

## PREFACE

My association with the orphanages and orphans of early modern Augsburg begins and ends with a series of discoveries. As a fellow of the *Alexander-von-Humboldt Stiftung* in 1987, I received not only the opportunity to work in the extraordinary archives and libraries of Augsburg but also the privilege to explore unaccompanied the stacks of its *Stadtarchiv*. There, among the incompletely catalogued materials of the old imperial city's Alms Office, I discovered the "Orphan Books" that would become the basis of this book. At the time, I was interested in locating source materials on the economic and social history of families and households. It had proven a difficult and frustrating task, particularly among the laboring poor. Hence my wonder at the contents of these 2 folio volumes: detailed information about the demographic, social and economic circumstances of thousands of orphans and their families.

So began a fascination that has endured over 15 years. Though I never abandoned my original interest in the economic history of the family and the household, this first discovery turned my attention to questions of poverty and charity. What were their economic consequences? What effects did they have on the city? How did they alter the behavior of the poor? Answers to these questions drew me ineluctably beyond the traditional bounds of economic history and into the relatively new and, for me, unexplored realm of cultural history. What did it mean to be poor? Why did individuals and communities give charity? To find answers—or to make educated guesses—I was forced to extend my studies beyond wills, contracts, and accounts, the traditional stuff of economic history, and to read other records in what were, for me, new ways. Piecing together the lives of Augsburg's orphans and their families required records other than those of the orphanages themselves. Tax records, trustee arrangements, criminal investigations, and official correspondence filled in some of the blanks left by the orphan fathers and alms lords.

I had also to contend with missing information. For some reason, the records of Augsburg's Lutheran Orphanage, established in the wake of the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, had not made their way to the *Stadtarchiv*. Above all, the Lutheran "Orphan Books" were

missing. Searches in the church archives of Augsburg as well as in the *Bayrisches Hauptstaatsarchiv* in Munich and the *Landeskirchliches Archiv* in Nuremberg had yielded no further clues. Rumor had it that these volumes had been destroyed or lost during the bombing that destroyed so much of the city in 1944. As contemporary records made no mention of such a catastrophic loss, I renewed the search in 2000. Further inquiries in Nuremberg finally yielded a slender catalogue of the “Archive of the Lutheran Children’s Home in Augsburg-Hochzoll,” written in 1970. Had its author actually seen the missing documents or merely copied an earlier “Repertorium”? Church and orphanage officials in Augsburg had no knowledge either of the catalogue or of its contents. Yet, they were prepared to assist one last search of the orphanage, room by room. The missing archive—approximately 10 running meters of documentation from the period, 1648–1945—was finally located in a closet, where it had been locked and forgotten since 1970. It was the discovery that cleared the way for the writing of the present study.

Any scholar who has experienced such long sought, hardly expected and thus doubly welcome discoveries will admit that, however intensely personal the euphoria of that moment may be, the search that leads to it is always the result of a larger effort and a shared enterprise. Family, fellows, foundations and friends have accompanied and assisted my discoveries among the children of the laboring poor, the orphans of Augsburg.

My family patiently tolerated the traces of 5,734 children in their home, strangers who often drew me away. My students and colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania and the *Universität Augsburg*, as always, discussed my ideas and honed them with their criticism. Dr. Eric Olsen contributed uncounted hours to the computer analysis of orphan data and, so, made sure I could “see the forest for the trees.” The staffs of the archives in Augsburg, Nuremberg, and Munich assisted my searches and made discoveries possible. Mr. Alois Senser, patiently conveyed and copied bundle after bundle of source materials for me, making a large task not only possible but also pleasant. Finally, my particular thanks go to the administrators of the *Evangelisches Kinderheim Augsburg-Hochzoll*. *Pfarrer* Christian-Friedrich Bubmann opened its doors to me on a rainy Sunday in August without knowing that there was anything to find or whether it would make a difference and, by so doing, enabled me to complete the count of orphans and to tell their story.

The *Alexander-von-Humboldt Stiftung*, the American Council of Learned Societies, the *Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst* and the University of Pennsylvania Research Foundation have provided funding for this project over the years. Their support was crucial to its completion.

My particular thanks go also to Professors Thomas A. Brady, Jr. and Roger Chickering. As editors of the series, *Studies in Central European Histories*, they approved this book's publication. I am grateful for their assistance and patience.

Philip Kintner, Professor Emeritus at Grinnell College, first awakened me to the seductions and satisfactions of historical study. Over the years, he has become more than a teacher. He has become a mentor and colleague, who has generously shared his own work on poverty and charity in Memmingen and discussed my early attempts to make sense of the orphans and orphanages of Augsburg.

Leonard N. Rosenband, Professor of History at Utah State University, encouraged me to attend to material aspects of history and to think like an economic historian. Since our first teaching appointments together, long ago in New Jersey, we have remained in regular touch, an on-going conversation that extends now over 2 decades. Reading and discussing the entire work in draft, he first convinced me to look at the orphanages as economic institutions and to see the orphans as artisanal laborers but never as passive objects.

Rolf Kießling, *Professor für Landesgeschichte* at the *Universität Augsburg*, has supported this project in a multitude of ways. He, too, read and remarked on the drafts of many chapters, improving them with his peerless knowledge of the history of Bavarian Swabia and of Augsburg. He provided opportunities for broader discussion in graduate colloquia on regional history and, with Christa, offered hospitality beyond the call of collegiality or friendship.

Lee Palmer Wandel, Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, has accompanied this project closely. Her initial work on the poor in Zurich was a source of inspiration. She read and reread every chapter. Through her knowledge of cultural history she helped me make sense of the multiple motives and meanings that might lie behind economic behaviors, and through her attention to sources and evidence she caught many a over-statement, encouraging a healthy skepticism of grand narratives and theories.

I have been fortunate in the friends who have stood by me and whose faith in the project helped see it through to completion. It is a pleasure, at last, to acknowledge publicly their support and

encouragement. They will recognize themselves in the pages that follow. To them goes much of the credit. This book is for them, therefore: Phil, who gave me my start and awakened me to the deeper meaning and complexities of communities; Len, who accompanied me from the beginning and alerted me to the big picture, the first level of theory; Rolf, who showed me the importance of local and regional history and provided me with a way of proceeding, a method; and especially Lee, who always insisted on the irreducible individuality of the orphans and, in doing so, returned me to the source.

I dedicate this book to the orphans of Augsburg and their caregivers over more than 4 centuries. Theirs is a tale of steadfastness in the face of adversity, in many respects, such as I did not expect to find. A final discovery.

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