality, upon a statue even of the apostate Augustinian monk; and so looking, he pronounced it good.⁵⁰⁸

For Protestant Americans, Wittenberg had a special appeal because there Luther had begun the Reformation. It was a moment in history worthy of—or even due to—Saxony's legendary love of enlightenment.

In another sense, however, Wittenberg did not fit the stereotypical American image of Saxony. It was ugly. Anna Ticknor was the most outspoken on this point:

[From Wörlitz] we drove off to Wittemberg, leaving all beauty behind us, and finding nothing but flat, sandy plains. ... It is an ugly place, this Wittemberg. ... My husband thought me sadly wanting in enthusiasm, and I know not why it excited me so little. ... I was glad to get away from the ugly old place.⁵⁰⁹

Anna Ticknor thought the city shabby, and she and others found the surrounding countryside dreary as well, more Prussian than Saxon. Americans were happy to count Wittenberg's spiritual and intellectual contributions as part of the Saxon heritage, but when it came to aesthetic considerations, sometimes they lumped it in with the rest of

⁵⁰⁸ Calvert, *First Years in Europe*, 162-163.

⁵⁰⁹ Anna Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 3: 15-16 May 1836.

sandy Prussia from the Saxon kingdom's borders to Berlin. Anna Ticknor did this when traveling from Potsdam to Dresden in 1836 and commenting on the route:

Herzberg is any thing but a pretty town. It is ancient, but neither venerable, – nor picturesque, and it has the cheerless, comfortless look so common in the villages of this part of Prussia. I have felt a certain satisfaction that every mile brought us nearer to Saxony, and, when we had absolutely passed the barrier, I found, or imagined that I found immediately, a great difference in the appearance of the people, as well as in the cultivation of the country. There is good reason for it, however, for the soil, in this part of Saxony is vastly superior to what we have seen in the adjacent part of Prussia, and the people are notoriously contented with their rulers.⁵¹⁰

For her, Herzberg (which was not especially far from Wittenberg) and its environs were clearly Prussian. Yet this region that she disdained for its “cheerless, comfortless look so common in the villages of this part of Prussia” had been a part of the Electorate of Saxony for centuries, only becoming Prussian scarcely more than twenty years before. For Anna Ticknor, in terms of appearance, the Kingdom of Saxony was the true Saxony. It was only when she crossed the 1815 border back into that kingdom that she noticed the landscape beginning to look more “Saxon.” George Ticknor, meanwhile, also characterized the Saxon cession as Prussian, not only because of the quality of the soil, but also for its general military spirit. In Herzberg he saw a

warlike character, which is present through all the borders of Prussia, and is, to strangers especially, very striking. We have found it every where, that we have been from Wittenberg round to the borders of Saxony again. –

31. May. This forenoon, we found ourselves again in the pleasant, quiet land of Saxony – surrounded with more fertility, than we have seen before since we left it, & in the midst, if not of a better population, of one that inspires more confidence, & seems more contented & comfortable.⁵¹¹

⁵¹⁰ Ibid., vol. 4, 31 May 1836.

⁵¹¹ George Ticknor, *Travel Journals*, vol. 4: 30-31 May 1836.

Despite Ticknor's survey of inhabitants of the cession in 1816, where he found that they still considered themselves and the land Saxon, twenty years later he believed that the people and the land of that region seemed more Prussian than Saxon.

Dwight was unlike the Ticknors in this regard, however. He considered this former Saxon region still Saxon, despite Prussian rule. And yet he also observed that its barren landscape did not fit the characteristic image of Saxony:

In quitting Berlin with your face turned towards the south, you anticipate the pleasure of leaving the sands behind you; but not such is the reality. ... The celebrity which Saxony has so long enjoyed, for the fertility of its soil, leads you to hope, that every mile you travel, in approaching this comparative land of promise, will present a fairer region, to your eye. After leaving Trauenbrietzen (half way between Berlin and Wittenberg) a few miles behind, you arrive at the boundary of Saxony, as it existed before the Congress of Vienna. The word Saxony, to the ears of the Germans, and to those of all travellers who have associated much with them, is synonymous with fertility, but no bright verdure exhibits to your eye a fairer land, and the walls and towers of Wittenberg rise from the sand, as if to remind you of Tadmor in the desert.⁵¹²

A few pages later, however, Dwight amended his assessment of the soil in the Saxon cession, in order to better support his argument that the region's character was still more Saxon than Prussian:

Although most of that part of Prussia, over which I have passed since leaving Trauenbrietzen, (Halle however is excepted,) was separated from Saxony and united to Prussia more than ten years since, at the Congress of Vienna, it has lost as yet very little of the Saxon, and acquired very little of the Prussian character. Its dialect is Saxon, much of its territory is in fertility genuine Saxony, ...⁵¹³

⁵¹² Dwight, *Travels in the North of Germany*, 260-261.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*, 272-273.

Thus, Dwight seems to have contradicted himself. First he said that the cession was sandy with “no bright verdure” and then he claimed that much of it was “in fertility genuine Saxony.” Both times, though, he emphasized the point that Saxony was synonymous with fertility, and Prussia with the opposite. And in attributing opposing characteristics to the same territory, he manipulated the cession’s image to underscore his stereotypes of Saxony and Prussia.

Clearly, Wittenberg and the rest of the territory which Saxony ceded to Prussia in 1815 posed a problem for Americans in defining their image of Saxony. Its intellectual spirit, as exemplified by Luther and the Protestant Reformation, was Saxon. Yet in a way, it was appropriate that it now belonged to Prussia, whose king was Protestant while Saxony’s was not. Meanwhile, Saxony was reputed to be fertile and attractive, with citizens living in comfort and contentment, while Prussia (at least Brandenburg) was despised for its drab, infertile land and its impoverished peasants. For many Americans, the landscape of the cession more resembled the latter. Wittenberg and the cession were thus a complicated middle ground, Saxon in historical identity but Prussian in appearance. Americans like Dwight and the Ticknors struggled to categorize it. Regardless of whether they perceived it as more Saxon or more Prussian, their thoughts revealed that their underlying image of Saxony—in this case fertile land and enlightened, contented people—was a very strong one in their minds.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Early in the nineteenth century, Germany was in many ways a “*terra incognita*” to most Anglo-Americans, perhaps especially those from New England. The more educated ones may have known something about Germany’s recent political history, but apparently had little current knowledge of the land, its people, and their language, and only the beginnings of an appreciation for their literature. Saxony was probably even less known across the Atlantic. Some merchants trading in goods that could be bought or sold at the Leipzig fairs, along with the Founding Fathers who were seeking to establish the U.S. economy on stable footing, may have been some of the only ones with any real knowledge of the Kingdom of Saxony before 1800. The downfall of Napoleon and the ensuing peace in Europe opened the door for a few illustrious American cultural pioneers to rediscover Europe beyond England, France, and Italy. George Ticknor and his generation popularized study in the German universities, which became an important way for men of means to gain the best education available and jump-start their careers. From a well-known handful of young men in the 1810s and 1820s to uncountable thousands making the academic overseas voyage at the end of the century, students were a significant part of America’s general growing awareness of Germany. The concurrent travel trend of wealthy Americans seeking social prestige, health, or adventure abroad connected America even more firmly with Germany. Germany’s popularity as a

destination in this respect had less to do with any perceived superiority over other countries (as it may have had with regard to universities), and more to do with the fact that, as increasing thousands of Americans traveled to Europe each year, more and more of them were bound to come to Germany as a side effect. Initially the growth in American travel to Germany lagged behind the traditional, well-known destinations in western Europe (France, England, and to some extent Italy), but as transportation improved and allowed faster travel to Europe and easier access to the interior of the continent, as more Americans became more prosperous and could afford to travel more, and as the appeals of Germany became more widely known in the United States through the proliferation of published travel accounts, Germany quickly became one of the most popular destinations in Europe. It never received as many visitors as the United Kingdom and France, mainly because sailing routes from America sent travelers to those countries first by default, because there were still important places to visit there, and because of America's dominant cultural kinship to England. As a landlocked destination deep within Germany, Saxony too had to wait until continental peace, increased American prosperity, improved transportation, and more widespread American awareness came about, before it saw a surge in American visitors. This belated surge in Saxon popularity in a way echoes the general trend of American travel to Germany overall.

The phenomenon of travel writing grew in tandem with travel itself, as the two interconnected activities reinforced each other and promoted the growth of the other. As more Americans traveled to Europe, more of them published accounts; as more travel accounts circulated in America and familiarity with Europe grew, more Americans

decided to travel there. All of these trends—travel to Europe, travel to and study in Germany, travel to Saxony, and travel writing—began in the first half of the nineteenth century, but all of them experienced their most dramatic growth and their maturity after 1850. Since this has been an analysis of the origins and early foundational developments in these trends *before* 1850, however, the era of large-scale tourism and study abroad, of the American colony in Dresden, and of the mass-publishing of travel books and letters are the subjects of other studies.

Saxony developed a particularly favorable reputation among American travelers. They praised it for the intellectual quality and good-natured spirit of its population and the respectable character of its rulers. Being a small kingdom sandwiched between the two ambitious powers of Prussia and Austria, and having been the site of numerous devastations from European wars, Americans were inclined to have an empathetic attitude toward it. The picturesque and fertile landscape of Saxony was a relief to the eye of Americans who had been traveling in bleak Brandenburg, Prussia just across the border. With these stereotypes established in their minds, Americans were free to adjust their image of the 1815 Saxon cession to Prussia in ways that maintained the stereotypes: to the extent that the region was known for its enlightened population, it could be regarded as typically Saxon; to the extent that it showed a strong military spirit and its land was barren and drab, it reflected the image of Prussia. The Americans' favorite place to go in Saxony before 1850 was Dresden, because of its world-famous art gallery and other impressive collections, its pleasant and peaceful atmosphere, and its royal court and high society that Americans could associate with if they had the right credentials. It

was an ideal place to reside a while for health and for cultural and social self-improvement, as exemplified by the Ticknors. Leipzig was a distant second favorite among pre-1850 American travelers to Saxony. Its appeals were mainly its association with Napoleonic War history and its unparalleled annual international trade fairs (which to some people were actually more of an inconvenience than an excitement). It, too, had a pleasant city atmosphere, but it was not as quiet as Dresden. Its fine educational institutions upheld the Saxon reputation for literacy, but in the first half of the century, Leipzig University was out of favor with Americans, possibly due largely to Ticknor's 1816 impression that it was old-fashioned and increasingly irrelevant. Finally, Americans in Saxony enjoyed getting away from the cities to marvel at the natural wonders of the Saxon Switzerland, which they considered one of the most scenic areas in all of northern Europe.

These American preferences and prejudices, and the perceptions that they recorded in their writings, tell us something about these individuals. The early visitors to Saxony were essentially all from the privileged classes, were well-educated, and often from New England. Their visits to Saxony—and Europe in general—were meant to improve them socially, culturally, and physically, and to prepare them for better opportunities in the United States. They all found much to love in Europe. Often what they appreciated most were things they felt would be useful in elevating their own country to a higher level of educational and cultural perfection (like museums and libraries). But no matter how much they loved certain aspects of Europe, they remained committed American republicans, proud to feel that their nation was the freest and purest

nation in the world, with the strongest potential for great achievements. Self-improvement was a key concept with these Americans, on both the personal and national levels. These attitudes are probably some of the most important reasons why they loved Saxony. Or perhaps the other way around: these are the attitudes of the types of Americans that Saxony attracted. Regardless, American images of Saxony as a culturally and agriculturally cultivated land, with intellectual and humane rulers, who were well-loved by their enlightened and contented subjects, highlight some of elite Americans' own ideals and dreams for their own budding nation striving towards utopia.

APPENDIX A

MAPS

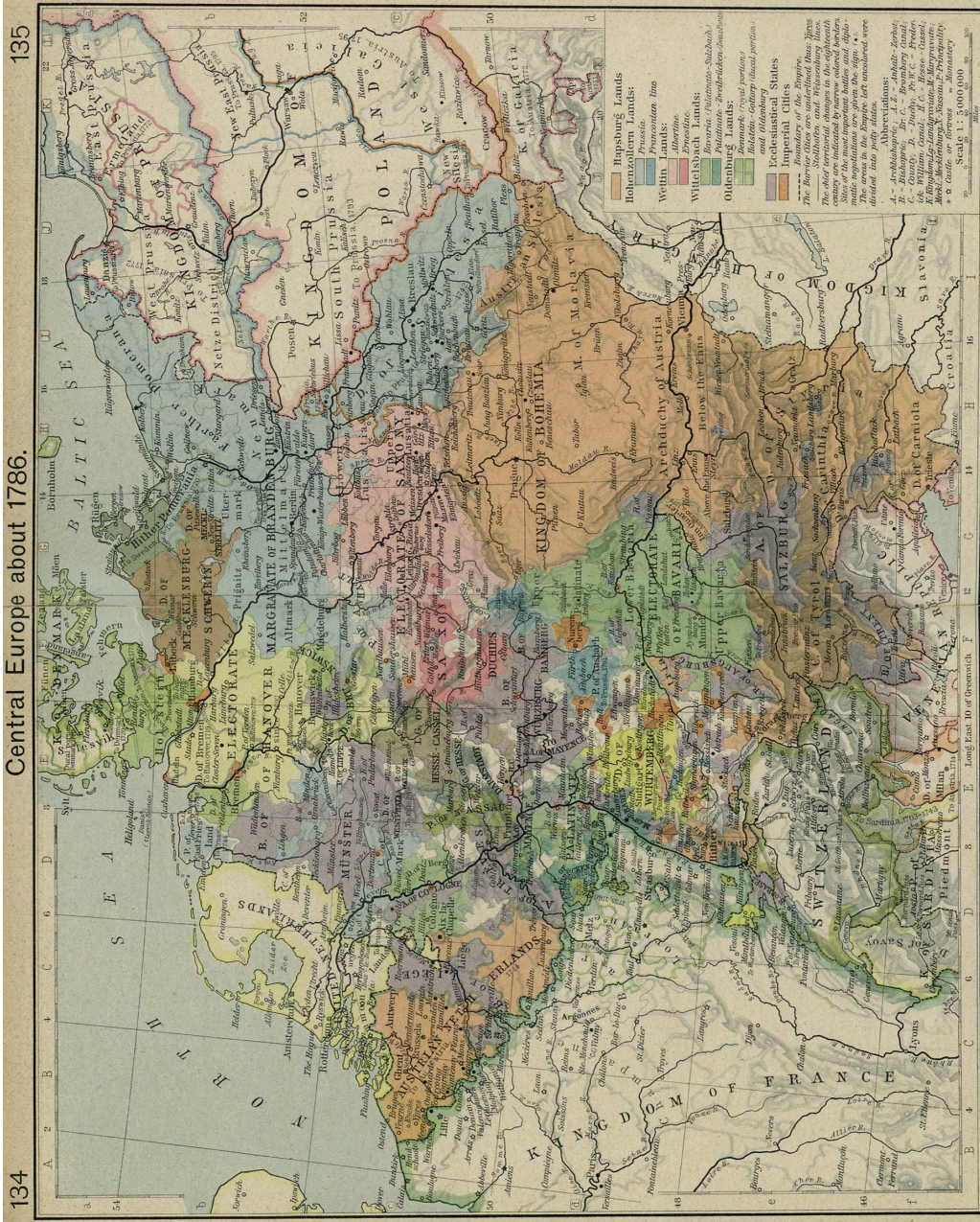


Figure A.1 Map of the Holy Roman Empire about 1786. Reprinted from William R. Shepherd, *The Historical Atlas* (Henry Holt and Company, 1926). Courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin.



Figure A.2 Map of the German Confederation in 1815, after the Congress of Vienna. Reprinted from Sir Adolphus William Ward, et al., *The Cambridge Modern History Atlas* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1912). Courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin.



Figure A.3 Map of the Electorate of Saxony about 1786. Detail from Shepherd, "Central Europe about 1786," *Historical Atlas*. Courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin.

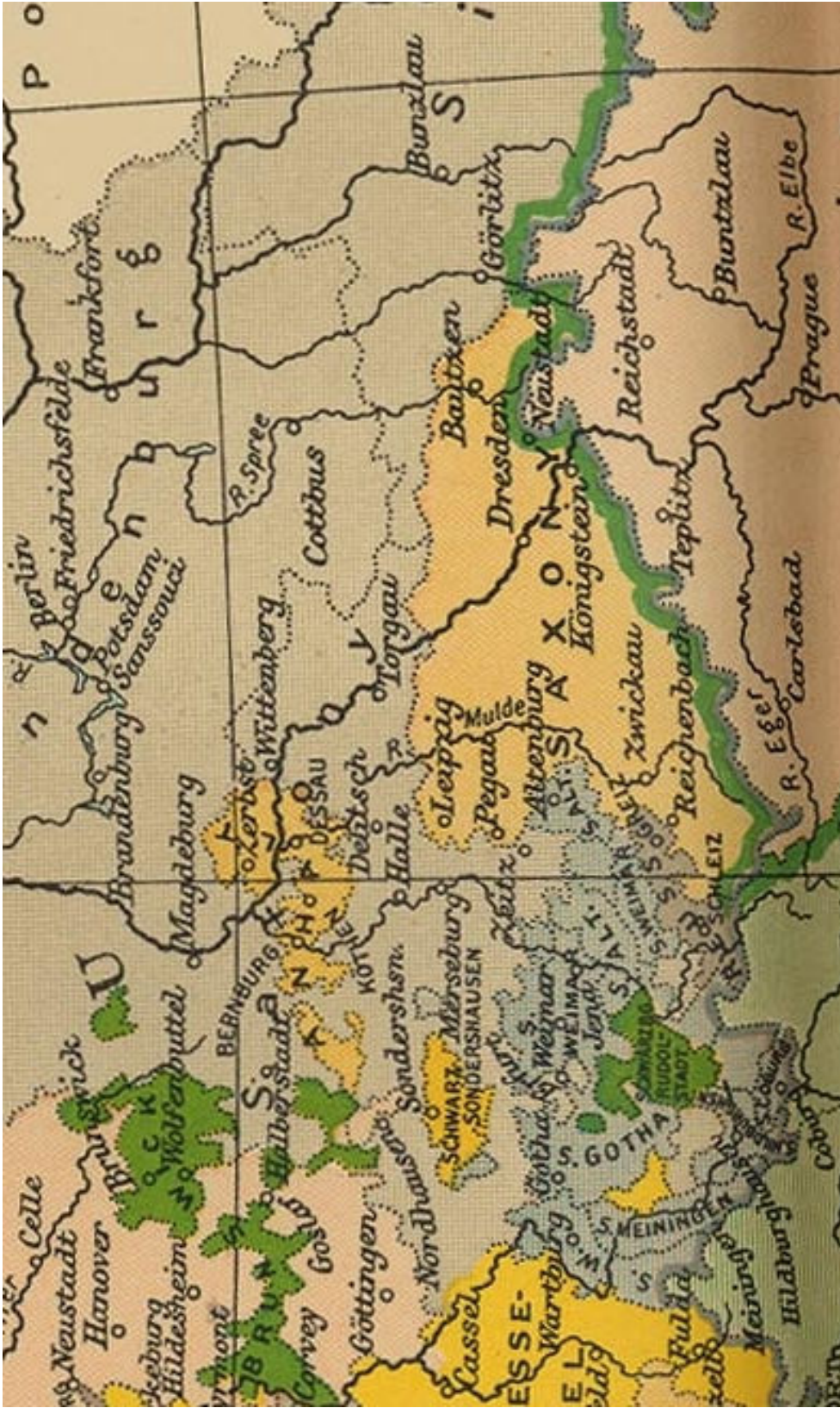


Figure A.4 Map of the Kingdom of Saxony in 1815, after the Congress of Vienna. Detail from Ward, et al., "The Germanic Confederation 1815," *Cambridge Modern History Atlas*. Courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin.



Figure A.5 Map of Europe as an early nineteenth-century Harvard-educated New Englander would have seen it. Reprinted from J. E. Worcester, *Worcester's Modern Atlas* (Boston: Cummings and Hilliard, ca. 1821), which was the atlas that accompanied Worcester's *Elements of Geography*, the official textbook for examining candidates for admission to Harvard. Used by permission of Cartography Associates under the Creative Commons 2.0 license.



Figure A.6 Map of the German Confederation as an early nineteenth-century Harvard-educated New Englander would have seen it. Reprinted from Worcester, *Modern Atlas*, which was the atlas that accompanied Worcester's *Elements of Geography*, the official textbook for examining candidates for admission to Harvard. Used by permission of Cartography Associates under the Creative Commons 2.0 license.

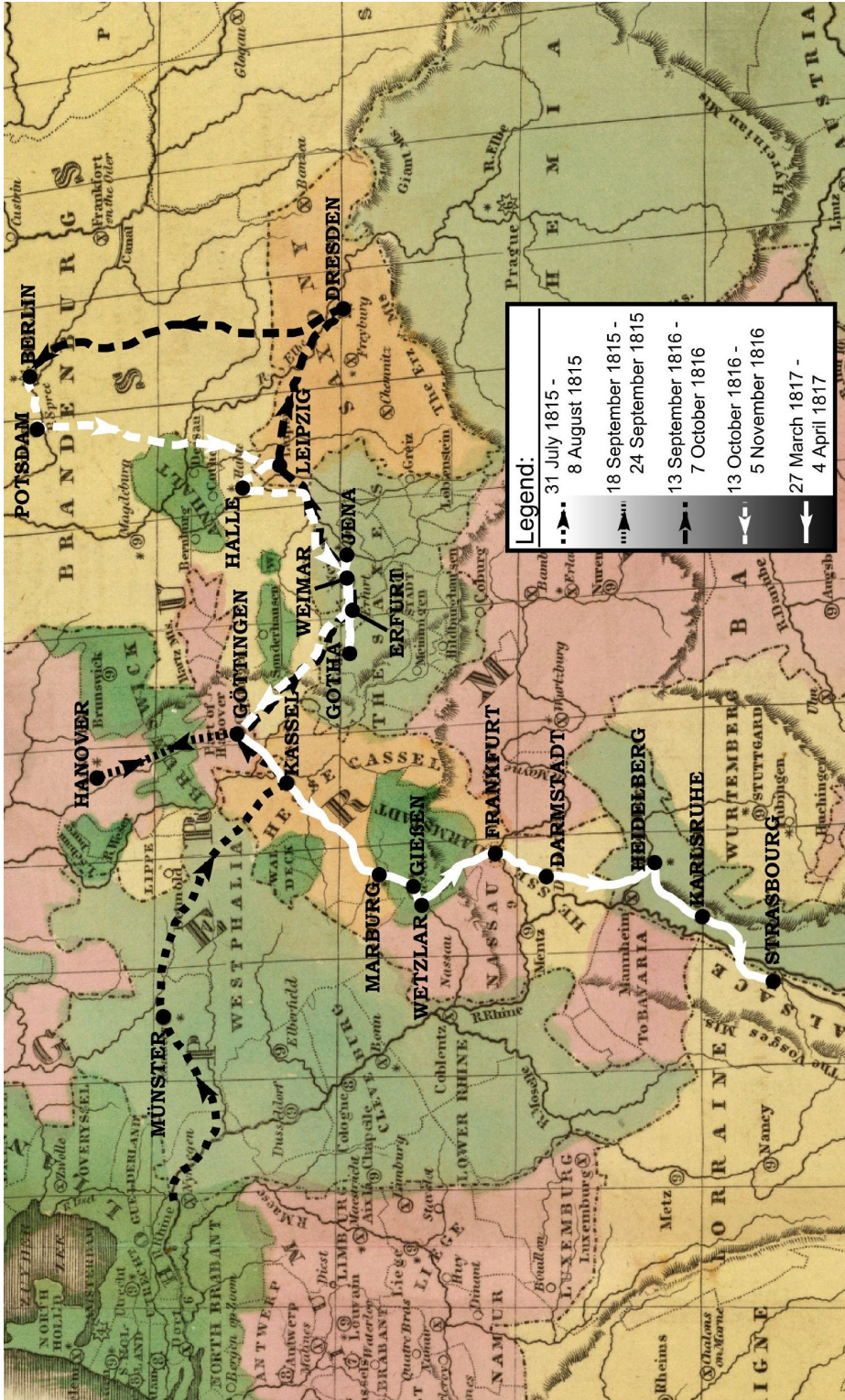


Figure A.7 Map of George Ticknor's 1815-1817 travel routes in Germany. Based on a detail from William C. Woodbridge, "Map of Central Europe comprising Great Britain, Holland, and Belgium, France, Germany, Prussia, and Switzerland, and a part of Poland, Austria, and Italy," in *Modern Atlas, or a New Plan, to Accompany the System of Universal Geography; a New Edition, Improved* (Hartford: Belknap & Hamersley, 1837). Used by permission of Cartography Associates under the Creative Commons 2.0 license.

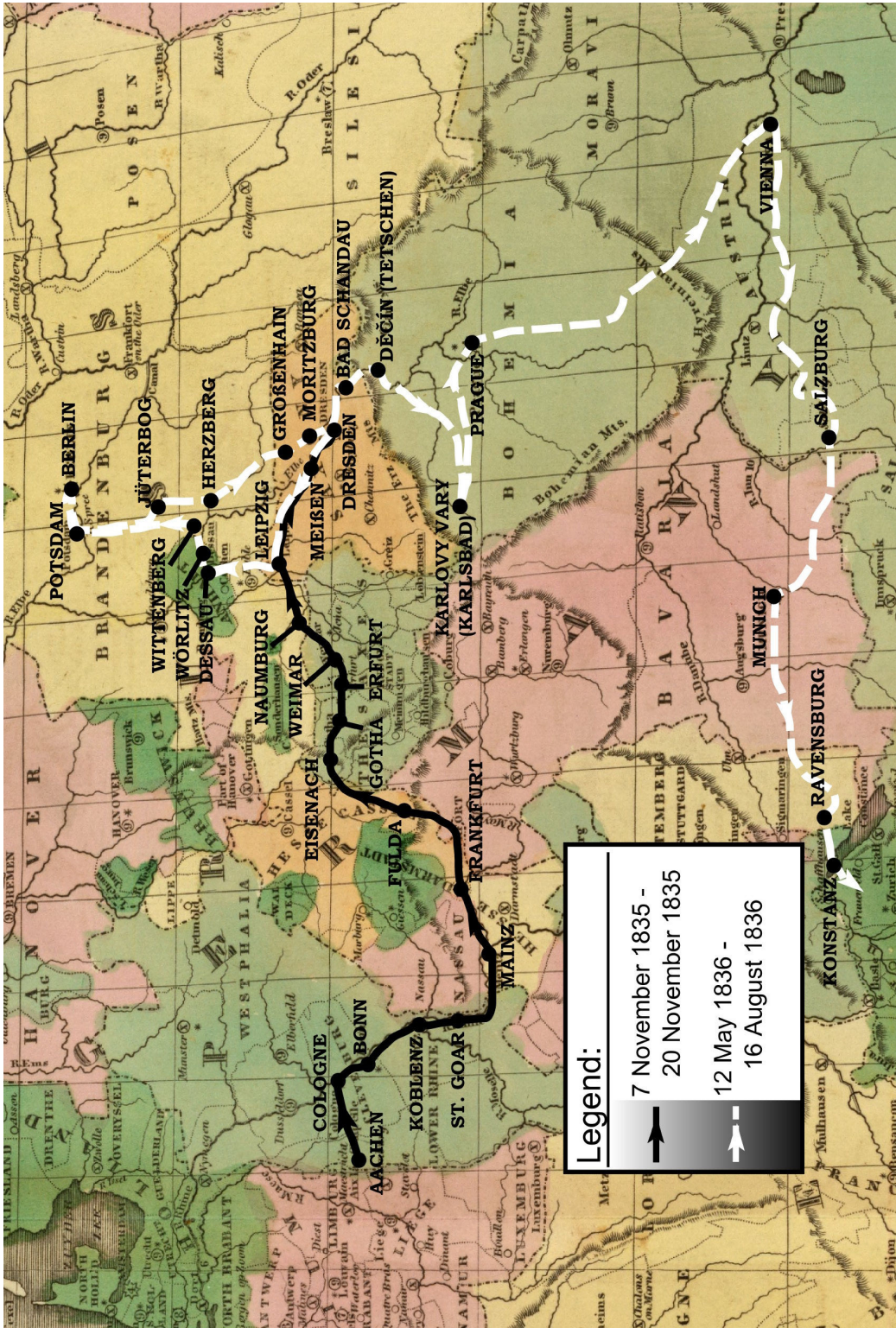


Figure A.8 Map of the Ticknor family's 1835-1836 travel routes in Germany. Based on a detail from Woodbridge, "Map of Central Europe." Used by permission of Cartography Associates under the Creative Commons 2.0 license.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Ashley Sides grew up primarily in Oklahoma, but as an adult has spent time living in the foreign countries of Germany, the Czech Republic, and Texas (where he currently makes his home with his wife, Jamie). His first trip to continental Europe as a university freshman ignited his enthusiasm for the study of world history, cultures, and languages and set his life on an internationally-oriented path. In 2001 he obtained his B.A. in International and Area Studies (European emphasis), with a minor in German, at the University of Oklahoma. He was attracted to the History program at the University of Texas at Arlington by its graduate-level emphasis on transatlantic history, and with this thesis he has completed his M.A. in that program. He anticipates future work in cross-cultural fields, in both life and in academics.