

(editor's note: This paper was transcribed from a handwritten cursive copy with various difficulties. For a perfect rendition, the reader might wish to consult the original, itself a copy, in the volume entitled *Literary Club Papers* 2, 1886 – 1887 June 5, '86 to May 21, '87)

## Martin Baum

A French traveler who visited the United States in the thirties of this century, describes the American merchants as the most arrogant class of men in the land, as people whose only thought was the reaping of profits, and to whom the almighty Dollar was the alpha and Omega of their existence as people who judged the value of men solely in accordance with the credit pages of their ledgers, and the size of the figures that stood there at their disposal; as people who viewed the rest of mankind which does not belong to the mercantile aristocracy as an inferior class, and in about the same light as the European nobility looks upon the plebeian masses. "This all-absorbing mania for the reaping of riches, this supreme reigning of the bourse to the exclusion of all other thoughts," he writes, "was the most destructive factor in the cultured development of the American people, a factor that threatened to altogether sour the mind and embitter the happiness of life, and to degrade in general the morals of the nation."

If we reflect a little, we certainly must confess that there is a great deal of truth in the accusations of the Frenchman. There is no nation that exhibits so bold and glaring the traits of greed and thirst for the filthy lucre as the American. Although I would not condemn a person for striving after wealth, yet I believe that the lust for money in America is an evil, an inherited evil, and has grown to become so irresistible, that justice and honesty to a great extent become impediments rather than guide-posts for the conduct of business. The money making, "straight or crooked," is altogether too much applauded here to not infest the public morals, and if we complain of the so-called "boodle" in the politics of our nation, it is simply a crop planted by our own hands in our own fields. The original seedings of this intolerable fruit were raised on the shores of New England by the people commonly called Yankees, with which term I do not propose to characterize all the inhabitants of the Eastern states, but only those which the poet Halleck describes in his "Connecticut" as —

“— Apostates who are meddling  
With Merchandise, pounds, shillings, pence, and peddling,  
Or wandering through Southern climes, teaching  
The A. B. C. From Webster's Spelling-book,  
Gallant and godly, making love and preaching,  
And gaining by what they call "hook and crook,"  
A living. ....

— And those of whom a Hebrew merchant, who was asked why there were so few of his people in New England remarked: "Now this is plain! You can make seven Jews out of one Yankee."

If this is the average characteristic of the American merchant, there are, luckily, noble exceptions to this rule, and of these noble exceptions I propose to lay a pen-picture before

you in the life-sketch of the most prominent businessman of Cincinnati, of one of the main levers of this city's growth in the first quarter of its existence, Martin Baum.

Martin Baum, the son of John George Baum and Elizabeth his wife, was born in the small town of Hagenen in lower Alsace, about six French leagues, or fifteen English miles north from Strasburg on June 15th 1765. His father was a merchant or "Kraemer", as they are called in Germany, who, similar to the so-called country stores, sell groceries, dry goods, notions, hardware, and similar commodities of life. Baum sen., a strong adherent of the Lutheran Church, was, as I am told, greatly displeased with the annexation of the neighboring province of Lorraine to France, which in 1766 fell an inheritance from Stanislaus Leczenski, King of Poland, to his son-in-law Louis XV, as he very much feared that the Catholic French government would now, when it's frontier by that annexation was solidified towards the East, draw the reins of intolerance tighter upon its Protestant subjects in Lower Alsace. This fear of a repetition of the expulsion of the Protestants in the manner of the famous edict of Nantes, was not without some reason. It is a historical fact that immigration from Lower Alsace, which, shortly after the close of the war for the Spanish succession had begun on a large scale, and which was augmented under the inflated under the notorious John law to a regular stream, carrying thousands of Alsatians and Palatines to the swamps of Louisiana, had almost subsided at the time of the annexation of Lorraine, when it began anew to take a vigorous flow. Fully one third of the Germans arriving in Philadelphia between the years 1766 and 1775, – when immigration ceased on account of the Revolutionary war were Protestants from lower Alsace as is sufficiently shown by the records preserved in the archives of Pennsylvania. I will not say that religion was the sole cause of this immigration, but the fear that intolerance might be practiced on the part of the French government against the small number of Protestants in the former ten Imperial cities of the Vosgan, the narrow strip of land between the River Rhine and the Vosgean mountains, now that the Trans-Vosgean territory, whose inhabitants were all Catholics, rounded and strengthened the kingdom of his Catholic Majesty to the east, was at least a justifiable reason for, and it seems to me one of the causes of the immigration in those days. Baum sen. as I have already said was animated by this fear, to leave his native home in order to seek a new one, where his religious liberty would not be interfered with.

The good ship "Crawford", Chas. Smith master, landed Baum and his family in Philadelphia October 16, 1772. They settled in Montgomery Co. Penn. in what was then called Falkner's Swamp (now New Hanover) from whence the elder Baum, sometime after the close of the Revolutionary war removed the present Hagerstown, Md. (then called Elizabethtown) where Baum sen. again carrying on the business of a merchant acquiring some wealth.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I have been somewhat minuteous in relating Baum's birth and the emigration and settlements of his parents in this country because Mrs. Eleanor Hartshorn a daughter of Baum, claimed that he was born in Hagerstown, Md. which is an error, there was no place in Hagerstown in Maryland in the year 1765. On the other hand, Harvey Hall in his city Directory of 1824, who gives Nativity of the inhabitants calls Baum a native of Pennsylvania. E. D. Mansfield, in his Memoirs of Dr. Dan'l Drake, says that Baum was

During the Revolutionary war young Martin Baum showed some signs of a warlike inclination, which, however did not ripen into full maturity. His parents designed him for the ministry of the Gospel, and sent him to the Rev. Henry Ernst Muhlenberg, Lutheran pastor in New Hanover, to make his studies. From here he ran away in 1779 to join the Army but his father got the fourteen-year-old lad released from his enlistment, sending him to school again. A year or so later he studied under the Rev. Christian Streit, who became the successor of Dr. Muhlenberg, the classics, Latin, Greek, and the rudimentary principles of Theology. After the removal of the family to Hagerstown, Martin exchanged his study of Theology for that of Medicine under Dr. Wiesenthal, in Baltimore, where he acquired at least some knowledge of *Materia Medica*, Pharmacy, Botany, and Chemistry, besides a little of the French Language.

The history of his life now becomes obscured until the year 1794, when we find him on the staff of Gen. Anthony Wayne, as Pharmacist of Wayne's army. When the Indian War closed, 1795, Baum settled in Cincinnati, where he so established himself in mercantile business, and became the leading merchant and most enterprising citizen of the young town. Again we are in ignorance about his pursuits, excepting that the "Western Spy." – The first newspaper of Cincinnati, publishes his advertisement, locating his place of business on the Public Landing. A picture published a few years later: "View of Cincinnati in 1802;" fixes this at the north-west corner of Front and Sycamore streets, where Baum subsequently erected the finest business house of the village.

Baum now became the great merchant of the West, whose trade extended all over the new country as the settlements beyond the Alleghenies were then called. For the purpose of facilitating his enterprises, he organized, in the year 1803 the Miami Exporting Company which must be distinguished from the banking house with that name of a later day familiarly called "the old cow," and which bankrupted so disastrously in the year 1841. The Miami Exporting Co. of Baum's origin was a sort of hybrid, a combination between a Bank and a Commission House, and establishment to which the farmers sold or consigned their over-plus products for the purpose of sending them to distant markets, and receiving in exchange goods imported from foreign markets. These products of the Western farmers, over and above the necessities of their own perusal, were at that time almost worthless, as the transport across the mountains was coupled with greater expenses than the goods themselves would bring in the Eastern markets. Baum however managed to obtain a trade with New Orleans where a French house, Ouvrard in Paris and Bordeaux, had a branch, and obtained permission from the then Spanish governor O'Hara, to pass these goods unmolested through the barriers in the neighborhood of Natchez. In the year 1806 when the territory of Louisiana was acquired by the government of the United States this commerce increased, and Baum, who already had secured this trade,

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born in Germany. From other sources it was reported that Baum was a Frenchman. To settle these conflicting reports, I made a careful examination, and obtained, after much trouble the documentary evidence which fixes the birth and early history of Martin Baum as outlined above. In addition I may state that relatives of Baum are still residing at New Hanover, Pa., Where a younger sister of Martin Baum in the year 1807 married one John Tyson, whose descendents are now living there.

continued for several years to monopolize it, as far as the Ohio Valley was concerned.<sup>2</sup>

For the purpose of improving this trade, which originally had to be carried on with flat or keelboats, whom it took from 9 to 12 months to make a round trip to New Orleans, Baum devised, with the assistance of Capt. Henry Bechtle, who was in Baum's employ, the building of barges which were propelled partly with sails and partly with long poles by which means they were enabled to make two trips per year. This mode of transportation completely destroyed the tedious keel boating, and it was kept up until it again was superseded in 1817 by steam navigation.

These barges in return supplied the settlers of the Ohio Valley with such commodities of life as were then unattainable here, and of the greatest rarity, i.e., Coffee, tea, sugar, rice, dry goods, hardware, tools, etc. One obstruction however was in the way to disturb the regularity of the barges in their voyages – the falls of the Ohio River at Louisville. At a stage of low-water the barges were often times compelled to interrupt their trips up the river for two or three months, which was a great inconvenience. To overcome the difficulty, Baum suggested a canal around the falls, and for that purpose organized the Jefferson Ohio Canal Company, which was incorporated by the legislature of Kentucky in 1818, and he became likewise one of the largest share-holders therein. His representative Capt. Henry Bechtle was placed at the head of the enterprise, and work began. It was hardly and but meagerly completed at the time of Baum's death, and the Canal afterwards went into the hands of the United States government.

Baum now became very rich: in fact, the richest man in the West. He, however did not hoard his riches simply to possess them, but applied his large means to the improvement of his chosen home in the most liberal manner. Already as early as 1807 he built a sugar refinery here, the management of which he entrusted to Jacob Guelich who was recommended to him by Vincent Nolte the New Orleans agent of Ouvrard as a practical sugar refiner. Both Nolte and Guelich were born in the city of Hamburg.

In 1810 Baum erected in this town the first iron foundry in the West, and a few years later, in connection with Col. Wm Oliver, the first steam-mill. He was likewise the principal mover and one of the stock-holders of the “Ohio Woolen Company,” which built, in 1817 the Cincinnati Wollen Mills. These various enterprises caused Baum to gain for Cincinnati some of its best and most useful citizens, engineers, draftsmen, artisans, etc., among them Albert Stein from Düsseldorf, the father of the late Capt. Albert Stein, an engineer under the first Napoleon who became the superintendent of the Woolen mills, and afterwards the projector and builder original of the Water Works<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Vincent Nolte who, since 1806 was the New Orleans agent of the house Ouvrard & Co., has published an autobiography in two volumes, (Hamburg 1854 2nd Ed.), “Fifty Years in both Hemispheres,” which furnishes a large amount of information relating to the river trade of the Mississippi and its tributaries at that early date.

<sup>3</sup> Albert Stein sen. Died in Mobile Ala., about the year 1874 aged 84 years. He owned the Water Works of the city at the time.

For the purpose of obtaining trustworthy workmen Baum would send to Baltimore to induce German immigrants to come to the then far distant West, and he even went so far as to advance to them their traveling expenses; or he would purchase so-called redemptioners to whom he gave good employment in his various establishments.

[*Editor's note: The following list is difficult to follow. Apostrophies are used apparently in plural names*] Among the German redemptioners brought here by Baum were the Oehlers, Kahny's Hoeffers (now Hafer), Voegeli's Beobinger's (Babbinger), Mundhenk's, Vogt's, Knoop's. Fabler's, Gruener's (now Greene), Schroedenger's (Shaddinger) Benninger's, Links, Stabler's, and many others who were all very much attached to their old master, and became some of our best and most useful citizens. I have known a great many of them and they all spoke in terms of the highest esteem of Martin Baum, whom they would call the founder of their welfare, and the father of their happiness.

An absurd story was published in the Cincinnati Commercial sometime during the autumn of 1877 that Baum had purchased his own parents as redemptioners. This base fabrication of an empty reporter's mind, – such manufactured stories are no uncommon things in our newspapers now-a-days, was probably caused by a statement made by me, that Martin Baum had purchased the parents of Henry Hoeffler (Hafer) the first baker of Cincinnati, and grandfather of our esteemed townsman George Hafer, esq., President of the Lebanon and Northern R.R. Co. Young Hoeffler came to Cincinnati before 1810 and established himself as a baker here. From his earnings he would send from time to time money to his parents in Germany, who carefully saved these sums, and then resolved to follow their son to the New World. From Havre they sailed to Baltimore where they safely arrived. But their means were not sufficient to pay for their passage, and, as was customary in those days the captain offered them at auction for the balance due him, to serve as redemptioners. It so happened that Peter A. Sprigman as Baum's agent was then in Baltimore, and he bought the aged pair. Imagine the happiness of parents and son when upon arrival of the old people at Cincinnati they found each other here, by a fortunate intervention of providence. Of course the son redeemed his parents at once, and the old folks lived for many years to enjoy the successful career of their descendents.

Besides his commercial and manufacturing enterprise, Baum also introduced wine-growing here. His vineyards were around the southern and western slopes of Mt. Adams and on both banks of Mill Creek in the rear of where the Sinton residence on Pike St. now stands. When in 1802 or 1803 Jonathan Staebler arrived at Cincinnati, he came to Baum and applied for work. Baum asked him about his profession, and Staebler told him he was a vintner. Baum then showed him to his large tract of hill lands above mentioned saying “Plant yourself a garden here and cultivate vegetables for the market and when you make some money, then let me know what rent you can pay me.” Staebler planted the garden and became well-to-do, and then planted a fine vineyard and an orchard, part of which were afterwards, (1821) changed to a place of amusement called the “Apollonian Garden,” later “Schuetz's Garden”, where the Germans of the early settlement congregated in the evenings and on Sundays for recreation according to their native custom.

Baum however was not only the successful merchant and enterprising business-man, he was more; for he took from the earliest times a lively interest in the promotion of all that

was good and beautiful, the cultivating of art, science, and learning in Cincinnati. In 1813 he was one of seven men that organized the "Lancastrian School" in this city. Baum became one of the trustees of the school which subsequently was changed into the "Cincinnati College," (1818) of which Baum was again a trustee and its first vice-president, Judge Burnett being the president. In 1817 he was among the founders of the "Western Museum," of the "Literary Society," 1818, of the "Society for the promotion of agriculture in the West" 1819, and of the Apollonian society, 1824. This latter, a musical organization had its meetings in the already mentioned Apollonian garden which was then kept by Reuter and Ott.<sup>4</sup>

When the Bank of the United States in 1817 established a branch office in Cincinnati, principally at the instigation of Martin Baum, he was chosen as one of the directors of the Branch Bank, and its manager. In the same year he purchased the land upon which the main portion of the city of Toledo, Ohio now stands, and thus became one of the founders of that city. His associates, to whom he conveyed undivided interests in the land were Major Wm Oliver and John H Piatt [*editor's note: there is no insertion point indicated for the footnote below*]<sup>5</sup>

The original name which they gave to the town was Port Lawrence. Here it was again Martin Baum who foresaw the importance of connecting the Ohio River with Lake Erie by way of a canal, the building of which he urged as early as 1818. His last enterprise was the erection of a cotton mill in Cincinnati 1829 and the establishment of cotton depots in the southern states. Once more he became the founder of a new town Florence Alabama, where he built large cotton warehouses, over which he put one of his sons who died there in 1841, as superintendent. Then came the disaster which has since shaded his name.

Already in the crisis of 1820, 1821 he lost a large amount of his riches, including the greater portion of his Deer Creek and Mt. Adams lands, which he sold to Nicholas Longworth. These lands included part of the present Eden Park, then called the "Garden of Eden," where Martin Schnetz had planted vineyards for Baum, which went into the possession of Longworth who enlarged them, and thus became the famous wine grower of the West.

When Baum, after that crisis, rehabilitated himself in his fortunes, he built a splendid residence on Pike St., which is now occupied by Mr. Sinton. Schuetz again became

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<sup>4</sup> Dr. Joseph Ott was 1841 appointed US Consul at Basle, Switzerland by President Tyler.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Danl Drake, Gen. Jas H Weitzel, (who subscribed \$3000 worth of land), Oliver M Spencer, Martin Baum, (who paid \$3000 in cash and volunteered to pay \$1000 annually until the whole fund should reach \$50,000), John H Piatt, I. H. Oliver, and Judge Jacob Burnett.

Baum's gardener, and planted the fine parks surrounding the new residence. This elegant garden had already grown to become one of the most beautiful spots in the city; but in the new palatial residence Baum should never live. It was almost completed and ready for occupancy when the United States Bank crisis set in (1831). Baum, who had imperative confidence in the stability of that institution had placed his entire property at its disposal, and when the bank failed, he was completely (*sic*) prostrated. His honesty would not prevent him to extricate himself from the calamity by trickery. He gave his dwelling and surrounding lands and nearly all his other property in payment of his bank-debt, and the obligations which he had assumed in behalf of the bank. Nicholas Longworth also bought the residence and the balance of Baum's Deer Creek lands. The residence was occupied by Longworth who died therein, and subsequently it went into the hands of David Sinton, who is now its occupant, as before stated.

This catastrophe broke Baum's health, and he died Dec. 14th 1831, carrying, as to his honesty and integrity, the heartiest sympathies and the fullest confidence of the entire population of Cincinnati with him to the grave. That full confidence he had enjoyed all his life-time. Twice he was elected to the chief magistrate of Cincinnati, to the growth of which from a village to the metropolis of the Ohio Valley, he had contributed more than any one of his contemporaries. The first time in 1807, and the second time in the year 1812. From 1816 to 1819 included, he was the Recorder of the town.

His religious views were determined and fixed. A strenuous Lutheran by birth, he could never be induced to join any other denomination. The only congregation in Cincinnati during the first decade of the town was the Presbyterian Church on Main and Fourth Streets. Baum visited it, contributed largely toward its erection, and afterwards its rebuilding into the once famous two horned church; but he could not be persuaded to join it as a communicant. Many years later when Cincinnati had grown to be a great city, with several fashionable churches in its midst then the comparative (*sic*) poor German element established a little block church on East Third Street (1815) small and primitive. Baum donated the lot and erected the building thereon alone. Then only did Martin Baum, the first and richest man of the town, join this poor congregation as a member, and he remained a member of it until his death.

Baum was married in the year 1805 to Miss Anna Wallace Indge Burnett's sister-in-law; and from that marriage spring seven children, five sons and two daughters. The two daughters, if I am correct, are still living: Mrs. Ewing in Chicago and Mrs. Eleanor Hartshorn in this city. All the sons have died without issue, plus extinguishing his name in his own blood, – a name that only lives in an out-of-the-way street of this city, and in the dear memory of all that have known him in his life-time. His name however ought to be revived and placed in the list of the great deceased benefactors of this community equally with the names of Joseph Longworth, Charles W West, and Ruben R Springer.

And now to recur to my introductory remarks: Martin Baum did not belong to the class of American merchants as described by de Tocqueville, nor was he one of the characters delineated in Halleck's "Connecticut." There is something in the pursuit of money and the pursuit of higher enjoyments, which, if not radically hostile to each other, at least admits of no divided empire. Mammon claims all for his own, and looks with jealousy and hate upon all who raise their heads above the dust. Martin Baum, like most men of learning

and genius had good reason to describe mammon with the words of Milton as

---the least erected spirit that fell from Heaven  
For e'en in Heaven his looks and thoughts  
Were always downwards bent, admiring more  
The riches of Heaven's pavements trodden gold  
Than aught divine or holy else enjoyed."

H. A. Ratterman