



1885 PROFILE

Bernard Schmidt's dream was simple: to own his own farm where he could work outside in the fresh air—growing tobacco—far away from the grime of any city.

Life at Home

- Thirty-eight-year-old German immigrant Bernard Schmidt was tired of the long hours making cigars.
- He'd had enough of seeing tobacco stains on his hands and living in the dirty city of Newark, New Jersey.
- His dream was to own his own tobacco farm.
- Regretfully, this dream required money; with little cash and many family obligations, Bernard saw a scant chance of making it a reality.
- Instead he was forced to live within a city growing daily, populated by eager, desperate, newly arrived immigrants.
- Bernard considered himself a native of the United States; he had emigrated to America from Bavaria when he was only two years old, and so recalled nothing of his life there.
- His only memories were of Newark and the New Jersey countryside he had visited a few times in his life.
- Bernard's father, Georg, often talked about Bavaria during long walks or around the dinner table.
- Most of these tales were about people who lived near the old family home or the traditions within Bavaria itself.
- In the end, the key lesson was that life was hard for Bernard's father Georg.
- The stories were retold in so much detail that Bernard could visualize the family home from corner to corner, and almost hear the creak from the family's front door that would not become quiet with oil.
- One of the clearest stories was about the events that led to the family's departure from Germany for America.
- To Bernard, the tale was ancient history; to his father, it occurred yesterday.
- Both Georg and his older brother Fritz were blacksmiths and shared a proud reputation in the community: Fritz as an exceptional blacksmith and Georg as a proficient toolmaker and blacksmith.



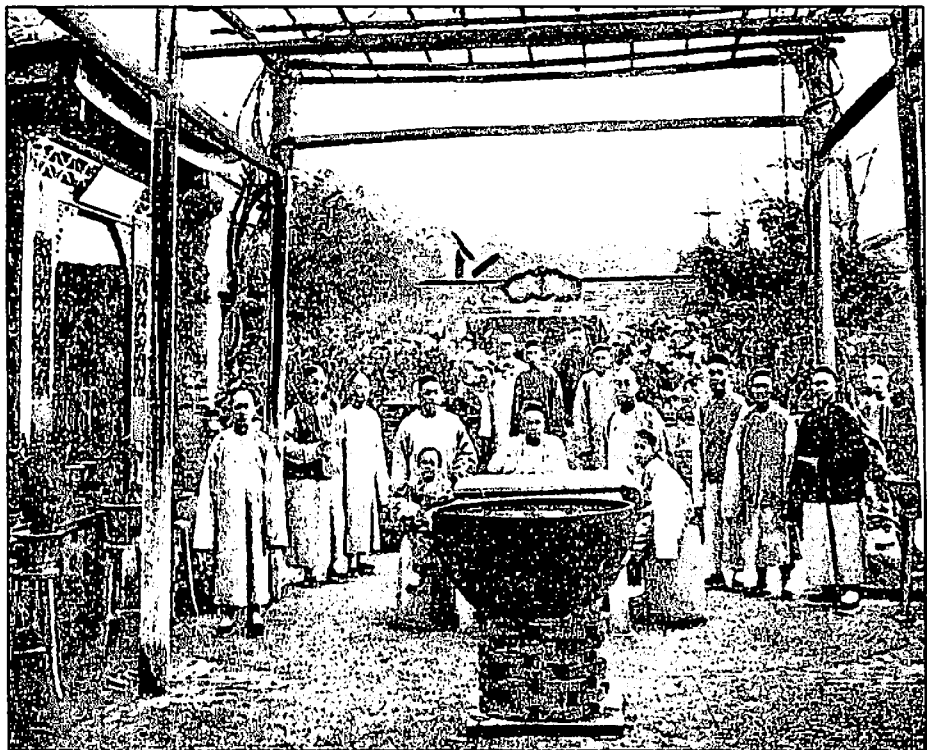
Bernard was two-years-old when he arrived in America. At 38, he was still looking for a better life.

“People’s Natural History Embracing Living Races of Mankind,” E.R. Dumont, 1902:

The physical traits of the average Chinaman may be described in a few words. The form is well built, and, though rather short to represent what we regard as perfect symmetry, is fairly proportionate. It is something between that of the lithe, supple Hindu and the muscular, fleshy European. The complexion may be described as brunette, with a strong yellowish tinge. In the south of China people are darker in tint than in the northern provinces, but their swarthinness is not so deep as that of the Portuguese.

The hair of the head is lank, black, coarse, and glossy; the beard is always black, and is very scanty; while whiskers are still more scanty or wholly wanting. Very little hair grows on the body. The eyes, distinctly typical features, are always black, narrow and apparently oblique. The latter appearance is due to the very slight degree in which the inner angles of the eyelids open, not allowing the whole iris to be seen. This Mongolian peculiarity distinguishes the races of Eastern Asia from all of the races of mankind. The cheekbones are high and the outline of the face is remarkably round; the nose is short, flat, but wide at the end; the lips are somewhat thicker than those of Europeans; while the hands are small and lower limbs of average proportions. . . .

Next to the oblique eyes, the plaited “tail” or more correctly the queue, is generally regarded as the most distinctive feature of the Chinaman. But the fashion of dressing the hair is not one of the ancient customs of the Chinese, nor was it originally practiced by them for their own gratification. The ancient Chinese wore the hair long, bound upon the top of the head in a fashion similar to that practiced by the Loo-choo Islanders. They took pride in its glossy blackness, and had long distinguished themselves from other peoples as the “black haired race.” But two centuries and a half ago the Manchu Tartars invaded China from the north, defeating the Chinese in successive battles. They wore their hair in the long queue with which all who have seen Chinese are now familiar, and in 1627 they issued an order that all Chinese should adopt their coiffure as a sign of allegiance on pain of death. As they overthrew the ruling dynasty at the time with ease, and the chief of the Manchus was made emperor, they enforced the order with such merciless rigor that the Chinese throughout the land eventually submitted. The queue was imposed on the people as a badge of such subjugation; but before the Manchu dynasty (the present rulers of China) had been 50 years established, the “tail” had the common appendage of which the Chinese were proud, and a long black queue was the subject of intense desire of every honest Chinaman.



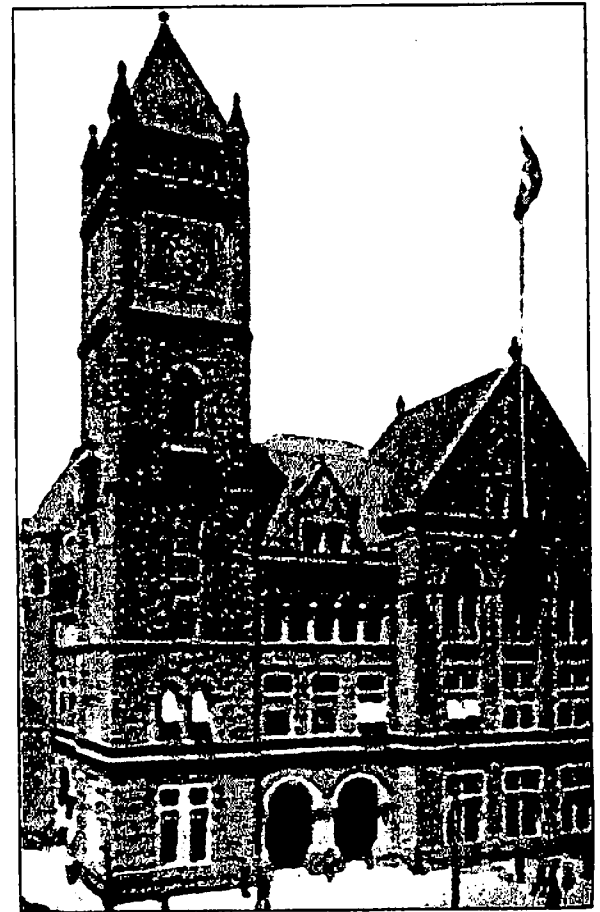
A Chinese garden party in China.



Georg's brother and his family remained in Bavaria.

- The Grippe, or flu, had seized their father's health and he passed away when Georg and Fritz were in their early twenties in the late 1840s, a year before Georg married Anna.
- At the same time, crops failed in the region, and business slowed for the area's blacksmiths: poor farmers and struggling factories required fewer tools and often delayed shoeing horses.
- The young families of both Georg and his brother Fritz were starving; the blacksmith shop could only support one family.
- After much agonizing, a family decision was made: Fritz would keep the shop in Bavaria, and Georg, his wife Anna and two-year-old Bernard would take most of the meager savings of both families and seek their fortune in the United States.
- They did not have any family or friends in America—only hope.
- First, the family—carrying only a couple of bags of clothes—journeyed to Hamburg.
- They also took the family crucifix, which belonged to Georg's grandfather.
- They boarded the ship at Hamburg for a city called Newark, somewhere in America.
- During the journey at sea, the family survived cramped quarters and many days of nausea; young Bernard was dreadfully sick on the voyage.

- Both Anna and Georg worried and prayed to God for their son to survive the trip; he was dehydrated and listless.
- Although Bernard's health improved when they set foot on the soil of their new home, seven other passengers were less fortunate and died from a fever.
- With few options and no English language skills, Georg went to the only place he knew—the closest Catholic church.
- With the Latin he knew, he managed to communicate with Father Patrick Moran from St. John's Roman Catholic Church.
- He introduced Georg to other Germans living in the community, including a lawyer from Munich who had left to avoid the political troubles brewing in the region.
- Georg's skills helped him find a job as a blacksmith at an iron works in Newark; the family saw this opportunity as a blessing from God.
- Though he did not speak English, Georg worked closely with a few other Germans in the iron works and his family lived within a small but growing German community in Newark.
- The family's home was nothing like their place in Bavaria.
- Instead of a nice, warm cottage, the family resided in a run-down carriage house with two other German families.
- To avoid the draft from the doors, everyone slept upstairs on the wooden floor covered with some old straw.
- Georg and Anna had to live that way for several years before they could afford a proper place to rent that they didn't have to share.

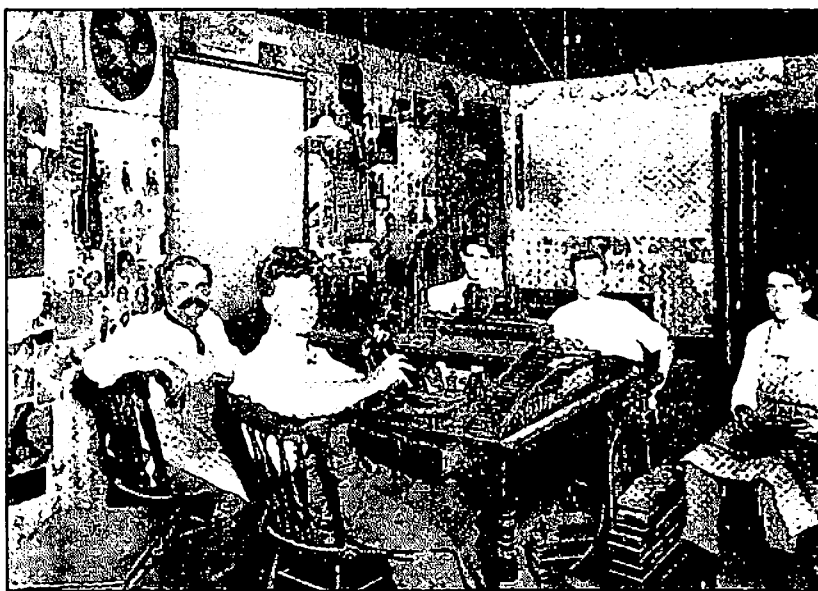


The Catholic Church was a comfortable place for Georg when he first arrived in Newark NJ.

- Life in Newark was tough and filled with challenges: Georg often felt scared among immigrant-hating Americans.
- German immigrants who spoke little English and took "American" jobs were unwelcome.
- Growing up, Bernard received more than a couple of bloody noses while battling a gang of neighborhood boys who made great sport of picking on him and other German youths.
- A significant number in the native Anglo-Americans in the United States were against having immigrants in their town and even called themselves Know Nothings, based on pretending to know nothing of the crimes and acts of violence they inflicted on the immigrants.
- Many of the Know Nothings did not like seeing the city's Catholic population increase and believed the Protestant way of life was threatened.
- Catholic families named Schmidt rarely felt safe in Protestant communities, and the reaction against German immigrants was exploding.
- Crop failures and political unrest drove thousands of Germans to America.
- After that, the entire United States was hit in 1857 by a recession that threw thousands out of work.

Life at Work

- Bernard Schmidt was 10 years old when the recession of 1857 hit the nation, and working hours were suddenly limited at his father's job.
- Young Bernard had to bring income into the home, the family concluded.
- His native-born brother Charles, only four years old, was too young to work.
- Rent on the family's four-room apartment was \$5 a month—a sizable portion of the family income.
- Bernard's English was strong for a child of 10 years, which delighted his parents.
- Bernard was often called upon to help Georg and Anna with their language difficulties when shopping or getting around Newark.
- The fact that he spoke English helped Bernard find odd jobs in the neighborhood until one member of the German community hired him at his seegar (cigar) shop.
- Working in the seegar shop required a great deal of attention to detail.
- Tobacco leaves were shipped from Southern states like Virginia, and Bernard had to strip the tobacco from the midrib of the leaf.
- This demanding work earned him \$0.35 per day.
- Almost immediately he decided to work his way up to a cigar maker.
- Bernard's opportunity arrived when the Civil War erupted in 1861; some of the workers in the shop enlisted and others were drafted into service.
- Bernard was not old enough to serve, but skillful enough to graduate from a tobacco stripper to a cigar maker.



Bernard began working in a cigar shop at 10-years-old, stripping the tobacco from the midrib of the leaf.

- The hours were long and tough on his hands, on which the tobacco left daily stains and imparted a strong scent that remained under his fingernails.
- But the work was steady, as cigars only grew in popularity during the war; manufacturers began competing to produce five-cent cigars.
- Demand in the 1870s increased by over 100 percent, while the population grew only 30 percent.
- To meet the demand, many cigar manufacturers hired at low wages women who spoke little to no English.



To meet the increased demand for cigars, manufacturers hired at low wages women who spoke no English.

- By 1885, the average cost to produce 1,000 cigars was roughly \$43; labor cost the manufacturer \$21.
- Expenses also included the cost of the tobacco and other business costs, including a \$6 federal stamp tax per 1,000 cigars, so profits were small.
- To compete, manufacturers constantly fought to reduce labor costs and produce more cigars to make a reasonable profit.
- Working 10-hour days, Bernard produced just over 3,000 cigars a week, earning him \$9.50 a week.
- He was also permitted to make one personal cigar a day, which he smoked while working, and provided two for his father and brother once per week.
- Bernard's cigar making job helped pay the bills, but it was not until his younger brother Charles was 12 years old that more money was earned by the family to cover additional costs.

- Bernard's father Georg found work at Hewes & Phillips Iron Works on Ogden Street, just over a mile from their current home.
- While on the job, Georg convinced the foreman to permit his son to apprentice under him while also allowing his son to translate from English to German detailed instructions that were required in the iron works.
- When Charles finished his apprenticeship, he continued to work with his father at the iron works and earned decent wages for the family.
- The two men, Georg in his early sixties and Charles in his mid-twenties, walked over a mile each day toward the Passaic River where the iron works was located.
- Bernard, being the oldest, wished he could have had the experience of working with his father and maintaining a tradition of sharing the skills Georg had acquired from his father in Germany.
- Hearing his father and brother talk shop at the dinner table made him resent the bond that his brother Charles had with his father.
- Fortunately for Georg, this father-son relationship helped keep him employed when an accident happened at Hewes & Phillips Iron Works.
- While repairing equipment, some machinery started up unexpectedly and caught Georg's hand in the gears.
- The accident crushed the fingers on his left hand; to keep his job, Georg became more dependent upon Charles at the iron works.



Georg and Bernard's brother Charles worked at an ironwork factory.

- Each day Georg and Charles arrived with the over 200 employees early in the mornings and worked nine-hour days, six days a week to manufacture Corliss engines, tubular boilers, and steam fittings.
- At the end of the week, Charles earned \$8.80 and Georg \$6.50.
- The elder earned less because his productivity declined after his hand was crushed.
- This did not upset Georg because he was grateful to work and to provide for his family.
- Fortunately for the family, Bernard's youngest sibling Annie started working at a tailor shop when she was 11 years old.
- She had been working at one shop for almost four years now, and managed to earn \$3.75 for a 55-hour week.
- Sometimes before dinner, Charles would meet Bernard at Otto Brandt's Tavern for a drink and to socialize with some of the other Germans in the city.
- Many of the Germans in Newark were farmers who immigrated and wanted to continue farming so that they might leave factory work behind.
- Most of the plans involved saving enough money to buy farmland in the Midwestern United States where other Germans were migrating in large numbers.
- Most wanted to save enough to have a debt-free ownership of a farm of 40 acres or more.
- This typically required saving over \$1,200 to purchase the land, a team of horses, a plow, seed and other feed implements.
- Most at Otto Brandt's Tavern had heard of the land speculation scandals that victimized immigrants and did not want to lose what they invested.
- All agreed it was foolish to lose now after risking everything to migrate across the Atlantic.



Bernard and Charles would often meet after work to socialize with other Germans.

- Charles and Bernard often discussed their dream of having a farm.
- Instead of farming in the Midwest, the two dreamed of traveling south to Virginia for the tobacco farming.
- There they would grow high-quality tobacco and sell it at a large profit to cigar manufacturers.
- Bernard liked the idea of working with his brother.
- It reminded him of the stories his father shared of when Georg and his brother Fritz were both blacksmiths in Germany.
- Regretfully, Bernard's father would not have any of this talk of buying a farm or growing tobacco when the family was struggling to support itself.
- Bernard realized how much his father feared starting over again, especially with the bad hand.
- Even though the family was financially secure now, his father remembered the past and feared the future.
- Family was the cornerstone within the German social structure, with the German father typically holding the dominant role.
- Even as men in their thirties eager for a future of their own choosing, both Bernard and Charles obeyed their father and heeded his demands.
- Bernard continued to make cigars with tobacco someone else had grown.
- Besides, being financially stable was one thing; having extra money was another.
- The family earned roughly \$1,200 for a year's labor—with four people working—but had substantial living expenses.
- Rent alone cost \$21 a month for the house they lived in at the edge of Newark's Sixth Ward.

Life in the Community: Newark, New Jersey

- To distract himself from the fatigue caused by work, Bernard made a point of being active with the German community.
- Most Germans resided in Newark's Sixth Ward and the neighborhood was full of German organizations and associations.
- One of the largest community organizations was the German Roman Catholic Central Association, or, as it was called in German, *Deutscher röm-kath. Central-Verein*.
- Besides strengthening the Catholic feeling in the area, the Association provided aid to members in the event of sickness or death.
- All of the Schmidt men were actively involved with the *Deutscher röm-kath. Central-Verein* led by Bernard's father's longstanding commitment.



Most Germans lived in Newark's sixth ward, a neighborhood filled with German associations.



The size of the German community continued to grow in Newark.

- Bernard was grateful for the community's assistance when his father was hurt and could not work for several weeks.
- He was deeply touched by the members that provided food and some money to the family during that period.
- The charity alone did not influence Bernard to be involved, because his family still maintained a strong religious tradition in the home.
- As the German immigrant community grew in Newark, so grew the size of the Catholic community.
- Although there was only one Catholic church in the area when Bernard's father first arrived, by 1885 Newark had four, including St. Mary's, St. Benedictus, St. Peter's and St. Augustine's.
- Each of the churches provided religious education to the children within the Catholic community to help them with the reading and writing skills necessary for employment, but also to provide a spiritual foundation.
- When a family was encountering a crisis in health or spiritual well-being, it was not uncommon to have a priest visit and pray with the family.
- Bernard often spent time talking with some of the local priests after Mass and, at times, expressed his concerns about his family.
- Often he felt guilty for wanting to start a life of his own outside of Newark.
- Father Adrian, a priest he knew well, understood his dreams but stressed the fact that God does not provide what you want or desire; instead he motivated Bernard to pray and determine what God asked of him.
- This did not sit well with Bernard because he wanted to leave Newark and the priest was informing him God might have other plans for him.
- Typically these priestly conversations were too much for Bernard.
- Many of the German immigrants brought with them the tradition of socializing with friends and drinking beer after the morning's religious services.
- Bernard was no exception.
- At times the discussions of politics were lively during Sunday afternoons, but one hot issue continually was discussed—that of the Freethinker movement.



Bernard desired to leave Newark and make a better life for his family.

- The movement created tension for both Protestant and Catholic Germans because it was based upon scientific thought that flourished in Germany in the 1870s and 1880s.
- For Germans like Bernard, it provided a new way of seeing the world.
- A number of German Freethinkers and others believed that science was the source of truth and that many of the ideas of Christianity were unreasonable.
- Circulating around the German community was a booklet which attacked Christianity entitled, "A Proposed Guide for Instruction in Morals from the Standpoint of a Freethinker for Adult Persons, Offered by a Dilettante."
- Bernard saw his father get rather animated over the topic and argue poorly over the role scientific thought had on religion.
- He became even more enraged when Bernard stated that he agreed with some of the points that science provided.
- When Bernard's father became upset, he talked in more German than English and often spoke so quickly it confused Bernard.
- The only thing he knew was that he was in trouble with his father and talking reasonably was impossible.
- How could Bernard explain that he could still have his faith and accept science for the truth it provides?
- It was during these discussions that Bernard realized that he lived in two different worlds: one of a younger American generation seeing the future before them and that of a German community clinging to the traditions of the world they left behind.
- It was between these two worlds that he was trapped.
- He realized he could not pursue his dream of being a tobacco farmer if the perfect opportunity arose.
- The next question was, how long would he have to wait?



***Circulating Library of St. John's Church, A History of the City of Newark, New Jersey,*
by Frank John Urquhard, Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1913:**

For St. John's Roman Catholic Church belongs the proud distinction of giving birth to the first Circulating Library in Newark. The Newark Library Association, "for the establishment of a library with all proper conveniences and appurtenances . . . with the view to advance the interest of learning generally and better educate the youth of the city of Newark in science, literature and the arts," was only created by act of Legislature a body corporate in 1847, and opened in 1848, 13 years after St. John's Library had been put in operation. St. John's Circulating Library was founded in the year 1835, and in 1859 contained 1,300 volumes, including the best standard works on religion and morality.

**"Cigar Maker Work and Income, Report on the Statistics of Wages
in Manufacturing Industries," Department of the Interior,
Census Office, 1886:**

There appear to be some opportunities for overtime for all . . . in this industry, growing out of increased demand at times. For this overworked [employee], regular wages are paid, but it seems that the employes are in some cases allowed tobacco and cigars free for their own use.

Cigar makers are obliged to furnish a rolling-board and cutting-knife. The cost of these is quite small, however, [and] if considered would reduce the wages but a very small percent. Tobacco workers are not obliged to furnish any tools or pay out any part of their wages for help. . . .

With but one exception employes at the establishments reporting are paid in cash. . . .

It is somewhat difficult to arrive at the average hours of labor in this industry, for the reason that the men work by the piece. The general hours of work in cigar shops seem to be from 8 to 10, and in fine-cut and plug tobacco factories, 10 hours. . . .

One manufacturer states that he thinks 10 hours per day the most profitable to employers and employed. A fewer number of hours would decrease production, and would not benefit the employes either physically or morally, while longer hours would be injurious to the health of the employes and unprofitable to the employer. . . . Another employer states . . . that they tried the experiment of working two-thirds of their hands three hours overtime. This did not result in a corresponding increase in production, as the employes were tired out and unable to work well either during the regular hours or overtime.