

## CURATOR'S CORNER

By Emily Ruby, Curator

### Zoglmann's Saloon

When Benjamin Franklin wrote to a friend in 1763 about the frontier settlement surrounding Fort Pitt, he noted, "There is a Brewery, would you think it, near the Town."<sup>1</sup> Alcohol and its consumption played a long and critical role in the region, including the tumult that grew into the Whiskey Rebellion. As saloons and taverns continued to open, these establishments offered communal space where people could conduct trade and provided a place for recent immigrants to make connections. Many became legendary in their eras and even across the decades.

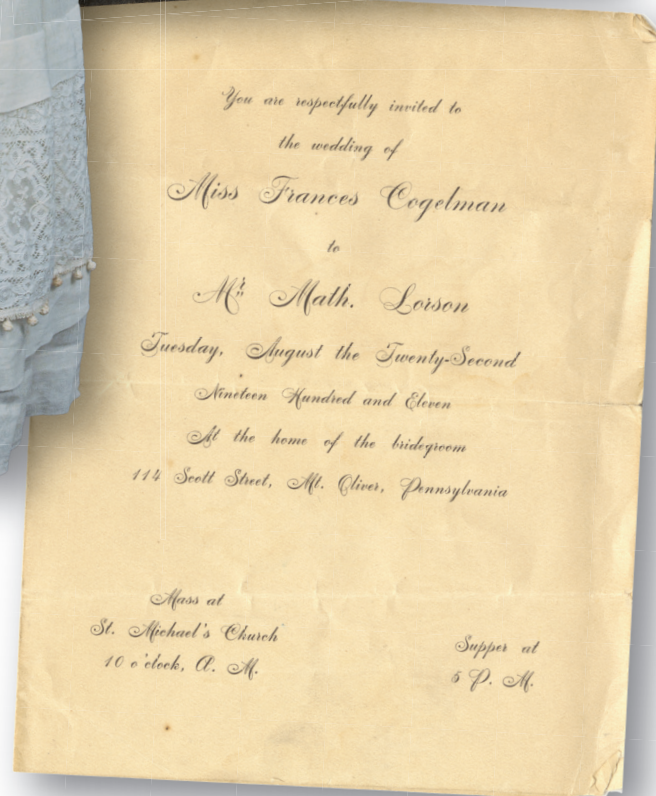
In a 1942 *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* article, Charles F. Danver captured the spirit of Zoglmann's "mellow tavern" along Carson Street and provided a hint as to why the place remained a staple in the community; it was "frescoed with hunting scenes and Danubian vistas, and here and there are huge pipes and old-fashioned beer steins. A friendly barkeep sets up a man's size scuttle of suds in an old-time glass holding 14 ounces. Not designed for a panty-waist columnist."<sup>2</sup>

The fact that Zoglmann's, opened and operated by Austrian immigrant Wolfgang Zoglmann, would be described in such



Frances (Zoglmann) Lorson's wedding gown, 1911. Frances and Mathias were married until 1931 when he died of a brain tumor at age 50 while still employed at A.M. Byers as a laborer.

HHC Collections, gift of Phyllis Tomko, 2017.41. Photo by Liz Simpson.



Frances (Zoglmann) Lorson's wedding invitation, 1911.

HHC Detre L&A, Zoglman-Linz Family papers and photographs 1891-1992, MSS 874.





**LEFT:** Wall fresco hung in Zoglmann's, c. 1900. One of those "Danubian vistas" described in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* now hangs in the Special Collections gallery in the German section. **ABOVE:** Hunting scenes and related sporting scenes were typical artwork in many German saloons, as well as being a popular pastime for Wolfgang. You can see additional frescos hanging in the bar in the interior image.

HHC Collections, gift of Ruth Kapinskis in honor of the Zoglmann and Linz families, 2003.15.5. Photo by Liz Simpson.

glowing terms during WWII is testament to the central role it played in the community and the popularity of its proprietor. Wolfgang came to Pittsburgh in 1893 from Vienna, where he had moved at the age of 16 from his Bohemian birthplace, and settled in the predominantly German area of the South Side. Around 1900, after working in his father-in-law's bar on Fifth Avenue, he opened his own establishment. Newspaper clippings donated to the History Center by the family include many stories of his jovial personality, love of hunting, and participation in Austrian/German societies.





Zoglmann's token, c. 1900. The back of the token shows it is worth 5 cents in trade, which at the time would have been enough for a typical saloon lunch of a "nickel" beer and a simple hearty offering of soup or stew.

HHC Collections, gift of Ruth Kapinskis in honor of the Zoglmann and Linz families, 2003.15.2.




Frances and unidentified women, c. 1910, playing cards in the courtyard of Zoglmann's.

Courtesy of Phyllis Tomko.

After their mother died, his sister Frances followed him to Pittsburgh in 1899. She is shown in the 1910 census as living at 601 Carson Street, the location of the bar and the family apartment above, and her occupation is listed as servant. It is likely that Frances worked in the bar and that is where she met her future husband Mathias Lorson, a German immigrant, who worked at the nearby A.M. Byers Company as a laborer. Mathias would cash his check at Zoglmann's and perhaps participate in a round of Sixty-Six, a popular card game in Austria and Germany and one

often played at the tavern. The two were married in 1911 and had four children. Frances continued to live in the area, but it is unclear if she continued working at Zoglmann's. When Wolfgang died in 1949, his daughters Frances and Loretta ran the bar until 1965. After several changes of ownership, it closed sometime around 1980.

In 2003 and in 2017 two separate donations of items documenting both the bar and the family came into the collection from different Zoglmann descendants. Together, the collections (consisting of wall frescoes,

St. Michael's memorabilia, Zoglmann's and A.M. Byers tokens, wedding gowns, German bibles, as well as photographs and other archival material) tell a rich story of chain migration, the South Side German community and the changing role of the tavern in American life. 

<sup>1</sup> *Letter from Benjamin Franklin to Richard Jackson, March 8, 1763*, The Papers of Benjamin Franklin, Courtesy of Yale University Library

<sup>2</sup> "Pittsburghesque" Charles F. Danver, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May, 15, 1942, p. 10 \*Danubian refers to the river Danube.